

ADOPTION OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES BY COCONUT GROWERS IN THE KURUNEGALA DISTRICT OF SRI LANKA

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In Sri Lanka, coconut production has been a significant source of direct and indirect livelihoods, offering economic and social benefits. Through decades of research, Sustainable Agricultural Practices (SAPs) have been standardized to achieve profitable and sustainable production in coconut farming. However, studies have yet to be undertaken to investigate the current adoption of SAPs among coconut growers. This study assessed the adoption of SAPs and the challenges encountered in adopting SAPs by commercial coconut growers in the Kurunegala district of Sri Lanka. The primary data were collected through a field survey using a structured questionnaire, with 60 randomly selected coconut growers and analysed using descriptive statistics. Quantitative data analysis was conducted using the SPSS version 22. An Adoption Index (AI) including 14 SAPs was used to determine adoption intensity. None of the growers completely adopted the SAPs. However, the majority (71.7%) adopted moderately, 23.3% mostly adopted, and only 5% adopted slightly. Among the practices, all the respondents adopted proper planting methods and weeding. Additionally, practices such as mulching (85%), irrigation (81.7%), use of husk-pit (53.3%), and inorganic fertilization (53.3%) were adopted by the coconut growers. Integrated production systems (45%), agroforestry (30%), Gliricidia cultivation (25%), organic fertilizer application (20%), use of other soil and moisture management practices such as terrace, SALT, contour drains (8.3%), cover cropping (6.7%) recorded a lower level of adoption. Conversely, the adoption rates for Differential Fertilizer Recommendation (DFR) and biochar were zero. The results highlighted poor knowledge of SAPs (46.7%), high cost (38.3%), unskilled labour (20%), and inadequate access to resources (13.3%) as some challenges to adopting SAPs. Some SAPs are highly adopted, while some are least adopted, primarily due to poor knowledge. Hence, it is crucial to enhance awareness of SAPs to improve productivity, sustainability, and resilience in coconut cultivation in the region.

Keywords: Farmer awareness, Integrated production, Productivity, Sustainability