

AGRO-PESTICIDE USAGE IN VEGETABLE
CULTIVATION IN THE BATTICALOA DISTRICT

BY

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ABSTRACT

Agro-pesticide usage in relation to recommended plant protection measures, sources of information regarding application, protective measures and hazards were studied by interviewing randomly chosen 138 vegetable farmers from predominantly vegetable growing areas of Batticaloa district, during the 1992/93 Maha, using a structured questionnaire.

Among the farmers interviewed, 85.5 percent of them were able to identify pest and diseases, while 94.9 percent of them were able to select pesticides to control pest and diseases on their own experience. Agricultural Extension Workers were found to play minor role in disseminating plant protection information in the study area.

Although 70.3 percent of the respondent farmers expected instant "knockdown" of pest and diseases after pesticide application. The need to keep the crop absolutely "pest free" until sale of produce resulted in about 59 percent of the farmers spraying pesticides before appearance of pest and disease. Since a majority of the farmers felt that recommended levels of dosage does not control pest and diseases effectively and completely, 62 percent of the farmers use higher concentrations than recommended levels. Further, 77 percent of the farmers used cock-tail mixtures of pesticides and fungicides, to control many types of pest and diseases simultaneously.

Majority of the farmers are adhering to the recommended time interval between successive pesticide applications. However as more than 80 percent of the farmers surveyed were harvesting their produce within 2 weeks after application of pesticides, the residual effect of pesticides sprayed on crops can reach consumers through the marketing channel.

Also it was found that 68 percent of the sprayer operators or farmers did not adopt any protective measures, while only 36 percent of the farmers who adopt protective measures used hand gloves and covered nose and mouth with a piece of cloth.

Also 46 percent of the farmers had experienced pesticide poisoning. The main causes for not adopting protective measures were inadequate protective clothing available and had experienced that wearing hand gloves and mask was inconvenient while spraying.

The distribution of pesticides is purely done by the private traders in the area. Cost of pesticides to the total cost of production was highest for brinjals and lowest for onions. The most profitable crops in the district were onions and okra.

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