“Food System of Sri Lanka: Self - Sufficiency, Challenges and Future Cooperation with Finland”

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OVERVIEW OF SRI LANKAN FOOD SYSTEM

Sri Lanka's food system is based on small family farms, home gardens, and ancient tank irrigation. Rice, coconut, vegetables, fruits, spices, and fish form the core of daily nutrition. The system combines household self -sufficiency with commercial agriculture and exports such as tea. National goals focus on food security, rural livelihoods, and sustainable development.

1. General Overview

- Tropical monsoon climate enables year -round production
- Main foods: rice, coconut, vegetables, fruits, fish, spices
- Three agro -climatic zones shape farming systems
- Strong role of home gardens and small farms
- Mix of subsistence and commercial agriculture

2.Goals of the Food System

- Ensure food security & self -sufficiency
- Reduce rural poverty
- Sustainable and climate -smart farming
- Develop export sectors (tea, coconut, spices)
- Improve nutrition & food safety

3. Primary Production

- Mostly smallholder farms (<2 ha)
- Ancient tank irrigation supports rice and other agriculture products
- Family labor + hired daily workers
- Mix of traditional and modern methods
- Income gap between small & large farmers

TRADE, CONSUMERS & FOOD SECURITY

Food trade relies on weekly fairs and small local shops, connecting farmers directly with consumers. Diets are based on rice, coconut, vegetables, and fish, with strong use of home -grown food. Sri Lanka is self -sufficient in most fresh foods but depends on imports for wheat, milk powder, and sugar.

4. Food Trade & Retail

- Supermarkets mainly in big cities
- Weekly fairs (pola) main sales channel
- Exports: tea, spices, coconut, seafood
- Domestic focus for rice & vegetables
- Prices strongly influenced by middlemen

5. Consumers & Public Services

- Rice and curry as daily meal pattern
- Coconut used in most dishes
- Nutrition challenges : anemia, child malnutrition
- Schools don't supply meals but having maternal and infants nutrition programs

6. Self -Sufficiency & Traditions

- Sufficient: rice, coconut, vegetables, fish
- Imports: wheat, milk powder, sugar
- Yala & Maha – two harvests per year
- Families store rice for six months
- Use traditional preservation methods

Technological Innovations in agriculture

“ Sri Lanka’s food system is built on strong household self -sufficiency and traditional knowledge. By combining these strengths with Finnish technology, education, and climate -smart solutions, a more resilient and fair food future can be created.”

7. Strengths

- Household self -sufficiency in rice and coconut
- Yala & Maha seasons ensure two harvests/year
- Ancient tank irrigation network
- Rich diversity of crops and fruits
- Strong food culture and local markets
- High export value in tea and spices
- Traditional storage for long -term food security

8. Challenges

- Low prices received by small farmers
- Limited access to machinery and credit
- Post-harvest losses and weak chains
- Climate risks – droughts, floods, irregular rain
- Dependence on imports (wheat, milk powder
- Power of middlemen in price formation

9. Development Solutions

- Farmer cooperatives and direct sales channels
- Affordable small machinery and drip irrigation
- Community storage and processing centers
- Climate -resilient seed varieties
- Local value addition: coconut, spices, fruits
- Women and youth rural enterprises

10. Cooperation with Finland

- Student & expert exchange programs
- Precision farming and digital advisory tools
- Dairy production and milk quality systems
- Renewable energy for farms (solar/biogas)
- Cold storage and food processing technology
- Water -saving irrigation management

Thank You!