

Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Fish Consumption Patterns in Sri Lanka

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The COVID-19 which was originated in Wuhan, China has been rapidly spreading across the globe and consequently the World Health Organization has announced a global emergency condition. The pandemic has drastically changed the dietary and lifestyle patterns of people and specifically consumption of freshwater fish and sea food has been considerably reduced in terms of frequency and level of consumption. The aim of this study was to examine the food fish consumption patterns, production of inland food fish and price variation of fish before and during the period of the COVID-19 in Sri Lanka. A hybrid survey (both online and physical) was carried out in 13 districts and collected primary data from 711 respondents. The Wilcoxon test was employed to compare the selected variables before and during the COVID-19 using in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 25). The study found inland fish consumption has increased by 13.81% as frequently consuming fish type during COVID-19 pandemic when comparing before COVID-19. Moreover, type of fish, processing methods of fish, fish purchasing places, affordability to buy fish per month, fish purchasing frequency, fish consumption frequency and the amount of fish consumed by family per month were also analyzed and there was significant difference ($p < 0.05$) during the pandemic, compared to before 13th march 2020. Moreover, it was examined 78% of the consumers were aware of the process of cleaning, storage and preparation and also 58.74% of them have changed their pre COVID cleaning and storage process during COVID-19 period. The average retail food fish price and inland fish production was increased at the end of the lockdown period after first wave of COVID- 19 pandemic from May 2020 when compared to year 2019. The study identified the differences of the pattern of fish consumption; fish consumption frequency, preference for freshwater food fish during COVID-19 pandemic compared to before COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: COVID-19; Protein; Dietary pattern; Food price; Fish production