ADOPTION OF VPLC-880 FERTILIZER MIXTURE AMONG TEA SMALL HOLDERS IN MATARA DISTRICT OF SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

Around 397,000 tea small holders are engaged in cultivation of tea covering approximately 400,000 holdings in 14 administrative districts in the island. As in previous years, the tea sector continued to dominate and contributed 65% of total tea production in 2005 due to both greater land area used as well as higher yields. Small holding sector hold 45% of the area under tea plantation. The average yield in the small holder sector was 1,867kg/ha in comparison to 1,358kg/ha in the estate sector in 2005.

The Tea Research Institute introduced new fertilizer recommendation for mature tea in 2000. However; the adoption of this new fertilizer mixture by the respondents is poor. The major objectives of this study to determine the level of adoption of the newly recommended fertilizer mixture and to assess the influence of attitudes towards the recommendations on the selection of fertilizer by the respondents. The method adopted for primary data collection in the study was the survey research through personal interviews using a structured questionnaire. Information related to tea cultivation and fertilizer usage, socio economic characters, land and crop information, attitude of the respondents plant nutrition, information sources, basis of fertilizer selection, credibility of information sources were gathered for a group of 45 respondents selected randomly Pasgoda tea small holdings area. Most of the tea small holders used the old TRI mixture, especially the U709 mixture (66.7%) and T1130. Only 22% used the new TRI mature tea mixture. Resonpondents used attitude about changes in growth of plant, duration of high production and the yield potential as their basis of fertilizer selection.

Majority of the respondents (48.9%) used tea factory as their main information source and 6.7 % respondents used TI/EO to obtain information about tea farming. Nearly 30% of respondents received information from both factory and other farmers. About 13% of respondents received information from both factory and TI/EO. Many of the respondents (78%) had medium attitude towards the practical aspects of the new fertilizer mixture and 55.6% of the respondents had high attitudes towards the economic aspects of the new fertilizer mixtures.

The adoption index calculated by using the amount and frequency of use of VPLC-880 and use of urea according to the yield level.

The most important reasons for the low adoption were; low practicability influences the attitude towards the new recommendations. Most frequently mentioned reason for not adopting new fertilizer mixture were interference of tea factory in distribution of fertilizer.

It can be concluded that the knowledge and adoption of the new recommendation were low. Continuous adaptive trials in the region, cost benefit analysis on new fertilizer recommendations, improve the service of the extension officers of TSHDA could be recommended for the increase in the adoption of new fertilizer recommendation.

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