

Viewpoint: ‘Well intentioned’ Sri Lankan plan to embrace organic farming tainted by lack of science, damaging its economy, health, and food security

In Sri Lanka, world renowned for its tea production, an initiative to go all-organic — the textbook definition of a one trick (and gratuitously handicapped) pony — threatens to backpedal agricultural progress.

Though well-intentioned, the president has called for a Green Socio-Economic Model informed by organic clichés (read: slogans) and threadbare arguments against conventional ag. Basically, restrict the importation of chemical (aka inorganic or synthetic) fertilizers and pesticides overnight. Utopia realized?

Some people lauded the decision, identifying it as a critical step towards environmental conservation and human health. In their view, it's a preemptive strike against a clear and present danger.

Yet it'd be a turnabout of ruinous proportions. Despite the gushing endorsement (to be fair, they recommended an alternative approach to reach the same goal), economists predicted massive economic losses — stemming from yield penalties (25 percent for rice and 35 percent for tea) in lieu of inorganic fertilizers. Reduced food security, food safety, and farm income (exacerbating rural poverty) would be the unavoidable consequence.

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Rather than play [the chemophobe game](#), tighten the rules and institutions that govern an evolving ag infrastructure. Technology and education will deliver the desired Green outcomes “organically” (pun intended).

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