

RESEARCH NOTE

VALUE FOR YOUR MONEY

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Nutritious foods are the foundation of good health. Food is the major source to provide nutrients. The foods consume today plays a major part in shaping one's destiny tomorrow, as an individual, as a family and as a nation. Good health means more than just the physical well-being of a person. Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Ministry of Women's Affairs in year 2002 initiated a Home Garden Project focusing on women of low and middle level income groups in selected Assistant Government Agent's (AGA) divisions. The objective of the project was to ensure consumption of nutritious meals in the households thereby to increase the nutritious status of these families. Women's Agricultural Extension programme of the Extension and Training Division of the Department of Agriculture coordinated the training of project beneficiaries.

An exercise was done during the training session with a sample of 720 trainees in 12 AGA divisions in 2003 to assess the knowledge on foods. Each trainee was asked to name, vegetables and fruits what they thought as best sources vitamins (A and C) and minerals (iron) in the Sri Lankan diet. The market values and the nutritional values of these identified sources were calculated with them. The project beneficiaries of each training session (N= 60-50/AGA division) were divided into 05-06 groups on village basis (same geographical location) An account was taken of the fruits and vegetables which were freely available in trainees' localities. Nutritional values of these were compared with the results of the first exercise.

It was found out that there is a growing tendency to consume prestigious foods rather than for foods for health and nutrition. It was also revealed that the criterion to create prestige of a food was the price. No specific, continuous channel exists in village level to obtain information on nutritious foods for the whole family.