

## Factors Affecting Farmers' Decision in Crop Diversification: The Case of Kilinochchi District, Sri Lanka

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Most of the low lands are used for paddy cultivation in the dry zone of Sri Lanka. Irrigating the paddy in a well-draining soil is an inefficient method of water usage. There is an opportunity to cultivate other field crops in low lands in order to utilize the limited resources efficiently. However, due to many reasons, farmers do not grow other field crops. This study was carried out to assess the degree of crop diversification in the paddy land and the factors affecting the farmers' decisions on crop diversification practices during the dry seasons in the Kilinochchi Iranamadu area of Northern part of Sri Lanka. A two-stage stratified random sampling design was used in this study to make representative samples of the head and tail end farmers. Out of twenty farmers' organizations in Iranamadu low land area, two organizations were selected randomly, one from the head end and the other one from the tail end. Within each farmer's organization a sample of twenty-five farmers were selected ( $n = 50$ ). The Chi-square results revealed that the socio-demographic characteristics of farmers do not have any significant association with the crop diversification activities, particularly the number of other field crops grown by the farmers. However, the size of land used for cultivation and the ownership of land had a significant association with the number of crops that are being grown by farmers as other field crops. The farmers who use above 10 acres of land for cultivation and tenant farmers grow a greater number of other field crops than the farmers who cultivate in their own land. Mung bean and cowpea were the most popular crops among the farmers in the study area. There was a significant difference between the head and tail end farmers in the cultivation of Mung bean and cowpea. The crop diversification may have a positive impact on livelihood of the rural farmers. This study revealed that there is a need to assist farmers in their decision making in terms of crop diversification and its importance.

**Keywords:** Crop diversification, field crops, irrigation, low land paddy