

KEY FIELD PROBLEMS, TRAINING AND RESEARCH NEEDS PREVAIL IN THE VEGETABLE SECTOR OF SRI LANKA

A.G.P. Wickramarathne¹, L.D.B. Suriyagoda², W.A.R.T.
Wickramaarachchi³, T.K. Illangakoon³, R.M.S.C. Ranaweera³ and
D.A.U.D. Devasinghe¹

¹*Department of Plant Sciences, Faculty of Agriculture, Rajarata
University of Sri Lanka, Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka.*

²*Department of Crop Science, Faculty of Agriculture, University of
Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.*

³*Horticultural Crop Research and Development Institute, Department
of Agriculture, Gannoruwa, Sri Lanka.*

Alignment of field problems encountered by the farmers, their training and research needs are crucial for the development of the vegetable sector. Hence, this study aimed to analyse information available in Provincial Technical Working Group reports of the Department of Agriculture between 2012 and 2023 for both seasons and regions in Sri Lanka. Altogether, 462, 793 and 216 number of field problems, training and research needs were recorded, respectively. The frequency among categories of a variable and the associations between variables were subjected to Chi-square analysis in SAS to examine statistical significance. More field problems were reported during *Yala* (61.3%) than *Maha* (38.8%) season ($p < 0.05$), with 30.5% attributed to pests and 26.6% to disease problems ($p > 0.05$). The majority of field problems were reported for crops including beans, bitter gourd, brinjal, and tomatoes, whereas fewer problems were reported in carrots, *innala*, *knol khol*, and *kohila*. Moreover, beans, brinjal, cassava, and yard-long bean had more field problems during *Yala* ($p < 0.05$), while the reported number of field problems of other crops remained comparable in the two seasons ($p > 0.05$). No significant association was found between the incidence of pest and disease problems across the two seasons ($p > 0.05$). More training needs were requested by the extension staff during *Yala* season (62.2%) than *Maha* season (37.8%), highlighting the essential needs in pest management (22%), crop and soil management (18.4%) and protected agriculture (13.9%). A large number of research needs were also recognized during *Yala* (62.5%), particularly emphasizing breeding (20.4%), fertilizer management (17.1%) and pest management (16.2%). Therefore, most of the field problems, training needs and research requirements in the vegetable sector in Sri Lanka are related to pest and disease management and were also season, crop and region-specific.

Keywords: Field Problems, Pest Management, Research Needs, Seasonal Variability, Training Needs