

**FACTORS AFFECTING LAND PRODUCTIVITY OF
PROPRIETARY TEA ESTATES IN BADULLA DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

The tea industry of Sri Lanka has made a significant contribution on the country's socio-economic status since its history. The sustainability of the tea industry in Sri Lanka is at a critical juncture since it faces many challenges like the rising cost of production, declining productivity, shortage of labor and climate changes. The main objective of this study was to identify the factors that affect the land productivity of proprietary tea estates in the Badulla district and to propose strategies to optimize the land productivity for its long-term sustainability. Proprietary Tea Estates are considered as middle-level tea estates that may have a range of tea land extent between 10 to 50 acres (4 to 20 ha). The total extent of proprietary holdings under category of 4 to 20 ha in extent, is 14710 ha of land which is represented 6.6% of the total extent of Sri Lanka. A conceptual framework and research methodology were developed according to the information gathered from focus group discussions held with key experts attached to public institutions and few proprietary holdings in the Badulla District. A cross sectional survey using a pretested structured questionnaire together with focus group discussions were held for the collection of primary data. The stratified purposive sampling method was performed to select 33 proprietary tea estates in four tea inspector's ranges in the Badulla District. Secondary data were gathered. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the socio-economic factors of the estates. Multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the effect of independent variables on land productivity. 87.0% of the variance of land productivity was explained by the independent variables; Age of cultivation, Soil characteristics, Land use pattern, Experience, Access to formal extension services and training, Access to inputs and finance, Knowledge on estate, owners on recommended practices, Adoption to recommended practices ($P = 0.000$, $n = 33$). The findings of this study concluded that although there are proprietary tea holders who have experience with a sound knowledge on agricultural practices, the major constraints for improving productivity of the tea estates in Badulla district are inadequate opportunities to access for formal extension services in order to get technical, input and financial assistance on required time. Thus, this study would be useful for relevant authorities to implement strategies to optimize the land productivity of proprietary tea estates in the Badulla District.

Key words: Tea Industry, Proprietary Tea Estates, Land Productivity, Regression Analysis