

**EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PEPPER PLANT DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM
THROUGH REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF SURVIVAL RATES IN SRI LANKA**

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Black Pepper (*Piper nigrum*, Piperaceae) is an important commodity in international trade, significantly contributing to the export revenues of major producers such as Vietnam, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka. Known as the "king of spices", it is one of the most widely used spices in the world, valued for its pungency, aroma, and spicy flavour. In Sri Lanka, pepper is cultivated in the wet and intermediate zones and has made a significant contribution to the country's export income. The Department of Export Agriculture plays a vital role in promoting pepper cultivation through various programs. This study evaluated the effectiveness of the new cultivation program introduced and assessed the production rates in both wet and dry zones. A survey was conducted to analyse the survival rate of pepper plants distributed in 2022 across 15 districts, using a stratified random sampling method to select fields. Data were collected to determine the survival percentage of plants and the yield in metric tons across districts. The results revealed significant variability in survival rates, with Galle achieving the highest rate at 99.65%, followed by Kalutara at 95.73% and Ratnapura at 93.43%. Conversely, Polonnaruwa (25.84%), Hambantota (26.57%), and Ampara (43.93%) exhibited the lowest survival rates. Overall, 77.72% of the introduced plants survived. The plants introduced in Ratnapura, Kegalle, and Kurunegala generally showed better survival rates. This study highlights the need to identify best practices from high-performing districts while addressing the reasons for low survival rates in other areas. It is recommended to implement targeted interventions in districts with lower success rates.

Keywords: Cultivation, *Piper nigrum*, Plant-survival, Yield