

Crop changes in the Udawalawa development programme: the shift from paddy cultivation to Other Field Crops (OFCs)

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Udawalawa Development project aimed mainly to develop agriculture within the region. It was planned to provide irrigated lands for landless, increase agricultural production, (vegetable and industrial crops as well as paddy), Increase employment opportunities in the project area, mitigate environmental degradation, contribute to the southern area development and regional economy, alleviate poverty through development of irrigation and drainage systems and social infrastructure, manage irrigation water efficiently through rehabilitation of Udawalawe irrigation system. Each family is provided 0.1 ha of homestead land and 1.0 ha of irrigated paddy land or 0.8 ha of irrigated land for OFCs. The project provides financial assistance for initial establishment at the field of each family. In addition; the project supports farmers for initial land clearing and land preparation for cultivations.

At the beginning of this programme preference was given to paddy cultivation. However at present the importance of paddy cultivation has been significantly dropped. This trend seems to be a distributing at a time of increasing rice price. The main objective of this research is to discover the reasons as to why farmers choose to cultivate other types of crops rather than rice. In addition, the present study also intense to probe in to the socio- economic background of this area. The area of study is located in the New Mayrapura which is under the Left Bank development area of the Udawalawa Development project. Data were collected through questionnaires servers based on a random sample from the land owners. Additional data were also collected from various private and government institution in this area.

The findings of this study revealed that land previously used for paddy cultivation was quickly converted cultivation of OFC s. There seems to be a crop variation in the Left Bank of the Udawalawa reservoir in comparison to the Right Bank. This could be due to the following factors. Less amount of water needed for crops, easy maintains condition, lesser risk, higher yield, profitable market, use of minimum labor force, long term revenue and ability to earn large amount of money fast are the main reasons. Based on these factors it could be concluded that the farmers are successful in their agricultural activities and also are in a sound socio- economic state.

Key words: OFC s, Left bank, Right bank, Irrigation, Homestead

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