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Potentials and challenges of introducing *Dracaena sanderiana* (Lucky bamboo) in Hambantota, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Sri Lanka has been identified as a reliable supplier of good quality floriculture products worldwide. *Dracaena sanderiana* is an attractive foliage plant with a high demand in export market. Though export-oriented *D. sanderiana* cultivations are limited to wet zone in Sri Lanka the supply from the country still has not catered the demand. This study aims to identify the future potentials and challenges of introducing *D. sanderiana* to Hambantota district as commercial foliage. Randomly selected 40 flower growers from Sooriyawewa, Thissamaharama, Hambantota and Beliatta Divisional Secretariat Divisions (DSDs) were interviewed administering a pretested semi structured questionnaire during early 2022. According to the findings, majority (60%) of them grow floriculture crops as a full-time employment and middle-aged females were widely engaged in floriculture operations. Seventy percent (70%) of the respondents were willing to include *D. sanderiana* as a new floriculture crop to their nurseries with required support since they (50%) have excess lands (up to 0.25 acres) with natural shade. Sixty percent (60%) of them preferred to train on value addition of *D. sanderiana* by knitting. and were willing to enter to export oriented market channels. Fifteen percent (15%) of them had already established shade net houses and other infrastructure. The *Dracaena* grower society in Beliatta DSDs is ready to share their experience with new growers. Respondents understand the importance of marketing the product as a group to reduce the transportation cost. Major challenge was the initial investments on growth structures, net houses, and irrigation. Most of the growers (70%) were expecting financial support from the government. Lack of awareness of the crop husbandry, low availability of planting materials, increased transportation costs and low availability of fertilizer and fungicide in the markets were other challenges. Awareness and training programs, production assistance, trading facilities and credit support is required to introduce *D. sanderiana* as a successful future export crop to Hambantota district. Further research activities are suggested to identify the best growth conditions of *D. sanderiana* in Hambantota district prior to export level operations

Keywords: Challenges, Crop husbandry, *Dracaena sanderiana*, Hambantota, Potentials

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