**Turning urban waste into sustainable value chains for agriculture**

Grants under the **Knowledge and Linkages for an Inclusive Economy** (KLIE) Grants Program of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) offers opportunities for government agencies, researchers, the private sector and other networks to come together to share knowledge and expertise to influence policy and practice.

The project ‘*From urban waste to sustainable value chains: Linking sanitation and agriculture through innovative partnerships’* is a timely initiative particularly in the light of government policies around organic agriculture and in the broader context of climate change. It highlights the need for a paradigm shift towards applying circular economy concepts to find solutions for fundamental challenges such as waste and sanitation management. The project brings together different sectors that have been traditionally operating in silos in a multifaceted way to find solutions, create partnerships and collaborations.

The project follows a unique approach looking at the holistic value chain, investigating the supply of organic waste and demand from farmers for compost, as well as political economy context to understand the big picture of building sustainable organic waste value chains. The project findings are expected to inform governments and farmers, and others within the supply chain such producers and retailers, to improve the current practices of fertiliser and compost use.

The project is a partnership between the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS-ISF), the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Janathakshan (GTE) Ltd, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (SUSL). In March 2022, the project team held a workshop: ***Showcase of research project findings and implications.***

Informed by research activities including an organic waste system assessment for the case study region of Kaduwela, social and market research and political economy analysis, the team presented options for building sustainable urban waste value chains. The options focused on:

* QUANTITY - Increase volume of waste treatment for compost
* QUALITY - Improve waste collection and compost production practices
* VALUE-ADD - Improve nutrient value of compost through addition of septage
* MARKETING - Segmenting and marketing compost products to meet farmer needs
* AWARENESS – EDUCATION - Education of retailers and farmers on compost use

The present agriculture policy of Sri Lanka focuses on green agriculture mainly by using organic fertilizer, and attention has been drawn to the possibilities to act collectively through marching towards a sustainable green agriculture by undertaking ecofriendly organic farming. The research project and design options offered seek to contribute to this change agenda.

The additional secretary, Ms. P. Malathy, State Ministry of Agriculture noted during the forum: *“I strongly feel the research findings and outcome of this project would help create knowledge and linkages for enabling local entrepreneurs to implement innovation value chains that determine how organic waste can be transformed to valuable resources”.*

During the forum the Australian High Commissioner, Mr David Holly, commented: *“This project offers opportunities for the agriculture markets, particularly to SMEs and vulnerable groups to which the opportunities and information presented by this study are useful towards improving the current system and practices to ensure sustainable waste management, food security and health.*

The research partnership is excited to continue research and policy influence through a second phase of the research project in 2022-24. We welcome connections with interested partners to continue to contribute and build sustainable urban waste value chains in Sri Lanka.

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Please read more about the project here and final all research outputs

<https://www.uts.edu.au/isf/explore-research/projects/urban-waste-sustainable-value-chains-linking-sanitation-and-agriculture-through-innovative-partnerships-sri-lanka>