

COVID PANDEMIC IN JAFFNA METROPOLITAN AREA AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS IN AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY DURING 2022-2023 – A PERSPECTIVE STUDY

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The worldwide COVID pandemic of 2020 has made considerable damages to the Economy of Sri Lanka. This study focuses on the gravity of the health effects and the consequent impacts on the agricultural activities and connected income patterns of the workforce in the agricultural sector of the Jaffna Metropolitan area during the post-COVID scenario. The period and population covered in this perspective study is from 2020 to 2022 and the people living in the two DS divisions named Jaffna and Nallur contained in the Jaffna Municipal Council area and its suburbs named Nallur, Ariyalai, Thirunelvely and Kokkuvil. The investigation for this study was performed during March and April of 2023. Secondary data relevant to the population profile and COVID-19-affected sub-population of the study area were retrieved from the records of General and Health Administrative sources. Primary data on the changing nature of the agricultural activities and connected changing patterns of income were collected from the sub-sample of COVID-affected sub-population using a purposive systematic sampling technique. The primary and secondary data collected were subjected to analysis in this study for obtaining the results. The contingency tables constructed from the data were subjected to simple percentage analysis and the extracted relationships were confirmed using Chi-square statistical tests. This study has shown that the incidence of COVID pandemic in Jaffna Metropolitan area was 4.53, which was comparatively higher than 3.33 that of Jaffna District and Sri Lankan national rate 3.03. Investigations on various types of changed agricultural activities on the workers in 2023 have shown that the work capability in agricultural sector has been severely deteriorated in the sense that about 35 percent of the workforce has given-up such agricultural activities. The income patterns were also severely affected, in the sense that 45 to 50 percent of them have commenced receiving lesser income compared to pre-COVID scenario. However, the vegetable and fruit sellers, small and medium businessmen, have maintained or increased their income. Hence, we conclude that the effects of COVID pandemic among the agriculture workforce in Jaffna City were severe than that of the district and national scenario.

Keywords: *Agricultural-workforce, COVID pandemic, Economic impacts, Incidence-rates of COVID, Workforce capability.*