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Youth involvement in agriculture employment in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Though the youth is an important resource for economic development, yet their participation in agriculture is very low in globally. Sri Lankan youths are stepping down from agriculture. As a developing country, Sri Lanka must motivate youth involvement in agriculture to establish a proper food security. Therefore, this study aimed to identify major determinants of participation decision, major motivations and incentives for youth involvement in agriculture. This scoping study was a mixed methodology that employs both secondary and primary information. The data for the major study are coming from Household Income and Expenditure Survey conducted by Department of Census and Statistics of Sri Lanka. The data were analyzed using multinomial probit regression. The polychotomous dependent variable contained unemployed, non-agriculture employed, and agriculture employed categories. Results suggested that participation decision depends on individual's marital status, education level, location (urban, rural, estate), household size, annual income generate from employment, household debt, ownership of an agriculture land and distance to the agrarian service center. Around 30% of rural youths stay unemployed while 5% engage in agriculture. The study found that 92.03% of rural youth who received more than ten years of education are open to adopting modern technologies in agriculture. Although this did not impact their decision to participate, the average land area cultivated per individual was 0.9513 acres. Civil status had positive influence on participation decision; married, divorced, separated, and widowed individuals tend to being employed compared to the never married individuals. The mean distance to nearest extension service center was 6.8302km. Reside in rural or estate increase the participation. Increasing household debts had negative influence while gender, ethnicity, cultivation area and individual's age had no influence on participation decision. The primary survey aimed perception of youth about agriculture. This parallel study also resulted that the youth tend to adopt new technologies for farming. 76.27% of youth state it as 'Very important action' to be taken. 72.03% and 66.95% states that introducing agribusiness and entrepreneurial studies to school curricula, provide vocational training on agriculture entrepreneurship is a 'very important action'. Further, the study recommends to promote advanced agriculture techniques, improve accessibility to practical knowledge, and develop market-oriented production system that will also be effective to address the challenges rural youths face.

Keywords: Agriculture, Occupation choice, Participation decision, Youth

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