



International Journal of Research Publications Volume 4 – Issue. 1, May 2018

Status of Principal Agricultural Crops in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Paddy, tea, rubber and coconut termed as principal agricultural crops contribute substantial percentage of GDP for agricultural sector. The objectives of this study are to find the trend of percentage share of agriculture sector to GDP and share of principal agricultural crops to Agricultural GDP from 1956 to 2016 and study the production and the land extent of principal agricultural crops over the period. The study uses the secondary data which was gathered from Central Bank of Sri Lanka Annual Reports and Department of Census and Statistics. The data was initially tabulated and after that graphs were produced and based on the detected patterns certain inferences were made. The proportion share of GDP of agriculture sector was nearly 45% in 1950 and touched 7% in 2016 where it showed a diminishing trend. Similarly, contribution of principal crops also displayed a decreasing contribution. The percentage portion of percentage share contribution of all four principal agricultural crops presented a lessening trend whereas paddy decreased significantly. The production of tea and area under cultivation continued at a certain level since 2006 and detected a considerable decline in 2016 as a result of supply and demand factors together. Production of rubber showed a rising trend from 2006 and reached its peak in 2012 and thereafter it declined significantly in each year. The production of coconut and extent of cultivation remained at the same level with regular fluctuation. Principal agricultural crops become an unpleasant venture for farmers related to other field crops.

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Key words: Principal Agricultural Crops, GDP, Production

1. Introduction

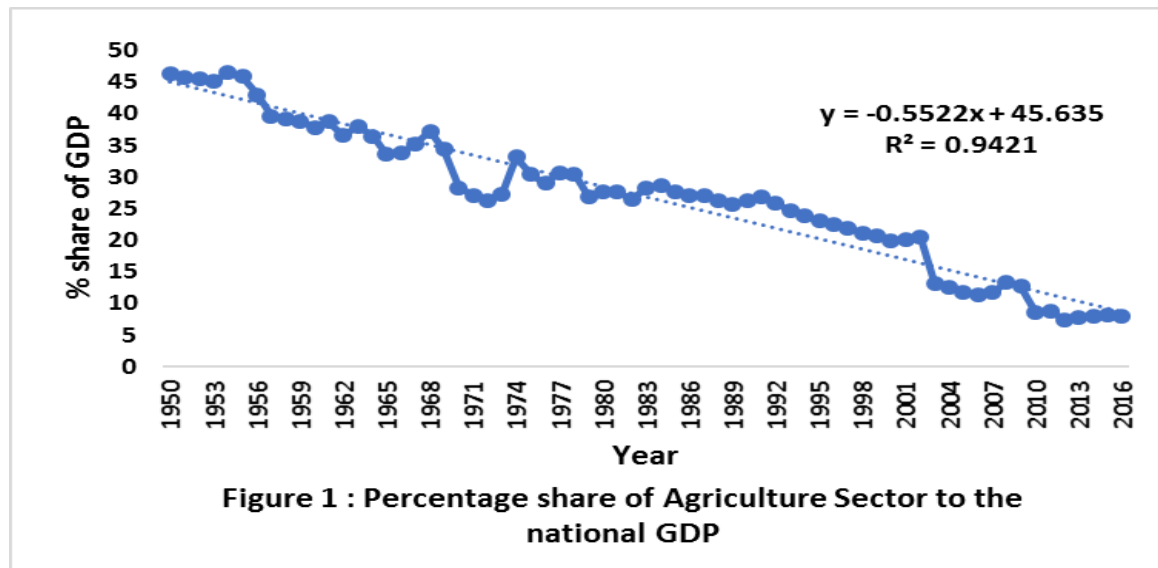
Progress in agriculture sector may be well judged by the surge in agricultural production over a period. Paddy, tea, rubber and coconut are the principal agricultural crops in Sri Lanka which contribute significant proportion to GDP through agriculture sector. Maintaining a self-sufficiency ratio above 95 percent has already been achieved for paddy sector (Ekanayake, 2007). Subsistence food crops are imperative components of the nourishment in most of the developing countries (Qaim, 2011). Comparative share of agriculture to the national GDP ever deteriorating over the last six decades (CBSL, 2016). Within this context, the objectives of this study are to i) identify the trend of percentage share of agriculture sector to GDP over last six decades (ii) detect the contribution of principal crops to the percentage of agriculture sector to the GDP and (iii) examine the production and the land extent of principal agricultural crops.

2. Methodology

The study uses the secondary data which was collected from various issues of Central Bank of Sri Lanka Annual reports and Department of Census and Statistics. The data is first tabulated and then generated graphs and based on the observed patterns certain inferences are made.

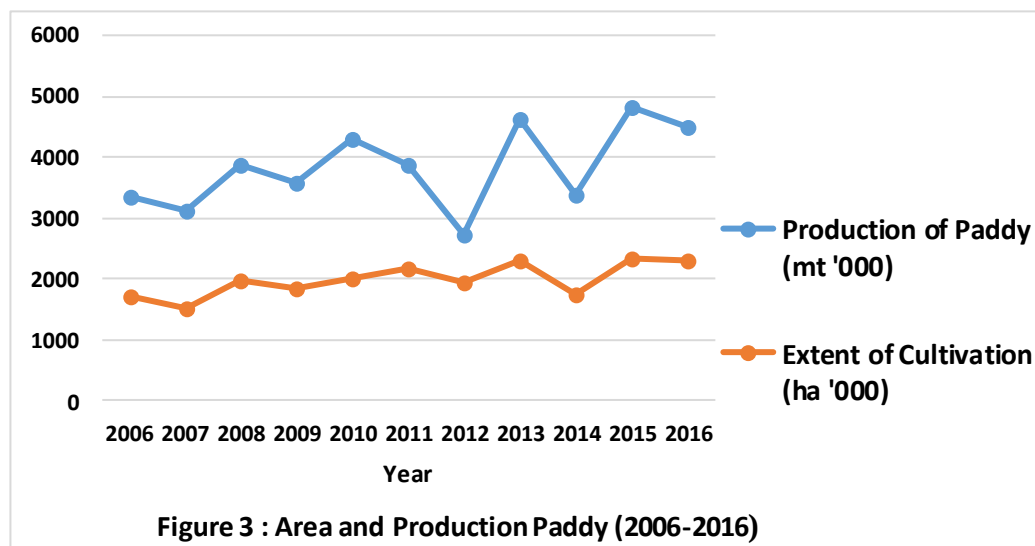
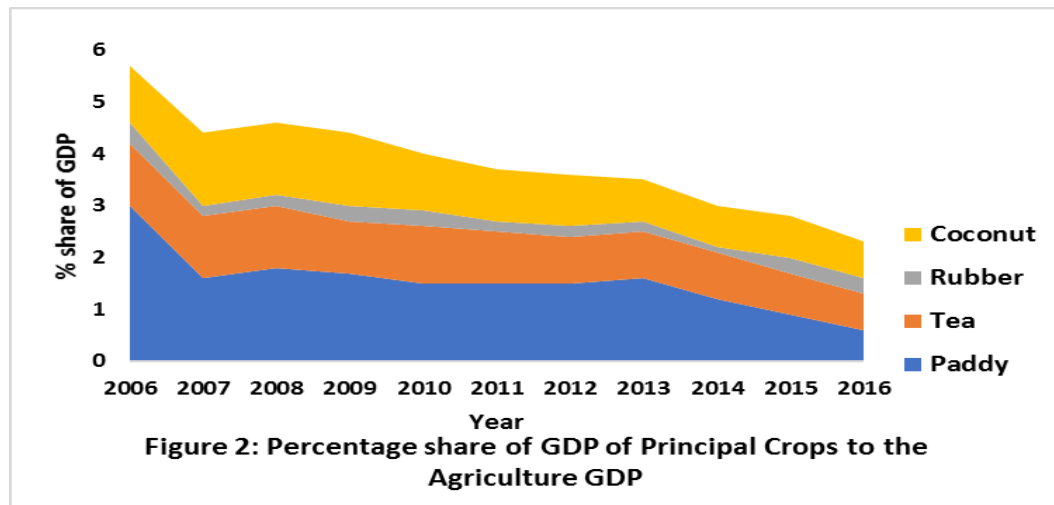
3. Results and Discussion

It can be seen from the Figure 1 that contribution of agriculture sector to national GDP has decreased continuously since 1950. The percentage share of agriculture was just above 45% in 1950 and the figure showed a drastic reduction over the last six decades and reached approximately 7% in 2016.



Further the agriculture sector was observed in detail and the contributions of principal agricultural crops were graphed. As depicted in Figure 2, the major contributor to the GDP through agriculture sector is paddy and it declined marginally over last decade. In 2016 paddy, tea and coconut contribute to equal share while rubber pays to very low amount. All four principal agricultural crops showed a decreasing trend whereas paddy decreased significantly.

Even though the contribution of principal crops to the agriculture GDP is declining, the production of each crops stagnated with small fluctuations. The production of staple food paddy showed an increasing trend with frequent fluctuation (Figure 3). Contrastingly, the production of paddy declined 8.3% due to bumper harvest in 2016. At the same time the net extent of harvested also decreased and this led to considerable reduction in the paddy yield (CBSL, 2016).



The production of tea and area under cultivation remained at a certain level over the nine years since 2006 (Figure 4). It is observed that production of tea declined as a result of both supply and demand factors in 2016. Even if international market environments improve, inflexibilities in the internal supply and growing costs of production could make it challenging for the domestic tea industry to secure the full profit.

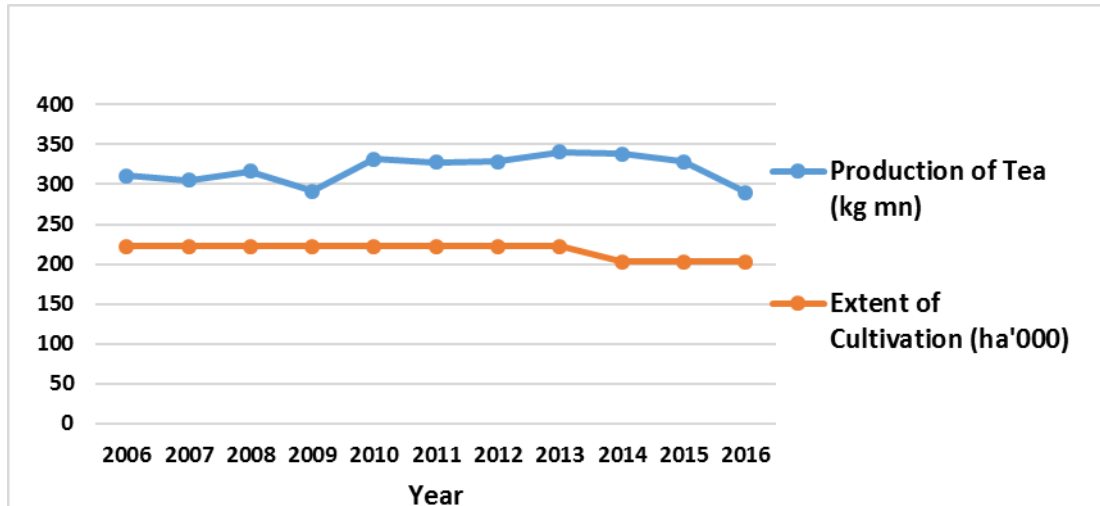


Figure 4 : Area and Production of Tea (2006-2016)

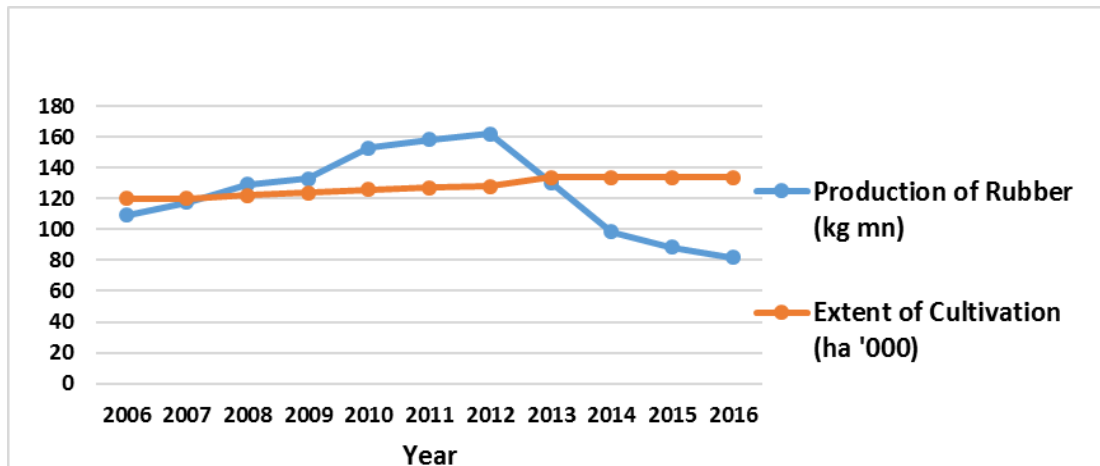
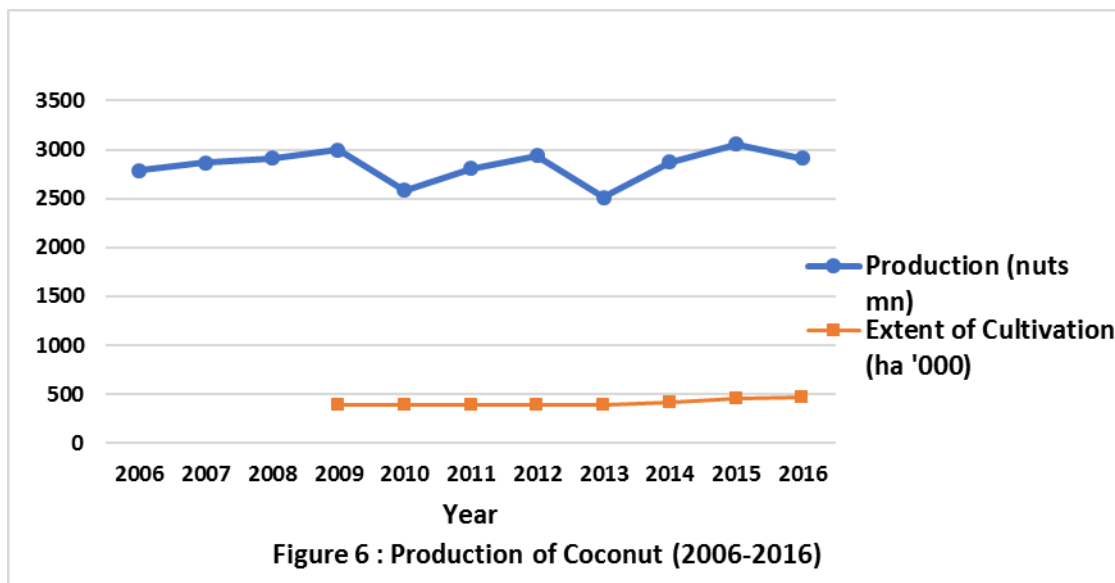


Figure 5 : Area and Production of Rubber (2006-2016)



It can be observed that the production of rubber was showed a climbing trend from 2006 and reached its peak in 2012 (Figure 5). Thereafter it declined significantly in each year. The decline in production of rubber in 2016 (CBSL) was due to the reduction of both the extent under tapping and the number of tapping days, in response to lower prices primarily in the smallholder sector. The production of coconut remained at the same level with frequent fluctuation while area of cultivation stagnated approximately 500,000 ha. It reached its highest in 2015 and declined in the last year. The decrease in the coconut production was mainly due to the low rainfall received in main coconut growing areas in 2016. Even though total production of agricultural crops has been increased marginally or remained at the same level, the percentage share of GDP of agriculture sector showed a decreasing trend. This may due to surge in productivity in other sectors.

4. Conclusions:

Principal agricultural crops are becoming an unattractive venture for farmers compared to other field crops. Therefore, the development of principal agricultural crops in Sri Lanka has been rather on the diminishing side except for rubber. Paddy cultivation has declined significantly in last three years mainly due to prevalence of unfavourable weather. Further it can be seen that extent of cultivation for tea, rubber and coconut maintained at the same level because of adverse weather and decreased in demand for primary sector such as raw materials. Further research is needed to find potential high yielding crop varieties and value added products especially for tea, rubber and coconut in which Sri Lanka can strive in the future.

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