Marketing of local organic food: a case of urban Sri Lanka

S. H. P. Malkanthi[1*], P. Sivashankar[2]
[1 & 2]Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, Belihuloya, Sri Lanka
[*]E-mail: malkanthi@agri.sab.ac.lk

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Abstract

This study aimed to assess the marketing of locally produced organic food in capital cities of six urban districts in Sri Lanka – Colombo, Galle, Gampaha, Kandy, Kurunegala, and Rathnapura. First, a situation analysis of the organic food markets was conducted to find out the existing market places and their nature. This was followed by a consumer survey for a sample of 600 consumers, from November 2018 to December 2019, to study the consumer awareness, willingness to buy organic food, and identify the constraints involved in purchasing of organic food. The data were analyzed with descriptive statistics. According to the situation analysis, Colombo district had the highest number of organic market places. The situation of the organic food marketing in urban Sri Lanka is at its initial stage with an average rate of growth, and a majority of the markets conduct irregular sales of organic food. As per the consumer survey, about 95% of respondents were knowledgeable of organic food, and 93% were willing to buy organic food. However, higher price levels, unavailability of some food items and discontinuous supply, poor trustworthiness on food with organic labels, and the lack of proper organic certification systems and market information were the main constraints in organic food marketing. Increasing the availability of organic food while developing an appropriate system of marketing, forming suitable certification systems for organic products, improving accessibility for certification bodies, and adopting successful marketing strategies are the suggested recommendations to enhance the marketing of local organic food in urban Sri Lanka.

Key words: Organic certification; Organic food; Organic food consumers; Organic market places; Urban Sri Lank

Introduction

Organic food refers to food products that are produced, prepared, and processed through organic agriculture or organic farming without the use of chemicals (Winter and Davis, 2006), and are becoming popular among consumers in most countries throughout the world at present due to their health benefits and environmental friendliness (Narmilan and Amuthani, 2015). The USDA definition of organic food states that "organic food is produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations" (USDA, 2018). Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are not treated with antibiotics or growth hormones. Organic food is produced without using most conventional pesticides or fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge, bioengineering, or ionizing radiation (MedicneNet Newsletter, 2008). According to the definition given by the Food Federation (IFOAM), 2005, "organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems, and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity, and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation, and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and good quality of life for all involved".

Therefore, organic agriculture is a sustainable agricultural system that provides many opportunities for the value chain members, where producers gain a premium price at low production cost while health-conscious consumers receive healthy and high-quality food (Meemken and Qaim, 2018). As a holistic production management system, organic farming emphasises the use of management practices, concerning the use of off-farm inputs while considering the regional conditions that require locally adapted systems (Timsina, 2018). These conditions could be accomplished by using, wherever possible, agronomic, biological, and mechanical methods, as opposed to the use of synthetic materials, to fulfil any specific function within the system (Poole, 2017).

The global demand for agricultural products has increased and may continue to do so for decades (Godfray, 2010). To cater to the needs of the increasing population, the use of agrochemicals has increased widely to upsurge the crop yields. Together with the growth of population, industrial development has also boosted the process of using chemicals on crops and food (Popp et al., 2013). Therefore, a vast array of agrochemicals such as pesticides, weedicides, insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides have been used across the world, polluting the marine, freshwater, and terrestrial ecosystems (Gangwar et al., 2014). Meanwhile, the demand has elevated for organic foods from the consumers who are well-aware about critical health impacts due to the over-use of chemicals (Hapuarachchi, 2016). Many countries have conducted research studies on consumer demand for organic food (Wier and Calverley, 2002; Dimitri and Lohr, 2007; Jensena et al., 2011; Denver and Christensen, 2015). For instance, an investigation on factors influencing organic food purchasing intention of Indian customers reported that consumers are more motivated towards a healthy lifestyle, and they trust that consumption of organic food is a good alternative available for them (Pandey et al., 2019). In India, consumers are interested in organic food, which is highly contributing to the Indian organic food market growth. On the other hand, increased consumer awareness on the benefits of consuming organic foods for a long-lasting healthy life is another driving force to enhance the consumption of organic products in the world (Grunert et al., 2019). Since the organic food market is the place where the organic food consumers reach the organic food, the assessment of the present situation of the organic food market is timely and valuable to develop the market intervention while identifying the consumer behaviour and market gaps existing in organic food marketing.

The organic sector is principally located in developed countries, with the European Union and the United States being the main markets (Organic Monitor, 2001). In developed countries, this situation is applied to all kinds of products. Changes in the dietary habits of consumers in developed countries was a result of their improved health awareness, and the increasing demand for a wider variety of products including convenience food has contributed to this growth (Grunert et al., 2018). In developing countries, the organic segment of the market is small and a niche in the entire food sector; but it is expanding quickly (Hallam, 2003). The current market expansion for organic food has linked with the shifts in the structure of retailing as it is connected with mainstream marketing and distribution channels. Due to that reason, organic food has become available not only in specialist shops but also in major supermarket chains (Hamzaoui-Essoussi, L. and Zahaf, M., 2012). At this point, large-scale retail chains are playing a significant role in bringing organic products to a broader market while increasing the market availability of the products. This shows the evidence of its future contribution to the expansion of the best quality organic food market. The demand for a premium price at the downstream is due to its conventional production of food. It continues through the value chain until the product reaches the consumer (Oberholtzer et al., 2005). This premium price is a result of higher production, and the distribution costs associated with organic products vary according to the country. However, it depends on demand and supply (Hallam, 2003). Consumer motivational factors and their effect on the expansion of regular purchasers have affected the current market expansion for organic production. These motivational factors include health concerns, ethical and philosophical reasons, and environmental and social concerns (Zanoli and Naspetti, 2002). Such reasons make consumers interested in organic food highly diversified, which, in turn, demands a wider variety of promotional and marketing techniques (Hallam, 2003). The situation has created a requirement on analyzing the current status of the organic food market to understand the market situation and identify the possible development strategies to overcome the inefficiencies in the current market and promote its future growth.

In the literature, Ilbery et al. (2005) examined how the producers and other actors in the food supply chain construct the “difference” by combining the attributes of “product, process, and place” (PPP) in a range of marketing and labelling schemes. Results indicate the possibility to identify “critical” and “territorial development” rationales that influence how the three “P’s” are combined. Partap and Saeed (2010) revealed a potential for the expansion of small-scale, decentralized marketing outlets, and in some cases, greater involvement by supermarkets seems to be appropriate. According to Padel and Midmore (2005), the mutual, but then again mismatched interdependence of demand and supply, was identified as a constraint to the overall market development. Therefore, policy intervention should focus not only on the specific local conditions but also on the stage of market development. The global organic market value can be forecast as USD 679.81 billion in 2027 (Shahbandeh, 2020). North America accountable for 40% of that particular organic market with 3.2 million hectares of organically managed farmlands in 2017 (FiBL and IFOAM, 2019). Booming growth is obtained in Australia, United Kingdom, Canada, Sweden, China and India within the organic food market across the globe (Bazaluk et al., 2020; Figueiras, 2020).

Organic food market of the United States of America

Based on the figures of the US Organic Trade Association (OTA) US market is still dominates in the organic food market. Because the US Organic market grew 7% during the period of the 2017 to mid of 2018 (Figueiras, 2020). Because 5.5% of total food sales accountable for organic foods (FiBL and IFOAM, 2019). And also, based on the analyzing the recent organic food market trend the agricultural improvement act of 2018 established to regulate the organic research works and trading policies (FiBL and IFOAM, 2019).

Organic food market of Europe

European organic food market is smaller than the US market, but there is considerable growth obtained according to the forecasting values of USD 40 billion in 2020 (Figueiras, 2020). COVID 19 pandemic negatively affect that figure when reaching their market expectations (OECD, 2020). Germany valued over 12 billion as their organic domestic market. In France, started to promote and develop the organic food market and organic supermarket sales were Up to 18% (Figueiras, 2020). In Europe, the leading consumer of organic food is Denmark (13.4%), followed by Sweden (13.4%) and Switzerland (9%) (Pawlewicz, 2019). Switzerland has the highest per capita expenditure for organic foods. And also, Italy, Sweden, Spain and UK showing higher domestically growing demand for organic foods (Figueiras, 2020).

Organic market in Asia

Demand for organic foods were gradually increase within the Asian economy, because most raising high growth economies China, India and Indonesia turning more favored to the organic foods rather than the conventional foods (Figueiras, 2020). In 2019, the sales of organic foods in China increased to about 465.7 billion Yuan (Blazyte, 2020). The organic food market in Southeast Asia is expanding because, the organic farming area in the region is in continuously expand (IFOAM, 2020). Specifically, according to the data of FiBL and IFOAM (2018), Indonesia, Viet-Nam, and Thailand are recorded as the largest organic area based on the available arable land area. Organic land areas as follows:

Table 1. Organically managed farmland areas in selected South East Asian countries

Country	Organically managed farm land area (hectares)
Indonesia	251.631
Viet-Nam	237.693
Thailand	95.066

Singapore and Thailand recorded high percentages of growth increment of preferences for organic products (IFOAM, 2018). In South East Asian countries, obtain key issues related to the organic food market, such as high cost associated with the organic certification and consumer preference on organic products (Mutiara and Satoshi, 2017). According to the findings of the FiBL and IFOAM, 2020), Organic land areas of selected South Asian as follows:

Table 2. Organically managed farmland areas in selected South Asian countries

Country	Organically managed farm land area (hectares)
India	1,780,000
Sri Lanka	165,553
Pakistan	51,304

Some countries in South Asia have also conducted many investigations. For instance, according to a new research report in India, Indian Organic Food Market Analysis**,** organic food is invariably catching up pace among the Indian retailers, especially with the niche retailers, owing to a wide awakening among Indian consumers towards leading a healthy life (Jose and M. K., 2018). According to India Organic Food Market Forecast and Opportunities, 2019, the organic food market revenues in India are expected to grow at a combined annual growth rate of around 25% during 2014–2019 (Chandra and Rosmann, 2020). As recounted by the (TECHSCIE RESEARCH from now to next, 2020), "India organic food market by product type, competition forecast and opportunities 2011–2021, the Indian organic food market is anticipated to grow at an average growth rate of over 25% during 2016–2021, due to increased use of synthetic chemical fertilizer and pesticide in non-organic products that lead to various health issues such as cancer, obesity and birth defects". Further, India Organic Food Market Forecast and Opportunities 2020, has evaluated the future growth potential of India organic food market and provides statistics and information on market structure, size, share, and future growth (TECHSCIE RESEARCH from now to next, 2020) Besides, the report also identifies and analyses the emerging trends along with essential drivers, challenges, and opportunities present in India's organic food market. Research by Baisakhi (2017) studied on "Indian Consumers and Organic Products (With special reference to North India)", which revealed that marketers should consider reviewing the marketing strategies which include brand development, product positioning, advertising and promotional activities, and the rising trend of organic consumerism.

According to Indu and Raj (2005), organic producers in India, i.e., both exporters and domestic producers, unanimously agree that there will be an increase in the organic product sales in the next five years, and they are satisfied with their business. Organic producers in India expressed their willingness to expand the business since they have a profoundly positive expectation about the future growth of organic consumption (Indu and Raj, 2005). The study about Consumer Insights for Organics Food Market: A Delhi-Ncr revealed that organic food marketing is the new modified trend in the Indian agriculture sector (Mishra and Kaushik, 2013). The scope for marketing organic food in India is vast and still not explored to its full potential (Wani et al., 2017). Hence, this study serves as a good knowledge-base for more research in understanding the organic food market and consumer preferences. India organic food market valued of USD 849.5 million in 2019. The market is further expected to grow about 20.5% in the forecast period of 2020 and 2025 to reach an expected market value of about USD 2601 million in 2025 (India Organic Food Market Outlook, 2020).

Organic food in Nepal is a rapidly growing industry, even though Nepal is a small developing country in South Asia. It was evident from the reports of Bhatta et al. (2009) on "Potentials of organic agriculture in Nepal", Aryal et al. (2009) on "Consumers' willingness to pay for organic products: a case from Kathmandu Valley", Blomquist (2012) on "Organic agriculture and food security: lessons from Nepal", and Singh, M., and Maharjan, K. L. (2015) on "The Market for Local Organic Produce in Urban and Semi-Urban Areas of Nepal: A Case Study of Kathmandu valley and Chitwan district". According to the findings of the FiBL and IFOAM 2020), Sri Lanka consists with 165,553 hectares of organically managed farming land areas in 2017. In Sri Lanka, majority of the farmers were well-aware of organic agriculture and agricultural extension programs and training programs conduct to promote and development of organic farming (Malkanthi, 2020). And also, most of the urban Sri Lankan's express their higher willingness to purchase organic foods. This will create better market opportunities for the local organic foods sellers in Sri Lanka (Malkanthi, 2020). There is a high potential for organic agriculture in Sri Lanka, where the economy of the country is primarily based on agriculture (Ranaweera, 2008). Sri Lanka has a high degree of biodiversity than most developing countries and is blessed with a nature-gifted congenial climatic condition for having sustainable natural agriculture systems (Gunatilleke et al., 2008). The agricultural practices performed for many years with indigenous knowledge of our traditional farmers have immensely contributed to the development of sustainable agriculture and organic farming in the country (Senanayake, 2006).

However, at present, the production and marketing of organic food are not at a satisfactory level. The main target market for organic food in Sri Lanka is the export market, and major certified products exported at present are value-added Tea, Spice-based products, Coconut-based products, Fruit-based products, and Herbs (SLEDB, 2017). The major export markets for Sri Lankan organic products are the USA, Germany, France, Japan, UK, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Australia, Canada, Belgium, and Austria (SLEDB, 2017). Thus, locally-grown organic food is less available in the Sri Lankan market. Presently, only limited research studies have explored organic food marketing in Sri Lanka. According to the study of Rosairo (2006) on "Are organic vegetables a marketing failure in Sri Lanka" customers in Sri Lanka are not willing to pay a higher price for organic vegetables. Organic farming warrants close contacts with final customers. However, popularity and demand for organic vegetables in Sri Lanka is increasing gradually (Rosairo, 2006). The study of Piyasiri and Ariyawardana (2011) on "Market Potentials and Willingness to Pay for Selected Organic Vegetables in Kandy" has revealed that most consumers are less aware of organic products. Furthermore, a majority of the consumers considered "price" as a critical factor for their organic product consumption, and have attached higher importance for certification from a reputed organization. Narmilan and Amuthenie (2015) have studied on the "Demand for Organic Food Products in the urban areas of the Batticaloa District, Sri Lanka". The results revealed a lower number of respondents (20%) were interested in consuming organic food produces, while 28.2% of them believed that the market supply with various products from organic agriculture is at a lower level.

They have further revealed that around 44.7% of them realized the supply is unsatisfactory, while at the same time, only 7% believed that the assortment is on a satisfactory level. The organic industry in the Batticaloa district confronts many issues, including marketing problems and price determination (Narmilan and Amuthenie, 2015). Another research by Siriwardhane (2017) on "Consumer Awareness and Preference towards Sri Lankan Organic Food Industry" denotes the preference of local consumers on the organic food at a favorable level, which can actively encourage the market, while the consumer awareness needs further development. As per the above research studies, the responsiveness of consumers about organic food is at a significant level and the demand for organic food is gradually increasing. However, there is still a shortage of literature on situation analysis about the marketing of organic food in the main cities of the country on a larger scale. The market for organic food is comparatively high and continuously growing in other countries. The international organic food market is standardized with rules and regulations, where the downstream value chain members have to orient their production and marketing process accordingly. However, existing loopholes in information dissemination, the situation of proper production orientation, and market placement are still weak in Sri Lanka. This situation creates complications when analyzing the current market situation. Thus, this study attempts to find out the present condition of the marketing of locally-produced organic food in urban Sri Lanka. The primary objective of this investigation was to analyze the current situation of marketing locally-produced organic food in urban Sri Lanka. Identifying the existing market places selling organic food, including information of their expansion, assessing consumer awareness and sources of information on organic food, and purchasing of organic food and constraints faced by consumers in purchasing organic food were the other significant aspects of the research.

Material and Methods

This research study was conducted in urban Sri Lanka, covering main cities of six urban districts, i.e., Colombo, Galle, Gampaha, Kandy, Kurunegala, and Rathnapura. The average household income and urban population were considered before selecting these six cities, based on the information of the Department of Census and Statistics 2019. Accordingly, these main cities have a high potential for the marketing of organic food due to a large number of consumers with high purchasing power. At the initial stage of the research, a situation analysis on the market places in the above cities was performed to identify the marketing places of organic food, development of market places, and attain essential information about organic food items. Discussions with owners of marketing places helped to gather relevant information. By referring to the categorization of highland crops of the Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka 2019, this research was based on the locally-grown organic food items commonly purchased by local consumers for their day-to-day meals including Cereals, Pulses, Oilseeds, Root and Tuber crops, Low-Country Vegetables, Upcountry Vegetables, Spices, and Fruits. Animal products and imported organic food items were not considered for this research study.

Results and Discussion

According to the findings of the situation analysis of market places, some market places were selling only organic food items (such market places sold a significant number of organic food items), while other market places had organic zones/sections as separate sections inside the market. By December 2019, the number of market places in Colombo, Galle, Gampaha, Kandy, Kurunegala, and Rathnapura were 17, 04, 04, 07, 04, and 04 respectively. Table 1 presents relevant information on these market places.

Out of all market places in Table 3, only eight market places, namely Good Market, Saturday fair, Organic Fair, SamBodhi Temple, Saaraketha Organics, Forest Garden Organic, Chemical Free Food Shop, and Lanka Organic Private Ltd were selling only the organic food products, of which, most were labelled and certified. The other market places sold a limited number of organic food items along with other non-organic products. In most of these places, it was difficult to identify a proper and regular market flow for some organic food items from farmers to the markets. However, these organic foods were 2–3 times expensive than conventional food items, and some products were not following prominent marketing strategies such as branding, certification, packaging, and any promotional method. While small numbers of organic food items such as a few rice varieties, some vegetables, green leaves, some spices, and few fruit items were mainly sold in significant quantities regularly, and for other items, a continuous supply was very rare, and they have poor marketing systems. Nonetheless, gradual improvements could be noted in the number of organic food items, quality, and certification in these organic markets. Besides, the non-govern-

Table 3. Market places selling organic foods in selected six cities and their suburbs

City	Name of the market place	Location	Starting year	Remarks
Colombo	Good Market, Saturday fair	Colombo 07	2012	A local market
	Organic Fair, Sambodhi Temple ***Initiated by Kusaladhamma Thero***	Colombo 07	2011	A local market
	Saaraketha Organics	Colombo 07	2006	A local market
	Forest Garden Organic	Colombo 05	2007	A local market
	Chemical-Free Food Shop	Colombo 07	2013	A local market
	Lanka Organic Private Ltd	Colombo 02	1992	A local market
	Keells Super Centres (organic section)	Colombo & suburbs	2015	A local market
	Cargills Food City Centres (organic section)	Colombo & suburbs	2016	A local market
	Laugfs Super Markets (organic section)	Colombo & suburbs	2016	A local market
	Arpico Super Centres (organic section)	Colombo & suburbs	2017	A local market
	Family Super Markets (organic section)	Colombo & suburbs	2014	A local market
	Crystal Super Markets (organic section)	Colombo & suburbs	2013	A local market
	Sri Lak Super City Shops (organic section)	Colombo & suburbs	2010	A local market
	Co-op city shops (organic section)	Colombo & suburbs	2017	A local market
	Organico guru Lanka (Pvt.) limited	Nugegoda	2002	A local market
	EOAS Organics (Pvt.) Ltd	Rathmalana	1990	A local market
	Three Star organic (Pvt.) Ltd	Piliyandala	1992	A local market
Galle	Good Market: Galle branch (Galle Fort Market)	Galle Fort	2014	A local market
	Cargill's Food City (organic section)	Galle & suburbs	2016	A local market
	Good food market ***Supported by a few medical doctors***	Karapitiya	2005	A local market
	Labuduwa Farm Shop	Labuduwa	2003	A local market
Gampaha	Healthy food shop ***Supported by a few medical doctors***	Yakkala City	2015	A local market
	Health food shop	Gampaha City	2015	A local market
	Pripa Organic Private Ltd	Nittabuwa City	1997	A local market
	Fruits and Nuts Export (Pvt.) Ltd	Kelaniya City	1998	Local & export markets
Kandy	Ayubowan Organic food outlet ***Organized by a medical doctor***	Peradeniya	2006	A local market
	Agro products Sales Centre, Faculty of Agriculture (organic section)	University of Peradeniya	2004	A local market
	Harith Sales Centre	Getambe	2013	A local market
	Hadabima Authority Sri Lanka (organic section)	Gannoruwa	1998	A local market
	Kandy City Centre (organic section)	Kandy	2016	A local market
	Bio Food Pvt. Ltd	Aniwatta	1993	A local market
	Saturday Organic Market at Kandy Hospital ***Organized by a team of medical doctors***	Kandy City	2009	A local market
Kurunegala	Saturday Organic Fair, Zonal Agricultural Office	Kurunegala City	2014	A local market
	Ceylon Organic Agriculture	Kurunegala City	2016	A local market
	Tropical Health Food (Pvt.) Ltd	Malkaduwawa	1997	Mainly for the export market
	Laughs Super Markets (organic section)	Kurunegala City	2016	A local market
Ratnapura	Ratnapura district "Kitul" Producers outlet	New Town Ratnapura	2007	A local market
	Keels Supercentre (organic section)	Ratnapura Branch	2017	A local market
	Minipura COCO shop	New Town Ratnapura	2013	A local market
	Sanjeewa Fruit Centre (organic section)	Ratnapura City	2015	A local market

Source: Market survey 2018–2019.

ment organizations, government organizations, and community organizations periodically hold exhibitions, organic fairs, and sales outlets with the support of the government, farmer organizations, and private firms.

A unique feature identified in this context was that many Buddhist monks are making a distinctive effort to promote organic food in the country to protect the health of the future generation. Furthermore, individuals in high professions in Sri Lanka, such as doctors, nurses, teachers, and lecturers, have more tendency to buy organic food at higher prices, and they play a significant role in promoting organic food within the country. Especially doctors tend to cultivate and promote organic products by facilitating farmers to market their products for consumers, and they help to maintain some organic shops such as Good food market, Healthy food shop, *Ayubowan* organic food outlet, and Saturday Organic Market at Kandy hospital. The underlying reason for this effort is to promote organic food among consumers. Over the past 30 years, the North Central Province (NCP) of Sri Lanka experienced a surge in Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD), which killed more people in the NCP (Rajapaksha et al., 2016). Doctors, scientists, researchers, and activists all suspect that the exposure to high concentrations of toxins from the heavy usage of agrochemicals plays a major role in this regard (Kashi, 2016). Therefore, doctors are taking actions to destroy the root cause of CKD, and hence, they are promoting organic foods while convincing people about the adverse effects of consuming conventional foods produced using agrochemicals. According to the information of the Sri Lanka Export Development Board (SLEDB) 2017, a significant amount of local organic food items is exported to many countries. European countries are the main export market for Sri Lankan organic products, and Sri Lanka holds a good position in the world organic market, which is expanding gradually.

Fig. 1. The number of organic market places with their starting year

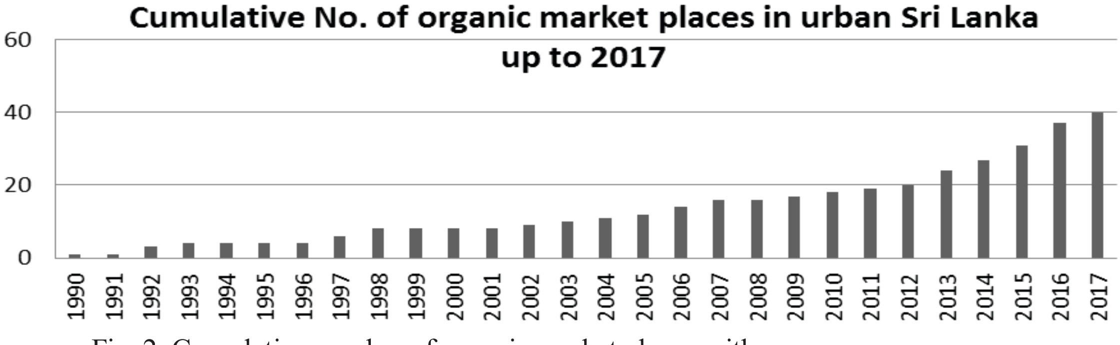

Fig. 2. Cumulative number of organic market places with years

The growth of organic market places in urban Sri Lanka during the last few years

Table 1 shows the gradual development of the organic market place over the previous 27 years in the urban sector of the country. Even though the initiation of market places was slow at the early stage, rapid growth was noted in the latter part, as presented in Figure 1 and 2.

The number of individual organic food market places were plotted against their starting year (Figure 1), and cumulative organic food market places and years were plotted (Figure 2) and studied in detail to understand the development of organic market places in Sri Lanka.

According to Figure 1 and 2, organic market places have started in the 1990s, with a gradual increment during 1990s and 2000s. However, a rapid increase in organic markets is evident after 2011. The establishment of leading supermarkets in the country such as Cargills, Keells, Laugfs, and Arpico has created a very high competition among them to attract consumers. The middle-income families were the target market segment of all these markets. They attempt to expand their marketing by improving the quality of their products and adding new items and incorporating various marketing strategies.

Conclusion

Marketing of organic food in urban Sri Lanka is still at the initial stage. Only a few markets are selling a significant number of organic food items, while other market places have only an irregular sale of selected organic food items. However, the gradual development of the number, quality, and certifications of organic food in these markets is apparent. Some shops use the internet for marketing organic foods, and when consumers place an online booking, shop keepers do home delivery. While Buddhist monks perform an essential role in promoting organic food among citizens of the country, some professions, especially doctors, encourage organic food in many ways for the consumers and farmers, as it is vital to prevent diseases caused by conventional foods with chemical residues than treating the farmers with multiple diseases caused by the exposure to agrochemicals. They have understood the seriousness of the situation because these diseases are spreading like an epidemic in many areas of the country at present. However, organic marketing is gradually improving and expanding, and according to the consumers, the present situation is better than 2–3 years before. Professionals with better education are playing an essential role in promoting organic food in Sri Lanka.

Recommendations

• Increasing the availability of organic food in market places by shop keepers.

• Make continuous product availability with good-quality at reasonable prices. Organic products should be sold at various quantities, and in easily accessible ways for the convenience of purchasing.

• Application of modern market promotional strategies such as the internet (E-marketing) and home delivery by shop keepers can help consumers to obtain organic food easily and quickly.

• Development of tracing systems of organic food items through certification and labelling to enhance the trustworthiness of the organic food value chain is an essential factor. It is beneficial to the consumer to become aware of the product information, including the producer, market flow, and value chain of the product in sales place. Ultimately, it improves the availability of products and market information.

• Arrangement of easy and quick access for the certification bodies by the organic food producers.

• Certification of product or food is a costly procedure, which is a reason for the less interest in small-scale and medium-scale producers towards product certification. Therefore, it is better to implement programmes that support the small- and medium-scale farmers for product certification via loan facilities and encouragement to access certification bodies.

• Application of a wide variety of marketing and promotional strategies can help to continue the sustainability of organic food market places.

It enables reaching to a diverse group of consumers. Organizing public speeches by responsible resource persons about the importance of organic food, and conducting exhibitions, organic fairs, and sales outlets by the government will enhance consumer motivation towards the study and purchase of organic food.

• Conducting consumer survey/market research periodically to identify the changing demand for organic food, consumer purchasing patterns, and new trends of organic food to reorganise the organic food market behaviour.

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