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# PEST AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES OF VEGETABLE GROWERS IN THE CENTRAL PROVINCE OF SRI LANKA: A SURVEY

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Sri Lanka faces significant obstacles from pests and pathogens in vegetable cultivation, which leads to substantial crop losses. Synthetic agrochemicals used to manage pest and disease outbreaks have many adverse effects on human health and the environment. The objective of the study was to assess the pre- and postharvest pest and disease management strategies used for vegetables through a questionnaire survey. Twenty growers per district in the Central province (Kandy, Matale and Nuwara-Eliya districts) were selected and their responses were recorded. Almost all farmers practice different kinds of land preparation techniques to prepare their lands before vegetable cultivation. Of the 60 farmers surveyed, about 53% responded that different land preparation methods impact pests and disease control. About 98% use synthetic pesticides in disease management. Although all farmers know the health risks associated with synthetic pesticides, about 10% of them still do not take proper precautions when handling them. Even though majority of those surveyed depend on synthetic pesticides for pest and disease management, most of them had a fair knowledge of how to handle them. Farmers used fewer non-chemical pest and disease control methods due to limited knowledge and confidence in these techniques. Government regulations banning agrochemicals have forced farmers towards more organic cultivation, while most of them face problems in crop production and pest and disease management. Integrated pest management (IPM), which has been introduced to minimize pesticide usage, is common among farmers. According to the responses of eight exporters, commodities from IPM-certified farmers are always selected for vegetable exports, as they use a minimal concentrations of synthetic pesticides.

**Keywords**: Pest and disease management, Vegetable cultivation, Vegetable exportation