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Rationale behind the decision making of agricultural land allocation of farmers in the Northern region of Sri Lanka

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The decision of land allocation is one of the critical factors which influence the food security of a nation. When land is allocated, the productivity and sustainability have to be considered because land availability is becoming scarce. Hence, this research seeks to find out the crucial factors associated with land allocation which influence the farmers' decision in the Jaffna peninsula of the Northern region. A structured questionnaire designed and pretested with selected respondents was administered to the sample farmers. Primary data were collected from a sample of 306 farmers randomly selected from seven AI divisions located in the region. The multivariate regression model was employed to reach the objectives of this research. The compiled data where analyzed within the framework of seemingly unrelated regression (SUR) by employing the econometric software STATA 11. The model equations for vegetable, fruit and tuber crops were statistically significant at 1% α level and for cash crop it was at 5% α level. Around 10% to 22% of the variation on farmers' decision regarding land allocation was explained by the model. The results revealed that educational level, farming experience, contact with extension, gifting land, household's capital and access to credit showed a positive and significant impact on farmers' decision making on land allocation for crops. Only family labour imparted a negative impact on land allocation. The recommendation is that if the aim is to motivate the farmer in vegetable cultivation the element of liquidity has to be enhanced. To meet this condition low interest credit facility could be arranged, relevant constituents could be supplied at a reasonable price and farmers could be motivated to cultivate the remaining land in their possession. When a formal credit facility is arranged it should be tagged with longer grace periods to help ease the burden of a loan and motivate them further in crop farming. If the fruit crop production in the region is increased, it would motivate the farmers in the Puttur and Urumpirai areas. Further facilitation of a better farm level education which may provide information and knowledge regarding proper crop management strategies, cropping systems such as intercropping, crop rotation and multi cropping will increase farm land utilization, efficiency and productivity of land. Exchange of family labour between farm families to fulfil labour needs also reduces the cost of hired labour and increases the land utilization to provide a variety of crops. Finally, where household labour is abundant, the recommendation is to allocate more land for vegetable cultivation. This will enable them to enhance their income. To facilitate better participation of women in the use of land, it is recommended that the Government, NGOs and agribusiness companies assist especially female headed households in providing them agricultural inputs, modern implements, micro financing and markets. This would increase the participation of females in agricultural production.

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