

Abstract

Food security can be defined as physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious foods to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life for all household members. A cross sectional survey was conducted to determine the household food security status and the nutritional status of rural subsistence agricultural sector in Sri Lanka. Eighty households from ten districts (Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Kurunegala, Kegalle, Rathnapura, Galle, Matara, Hambanthota, Badulla and Monaragala) were recruited to the study. Core food security module of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) was used to assess the household food security status. Nutritional status of children less than 5 years, primary school children, and adolescents were measured using height-for-age, weight-for-age, weight-for-height and BMI-for-age indicators. BMI was calculated to assess the nutritional status of adults. Anaemia prevalence was determined by measuring blood haemoglobin concentration. Households were identified as “food secure” (25%), “food insecure without hunger” (55%), “food insecure with moderate hunger” (17.5%), and “food insecure with severe hunger” (2.5%) according to USDA core food security module. Prevalence of stunting, wasting and underweight among children less than 5 years were 18.8%, 17.4% and 28.4% in the study population. Prevalence of stunting, thinness and underweight were 27%, 59%, 62% for primary school children and 37%, 49%, 54% for adolescents respectively. Underweight prevalence among fathers was 29% while the value was 24% for mothers. Prevalence of anaemia was 45% for children less than 5 years, 23% for primary school children, and 44% for adolescents. Malnutrition and Anaemia were significant public health problems in this study population. Acute malnutrition was the main constraint than chronic malnutrition. Maternal nutritional status and adolescents' thinness had significant associations with household food security status.