

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, SRI LANKA (1981)

Instituted under the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Research, the Department of Agriculture is responsible for the development and dissemination of new technology for the small farm sector in Sri Lanka. This responsibility specifically involves the development of new technology within the food crops sector.

The Department of Agriculture through a process of research and extension, coupled with an organized programme dealing with education and training of both officials and farmers, has been the catalytic agent responsible for increasing the production of agricultural crops in the country.

The Department consists of six technical divisions: Research, Extension, Education & Training, Farms & Horticulture, Agricultural Economics and Projects and the Botanical Gardens. The supporting divisions are Administration, Accounts and Engineering.

Indicated briefly below are the main responsibilities and the functions of the different divisions.

1. Division of Research

The generation of new technology is the responsibility of the Research Division while the diffusion of improved practices and planting material is the function of the other Divisions.

1.1 Arable Crops: Arable crops in which research is conducted are:

- (i) Rice—the staple food;
- (ii) Coarse grains—maize, millets, wheat and triticales;
- (iii) Roots and tubers—potato, cassava, sweet potato, dioscoreas, tannias and *Plectranthus tuberosus*
- (iv) Grain legumes—mung, cowpea, blackgram, soyabean, pigeon pea and chickpea;
- (v) Condiments—chilli, onion, garlic, tumeric, ginger, fenugreek, cumin, fennel and coriander.
- (iv) Agroindustrial crops—cotton, kenaf, ground nut, sesame, castor, sunflower, and safflower;
- (vii) Horticultural crops—vegetables, fruits and cut flowers.

- 1.2 The Research Division, based at Peradeniya, is responsible for the formulation of the overall national research strategy in respect of these crops, including priorities, organizational structures, staff development, and linkages with International Research Institutes and Project Agencies.

Current linkages are with (i) International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) (ii) International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT) (iii) International Potato Centre (CIP) (iv) International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) (v) International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and (vi) Asian Vegetable Research and Development Centre, (AVRDC), (vii) SL-UN Agricultural Extension and Adaptive Research Project (viii) SL-FAO Horticulture Development Project (ix) IDRC Root Crops Development Project and (x) Canada International Development Agency.

1.3 Regional Research

Research is conducted primarily on a regional basis. There are three main climatic zones; wet zone (1.5 m ha), dry zone, (4.1m ha) and intermediate zone (0.8m ha) receiving a mean annual rainfall of 2250-5000 mm, 875-1500 mm and 1500-2250 mm respectively.

These three zones have been further sub-divided for research purposes into 8 major agro-ecological regions on the basis of variations in climate, relief and soils.

1.4 Regional Research Centres

There are 8 Regional Research Centres, 4 special Research Centres and 12 Associated Experimental Stations as given below:

(a) Regional Research Centres	Experimental Stations
(i) Kilinochchi (Northern Dry Zone)	(i) Thirunelvely (ii) Paranthan (iii) Murunkan
(ii) Maha Illuppallama (Central Dry Zone)	
(iii) Karadiyan Aru (Eastern Dry Zone)	
(iv) Angunakolapelessa (Southern Dry Zone)	(i) Ambalantota

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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| (v) Makandura
(Low Country
Intermediate Zone) | (i) Wanathavillu
(ii) Kalpitiya |
| (vi) Bandarawela
(Up country
Intermediate Zone) | (i) Rahangala
(ii) Moneragala
(iii) Bibile |
| (vii) Gannoruwa
(Mid country Wet Zone) | (i) Pussellawa |
| (viii) Bombuwela
(Low country Wet Zone) | (i) Labuduwa
(ii) Bentota |
- (b) **Special Research Centres**
- (i) Batalagoda for Rice Breeding and Agronomy.
 - (ii) Sita Eliya for Potatoes and Vegetables.
 - (iii) Gira Andura Kotte for Mahaweli System C.
 - (iv) Aralanganwila for Mahaweli System B.
- (c) **The Land and Water Use and Soil Conservation Divisions** are two other units based at Peradeniya, which come under the Division of Research.

1.5 Agricultural Extension and Adaptive Research

In order that on-station research may not be divorced from the practical problems of farmers, it is very essential that close links be established both with farmers and the extension personnel of the Department of Agriculture who are finally responsible for disseminating improved technology at the rural level.

This very necessary link has been made possible by the establishment of the Agricultural Extension and Adaptive Research Programme. In this programme, research officers have the opportunity to meet and discuss in Regional Technical Working Groups (RTWG) the pre-seasonal cultivation programmes biannually with officers from the Extension, Education and Training, and Farms & Horticultural Divisions.

As island-wide Adaptive Research Programme has also been established whereby multi-disciplinary research teams are given the opportunity to study farmers' problems at first hand and relate them to on-station research findings when applied to their fields.

It is expected that these innovations will bring about a more meaningful research in the future.

2.0 Division of Extension

The Extension Division of the Department employs a staff of field officers at district, segment and field levels. The 24 district programmes are co-ordinated by the Assistant Directors of Agriculture in the districts. Officers within the division are trained in the latest technologies dealing with food crops and they in turn disseminate the information to the farmers within their districts.

Since 1980, the activities of the Extension division have been organized within the framework of the Training and Visit System (T & V) of the Adaptive Research and Extension Project funded by the World Bank. The training component is undertaken by the Education & Training Division while the visits by the extension staff to the farmers have been systematized and scheduled in such a manner that farmers are visited on a fixed date regularly every fortnight. On these visits the field level extension staff carries specific technical information relating to the farming operations on which the farmers are engaged during that particular time. The information relates specifically to the crops that are commonly grown in that district for the particular season. For ease of communication one farmer is selected as a contact farmer within a certain area to help in organizing the groups. Presently there are within the country approximately 54,000 such contact farmers.

There is also an established interaction between the Extension and Research Divisions via the Regional Technical Working Groups (RTWG). At these meetings, (held twice a year) the field level problems are highlighted by extension staff and discussed with both the Research and Education Divisions. Consensus is reached as to the priorities for research in a particular region at these meetings. Additionally, research-extension dialogues as well as field days are organized regularly.

3.0 Division of Education and Training

The Division of Education & Training is responsible for pre-service training, in-service training of extension staff as well as institutional vocational training in the country. New technology that is developed by the Research Division of the Department is incorporated into these training programmes.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

At present, there are three Schools of Agriculture headed by Assistant Directors of Agriculture with a total annual intake of about 280-300 students following a two year diploma course. Additionally, there exist six Regional Training Centres (In-service Training Institutes) attached to each of the Regional Research Stations also headed by Assistant Directors of Agriculture. Two additional Regional Training Centres should be functional by end of 1983. The training programmes in these centres are geared to provide a strong inservice support for both the Extension Officers in the field as well as Subject Matter Officers and others in specialist-disciplines.

The Division also has sixteen Vocational Training Centres which provide training to a large number of farmers, out of school youths and voluntary organizations. The Division is responsible for the development and production of communication and training aids as well as for radio programmes and films of general motivatory influence.

4.0 Division of Farms and Horticulture

The main responsibility of this division is the provision of improved seed and planting material to farmers. It produces and distributes quality certified seed to the farmers as well as good planting material for the cultivation of horticultural and other tree crops. The division is also responsible for the seed certification service of a wide range of crops.

The division co-ordinates the activities of a total of thirty five seed farms. The regional activities of the farms and planting materials division are co-ordinated by Assistant Directors of Agriculture who overlook the production programmes in the different farms. The extent cultivated in the different farms under the division amounts to 4,000 ha. In crops like rice, potatoes, chillies, onions and grain legumes there is a strong component of private seed farm sector participation which undertakes contract cultivation to supplement the seed produced in government farms.

5.0 Division of Agricultural Economics and Projects

This division is mainly responsible for the collection and analysis of agricultural statistics in the food crops sector. Data obtained from individual districts in the country on the crop production situation are analysed to provide indicatory trends in production of these crops. Regional Economists, attached to the Regional Research Centres, work in collaboration with research and extension personnel.

The division also regularly undertakes surveys relating to the cost of cultivation of different crops. These cost figures are used in calculating the floor prices guaranteed by the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Research for certain crops. The analysis of the cost data also indicates the trends in price fluctuation of both in-puts and out-puts as well as changes in the in-put levels.

The division is responsible for monitoring the Agricultural Extension and Adaptive Research Program and co-ordinating the activities of all foreign funded projects within the Department of Agriculture.

6.0 Division of Botanical Gardens

This division is responsible for the maintenance of the Botanic Gardens at Peradeniya, Hakgala and Henarathgoda and the Medicinal Herb Garden at Ganewatte. It also maintains the gardens of His Excellency the President, The Honourable Prime Minister, and the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall. An important facet of this Division's activities is the research thrust it has given to the development of cutflowers such as anthuriums and orchids, foliage and ornamental plants.

7.0 Supporting Divisions

In addition to the six technical divisions there exist the supporting divisions of Finance and Administration which coordinate all the financial and administrative functions within the department.

The Civil Engineering Division is responsible for the construction and maintenance of the buildings within the department.

The Mechanical Engineering division is responsible for the maintenance of the Workshops: it also conducts the research programme pertaining to farm mechanization, specially in respect of small implements.

8.0 Staff

The total staff component within the Department of Agriculture is approximately 17,000. The breakdown of the staff as at end of 1981 is as follows:

1. Staff Grades	
(Director, Deputies, Agric. Officers, Research Officers, Engineers, Administrative Staff)	491
2. Technical Grades	
(Agricultural Instructors, Research Assistants, Extension Aides and others)	4,784
3. Engineering Staff	1,102
4. Clerical & other Office Employees	897
5. Labour	9,860
TOTAL	17,134