

Are Low-Income Households Food-Secure in Sri Lanka? A Case of Rathnapura District

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Background: Food security is a key concern in economic and social development. However, it is questionable whether rural low-income households are adequately food secure to lead a healthy life due to problems inherent in the rural sector, a high risk of vulnerability to macroeconomic shocks, and the adverse impact of climate change. Hence, understanding the food security status of low-income households is essential for formulating appropriate policies to achieve the zero-hunger target of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Objective: This study aims to analyse the food security status of low-income rural households and the impact of coping strategies for food insecurity.

Methods: Primary data collected from 400 households, selected using purposive and random sampling methods in the Ayagama Divisional Secretariat Division of the Rathnapura district, were analysed to achieve the objectives. The Household Dietary Diversity Score and the Household Food Insecurity Score were used to measure the food security status.

Results: The results indicate that the majority of households (62%) have a moderately diversified diet, while only 15.6% have an adequately diversified diet. Nearly half of households (48.1%) are food secure, while the remaining households suffer from mild (10.6%), moderate (30.5%), or severe (10.8%) food insecurity. Food insecurity coping strategies negatively affect their health condition and long-term economic stability.

Conclusion: Rural low-income households are not food secure at a satisfactory level, and their food security coping strategies have a negative impact on both their short-term and long-term well-being. It is recommended to provide direct food assistance to ensure short-term food security while implementing appropriate policies to enhance their long-term resilience to food insecurity.

Keywords: Dietary Diversity Score, Food Insecurity Score, Low-income rural households