

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ON PERFORMANCE OF PINEAPPLE FARMERS LINKED TO EXPORT AND LOCAL MARKETING CHANNELS

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Pineapple (*Ananas comosus* L.) is the largest export fruit crop in Sri Lanka, largely grown in Kurunegala, Kalutara, and Gampaha districts. Pineapple is supplied to the market through different marketing channels. Yet, the beneficial channel to the farmers remains unknown. This study compared the performance of farmers linked to the local and export marketing channel by using a qualitative research design. Constructionism is the theoretical perspective used for the study. Primary data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire and face-to-face interviews from 30 pineapple farmers linked to the local and export markets. Interviews were transcribed and line-by-line open coding was done to identify the themes. Farmer's income, cost of production, access to information, and productivity were compared between the two marketing channels. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were analysed. Results revealed that pineapple farmers linked to the export market receive high income compared to the farmers linked to the local market. Both local- and export-oriented pineapple farmers grapple with high cost of fertilizer, weedicides, fuel and labour comparably. The productivity of both marketing channels was equally low because of the unavailability of fertilizers and agrochemicals due to the government importation ban. Both farmers get information on market prices through mobile phones. Farmers linked to export channels showed higher willingness for the acquisition of technical information on quality production of pineapple. Major weaknesses of the pineapple value chain include; lack of proper grading system, quality control and timely supply. Results suggested that introduction of cost reducing technologies, quality management and grading systems are important to promote pineapple supply to the export market which is more rewarding to pineapple farmers.

Keywords: Export market, Local market, Pineapple farmers, Productivity