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**Changing scenarios and career ambitions of
Agricos: A Study from Kerala state, India**

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Abstract

The aspirations of the agricultural graduates are having greater influence in future development of agriculture in a country. The present study was conducted to trace out the career aspirations of the agricultural graduates. The study was conducted among the sixty four respondents of B.Sc. Agriculture degree holders through open online survey using 'Google forms' and 'Facebook'. Majority of the respondents had medium level of career aspiration. Three-fifth of the respondents (60.94%) aspired for academic research and teaching positions in educational institutions. In the other hand only 14.06 percent opted for start-ups or self-employment avenues after the graduation. Leveraging the full potential of agricultural technology to solve the farming problems is possible innovation with private capital. The agritech ventures and start-ups focussing on farmer-inclusive business models could ensure sustainable economic outcomes. The Agritech enterprises also hold huge potential for investment and impact. Anyhow there exists need for lucid efforts for tuning up Agricultural graduates more towards self-employment and Agri-business start-ups.

Keywords: Aspirations, career, agricultural graduates, Agri start-ups

Introduction

India's agriculture sector contributes a mere 17% to the country's gross domestic product (GDP), though nearly 60% of rural households are engaged in agriculture and allied industries. Though the New-age methods of agriculture technology transfer and farm management have improved agricultural practices and productivity over years, the sector still lags when it comes to modernization. The professional education or vocational education imparted in Agriculture domain plays a vital role in sectoral reforms and growth. Agricultural education aims in agricultural human resource development for not only generating new technologies, but also in their assessment, refinement and dissemination to the farming community. The present situation demands a renewed focus for enhanced quality and relevance of higher agricultural education where agricultural scholars needed to develop knowledge, skills, ability and entrepreneurship to provide village specific extension services. Aspirations are defined as forward-looking goals or targets (Locke and Latham, 2002) ^[5]. It is a mental image created by people about their future opportunities and regarding when, where and how they can achieve them. Majority of the studies from India reveals that most of the students pursuing agricultural graduation had medium to high level of occupational aspiration. Most of them wanted to pursue a Government job career because of the job security, attractive salary, power, attached better promotional chances, lack of risk and good status. (Mishra, R. *et al.*, 2014) ^[6]. In a study conducted by Dhakre (2014) ^[2] regarding aspiration of agriculture students towards agriculture enterprise in West Bengal, 73.8 percent students joined Agriculture College for getting job and aspiration of students towards agriculture enterprise were positively and significantly

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associated with father education and with father occupation, family size and aim of joining. The majority of Girl Students (71.00%) had overall medium level aspiration among which 56 Percent of them interested to do higher education. (Yongam and Tekale, 2014) [8]. Thus, the present study aims to find out the future aspirations of agricultural scholars and to find the educational gaps experienced by them.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Kerala among the agricultural graduates. Ex-post facto research design was used in this study to suit the objectives and type of information needed. Well-structured questionnaire was organised and validated with the help of 'Google forms', an online application provided by Google Platform. The online form was then published in different Student's Community groups through the social networking site Facebook for a period of one month. Facebook was selected for this purpose due to the wider popularity of this site among youth of India as a social networking tool. Among the sixty seven random respondents, sixty four students who pursued their Under Graduation

Degree in Agriculture (B.Sc. (Hons.) Agriculture) in the last ten years were selected based on the objective of the study. Statistical tools like percentage analysis, Cumulative Frequency and Simple correlation analysis were used for analysing the data.

Results and Discussion

Personal characteristics of the agricultural graduates

A clear-cut understanding and first-hand knowledge about the composition of the subjects render in a larger way to interpret the collected data evidently. In studying the aspirations of the agricultural graduates, it is very important to scan the profile of the respondents as they would also act as causes for the development of various aspirations regarding their career. Keeping this view, attempt has been made to collect the details on selected profile of the respondents from the educational institution. The composition of the respondents has been discussed against each variable selected for this study. The results have been presented and discussed in table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their personal characteristics (n=64)

S. No.	Categories	Number	Percent
A	Gender		
	Female	52	81.25
	Male	12	18.75
B	Age		
	Low (≤ 23 years)	5	7.81
	Medium (24-27 years)	56	87.5
	High (> 28 years)	3	4.68
C	Educational status		
	B.Sc. (Hons.) Agriculture	19	29.68
	M.Sc. Agriculture	38	59.38
	Ph.D.	7	10.94
D	School education stream		
	State Board Syllabus	39	60.94
	CBSE Syllabus	23	35.94
	ICSE Syllabus	2	3.13
E	Mass media exposure		
	Low		17.19
	Medium		51.56
	High		31.25
F	Leadership skills		
	Low		59.38
	Medium		32.81
	High		7.81
G	Parent's occupation		
	Labour	5	07.81
	Farming	5	07.81
	Farming + Labour	5	07.81
	Business/ Private job	16	25.00
	Service	36	56.25
H	Land holding		
	< 1 acre	30	46.90
	1 - 2	23	35.90
	2 - 4	8	12.50
	> 4 acres	3	04.70
I	Annual income		
	Up to Rs.50,001	11	17.20
	Rs.50,001 to 1,0,0001	7	10.90
	Rs.1,00,001 to 1,50,001	8	12.50
	Rs.1,50,001 to 2,00,001	8	12.50
	Above Rs.2,00,001	28	43.80
J	Family dwelling		
	Rural	34	53.10
	Semi-Urban	17	26.60
	Urban	13	20.30

Gender is another key determinant of aspirations. Strong gender differences are found in the content of occupational aspirations for girls and boys, reflecting stereotypical occupations for women and men (Blackhurst and Auger, 2008; Kenkel and Gage, 1983) [1, 2]. Majority of the students (81.25%) were female. Age of the respondents ranged around thirties as the responses were collected from agricultural graduates who passed out from the university in past ten years. Education improves one's capability to cope up with different situations and also helps in taking correct decisions. Nearly three-fifth of the respondents (59.38%) did Post Graduation after their B.Sc. (Hons) Agricultural degree program whereas more than one-fifth of the respondents either pursuing the degree or finished their education with Under Graduation. The school education background of the students had greater influence in their reason for selection of the course for higher education. More than three-fifth of the agricultural scholars did their schooling in state syllabus and remaining learned Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Syllabus. Only a meager percent of the students (3.13%) did their schooling in Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) syllabus. Utilization of different mass media like radio, newspaper, television magazines and other internet sources for both agricultural and non-agricultural related matters were studied categorized under three categories. More than half of the respondents are having medium level of exposure followed by high (31.25%) and low level (17.19 percent) mass media utilization respectively. Whereas interest of around half of the respondents towards agriculture related media are of medium level (57.81%) and towards non agriculture related media are high (46.88%). Leadership ability refers to ability of a person to influence people to co-operate in achieving a goal. In this study, past and present participation of agricultural students as either members or office bearers of class committee, college union, university union and National Student Services (NSS) activities were studied. Nearly three-fifth of the agricultural graduates are having lower level of leadership followed by medium level of leadership by 32.81 percent of respondents. Only 7.81 percent had higher level of leadership skills.

Family socio-economic status

Literature reviews shows that aspiration of agricultural students were associated with socio-economic characteristics of family such parental occupation, income and place of dwelling etc. (Dhakre, 2014) [2]. Hence it is important to learn socio-economic status of the family which may affect the future desires and goals of the agricultural graduates. Land

holding referred to the total extent of land an individual farmer possessed and cultivated. In this study it is the land owned by the family of the respondents which in turn can be considered as an indicator of dependency of family to agriculture and other related activities. The annual income of the family of more than two-fifth of respondents (43.8%) are above two lakh. Higher educational and occupational status of parents of the respondents will brought the explanation for the higher annual income of the parents.

Aspirations of agricultural scholars

Level of aspiration is operationalized as the goal that the individual sets for himself and that he / she strives to achieve. Aspirations play an important role in influencing how young people make life choices, how they think and feel about themselves.

From the study (Table 2) it was inferred that Three-fifth of the respondents (60.94%) wanted to become a researcher or a well-known academician in agricultural sciences which confirms with their higher educational aspiration to go for post-graduation in agricultural sciences. Around one-third of the respondents are most interested to work in officer post (agricultural or technical) in different Government Departments (39.06%) and in nationalized banks (28.13%). Only one-fourth of the respondents (26.56%) had higher aspirations to join for Civil Service under Central & State Government. Entrepreneurial behavior of the respondents are low with around half of the respondents not interested in starting business followed by 40.6 percent moderately interested and only 14.06 percent most interested. More than three-fifth of the respondents (64.06%) are not interested to work in private sector followed by 41.00 percent moderately interested and only four percent who are most interested. Economic motivation is one of the basic drives against the activities of an individual and it has more influence on the career aspirations of the agricultural graduates. Nearly three-fifth of the respondents (60.94%) are looking forward for a higher salary followed by 32.81 percent of the respondents who are moderately interested and only 7.81 percent who are least interested. Around half of the graduates are most interested in purchasing land (43.75%), building new house (50.00%) and purchasing of vehicle (48.44%). Two-fifth of the respondents (40.63%) are interested in development of infrastructure for farming activities. Nearly three fourth of the respondents were not interested in investing in real estate. Rather more than two fifth of the respondents wanted to have bank balance.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their aspiration levels (n=64)

A	Career aspiration	Most interested		Moderately interested		Not interested	
		No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
1.	Civil service under Govt.	17	26.56	18	28.13	29	45.31
2.	Become a well-known academician.	39	60.94	16	25.00	9	14.06
3.	As agricultural officer in Govt. Dept.	25	39.06	24	37.50	15	23.44
4.	Nationalized bank.	18	28.13	20	31.25	26	40.63
5.	Voluntary organization, NGOs.	12	18.75	29	45.31	23	35.94
6.	Start business	9	14.06	26	40.63	29	45.31
7.	Work in private organization.	4	6.25	19	29.69	41	64.06
B	Economic aspiration						
1.	Looking forward for a higher salary	38.00	59.38	21.00	32.81	5.00	7.81
2.	Interested in purchasing land	28.00	43.75	25.00	39.06	11.00	17.19
3.	Building new house	32.00	50.00	22.00	34.38	10.00	15.63
4.	Purchasing of vehicle	31.00	48.44	26.00	40.63	7.00	10.94
5.	Farm infrastructure development	26.00	40.63	24.00	37.50	14.00	21.88
6.	To have bank balance	28.00	43.75	26.00	40.63	10.00	15.63
7.	Interested in investing in real estate	4.00	6.25	14.00	21.88	46.00	71.88

Overall aspiration level of agricultural graduates

From the study, it was revealed that the respondents fall in the category of medium level for Career aspiration (68.75%), and Economic aspiration (71.88%) (Table 3)

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to their overall aspiration level (n=64)

Sl. No	Categories	Low		Medium		High	
		No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
1	Career aspiration	11	17.19	44	68.75	9	14.06
2	Economic aspiration	9	14.06	46	71.88	9	14.06

Conclusion

A report by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (2006) [7] says that, "At present, most of the farm graduates are either taking jobs in the government, or financial institutions, or in private sector industry. They are seldom taking to farming as a profession," Therefore efforts should be made to change them medium level of aspiration to high level of aspiration so that the farming community of the India got benefitted. The State Agricultural Universities (SAU) under ICAR system are providing human resources, skills and technology, required for the sustainable development of its agriculture and forestry through conducting, interfacing and integrating education, research and extension. Presently India's agriculture sector is advancing steadily towards its digital transformation and the start-up ecosystem is playing a critical role by bridging innovation, Agricultural technology. According to the National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) report as of June 2019, India currently hosts more than 450 start-ups in the agritech sector and agritech sector has received more than \$248 million funding a rise of 300% as compared to the previous year. According to the report, Agritech in India – Emerging Trends in 2019, the sector in India is growing at a rate of 25%, year on year, and has over the recent years witnessed some of global and sector-focused funds directly investing in agritech start-ups. For this Agricultural education has now to evolve in tune with fast changing national and international scenario of food security, globalization and technology transformation. The agricos should be motivated enough to start new ventures in Agribusiness in the line of digital agriculture, supply chain management, better access to inputs and financing. It is really welcoming scenario that cutting age technologies are comes as helping hand for a local farmer. In the last five years, more than five global agritech companies have ventured in India, as compared to more than 25 Indian agritech companies with global presence. With gaining momentum on Public Private Partnership (PPP), Government of Tamil Nadu enacted a law on contract farming to ensure profitability for farmers.

TNAU initiatives

Recognizing this trend, Government of India, DST-NSTEDB has established one Business Incubator in TNAU by name "Technology Business Incubator" (TBI). The TBI was established and registered in 2011 (Sec 10 of TN Act, 27 of 1975 under Registrar of Societies, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu) in the name of "Agribusiness Incubation Society" (ABIS) which extends its support to start-up firms in the above-mentioned areas. All the Technologies developed by the University are available for transfer to entrepreneurs and agro based companies. These technologies are transferred through TBI, TNAU funded by DST-NSTEDB. The DABD strives to serve as a one stop solution to all the business needs

of entrepreneurs who are interested in agribusiness in the areas of food processing, farm machinery horticulture, renewable energy, value added products from agricultural wastes, Bio-inputs, organic vegetable cultivation, Aeroponics and Hydroponics method of vegetable cultivation.

It is concluded that by 2020 the agritech sector will be focal hub for investment. While many international companies are investing in Indian landscapes, Indian companies with newer business models expanding operations in regions like South East Asia, Europe, Africa and South America. With human capital with medium level of career and economical aspiration, the ecosystem needs to reengineered with education modules with focus on agribusiness and start-ups, capacity strengthening, first hand training with clear focus on driving innovation, crowd funding.

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