ID 103

Upgrading vanilla value chain through supportive services

S.T. Hansika* **and D.A.M. De Silva**

Department of Agribusiness Management, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, Belihuloya.

Abstract
Being the second most expensive spice in the global market, demand for vanilla is increasing daily and vanilla production is a high-income generating agribusiness. Vanilla farming in Sri Lanka has been limited to home gardening crops that generate hand-cured vanilla. Since vanilla cultivation has been limited only for the particular districts of the country, this study aims to upgrade the vanilla value chain through supportive services such as extension, finance, research and development, ICT and novel technology applications. Finance, knowledge, and technology based supportive services strengthen the farmers with skills, knowledge, experiences and stability of business. Primary data were collected through surveying 62 vanilla value chain actors in the districts of Kandy, Kegalle, and Rathnapura, as well as through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Descriptive analysis with qualitative techniques was applied for the analysis of the data. Both non-governmental and governmental organizations are actively involving in supplying supportive services to vanilla value chain actors. Almost all the farmers are already joined to the farmer communities, hubs, and relevant organizations to secure their business. Although there are some gaps between the value chain actors and the supportive services relating to finance, extension, research and development, processing and post-harvest management technology, knowledge dissemination, market orientation and export market. At both ends of the value chain, supportive service gap is moderate and in the middle of the value chain it is considerably higher. With the advancement of modern technology, an ICT-based online platform is the most convenient way to bridge the gap between value chain actors and supportive services. This online linkage should be modified to link all the financial services, extension services, value chain actors, government and non- government organizations, farmer communities, research stations and all other relevant parties. Well customized mobile app can be suggested as the online platform since almost all the value chain actors are used mobile phones in their day-to-day life. Well-developed supportive services without supportive service gaps will minimize the inefficiencies in each and every stage of value chain and will increase the overall productivity of the vanilla value chain.

Keywords: Mobile app, Online linkage, Supportive services, Value chain, Vanilla

****Corresponding Author:*** hansika.agri.susl@gmail.com