

Pre and Post-Harvest Losses of Cashew (*Anacardium occidentale* L.) in Batticaloa District, Sri Lanka; Preliminary Investigation of the Causes

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The cashew nut industry in has great economic importance in the developing countries like Sri Lanka, in the local and global market. However, the market price per kilogramme of the nuts reveals, the demand for cashew nut and the gap between need and the production. Though, Batticaloa is one of the major districts for cashew production in Sri Lanka, no studies have been undertaken to estimate the postharvest losses and the causes of such losses. Hence, a survey was conducted to find out the possible reasons for pre and post-harvest losses of cashew nut and apple in Batticaloa district. The survey was conducted in five Divisional Secretariat (DS) with 95 individual questionnaires. The semi-structured questionnaires were carried out through opportunistic non-random sampling (Convenience sampling) method, interviewing cashew farmers, cashew nut and apple sellers. Key informant interviews and field verification were also conducted during this study. Descriptive statistics and the one- way ANOVA were used to analyse the data, statistically. The study revealed that the average production of cashew nut/tree/year is 8.63 kg. The unorganized orchards, poor cultural practices, old heterogeneous population of trees and poor or low yielding varieties are some of the major reasons for poor yield. In addition, 15 % of loss occurs due to the natural enemies, including parrots, bats, *etc.* Further, the results showed that poor harvesting, drying and storing practices also contribute to the postharvest losses. The survey revealed that majority of the farmers discard the cashew apple after collecting the nuts. Hence, awareness on management of cashew plantations, introduction of improved varieties and proper pre and post-harvesting practices are some of the vital aspects to enhance the cashew industry. In addition, improve the value-added products of cashew apple could also lead to have better economic returns to the local industries.

Keywords: Cashew Nut and Apple, Pre and postharvest management practices, Value-added products