

Farmers perception on cultivating medicinal plants as an agribusiness venture: a study at Pambahinna agrarian services division

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Abstract

Medicinal plants have been used in Sri Lanka for many purposes since early civilization. Recently both national and international demand for ayurvedic medicinal materials has been increased due to increased health awareness. But unfortunately Sri Lankan cultivations presently do not at least provide for the demand for the country itself, this leads to import many plants from countries like India, Pakistan and Dubai. Therefore the propose of this research was to identify farmers perception on medicinal plant cultivation as an agribusiness which could be an important perspective to develop this sector. This research was particularly carried in Pambahinna Agrarian Services Division. In the research questions farmers experience and knowledge on medicinal plant, awareness on markets, potentials and constrains of this industry was discussed. A survey was conducted among randomly selected sample of 111 farmers within 10 GN (gramasewa niladari) divisions and obtain information through an interviewer administrated structured questionnaire. Data analyzing was done using mini tab 14 and MS Excel using descriptive statistics, graphical explanations, and *chi square* test. Concerning on awareness, many farmers were aware about the value of medicinal materials but they lack information about such agribusinesses so they lack motivation and inspiration

Key words: Perception, Medicinal plants, Agribusiness

Introduction

Common medicines like ginger, garlic, and coriander were used by ancient physicians and used by the people even today. In fact the chemicals used in western drugs were originally extracted from medicinal plants. There is a current trend evolving in many developed and developing countries to move back to old traditions in medicine and especially in beauty culture. The national demand for medicinal plant materials was 3,864,760 kg in 2000 and approximately 1,509,201 kg of this amount were imported to meet the national demand at a cost of about Rs. 13 million (Abeywardana, N and Hettiarachchi, J. K., 2001). Hence great potential exists to organize the cultivation medicinal plants on commercial scale to increase the domestic supply of raw materials (Joseph and Abeyssekera, 2004; Gunasena *et al.*, 2004). This paper looks at the farmers' willingness to cultivate medicinal plants as an agribusiness venture and to find out the potentials and constraints in medicinal plant cultivation.

Objectives

Broad objective

My broad objective is to find out farmer perception on planting medicinal plants as an agribusiness.

Specific objectives

- To find out the level of experience and knowledge available within the farmer community on medicinal plant cultivation that would help them for easy adaptation process.
- To assess the level of farmer awareness on market demand, price and buyers of medicinal plants.
- To discover the potentials and constrains of this agribusiness in farmers point of view.
- To determine the farmers perception towards this business.

Methodology

Research Design

- Research approach - Deductive research approach
- Type of the research - Descriptive
- Research strategy - Survey strategy

Target Population

- Target population was farmers in ten GN divisions in Pambahinna agrarian services division

Sampling Technique

- Systemic sampling

4. Results and Discussion 4.1 Demographic factors of farmers

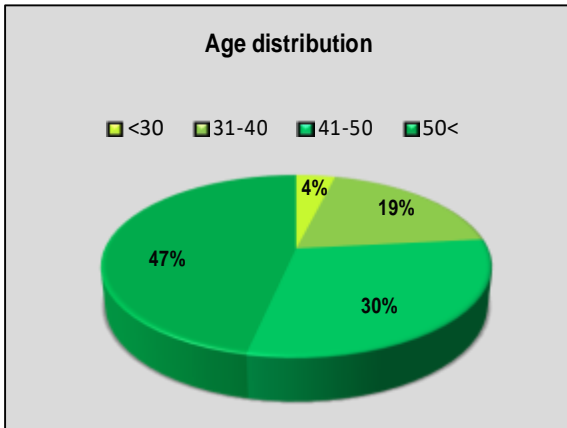


Figure 4.1: Percentage of farmers based on age

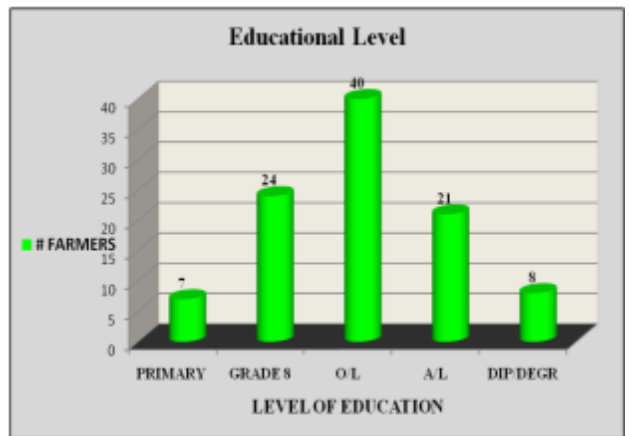


Figure 4.2: Education level of farmers

Objective 1: Experience and knowledge available within the farmer community on medicinal plant cultivation

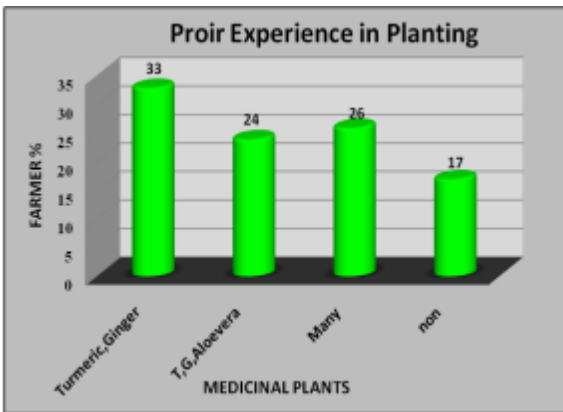


Figure 4.3: Prior experience in planting

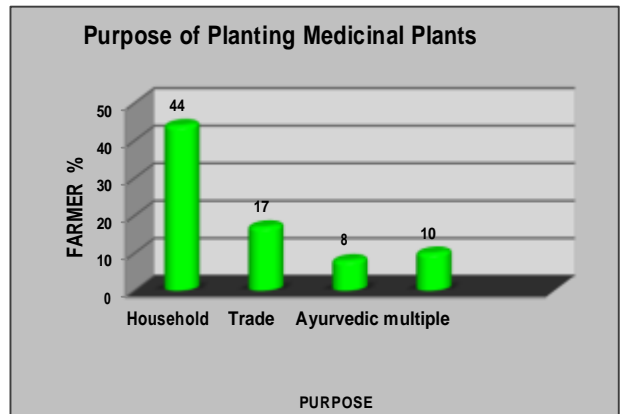
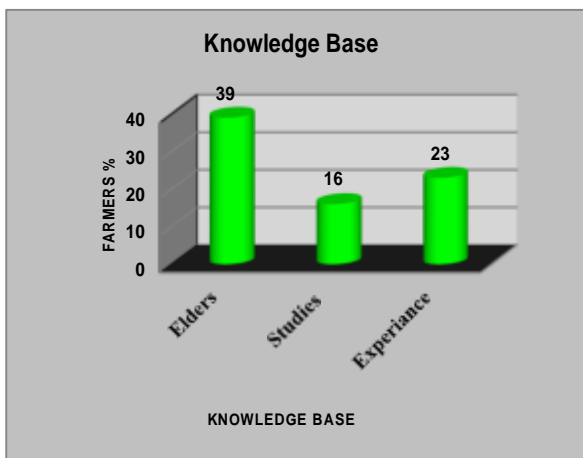


Figure 4.4: Purpose of planting herbal



8 Figure 4.5: Knowledge base

Table 3: Factors effecting experience and knowledge

Factor	Chi square	D.F	P. Value
Age	29.221	1	0.000
Farming experience	12.936	6	0.008
Gender	11.851	3	0.044
Level of education	10.263	6	0.114

4.2.2 Relationship between factors effecting experience and knowledge on medicinal plant cultivation

H₀: There is no relationship between following demographic variables and experience and knowledge on medicinal plant cultivation.

Objective 2: Farmer Awareness on Medicinal Plant Businesses and Its' Market.

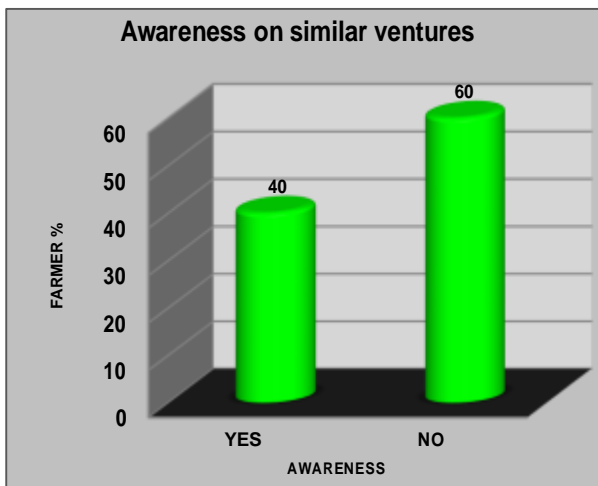


Figure 4.5: Awareness on similar ventures

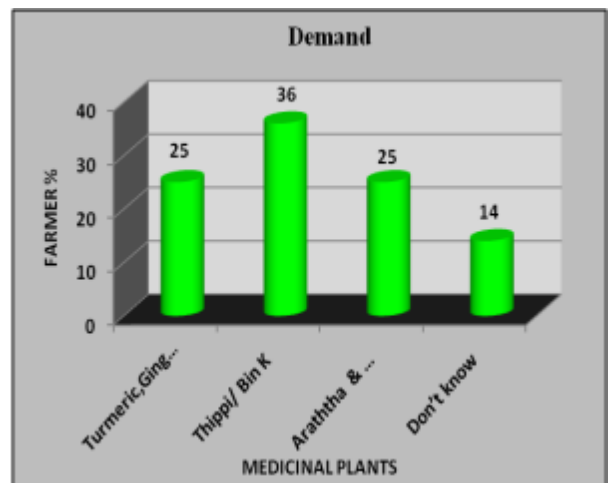


Figure 4.6: Familiarity with demanded medicinal plants materials in the market

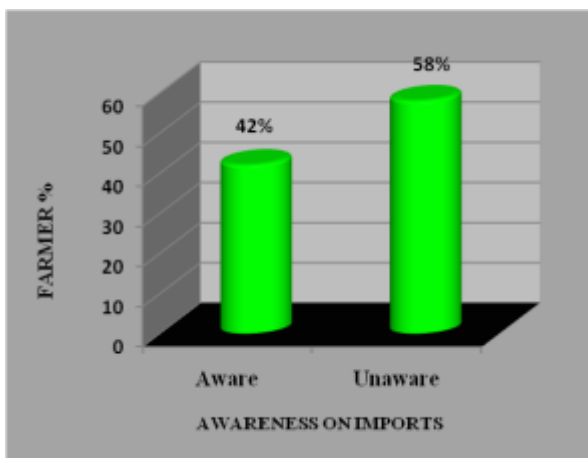


Figure 4.6: Awareness on medicinal plant material importation.

Objective 3: Potentials and Constrains of This Business in Farmers Point of View

Table 5: Reasons for the willingness to adopt

Reasons	Mean	Mode	S D
Can find planting materials easily	4.21	5	2.844
This is high profit generating business	1.746	1	2.496
High plant vigor and easy to maintain	5.25	4	2.08
Supportive climatic condition	2.713	3	1.853
As a secondary source of income	2.234	2	1.772

Table 6: Reasons for not to start this venture

Reasons	Mean	Mode	S D
Land limitation	1.246	1	1.573
Demand uncertainty	2.231	2	1.363
Loopholes in value chain and theft	2.385	3	1.387
Hesitance to change from current business	4.231	4	2.006
Lack of knowledge on medicinal plants and their cultivation	5.231	5	1.964

Objective 4. Farmer Attitudes in Practicing Medicinal Plant Cultivation as a New Business.

STATEMENT	Disad.	Nura.	Agre..	mode	mean	S.D
Medicinal plants are easy to maintain	13	20	67	4	4.18	0.697
There is a high demand for medicinal plants	2	25	73	4	3.7	0.435
This is a potentially profitable business	13	38	49	4	3.39	0.704
This business will be a good industry in future	12	45	43	3	2.5	0697
I would like to try this new venture	14	25	58	4	3.46	0.736

Conclusion

Majority of the farmers have enough capacity and will to engage in this business. If they are provided with a slight assurance on buyers, necessary information on the market. And if they are aware of the shortage of supply in national level, there could be a possibility of getting more farmers involved in medicinal plant cultivation as a venture or as an additional income source. Therefore, it is recommended from this study to create awareness on the potential of growing medicinal plants as a venture will encourage them to grow medicinal plants.

References

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