

Factors Affecting Youth Involvement in Agriculture in Sikkim

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Abstract—Youth are backbone of any society and an economy, especially for India where youth is considered as demographic dividend. On the other hand, agriculture sector is base for all sector. But in reality, youth and agriculture sector is becoming annoyed. Agricultural population is declining and youth unemployment is also sneaking. In this context, this study tries to understand the factors affecting youth involvement in agriculture by considering view of 259 youths (14-29 years) from 8 villages of four district of Sikkim. Study found that instead of an organic initiative rarely youths are interested to take up agricultural activities as a livelihood due to socio, economic, parents' expectation for job, educational level mainly affecting youth involvement in agriculture.

Keywords: Youth, Agriculture, Sikkim.

Introduction

By the year 2025, 83 percent of the expected population of 8.5 billion will be living in developing countries. Yet the capacity of available resources and technologies to satisfy the demands of this growing population for food and other agricultural commodities remains uncertain (UNEP)¹. While most of the world's food is produced by smallholder farmers (aged) in developing countries, older farmers are less likely to adopt the new technologies needed to sustainably increase agricultural productivity, and ultimately feed the growing world population while protecting the environment. Hence, we need to re-engage youth in agriculture (FAO, IFAD and CTA, 2014).

There is compelling evidence of an ageing farmer population in all over the world. Ottosen (2014) found that there is an increase in the proportion of older people living in rural areas and a decline in the proportion of younger people, where agricultural holders² are aged over 55 years are 27.5 percent globally and 28.5 per cent in Asia. Consequently, if young (youth) farmers do not replace the ageing producers (Lalji; 2010), then who will produce foods to feed the growing population. Indeed, due to many uncertain factor existing farmers are willing to leave agriculture activity as NSSO, 59th round survey found in India that an estimated 27% of farmers

did not like farming because it was not profitable and in all, 40% felt that, given a choice, they would take up some other career.

In this scenario, youth has an opportunity to grab this sector as an employment sector, but youth of present day not seen agriculture sector as a lucrative livelihood option. Even it is need of this era, where there is high unemployment problem among youth. International Labour Organization (ILO) has estimated that nearly 7.5 crore youth are unemployed around the world and global youth unemployment rate is projected at 12.7 per cent. They further suggested that in comparisons with adults, youth continue to be almost three times as likely to be unemployed, and unemployment rates affect them disproportionately³.

Uniformly India's employment scenario is also not satisfactory to youth, World Bank report especial focus on India, reported that just 8.5 lakh job generated on monthly average in last decade and in currently approximately 12 lakh labour force will entered in labour market in every month⁴. But to adjust this bulk of youth labourforce, there are no any prospects in formal economy in picture. Agriculture as an informal sector, Pandey⁵ (2013) pointed to the rising size of the informal economy in India, where estimated 93 percent of the workforce is in informal employment.

The youth bulge will surely become a demographic dividend if they get an opportunity to use their productive time. However, if a large cohort of young people cannot find employment and earn satisfactory income, the youth bulge will become a demographic bomb. Subsequently, youth can be challenges for an economy drastically if we are not seen youth as an opportunity for an economy by generating employment source.

Youth unemployment is compounded by the fact that large portion of the population in developing countries tends to be

¹ Agenda 21 – Promoting Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development – United Nations Environment Programme.

² Agricultural holders consider the person who take main responsibility of agricultural activity and take major decision about the activity.

³ 3rd Annual Employment and Unemployment report 2012-13, GoI.

⁴ According to KalpanaKochhar, Chief Economist of World Bank (South Asian Region) on Report of South Asia.

⁵ A.C. Pandey, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Govt. of India

youth. The formal economy is unable to create enough employment opportunities to absorb this climbing supply to labor force, who all are youth. Agriculture has potential to generate employment. Whatever the solution(s) to this multilevel problem, a great deal of coordination and deft thinking will be required to attract gadget loving and efficiency prone young people into the agricultural sector. Amongst the trendy and perhaps viable 'solutions' being touted today is greater youth involvement in rural development through agriculture (Tyrone Hall, 2010)

However, whether youth willingly accept this venture as a livelihood or not that is big question. For agricultural development, youth acceptance, attitude and knowledge about agricultural activities can be considered as the key for this sector to sustain. It has potential to increase the income of the rural poor and provide bigger employment opportunities (Bahaman et.al; 2010).

So, with these background this study would like focus on scenario of farmers and try to analyze the factors which discourage the farmers to continue agricultural activity. And even addition to this, as part of solution to ageing farmers, how youth can be significant for continuous agricultural activity and analyze the factors in youth perspective which influence or attract them in agriculture sector. Even Paisley⁶ (2014) stated on report on involving young people in agricultural development that there is hardly found similar study in Asia-Pacific region.

Sikkim: A Study Prospect

Sikkim is tiny and naturally blessed 22nd state of India. It became a part of Indian union on 16th may 1975. It is blessed region with fertile soil and right climate which is highly suitable for agriculture activities. Opportunities for agriculture-based businesses and activities are almost unlimited. Even, Sikkim is pioneer for Organic Farming initiative in a world. It is still seen as one of the sector which expected to offer many job opportunities. Out of total population (610577) it is estimated that about 75% (456999) of the total population reside in rural area (census, 2011). Majority of rural population depends on agriculture and allied sectors for economic, food and nutritional security. Out of 308138 total workers (main + marginal), 141867 (cultivators + agricultural labourers) are involved in agricultural activity which is about 46 percent of total workers.

Total Geographical area is 7096 sq. km. Out of which, only 9.53 percent (67693 Hectares) is net sown area of total geographical area. Still 3.76 percent land are fallow in nature. Which can be utilized productively by young and unemployed youth, because Sikkim has already make a brand of Organic and its product has high demand in local, national and global level. It is the need of the day, since Labour Bureau Report on Employment and Unemployment Survey, 2013-14 founded

that Sikkim having highest Unemployment rate (more than 15 percent) among the Indian states and it is nearly 4 times more than national average (4.9 percent).

Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to understand the determinants of youth involvement in agricultural activities.

Methods

Study based in Sikkim, about 259 samples of youths were collected, who belongs to age group between 15 to 29 years (as per National Youth Policy of India) are collected to understand their view on agriculture and what determine their interest on agricultural activities. Data initially entered into excel sheet and then analysed through SPSS. This study used both qualitative and quantitative tools for analysis purpose.

Constraints and Determinants of Youth Participation in Agriculture

Whether youths are willingly accepting this venture as a livelihood or not is an important issue to be examined. Youth's acceptance, attitude and knowledge about agricultural activities are considered as the key for participation in agriculture. Whatever the solution(s) to this multi-dimensional problem, a great deal of coordination and in depth thinking will be required to attract gadget loving and efficiency prone young people into the agricultural sector. Amongst the trendy and perhaps viable 'solutions' being publicized today is greater youth involvement in rural development through agriculture (Hall; 2010)

But, Baksh (1984) found that occupational expectation are affected by parental influence and educational expectation, through academic performance, peer influence and socioeconomic status exert varying degrees of influence on students' occupational expectations.

The drift of youths from farming to less tedious and more lucrative jobs is on the rise, which creates the need to ascertain the level of participation and identify the determinants of participants. Adesian & Favour (2014) found that inadequate training facilities were most severe constraint to participation in agriculture. Similarly, lack of access of market, credits, low level of technology especially mechanization, inadequate post-harvest infrastructure (storage, processing, transport) low uptake of research findings by stakeholders and limited availability of improved technological packages especially planting materials and certified seeds made agriculture unattractive and non-lucrative resulting to decline in number of youth participation.

Adekunle et al. (2009) work on constraints to youth's involvement in agricultural production in Kwara State Nigeria, that inadequate credit facilities, low farming profit margins and a lack of agriculture insurance, initial capital and production inputs under economic factors, under social factors public perception about farming and parental influence to move out of agriculture and environmental issues include

⁶ Paisley is Director of YPARD - Young Professionals for Agricultural Research for Development

inadequate land, continuous poor harvests and soil degradation. But altogether, this study revealed that an economic based constraint seems to be most important factors.

Sometime migration push and pull factors also worked as a determinants indirectly for not to involve in agriculture. As Akpan (2010) said that economic pull factors like the perception of greater job opportunities due to the presence of industries and companies in cities and economic push factors like poor physical infrastructure and social amenities in rural area, search of education and skills acquisition and the absence of desirable job opportunities.

As analyzed by Adesian & Favour (2014) one of their study, the constraint in participation in agriculture in rank basis i.e. firstly inadequate training facilities, secondly inadequate credit facilities, 3rd inadequate extension service, 4th low farming profit margin in agriculture enterprises, 5th lack of modern agricultural equipment and machinery, 6th lack of continuity in agriculture programme and others are inability to establish link between different government schemes, inaccessibility of market and social and psychological effects of being called farmers.

EPRC (2013) noted agriculture income is major determinants of agriculture involvement by the youth which indicates that the probability of youth getting involved in agriculture increase as the amount of income derived from agriculture enterprises increases. Even same report reiterate that compare to youth with the formal education, those who studied up to some level of secondary education are less likely to get involved in agriculture which means probability of taking agriculture as a livelihood reduces with the level of education attained.

It is noted on above, instead of great potential in agriculture youths are not interested to take this sector for their livelihood due to many constraints and determinants which led to refrain them from entering into this sector. Still, if these constraints overcome with possible efforts, the potential of agriculture to absorb and provide handsome livelihood is not impossible task. Having said that, opportunity in non-agriculture sector is also not suitable for growing new entrants in labour market as noted from many studies. The employment scenario for youth provide a clear picture.

Result and Discussion

Demographic Profile

Demographic profile includes the gender, categories, age and educational level of youths which are collected from youths of the farming household. This study, consider youth between the age group of 15 to 29 years as a threshold for the study purpose. Out of total 259 youths sample 56.4 percent (146) are girls and 43.6 percent (113) are boys from all four districts of Sikkim. Educational level varies from below standard 10 to graduation and above. About 34 percent of respondents are having less than standard 10 level and 37.5 percent are having standard between 10 and 12 levels. There are some who have

even master degree still lying idle without any work. Graduation and above are 28.5 percent some are doing casual labour and some are engaged small remunerative works like private school teaching and majority are engaged in urban areas holding some jobs especially in companies/factories as a casual labour. Among the youths 32.8 percent were between 15 to 17 years and 30.1 percent between 18 – 21 years. Similarly, 22 to 25 years were 21.2 percent and 26-29 years were 15.8 percent.

Table 1.1: Demographic Details of Youths

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Girls	146	56.4
Boys	113	43.6
General	24	9.3
ST	109	42.1
SC	16	6.2
OBC	110	42.4
Below Std 10	88	34
Std 10 – 12	97	37.5
Graduate & above	74	28.5
Less than 18 years	85	32.8
18 - 21 years	78	30.1
22 - 25 years	55	21.2
26 - 29 years	41	15.8

Source: Primary Survey, March- April, 2018

Future Aim to Do: Preferences of Youth

As given below table, it tries to accumulate the youths aims to become, in which 62.5 percent have aim to hold govt. job followed by self employed (15.8 percent) and then others (which include nursing, tourism, army, musician, sports etc). But there were some youths who profoundly said that they would likely to be in private job (6.9 percent) just because of high competition or low option in govt. job. Only 3.9 percent of youths were shown interest to become farmers or engaged in farming.

Table 3.2: Preferences of Youth for Profession

Aim to be	Frequency	Percentage
Govt. Job	162	62.5
Private Job	18	6.9
Self Employed (Business etc)	41	15.8
Farming	10	3.9
Other	28	10.8

To have a perception or any kind of expectation or willingness is a result of many factors. Among such factors are environment where we grown up and the scenario which we

seen and perspective of education which we get and expectation of parents to become are many such. Study observed from the above table about the aim to be or preferences to have livelihood in various sectors by youths. The differences among the youth preferences were because of many reason among such few which are actually pointed out as a reason by youth on their preferences are categories in below.

Table 1.2: Reasons for the Preferences of Youth

	Reason for preference	Govt . Job	Private Job	Self Employed (Business etc)	Farming	Other
1	It's my dream	7	0	7	2	16
2	It is respected Profession	16	0	0	0	0
3	To become rich/successful/future bright	9	3	17	1	3
4	Its Permanent/regular/good salary	77 (47.5 %)	0	0	0	1
5	Govt. job difficult to get	0	13	10	0	0
6	To serve community	8	1	7	7	8
7	Parents are farmers	21	1	0	0	0
8	To get facilities	24 (14.8 %)	0	0	0	0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

In nutshell, majority 62.5 percent of youth willing to opt for govt. job mainly (47.5 percent) because of its permanent or regular in nature and have good salary, 14.8 percent to access good facilities like medical and other and 12.96 percent opted govt. job because their parents are farmers. But farming only selected by 3.9 percent (10) out of total youths, as 2 said it is their dream and 1 said the reason to become success or rich and 7 said that they have opted this farming as profession to serve community. Altogether, youths are still in confusion that education is to get job for their livelihood because 62.5 percent has the aim to be in govt. job and similarly other in certain percentages. But agriculture and allied activities or farming is rarely seen as a profession or livelihood it may because of lack of broad education and real understanding of dignity of labour. Even, by above factors study can infer that youths are more attracted towards profession which is regular in nature, security in terms of service and future, can access facilities like medical and profession should be respected, which helps to fulfilled dream. This indicates, farming sectors lack these features led to refrain youth enter into this profession.

Factors Determine Youth Interest on Agricultural & Allied Activities

Interest on something or some activities is result of inculcation of many factors. Interest depend on situation one stand, environment where he/she grown, knowledge he/she accrue on process of taking education or degree, parental and society expectation and many others.

Table: 1.3. Factors Determine Youth Interest on Agriculture Activities

Sl. no.	Factors	Yes	No
1	Parent Support to enter into farming	12.8%	87.2%
2	Farming as a Social Prestige	32%	68%
3	Income Irregularities in Farming	92%	8%
4	Educational Degree/level as barrier to enter into agricultural livelihood	83%	17%

As per respondent, parents hardly support to enter into farming as they had bitter experienced in farming. Hence, they told ‘we worked hard to provide you good education so that you get good job, if you are also want to do hard work in agriculture then leave school/college’. It infers or inculcate in mind of youths that education is not needed for agricultural occupation. Another one is societal perseverance, that agricultural activities is for uneducated, that consequently low social prestige of farming commune. Another one is earning irregularities due to fluctuation in market price of agricultural produce. And last one is, educational degree, as level of degree increase everyones expectation increase and to fulfilled this agriculture activities is not adequate.

Conclusion

Sikkim is first organic state of India, where prospect for an agricultural activity is tremendous but rarely youth are taking interest to accept this livelihood. Majority of youth preferred to opt for govt. job (62.5 percent) and only 3.9 percent are willing to step up for farming and remaining in other profession. As per this, preference of youth are more attracted towards profession where there is security in terms of socio, economic, permanent in character, regular income, social prestige, access of facilities like medical and many more, which is lack in farming sector as per respondent (youths) perceived notion. Similarly, youth get discouragement by parents for farming (87.2 percent), in addition to this livelihood has risk or say irregularity in earning (92 percent) and lack of social prestige (68 percent) and educational level or degree bar the interest on entering into farming (83 percent).

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