

CHALLENGES FACED BY SMALL SCALE FOOD INDUSTRIES DURING COVID-19

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Food insecurity is a critical problem faced by the people in developing countries like Sri Lanka. Food processing sector plays a major role in a country's economy as it acts as a bridge between agriculture and industry. Studying the challenges faced by the families who rely on small scale industries will help to find necessary actions to uplift the economic conditions of the families. The study was conducted with the objective of identifying the challenges faced by the small hold food industries during Covid-19 period (March- May 2020) in Jaffna district. 25 representatives who run small hold food industries in local areas were interviewed and a questionnaire was distributed among them to find the challenges faced during the Covid-19 period regarding their business. Those who prepare savory snacks, sweets, dried vegetables and 'pappadam' were interviewed. Even though availability of raw materials, transportation issues, lack of staff, financial constraints, problems in getting registered, lack of storage facility, competition in the market, high price of raw materials and weather changes are found as the common challenges, inability to market the prepared foods was the most serious challenge identified by them. As the movement of the people was completely restricted during the period, they were unable to market the food items they prepared. Although advertisements were made via social media the food items could not be sold out. The food items prepared by the small hold food industries have relatively narrow shelf life as less amount or no chemical preservatives are added into them. The people lost their income due to the pandemic and they could not find any compensation. Necessary actions should be taken to provide financial assistance to them to build up their livelihood business.

Keywords: *Small Scale Food Industries, COVID-19, Pandemic, Food Insecurity, Snacks*