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FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SELECTION AND UTILIZATION OF VEGETABLE SEEDS IN MANMUNAI SOUTH AND ERUVIL PATTU D.S. DIVISION OF BATTICALOA

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ABSTRACT

Good quality seeds are important for successful vegetable cultivation in Sri Lanka. Proper identification of agronomic practices currently being adopted by the farmers in selection, utilization and storage of seeds would help to improve that practices. As such, a study was conducted to find the socio economic status, problems and agronomic practices adopted by the vegetable farmers in selection and utilization of seeds in Manmunai South and Eruvil Pattu D. S. division of Batticaloa district. This survey was carried out from April to May 2009 using structured questionnaire. Collected data were analyzed statistically. The results of the survey indicated that, most of the respondents (50%) were only completed primary and intermediate level of education and majority of respondents were (88 %) full time farmers. Higher percentage (96%) of farmers were having own land area for cultivation. Major problems faced by the vegetable farmers were heavy incidence of pests and diseases followed by low profit and low yield. More than 38.5 % of the respondents relied on their own experience to select seeds and 42% of the respondents were using their own seeds for cultivation. They select the crops for seed purpose based on the characteristics like pest and disease resistance (36%), vigour (32%) and high yield (26%). Very few percentage (7%) of farmers purchased seeds from private dealers. When purchasing seeds they gave priority for price (31%). Germination test was being done by 46% of the respondents. Most of the farmers (70%) performed seed treatments before planting such as soaking in water, fungicide treatment etc. Majority of the respondents (60%) stored their seeds at room temperature. In conclusion, most of the farmers in the study area were still using conventional practices in selection, utilization and storage of seeds. Education level of the farmers is also one of the factors, which contributes for this situation. As such, awareness of farmers in Manmunai South and Eruvil Pattu D. S. division of Batticaloa district regarding seeds should be improved to increase their production. Remedial actions should be taken to overcome the problems faced by the vegetable farmers in the study area.

Key words : Seeds, Vegetable Cultivation, Vegetable Farmers

INTRODUCTION

Vegetable cultivation is one of the major livelihood activities of the Sri Lankan farmers. Most of the vegetable crops grown in Sri Lanka are propagated by seeds. Seed constitutes the main propagule for plant growth and major input for crop production. Seeds are easy to handle and transport when compare with other planting materials under proper storage conditions. They can be stored for longer duration without losing their viability. Good quality seeds are important for successful cultivation. Their role in crop production is unavoidable. Quality seeds determine field establishment of a crop, crop vigour, degree of weed infestation, pest and disease resistance and quality and quantity of yield. As such seeds act as a basis of crop production.

Seed is the fundamental input in agricultural development and can be reproduced by the farmer himself unlike other inputs. Farmers are using varieties of seeds and obtain them from different sources. There are greater variations in the seed sources from own seeds to commercially produced hybrid seeds. But, the quality of seeds being used by the farmers is questionable. Farmers' awareness on seed quality plays significant role in this regard and farmers use several information sources to select seeds. The degree of usage of these sources may vary among farmers and it could be influenced by the education and socio economic status of farmers. Proper seed treatment is important to ensure better germination, good seedling vigour and uniform seedling establishment. Seed treatment methods may be different between farmers. Storage of seeds for next

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