

A Survey on Pesticide use and Safety Practices among Farmers in Uva Province of Sri Lanka

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Majority of the rural population in Sri Lanka are engaged in agriculture and make a significant contribution to the national economy. Use of pesticides has become important in gaining maximum agricultural yield ensuring the plant protection. But the indiscriminate usage and improper handling of pesticides have caused various health risks among farming communities. Since the Uva province of Sri Lanka has been recognized as one of the provinces with a heavy usage of pesticides, a survey-based study was carried out to enquire the knowledge and habit of pesticide usage of the farmers in the area. The questionnaire survey was conducted using stratified random sampling technique with 227 respondents in total. Results indicated that 92.07% of interviewed farmers are using pesticides in their agricultural practices whilst 65.55% of them are handling more than one pesticide on a working day. Out of the farmers who use pesticides, 27.27% were identified to exceed the recommended dose. Only 32.54% are using head covers, 55.02% are using gloves, 53.11% are using masks, 56.94% are wearing long-sleeved shirts, 3.83% are using safety boots, 32.54% are practicing the proper way of applying pesticides by walking perpendicular to the wind direction during pesticide application. 52.15% of them store mixed pesticides in their houses. According to above findings, most of the farmers in Uva province do not adhere to the recommended safety practices during pesticide handling and application. Hence, they are prone to have potential health risks posed by pesticides due to the lack of knowledge on proper use, handling and safety application of pesticides. This study revealed the importance of having proper awareness programmes among farmers to reduce the potential hazards involved in the usage of pesticides.

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