

## **Knowledge and Attitudes of Vegetable Farmers on Organic Farming: A case Study from Anuradhapura District**

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With marked benefits such as environmental protection, conservation of non-renewable resources and ensuring of food quality, Organic Farming (OF) has emerged as one of the key concepts in the field of agriculture. Knowledge and perceptions of farming communities play a vital role in promoting OF in any country, including Sri Lanka. Therefore, the current study was conducted to evaluate the awareness and attitude levels of a vegetable farming community in Anuradhapura. Four Divisional Secretariat Divisions (DSD) in Anuradhapura district were selected as the study areas. A pre-tested interviewer based questionnaire was used to collect the basic socio-economic, demographic, Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of randomly selected vegetable farmers residing in each DSD through face-to-face interviews. Based on the responses, an aggregated index for Knowledge and Attitudes of the farmers were calculated, independently. Chi-square test of association was used to identify different factors that significantly influence the awareness level of farmers on OF. A total of 133 vegetable farmers were interviewed and all of them were males. The age group of 32 -38 was the predominant, followed by > 52 years' group accounting for 39.8% and 31.6% of farmers, respectively. Majority were cultivating in their own lands (66.2%), while 74.5% of the farmers were depending on farming as the major income source. In case of educational levels, O/L (44.4%) and A/L (36.1%) included majority of the farming community, while no one belonged to the illiterate or primary education category. With 46.6% of farmers, the income category of 21, 000 – 30, 000 LKR remained as the most dominant category, followed by 31, 000 – 40, 000 LKR and 11, 000 – 20, 000 LKR categories (27.1% and 22.6%, respectively). Only 8% of the farmers were engaged in OF. In case of the knowledge on OF, majority of the farmers had a “Low” (2.1 – 4.0) knowledge level followed by “Moderate” (4.1 – 6.0) with 63.43% and 20.90%. Only 4.48% of the vegetable farmers had a “High” knowledge on OF, while none had an “Extremely High” knowledge. As depicted by the Chi square test of association, only the residing DSD had a significant association with the knowledge of farmers on OF ( $p < 0.05$  at 95% level of confidence). In case of attitudes, 47.01% of the respondents had a “Moderate” attitude score on OF, followed by “Low” category with 38.81%. Residing DSD, education level, age and income level of the farmer were significantly associated with attitude score on OF, along with the type and nature of farming, in accordance with Chi square statistics ( $p < 0.05$  at 95% level of confidence). Therefore, above the government and other entities should design their awareness programmes based on above influential factors to promote OF within the Anuradhapura District.

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