



Economic impact of Blister Blight leaf disease and its control

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Blister blight is the economically most important disease of tea in Sri Lanka. Spread of the disease in different regions is dependent upon the weather pattern of that region. Duration of disease is normally governed by the predominant monsoon/s, in a given location. The highest impact of the disease is felt in the Up-country.

Accordingly, the duration of blister blight in the Up-country western sector is about 7 months spanning from June to December; comprising 5 months of heavy and 2 months of light monsoon period. This duration in the rest of the regions, i.e. Up-country Eastern sector, Mid-country, Uva and the Low-country, is approximately 3 months through September to January, as appropriate. However, in the Low-country, only 20% of the total extent is estimated to be blister blight prone.

The objectives of this study were, to assess economic losses due to blister blight disease, to estimate cost of controlling the disease adopting TRI recommendations and to compare costs and benefits of blister blight control measures.

According to the study, the damage due to blister blight in plucking fields is expected as follows: In the Up-country western sector, over a period of 6 to 7 months, an average annual yield loss of 25% is expected. In the Up-country eastern sector, Mid-country, Uva and the Low-country, over a period of 3 months an average annual yield loss of 12.5% is expected.

In fields recovering from pruning, crop loss is mainly due to delays in the recovery, that is the extra time taken for tipping, which will be additional 3-4 months. For the purpose of estimation present pruning cycles are considered as;

Up-country Estate sector	- 5 years ($\frac{1}{2}$ of the pruned extent)
	- 4 years ($\frac{1}{2}$ of the pruned extent)
Up-country SH sector	- 4 years
Uva/ Mid-country Estate & SH sectors	- 4 years
Low-country Estate & SH sector	- 3 years

In immature teas, an additional cost of maintenance is incurred, which goes to add to the capital cost due to the extended immature (unproductive) period. In the Up-country this is worked out to be 3 months, while in Uva, Mid and Low elevations and Up-country it would be $1\frac{1}{2}$ months. This will also entail delays in bringing into bearing and the crop losses associated with it.

In the nurseries an additional cost of maintenance due to extended nursery period of 3-4 months is anticipated. When blister blight is not controlled in the nursery, the number of suitable/quality plants will be reduced, and hence the cost of available plants will be increased and replanting/infilling of the planned extent of will not be possible.