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Revitalization of citronella Industry in the Southern Region

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Citronella was one of the most important industrial crops grown by village farmers in the southern of Sri Lanka. Present total local production and export volume have been declined seriously, resulting abundance of citronella cultivations. But Ceylon citronella has comparatively higher world market price than Java and China citronella. The objectives of the study were to examine the present situation of citronella industry; to identify factors affecting for the declining of production and exports and to investigate suggestions and remedial measures for revitalization of citronella industry. The study was mainly based on primary data collected by field survey from Hambantota and Ratnapura districts. Simple Random Sampling was used to select thirty cultivators and thirty distillery owners. The study has revealed that the average farm land extent is about two to less than four acre consisting small and medium scale farmers. Majority of the cultivations are above twenty years old. The citronella industry is becoming more dependent on cultural practices. However, weeding is the only important cultural practice adopted by farmers and no one use fertilizers. The yield variation between major growing areas is found to be very high (Hambantota-10 kg/Ac/harvest, Ratnapura-30kg/Ac/harvest). Present marketing channel of citronella industry mainly consists with growers, distillery owners (collectors) and exporters. Net Present Value (36 684) and B/C ratio (2.508) were higher in Ratnapura district showing more benefits than other growing areas. Uneconomic yield, labour unavailability and insufficient raw materials supply for oil distillation were main factors affecting the declining of production and exports in the point of view of cultivators, processors and exporters. Introduction of fertilizer subsidy scheme, establishment of village level planting material nurseries, encourage farmers to practice systematic replanting process, introduction of high performing distillery plants, introduction of new process to purchase oil based on quality, expansion of extension services and development of infrastructure facilities are suggestions for the revitalization of citronella industry in the southern region.

Keywords: Citronella, Cultivators, Distillery owners, Exports, Uneconomic yield