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Problems Faced by The Rural Paddy and Vegetable Farmers in Sri Lanka (With Special Reference to Kurunegala District)

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Background: Rural paddy and vegetable farmers in Sri Lanka face numerous challenges. Compared to other sectors, the contribution of agriculture to GDP has gradually declined, from 7.5% in 2024, despite a large portion of the workforce (26%) being directly employed in the sector. This situation has resulted in income inequality, poverty, vulnerability, low educational attainment, and a vicious cycle of low income. Addressing these issues requires strategic solutions, where the government's role is particularly crucial. However, limited studies have been conducted to examine the problems faced by Sri Lankan vegetable and paddy farmers.

Objective: To identify the problems faced by rural Paddy and vegetable farmers in Sri Lanka.

Methods: The problem of the current study emphasises the main challenges faced by rural paddy and vegetable farmers. Using the purposive sampling method, 13 experienced farmers were selected from the population, and data were collected through in-depth interviews under the qualitative approach, then analysed using thematic analysis.

Results: Most of the farmers, 10 out of 13, had more than 25 years of experience, and 92% were male, mostly adults. Most of the farmers had education levels only one having completed an Advanced Level qualification. Most farmers, due to their limited qualifications, had chosen farming as a career. However, they engaged in farming with happiness and a sense of freedom. The study found females and youth in farming was comparatively low. Thematic analysis revealed the main problems, including wild animal attacks, water scarcity, climate-related issues, financial constraints, inadequate government and institutional support, price fluctuations, market-related problems, land fragmentation, and high production costs.

Conclusion: Rural farmers face numerous challenges, including poverty, low income, and economic vulnerability. Young, educated females are reluctant to engage in agriculture. Therefore, government support programs should be redesigned to better address the needs of rural farmers.

Keywords: Problems of Farmers, Agriculture, Rural Sector