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RETENTION OF RURAL YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE

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The existing situation of rural youth engaged in the agricultural sector, becoming a threat against the improvement of agricultural sector performance in the future, is the rural young generation's low interest in and motivation to work in the agricultural sector. The data shows that, the maximum number of operational land holders (33.7%), belonged to the age group of 41-50 years, followed by 33.2 per cent in the age group of 51-60 years out of 100 million farmers in India. While this generation is reaching the age of retirement, the next one does not want to farm (Mahapatra,2020).

Many young farmers are taking over high-risk high returns agri-ventures like protected agriculture, precision farming, organic agriculture, floriculture, medicinal and aromatic plant cultivation, food processing, value addition, agro-tourism, etc. which are mostly avoided by the aging farmers. These new agri-ventures should be actively supported by the government agencies and financial institutions with skill training, financing and marketing support.

Youth participation in agriculture can solve the crisis of unemployment and migration. Questions required to be answered are whether the agriculture sector has enough prospects to provide decent livelihoods to youth, how youth are motivated to take up farming and farm-related businesses, and most importantly, whether leveraging youth for agriculture is an instrument for modernization and future growth of Indian agriculture. (Sukanya Som, *et. al.*, 2018).

Retaining rural youth in agriculture is critical for Indian farming. Most of the innovations (both technical and institutional) required a talented agriculture workforce. Young farmers and producers often have a greater capacity to adopt innovation and entrepreneurship than older farmers. The genuine solution is to take a position of “the rural

youth of today, the farmers of tomorrow”. Based on study findings of 21 retention indicators to formulate the “Perspective model of the twenty-one-point programme on retention of rural youth in agriculture” are expected to contribute significantly towards the worldwide and national efforts of skyrocketing production and ensuring food security through increasing rural youth retention in agriculture,

The rural youth (male and female) with the age group of 16-30 years who must have been engaged in agriculture farming was considered respondents in this study.

For the measurement of the retention index of rural youth in agriculture, the procedure adopted by (Anamica,2013)was used with necessary modifications. For systematic and accurate measurement of the retention index of rural youth in agriculture.The 21 major indicators with 77 sub-indicators selected on the basis of the result 98 experts or judges of different institutions.

The finishing inventory of indicators was subjected to expert opinions. The experts or judges were from the cadres of Assistant Professor and above in teaching, research and extension faculty of social science group of Dr. PDKV, Akola and other agriculture universities throughout India and scientist working in ICAR Institutions.

The actual facts were collected personally with the help of a structured pre-tested interview schedule and data were analyzed by suitable statistical methods to get a meaningful interpretation and obtained each indicator score used for the groundwork of prescriptive model of the twenty-one-point programme on Retention of Rural Youth in Agriculture (RRYA).

Table 1: Indicator-wise Retention Index Score

Sl. No.	Retention Indicators	Mean Index Score
1	Skill development	76.00
2	Family income	75.80
3	Affiliation	75.60
4	Intrinsic motivation	75.40
5	Autonomy (Self-sufficiency)	75.20
6	Access to market	75.00
7	Quality education	74.40
8	Access to technology	74.40
9	Employment policy	74.40
10	Perception	74.20
11	Access to agricultural input	73.40

12	Aspiration	73.40
13	Health care services	73.00
14	Exposure to agribusiness management	72.60
15	Reward and recognition.	72.60
16	Social support	72.40
17	Access to farm mechanization	71.80
18	Access to finance services	70.40
19	Government schemes	70.20
20	Access to digital technology	69.60
21	Agricultural policy	69.00

Finally, the composite retention index worked out was (73.00). The indicator-wise discussions of the retention Index are presented below.

Prescriptive process model on retention of rural youth in agriculture (Fig.1) based on the field experience and major findings of research outcome.

The prime challenge for the stakeholders is “How to retain rural youth in agriculture”. Keeping in view the outcome of the study, an attempt was made to retain rural youth in agriculture. The prescriptive model is multidisciplinary, focusing on all the possible ways and means for retaining the rural youth in agriculture and providing them handhold support to stay in agriculture

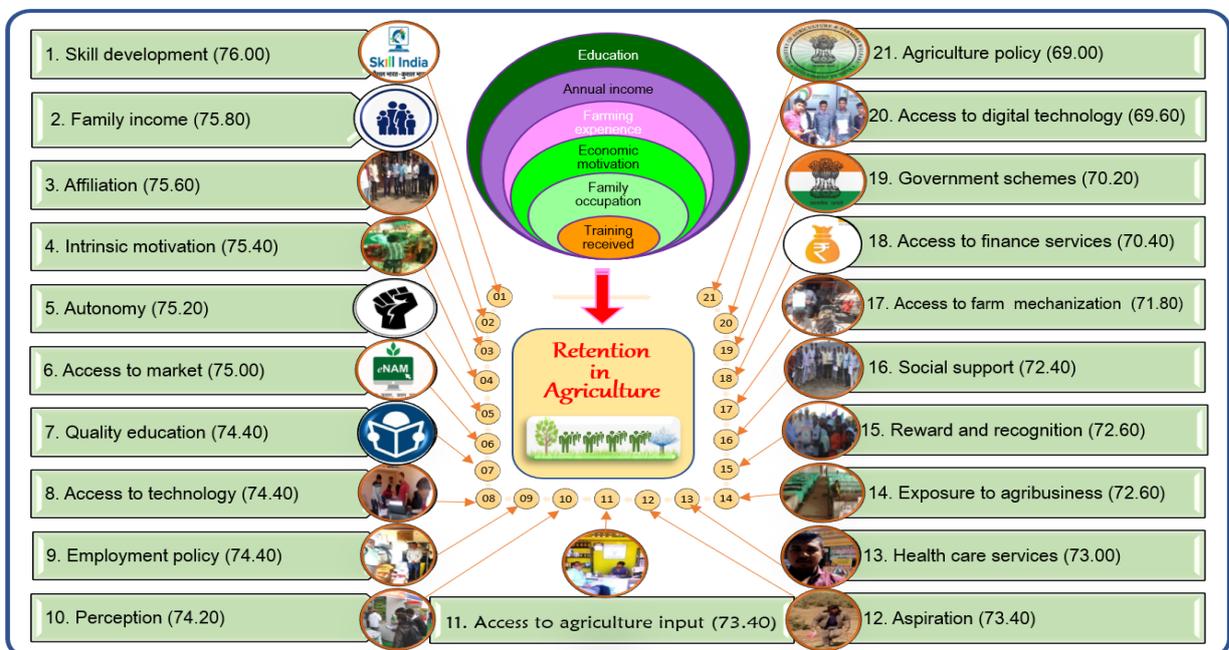


Fig. 1: Prescriptive model of the 21-point programme on retention of rural youth in agriculture

Conclusion

In this study, for measurement of retention of rural youth in agriculture retention index was developed and standardized, on the basis of results of retention index proposed a model on “Twenty-one-point programme on retention of rural youth in agriculture” this model consists of 21 indicators viz., skill development, family income, affiliation, intrinsic motivation, autonomy, access to market, quality education, access to digital technology, employment policy, perception, access to agricultural input, aspiration, health care services, exposure to agribusiness management, reward and recognition, social support, access to farm mechanization, access to financial services, government schemes, access to digital technology and agricultural policy. These indicators are very important in the development of a project or programme. Therefore, it is implied that policymakers, development agencies and extension functionaries should consider these indicators while preparing and planning programs or projects for the development of rural youth.

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