



Youth in Agriculture: Next Generation Farmers

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Youth is often the time when a person starts to dream of the future, think of the path to take and boldly and aggressively set his/her life in motion. In many rural villages, to be a farmer is not part of this dream future. Farming is a lowly job and does not earn, so better migrate to cities or abroad where there may be more opportunities and adventure. What will then be the future of agriculture and food without young farmers? No farmer, no food. No food, no life.

Thoughts of Rural Youth on Agriculture

India is an agriculturally dominated country or it will not be wrong to say that India lives in villages. Primary occupation of villagers is still agriculture and its allied ventures. In the present scenario the interest of rural people especially rural youth is declining towards agriculture. This noble profession of agriculture is taking the back seat among different sources of farmers' income due to decreasing profit when compared with total cost of production. Keen interest and contribution of rural youths towards agriculture is must for the prosperity of agriculture sector in the country because youths have the energy to work, they want to excel in life. The clearest indicator of the problems of agriculture as a profession is how there are actually shortfalls of labour in some areas, with larger farms relying on imported farm labourers, drawn not just from the neighboring states but from the far ends of the country (especially the north-east) and even Nepal. Younger generations do not want to follow their parents' footsteps, which pushes urbanization. Unfortunately, urban areas, while offering more opportunities, also relegate many to low-end jobs.

What Does the Research Say?

Youngsters count for a good number in agricultural and horticultural universities, but young farmers are very less", he added. He also said that youngsters were rushing to neighboring states in search of a job, leaving their farms behind. "Agriculture is the last option for the youths here as they are attracted towards private jobs in neighboring states," "People who remain in villages compare themselves with their friends who have moved out and are doing other jobs," adding that it was important that they are economically as well placed as those in services and business. Agriculture was less remunerative in the state. "We can start any agricultural venture with the government's help, but scope of survival is bleak," A new study, the 2019 Rural Development Report by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, added another dimension to the issue of unemployment among the rural youth in context of the declining farmer population and income from farming sources, not only in India but also the world. The report aggregated several studies to calculate population trends as well as economic futures of rural youth and concluded that their population is increasing across the globe, but more in Asia and Africa, particularly in developing and least-developed countries.

This bulge in rural young population comes at a time when these areas neither have impressive economic growth nor diversified livelihood sources. Where would they be employed? Consider this. Close to three-fourths of the rural youth live in countries where agricultural value-addition is among the least. “Young people have a tough time escaping poverty by engaging in farming activities in these countries; most will earn a better living by transitioning into other sectors,” the report claimed. The trend is observed in India as well. A significant percentage of the rural, young unemployed in the country is found in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar -primarily agrarian states with a very high young population looking for alternative livelihood sources than farming. However, in comparison to African countries, India does have higher level of non-farm employment. At the same time, the study argues, agriculture has huge potential to gainfully absorb the new work force. Close to 67 per cent of rural youth live in areas that have high agricultural potential. “Failing to act risks creating a lost generation of young people without hope or direction, which contributes to an increased risk of forced economic migration and fragility,” Gilbert F Hounbo, IFAD president, said. So, potential of agriculture is not a constraining factor for the rural youth to take up farming as a vocation. That they don’t reap a good harvest and prices are the main reasons for their disinclination.

Why Agriculture is Not Attractive to the Youth?

- Farmers low identity and self-image.
- Farming is not profitable comparative to other job.
- Insecure land ownership and increasing land price
- Lack of rural infrastructure.
- Lack of supportive government policies and program for family farmers.
- Inadequate skills and knowledge on production, processing and business.
- Uncertainties and variability in prices.
- Lack of risk taking capacity.

Which Possible Solution Can Change the Prospective of Looking Agriculture as Unattractive Occupation to Youth?

Today’s young generation runs after profit and because of which they get benefit; they are forced to run after it. Agriculture used to be only a means of subsistence in traditional times but now this thing has changed. Now along with farming there are numbers of different diversified farming ideas like vertical gardening, fish farming, mushroom production, establishing processing units, home gardening, urban farming etc. after reviewing many success stories, there are many youth who select their occupation as farmer or agricultural business person and at the same time they have been seen succeeding in that respective business. So making agriculture occupation popular among the youth is not an impossible task. All we need is proper policy so that the desire information can be passed on to the youth, especially rural youth. It is the time to understand that it is the youth who can extract the needed benefits and evolve an innovative way of farming keeping in mind the conditions like climate change and other seasonal abnormalities. The focus is needed on the strategy to make agriculture an occupation that not only ignites youth’s interest but also convert it into a financially promising sector. Recent studies show that only 20% of youth of rural families are engaged in agriculture and the numbers indicate a grim situation. Schemes run by state and central governments to engage youths into agriculture have succeeded to a limited extent.

Possible Solutions

The aim should be to make agriculture more attractive to the younger generation; here are a few suggested ways to accomplish the task:

1. Improve productivity and efficiency.

2. Think system level and price inputs correctly.
3. Start taxing high-income agriculture.
4. Focus on quality or value, instead of quantity.
5. Training program for Rural Youth
6. Link social media to agriculture.
7. Image management.
8. Strengthening the education system in agriculture.
9. Utilizing ICT
10. Facilitate easy access to credit and land

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