

ECONOMIC AND AGRONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS IN THE PROFITABLE LOCAL PRODUCTION OF ONIONS

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ONION is one of the oldest and the most extensively used vegetables. It is cultivated in almost every country where agriculture has been developed, and constitutes an important article of food. There are reasons for its wide popularity. It not only contains valuable nutrients but is credited with remarkable medicinal properties. Besides, it has the great merit of keeping quality for a fairly long period and power to withstand rough handling during transportation which has secured for it a place in international commerce.

There is an extensive use of onion all over Ceylon. It is popular in rural as well as urban areas and finds a ready market. There are chiefly two kinds of onions available in local markets. The first is known as Bombay onion which derives its name from the port from which it is shipped to Colombo. It is produced chiefly in Nasik and Poona Districts of the Bombay Presidency.

The Bombay onion is fairly large-sized and round-shaped and is mostly of light-red colour, but sometimes bulbs of silvery-white colour are also found in the market. Silvery-white coloured bulbs are of mild flavour and are valued comparatively high. The red-coloured bulbs which are most commonly found in the local market are fairly strong-flavoured. On the whole, Bombay onion fetches a comparatively higher price than shallots in the local market and is more appreciated.

The shallot has a compound bulb splitting into bulblets which cohere at the base. This bulb is small-sized, red in colour, strong in flavour and not so round in shape as the Bombay onion. Shallot is grown to a fair extent locally in the Jaffna and up-country districts. The requirements of shallots in the Island are supplied by such local produce as well as by imports from the port of Tuticorin which is the exporting centre for the produce of South India.

It is rather difficult to find out in exact terms the total amounts of onions annually consumed in this country. Exact figures of local production are not available. The following statement