

FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMER PREFERENCE AND MARKET DEMAND OF TRADITIONAL RICE VARIETIES IN KAGALLE DISTRICT

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Though traditional rice prices are closed to three times higher than that of the normal rice, there is still a considerable demand for traditional rice in Kegalle district. There is a selection for the rice variety by different consumers at the market. This study was conducted to determine the factors affecting consumer preferences for selected traditional rice varieties at the markets in Kegalle district and to identify the factors influencing market demand for traditional rice. The primary data were obtained from a sample of 180 rice consumers representing the entire district through structured pre-tested questionnaire. Data were analyzed using binary logistic regression, Friedman test and Factor analysis. The results of logistic regression showed that awareness on traditional rice was the main factor significantly influencing ($p < 0.05$) market demand where other factors such as community, education level, income of household head, disease availability and number of diseased persons in a family are also significantly affecting market demand of traditional rice ($p < 0.05$). Factors such as average income, total family income, age, gender, occupation and household size didn't significantly ($p < 0.05$) affect the market demand of traditional rice. Four factors were identified significantly affecting ($p < 0.05$) consumer preference of traditional rice from scree plot of the Factor analysis. These were namely quality related factors, nutritive values, marketing and cooking factors. The findings also suggested that quality and nutritive factors are the most important factors influencing consumer preference towards traditional rice followed by marketing and cooking factors. Overall result imply that traditional rice has a good perception in general among traditional rice consumers in Kegalle district. However, the less market availability, less awareness of rice consumers are the limitations of traditional rice market. This finding would help stakeholders in the traditional rice industry to understand the underlining pattern of consumer intention and decision towards purchasing and consuming traditional rice in Kegalle district.

Keywords: Consumer preference, Market demand, Traditional rice