

Panel of Experts - Agriculture and Food Security

Dr Manoj Thibbotuwawa - Theme Lead



Research Fellow, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka

Dr Manoj Thibbotuwawa is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS) with research interests in agriculture, agribusiness value chains, food security, climate change, and environmental and natural resource economics. He has more than 20 years of research experience at IPS.

He has collaborated and served as a consultant to several international organizations such as the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International

Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research (ACIAR), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Union (EU), and the World Bank.

Dr Thibbotuwawa holds a BSc (Agriculture) with Honours from the University of Peradeniya, an MSc (Agricultural Economics) from the Post-Graduate Institute of Agriculture at the University of Peradeniya, and a PhD from the University of Western Australia.

Dr Nihal Atapattu



Independent Consultant, Agriculture, Environment, and Project Evaluation Research

Dr Nihal Atapattu has over 20 years of experience leading innovative, multi-sector development projects focused on economic growth, particularly in food and agriculture, natural resource management, and private sector development. His extensive background includes designing and managing programs in various countries, collaborating with bilateral donors, UN agencies, international financial institutions, consulting organizations, and INGOs.

With 13 years of experience implementing Canada-funded programs in conflict, post-conflict, and post-disaster environments in South Asia, Dr Atapattu has demonstrated the ability to deliver results in challenging contexts. He holds a Doctoral degree in agriculture and applied economics and an MS degree in agricultural economics from Virginia Tech University.

Dr Atapattu specializes in program and project development, project management, grant writing, monitoring and evaluation, procurement, technical training, food policy, food security, and women's economic empowerment with significant contributions to economic growth through research and analyses in agricultural resource management, technology policy and innovation, sector modernization, and policy reform.



Dr Herath Gunatilake

Executive Director, Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA)

Dr Gunatilake has a Bachelor's degree in Agriculture (Sri Lanka), Postgraduate Diploma in Sustainable Agriculture (Norway), Masters in Natural Resources Management (Norway), and PhD in Resource Economics (United States). He has served at the University of Peradeniya (1986-2004) in various positions including Professor and the Head, Department of Agricultural Economics. Notable trainings he has undergone includes training on Environmental Economics and Policy Analysis at Harvard University, USA, in 1993, and a Programme on Leadership for Sustainable Development at Cambridge University, UK, in 2011. He joined the ADB as an environment specialist and served as natural resource economist, economist, and energy economist in different departments. He was also the Director of the Environment and Safeguards Division in the Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department of ADB. He has published more than 50 journal articles; about 25 ADB publications; and five books on energy, natural resources, and environmental economics. His recent publications are on economics of biofuel, hydropower development and economic growth, impact evaluation of energy sector investments, private sector participation in infrastructure provisions, assessing and unbundling demand for water and electricity, energy trade and regional cooperation, transport sector investments, economic growth and poverty reduction, and agricultural land consolidation for poverty reduction.

Dr Gunatilake was a former member of the Board of South Asia Network for Development and Environmental Economics (SANDEE). He is a Fellow of the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, Visiting Professor at Kelaniya and Peradeniya Universities, member of Sri Lanka Agriculture Economics Association, and a member of Research and Training Committee in Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute.

Dr Gunatilake currently serves as the Executive Director at the Center for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) in Sri Lanka.



Prof. G.A.S. Ginigaddara

Vice Chancellor, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka

Professor G.A.S. Ginigaddara is a professor in Agricultural Systems and has been serving as the Vice Chancellor of the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka (RUSL) since 2021. With an extensive academic and administrative career, Professor Ginigaddara has been instrumental in advancing the university's mission of academic excellence and innovation.

She has obtained her first degree in BSc Agricultural Sciences from the University of Peradeniya and completed her PhD in Agricultural Systems at the Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand. Professor Ginigaddara has a robust educational background that has underpinned her professional journey. Before her current role, she served as a professor in agricultural systems at the Faculty of Agriculture, RUSL. In addition, she has held several administrative positions in the university, such as the Director of the

University Business Linkage Cell (UBL), Director of Career Guidance Unit, and many more. Through those positions, she has spearheaded significant projects towards the success of the university.

Dr Liwan Liyanage-Hansen



**Senior Lecturer in Computer, Data and Mathematical Sciences,
School of Computer, Data and Mathematical Sciences, Western
Sydney University**

Dr Liwan Liyanage-Hansen began her academic journey earning First Class honours in BSc (Mathematics and Physics) in 1976 from University of Colombo, followed by an MSc in 1978 and a PhD in 1983 from the University of Wollongong, Australia. With over 48 years in academia, she has held esteemed positions at multiple universities and is currently at the Western Sydney University (WSU).

As the founding leader of WSU's Data-Driven and Accountable Solutions for Social Good and Sustainability Research Lab, she champions digital technology to address global challenges, particularly climate change and sustainable development.

Dr Liyanage has pioneered "Data Pre-Processing for Imputing Data with Large Gaps", revolutionizing environmental sensor data analysis.

As a member of the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP), Climate Change Digital Technology Taskforce, she represents Australia and Sri Lanka. Her research and contributions focus on data-driven adaptive modelling, decision-making, and integration of UN SDGs, with over 50 publications, numerous grants and PhD completions, one with the National Gold Medal Award in 2019 from Institute of Applied Statistics. She is also the Workstream Lead of the multi award winning OPENAIR project, securing the Healthy Planet, Healthy People National Award, and IoT Research National Award in 2024.