

Impacts of the 2015 Ban on Glyphosate in Sri Lanka – Key Findings from Abeywickrama (2018) Field Study

Loss of access to glyphosate adversely impacts growers of all sizes in terms of economic loss, product efficacy, safety, and crop production and marketability – but endangers smallholders most of all.

The Realities of Farming – and the Criticality of Glyphosate to the Livelihood of Farmers and Sri Lanka As a Whole

- Glyphosate is an essential tool for Sri Lankan growers. Prior to the ban, over 96% of farmers used glyphosate for weed control.
- The livelihoods of small-scale farmers depend on tools such as glyphosate to maximize farming efficiency – over 94% of Sri Lankan growers have farming as their only source of income.
- Nearly 10% of Sri Lanka's entire population is engaged in tea farming, for which glyphosate is critical for cultivation.
- Tea is Sri Lanka's most important export, accounting for nearly 20% of all Sri Lankan exports.
- Sri Lanka has had the goal of increasing domestic food/feed crop production and reducing import reliance – but the ban on glyphosate and resulting lost productivity has significantly impeded this initiative.

The Glyphosate Ban Has Significantly Increased Grower Costs – and Economic Pain

- The ban has imposed significant economic costs on growers of all operation sizes – but smallholders have been disproportionately affected.
- In large tea plantations the cost of weeding has increased more than threefold.
- Without glyphosate as a legal means of efficient weed control, growers have had to resort to increased manual weed management, increasing machinery costs (+Rs 12.500/ha) and labor costs (+Rs 2.5000/ha)
- Moreover, the increased need for machinery has led to local supply shortages – which have disproportionately impacted smallholders with limited working capital.
- Increased manual or machine weeding has damaged drip irrigation systems (e.g. banana cultivation in Hambantota), exacerbating the cost of repair/replacement.
- With more intense weed pressure, growers have needed to apply more expensive selective herbicides.
- Over 90% of corn farmers reported increased costs for weed control.
- Among growers in the Anuradhapura District, 63% reported extreme increases in the cost of weed control.
- Among tea farmers, 57% reported increases in the cost of weed control.

The Glyphosate Ban Has Enabled Illegal Black Market Sales – and Endangered Growers

- The ban has been ineffective in removing glyphosate from the market and has endangered growers by enabling a black market.
- About 50% of farmers (69% in Anuradhapura) are using unregistered glyphosate procured through illegal channels.
- The content of black market formulations is unassured both in terms of safety and effectiveness as there is no party responsible for ensuring product quality.
- By having to purchase glyphosate on the black market, growers have seen the price per 4-liter container increase by 300% -350% from Rs 4.000 pre-ban to Rs 12.000 - 14.000 during the ban.

The Glyphosate Ban Has Limited the Productivity, Quality, and Marketability of Sri Lankan Crops

- With decreased access to glyphosate, growers have resorted to inefficient alternate practices that have decreased crop extent and yield.
- Without glyphosate for control, pressure from weeds such as *Cyprus rotundus* (Kalanduru) has limited chili cultivation.
- Over 35% of corn growers reported lower yields, crop damage, and/or decreased quality of harvest.
- 24% of tea growers reported reduced yields.
- The ban on glyphosate has necessitated the use of alternative herbicides in tea cultivation – but to maintain ample weed control, larger quantities of these chemicals must be used.
- Increased herbicide application in tea presents the potential of crossing residue limits, damaging brand equity of “Ceylon Tea” and creating the potential for rejections of tea exports.
- Due to higher costs of cultivation, 89% of smallholder corn farmers and 73% of larger corn farmers have reduced cultivated area – reducing Sri Lanka's domestic production and reversing a trend of decreasing import reliance.