

PADDY LAND MANAGEMENT IN AMPARA DISTRICT

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Introduction

Sri Lanka is a country depends on paddy cultivation for food production, employment and rural livelihood for centuries. Ampara district is one of a major contributor in paddy production and recognized for commercial paddy cultivation in Sri Lanka. More than 10% of Sri Lankan paddy is produced by Ampara district and 46% of the people depend on paddy sector for direct and indirect employment in the district (DCS,2010). An average yield of the paddy lands is almost stagnant from 1980s and fluctuates in the recent past (Kikuchi, 1999). Land fragmentation, Tenure cultivation, incentive cultivation due to over population are induce land degradation which causes for decline in land fertility and yield of agricultural lands (Daniel, 1994). Most of the farmers from the area reports that they face severe lost in their cultivation not only by lower paddy price but also by poor yield from the farm. Loss in the paddy cultivation may leads to poverty, unemployment, poor capital formation and decline in business sector in the region. Proper land management is one of a good practice help to improve in both high yield and land fertility.

Objectives

The land used for paddy cultivation in the district is old and being used for many decades. Managing farm land is one of good practices in order to get high yield in the farm. Particularly maintaining the fertility of the paddy land is the basic factor determines the yield of the land. There are many factors contribute in the decline of yield in the field. Poor land management attitude of Tenure cultivators causes land degradation which leads to poor yield (UNDP, 1995). Paddy land management activities in relation with higher yield were not given proper attention by researchers in the past in the district. This study is an attempt to analyze the issues related with loses in paddy production due to poor management of paddy farms of the region. Major Objective of the study is to find the status of paddy land management and to give guidance for proper land management practices in order to improve the yield in paddy cultivation.

Method

This study mainly depends on primary data collected from farmers, cultivation officers, agricultural instructors were analyzed to get the findings for the study. A questionnaire was issued among randomly selected farmers from different agrarian centers of the district. 243 samples were randomly selected from total farmers approximately 1% of the population. In addition to these Officers from agrarian centers, farmer community leaders, land lords were interviewed to collect further information to find land management practice. Only Tamil speaking farmers were selected to issue questionnaire in order to collect information. The questionnaire consist questions mainly on the paddy land management practices, annual yield, fallow period between two sessions, utilization of chemical fertilizer and pesticides, awareness about fertility management and other relevant matters related with research topic. Collected data was analyzed with in mathematical tools using charts and graph in order to get the result.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study finds that the Trend of the yield from selected paddy lands being fluctuated for last twenty seasons and expected yield was not achieved in the land due to poor and inappropriate paddy land management in the area. There are many factors has contributed for poor farm management. Most of the famers were not aware of land management and not given interest in land management. Majority of the farmers only concentrate in the short term high yield rather than sustainability of land fertility of paddy land in future. Around 62% of the farmers have no awareness regarding fertility management. Almost all the farmers utilize more chemical fertilizer and agro chemical which contribute to land degradation beyond the prescribed level by agricultural instructors. According to the interview with agricultural officers that the mono cropping, the long run practice of only paddy cultivation in the land is one of the factors contributes in decline of land fertility. Utilization of composed fertilizer which helps to manage the land fertility is very poor and farmers report regarding this that the availability of composed fertilizer in the area is not adequate to meet the needs of the farmers. 84 % of farmers reported that they have no practice of using composed fertilizer and changing crops in cultivation. It has been identified that the frequent soil testing practice in their paddy lands among the farmers is very rare and farmers have no knowledge in this regard. Only 1.6% of the farmers have done soil testing long ago. The fallow period between two cultivation seasons respectively Maha and Yala is very low. There is culture that the farmers usually prepare their land soon after the harvest without proving a fallow period which helps the land to renew the fertility naturally. More than 90% of the farmers burn the straw instead of using for fertilizer in the land. In brief, the usage and application of good practices which help to land fertility management are rare and majority of the farmers are ignorant in this regard.

The study recommends proper awareness on land management by agriculture instructors to farmers occasionally in order to maintaining land fertility. Selecting some paddy lands as a model farms in the area for land management also can help to introduce good practices in paddy land management. Using composed fertilizer, increasing the duration of fallow period, reducing over use of chemicals are some the good practices can be adopted in the cultivation in order to maintain land fertility. Instruction on new sustainable paddy cultivation to farmers with the assistance of government agriculture service sector is a helpful way to protect the farm lands and farmers for sustainable paddy cultivation.

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