

## **Tendencies in Production, Imports and Per Capita Availability of Potato and Its Challenges in Sri Lanka**

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Potato is the fourth most vital crop in the world and one of the important crops in Sri Lanka due to its high consumer preference and disposable profit generation. In this context, the objectives of this study were to review the trends in potato production, the area under harvested, imports and per capita availability, and to investigate the government involvement in regulating the prices and importation. The study is mainly based on secondary data which were collected from the annual reports of Central Bank of Sri Lanka and Department of Census and Statistics from 1961 to 2016. The data were first tabulated and then graphs were produced and based on the observed patterns certain interpretations were made. Both total production and area under harvested display the similar trend for the study period with a sudden decline in 1997. Badulla and Nuwara-Eliya districts contributed on average 73% and 26% of the national potato production respectively in the last decade. The yield of potato expresses a gradual increase over the period with frequent fluctuations. The imports of potato were lesser than the production until 2006 with a surge in the years from 1997 to 2001 and thereafter importation was increased drastically and continuously, which is 148,081 metric tons in 2016. Imports of potato contribute 5.1% of the national imports and 41% of the food and beverages imports on average in last five years. Per capita availability of potato showed an increasing trend where it was doubled from 3.89 kg/year to 7.79 kg/year during the period from 1995 to 1997 and reached its peak of 10.5 kg/year in 2016. The government imposes several policies such as maximum retail price and special commodity levy time to time in order to protect the local farmers as well as to make the availability of potatoes to consumers when demanded. Several input subsidies have been introduced to promote potato cultivation. Therefore, these modes of government interventions should remain to retain the potato sector competently.

*Keywords:* Imports, per capita availability, Potato, Production