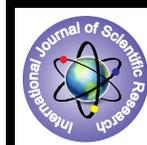


Facilitating Youth in Agriculture - Study of Four Villages at Alanganallur Block in Madurai District



Social Science

KEYWORDS : Youth, Agriculture, Youth and development

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ABSTRACT

India is known for agriculture and comprising one fourth of youth population so, it is very much essential to connect youth and agriculture. The present study design for conducting study on facilitating youth in agriculture in four villages of Alanganallur block, Madurai district, Tamil Nadu. According to the definition of youth in National Youth Policy 2012- Youth in the age group of 18-35 years were chosen for the study. Wealth ranking and stratified random sampling method were employed to conduct the study. The total numbers of youths identified were 926 out of which 86 were full time farmers. From the analysis it was observed that youth in the areas of study contributed very less to agricultural development. The rural youths are found to participate very less in development of agriculture and are not interested to take up agriculture as their main occupation.

Introduction

India lies on the cusp of a demographic transition, similar to the one that fuelled the spectacular rise in Gross Domestic Production of the East Asian Tigers in the second half of the 20th century. However, in order to capture this demographic dividend, it is essential that the economy has the ability to support the increase in the labour force and the youth have the appropriate education, skills, health awareness and other enablers to productively contribute to the economy.

Youth in the age group of 15-29 years comprise 27.5 percent of the population. At present, about 34 percent of India's Gross National Income (GNI) is contributed by the youth, aged 15-29 years. However, there exists a huge potential to increase the contribution of this class of the nation's citizenry by increasing their labour force participation and their productivity.

Importance of Youth in Agriculture

Youth are the vibrant human resources and assets to the rural economy who can be well trained to involve in agriculture as primary livelihood. It requires continued skill building to get them inspired with the farming. The core dimensions and outputs of shaping the youth towards farming would be on building social capital, impacting village economy and making farming as sustainable livelihood to encourage youth to perceive it as their choice.

Objectives

The present study design for conducting study on **facilitating youth in agriculture** in four Villages of Alanganallur block, Madurai district, Tamil Nadu. The study has following specific objectives.

To study the present trend of youth in agriculture

To examine the push and pull factors affecting the participation of youth in agriculture.

To study the reasons behind youth taking up agriculture as mainstream livelihood or secondary livelihood.

Materials and methods

To identify the number of youth in the villages "wealth ranking" method was used. The source used to identify the youth were the voters list of the year 2013-14. The process was conducted at the common meeting point /halls of public meeting with the presence of village resource. The group consisted of five members, identifying the number of youth and scrutinizing them under the category of full time farmers, agriculture labours and non- agriculture labours. To find out push and pull factors interview method was used and 30 percent simple random sampling was used. Further Focused Group Discussion was conducted to identify the reason behind youth involving in agriculture.

Youth in agriculture

To understand the participation of youth in agriculture it is important to identify the actual number of youth and their current occupation in the villages. Using the Voters list 2013-14 total numbers of youth in four villages was identified and from that sample size was chosen for conducting the survey using interview schedule.

Table 1 : Total number of youth in four villages

Name of the Village	Youth Population		
	Total	Male	Female
Rajakkalpatti	197	129	78
Vellaiyampatti	217	111	106
Mettupatti	236	167	69
Kondaiyampatti	276	144	132
Total	926	551	385

From the above table 1 it is found that total youth population amounts to 10 percent of the total population in four villages. The number might increase from 10 to 20 percent in next decade. Therefore it is important to identify and tap the human resources and utilize them for the holistic development of the rural economy.

Table 2 : Total number of youth farmers

Name of the Village	Farmers		
	Total	Male	Female
Rajakkalpatti	25	15	10
Vellaiyampatti	22	8	14
Mettupatti	13	7	6
Kondaiyampatti	26	15	11
Total	86	38	35

It is observed that out of total youth population, nine percent of the population are involved in full time farming and have made agriculture as their main livelihood activity. Further to understand the remaining position of other youth population, second level of wealth ranking activity was undertaken.

Table 3 : Population of youth as Agriculture labour and Non-Agriculture

Name of the Village	Agri-lab			Non-Agri		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Rajakkalpatti	43	12	31	122	95	27
Vellaiyampatti	76	27	49	96	57	39
Mettupatti	116	67	49	44	38	6
Kondaiyampatti	238	104	134	20	15	5
Total	473	210	263	282	205	77

From the table 3 it is found that 50 percent of youth are working as agriculture labours and the remaining 30 percent as non-agriculture labours. Therefore, it is pertinent to understand the reasons behind youth farmers taking up agriculture as their mainstream livelihood and to identify the pressing reasons of non-farming population for not taking up agriculture as their livelihoods.

Push and pull factors affecting the participation of youth in agriculture.

To understand the mobility of the youth population with respect to farming, reasons and phenomenon behind such mobility must be analysed using different factors for example: land holding pattern, type of land, irrigation source, market accessibility, availability of resources, trend in crop yield etc. Hence, the land holding pattern of four villages will be analysed.

From the data it is understood that the majority of the farmers own 3-4 acres of cultivable land which tells that they are of small and marginal land holders and their production is also in small-scale. From the discussions with farmers, it has been observed that the land holding size has been decreasing due to lack of land retention capacity, degradation of cultivable lands which is in response to the increasing urbanisation and commercialization of lands. With the limited land holding, the challenges that they face with farming has also increased.

It is found that the Rainfed villages namely, Rajakkalpatti and Vellaiyampatti, majority of the population farm in own lands, whereas in the canal fed village like Kondaiyampatti, there is a trend of farming in leased land. The farmers of rainfed villages own land close to two acres and the canal irrigated villages own more than three acres of land, therefore it is found that the canal irrigated villages hold 45 percent of total farmers and it is possible that the percentage of farmers leasing their land might increase in coming years and there will be reduction in participation of youth in agriculture.

Further, it is also important to find out availability of land with non-agriculture labours as well as agriculture labours and moving ahead to know the reasons for not engaging themselves in farming.

The study representing that Rajakkalpatti and Vellaiyampatti, Mettupatti and Kondaiyampatti Agriculture and non-agriculture labourers, represent the situation of landless people living in villages. Half (50 percent) of youth population are involved as agriculture labour have own land, but do not involve in farming because of availability of very less land whereas in the case of non-agriculture labours, it is more than 90 percent of people do not own land are forcefully pushed into other occupation like, driver, barota master in hotels, electricians. It is also observed that average education of non-agriculture youth is 10th standard and in many cases drop outs are found.

Further discussing about the challenges in agriculture, youth farmers felt that the prime difficulty they face were water scarcity, climate change and lack of training in better agriculture prac-

tices. On the other hand the opportunity that they had shared is of expanding the cultivable area using organic farming and with usage of optimum natural resources. Farmers also felt the need of credit facility to sustain their livelihood. But when asking on leaving agriculture if better opportunities come, 70 percent of them said a 'yes'. This puts in a situation of asking ourselves that who will continue in agriculture to feed the future population?

Reason for youth involving in agriculture

The other factors and reasons that retain and eliminate youth were studied using focussed group discussion and interview schedule. It was understood that most of the youth were doing agriculture because they had own land and was a traditional occupation to follow by the next generation. The farmers also felt to expand their agriculture and were willing to take part in the trainings provided by the agriculture department and other line departments supporting as well as promoting agriculture.

The prime difficulty that was faced by the youth farmers were lack of adequate credit facility and timely trainings for better farming practices. The internal factors also contributed to their everyday challenge, where many farmers felt that National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (100 days work) did take away the labours required for agriculture and it has become difficult to manage large acres of land without them.

Findings

The other findings of the study reveals about the absorption capacity of small-scale production and rural economies that are not effectively stimulated. There is retardation of youth not taking up agriculture as main livelihood but as a secondary choice. The current productivity rate may not support the hunger of growing population which questions the Food Security Act 2013 and it may lead to mal nutrition and rapid depreciation of Human Development Index. The realities of tomorrow's small-scale farmers and the extent of existing agricultural policies are not reflecting those realities/future dreams. The institutions that support small-scale farmers, and the businesses that trade with them are not profitable to maintain a subsistence rural economy. The new development model does not pay importance to the dying rural economy. Gender issues of agriculture reflect women as a main source of agriculture labour confining her jobs to managing livestock, and doing non-farm activities. Land rights and credit facility has been not reachable to women farmers for a long time.

Conclusion

Small-scale farming and youth should be included within the framework on wider economic transformation with respect to different regions the agriculture must play a central role inter-generationally. The action is needed to remove barriers to accompany agricultural transformations for eg. Land reform, farming as a business, market access etc. Creating awareness across villages, Address multiple constraints faced by the youth and start building up the energy and human capital- land (including land transfer, credit, market..)Strengthen youth based institutions- Youth Farming Group and Optimizing new technology- ICT.

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