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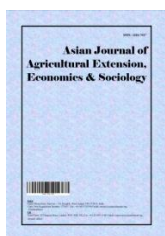
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Constraints Faced by Agriculture Graduates in Adopting Farming as a Profession - Suggestions to Overcome Them

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture is an age-old Profession in India and is considered just a way of living rather than a profession or an occupation to earn money. Since India has a massive power as more than half of its population is below 35 years of age and several agricultural students are being graduated from several universities, it is the need of the hour to orient the graduates to go along the mainstream of the development process of the country by encouraging them to enter into the agriculture and make it a profitable sector. Taking this into consideration, a research study was conducted to know the constraints faced by agriculture graduates in adopting farming as a profession. The study was conducted at Sri Venkateswara Agricultural College, Tirupati of Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University (ANGRAU) with its headquarters at Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh. A sample size of 120 agricultural undergraduates were randomly selected for the study. The study revealed that the constraint, "Need for financial security" was ranked at first position followed by the constraints like instability in market prices, non-agriculture background, lack of initial investment, lack of family support, and lack of cultivable land. Furthermore, when respondents were asked for suggestions, the top three responses were: more exposure and field excursions, internships in new start-ups, and more actual work than theory.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture plays a vital role in India's economy. 54.6% of the total workforce is engaged in agricultural and allied sector activities [1] and accounts for 17.8% of the Country's Gross Value Added (GVA) for the year 2019-2020 (at current prices). The current state of Indian agriculture is the result of several revolutions involving the application of science and technology by skilled manpower in the field of agriculture, which has been made possible by agriculture education in the form of generating trained professionals to serve in agriculture [2]. Agriculture is not an exception. A lot of youth are diverting their paths from agriculture, which will affect our economy, food security in many possible ways. Besides, the country is adding 2 million young people to the ranks of the unemployed every year [3]. Unless farming becomes both intellectually stimulating and economically rewarding, it will be difficult to attract or retain rural youth in farming [4]. To address these issues, the Government has started agriculture universities in the early 1960's only, which specifically train the students in scientific orientation so that they can take up agriculture in a modern way and on a commercial scale. Increased literacy in rural regions (71%) provides a ray of hope for bringing reforms to all aspects of village life, including agriculture. Agriculture's mantle is in the hands of the country's educated rural young. But it is not the current scenario. The uncertainty in agriculture is increasing day by day, which is making it difficult to even think of taking up agriculture by the youth of India. Job security in various sectors like banking, government organizations, are lucrative factors instead of taking agriculture as a profession. Despite the fact that agriculture offers several job prospects after graduation, there is a perception that farming is a non-professional, less prestigious, and less profitable industry for students to pursue after graduation. Harnessing the potential of the youth, particularly agri-graduates, and retaining them in agriculture can be a solution to unemployment, poverty, and environmental challenges [5].

Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University, Guntur was established in 1963 in order to cater the needs for education, research and extension needs in agriculture in the Andhra Pradesh state of India. The university has 11 well-established constituent colleges and recently 6 new colleges were affiliated with the university [6]. Sri

Venkateswara Agriculture College, Tirupati is one out of 11 constituent colleges. General observation shows that, like in other parts of the country, the majority of university graduates are employed in well-established governmental or private sector jobs and none of them were into farming and it is also there has never been a systematic study done on undergraduates in this aspect. Amidst to these situation it was felt important to measure the willingness of agricultural graduates in adopting farming as an profession and rank the constraints faced by agriculture graduates and also the suggestions given by the agriculture graduates in adopting farming as a Profession.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the year 2022 with an ex-post facto research design. Sri Venkateswara. Agricultural College, Tirupati of ANGRAU of Andhra Pradesh which is offering B.Sc. (Agriculture) was selected through conveyance sampling procedure. A sample size of 120 Final year B.Sc. Agriculture students were selected randomly from Sri Venkateswara Agricultural College, Tirupati. Final-year students are chosen because they are nearing the completion of their first degree and are in the process of determining their professional career path. In the present study data pertaining to profile characteristics, willingness of agricultural graduates in adopting farming as a profession, constraints faced by agriculture graduates in adopting farming as a profession and suggestions offered by them to overcome the constraints were collected through an online mode using google form. For analyzing the data collected for the study, tools like descriptive statistics was carried out and weighed mean score for ranking the constraints and suggestions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Profile of the Respondents

From Table 1, it was found that the students were aged between 21 to 24 years. 52.50 per cent of them were male. Majority (75.83 %) of the respondents were from urban domiciles. With respect to the occupational status of respondent's fathers, 42.50 per cent of them were in private jobs whereas 61.66 per cent of the respondents' mothers were homemakers.

It was also found in Table 1 that one third (33.33 %) of the respondents' parents did not possess agricultural land holding. Among those who possessed land holding, the majority (35.50%) possessed less than 5 acres of land. Majority of the parents (60.83%) had an annual income of less than one lakh. The above finding is in line with the findings of [7,8] and [9].

Table 1. Demographic details of respondents

Variables	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	63	52.50
	Female	57	47.50
Domicile	Rural	29	24.16
	Urban	91	75.83
Size of land holding	0 Acres	40	33.33
	< 5 Acres	42	35.50
	5-20 Acres	33	27.50
	> 20 Acres	5	4.16
Annual family income	<1lakh	73	60.83
	1-3 lakh	39	32.50
	> 3 lakh	8	6.66
Father occupation status	Govt.	29	24.16
	Private	51	42.50
	Entrepreneur	5	4.16
	Farming	20	16.66
Mother occupation status	Others	15	12.5
	Govt.	10	83.33
	Private	15	12.50
	Homemaker	74	61.66
	Others	7	5.84

Source: Questionnaire, (2022)

3.2 Students' Willingness in Adopting Farming as a Profession

From Table 2, it was evident that the majority of the agri-graduates (92.50%) are not willing to adopt farming as their profession and only 7.50 per cent are willing to take farming as a

profession out of which majority i.e., 44.44 percent are willing to do crop production followed by livestock production, Beekeeping and aquaculture. The graduates who are not interested in the farming profession were interested in government jobs mostly, followed by private jobs, Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs), and want to become entrepreneurs.

3.3 Constraints Faced by Agriculture Graduates in Adopting Farming as a Profession

Through pilot survey on the students of S.V Agricultural which is one of the constituent colleges of Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University, Guntur as well as thorough review of literature, eight constraints faced by agriculture graduates in adopting farming as a profession were identified. The constraints were presented to the final responders, who were then asked to rank them in order of their perceived relevance and importance. The total rating for each constraint statement was calculated using a mean weighted score. The restrictions and their rankings are as follows: presented in Table 3.

From the Table 3, the results indicate that the need for financial security in agriculture was the major constraint that keeps away the agriculture graduates from adopting farming as a profession which is similar with the [10] who mentioned that fluctuating income and uncertain regular income nature of agriculture was the major constraint that keeps away the agriculture collegian from opting farming as a profession. Other important constraints were Instability in regular income and increased cost of cultivation, Non-agriculture background, Lack of initial investment, lack of family support and encouragement, less practical oriented curriculum structure for B. Sc. (Ag.),

Table 2. Students' willingness in adopting farming as a profession (n = 120)

Question	Willing	Not willing
Are you willing in adopting farming as a profession?	9 (7.50%)	111(92.50%)
Agriculture enterprise of interest (n=9)		
Crop production	4(44.44%)	
Livestock production	2(22.22%)	
Beekeeping	2(22.22%)	
Aquaculture	1(11.11%)	
If not willing, what is your dream job? (n=111)		
Government sector		56(50.45%)
Private sector		37(33.33%)
NGO		12(10.81%)
Entrepreneurs		6(5.41%)

Source: Questionnaire, (2022)

Table 3. Constraints faced by agriculture graduates in adopting farming as a Profession (n=120)

Constraints	Weighed mean score	Rank
Need for financial security	95	1
Instability in regular income and increased CoC	89	2
Non-agriculture background	85	3
Lack of initial investment	79	4
Lack of family support and encouragement	70	5
Less practical oriented curriculum structure	66	6
Not a recognized and respected profession	52	7
Lack of cultivable land	40	8

Source: Questionnaire, (2022)

Table 4. Suggestions given by the agriculture graduates to overcome the (n=120)

Suggestions	Weighed mean score	Rank
More exposure and field trips	95	1
Internships in new start-ups	93	2
More practical work than theory	88	3
Guidance from professors	84	4
Special credit loan facility for agricultural graduates	78	5
Improvement of infrastructural facilities	75	6
Special policy for small and marginal farmers	74	7
Knowledge of farming should be compulsory from the school level	68	8

Source: Questionnaire, (2022)

Not recognized and respected when compared to white-collar jobs, and lack of cultivable land. The above results are in similar with findings of [11] and [12].

3.4 Suggestions Offered by the Agriculture Graduates to Overcome the Constraints

Table 4 promisingly shown that, the majority of the agriculture graduates felt that the 'More exposure and field trips as one of the major suggestion and it was ranked first among all the suggestions based on weighed mean score.

'Internships in new start-ups' was suggested by second majority of agriculture graduates and was ranked second followed by 'More practical work than theory' ranked third, 'Guidance from professors' ranked fourth. 'Special credit loan facility for agricultural graduates' ranked fifth, followed by 'Improvement of infrastructural facilities' ranked sixth, 'Special policy for small and marginal farmers' ranked seventh, 'Knowledge of farming should be compulsory from the school level' ranked eighth. This results are similar with the findings of [13].

4. CONCLUSION

It is high time to bring considerable changes in the agriculture education system so that every graduated student decides to engage in farming with passion & confidence. Hence certain initiatives should be taken such as exposure and hand-in experience on practical and field-level issues, orientation towards technology-enhanced agriculture, developing of a sense of passion for farming from the school level, providing special credit facilities like loans and crop insurance to graduates and also by the implementation of many other schemes and programs like MAYA (Motivating and Attracting Youth in Agriculture), that act as a road for the youth to travel further towards farming. If this case continues as found in the study shortly there will be a severe shortage in production, which takes us 70 years back to a similar situation of food insufficiency soon after post-independence.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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