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ITI introduces low cost farm storage system

The Post Harvest Technology Group of the Industrial Technology Institute (ITI) successor to the Ceylon Institute of Scientific and Industrial Research (CISIR) has introduced a low cost system for farm storage of horticultural produce. The ITI which functions within the purview of the Ministry of Science & Technology initiated this programme at the request of the Southern Development Authority (SDA), whereby farmers growing lime in the Moneragala and Welimada districts can store part of their crop for marketing during the off season, a media release said.

The marketing of seasonal horticultural produce continues to pose serious economic consequences to rural farmers. The glut of produce during the time of harvest and the inability to store crops for off season distribution, result in price fluctuations and heavy post harvest losses which adversely affect both the producer and the consumer.

Farmers in the Moneragala and Welimada districts have faced the problem of post harvest losses year after year. Under these circumstances they have to either sell their produce at prices below cost

during the season when there is a glut of the commodity in the market or meet with heavy losses due to spoilage of crop when attempting to store their produce under the prevailing high ambient temperature and humidity conditions. The introduction of the low cost storage system by the ITI whilst ensuring a better income for the farmers will also help the consumers by preventing drastic price fluctuations.

The system is based on the evaporative cooling facility for extending storage life of perishable commodities developed by Prof. Susantha Roy and Dr. R.K. Pal of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) in New Delhi. Dr. Shanthi Wilson, Manager of the Post Harvest Technology Group of the ITI and Dr. Malinee Abeysekere, Senior Research Officer were able to observe and discuss the construction of this low cost facility on a recent visit by them to the IARI under the Indo-Sri Lanka Sub Commission programme on Science & Technology. The ITI officers successfully adapted and tested the system for application in Sri Lanka.

The low cost storage struc-

ture accommodates up to 500kg of limes and will cost between Rs. 1,500/- and Rs. 3,000/- depending on the capacity and dimensions of the system. Trials conducted by the ITI post harvest team indicate, that lime could be held in optimum conditions for six to eight weeks provided they are harvested at the correct stage of maturity and are in good physical condition when placed in storage. Research is currently in progress for extending this storage period further.

The ITI post harvest team that is financially supported by the Southern Development Authority for this study conducted a workshop and training programme for farmers from the Moneragala and Welimada districts on post harvest handling procedures for limes on May 26. The technology for constructing the storage structures will also be demonstrated at the two sites where two model storage systems have already been built.

The ITI Post Harvest Group is able to provide technical assistance with respect to extending and promoting the use of this low cost storage structure for other fruits and vegetables.