EVALUATING THE IMPACTS OF COVID – 19 PANDEMIC ON THE PRODUCTION OF OTHER FIELD CROPS (OFCs) IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to evaluate the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the production statistics of other field crops (OFCs) in Sri Lanka and to examine whether the production statistics of OFCs show this perceived impact during *Yala* (2020) and *Maha* (2020/21) seasons. The data on extent of cultivation and total production of 15 OFCs at national scale were collected from the database of the Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka. The data were compared to the pre-pandemic, long-term average (2001-2019) of the extent of cultivation and production of OFCs during both seasons. Results showed that, the extent of cultivation and production were highly decreased for potato, sweet potato and big onion, thus highlighting the vulnerability of these crops to COVID-19. Meanwhile, maize, cowpea, black gram, mung bean, ground nut, turmeric and ginger showed substantial increase in the extent of cultivation and production, hence demonstrated resilience to the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, farmers began to cultivate turmeric and ginger during the *Yala* season in 2020. Promotional and awareness programs to enhance the local production of OFCs might have contributed to achieve the increased local production of these crops, compared to the pre-pandemic years. Furthermore, this study highlights the possibility of using the national statistics to visualize the impacts of a large-scale pandemic on the production of OFCs in Sri Lanka. Future studies will be employed with advanced statistical techniques to isolate the impacts of this pandemic in crop production.

Keywords: *COVID-19, national statistics, field crops, resilience, vulnerability*

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