

AN ANALYSIS OF RURAL MARKETS IN EASTERN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted in rural markets in the eastern province (Ampara and Batticaloa districts) to understand the operation of rural markets and the behavioral pattern of rural consumers visiting these markets. A few rural markets were purposively selected and a survey was done by randomly selecting 190 consumer buyers visiting the rural markets on a market day, using a structured questionnaire.

Two types of rural markets (Polas) were identified; periodic and non-periodic operate in the districts, with the later being more in numbers. Most of the markets were located close to the main road and were accessible easily. Consumers travelled between 0.5 to 1.8 km to reach a market, either by bicycle or on foot. The “consumer basket” on market day contained vegetables, dry fish, fish, rice and other essentials. On average a consumer in the Ampara district spends RS.354 on a market day, while this figure was Rs.465 in Batticaloa district. About 20% of the expenses were to buy vegetables and dry provisions and close to 15% on rice.

Market buyers were mainly consumers, due to an absence of trader and wholesale buyers. Consumers visited the markets once a week or twice a week (90%). They visited other rural markets too, due to non-availability of goods needed, higher prices and bargaining not possible. Most of the consumers were unaware of prices prevailing at nearby markets, while others got price information by visiting other markets or from friends/relatives. The quantity of goods purchased by consumers did not differ between the two districts.

Key words : rural market, periodic and non-periodic, consumers, expenditure, price information.