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**885 acres under Nilwala
Ganga scheme ready for
Yala, after 18 years**

Eight hundred and eighty five acres of paddy lands in the South which had remained fallow for over 18 years due to the failure of the Nilwala Ganga Flood Control Scheme launched by the previous regime has been reactivated and brought under the plough by the Southern Development Authority (SDA) enabling over 2,500 farmer families to restart their normal livelihood from the Yala season this year.

A press release issued by the Government Information Department said non availability of seed paddy at the correct time, difficulties in obtaining and managing irrigable water and lack of capital for cultivation activities had been the main problems besetting farmers coming under the Nilwala Ganga scheme. The SDA found quick solutions to these problems and encouraged farmers to restart in their usual agricultural activities. Under this program each farmer now receives Rs, 1,000 to purchase his seed paddy requirements and another Rs, 2,000 for sundry activities.

The Colombo Commercial Company has stepped into provide quality seed paddy to the farmers.

Paddy lands in 7 Divisional Secretariat divisions coming under the Nilwala Ganga have now been recultivated under this program and observation Tour conducted by the SDA's Nilwala Committee has revealed.

The break down of recultivated land Divisional Secretariat Divisionwise in Akuressa - 140 acres, Thihagoda - 94 acres, Matara - 287 acres, Weligama 32 acres, Welipitiya 34 acres, Kamburupitiya - 154 acres, Dickwella - 34 acres, and Malimbada - 110 acres.

During the observation tour Matara District Secretary P. S. Ediriweera directed officials present to identify farmer problems and find on the spot solutions to them, the release said. He also directed Irrigation Engineer Neville Samaraturunge to take immediate steps to renovate the 2 kilometre irrigation canal across the Medawila tract in Malimbada for servicing the paddy lands in the area. Matara Additional District Secretary Gamini Jayasekara, Assistant Director of Agriculture, S. Ratnasiri, SDA District Director and Irrigation Engineer B. H. Kumanayake and officials of the Matara District Farmers Organisation accompanied Mr. Ediriweera during the tour.