

## Abstract

Fortification of staple food has been highlighted as one of the most cost-effective solutions to address multiple micronutrient deficiencies. Iron fortification of rice may be the best solution to combat iron deficiency anemia, which has been proven effective at large scale. Therefore, the government of Sri Lanka has planned to introduce fortified rice into the market in future. This study was carried out to assess the rice consumption pattern and buying behavior of consumers, the consumer perception on iron fortified rice and the nutritional knowledge level regarding iron. The data were gathered by using an interviewer administered questionnaire with 100 convenient samples of households situated in Kalpitiya divisional secretariat division in Puttalam district. The findings suggested that the nutritional value of rice was the most influencing factor when buying rice. "White naadu" is the commonly consuming rice type considering the health benefit of it. Price is the main influencing factor which will determine the purchase of fortified rice. Consumers will only accept the extra amount for rice within Rs 5-10 per kilogram. Majority of the people (89%) did not know about the availability of fortified products in the market and introduction of iron fortified rice. Consumers' nutritional knowledge related to iron was low. Overall 91% of the respondents were willing to accept iron fortified rice as a solution for anemia, whereas only 19% of them were ready to accept iron fortification of rice at present. Rest of 81% of respondents require more information on fortified rice from most reliable source, they believe that the reliable source should be the doctors. Further, consumers also have some future concerns related to sensory attributes of fortified rice next to the nutritional value. In conclusion, the results suggested that majority of the respondents are willing to accept iron fortified rice without changing their buying behavior and consumption pattern. However they need more nutritional knowledge related to iron and iron fortified rice before making decisions on purchasing and consuming fortified rice.

**Key words:** Consumers perception, Fortified rice, Future concerns, Iron deficiency, Nutritional knowledge,