

*Presidential Address Section B Agriculture & Forestry*

## PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY AND AGRICULTURE IN SRI LANKA

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### Introduction

Sri Lanka is still an agricultural country. Some important food crops cultivated are rice (staple food), fruits (banana, papaya, citrus etc.), vegetables and cash crops such as chilli.

As identified even through local media, the agricultural sector in Sri Lanka is undergoing a decline in productivity. Agriculture is also threatened by recent unfavourable climatic changes. The production cost is also increasing continuously. One other key factor for agricultural production to decline is the unwillingness of people to get into agriculture. This is mainly due to low social status given to the farmer (the agricultural producer). Because of this, the situation at present is that a person would get into agriculture mostly when nothing else is possible.

**Table 1**

**AGRICULTURE - ?**

Production and processing of plants and animals for human use

**BIOTECHNOLOGY - ?**

Any technological application that uses biological material to improve organisms or their products or processes for human use.

**AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN SRI LANKA?**

- Declining productivity.
- Unfavourable climate conditions.
- Increasing production costs.
- Low social status of the farmer / agricultural producer

**SOME REASONS FOR LOW PRODUCTIVITY**

- Poor infrastructure for enhanced agricultural production.
- Decrease in available facilities - suitable land, improved varieties.
- Very little incentives and encouragements.
- High risks and very low profits to the producer!
- Significant post harvest losses due to non - use of new technologies.
- Poor social status of the agricultural workers, 'educated' young people and the school leavers look for jobs with 'status' !
- Non-use of new technologies, and adherence to conventional methods.
- Very poor agricultural extension services; 'farmers' seek advice from the pesticide dealer in the village!

**IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT AUTHORITIES SERIOUSLY PAY ATTENTION TO THESE FACTS, AND TAKE IMMEDIATE NECESSARY ACTION !!**