

2.14 A contribution of Minor Export Crops on Rural Economy in Sri Lanka (with reference to Rambukkana divisional secretariat)

H.M.Nawarathna,
Department of Economics University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

ABSTRACT

The talk in the town and village today is the sky ricketing cost of living and how the ordinary citizen can face this situation. No one talks about the prices of minor export crops that are freely available and easily grown in the villages. These crops played a vital role in our agrarian economy long before the introduction of plantations such as coffee tea cocoa etc. by the British. The changes brought about by the introduction of a plantation economy had adverse effects to our religion-cultural and social value systems. The Waste Land Tax No. 19 of 1840, the Land Tax Act No. 5 of 1866 and the Grain Tax which was abolished by Governor Arther Havelock in 1892 were some of the Acts that changed the village agrarian economy. The prices of all minor export crops such as pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg, cloves coffee etc; that are grown easily and less labor intensive also fetch high prices to boost the income of the average village farmer. It should be remembered that over sixty percent of our population are rural and live in the villages.

The problem of this study is there any contribution from minor export crops to the up-lift of rural economy in Sri Lanka. The objective of this paper is to identify the reason for low development of rural economy of Sri Lanka, identify the contribution of minor export crop to the upgrade of rural economy of Sri Lanka and identify the solutions for upgrading the rural economy of Sri Lanka. This study has been used both primary and secondary data. Secondary data was collected from secondary sources and primary data was collected from hundred families from Maligathenna Grama Seva Division in Rambukkana. Data was analyzed by using tables, graphs and percentages.

Apart from reduction of the land area available for minor export crops, the available extent is infertile due to soil erosion, fragmentation, haphazard contour drains and other bad land management practices which has led to the degrading of the soil. But according to above data it can be said that there is big contribution from minor export crops to upgrade the rural economy of Sri Lanka. If one can reminiscence the Districts that these crops grow it can be seen that except for the North and East in most other Districts spices are grown. The land has been blocked out and used for construction purposes. In the Districts of Matale, Kandy, Kegalla etc; where rubber cocoa and pepper are grown in abundance the production of these crops have become minimal thus affecting the income levels of the rural masses. What a government could do to improve the village economy is to create avenues to earn more income through agrarian and agricultural practices and get better prices for their village agriculture and minor export products.

Key words: Rural Economy, Minor Export Crops and upgrading the economy