Economics is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other similar title.

Place: Madurai,

Date: (S. ALAGUMARI MUTHU)
I express my profound sense of gratitude to my research Supervisor **Dr. K. ALAMAR, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D., B.L.I.Sc.,** Reader and Head, Department of Economics, Centre for Research, Arul Anandar College (Autonomous), Karumathur, Madurai. This thesis could not have been completed without his inspiring, valuable suggestions, constant help and encouragement throughout the period of the study. I am highly indebted to him for his affection and guidance.

I am grateful to **Prof. P. Rengan,** Principal and **Dr. R. Gopal,** Vice-Principal, **Dr. A. Ramasamy** and **Thiru. C. Narayanan,** Committee Members, Yadava College, Madurai, for their blessings and the keen interest they have shown and encouragement they have given throughout my research work.

My thanks are also due to **Dr. N.S.S. Tilagavathi,** Reader, Department of Economics (DDE), Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, for her kind co-operation that they have extended to me throughout the study.

Due acknowledgement is recorded for the authorities of the following libraries who permitted me to refer to relevant books, periodicals, reports and data for my study: Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Trivandrum, Madras School of Economics (MSE), Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS), Chennai, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, Gandhigram
Rural University, Gandhigram, St. Joseph College, Trichy, and Arul Anandar College, Karumathur.

I am grateful to the farmers and traders who have provided all required data for the successful completion of this study.

I express my appreciation to Mr. N. Murugesan, Sri Balaji Computers, Palkalainagar, Madurai, for his neat execution of computer programming and typing.

On a personal note, I deeply acknowledge the enthusiasm, encouragement and support rendered to complete my research work by my father-in-law Mr. Sethuraman, B.Sc., Health Educator, my mother-in-law Mrs. S. Muthulakshmi, my wife Mrs. A. Seethalakshmi, M.A., B.L., my brother Mr. S. Paulraj, B.E., and my sister Mrs. N. Vijaya Navaneethakrishnan.

Last but not least, I am greatly indebted to Sudaroli Ayya and Paramasivam Ayya, in whose blessing I have infinite trust.

S. ALAGUMARIMUTHU.