

## **Consumer Willingness to Pay for Underutilized Vegetables in the Badulla District**

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Sri Lanka is one of the countries that consist of a wide range of plant species and they can be categorized as wild and domesticated plant species. Underutilized crops can be described as the domesticated plant species which have been eventually declined their importance for the society. The vegetable crops which are neither grown commercially in large scale nor traded widely termed as “underutilized” vegetable crops. Nowadays, consumers exhibit increased concern on the underutilized crops due to their medicinal properties, other health benefits, and nutritional values. However, prices of these underutilized vegetables at farmers’ markets and village fairs are low and unstable so that the sellers cannot maintain competitive prices and profit margin for underutilized vegetables. Therefore, this research was carried out to identify the consumer and marketing mix factors that may be influential on consumers’ willingness to pay for underutilized vegetables. To accomplish the objectives, a self-administered questionnaire was prepared and a survey was conducted with 200 customers who visited the village fair for purchasing vegetables in Badulla, Bandarawela, and Hali Ela divisional secretariat area in Badulla district. For data analysis, the ordered logit model was applied. The results of regression analysis revealed that consumer age, income, suffering from non-communicable diseases by family members, number of children present in the family, attitude towards health benefits of foods, knowledge on health foods, and marketing mix factors were significantly associated with the consumer willingness to pay for underutilized vegetables. Furthermore, the marginal effects were calculated to reveal the probable impact of each significant independent variable on consumers’ levels of willingness to pay for underutilized vegetables.

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