AGRICULTURE

A BUMPER PADDY HARVEST-MAHA 1984/85

Paddy production in the Maha season, 1984/85 is estimated at 1.75 million metric tons or 84 million bushels by the Census and Statistics Department. This indicates a marked increase of 20 percent or 398,000 metric tons over the previous Maha production of 1.06 million metric tons which was the lowest production ever recorded for a Maha season after 1971. However, the 1984/85 Maha production indicates a decrease of 2 percent or 35,000 metric tons compared to the 1982/83 Maha production of 1.79 million metric tons the highest production ever achieved in a Maha season. Paddy production recorded in Maha 1984/85 almost achieved the production target of 84 million bushels or 1,895,122 metric tons set for the season by the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Research.

The highest paddy production of 0.27 million metric tons was recorded from the Kurunegala District which has the largest extent under paddy cultivation. Amparai district accounted for the second highest production of 0.17 million metric tons, closely followed by Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura districts producing 0.14 and 0.13 million metric tons respectively.

The increase in paddy production in Maha 1984/85 was the combined result of the increase in the extent harvested as well as increase in the average yield per hectare. The average yield is estimated at 65 bushels per nett acre or 3,498 kgs per hectare which shows a considerable increase of 15 percent when compared to the rather low average yield of 3,031 kgs per hectare in the previous Maha, which suffered a severe setback due to the heavy rains and floods that occured during the season. This increase in average yield is recorded in all paddy producing areas; a 19 percent increase in major irrigation areas, 13 percent increase in minor irrigation areas and 10 percent increase in rainfed areas when compared with that of the previous Maha season. The highest yield during this season, 4,874 kgs per nett hectare is recorded from Polonnaruwa district.

While in the Maha 1984/85 too in wet zone areas particularly in the Western and Southern provinces the crop was affected to a considerable extent by the untimely rains. Had this heavy rain fall not occured the average yield in the season would have further increased and a higher production would have been recorded. However, the average yield in Maha 1984/85 is still 4 percent lower than the average yield of 3,638 kgs. in Maha 1982/83.

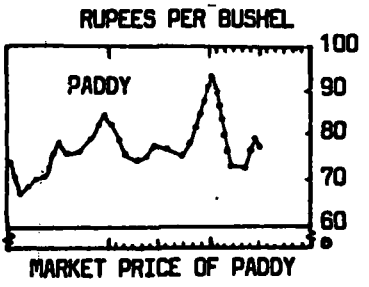
The production in the Northen and Eastern provinces appears to have been slightly affected by the ethnic disturbances. Particularly the distribution of inputs such as fertilizer in these provinces were affected by the disturbed conditions.

During the Maha season 85 the total gross extent harvested decreased by 6 percent to 569,000 hectares while the total gross extetn sewn increased by 10 percent to 559,000 hecatres compared to that of the previous Maha season. The increase in harvested area is mainly a result of a considerably lower extent of crop failure occuring in Maha 1984/85. The extent of crop failure - the difference between sewn and harvested extents in Maha 1984/85 was only 1.7 percent which is quite low compared to the considerably high rate of 16 percent in the previous Maha season as well as the average figure of 7 percent during the last few years. Considering the gross harvested area during Maha 1984/85 in terms of types of irrigation, it is observed that about 42 percent, 23 percent and 35 percent of the total area was cultivated in major irrigated, minor irrigated and

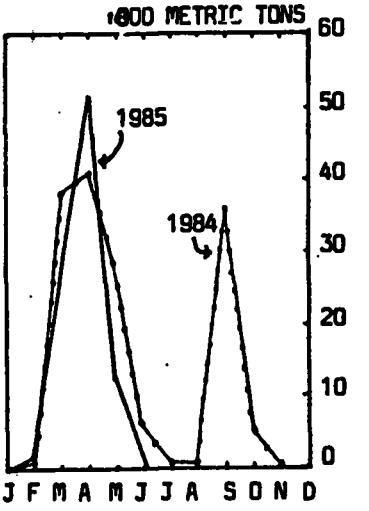
PRODUCTION, AVERAGE YIELD, EXTENT SOWN, EXTENT HARVESTED AND ISSUE OF FERTILIZER AND INSTITUTIONAL CREDIT IN PADDY SECTOR DURING THE MAHA SEASON, 1984/85

Item	Unit	1982/83			1983/84			1984/85
		Maha 82/83	Yala 1983	Total 1983	Maha 83/84	Yala 1984	Total 1984	Maha 84/85
1. Production	'000 M.Tons	1,786	698	2,484	1,353	1,060	2,413	1,751
2. Average yield per hectare	Kgs.	3,638	3,603	3,606	3,031	3,146	3,146	3,076
3. Net extent harvested	'000 Hectares	495	194	689	451	336	787	498
4. Gross extent harvested	'000 Hectares	558	219	777	509	377	886	559
5. Gross extent sown	'000 Hectares	583	241	824	606	384	990	569
6. Fertilizer issues	'000 M.Tons	108	57	165	113	72	185	120
7. Institutional credit granted	Rs Million	124	29	153	136	40	176	N.A.

Sources: *Department of Census and Statistics*
Ministry of Agricultural Development and Research



MARKET PRICE OF PADDY



PADDY PURCHASES
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rainfed areas respectively. Naturally the area under major irrigation records the lowest ratio of 0.4 percent crop failure, followed by the area under minor irrigation with 2.6 percent crop failure and rainfed area with the highest ratio of 2.5 percent crop failure.

Fertilizer issues to the paddy sector during the Maha season 1984/85 is registered at 120,000 metric tons by the National Fertilizer Secretariat. It shows a 7 percent or 6,200 metric tons increase in fertilizer issued to the paddy sector compared to that of the previous Maha season. The volume of fertilizer used per hectare during the season also indicate a 11 percent increase over the previous Maha season. The increase in fertilizer uses in the paddy sector was influenced both by the stability in prices of the main fertilizer mixtures used in the paddy sector and the considerably favourable weather conditions which prevailed during the season.

Institutional loans given to the paddy sector seem to have dropped. For instance, the amount of loans issued for paddy cultivation by the People's Bank, a main institutional credit supplier to the paddy sector dropped about 45 percent to Rs 35.4 million compared to the previous Maha season amount of Rs 65.9 million. According to the recent studies on the subject, existing institutional cultivation loan schemes have not had a major impact in the paddy sector. While the Banks faced the problem of a large number of defaulters on the one hand, on the other credit has not contributed towards the increase of production as expected due to several weaknesses in the credit schemes themselves. These are now being remedied as now there is an increasing interest towards reorganisation of the institutional cultivation loan scheme.

Sri Lanka is now likely to reach the level of self-sufficiency in rice. The Agricultural Ministry has targetted for a production of 90 million bushels in Maha 1985/86. However, this is occuring in a situation where people are consuming a large amount of imported wheat flour. (Sri Lanka annually consumes about 450,000 metric tons of wheat flour which is approximately equivalent to a one third of its annual rice consumption of 1,400,000 metric tons). Therefore with the increase of paddy production in the future it is important to encourage people as far as possible to consume more rice and less wheat flour. If consumer preference is to be directed towards rice flour from wheat flour, quality rice flour should be made available in the market at reasonable prices compared with the available wheat flour. In this process of introducing a very palatable and good quality rice flour which can be sold at a competitive price, a vital role would have to be played by the food scientists.