

Motivational factors for attracting and retaining youths in agriculture through new ventures of agro-skills

Opinion

For a livelihood the best profession is farming, the next lower in order is a business, then service & begging is always formidable. But on flipside the social value system has changed and almost reversed the past concept. Today's youth is showing a lackadaisical response to agriculture. Because they find agriculture less remunerative, high risk business due to vagaries of nature and scanty of social recognition. Farmers want to get rid of their land and migrate to the cities while youths prefer to do minimum wage jobs rather than doing agriculture. If this situation persists in the future, it will be a herculean task to maintain country's food security. "Agriculture is the backbone of our country", more than 50% of labour force are engaged in agriculture and in order to retain the backbone straight, timely, convenient measures need to implement to foster towards food security.¹ Land under agriculture is declining due to several socioeconomic and natural causes. In this context the R & D of our country have to give timely emphasis for raising agriculture productivity through hi-tech and modern technologies. And who else better than youths can adopt and apply hi-tech and modern technologies? India blessed to have so many capable youngsters in a place which is full of opportunities. This is our greatest asset. Young mind are creative and youth is capable of achieving seemingly impossible task. United Nation defined youth age group as 15-25, but in India, youth is in the age group of 13-35 years² which constitute 46% of the total population of the country. Knowing the vitality of rural youth in a youthful country, especially for the purpose of agricultural development from the point of view of India's food security, the apex body ICAR begins on a program on "Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture" (ARYA). The objectives of ARYA are (i) To captivate and accredit the Youth in Rural Areas to take up different Agriculture, allied and service sector enterprises for sustainable income and gainful employment in selected districts, (ii) to set up a conglomeration by creating groups for secondary agriculture such as value addition, processing and trading (iii) to show various linkages with various sectors and stakeholders available under various schemes/program for sustainable development of youth. ARYA project will focus into the area of apiary, mushroom, seed Processing, soil testing, poultry, dairy, goatry, carp-hatchery, vermin-compost etc. Rural youths will be identified for their skill development in entrepreneurial activities. The purpose is to establish economic models for youth in the villages so that youth get attracted in agriculture and overall rural situation is improved. Skill development of rural youths will help in additional employment opportunities in rural areas.

Reasons for repulsion of youth from agriculture

Scanty cash flow in agriculture

Indian agriculture still remains in its subsistence. Particularly in the state of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and the state of the northeastern region, farmers are underprivileged. Farmers are having fragmented

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land holding. That is why large scale farming is not possible. They could not take agriculture as a business and cultivate for consumption of the family. Selling produce in local markets could not fetch good remuneration or the middlemen are engulfing the profit share. Socio-political reasons resist them to get united to form cooperatives, which is an authentic means of earning for the small farmers in a sustainable way.

Social value system

Social value system of our country has humiliated the novel profession of agriculture. The hard work of farmers feed us every day and in the due course we have forgotten that, whatever we do the industrialization, play with electronic gadgets such as computers, smart phone, tables etc or doing high profile jobs, shopping in luxury malls at the end of the day we need food. In an empty stomach all other things will become immaterial. Former Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru told "Everything else may wait but not agriculture". But the fact is farmer do not have social recognition. A father will prefer to tie the knot his daughter with a salaried person rather than a youth engaged in agriculture. There is no fascination in agriculture. A doctor wants his next generation to set the carrier in the medical field or engineering stream and so on. But a farmer does not want his subsequent generation to enter into the farming business. This is the irony of farming fraternity.

Lack of entrepreneurial motivation

According to McClelland's theory of motivation, there are three kinds of human need. Need for achievement, need for power and need for affiliation. And the need for achievement is important for entrepreneurial motivation. Youths in India have become job seeker. It about to become a job provider to many others. It is about taking calculative risk and become successful. Entrepreneurs are not necessarily born, but could not develop. Indian youths are not exposed to the vistas of agriculture where there is a lot of scope of success. Thus, there is a lack of entrepreneurial motivation.

Initiatives to attract and retain youths in agriculture

Economic security in agriculture

Economic security is the ladder to climb towards food security, health security, educational security, social security an overall livelihood security. Economic security comes from a sustainable source of income. But the threat in agriculture is, it is complex, diverse

and risk prone in nature. And in a climate change scenario, this threat is becoming more severe. Addressing the threats in agriculture will become an opportunity for the educated youths to shine in the field of agriculture. Every youth need not really work on the farm. They need to become farm manager who should have future vision of agro improvement, who can guide farmers in farm operation, marketing and storage options. They should know the support mechanism in agriculture in through integrated farming so that if one crop fails due to weather vagaries, farms need not to face loss. Education and skillful youths may register in “Start-up-India” initiative of Government of India to provide advices and managerial assistance to the farmers. Furthermore, the Government has introduced “Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana” to compensate the loss incurred due to crop failure.

Recognition of algebra skills

Recognition of algebra skills will motivate youths to take up agriculture as a profession. Government of India has up ‘Skill India’ initiative to support and promote skills all over the country. In a recent Skill India, advertisement, renowned cricketer Sachin Tendulkar acknowledges a carpenter who prepared a nice wooden chair and tells him, there is no difference between them. Because the carpenter prepares nice chair with a piece of wood and he make a run with the bat made up of wood. Tendulkar tells “Hunar hona zaroori hai”, means one should acquire skill. And more importantly, all skills should be recognized. No job should be treated as low profile as every job is importantly, and requires specific skill. The younger generation will be interested in taking to farming as a profession only if farming becomes both economically and intellectually attractive. The future of food security in our country will depend on strengthening of the ecological foundation essential for sustainable agriculture, as well as attracting educated youth to farming and allied professions such as animal husbandry, inland and marine fisheries, agro-forestry, agro-processing and agribusiness. There are great opportunities for strengthening the service sector in rural areas. A group of young farmers consists of agriculture, veterinary, home science, engineering and commerce graduates could jointly organize Agricultural, Transformation Centers in every block to bring about a technological up gradation of farm operations and farming enterprises as well to provide demand driven services.

Inculcate entrepreneurial motivation among youths

Agriculture should satisfy the intellectual need of the youth. Introduction of bio-technology, nanotechnology in agriculture requires sophisticated skills. The next green revolution is impossible

without Biotechnology, Nanotechnology and Information technology. Developing incubates in these sectors, identifying angel investors to support and finance such sophisticated areas in agriculture could develop entrepreneurship in agro sector. Entrepreneurs are not necessarily born; they could be developed through entrepreneurship motivational trainings (EMT). Ministry of skill development and entrepreneurship and Ministry of micro, small and medium enterprises look after entrepreneurship development in India. There are Entrepreneurship Development Institutes (EDIs), (i) Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, Gwalior, (ii) National Institute of Entrepreneurship and small Business Development (NIESBUD), Noida and (iii) National Institute of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (NIMSEM), Hyderabad who incurs training on entrepreneurship development.

Conclusion

Contentment in agriculture will attract and retain youth. Maslow has human needs into five categories. Physical need, safety need, need of belongingness, self esteem and self actualization. Sustainable cash flow in agriculture will satisfy the physical needs, i.e. food, and clothing. Having enough money brings safety of all kinds. They could access better medical facility, good education for the children and avail modern facilities. By doing so they feel socially recognized and could establish self esteem. Dedication in agriculture leads to new innovations and farmers could experience self actualization in their domain. Hence satisfying the needs of fewer than three categories may attract the young generation and satisfying the needs of upper two categories may retain them in agriculture. Startups with niche technology and new business models are working to solve problems in India agriculture.

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares there is no conflict of interest.

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