POTENTIAL TO EXPAND THE CUT FLOWER INDUSTRY AMONG RURAL HOUSEWIVES IN BANDARAWELA, SRI LANKA

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Cut flowers, which are traded worldwide, have always been the main commodity group within global floricultural trade. The demand for cut flowers is increasing in domestic as well as export markets annually while the world supply is insufficient to satisfy the requirement. In Sri Lanka, flowers are grown commercially in the Western, North Western and Central Provinces. However, the current production is very low and less number of farmers involve in producing cut flowers in commercial scale. This study examined the potential in expanding the cut flower industry in order to increase the income of rural housewives in Bandarawela area. The objectives of this study were to identify the resource availability,limitations and perception of housewives in relation to cut flowers production as a commercial venture. A random sample of 250 housewives were selected from five *Grama Niladhari* divisions in Bandarawela area. Socio-economic data were collected using a semi structured, pre-tested questionnaire. A multinomial logistic regression model was fitted to identify the factors affecting the production of cut flowers. The results revealed that 56% of respondents were willing to produce cut flowers with organizational support while another 29% were willing to produce cut flowers without organizational support. Estimated logistic regression modal indicated that perception on cut flower production among housewives increases with education level (OR=7.328), household size (OR=1.947), knowledge (OR=999.99), upland extent (OR=687.82), water availability (OR=2.291), and fertilizer availability (OR=11.701).The study concludes that, cut flower production in Banadarawela area of Sri Lanka could be increased by having effective extension service; educating the housewives about the industry; increasing accessibility to water and fertilizer and increasing the availably of uplands.

Keywords: Cut flowers, Housewives, Multinomial logistic regression, Perception