

**Title** Market opportunities for value-added products of underutilized fruits and vegetables  
**Author** T.U. Thillakawardane  
**Citation** ISHS Acta Horticulturae 806:465-472. 2008.  
**Keywords** value-added products; seasonal commodities; ready-to-serve drinks (RTS); small-scale production; small-scale venture

### **Abstract**

Underutilized vegetables and fruits could be used to prepare various value-added products. These products are nutritious and high in fiber and antioxidants. The products are different from those of mainstream commodities - limited and seasonal availability and difficulties in harvesting/collection make these commodities/products costly. High costs, lack of awareness, and ideological aspects keep products away from diets and adversely affect underutilized fruit/vegetable business. A ten-year existing venture in Sri Lanka prepares and markets a number of long shelf-life products from underutilized fruits/vegetables. Limited availability and seasonality, time and labor requirements for plucking and/or cleaning, and often small edible portions of the fruits/vegetables make final products costly. High prices prevented the sale of products in local market. Generally available commodities and products are cheaper. Nevertheless, sales of products were limited due to availability of fresh crop and ideological barriers. Fruit and vegetable products canvassed in foreign markets focused on Asian communities. Many products were successful in markets such as UK, Canada, USA, Australia, and Dubai. The demand for fruit and vegetable preserves and preparations is increasing yearly. Ready-to-serve drinks (RTS) in standard packs are very popular and fast-moving in the tropics. A small-scale venture based in Sri Lanka uses a number of underutilized fruits to produce RTS. External colors, flavors and preservatives were not added to RTS drinks which were packed in returnable glass bottles. These RTS drinks conserved the natural color, flavor, aroma, and taste of fruit for 8-12 months and were within required parameters. RTS received high marks at taste panels and high acceptance by health-conscious people. RTS survived and moved well among essence-based beverages of multinational companies with other RTS made from imported pulps and drinks with external colors, flavors, and chemical preservatives. Sales were continued for four years but profits were marginal due to small-scale production and marketing. Underutilized fruit/vegetable products were successful overseas while RTS from underutilized fruits could be sold locally. Demand for underutilized fruit/vegetable products, market share, and profits could be increased. Awareness on benefits of these products and market promotion is necessary.