

# **Organic Fertilizer Producers in Sri Lanka: An Assessment of Constraints along the Value Chain**

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Annually Sri Lankan government spends nearly US\$ 12,000 for the importation of inorganic fertilizer which is the highest expenditure among the intermediate goods import to the country. The frequent and continuous application of inorganic fertilizers into agricultural fields and its impact on human health and the environment are also rising concerns. In light of these, all stakeholders in the agriculture sector are, strongly encouraged to move from an inorganic to “organic fertilizer”. This study examines the constraints faced by producers who were practitioners along the value chain of solid organic fertilizer in Sri Lanka. The potential constraints were identified through review of literature and were further verified by means of a series of focus group discussions with academics, government officers and producers involved in organic agriculture. A structured questionnaire was developed embedding the constraints into a set of statements (n=25). A field survey was carried out to explore the perceptions of organic fertilizer producers (n=65) who have been engaging in “organic farming practices” through 04 registered organic groups in the Kandy and Kurunegala districts. The producers were asked to indicate their views on each statement on a 10-point likert-scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (10) [with “neither disagree nor agree” in the middle (5)]. The Exploratory Factor Analysis techniques were employed to analyze data, and the mean score of each statement. The outcome of statistical analysis sorted the 25 constraints stated into 7 key constructs, namely: ‘Production’ (P 1-6); ‘Institutional’ (I 1-5); ‘Market’ (M 1-3); ‘Financial’ (F 1-3); ‘Human resources’ (H 1-3); ‘Public & health’ (PH 1-3), and Regulatory (R 1-2). The greatest constraints faced by producers include: “Time taken to certify (3.7) and produce (2.5)”, “Government support” (2.2), “Availability of certification bodies (2.1)”. The outcome of analysis, suggests that the creation of an incentive-based regulatory framework supported by institutions to work on a fast-track certification is of paramount importance for organic fertilizer producers to retain in the value chain by disregarding the “conceivable benefits” of use of inorganic fertilizer.

*Keywords:* Constraints, Organic fertilizer, Producer perceptions

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