Study on Farmers' Perception on Providing Cash Grant Instead of Fertilizer Subsidy in Paddy Cultivation: A Study in Badulla District

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This study was conducted to analyze farmers' perception on cash grant including socio-economic characteristics of cash grant receiving paddy farmers, effect of new policy on fertilizer usage and paddy yield. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of cash grant program were also evaluated. A field survey using a questionnaire was conducted to collect data from 120 cash grant receiving paddy farmers in Badulla district from August to October 2017. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, one sample T-test and paired T-test. Result revealed that majority of the respondents are male, married, educated up to OIL, and their main occupation is farming. Further, respondents have positive attitude regarding five statements; "cash grant program is a chance to buy quality fertilizer", "easier than fertilizer subsidy", "low corruptions", "opportunity to move organic agriculture" and "cash grant is successful". However, they have negative attitude towards "cash is inadequate to buy required fertilizer" and "cash is not receiving at right time". Furthermore, there is a reduction in fertilizer usage and thus paddy yield during this period. In focusing SWOT of cash grant program, reduction of wastage and corruptions, support of farmer organizations and easiness of cash grant are strengths while farmers' negative attitude is a weakness. Also, promotion of organic agriculture and high environmental concern were recognized as opportunities for the cash grant and higher market price of fertilizer, delaying cash grant receiving time and tenant farmer conflicts are the existing threats. However, they have comparatively positive perception on cash grant program. In order to get maximum returns of cash grant program, payment of cash at right time is crucial. Also motivation of farmers towards organic agriculture through appropriate training programs will be highly important.

Keywords: Badulla district, Cash grant, Fertilizer subsidy, Organic farming, Paddy farmers