

# Development of Food Hygiene Surveillance System in Plantation Sector, Sri Lanka

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## Objective

To develop a food hygiene surveillance system to improve food safety measures within food establishments in the plantation sector of Sri Lanka.

## Introduction

Wholesome food in adequate quantities is essential to human beings for their existence (1). However, diseases spread due to contaminated food are a common problem throughout the world and an important cause of reduced economic productivity (2,3). Food borne illness can, therefore, be considered a major international health problem and a significant cause of economic loss (4,5). Approximately 10 to 20% of food-borne disease outbreaks cause due to contamination by the food handlers. In Sri Lanka, information about food hygiene practices in plantation sector is scarce. Therefore, this study was designed as a preliminary study to identify hygiene practices in food processing in the plantation sector for the establishment of a surveillance system in Sri Lanka.

## Methods

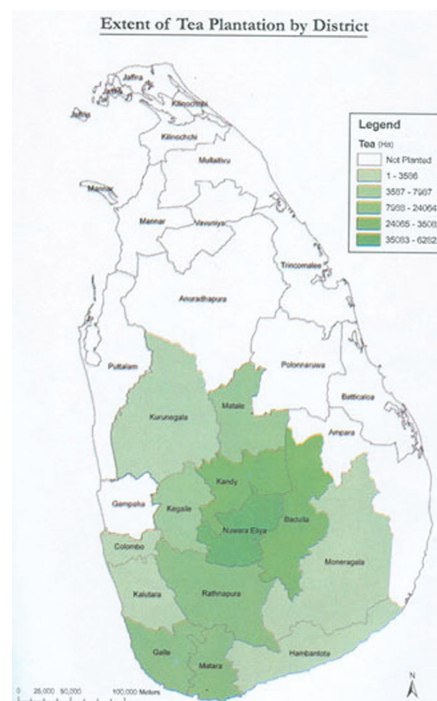
This cross-sectional study was carried out in tea plantation sector in Kandy, Sri Lanka from July to September 2013. Information regarding sanitary conditions, hygiene behavior, education status and de-worming date was obtained from food handlers using structured and pre-tested questionnaire. The data was analyzed with the SPSS version 17 statistical software.

## Results

375 food handlers from 18 to 53 years were enrolled. 59.6% of them had primary education or below whereas others had secondary education. Majority (91.3%) wash their hands with soaps after the use of toilets while only 16% wash with soap before meals. When food handing, 58% wash their hands always with soaps while others wash rarely. 52% of them wash vegetables with water and 48% used salt water to wash vegetables prior to preparing the meals. 66% of them had a habit of eating raw vegetables and only 32% trim their nails in regular pattern. More than half of food handlers (54%) wash equipments and tools with soap rarely before and after food handling while others use soaps every time. Only 6% of them undergo regular deworming treatment.

## Conclusions

This study revealed that knowledge of food hygiene practices among food handlers is poor. Community - Health education programs, promoting better food hygiene and improved sanitation should be considered, when planning a food hygiene surveillance system.



## Keywords

Food hygiene Surveillance; Sri Lanka; Food borne illness

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