

## Hayleys Agriculture plants seeds of greater productivity through mechanized Rice Transplanter Saves on seed paddy, reduce weedicide usage and guarantees a greater yield

The Agri-Equipment Division of Hayleys Agriculture Holdings Ltd has changed the face of agriculture and farming by introducing a range of agricultural machinery during the last several decades and is now pioneering the introduction of mechanized ricetransplanting in Sri Lanka. Recently the company joined hands with the "Gamidiriya" programme (Community Development and Livelihood Improvement Project- Phase II) of Ministry of Economic Development and demonstrated the unique features of the Kubota ricetransplanter to farmers in the North Central and Southern Provinces and explained the benefits of the machine, particularly how it would help the farmer to save on seed paddy, reduce weedicides, and increase yields. The Kubota ricetransplanter is fast gaining popularity in Polonnaruwa, Ampara, Mannar, Vauniya, Killinochchi and Hambantota Districts.

Hayleys Agriculture together with Kubota, Japan carried out the first trials of the mechanized ricetransplanter during 2012 Yala and Mahaseasons. The representatives from Kubota, Japan along with Hayleys Agriculture Extension Services and Research & Development Units demonstrated to the farmers as to how paddy nurseries are established and transplanting technology of the mechanized ricetransplanter. The benefits of mechanized rice transplanting were quite evident to the farmers. Firstly it was seen that the area required to establish a paddy nursery is very small. Secondly the Kubota/ Hayleys demonstrations clearly showed that with proper nursery management and mechanized transplanting it will bring about as much as a 50% saving on seed paddy (compared to the broadcasting method). Furthermore, currently the formal seed paddy sector is only able to supply 30% of the seed paddy requirement to farmers. Therefore farmers are compelled to "grow" their own seed paddy which may be of poor quality and bring about a reduced yield at the time of the harvest. This saving will greatly contribute to the Agriculture Department's endeavours to ensure that farmers have adequate supply of high quality seed paddy in the future. The Kubota rice transplanter introduced by Hayleys Agriculture will prove to be a yet another boon to the entire paddy producing sector.

Agriculture experts who had seen the Kubota ricetransplanter in operation state that the process of mechanized transplanting particularly the Japanese technology that is on offer may also save on agrochemicals. The concept of "Transplanting" reducing the need for agrochemicals particularly weedicides is quite comforting.

The nursery plants are cut into rectangular blocks and inserted into the grooves in the Kubota rice transplanter. The machine then transplants the rice plants in equally spaced rows and within the rows the rice plants are equally spaced as well. The gap between the rows enables mechanical weeding and also allow favourable wind movement which could lead to a reduction in pest infestation. Labour requirement for the Kubota rice transplanter model NSP-4W is only two persons and they are able to transplant one hectare per day.

Without any doubt, the main reason that guarantees and proves a greater return on investment in the case of Kubota rice transplanter is the increase yield. Hayleys Agriculture has conducted many trials island wide including the Rice Research Institute at Bathalagoda and Samanthurai. These trials have proved that yield could be increased as much as 10-20% due to higher tillering per hill (20-25) when compared to the traditional broadcasting method.

Due to the benefits mentioned above, the government should encourage the adoption of this technology by the farming community and perhaps provide loans/leasing facilities at concessionary interest rates through the financial institutions to the farmers. Hayleys Agriculture has pioneered many aspects of farm mechanization, upgraded designs, introduced new products and brought in professionalism to farming. Apart from the Kubota rice transplanter, Hayleys Agriculture also markets Hayspray stainless steel knapsack sprayer, combine threshers, 2-wheel and 4-wheel tractors, combine harvesters etc. and has been in the forefront of agricultural mechanization in Sri Lanka for a long time.

