

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring the limitations of achieving of food safety certification in Sri Lankan tea factories

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ABSTRACT

Ceylon tea has reputation as the best tea being a cleanest and high in demand. People in the developed countries are increasingly moving towards the healthy food as their living stands trend with health conscious for foods. They demand safe and quality food. Therefore, product quality certification is the most important point for that situation; because in general consumers always find safety food even though price is high. Hence Sri Lankan tea should be lined with international standards to facilitate the international trade. A study was conducted to identify barriers, and limitations that prevent factories implementing quality and food safety management system. The study was conducted by using pre-tested questionnaire, informal discussion, field observation and secondary data. Multi-stage proportion random sampling method was used to select the sample from all administrative regions that recognized by Sri Lanka Tea Board and evaluate Food Safety and Quality Certification (FSQC) in all administrative regions. According to the final results, 20.3% reported they have financial limitation to implement the certification level. Because, implantation of FSQC is high cost process. Then it was mainly affected cost of production in tea processing. Therefore, tea factories should be motivated to go for certification level to maximize the profit. Study recommends giving financial assistance in order to go for certification and meet world consumer demand to reap competitive advantage for Ceylon tea.

Key words: Ceylon tea, Food Safety and Quality Certification, Limitations, Sri Lanka

INTRODUCTION

Tea (*Camellia sinensis*) is globally one of the most popular and lower cost beverages. Ceylon tea as a beverage has been enjoyed by people all over the world for generations (TransFair, 2009). Therefore, the tea industry has become a significant contributor to the economics of producing countries such as Kenya, Sri Lanka, India and China (Gunathilaka and Tularam, 2016). Not only that, global tea production is also 5,173,471 MT and the global consumption is 4,764,000 MT in 2014 (ITC, 2015). Furthermore, Sri Lanka tea production was 328.96 million kilograms in 2015. But only 307 million kilograms of tea was exported during 2015 (Sri Lanka Tea Board, 2015). Ceylon tea mainly exports many countries such as Russia, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, United Arabs Emirates, Azerbaijan, Syria, Libya, Kuwait and Japan. 1.6 billion dollars could earn in last year. Sri Lanka has a market share of 10% in the international sphere, and one

of the world's leading exporters with a share of around 23% of the global demand gain from Tea Packets, Tea Bags, Tea in Bulk, Instant Tea, Green Tea, Flavored Tea, etc., (Perera, 2016). The basic requirements for the international trading of tea must be fulfilled to ensure the product quality and safety. There by international standards facilitate to the international trade of tea and ensure customer loyalty toward the product. Therefore food safety is a responsive factor to behavior of firms, followed by sales and revenue as being more important for tea (Jayasinghe-Mudalige et al., 2015). Therefore, organizations and institutes have introduced more system certifications based on Food Safety and Quality Management such as Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), Good Hygienic Practices (GHP), ISO 22000, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP), ISO (write full name) 14001, standards mainly focus the system certification. GMP, GHP, HACCP certifications

focus on food hazard and quality control in manufacturing process. GMP is one of most important food safety and quality system certification. But, most of factory owners do not like to implement the system certification.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

There are 698 tea factories established in 7 administrative regions that were recognized by Sri Lanka Tea Board. The administrative regions are Bandarawela, Matugama, Gampola, Galle, Matara, Ratnapura and Hatton. The tea factories were randomly and proportionally selected from all administrative regions. The sampling method was multi stage proportion random sampling method. Thirty five (35) tea factories were selected as the sample from population. Primary data were collected by using pre-tested questionnaires. Questionnaire was designed to evaluate implementation of FSQC and to identify the limitations of each factory. The data was evaluated by using t-test and the descriptive statistics based on the representative sample data. SPSS Statistics (20) was mainly employed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of food safety and quality Certification

The study revealed that 17 tea factories had at least a quality system implemented while 18 had no quality system implemented. Therefore, only 48.57% tea factories have quality certification and more than half (51.42%) of tea factories have not any quality certification for their tea product or tea factory (Figure 1). Based on this result, majority of tea factories did not work in order to achieve international quality standards.

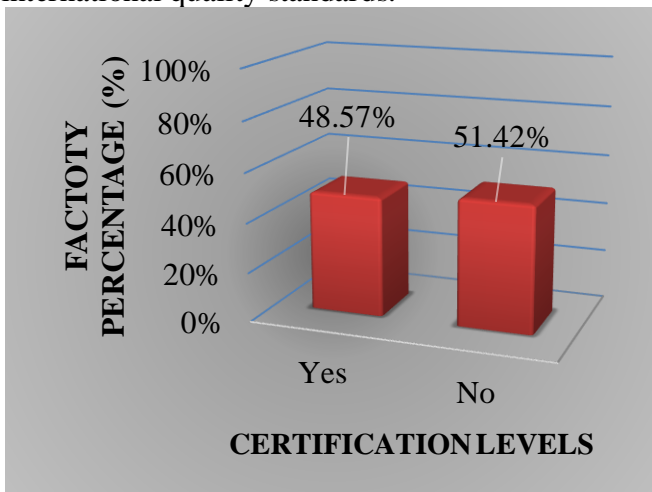


Figure 1 Factory percentage which was implemented any quality certification

Those implanted certification levels presented as a percentage in whole sample population (Figure

1).Some of factory gain CQC (write full name)certification which was offered by SLTB (write full name)and ISO 9001 which was represent under other certification bodies. However, most of factories have not been implemented certification. Majority of tea factories has not gone for food quality and safety certification; because of many barriers had with them.

Identification of barriers that prevent factories implementing food safety and quality management system.

According to the research, it was considered obstructions that prevent the factories implementing the FSQM systems. All possible limitations were categorized under the obstructions section such as, A- Financial limitation; B- Recruitment of certification is not known; C- No knowledge to implement quality system; D-No experience officers; E- Factory infrastructure is not sufficient to implement quality system; F-No return for investment; G-High rate of consultation and certification; H-Need large funding to meet develop the factory; I-Difficulty of finding a suitable consultant; J-Difficulty of find suitable certification body; K-No time to implement system; L-Factory is too large to develop the system; M-any other reasons. Obstruction wise considered in this study (Figure 2).

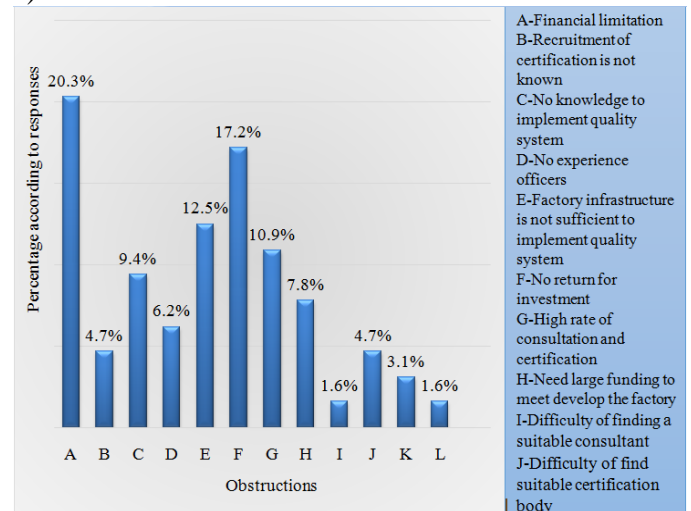


Figure 2 Percentage of responses respect to the obstructions

It is clear from the figure that based on the respondents' view, main limitation was financial limitation followed by non-return for investment. 20.3% responses expressed financial limitation is main limitation for implement the certification. Because when they consider the certification level, they want higher attention of many guidelines to increment of factory up to the

standard. Their cost is also high. Not only that, they want to expense much more money to implementing food safe and quality certification. It depicts from the figure that 17.2% reported they have no any return from investment, when go for certification level. Because when they invest money for gaining certification, that cost also adds in to the cost of production (COP) of tea. Then their profit gets reduce in case of that. Moreover, 12.5% reported they must want to improve the infrastructures up to the standard. Therefore, they could not go for certification level. The reason behind that was those factories are in basic level and build in past many years ago. Last few years build factories are in required standard. They are only mentioned process of line maintains. In addition, 10.5% said that they have a barrier in higher rate of consultation and certification. The consultation is important step when implementing the food safety and quality certification. But their cost is very high. The reason for that was it is higher responsible field. Furthermore, 9.4% reported they have no knowledge to implement quality system certification. However, they have barriers such as experience officers, suitable certification bodies and etc. But less number of responses (1.6%) reported that they could not found better consultation and their factory is too large therefore cannot move for certification level.

CONCLUSION

Financial limitation was the main barrier for implementing the certification level. Not only that, most of tea factories owners said that it is high costly procedure. Some certification levels want to spend more than Rs.200000. That cost were affected to cost of production (COP) increment. Therefore, they do not like to move any certification level. It was a myth. Because

they think it is not necessary for the tea processing. It is impossible with the procedure of tea processing. They want to motive for implementing the certification level. System certification is not only a one type of certification. It may most valuable key point for tea sector in the country to achieve financial sustainability. This is due to the fact that it helps to increase the quality of tea. Ultimately, it demands the Ceylon tea all over the world that builds higher foreign exchange. Therefore, these imitations should be addressed at the earliest convenience in order to reap the aforesaid benefit from the Ceylon tea.

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