

Socio-economic Characteristics and Status of Food Insecurity: Evidence from Rural Households in Sri Lanka

***Rathnayake, K.K.H.M., Sivashankar, P. and De Silva, D.A.M.**

Dept. of Agribusiness Management, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

*Corresponding email: maheshika@agri.sab.ac.lk

Recent attention has been focused on means of eliminating food insecurity and hunger worldwide. Food security can be explained as food that is available to everyone at all times, that they have means of access to it, that it is nutritionally adequate in terms of quantity, quality and variety, and is acceptable within the given culture. Absence of these conditions is considered as food insecurity. Aim of this study was to identify determinants of food insecurity status of rural households in Sri Lanka by using household income and expenditure survey data, a nationally representative data. The analysis was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, food insecurity index was determined and in the second stage binary logistic regression model was executed to estimate the food insecurity status of the households as a function of a set of independent variables. Food insecurity index was determined by using a proxy variable based on the percentage of each household's total expenditures devoted to food. Descriptive statistic results indicate that the percentages of food insecure and secure households were 54 % and 46 % respectively. The two sample t test results suggested that there is a significant mean difference in human capital variables between food secure and food insecure households. The results of the binary logistic regression model revealed that household head being female, younger and educated will decrease the vulnerability of household to become food insecure and if a household have higher number of members who complete the secondary education, higher number of workers, lower young dependents and higher old dependents will reduce the food insecurity status of rural households in Sri Lanka. In conclusion, the findings of this study support the empirical literature on the importance of human capital development in food insecurity status.

Keywords: Food insecurity index, Household income, Expenditure survey, Logit regression, Rural households