

FACTORS AFFECTING PLANTING BEHAVIOR OF BIG ONION FARMERS IN *DAMBULLA* REGION IN SRI LANKA

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Big onion is one of the important cash crops grown in the dry and intermediate zones of Sri Lanka and has become an important item in the diet as a condiment. Big onion has an impact on the national economy in Sri Lanka and every year government spends a large amount of foreign reserves to import big onions to meet the national requirement. To substitute imports, the government has taken many efforts to stimulate local production. However, national big onion production has not increased in the last few years. The area cultivated under big onion were also declined over the past few years. Hence, this study aimed to analyze big onion farmers' planting behavior and to analyze the factors affecting on big onion farmers' decision on expanding the extent of big onion cultivation. We surveyed 80 randomly selected big onion farmers in *Dambulla* area in *Matale* district. More than 50% of the total big onion production in Sri Lanka is cultivated in *Matale* district and *Dambulla* contributed to 77% of total big onion production in the district. According to the binary logistic regression analysis, farmers' education level ($p < 0.05$), farmers' age ($p < 0.05$) and the number of family labor ($p < 0.05$) positively influenced the likelihood of expanding the extent of big-onion cultivation. Results suggest that more educated adult farmers with sufficient household labor are more likely to expand their big onion cultivation. The government, therefore, need to target the right socio-demographic group of farmers to promote big onion production. More importantly, assistance should be directed towards mature, educated farmers with more family labor in their households.

Keywords: Affecting factors, Big onion, Farmers' behavior, Farmers' planting behavior