

Farmers' Perception on Transition towards Organic Paddy Cultivation: A Case Study in Matara District.

H.M.P.M. Dayarathne^{1*}, N.I.K. Nanayakkara A.M.W.W.N.D.B.Abeysekara¹ and
A.L. Sandika¹

¹*Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, University of Ruhuna, Matara, Sri Lanka*

Organic agriculture is growing at a rapid pace in response to progressively observed deterioration in the health of people and the environment. In such context, the present study is an attempt to identify farmers' perception on transition towards the organic paddy cultivation and the influences behind their perception. One hundred of paddy farmers were selected for primary data collection through multi-stage random sampling technique from four *Grama Niladhari* divisions in Matara District namely Welipitiya (34), Karandeniya (20), Kokmaduwa (22) and Kamburupitiya (24). The data were collected through structured interviews by farm/home visits. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential analytical tools. Results revealed that majority of the respondents (74%) have a satisfactory awareness of organic farming. About 50% of the respondents stated ancestral knowledge is the most effective method to gain knowledge regarding organic farming while, 18% of respondents stated mass media is the second best method. Among the rice varieties, *Suwadel* and *Kuruluthudu* were stated as the most suitable varieties to grow organically. Moreover, 54% of the sample was aware on the demand for organic paddy. The majority (78%) of the respondents mentioned supermarkets are the best place to sell organic products while export market and normal markets are alternative places. Further, 68% of the sample showed a positive perception to move towards organic farming. The results of the Pearson correlation coefficient explored that farmers' age, education, land area, income, and experience are the significant influences behind their perception. The study concluded that farmers' perception on organic paddy production is at a favorable level. Hence, these influencing factors could be tapped into further extension activities related to organic farming in order to foster paddy farmers towards organic farming.

Keywords: Farmers' Perception, Influencing Factors, Organic Farming, Paddy