

## FARMERS' PROBLEMS IN PADDY CULTIVATION IN THE COASTAL BELT OF AMPARA DISTRICT IN SRI LANKA

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Rice is the staple food in Sri Lanka and most of the people are cultivating paddy as their major income source. Specially, Ampara district is supplying 1/5<sup>th</sup> of rice production to this country's total paddy production. To get the higher yield the farmers utilize the high amount of pesticides than the Department of Agriculture recommendations due to the attraction of business promotional propagandas which are successfully made out through the mass media. Only 39% of the farmers are using certified seed paddy. Nearly 50% of the farmers use the correct suitable variety for their cultivation. Major pest was brown plant hopper and the blast was the common disease. The poor farmers are adversely affected by these pest and diseases, and it was a difficult task to control these pest and diseases. The integrated pest management is the one and only source to reduce the usage of pesticide and it can be an ideal remedy for protecting our farmers from the hazards. Due to the high rate of pesticide and the mixing of several chemicals, the cost of production was very high. Further, farmers are not concern about the mode of action and expiry dates of the chemical. Only 61% of the farmers use chemicals before the expiry date. Pesticides are applied without any safety measures. Only 11% of the farmers consider the wind direction during the application of pesticides. These actions pose severe health hazards such as acute kidney disease and other related issues. The high cost of the pesticides leads them to increase their cost of cultivation rather than other farmers who are not using pesticides. Therefore, the farmers using and not using pesticides obtained the net profit from the paddy cultivation which are not much different. Farmer awareness programmes and extension services have to be strengthened to increase the yield of paddy production in Ampara District.

**Key words:** Paddy, Yield, Pesticides