

Factors Affecting Land Productivity of Proprietary Tea Estates in Badulla District

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The tea industry of Sri Lanka has made a significant contribution to the country's socio-economic status since its' history. The sustainability of the tea industry in Sri Lanka is at a critical juncture since it faces many challenges like the rising cost of production, declining productivity, shortage of labor, and climate changes. Proprietary Tea Estates are considered middle-level tea estates that may have a range of tea land extent between 10 to 50 acres (4 to 20 ha). The total land extent of proprietary holdings accounts for 14710 ha of land which is represented 6.6% of the total tea land extent of Sri Lanka. The main objective of this study was to identify the factors that affect the land productivity of proprietary tea estates in the Badulla district and to propose strategies to optimize the land productivity for its long-term sustainability. A conceptual framework and research methodology were developed according to the information gathered from focus group discussions held with key experts attached to public institutions and few proprietary holdings in the Badulla District. A cross-sectional survey using a pretested structured questionnaire was held for the collection of primary data. The stratified purposive sampling method was performed to select 33 proprietary tea estates in four tea inspector's ranges in the Badulla District. Secondary data were gathered. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the socio-economic factors of the estates. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to analyze the effect of independent variables on land productivity. 87.9% of the variance of land productivity was explained by the independent variables ($P = 0.000$, $n = 33$). The findings of this study concluded that although the proprietary tea estate owners were experienced with sound knowledge on recommended agricultural practices, the major constraints for improving land productivity of the estates are inadequate opportunities to access to formal extension services in order to get technical, input, and financial assistance on required time. Thus, this study would be useful for relevant authorities to implement strategies to optimize the land productivity of proprietary tea estates in the Badulla District.

Keywords: Tea Industry, Proprietary Tea Estates, Land Productivity, Regression Analysis