

**STORED PRODUCT PEST MANAGEMENT AWARENESS AND PRACTICES IN  
FOUR SELECTED DISTRICTS IN SRI LANKA**

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Lack of awareness of proper hygiene and storage practices for grains contributes to increased insect pest attacks and substantial economic losses. The aim of this study was to understand the awareness and practices of communities from Ampara, Gampaha, Colombo, and Kandy Districts regarding stored product pests and their control. Residents from 100 households and 30 shop/warehouse owners from each district were interviewed using close-ended questionnaires. The grain consumption was highest in Ampara with different types of grains like “kurakkan”, barley, “kollu” and “meneri”. Polythene bags and plastic containers to store grains were high in all districts except Ampara. Nineteen percent of residents from Ampara used gunny bags for grain storage, while there was zero usage of gunny bags in the other districts. Additionally, floor storage was significantly higher ( $\chi^2 = 27.35$ ,  $p = 0.0001$ ) in Ampara (32%), where the grains were more vulnerable to pest attacks. Over 90% of participants understood insect pests and the damage they cause. Grains were reported to be infected regardless of the place of purchase (supermarkets/retail stores). The majority of respondents from all districts stated that pests could be detected if grains are stored more than one month after purchase. Most stores purchased grains for a month or less (Colombo 63%, Kandy 58%, Ampara 50%, Gampaha 45%). According to retail sellers, grains could be stored for up to six months, and some warehouses could store up to one year without damage. Unlike households that did not use insecticides, a few of the warehouse owners revealed the use of Actellic 50EC (pirimiphos-methyl) fumigants to control pests. Both groups (85.75% residents and 90.18% shop owners) did not trust plant-based pest control methods. Ampara area needs improvement in grain storage practices. Further, storage of grains over a long period in shops and warehouses potentially increases the risk of pest attacks, causing a national issue. Therefore, awareness programs are essential to educate people on stored product pest management.

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