

RATE OF ADOPTION TO RECOMMENDED CULTURAL PRACTICES BY THE SUGARCANE FARMERS OF SEVENAGALA, SRI LANKA

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Sugarcane holds a significant position as one of the oldest commercially cultivated crop in Sri Lanka. However, the local production is insufficient to fulfill the growing demand and that has been posing a heavy burden on treasury over the years. Among the causative factors behind the low production and low productivity of sugar cane, the high cost of production is prominent. One way of improving production is the adoption to cultural practices evolved through scientific research. Thus, this study was conducted to assess the rate of adoption to cultural practices recommended by the Sugarcane Research Institute. Proportionate random sampling technique was employed to draw a sample of 150 sugarcane growers in rain-fed sector in Sevenagala sugar industry area and data were collected through a questionnaire survey and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Accordingly, majority (98%) of the farmers were male and about 58% of the sampled farmers have more than 20 years of sugarcane farming experience. The results revealed that, the adoption to recommended practices for land preparation and planting of recommended clones were (100%) highly satisfactory among the sampled respondents. Adoption rates of recommendations such as time of application (34.6%) and the quantity of application (20%) of fertilizer were not satisfactory due to the poor knowledge and increasing cost of fertilizer. Moreover, 60% of the growers identified as adopting recommendations and burning diseased plants are beneficial. Cultural practices such as the identification of correct harvesting time (60%) and the rate of adoption to harvesting without fire setting were satisfactory. However, none of the famers have adopted off barring, nematode management and fungicide treatment for setts. Adoption to earthling up (45%), gap filling (16%), trash aligning (76%) and stubble shaving (64%) were considered as important practices by the farmers who are engaged in managing ratoon crops. Poor knowledge on cultural practices and high labour cost were main reasons for the low levels of adoption to improved ratoon management practices. In general, water scarcity, receiving income once a year and labour shortage have influenced heavily on the lower rate of adoption to recommended cultural practices. Thus, increasing access to financial sources and strengthening the existing extension service delivery are recommended as remedies to improve the rate of adoption of recommended practices by the sugarcane farmers of Sevenagala, Sri Lanka.

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