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Impacts of wheat flour price increment on rice consumption

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Among the food consumed by Sri Lankan, rice becomes the main and wheat comes to the next. Wheat is not cultivated in the country causing for drainage in foreign exchange. The government tries to reduce wheat consumption by increasing the price and promoting rice cultivation. Now Sri Lanka has become self sufficient in rice. The aim of this study was to assess the impacts of wheat flour price increment on rice consumption. One hundred and fifty households representing urban, rural and estate sectors were interviewed using a structured questionnaire. Research revealed that per capita wheat flour consumption was high in the estate sector (3.2 kg) than in urban (1.4 kg) and in rural (0.4 kg) sectors. However, average monthly income had a positive relationship with the consumption in estate sector (0.4744). Wheat price was high for the respondents (mean values for wilcoxon sign rank test - 1.26, -1.42 and -1.42) in all sectors. Urban and rural households consumed wheat in order to have a change in their consumption and estate households preferred wheat because of its easy preparation.

Respondents of all three sectors have reduced wheat and bread consumption with the price increment of wheat and increased rice consumption. Urban and rural respondents concerned health factors when consumed wheat flour based food products. Fifty one percent of the respondents stated that quality of the rice based food products should be improved. The study concluded that, although consumers concerned on price of wheat flour, price was not the only factor affected for wheat consumption, Education, income and health factors also affected the wheat consumption. But wheat consumption of estate sector still remained higher. People concerned on rice quality, when they purchased rice. The study recommends that nutrition promotion campaigns are necessary to promote rice consumption. Research should be focused on production of convenient, quality rice based products, and also upgrading the rice/flour milling technology.