

UTILIZATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES BY RURAL COMMUNITIES IN DIFFERENT FARMING SYSTEMS IN DRY ZONE (CASE STUDY IN RITIGALA)

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The average household income of the rural people is comparatively low and thus, they are compelled to depend heavily on environmental resources found in their living environment. As a limited number of studies have been published on the extraction of consumption, input, output and storage and stock environmental resources by the rural people; association between farming systems and the extraction of environmental resources and environmental damages associated with the extraction of environmental resources in Sri Lanka are not fully explored. This study attempted to explore those relationships. A field survey was conducted with 120 farmers randomly selected from three *Grama Niladhari* divisions in the periphery of Ritigala Strict Natural Reserve in Anuradhapura District. Results indicated that, the value of environmental resources extracted was around 20% of total annual income of the household. Income from non-farm activities was 44% and agriculture (income from crops, animals, perennials and timber) was 36% leading environmental resources such as clay used in brick making, animal feed and fire wood have accounted respectively for 40%, 19% and 18% of the income of environmental resources extracted. Common lands, home gardens and the village tank were the major sources of environmental resources. Extinction of flora and fauna species, siltation in tank, water scarcity and degradation of forest reserve were the adverse consequences, which were resulted by the over-extraction of natural resources and modern agriculture practices. Thus, it can be concluded that, the value as well as the quantity of environmental resources used is associated with the farming system and the geographical location of the village. Contribution of environmental resources is relatively higher in villages where crop and livestock systems are practiced than paddy cultivation in both seasons.

Keywords: Dry zone, Environmental resources, Farming systems, Ritigala, Rural communities