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## **FEASIBILITY OF TOMATO PROCESSING IN SRI LANKA: RAW MATERIAL AVAILABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Tomato is an important and highly seasonal cash crop for Sri Lankan farmers. Due to seasonality, there is a considerable surplus of production over consumer demand during the season. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to analyze critically the tomato surplus and feasibility and sustainability of using the surplus in any industry especially at the large scale. The objective was achieved based on a case study done on a large scale failed investment in tomato processing carried out recently in the Central province of Sri Lanka. Technical experts, government officials, investors, local buyers of tomato paste and tomato farmers have been identified to collect primary data. In addition, price data were also collected from the secondary sources. Data for the period 2006-2010 depict that there was an average excess production of 27,894mt of tomatoes annually that had not been used. In tomato processing, the appropriateness of fresh tomatoes for processing mainly depends on the brix value and the lycopene content. Study found that there is uncertainty regarding the technical suitability of the available tomatoes for processing. In addition, the surplus is not at a constant level throughout the year and it is a scattered surplus which required a well-established systematic mechanism to obtain the surplus to a focal point which is a difficult task. Finally, the price offered by the factory was lower than the market prices and therefore, farmers had not provided tomato to the industry. If the factory increases the price, then it is not competitive to sell their produce as the price of imported tomato paste would be lower than the local product. Therefore, the excess production is not the only criteria to go for processing. Technical feasibility, easy access to required quantity and affordability of raw materials should be taken into account with much concern along with the demand for the final product with special reference to quality and price when planning similar interventions in the future.

**Keywords:** Tomato processing, Technical appropriateness, Availability, Accessibility, Affordability