



SRI LANKA FOOD PROCESSORS ASSOCIATION (SLFPA)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

NEWSLETTER

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Issue - 27

Year End Edition - 2021



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WHEN YOU NEED TO BE SURE

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05

BORDER CROSSING for SME

06

Adoptability to the
New Normal Situation

09

SLFPA AGM 2020

10

Ways to Expand Processed Food...
Key Note Speech - SLFPA AGM

15

Multi-residue Pesticide Analysis
for Export Agricultural Products...

18

Export of Fresh Fruits &
Vegetables from Sri Lanka

24

Minimizing foodborne illnesses
through Food Safety Management..

27

GOOD FOOD HANDLER

28

Budget Proposal - 2021

THE NEW NORMAL



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We members of Food Processors Association are reminded more than ever about the struggle to survive and secure our community during the Corona virus outbreak. We strongly admit that it is our utmost responsibility to maintain the continuous food distribution in the country.

SLFPA believes that the Food Supply Chain is an essential service that must continue to operate during periods of lockdown, emergency, curfew and other containment measures. The Food Supply Chains are a complex web of interactions involving Farmers, Agricultural Inputs, Processing Plants, Shipping, Retailers and many more. Every effort must be made to prevent shortages and maintain the food supply chains efficiently.

Our Food Supply Chain was badly interrupted during last few months due to various factors such as ban of inorganic fertilizer and Agro-chemicals, ban on importation of some of the process inputs, shipping delays and high shipping cost, limited availability of foreign currency, which limits importation of inputs for manufacturing. Continuous weather also affects the agricultural production.

In many forums SLFPA has raised the voiced regarding the problems that our members were facing including the decision of fertilizer and Agro- chemical ban. I am really happy that government has positively reacted to the public voice and lifted the said ban. This would certainly help to streamline continuity of the food supply chain.

All physical events being cancelled and rescheduled virtual events which have cropped up in large numbers. SLFPA also had to face for the same and first time in its history we had to conduct our 24th "Annual General Meeting" virtually and Mr. Delano Dias was formally elected as the 12th President of SLFPA for the year 2022/23. He has been serving for the food industry more than 30 years and currently holds the position of Managing Director of Millers Ltd. Mr. Delano holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration (BBA) and is the current chairman of the import section of Ceylon Chamber of Commerce. I wish him and his team all the best for coming years.

Finally let me wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2022.. May SLFPA prosper in the years to come!

Nishan Perera

Editorial Committee



Aruna
Senanayake



Cyril
Wickramaratne



Sandya
Fernando



BORDER CROSSING for



In the recent budget speech, the Ministry of Finance stressed the need of developing the SME sector being the primary driving wheel towards economic development. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) being a stakeholder playing a major role in the current economy, is an account for creating a local cash flow that enhances the local economic development while creating sustainable supply chains that benefit the SME as well as Cooperate producers while creating job opportunities and entrepreneurship among the village level youth & women.

Most identified constraints for SME development at the regional level are meeting a high level of MOQs in purchasing appropriate packaging and poor accessibility to obtain required funds from the Banks, mainly due to collateral needs by the Bank. These obstacles are faced by SMEs in growing their enterprises to compete in the emerging markets locally and internationally. Although it is always a high priority by every government to enhance the growth of SMEs, still in the operational process there is no significant visible growth rate. In addressing the

unemployment, SME development is a key factor, especially at grass root level as most of the formal and informal job opportunities are being created by SMEs.

Hence Private/Public Partnership would be the most appropriate intervention in addressing these key issues along with a properly designed strategic plan with the participation of SMEs as an important stakeholder in the value chain and possible policy changing to enhance the way forward path towards developing SMEs to achieve Local Economic Development.



Mr. Sunil Rodrigo

*Dairy Technologist/Industrial Engineer
Chairman-LILI Chees (Pvt) Ltd*



Adaptability to the New Normal Situation

The economic and social disruption caused by COVID-19 is expected to be far worse than that of the 2008-09, Global Financial Crisis and perhaps might even beat the Great Depression of the 1930s. The economic impact of COVID-19 will be a function of the magnitude and speed at which it continues to spread and the duration over which it lasts. Containment is the current strategy, globally integrated supply chain models completely disrupted; the pandemic will have long lasting impact globally, on all fronts – social, political, technical, industrial and economic. The food processing sector plays a vital role in the economic development as it connects and synergizes two most important columns of our economy: industry and agriculture. The Covid-19 outbreak has transformed the way organizations work and respond, and instigated an adoption of new practices in a matter of days to respond to the crisis situation “The New Normal”.

The shortage of workers, primarily in perishable food produce, means that wastage will increase if the

products are not processed in time. The restrictions in movement of labour over the crisis, amid job losses, may lead to loss in seasonal crops and this may impact the supply chain of products like juices and pulp. The decline in the production of ready-to-cook food due to consumers rising preference for fresh foods will have a huge impact on small food retail shops. There has been a reduction in the bulk demand due to closure of institutional buyers like hotels and restaurants, and restriction on exports.

The logistics disruptions due to the lockdown have hampered the supply of products from processors to consumers. The non-availability of workers has become a major issue at the different stages of value chain. The larger players, with automated technologies for processing, have witnessed decreased demand from the domestic and international market. Agriculture and allied activities sectors have been partially affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but agricultural chemicals and fertilizers, which are import dependent, may see supply disruptions. Preventive



measures are the need of the hour to curb the spread of COVID-19 to rural population and mitigate the damage caused to the economy.

The entrepreneurial spirit truly came through - with many small, medium and big industries finding their own way to pivot and carve a niche. Whereas travel, tourism, hospitality and related sectors took a direct hit from the chaos that was unleashed globally. The food industry is an interconnected system. It comprises not only food retailers/wholesalers and product suppliers but also packaging companies, service providers, and others. As with any complex system, communication and feedback loops are essential to finding better outcomes for the industry.

The coronavirus market impact on the food industry has affected how businesses get their products, the very nature of their daily business operations, and consumer behavior. These are just a few of the recent trends in the food industry,

The shutting down of physical stores- Whether it was by mandate or out of concern, many in the food industry made the decision to completely close down their retail stores or shift to a delivery/pick-up model. Some restaurants got creative by selling grocery items and at-home meal kits, while food and beverage wholesalers that normally relied on restaurants began selling direct to consumers.

Increase in demand for packaged foods and beverages -Especially as the COVID-19 crisis peaked, people sheltered at home and made it a priority to stock up on non-perishable and frozen foods. As such, home cooking increased, and certain items became hard to find.

Supply chain disruptions -One of the reasons for some food shortages had to do with the fact that some items are sourced from overseas suppliers. Restaurants and grocery stores had a challenge to locate local suppliers, while manufacturers ramped up the production of certain items to keep supply chains moving.

Shift in consumer behavior- Consumers became hyper-aware of cleanliness and began worrying about who was handling their food. As such, anything packaged became more desirable than fresh ingredients, contactless delivery more in demand than having to go into a store. It is more important than ever for businesses to do all they

can to anticipate and prepare for future trends in the food industry. Promoting safe practices and cleanliness, as well as evolving with food market trends. Potential industry changes include: Cashless and contactless payment and services - Expect to see more e-receipts, tap and go and mobile payment technology, digital menu boards and disposable paper menus.

New and improved safety measures -Plexiglass barriers at checkout counters and partitions between seating areas. Retail stores are limiting the number of shoppers who can be inside at a given time, and spacing decals are keeping people separated while waiting in a queue. Employers are using temperature checks or even implementing infrared body temperature scans to detect fevers. Eateries are removing seating to comply with limited capacity restrictions. Hand sanitizing stations, masks, and gloves are becoming ubiquitous. Businesses that didn't have off-site services are shifting to offer delivery, catering, or pick up in order to make up for the fact that they cannot serve their full capacity on-site. This could also mean the need for menu changes to reflect easier packaging.

Demand for local food-Consumers more concerned about where their food is coming from, knowing that menus are relying on locally grown and sourced ingredients can make them feel more comfortable. COVID-19 has drastically changed the food industry, and only time will tell how far into the future these changes will reverberate. Consumers still desire food services, but in the safest way possible. Its best to keep up to new trends in the food industry, follow health directives from local government, and take cues from your customers on the best ways to show that you're doing all you can to ensure their safety.



Ms. Nirushika De Silva

Counseling Psychologist & Entrepreneur (John's)



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The Sri Lanka Food Processors Association recently held its 24th Annual General Meeting as a Virtual meeting on 22nd September 2021. In his address Mr. Delano Dias, the newly elected President Welcomed the new executive committee while thanking & appreciating the work done by the previous committee.

Founded in 1997 as an advocacy group the Sri Lanka Food Processors Association currently consists of over 130 member companies, which include large and multi-national, as well as small and medium enterprises (SMEs) committed to the development of the country's processed food and beverages industry.

Newly elected Committee for the year 2022/2023:

President	Mr. Delano Dias	Cargills Quality Foods Ltd.
President Elect	Mr. Thusith Wijesinghe	Trans Continental Packaging & Commodities (Pvt) Ltd.
Imm.Past President	Mr. Nishan Perera	CMC Engineering Export GmbH
Ist Vice President	Mr. Damitha Perera	Forbes & Walker Commodity Brokers (Pvt) Ltd.
2nd Vice President	Mr. Aruna Senanayake	CW Mackie PLC
3rd Vice President	Mr. Nadisha Guruge	Meadlee Packaging Co. (Pvt) Ltd.
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Hon.Treasurer	Mr. Amila Weerasinghe	Nestle Lanka PLC
Assit. Secretary	Mr. Hemantha Balasuriya	Coca Cola Beverages Sri Lanka Ltd.
Asst.Treasurer	Mr. Sanjeewa de Silva	Unilever Sri Lanka Ltd.
Committee Member	Mr. Dylan Gonawela	Virgin Oil International (Pvt) Ltd.
Committee Member	Mr. Nuwan Rodrigo	Rohan Rodrigo Refrigeration & Air-conditioning (Pvt) Ltd.
Committee Member	Mr. Ruwan Kumara	Ceylon Cold Stores PLC
Committee Member	Mr. Roshan Ranawake	Control Union Inspections (Pvt) Ltd.
Committee Member	Mr. Kolitha Amarasinghe	SGS Lanka (Pvt) Ltd.
Committee Member	Mr. Niroshan Dalpethadu	C.D De Fonseka & Sons
Committee Member	Mr. Jayanga Perera	Ceylon Biscuits Limited
Committee Membsr	Mr. Sheran De Alwis	MA'S Tropical Food Processing (Pvt) Ltd.
Committee Member	Mr. Vasantha Chandrapala	Visvaka Marketing (Pvt) Ltd.
Committee Member	Mr. Sameera Jayathilake	Westmann Engineering Co. (Pvt) Ltd.

By Invitation

Committee Member	Mr.Rasika Seneviratne	Connell Brothers Company Lanka (Pvt) Ltd (Non Voting)
Committee Member	Mr.Deepal De Alwis	Neochem International (Pvt) Ltd. (Non Voting)
Committee Member	Mr.Dineth Alahakoon	Country Style Food (Pvt) Ltd. (Non Voting)

The Keynote speaker at the event was Sri Lanka's Ambassador in Belgium and the Representative of European Union HE Ms. Grace Asirwadam.

The Meeting concluded after the vote of thanks by the Hony. Secretary Mr. Aruna Senanayake.



Ways to Expand Processed Food Export to EU



Her Excellency Ms. Grace Asirwatham Sri Lanka's Representative in the EU and our Ambassador in Belgium with her 33 years of Foreign Service experience mainly in the European countries and the UN made the Keynote speech at the last AGM of SLFPA. In her speech she highlighted the Non Tariff barriers that a Sri Lankan exporter of Processed Food to EU will have to be familiar with to be a successful supplier to the European Union.

Changes have been clearly noted in the consumer's food preferences and eating behaviors across Europe in the post-pandemic period. While there are pandemic influenced changes, the regular consumer expectations, healthy food and organic preferences, food growing and production methods and practices, use of approved food additives and preservatives etc., will be central to understand the EU food market. Consumer expectations may change, yet the importance of food and processed food will never diminish anywhere in the world.

I have been asked to speak on the subject of "Ways to expand processed food exports to the EU". As you are aware, in the European Union (EU), the European Commission which is responsible for trade including trade related policies, standards and Regulations, ensures that Europe's food supply is the safest in the world and that the same

standards of food safety apply to all products regardless of their origin.

Sri Lanka's export items to the EU in the food & beverage sector are tea, coconut-based products, spices, food preparations, dried foods, vegetables, fish and fish products, miscellaneous edible preparations, sugar confectionery, beverages and many other products. Sri Lanka exports around US\$ 2 billion worth of processed food to the world of which around US\$ 305 million is exported to the EU market.

Most of our food and processed food items are given zero duty under GSP Plus.

i. Tea is the major item in our exports of processed food to the EU in terms of value. Sri Lanka is famous for its black tea and it is still one of the largest exporters of Black tea to the EU to the value of Euro 98.8 million in 2020. However,



there is a growing trend of wellness around the world which is creating a higher demand for green and herbal teas. Exporters should also explore the market for value added teas and niche market teas, such as fermented tea beverages, tea syrups, flower tea and flavoured tea drinks.

ii. The second largest processed food item to the EU is Coconut Products. Desiccated coconut, coconut oil, dried coconut, canned coconut milk, coconut milk powder, and other coconut-based products are used in the European bakery and confectionary sector or as condiments for different cuisines.

There is also a potential for growth in certain coconut products that are not traditionally popular in the EU market, due to the growing demand for non-dairy milk varieties as healthier alternatives to traditional milk and change of eating preferences such as vegan and plant-based food. Therefore, we believe that coconut products in particular will most likely to be surging in demand, due to increasing popularity of plant-based lifestyles.

The Consumer demand for clean label food products has become a trend to stay, therefore the exporters of natural additives should take advantage of this and focus on natural products such as Coconut sugar as a natural sweetener. Moreover, the rising consumer demand for organic and vegan products is also generating demand for coconut sugar in the European market.

Sri Lanka can open more opportunities by replacing sugar with alternative products such as sweeteners including natural syrups, coconut syrup, kithul syrup etc. If product formulation requires the use of crystallized sugars, then white sugar can be replaced with coconut sugar or whole cane sugar.

Further the European consumers' concerns about excessive sugar levels in processed food are negatively affecting the fruit juice, jams and dried fruit industries.

iii. Spices are the next largest item under the processed food exports to the EU, with cinnamon taking up the majority of total spice exports. Sri Lanka has long established itself as a leading cinnamon exporter globally. There continues

to be a growing demand for Ceylon cinnamon in the EU, as it is highly popular in beverages, condiments and desserts.

The Export Development Board (EDB) is working on getting Geographical Indication (G.I.) registration for Ceylon Cinnamon in the EU which will solidify its popularity. The GI recognition enables consumers to trust and distinguish quality products while also helping producers to market their products better. Sri Lanka should also get GI recognition for Ceylon Tea. Other popular spice products that are exported to the EU include pepper, cloves, cardamom, nutmeg and mace.

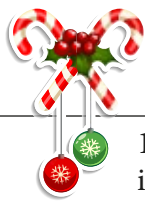
iv. The export of fish products from Sri Lanka to the EU, was Euro 94.6 million in 2020 which is an increase from 88 million in 2019. The most common fish exports from Sri Lanka to the EU are fish fillets and other fish meat, whether or not minced, fresh, chilled or frozen etc.

Common Sri Lankan processed fish products include canned fish, dried sprats, dried mora (baby shark), fried dry fish and bottled fish.

Consumers who seek healthy options believe that fish is a very valuable protein source compared to other animal products. You are aware that during the pandemic demand for food items that contained Vitamin D was surging due to its role in immunity. As growing health & wellness trends prefer leaner proteins like in fish, there will be a growing demand for fish products to continue in the future as well.

Despite the minimal setbacks from the pandemic, there is growing potential for Sri Lankan food exports.

We need to diversify the processed food exports and expand our markets in all EU countries. Further Sri Lanka should also increase the volume of the exports. Sri Lanka should also conduct product promotional activities in selected EU countries, participate in trade expos both common and specific, trade fairs and engage in brand and product promotions. While doing so we need to fulfil the EU conditions for exporting food items to the EU region, under several EU regulations.



1. Firstly, we need to understand most importantly the EU food safety system. Apart from customs procedures, almost all mandatory requirements related to exporting processed food are related to food safety. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is responsible for the development of specific food safety legislation and the creation of a framework for official food controls.

The EU has strict import rules in respect to food and feed hygiene, consumer safety and animal health status aiming at assuring that all imports fulfil the same high standards as products from the EU itself.

Therefore, mandatory import requirements for food products include everything ranging from the approval of additives to the banning of harmful contaminants. Information labels on food packaging are also strongly controlled.

2. Pesticide residues or excessive levels of preservatives are banned. The European Union has set maximum residue levels (MRLs) for pesticides in food products. The European Union regularly publishes a list of approved pesticides that are authorized for use in the European Union. This list is frequently updated and there is a general tendency to lower pesticide limits.

If your product contains residues of prohibited pesticides or higher amounts of pesticide residues than allowed, it can be withdrawn from the European market. The general public is very concerned about pesticide residues. Both government organizations and non-governmental organizations frequently conduct sample tests.

Therefore, Exporters must ensure that their processed food do not contain pesticides or heavy metals above the levels set by the EU. Non-compliance will result in products not being allowed to enter the European market or being withdrawn.

It should also be clearly noticeable in the labelling if a food contains allergens.

Cans and other materials used for packaging must be corrosion-resistant and free from contaminants.

In case of repeated non-compliance of rules on specific products from particular countries, stricter conditions may apply. These stricter conditions in practice imply stricter and tougher entry requirements such as requirement of obligatory laboratory certificates, frequent identity and physical checks for the food and feed of non-animal origin from those third countries for a defined number of imported containers or trucks.

3. Food additives are strictly regulated by the European Union. This is to ensure the safety of consumers who consume foods containing food additives. In recent years, there has been growing demand for additive-free foods, a trend that is expected to continue. Food extracts with coloring properties are not classified as food additives by European legislation; therefore they are suitable for use in additive-free foods. The EU is removing ingredients that are considered as artificial and unhealthy.

The European customs authorities do not allow food products into the European market if they contain unauthorized additives, or flavoring or substances not allowed in the EU.

4. European buyers regularly demand extra certification proving the added safety and quality in consumer products. European buyers demand certification of a food safety management system based on the European Union's Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) system outlined in EU Regulation on hygiene of food stuffs.

To trade with European buyers, Sri Lanka exporters should meet their demands for extra certification as that will give you an advantage in terms of successfully establishing yourself on the European market. Furthermore, it could be the basis for developing long-lasting trading relationships with buyers.

5. European buyers of processed food items, expect the exporters to provide them with well-structured and organized product and company documentation. Further, they expect documentation such as Safety Data sheets, technical data sheets and Certification of analysis. These documents give you an added advantage of gaining the confidence of the buyers and the market.



6. The EU's Classification, Labelling and Packaging (CLP) Regulation identifies hazardous chemicals and informs users about their hazards through standard symbols and phrases. For Sri Lankan processed food products to enter the European market, the EU legally requires exporters to meet its CLP Regulation. Non-compliance will result in products not being allowed to enter the European market.

As an exporter, you must determine whether your products are not hazardous. Check the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) database to determine if your ingredient is hazardous. If your natural ingredient is hazardous, use the appropriate special packaging and corresponding warning labels as guided by the ECHA.

7. There is growing consumer demand for ethical products and certified organic products in the European market, and this trend is expected to continue. Quality and contamination are two big issues for European buyers. As a result, European buyers are increasingly demanding certified organic food ingredients in order to meet growing consumer demand, but also because they are a sign of good quality. As such, you should consider acquiring organic certification.

8. Consumers are increasingly watching what they eat, trying to reduce fat, sodium and sugar intakes. As consumers want to be better informed about food, they want to see health and nutrition facts on the packaging of products they purchase. The fruits and vegetable industry in Europe is following this trend by launching innovative products and informing consumers about food characteristics on product labels.

Providing information on sourcing and ingredients through new digital packaging printing methods. One example is the growing use of QR codes in the foodservice industry, helping consumers make purchases according to their lifestyle. Some of these codes link to company site, where consumers can obtain more information on laboratory tests and ingredient origin, for example.

9. The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed, which is called RASFF, is the system to handle information related to imports with risks to public health.

Under RASFF system information will be shared efficiently amongst the EU member states and partners (EU Member State national food safety authorities, Commission, EFSA, ESA, Norway, Liechtenstein, Iceland and Switzerland) and a round-the-clock service will be provided to ensure that urgent notifications are sent, received and responded to collectively and efficiently.

Apart from border controls, official food controls include regular inspections that can be carried out at all stages from import to retail sales. In case of non-compliance with the European food legislation, individual cases are reported through the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feeds (RASFF), which is freely accessible to the general public.

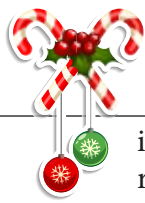
Vital information exchanged through RASFF can lead to products being recalled from the market. Repeated non-compliance with the European food legislation leads to stricter import conditions or even suspension of imports from repeated offender country.

Those stricter conditions usually include a health certificate and an analytical test report for a certain percentage of the shipments from specified countries. Products from countries that have shown repeated non-compliance are put on a list included in the Regulation on the increased level of official controls on imports.

10. Similarly, there is a European Union Notification System for Plant Health Interceptions – which is called EUROPHYT.

The European Union inspects food products to protect citizens, animals and plants from diseases and pests. EUROPHYT provides an essential support for the implementation of preventive measures by ensuring that the data on risks to plant health from trade in plants and plant products is up-to-date and accurate. The EU is trying to minimize the risk of new pests and diseases causing environmental damage, destruction of native plant species, substantial economic losses in agricultural production and leading to an increase in the use of pesticides.

A common way of protection is inspection of food and the issuing of a phytosanitary certificate before export. Phytosanitary certificates are



issued for plants or plant products which can be reproduced within Europe after imports, such as bulbs, tubers or food containing seeds.

Sri Lanka has also received RASSF and EUROPHYT Alert Notifications due to several reasons mainly due to presence of Aflatoxins, non-compliance of the EU quality standards, labelling requirements, packaging, approval procedures, certifications, etc.

Increase in the number of Notifications may result in tightening safeguard measures that would invoke the applicable implementing rules that could negatively impact on Sri Lanka's food products Exports to the EU.

In conclusion, I would like to share with you the ongoing Green trend and policies being adopted in the EU which would have an impact on the food imports to the EU.

Sustainability has become one of the most important topics on the official European agenda. The European Union implemented a set of policies called the European Green Deal, with the aim of

making the European economy more sustainable and climate neutral by 2050. Policies also include specific measures which may impact supply from developing countries. They also include a 50% reduction of the use of more hazardous pesticides and increasing the share of EU agricultural land used for organic farming to 25% by 2030.

Under the Green Deal policy, a FARM TO FORK approach is being adopted. This means that all food must be traceable throughout the entire supply chain, and that includes exporters from developing countries. The Farm to Fork Strategy will mobilize the food industry to increase the availability and affordability of healthy, sustainable food options. The goal is to reduce the overall environmental footprint of the food system and make the adoption of healthy diets easier.

The European Commission is also taking action to expand and promote sustainable production methods and circular business models in food processing and retail, including specifically for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

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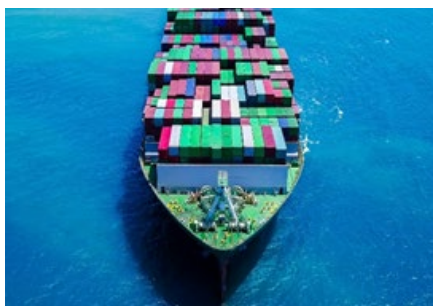
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MULTI-RESIDUE PESTICIDE ANALYSIS FOR EXPORT AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN SRI LANKA



Importance of Exports in an Emerging Economy

Agricultural exports are a key source of revenue for the emerging Sri Lankan economy, and the export of tea amounts to a lion's share (approximately 17%) of that revenue. Ceylon tea, a revered brand reverberating among the tea aficionados and within the general world population alike, has set benchmarks for its taste and aroma. Being one of the largest tea producers in the world and also the third largest orthodox tea exporter, export revenue from this commodity has always been a pillar of support to the Sri Lankan economy which amounts to approximately 230 billion rupees as per recent statistics.

Export of spices, primarily cinnamon, also contribute at a close second to the revenue raised from exporting agricultural products, and fresh vegetables and fruits still hold a minute share in the sphere of export revenue. However, the drive of the government is to dramatically increase the production of agricultural products within the next few years, and it is pragmatic to think that any surplus would be exported.

Effects of Pesticides on Agricultural Products In the past, the application process of chemical pesticides and herbicides was uncontrolled in Sri Lanka.

Exposure to these persistent chemical contaminants may have debilitating effects on health including acute poisoning, carcinogenicity, and teratogenicity (defects in reproduction). However, due to prevalent health concerns, such as bioaccumulation through prolonged exposure,

a lot of regulations have been brought forth to tackle the unsafe use of pesticides on agricultural products.

That said, the use of strong and sometimes unregulated pesticides and herbicides has led the consumers to ponder whether or not the agricultural produce they consume are contaminated with harmful pesticide residues.

International Regulations on Pesticides and the Effects on Exports

During the last two decades, there has been a worldwide increase in awareness of nutrition and food safety. Foreign governments have imposed strict regulations on chemicals allowed on agricultural items, and among them some of the stringent have been on persistent chemical pesticide residues. Therefore, maximum residue limits (MRLs) for pesticide residues have been introduced. For products such as tea the MRL values are 0.05 ppm (parts-per-million) in the European Union.

As a result of international regulatory action, the Sri Lankan agricultural export community has been significantly impacted. For instance, a few years back, the Japanese government had issued a temporary ban on importation of Ceylon Tea. This was caused by the presence of MCPA (a chemical pesticide residue) on levels above the threshold of their MRLs. Recently the Saudi Arabian Government has also made it mandatory to test 23 pesticides in green tea. Japan and Saudi Arabia are two of the largest importers of Ceylon Tea, and their restrictions have a punitive effect on tea producers and other affiliated industries like the



packaging industry. The financial impact of these regulations may reach a billion rupees.

Testing for Pesticide Residues

Detection of pesticide residues requires investments in highly sensitive and sophisticated analytical instruments, technical know-how and experienced laboratory analysts. Earlier it was a standard practice to subcontract tea samples to other countries for accredited testing. This practice was cost prohibitive for many small and medium scale tea industries. Within Sri Lanka, lack of laboratory infrastructure and the technical knowledge for pesticide residues testing have created further supply chain delays, especially under the current pandemic situation.

SGS Lanka Services for Tea and Other Agricultural Products

SGS is the world's leading inspection, verification, testing and certification company. SGS is recognized as the global benchmark for quality and integrity. With more than 89,000 employees, SGS operates a network of over 2,600 offices and laboratories around the world.

SGS Lanka (subsidiary of SGS Group) has a long-standing connection with testing agricultural products in Sri Lanka. Catering mostly to export clients we have contributed to various organizations in the agricultural sector, including 20 plus years of association with the Sri Lanka Tea Board.

As we expand our capabilities to cater to the export sector, we identified the urgency in accredited testing for pesticide residues in Sri Lanka. As a result, we have custom built a separate pesticide residues laboratory taking into care the rigors in maintaining a sterile environment needed for

pesticide analysis, and provide testing for a fraction of the cost of an overseas subcontracted test. Our state-of-the-art lab is equipped with the Thermo Scientific Liquid Chromatography Tandem Mass Spectrometry (LC-MS/MS) which is the main workhorse of this endeavour.

LC-MS/MS is an essential instrument for the testing of pesticide residues, toxic substances, pharmaceutical products, vitamins, and other persistent chemical contaminants.

Due to the tandem mass spectrometry, it has the sensitivity and the accuracy to reproduce qualitative and quantitative analysis of residues up to very low concentration ranges such as ppb (parts-per-billion) and ppt (parts-per-trillion).

The instrument is optimised for multi-residue analysis and the time taken for analysis is comparatively less with a high degree of accuracy as compared to other analytical instruments such as GC-MS and HPLC. The instrument has the capability to test up to 170 samples at once, thereby increasing the efficiency. Our team comprises of expert analysts with extensive training overseas.

First Lab in Sri Lanka to be accredited to test > 300 pesticides

At present, we take pride in ascertaining the position of being the first and only laboratory in Sri Lanka with accreditation for the analysis of more 300 pesticide residues by the Sri Lanka Accreditation Board (SLAB).

The instrument has been optimised to detect minute concentrations of pesticide residues well within the MRLs stipulated by different countries. Apart from tea, the accreditation also covers other commodities such as spices, fruits, vegetables



LC-MS/MS Instrument at SGS Lanka Pesticide Residue Laboratory

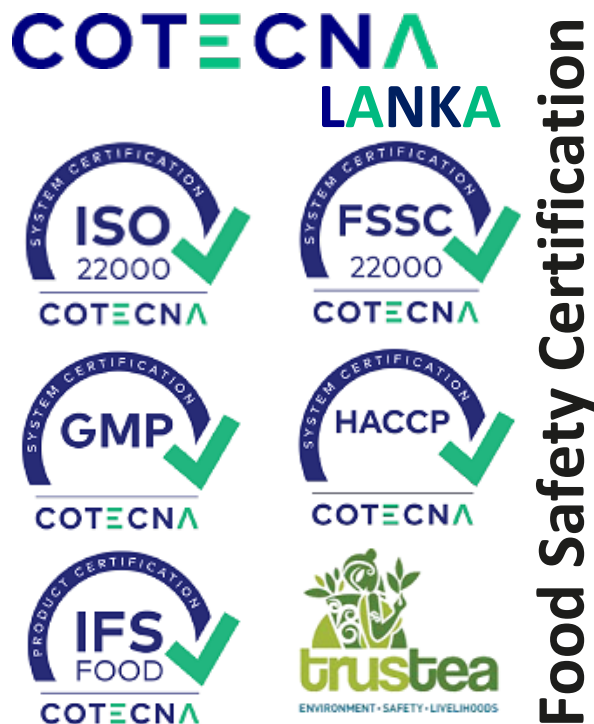


etc. Research and development processes are also underway to enhance the capabilities of the LC-MS/MS for analysing vitamins, including water soluble vitamins B1, B2, B3, B5, B6, B9, B12 & C, and fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E & K.

SGS Lanka remains committed to monitoring the quality and safety of your export products through our services (sampling, inspection, testing, and food safety systems certification), and winning the Silver award at the 28th Annual NCE Export Awards in recognition of service providers to exporters sector (large category) stands as a testament to this. We stand ready to support our customers in facing the challenges arising from the changing global trends.

Promod Jayasinghe

Health & Nutrition Customer Relationship Officer
SGS Lanka (Pvt) Ltd For more information



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Export of Fresh Fruits & Vegetables from Sri Lanka

Processes, Constraints and Recommendations

Dr Sujeewa Gunaratne is a Food Technologist with hands on experience in the industry processing fresh fruits and vegetables for export from Sri Lanka and, has supported the industry to introduce innovative sorting and packing techniques.

The objective of this article is to review one of the most valuable export businesses of Sri Lanka, the fresh fruits and vegetables, the accepted processes, constraints faced by entrepreneurs, and some recommendations.

About the industry

The organized fresh fruit and vegetable export trade of Sri Lanka is more than 40 years old to my understanding. There is only a limited number of players in this business, perhaps due to the need to develop a high level of expertise to engage in the industry and also due to constraints faced in working with perishable goods. To give a perspective to the overall industry, I have evaluated the statistics on fresh fruits and vegetable exports from Sri Lanka, and, found certain lack of agreement of statistics provided by different parties. Hence, I would refrain from discussing the export statistics, but would like to point out that fresh fruits and vegetables export appears to have overcome the challenges of recent years and, moved forward.

Export Markets

Sri Lanka exports fresh fruits and vegetables to some key markets. Some of them are Maldives, United Arab Emirates, other middle east countries, Europe, India, and Pakistan. Approximately 60% of the exports reach Maldives and the Middle East, for obvious reasons that these countries have a fair percentage of Sri Lankans as residents, and additionally employees who are Asians and therefore would demand Sri Lanka's fruits and vegetables.

How are export of fresh fruit and vegetables regulated?

According to the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), Sri Lanka is expected to facilitate Phytosanitary Certificates for plants, and plant products exported from Sri Lanka. Inspection and certification facilities are available at National Plant Quarantine Services (NPQS) units located at Katunayake International Airport and Colombo Port. The certificates for shipments of fresh fruits and vegetables are issued only if the export material meet the requirements of the NPQS. In order to meet the export requirements, it is highly recommended that the supplies of fruits and vegetables are sourced only from registered trusted suppliers who have been made aware of importer's quality specifications.

Packaging

Packaging for the export of fruits and vegetables need to be specially designed and manufactured in discussion with industry. Sri Lanka is fortunate to have a developed food packaging industry, and they cater to the special packaging needed in the export of fresh fruits and vegetables as well. Packaging that has been used for other purposes, such as packing of other food, clothing, live plants, chemicals and fuels must not be used for packing of fresh fruit and vegetables for export. Therefore, an entrepreneur in this field must consider the importance of packaging in this industry.



Shipping

The method of shipping of fresh fruits and vegetables can vary. A relatively small shipment (apprx 10 MT) of fruits and vegetables exported to a tourism destination in Maldives or a mega market in Middle East can be shifted by air freight. However, less perishable fruits and vegetables which may withstand a sea journey are preferably sent in sea freight when a single item exceeds apprx 20 MT. Freight Containers equipped with temperature and humidity control must be available for such purposes, and individuals with expertise in shipping need to be available to support smooth passage of goods.

As a review of all fresh fruits and vegetables itself would not be possible through an article of this nature, it is expected to focus on common export fruits and vegetables and share some thoughts and guidance on how to manage the challenges.

Pineapples

Sri Lanka's pineapples are considered one of the tastiest table desserts. Sri Lanka grows and exports two varieties, Mauritius and Kew. Mauritius is grown in Gampaha, and Kurunegala areas while some farmers have been successful in growing Kew in Badulla area. Most of the tourism destinations and mega markets order the Mauritius variety. Importers instruct their own quality requirements, but most common requirements are that the fruits need to be at least 1.3 kg in weight, dark green in colour, free of pests, damage and diseases. Most often pineapples are packed crown downwards in five ply corrugated cartons. Sometimes there could be orders requesting horizontal packing as well. Pineapples need to be sourced from registered suppliers who have been detailed on buyer requirements. If the air cargo leaves a facility in late evening, the fruits need to reach packing facility during the morning half of the day to allow time for sorting and packing process. A facility might need to pack about 10-15 MT of pineapples a day, and reasonable time needs to be allocated for this operation. During the sorting and packing operation the fruits need to be maintained approx. at 22- 24 oC. Exposure to higher temperatures may set off the ripening

process. All visible dirt and dust, mealy bugs, weeds, and other plant strands, must be carefully removed. A few magnifying glasses may be necessary to inspect for mealy bugs within the crown and in the crevices of the fruit surface.

Packaging specially designed for pineapples must be used, either to pack about 6 fruits crown downwards, or 'flat packing' as per buyer instructions. The cartons must have vent holes (to facilitate air passage). Fruits must be separated using corrugated dividers. Packing the crown downwards would provide a cushioning effect to the fruit. It is an accepted practice to apply Billet Carbendazim solution to the end of the fruit stem, as an anti-fungal treatment, but this needs to be done in agreement with the buyers. A destructive test must be carried out on several fruits from each supplier, to inspect any internal spoilages and diseases. Both the export processors and their suppliers must be observant for heart rot in the fruits, where the flesh of the fruit is impacted. The risk of heart rot usually increases in the raining seasons. Pineapples are mostly exported by air freight and upon clearing the goods importers usually expect the fruits to remain within edible quality for another 10 days.



Raw pineapples awaiting processing

Papaya for ripe fruit

The most demanded papaya from Sri Lanka for ripe fruit is the Red Lady variety. Trees usually bear large fruits ranging from about 1.5 to 3 kg. It is heavily demanded in Maldives, UAE and other middle eastern countries. Papaya needs to be transported to the packing facility, wrapped in paper or clean cloth, to avoid abrasion damages. Handling at the farm and packing facilities need to be carried out with extreme caution to



avoid soil and sand particles damaging the fruit surface. Such damages may initially impact the aesthetic properties of the fruit, and later lead to spoilage by allowing microorganisms to enter through damaged areas. Therefore, spreading papaya on the facility floor should be avoided. Instead, vegetable crates, or clean mats must be used to store the fruits until processing begins. Papaya at the initial stage of ripening only must be selected for export. They can be identified with four narrow yellowish stripes running from tip of the fruit towards the stem. Fruits that are more ripened than this will not meet the quality specifications at the destination, as they may be overripe and sometimes spoilage initiated. It is important to source the fruits from a harvest free of mealy bugs and, remove any dirt and insects during sorting and cleaning. A fruit mesh must be used to protect the fruits, and in addition clean paper, clean cardboard dividers can be used to separate fruits and prevent them from moving inside the box. Packed fruit boxes must be handled with care, without throwing, or heavy pushing. The boxes must be well taped, using the type of tape indicated by the buyers. Packing staff must have a clear understanding of the long journey each fruit box needs to make, and be committed to careful sorting and packing. It is advisable to dedicate at least a 2-4 hours per month for training about hygienic cleaning, packing and shipping requirements.



Red Lady papaya packed in fruit mesh

Papaya for raw fruit

There is a reasonable demand in the export trade for small raw papaya to be used in cooking. Due to the presence of Sri Lankan and other Asian residents, the demand is high from the Middle East countries. It is understood that most of the

raw papaya is used during cooking of meats and the rest used in papaya based curries. A fruit of approx. 1 kg is preferred for this purpose, and accordingly suppliers have developed the supply chain in Sri Lanka to cater to this need. In Sri Lanka, Puttlam area is known to cultivate small papaya. The quality concerns mentioned for Red Lady is mostly applicable here as well. All efforts must be made to keep sand from damaging fruit surfaces and fruits must be transported and handled with care. It is acceptable to wrap these fruits with white paper, for export, but care must be taken not to use unclean paper soiled with food, dust and dirt, human hair, insects and any other material with objectionable odours. Most buyers prefer 9 kg net weight packed in agricultural mesh bags. It is also advisable to carry destructive testing to observe any diseases and other unacceptable quality concerns of the fruits.



Raw papaya for export

Mangoes

A wide variety of mangoes are available in Sri Lanka but the most demanded in export trade are Karthakolomban (KC) and Alphonso. Mango is a highly perishable fruit, hence the export value chain must be developed from the farm itself, according to buyer needs. Farmers must be educated on the need to pluck fruits with stem, not to damage by dropping on ground during harvesting and protect the skin and stem from spoilages. Suppliers must transport raw mango covered in paper or fruit mesh and stacked in vegetable crates. Gunny bags, poly propylene bags etc must not be used to transport mango for export, as it increases damage and ripening. It is also not acceptable to source mango from ordinary fruit markets to fill export orders, as these fruits have been heavily handled, and



exposed to high temperature in passage between traders. Mango is one of the fruits with highest damage reports and this may happen due to negligence throughout the supply chain. A special small fruit net must be sourced to cover the fruits, and ideally the packaging must be developed for the height of the mangoes so only one layer of fruits can be packed. When this is not affordable, mangoes can be packed with mesh and space in between fruits filled with clean papers and further separated with dividers. Mangoes must be packed at raw stage, and, kept at a temperature 22 – 24 o C until dispatch.

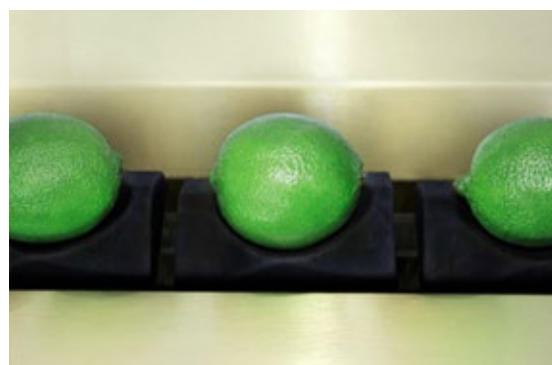
Lime

Lime is one of the fruits demanded in large volumes. Lime may be exported for the use at Mega markets or at tourism destinations. For mega markets which require large volumes, sea freight can be arranged in discussion with buyers. For tourism destinations, air freight orders can be delivered. Sourcing of lime for export must be very carefully done. Only lime of dark green colour, large in size (size as informed by buyers), without any black spots, no spoilage and dew spots must be accepted for export. A dew spot is a slightly off colour spot caused on the lime skin due to settling of dew on the fruits. Fruits showing such spots must not be selected for export, as during the export journey these spots become tender and help microorganisms to enter the fruit leading to spoilage of the fruit and adjacent ones as well. Sourcing needs to be done only from farmers who understand special quality requirements of the export trade. The sorting and packing facility must use a sorting device to select large fruits and reject small ones, and after that inspect for above quality requirements using manual labour. On average, only about 60-70% of the lime supplied to a facility may meet the quality requirements mentioned above. Therefore, adequate additional supply must be made available to complete an order. For eg. If the shipment needs 20 MT net weight lime, the facility may need to source about 34 MT of lime. It is also advisable have a pre-agreement with suppliers themselves to take the rejected lime or have a vendor ready to purchase it. Otherwise, the rejects will take the space in the facility obstructing sorting and packing activities. It is acceptable to use food grade wax coating

for lime, but it must be carried out only if agreed with buyers, and if required facilities are available. A wax coating would enable reduction of moisture loss from fruits, decrease the rate of respiration, and enhance the aesthetic appearance. If the shipment takes place through air freight, the packed boxes can be stored at 22-24 oC temperature (in the packing room), but if it is a larger shipment shifted by sea freight, then the boxes must be stored in the freight container at appx 12 oC and 85-90% humidity. The packing operation must be planned and completed within 2-3 days, with careful overnight monitoring of the freight containers. Otherwise, if longer time is taken before dispatch, it would impact the quality of fruits at the destination. If a packing facility plans to export lime by sea freight, it must be well planned, considering the extra space allocation, and additional labour requirements.



A lime sorter



Large green lime of export quality

Common vegetables

Most vegetables with less moisture percentage, eg. Brinjal, beans, green chili, lotus root, long



beans, ladies fingers, sweet potato, drumsticks, snake gourd, bitter gourd, bottle gourd etc can be cleaned, graded and packed in vented corrugated cartons. Vegetables need to be loosely packed leaving some air in the packages. All packed vegetables need to be kept at 22-24 oC until dispatch. Vegetables need to be spotless, and without any pest damages and spoilage. Any visible dirt and dust on vegetables must be cleaned and all vegetables must be inspected for insects. For vegetables such as carrots and cabbage, especially designed cane baskets can be used. Pumpkin, a hardy vegetable, can be packaged in long mesh bags.



Drumstick packed in long corrugated cartons

Lettuce

There is a wide variety of lettuces that have a demand in the export trade. Some of them are green lettuce, red lettuce, rocket lettuce, Romaine lettuce and iceberg lettuce. All lettuce needs to be carefully inspected for insects, snails, and slugs as they are grown in wet and cold climates. All damaged and spoiled leaves must be removed. Once sorting is over, the lettuce leaves must be allowed to ventilate on tables to evaporate water remaining on leaves. Lettuce can be exported in Styrofoam boxes having air vents. Packed boxes need to be kept open in a cold room maintained at 10 oC until dispatch time. At the time of loading, frozen gel ice needs to be placed in boxes adequately to maintain the cold chain until the journey ends.

Green leaves

Green leafy vegetables such as morning glory (kankung), amaranthus (mukunuwenna), and spinach also can be exported. Suppliers must be

made aware to supply very fresh leaves without insect damages so that it would not stress the sorting staff to inspect all the leaves. However, the sorting staff must be vigilant and inspect for worms, snails, slugs, insects, pest damages, weeds, grass and any other extraneous matter. If necessary, they may need to re-arrange leaf bundles according to buyer specifications. Sorting must be carried out in temperature controlled packing room (22-24 o C) as quickly as possible. Exposure to higher temperatures for longer time may cause leaves to begin ripening and wilting. Any excess water needs to be allowed to dry off before packing. Styrofoam boxes with vent holes are suitable for green leaves. Once the boxes are packed, they need to be held lids open, in a cold room of 10 oC until dispatch. Before dispatch frozen gel ice needs to be applied.

Manioc

Fresh manioc from Sri Lanka has a good demand in the Middle East, and large volumes are mostly sea freighted. The most important fact about sourcing manioc for export is that suppliers provide manioc without damages, and as fresh as they can manage, meeting packing timelines of the facility. Harvested manioc needs to be sorted and packed as fast as possible, and if a facility plans manioc packing for sea freight, an adequate sorting and packing staff and a dedicated space must be available. Manioc must be first sorted by inspecting for fresh and undamaged roots. Selected roots need to be washed with water to remove the soil, allowed to drain, and dipped in Billet Carbendazim antifungal solution. An adequate supply of sterilized coconut peat ('kohu bath') and rolls of polythene sourced according to size of the boxes must be available to start the packing. Place a sheet of polythene at the bottom of the corrugated box, and ensure this polythene is enough to cover the filled manioc from sides and top as well. Add a layer of coconut peat at the bottom, then a layer of prepared manioc, and again a layer of coconut peat. This could continue until the box is filled (usually two layers of manioc) and finally cover the manioc with a layer of coconut peat and cover the contents with the polythene. Clean processing tables must be made available to pack the boxes and tape, as the sorting, and washing of dirt can make the



area muddy and unclean. If the shipment is sea freighted, a freight container set at 5 oC and 85-90% humidity must be available at the premises, to load the packed boxes. Attention must be paid to relatively high amount of rejected manioc that may arise due to sorting, and its disposal needs to be planned. An adequate support needs to be available in the processing area to maintain its cleanliness. Depending on the order size, two or three days may be required to complete the packing, and raw material needs to be ordered in consultation with the volume that can be sorted and packed in a day.



Manioc packing for export

General Recommendations

To complete successful sorting and packing operations, it is imperative that the staff understands the stringent quality requirements of buyers. Constant, relevant training would help increase their awareness and commitment. The facility must be well maintained, and necessary certifications obtained. The exporters can share the feedback received on shipments during the training, and help the staff understand any shortcomings that they can correct, to improve the quality. Attention must also be paid to planned waste management, since the produce that do not meet export specifications will be 'rejects' and a part of the rejects may become waste.



Dr. Sujeewa Gunaratne
Immediate Past President, IFSTSL

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Minimizing foodborne illnesses through Food Safety Management System Certification



underreported public health problem. People older than the age of fifty and those who are with reduced immunity such as the patients diagnosed with diabetes, cancer, HIV infected, liver or kidney diseases etc., at a greater risk for hospitalization and death from intestinal pathogens commonly transmitted through contaminated food.

Foodborne illness is an illness caused by consumption of contaminated food and beverages. Food contamination refers to the presence of harmful chemicals or disease causing microorganisms in food, which can cause illnesses after consuming the contaminated food and beverages.

Food and beverages get contaminated through variety of mechanisms. Some of them are due to inadequate hand washing, cross-contamination, inadequate storage temperature, inadequate cooking temperature and contamination of food by animal waste such as urine and feces.

Do you know what is Food Danger Zone?

Foodborne bacteria can grow most rapidly in the range of temperature 40°F – 140°F (40°C – 60°C). The number of bacteria becomes double in number within twenty minutes' time in this range of temperature which is more favorable for its growth. This range of temperature is often called "Food Danger Zone". It is not suitable to keep food in this range of temperature which is more conducive for its contamination for more than two hours.

Common symptoms of foodborne illnesses are vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever and chills. Main causes of foodborne illnesses are bacteria, fungi, viruses, parasites and some of the chemical agents. Those are so called food safety hazards. A food safety hazard refers to any agent which has a potential to cause adverse health consequences for consumers. The top five foodborne illnesses are caused from having food and beverages contaminated with Norovirus,



Salmonella spp, Clostridium perfringens, Campylobacter and Staphylococcus aureus.

What is Food Safety Management System Certification?

A Food Safety Management System Certification is a group of best practices and procedures put in place to control risks and hazards actively throughout the food and beverage manufacturing process. It helps to ensure applicable legal compliance. Food Safety Management Systems aim at to reduce probability of occurrence (POO) and Severity of Adverse Health Effect (SAHE) of food safety hazards in food and beverages. This ensures the food and beverages safe at the point of consumption.

HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) is a systematic preventive approach to food safety from biological, chemical and physical hazards. There are seven HACCP principles which help control of food safety hazards in a process of food and beverage manufacturing.

The seven HACCP principles are included in the international standards FSSC 22000, ISO 22000 and Sri Lanka Standard for HACCP (SLS 1266). During the application of HACCP principles in a food manufacturing process the food business operator can identify possible causes of foodborne illnesses relevant to the process. The food business operator shall do a comprehensive hazard analysis, risk assessment and identification of Critical Control Points (CCPs). A critical control point is a step at which control can be applied and is essential to prevent or eliminate an identified food safety hazard or reduce it to an acceptable level, which does not harm the consumer. Then the food business operator shall identify critical limits for identified hazards at the CCPs. He shall set up suitable monitoring measures, corrections and corrective actions for deviations in the determined CCPs. Food business operator can verify the Food Safety Management System of the organization time-to-time. It helps the food business operator to reduce foodborne illnesses throughout his Food Safety Management System.

What is ISO 22000?

ISO 22000 is a standard developed by the International Organization for Standardization

(ISO). It sets out the requirements for a food safety management system within the food chain. It maps out what an organization needs to do to demonstrate its ability to control food safety hazards in order to ensure that food and beverages manufactured by them are safe for consumption. It can be used by any organization regardless of its size or position in the food chain. The current version is ISO 22000:2018.

FSSC 22000

Food Safety System Certification (FSSC) 22000 is an internationally accepted certification scheme owned by FSSC 22000 Foundation. This scheme is based on a combination of ISO 22000 standard and additional requirements. FSSC 22000 certification scheme is a Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) approved scheme.

SLS 1266

SLS 1266 standard has been developed by the Sri Lanka Standards Institution for HACCP certification, based on the Dutch HACCP standard.

Other benefits of Food Safety Management System certification are:-

- Money saving
- Avoid food poisoning
- Ensures compliance with the law
- Organizes process to produce safe food and beverages
- Increase food safety standards
- Increase food quality standards
- Promoting team work and efficiency
- Due diligence defence in court
- Increase market share

How to obtain Food Safety Management System to a food manufacturing organization?

- Develop your management system based on a Food Safety Management System standard.

The food business operator can select the suitable Food Safety Management System Certification standard based on the nature, complexity, customers' needs and expectations or as per applicable legal requirements.



- Implementation of the Food Safety Management System.

The food business operator can review the requirements in the relevant standard and implement within his organization.

- Verify that your system is effective.

The food business operator can do an internal audit based on the applicable standard to verify the effectiveness of the implemented Food Safety Management System within the organization.

- Register for certification in a recognized certification body

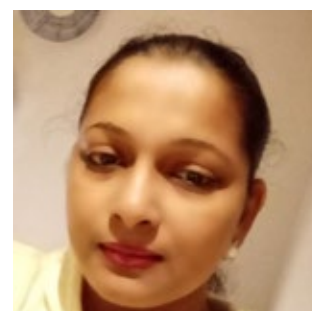
The food business operator can select recognized certification body to proceed with the certification process.

- Obtain an accredited Food Safety Management System Certification


The food business operator can select Sri Lanka Standards Institution (SLSI) as the Certification Partner, because SLSI is the government Certification Body which has accreditation status

from both RvA, the Netherlands (Accreditation Body of the Netherlands) and Sri Lanka Accreditation Board (SLAB). SLSI has more than thirty-five experienced food scientists who are well qualified for conducting Food Safety audits. SLSI is the sole member body of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) representing Sri Lanka.

Any interested food business operator can inquire the Systems Certification Division of the Sri Lanka Standards Institution for more details. The application, fee structure and other relevant documented information are available in the SLSI web site (www.slsi.lk). Contact details – Director (Systems Certification) Tel./Fax: 011-2672613. Email: dsc@slsi.lk.




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Chris Barnett

Sri Lanka Food Processes Association has proud heritage and well-known reputation over two decades of excellence with the vision of building a close working partnership with the industry as apex body. SLFPA has organized and conducted a training program on food safety improvement program and hot topics to be followed by food handlers attached to small, medium, and large food processors in the country.

The objective of SLFPA in organizing this session was to support the stakeholders in food industry by providing an opportunity to uplift standards through capability development. Furthermore, following main topics were discussed in the conference.

- GHP, GMP & Regulations pertaining to food premises
- Requirements for a food preparation and handlers
- Foodborne illnesses and how to avoid them
- Best practices in food industry.

First program has been launched on virtual platform on 27th, 28th October and 2nd, 3rd November this year to help public health innovate

in parallel to overcome COVID 19 pandemic challenges while consumer interest, trends and challenges on safe cooked foods in Sri Lanka are intensifying.

A large number of participants from various food processing entities attended the conference. The presenters of the event were Dr. Sujatha Pathirage Consultant Clinical Microbiologist, Mr. Chris Barnett Head of Training Gamma Pizza Craft (Pvt) Ltd., Mr. Lasantha Ratnayake Assistant Secretary of SLFPA and Mr. Amila Weerasinghe Assistant Treasurer of SLFPA. The Platinum Sponsors were - CW Mackie PLC, Nestle Lanka PLC & Colombo Food Solutions, and Co-00. Sponsors were Country Style Foods (Pvt) Ltd., Convenience Foods Lanka (Pvt) Ltd., & CBL Foods Solutions.

On behalf of SLFPA the conference organizing committee headed by Mr. Malik de Alwis and Mr. Thusith Wijesinghe wish to thank all expert Government resource personnel, industry expert resource personnel, participants and sponsors for the support extended to complete the conference successfully.



2021

Processed Food Industry in Sri Lanka/Food Processors Association

Submitted by the Sri Lanka Food Processors Association

The mission of the Sri Lanka Food Processors Association is to make a useful contribution towards the Budget proposal of the Government of Sri Lanka for the fiscal year 2021/22 specially in the areas and Activities related to the Processed Food, Agriculture & Agri Business sectors, with the view of generating Sustainable economic growth in Sri Lanka & by helping to establish and expand commercially and environmentally sustainable agro enterprises.

The local industry in relation to agriculture & Agri business faces innumerable hardships in order to make their efforts & enterprises economically viable & profitable, more both these entities currently

Is unable to attract the youth to indulge in Agriculture as a profession.

Funding is a major issue, it is not an easy task for those in the this sector to generate funds to make their Enterprise viable & profitable specially at SME & micro levels .Hence the impending Budget needs to be geared at addressing these issue and finding solutions. We have to create an atmosphere & environment for Sri Lankans especially the youth to be more enterprising and step out to contribute towards the prosperity & economic development of Sri Lanka.

This is to be done by providing agro entrepreneurs, farmers, and other stake holders with a variety of Technical, Managerial ,Marketing, Food Quality & Security, Certification & Financial Management services & systems., with both public & private sector participation.

The results envisaged will include higher yield & output, Adoption of new technologies, increased



sales both locally & globally, better income & Profit, increased employment and improved and enhanced global competitiveness and initiatives. This would entail implementation of demand driven agribusiness Development projects through integrated assistance that supports close linkages between Production, Post harvest Handling & Transport, Processing, Marketing & Policy reforms. This integration will culminate in the overall success Agriculture and Agri business, profitability & prices both for the cultivator , producer & the consumer.

The SLFPA has involved itself in the creation and formation of Industry Associations & Advocacy groups Which has contributed immensely towards the success of the various sectors in Trade, Commerce, and Industry & Agriculture. It is with all these factors relating to the afore said sectors in mind that proposals are made for inclusion In the Budgetary proposals for the fiscal year 2021/22.

We have mainly highlighted below proposals

1. It is important to have “National Destination brand” for the Food industry to build a comparative advantage. Brands play an important role in driving and growing industry .

Strong destination brands strengthen the platforms for their industries to market their products and build competitive advantage . Sri Lanka needs branding for all its industry to thrive .

2. Single focal point for private sector state interaction

Too many Government Institutions regulating one industry is a major concern. The industry and stake holders do not have a single interaction point . Government need to update and change the Laws & Regulations which are outdated and subject to unethical practice.

3. Lack of access to Realtime information and accurate data for long term stable planning

Establish a database of farm information and farmers’ network along with a management

system through a PPP project with an international or local IT Company.

If it was made mandatory for trading through this platform then all information needed to manage planting patterns, link markets, provide input supply and extension services while providing pricing data to farmers will be easily available and accessible on time giving them the opportunity to make better informed choices.

The transparency that will be created to a great extent to eliminate exploitation of farmers ,giving them better financial stability and the prospects of modernization will also motivate youth to choose agriculture as a profession.

4. Lack of access to affordable long-term capital creating issues to access modern technology

Lack of flexibility in Sri Lankan banking systems and averse to risk taking to support to address the needs of agribusiness.

SLFPA suggest to set up an equity investment fund with the support of multilateral agencies to provide capital on flexible terms. The Funds need to work with smaller regional organizations to be accessed by rural communities in agriculture.

Such a fund needs to be of long term of around 10 years. With cheap capital available around the world, it would be a good time to promote such a fund. In this year budget government has taken steps to address this issue and proposed few schemes to fund SME and micro-organizations

5. Cost of Marketing channels , Tax and credit conditions affecting working capital

The 30 % margin + 8 % VAT + Marketing costs takes away 50 % of the Retail price from Food manufacturers . In addition, 60 to 70 Day credit practice in the market’s destabilizers the working capital situations of SME’S .



It is recommended that Lanka Sathosa offers better terms bringing in Good practice and creating healthy competitions .

Assist SLFPA to open Antenna shops with STC in Cities promoting Locally processed foods .

Intervention and regulation of practice

6. **Post harvest loss – 40%-50% of perishables**

from Transport : Sri Lankan railway system covers north, south and east . The available Infrastructure is depleted with minimum investment covering, extensions to Economic centers such as Dambulla and could be still available for good use .

OUR Suggestion : Improve the rail way network which could travel at higher speeds .

Extend and connect the economic centers around the country (Keppettipola, N'Eliya, Kuruduwatte – Nawalapitiya, Dambulla, thabuththegama, Veyangoda) with the Colombo Wholesale market .

Containerize the transport of all food stuff with FDI'S in building of Container transport terminals and operating rolling stock on a BOT basis .

Set up cool room facilities in all these centers

7. **Price pressure due to unreasonable & poor regulatory systems creating unethical practice risking food safety**

The regulatory system should be looked at and modernized with close consultation of the industry .

Our consumers are educated lets give them good labeling and let them make an informed choice

8. **Immediate Transform from Conventional system to Organic systems**

Some of us are into Certified Organic production which is different to present organic drive.

We see as declining yields by immediate shifting from conventional systems to organic systems is a reality. Therefore, there is a likely chance that many food products would not be accessible due to less availability and less affordable due to higher prices, to a larger community in Sri Lanka.

Also, there is a growing concern of the availability of raw materials for the food processors in right price and quality for further processing. Some of our industries were heavily depended on exports and availability and the affordability of the raw materials is became a great concern.

We are very much grateful to the government for their decision lift the fertilizer as well as agro chemical ban.

9. **Import Restrictions**

Difficult to import some of the raw materials, Packaging materials, spare parts of the machinery to the country.

Also now we have to wait in long que to send the foerign currency for our input material purchase

Some of them are Food Preparations, Food Ingredients, some emulsifiers, Blends, Machinery spare parts, Palm oil, Sugar, Salt, Black gram, Finger millet, full fat soya floor turmeric etc.

Also importation of processing as well as their spare parts also difficult to import and this leads to low productivity as well as less efficiency in manufacturing.

10. **Export Drive of Processed food**

The trade secretaries of the consulate officers are expected to bring the information to notice of the respective food exporters. Streamlining of the Consulates – Trade Secretaries – Department of Commerce system to ensure regular feedback directly to industries is very important.

Use the same system to promote Sri Lankan



processed food in their countries actively.

11. Testing facility for exports

Food need to be tested for food safety parameters by accredited laboratories to establish that they meet MRL established by different importing countries.

The test methods are becoming advanced regularly, and the techniques become more sophisticated with time. Although there are a few accredited testing laboratories in Sri Lanka, and their minimum detection limits are identified in the certificates issued to each of the laboratories by the Sri Lanka Accreditation Board, the system does not appear to deliver results at required low levels of concentrations due to weaknesses of the testing systems.

Lanka Accreditation Board has to get involved and increase the amount of test facilities, quality and quantity of the testing by closely working with government and private accredited laboratories.

12. Export rebait scheme

Export rebait scheme – We propose to implement export rebait scheme of 8-10% which will be paid in LKR in order to encourage exports and keep the input material price subsidized.

13. More coconuts for export

Government should implement a mechanism to minimize the usage of coconut for domestic purposes and to make more kernels available for value addition aiming export income.

This requires allowing genuine palm oil as a substitute (alone or as a 50:50 mix). Palm oil is the cheapest in the global market and used widely.

14. Export Processing Zone in Hambanthota

Suggestion for an export processing zone dedicated for food processing next to the Hambanthota port where our exporters can import tea, fish, coconut from other countries for further processing and re-export, undisturbing the local legal frame work.

Again we are very happy for the government proposals to have couple of new export processing zones.

15. Economical & Timely shipping for exporters

Request government to charter a ship which is sailing one a weak touching main ports of Europe/USA

Make necessary action to free more containers for shipping

Ware house facility for exporters to store the products until they get containers to load.

Nishan Perera
President - SLFPA





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