

A Study on Income Generating Agroprocessing activities of Women in Batticaloa District.

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SUMMARY

Agroprocessing activities of rural households have been a traditional venture of women in Sri Lanka for many generations, and very little research has been done to identify constraints and issues for policy formulation.

This study aimed at identifying the income generating agroprocessing activities of women in Batticaloa District, their socioeconomic conditions, level of women's participation, income levels generated, problems encountered by women and policy implications.

Initially a RRA was carried out to identify the different types of agroprocessing activities and their location in the district. Later a structured questionnaire was used to collect in-depth information regarding each different agroprocessing activity.

Eight different types of agroprocessing activities were identified viz. Cashew Processing, Curd Making, Rice flakes Production, Roasted Rice flour Production, Dry fish production & "Pan" Processing. Most of these were mainly done by women on a part time basis, except for cashew processing, rice flakes and curd production which were full - time work. Some of this activities were done by widowed women (eg: Rice flakes production, rice pounding).

The socioeconomic condition of women involved varied much among the eight different activities. The average age of women involved varied between 38 to 50 years and the family size ranged from 3 to 5 persons / household. In some activities the women involved were illiterate (50 to 70%), while in other activities they had about 6 to 8 years of education. Most of the women's involved on the average had 10 years experience, while a few had around 20 years, but none had undergone any formal training programs related to their activity.

The average income obtained by women from these activities ranged from Rs.1,650 to Rs.2,900 per month. The contribution of women's income towards total household income varied from 53% to 70% per month. Major problems faced by women involved were seasonality of activity, lack of capital & access to formal credit sources, marketing difficulties and health hazards.

Agroprocessing activities of women is not strongly supported by Government and NGO's at the village level. There is a need to rectify this either through Government institutions or NGO's involvement by providing training, facilitating access to credit from Banks, health menaces and assistance in marketing processed products.