

Food Statistics of Sri Lanka: Issues in a Market Economy

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In contrast to the subsistent economies, the most of food consumers in modern societies including in Sri Lanka, do not produce food stuff at all and even food producers do not produce all what they consume. Sri Lankans depend on national and international food supply sources to satisfy their requirements. Issues in food statistics hamper the food production, processing, marketing and consumption in the country. High fluctuation of food prices is one of the major issues faced by all parties involved with the food sector due to lack of reliable and real time information for the food cultivators. The cultivators simply follow the price signals of the previous season without knowing the extent of total land under different crops in the country during the ongoing season. As a result of that, prices of over supplied crops bring to the rock bottom while the prices of under supplied crops are sky rocketing causing difficulties to both consumers and producers. This has been a common and long standing practice for highly perishable food items such as vegetable and fruits. The situation aggravates further in an environment where the extremely limited food processing facilities are available and virtually protected domestic food market from the international suppliers. The small producers are almost checked by quality, quantity, and continuity problems of their products, so that global buyers are absent in the market to cushion the low price even during an over supplied period. Similarly, information of a limited number of food items is available even though there are plenty of other items which are crucial in food supply and consumption of the country. There are a number of complementary and substitution food items though their statistics are not available. In addition to that, food production and consumption statistics are mismatching for many instances. A number of different organizations collect information for different purposes. There is no proper coordination among these organizations, so that decisions are taken on either wrong or incomplete information. Availability of reliable and real-time information is essential to maintain the price stability and food security of a country.

Key words: Food Production, Food Consumption, Price Fluctuation, Food Marketing.