

MARKET RESPONSIVENESS OF CHILLIE PRODUCERS IN THE MAHAWELI ECONOMY: A CASE STUDY OF MEEGALEWA.

The concept of marketing has changed from its traditional production orientation towards market orientation where the need for "an adaptation of the production facility to the market" has become vital to serve consumer demands profitably. The underlying premise of this approach is that the producers are in a position to read market signals correctly, and adjust their production processes in order to satisfy consumer demands. In short, the producer should be capable of organizing and co-coordinating the entire production process; producer margins arising from these operations reflect this capability.

This study attempts to evaluate the adequacy and validity of the above approach to explain the process of agricultural production and marketing in a Mahaweli village. The study employed the questionnaire interview technique alongside with observation to elicit information on the production and marketing process at producer levels.

The findings contradicted the basic assumptions of this approach with respect to production and marketing of agricultural commodities such as Chillies. It revealed that the village setting at Meegalewa does not provide conditions necessary for chillie producers to take control of the production process as they have been compelled to follow agricultural plans prepared by the Mahaweli Authority which determine the type of crops and time schedules therein. They could neither co-ordinate the production process nor make timely adjustments as they have been tied to cultivation plans and release of water which depended on strict engineering criteria. It was also found that the market signals were hardly accessible to them and even the information available was mostly inconsistent. These factors have prevented the settler farmers from adapting their production processes, schedules and activities as expected. The final outcome has been the production of what the Mahaweli Authority specifies even though these directives fail to ensure sufficient income to the settler farmers.

References:

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