

Economics of small-scale onion cultivation in the Batticaloa District

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This study was conducted to study the economics of small-scale onion cultivation in Batticaloa district. Special reference are given to the socio-economic condition of the farmers, cultivation techniques used, marketing channels and profit obtained. Five villages from the major onion producing area were selected for the study. Data were collected using a pre-tested questionnaire from 50 randomly selected farmers.

It was observed that the majority of the farmers cultivate 3 crops per year. Most of the farmers were full-time cultivators with an average farm size of 0.19 ha. It was reported that the expenditure on purchasing seed materials was fairly high (45 % of total cost) and the farmers experienced difficulties in obtaining quality seeds on time.

All the farmers practiced intensive cultivation techniques. Majority of them used different mixture of fertilizers at a time as top-dressing materials (applied 4 to 5 times / crop). The average yield obtained by the sample farmers was 8.15 Mt /ha. Forty percent of the farmers obtained loans from Banks and Agricultural Productivity Village (APV). Most of them reported that they were not satisfied with the loan facilities. It was also observed that only 35% of them had resettled their loans. The farmers also obtained loans in kind from NGO's. Due to poor storage facilities, only few farmers stored their farm products. Farmers sell their products to merchants and to middlemen from their village and from other areas. The average cost of production was Rs. 98628 /ha. The average profit was Rs. 80837 /ha. The average productivity was 14.94 kg / Manday labour used. The average total cost of production was Rs.12 per kg of onion produced. Although the farmers faced shortage of inputs and the exploitation of middlemen, majority of them obtained profit in cultivating onions.