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Rural tribal youths of Meghalaya may not be farming in future: Changing occupational preferences

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ABSTRACT

Meghalaya is an agrarian state where about 58% of the total workers are either cultivator or agricultural labourers. The decline in agricultural population is observed by the fact that the urban population increased by about 2 percentage point in between 1981 and 2011. This shift in population along with other associated factors may affect the farm sector. This study was conducted to understand how much farming is liked as an occupation in the hilly state of Meghalaya by different stakeholders and whether they are likely to continue doing farming or not. Primary data were collected from 100 respondents which included adult and senior farmers (more than equal to 30 years), rural youth (15-29 years) and students doing degree in Agriculture. About 58% of the adult and senior farmers were satisfied with the returns from farming and 52% of them were satisfied with their overall farming occupation. Majority of the adult and senior farmers (96%) were willing to continue farming. Half of the rural youth liked farming as a principal occupation but only three fourth of them were willing to continue farming. Only 22.28% of the 'agriculture students' liked farming as a principal occupation. Farm related government job was the most preferred occupation to the agriculture students. Therefore, policies should focus on improving and stabilizing the farm returns to keep them in farming.

1. Introduction

Historically, there was an oversupply of labour in the subsistence sector *i.e.*, agriculture (Basu 2000) but with the fast economic growth and the structural change in the economy, labours move out from the agriculture/rural sector to the modern sector (Lewis 1954). Agriculture is the primary occupation of the majority of people in India. About 54.6% of the total population of the country is dependent on agriculture and allied activities (Census 2011). It contributes 17.4 % to the country's Gross Value Added at current prices (GoI 2017). But, India might be at the pinnacle of decline in its agricultural population (Sharma and Bhaduri 2009). The farming population is moving out of farming especially in the form of rural youth or due to the ageing of farming population. In the year 2001, the farming population for the first time declined in Tamil Nadu and Kerala in absolute terms (The Economist 2001). A decline of about 3.6% rural male cultivator has been observed in between 1991 and 2001 changing the male to female cultivator ratio from 80:20 in 1991 to 67:33 in 2001 (Sharma and Bhaduri 2009). Persisting

agrarian distress, growing urbanization, better literacy standard, greater skill attainment, new non-farm job opportunities, attainment of dexterity by the rural youth could be the factors for drop in the population of rural youth in agriculture (Posani 2009; Sharma and Bhaduri 2009; Singh *et al.* 2016). Probably given a choice, majority of the farmers in the country would prefer to take up some other work (CSDS 2014).

A farm life cycle has entry, growth, maturity, and exit stages (Boehlje 1973; Ahituv and Kimhi 2002). Farmers need to invest both financial and human capital to have a growth in his farm. When they exit, the farm is either transferred to a successor or liquidated and they either retire or seek off-farm employment (Viira *et al.* 2014). Sometimes the farm exit decisions are linked with land reform policy or agricultural policy of the country *e.g.* EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The Government of Korea had promoted various policies such as farm entry policies, farm exit policies *i.e.*, direct payment for farm, non-farm job opportunities *etc.*, competitiveness policies and rural

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development policies but Kang (2010) found that those were in effective in persuading the young people to enter farming. The enthusiasm of rural young people for farming remained as little as the urban people. The competitiveness policy nullified the farm entry policy. Even these policies didn't affect the older farmers too as they were unwilling to leave farming.

A few studies attempted to identify the underlying factors or conditions that might induce the farmers to quit farming in future (Viira *et al.* 2010; CSDS 2014). Some of the researchers focused purely on the probability of rural youths quitting farming (Nag *et al.* 2018; Sharma and Bhaduri 2009). All these studies primarily applied probability regression models for identifying the responsible factors. Ownership of farm land, size of operational holding and share of rented land are important factors that influence farm exit or continuance decision which all these studies found. Viira *et al.* (2010) investigated between-group differences in the motivation to exit in Estonia. They formed relatively homogeneous groups of farms using cluster analysis at first and then asked the farmers about their intention to quit farming within the next 3 years. Applying ordered logistic regression model they found that the reliance on family labour and a diversification of activities reduces the exit probability in case of small-scale farms. They also reported that the exit probability reduces with the increase in size of agricultural land and decline in share of rented land.

CSDS (2014) conducted a comprehensive study covering 5350 respondents from 274 villages spread over 137 districts of India. About 61 % of the respondents were ready to quit farming given an employment opportunity, only 26 % said 'no' to quit option. This study also reported that the large farmers were less likely to quit whereas farmers with small landholdings or no land were more likely to quit farming. Similarly, Nag *et al.* (2018) came to the conclusion by applying binary logit model on the primary data collected from 120 rural farm youths of two states of India namely, West Bengal and Bihar that the rural youths with small and marginal landholdings were more likely to quit farming in future. In an another study, Sharma and Bhaduri (2009) tried to understand the withdrawal of the Indian rural youth from agriculture by collecting primary data from 13 states of India. The small and the marginal farmers had the tendency towards quitting farming possibly due to the low viability of small holdings of agriculture but, they also observed that as the land size increases the tendency of withdrawal increases.

Nag *et al.* (2018) suggested that positive feelings towards farming and additional non-farm and off-farm income opportunities were the important factors influencing the rural youths' decision to continue farming in West Bengal and Bihar. They also found a sizable population returned to agriculture those left in the past. Viira *et al.* (2010) found that

farmers involved in livestock production were more motivated to quit as it is capital and labour intensive. The youths are more sensitive towards the farm and non-farm income differentials, farm prices, interest rate etc. and their occupational mobility is comparatively higher (Sharma and Bhaduri 2009) due to better education and changing aspirations. Sharma and Bhaduri (2009) reported that proximity to the urban areas had the impact on withdrawal but they did not found any significant impact of availability of irrigation facilities on it.

Agricultural labour is one of the most important inputs for farm production. To feed the growing population of the country it is necessary to have enough work force especially in hilly states where mechanisation is near to zero. Their happiness is expected to affect the farm investment and ultimately the farm productivity. But the questions here are i) Are the stakeholders satisfied being in farming? ii) Are they likely to continue farming? iii) Are the new generation willing to consider farming as occupation in future? This paper tried to answer these questions in the context of a tribal state of Meghalaya which is one of the seven sister states in the North-Eastern (NE) hill region of India. The state is an agrarian state where agriculture is the primary source of income and employment for the majority of the population. About 58% of the total workers (1185619) of the state are either cultivator (41.72%) or agricultural labourers (16.73%) (Census 2011). Among all the NE hill states, the average monthly income per agricultural household was highest (₹11792) in Meghalaya (GoI 2016). The urban population increased by about 2 percentage point in between 1981 and 2011 in the state (Census 1981; Census 2011).

2. Methodology

Study area

Meghalaya is located in between 24^o57'N to 26^o10'N latitude and 89^o46'E to 92^o52'E longitudes covering total geographical area of 22429 sq. km. It is bounded on the North and East by Assam and on the South and West by Bangladesh. The elevation of the plateau ranges between 150 m to 1961 m above mean sea level (msl). As on 2011, the state has a population of 26.64 lakh and is the 23rd most populous state in the country. The rural population constituted 81.93 % of the total population and the remaining was urban population (18.07%) as in 1981 but the rural population declined to 79.93% in the year 2011 and the urban population increased to 20.06 % indicating growing urbanization (Census 1981). The sex ratio in Meghalaya is 989 *i.e.*, for each 1000 male in 2011 which is an increase as compared to 2001 which was 975 (Census 2011).

Meghalaya is predominantly an agrarian state with a significant commercial forestry industry. The net sown area is 286199 ha with the cropping intensity of 120 % as in

2014-15 (GoM 2017). The state has the net irrigated area of 102417.35 ha. Rice being the staple food of the people of the state occupies maximum area under cultivation covering an area of 107600 ha and production of 295850 MT of rice with yield of 2750 kg/ha as in 2020-21 (MOAFW 2021). Mainly local rice varieties are cultivated with minimum use of other inputs which are the major reasons of low level of yield. Other important crops cultivated in the state are spices like ginger and turmeric, potatoes, maize, pineapples, bananas, vegetables, etc. Plantation crops like arecanut is grown widely and plantation of coffee and cashew is also becoming popular.

Data collection and data analysis

Sample, data and preliminary observation

Exploratory research design was used in the study. Convenient sampling method was used for data collection due to paucity of time, non-availability of fund. Primary data were collected from 3 different set of samples during the month of July to November in 2018 using schedule containing open and close ended questions. The first set of respondents were the 'adult and senior farmers' whose age was 30 years or above. The second set of the respondents were rural youths whose age ranged in between 15 years to 29 years (CSO 2017).

These respondents were the participants of different farm trainings conducted at College of Post-graduate Studies (CPGS), a constituent college of Central Agricultural University-Imphal located at Umiam in the state of

Meghalaya. The third set of respondents was 'agriculture student' who were enrolled for different courses at BSc, MSc and PhD levels at CPGS. The sizes of samples were 50 for 'adult and senior farmer', 28 for 'rural youth' and 22 for 'agriculture student', totalling to 100 respondents including 38 male and 62 female. The respondents belonged to 8 districts of Meghalaya but majority of them came from West Garo Hills (30%), Ri-Bhoi (25%), East Khasi Hills (21%) and West Jaintia Hills (17%) districts.

Primary data were gathered on their personal information, land holdings, ownership of assets, irrigation facilities, their association with agriculture, their perception of farming as a career, their perception to shift from farming if given a choice, their willingness to continue and invest in farming, their satisfaction from farming and overall life etc. The collected data were first cleaned and then analysed to attain the objectives.

3. Results and Discussion

Basic information about the respondents and their farm assets

The adult and the senior farmers were of average 43 years of age while the rural youth and the agriculture students were about 20 years younger than them. About 96.43% of the rural youths were literate but about 36% of the adult and senior farmers were found to be illiterate. The adult and senior farmers had formal education mostly either upto primary or secondary level whereas the rural youths completed either higher secondary or secondary level of formal education.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents across the districts of Meghalaya

| Sl. No. | Districts | Adult and senior farmers | Rural youth | Agriculture student | Total respondents |
|---------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | East Khasi hills | 03 | 10 | 08 | 21 |
| 2 | West Khasi hills | 01 | 00 | 00 | 01 |
| 3 | Ri-Bhoi | 20 | 03 | 02 | 25 |
| 4 | West Garo hills | 15 | 10 | 05 | 30 |
| 5 | North Garo hills | 00 | 00 | 02 | 02 |
| 6 | South West Garo hills | 00 | 00 | 01 | 01 |
| 7 | West Jaintia hills | 11 | 05 | 01 | 17 |
| 8 | East Jaintia hills | 00 | 00 | 03 | 03 |
| | Total | 50 | 28 | 22 | 100 |

Table 2. Socio-economic information about the respondents

| Sl. No | Variables | Unit | Adult and senior farmers | Rural youth | Agriculture student |
|--------|-------------|-------|--------------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Average age | Years | 43.44 | 22.75 | 22.85 |
| 2 | Education | % | | | |
| | Illiterate | | 36.00 | 3.57 | 0.00 |
| | Primary | | 24.00 | 14.29 | 0.00 |
| | Middle | | 8.00 | 10.71 | 0.00 |
| | Secondary | | 20.00 | 25.00 | 0.00 |

| | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|--------|
| | Higher secondary | | 12.00 | 35.72 | 45.45 |
| | Graduate | | 0.00 | 10.71 | 22.73 |
| | Post- graduate and above | | 0.00 | 0.00 | 31.82 |
| | Literacy rate | | 64.00 | 96.43 | 100.00 |
| 3 | Gender | Number | | | |
| | Male | | 13 | 16 | 9 |
| | Female | | 37 | 12 | 13 |
| 4 | Average family size | Number | 7.00 | 6.00 | 5.00 |
| 5 | Number of earners | Ratio | 0.40 | 0.53 | 0.53 |
| 6 | Average operational holdings | ha | 0.90 | 0.67 | 1.73 |
| 7 | Irrigation | % | 8.00 | 7.69 | 26.67 |
| 8 | Agricultural land | % | | | |
| | Owned land | | 76.00 | 82.14 | 40.91 |
| | Leased- in | | 22.00 | 3.57 | 0.00 |
| | Leased- out | | 2.00 | 0.00 | 13.64 |

About 10.71% of the later were graduates too. The agriculture students were pursuing under graduate or higher level of courses. A respondent family was composed of on an average 5 to 7 member. The ratio of number of earners per family ranged from 0.40 to 0.53 which indicates about half of the family members contributing to the family expenses.

The average operational land holdings was greater (1.73 ha) for the households of 'agriculture students' than the households of adult and senior farmers (0.90 ha) and rural youths (0.67 ha). More than two-third of the rural youths and adult and the senior farmers owned land but only 40.91% of the 'agriculture student' households owned land. It was found that about 22 % of the adult and senior farmers leased in land due to their reliance on farming but about 13.64% of the agriculture student households have leased out their lands as it was difficult for them to manage agricultural activities due to paucity of time as many of them were in government jobs. Most of the respondents cultivated different crops in rain fed condition. Most of them had very basic kind of farm tools.

Farming was the primary occupation for majority (94%) of the adult and senior farmers which may be due to their low level of education and lack of alternative employment opportunities (Table 3). The average gross annual farm income of the adult and senior farmers was calculated to be ₹101330. Petty business or working as wage labour was the secondary earning sources for them. Many of the respondent rural youths were students and were working as wage labourer. Farming was secondary occupation for about 46.43% and primary occupation for only 35.71% of them. Most of the parents of the 'agriculture students' were in government job (72.73%) which indicates that these families had a regular stable income flow and were able to send their wards for better and higher education. Agriculture was primary occupation for only 13.64 % of them.

Occupation and income

Table 3. Information on occupation and income

| Sl. No. | Variables | Unit | Adult and senior farmers (n = 50) | Rural youth (n = 28) | Agriculture student (family information) (n = 22) |
|---------|----------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| 1 | Primary occupation | % | | | |
| | Agriculture | | 94.00 | 35.71 | 13.64 |
| | Service | | 2.00 | 0.00 | 72.73 |
| | Business | | 4.00 | 3.57 | 9.09 |
| | Others | | 0.00 | 60.72 | 4.54 |
| 2 | Secondary occupation | % | | | |
| | Agriculture | | 6.00 | 46.43 | 9.09 |
| | Business | | 34.00 | 3.57 | 13.64 |
| | Others | | 32.00 | | 9.09 |
| 3 | Average income | ₹/annum | 101330 | NA | NA |

| | | | | | |
|---|------------------|---|-------|----|----|
| 4 | Source of income | % | | | |
| | Farm | | 51.18 | NA | NA |
| | Non-farm | | 48.82 | NA | NA |

Note: the frequencies are mutually exclusive

Involvement in farm activities and satisfaction

[Fig 1 and 2]

As expected, all of the adult and senior farmers and slightly more than two-third of the rural youths were involved in different farm activities as it was either the primary or secondary source of income for them. About 68.18% of the 'agriculture students' had performed different farm activities *viz.*, transplanting, weeding, harvesting and sowing either at their own or others' field (Fig 1.). The rural youths also performed the similar farming activities in their fields. As all these activities require higher number of labourers in short span of time the demand for labourer spurt in the village. Moreover, who live in villages doing these operations is a way of life which is also evident from the positive responses by majority of them when asked whether they liked working in the farm or not (Fig 1.). The adult and senior farmers put labour for about 5.31 h/day in lean season to 7.34 h/day in peak season. They had leisure time of about 2 h/day which did not vary across the seasons as during the lean seasons they worked as wage labourer or put more time in petty business (Fig 2.).

Nearly all of the adult and senior farmers liked working in the field. About 58% of them were satisfied with the farm returns but still about half of them reported difficulty in managing the basic needs from the farm returns (Table 4). We further investigated the issue and found that a segment of the respondents (56%) who faced difficulty in meeting their needs reported that they were satisfied with the farm returns which is an inconsistent response apparently and difficult to explain (Fig 3.). It may be that those respondents knew their own limits as well as limitation in farming in hilly tracts, other than being happy there is no other way out. Moreover, the tribes in the hills are renowned for their

were also respondents who didn't face difficulty and were still not satisfied with the farm returns or didn't like farming as a principal occupation due to their risk averseness. Educated rural youths mostly didn't like farming as a principal occupation. independent, contented and happy life style. In contrast, there

Further a direct question "whether you are satisfied with the overall farming occupation?" was asked to them. About 48% of the adult and senior farmers replied that they were 'satisfied' but about 40% said that they were 'partially satisfied'. Only a small number of them reported that they were 'not at all satisfied' (8%) or 'very satisfied' (4%). The 'not at all satisfied' farmers were the ones with no or marginal land holdings, who had to lease in land and were frustrated with the net farm profit. Unavailability of inputs, failure of crops due to diseases and pest infestation and low level of market price were the reasons that made some to reply 'partially satisfied'. The farmers who were satisfied stated that they have already accepted the fate of farming and were satisfied with whatever it brings up for them as it was their only source of income. It also provides them a sense of satisfaction as they were continuing their family tradition of farming. The 'very satisfied' group of respondents were the one who believed in the philosophy of being contented with whatever they have in life.

Similarly, the CSDS (2014) studied that about 72 % of the farmers liked farming as it was their ancestral occupation (60%), some (15%) felt a sense of pride in farming and some (10%) found the farming a good source of income. The dislike (22%) for farming was higher among the landless farmers than the farmers with land. But when they were asked about their satisfaction with present economic condition, a considerable section (40%) found to be not

Table 4. Satisfaction of adult and senior farmers in farming

| Sl. No. | Particulars | Percentage |
|---------|--|------------|
| 1 | Satisfied with farm returns | 58 |
| 2 | Difficulty in managing household's basic need | 50 |
| 3 | Face difficulty but still satisfied with farm returns | 56 |
| 4 | Do not face difficulty but not satisfied with farm returns | 40 |
| 5 | Overall satisfaction with farming as occupation | |
| | Not at all satisfied | 8 |
| | Partially satisfied | 40 |
| | Satisfied | 48 |
| | Very satisfied | 4 |

satisfied. Low productivity, low farm income, no support from government and the variability in weather were the main reasons for their dissatisfaction. Interestingly, about 69% of the farmers felt that the urban life is much better than the rural life and only 19% gave the opposite response. Agarwal and Agarwal (2017) also reported that 60% of the farmers in India were happy with the farming by analysing the data of 50 thousand rural farm households from Situation Assessment Survey (SAS) of 2003 conducted by National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). Further they used logistic regression model and found that factor endowments, external support access, personal characteristics, locational characteristics were the factors linked with satisfaction of farming.

Occupational preference of rural youths and agricultural students

[Fig 4 & 5]

Though 57.14% of the rural youths reported that they faced difficulties in meeting their basic needs while growing up, about 53.57% of them stated that they like farming as a principal occupation which includes all of them whose principal occupation was farming (35.71%) and the remaining (17.86%) were at present pursuing education which constituted 41.18% of the students within the category of 'rural youth' (Fig4.). Interestingly, only about 22.28% of the 'agriculture students' agreed with the statement "I like farming as a principal occupation even when other choices are available". Respondents with farming background who believed in subsistence living constituted the affirmatives. The majority disagreed with the statement citing the reason that farming requires lot of physical work with no assurance of fixed regular income. Similarly, in the CSDS (2014) study when the young member of the households were specifically asked whether they prefer farming as an occupation, majority (60%) of them opted for other jobs and only 20% were willing to continue farming. There was an absolute agreement among the agriculture students in Meghalaya on the statement that "I like farming as a secondary occupation even when

other choices are available" reasoning that it could be an additional source of income, family will be less dependent on others for food, and would bring certain health benefits as it involves physicality.

Next they were given five choices as an occupational option for future. The preference for government job was strikingly high (90.91%) among the respondents (Fig 5.). Income security and stability of government job were the primary reasons why majority of the respondents preferred it. Moreover, these students were brought up in a society where the persons with white collar jobs are placed at high esteem and most of their parents were also involved in one. Some of them informed that their knowledge and expertise of agriculture acquired during their formal education can be better utilised in government jobs as they can reach to rural mass easily. Preference for farm related private jobs was meagre and there were no taker for pure farming and non-farm related jobs.

Further the agriculture students were asked "where do you see your life in future if engaged in farming?" About 42.86% of them replied that they see themselves as progressive farmers. Some felt that they would somehow earn good enough for living; some thought that they would be the master of their own without any pressure from any higher authority and about 7.14% of them don't see any future in farming.

Investment and continuance in farming

Farmers' satisfaction can act as a motivation to invest more of resources in farming (Agarwal and Agarwal 2017). To understand how the preference for farming as occupation affects the farm investment or continuance in farming three questions *i.e.*, i) whether they want to invest in farming ii) whether they want to continue in farming and iii) whether they want their children to continue farming were specifically posed for the adults and senior farmers. Majority of the adult and senior farmers (86%) were ready to invest but less than half of the rural youths responded positively (46%).

Table 5. Investment and continuance in farming (%)

| Sl. No. | Variables | Adult and senior farmers | Rural youth |
|---------|--|--------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Investment decision | | |
| a | Like to invest your resources in farming being the solo earner of family | 86.00 | 46.43 |
| b | Reasons for investing in farming | | |
| | Hope for better return | 93.02 | 76.92 |
| | No alternative choice | 4.65 | 15.38 |
| | Practising since childhood | 2.32 | 0.00 |
| 2 | Continuance in farming | | |
| a | Like to carry on the farming tradition of family (%) | 96.00 | 75.00 |
| b | Reasons for continuing by them | | |
| | No alternative choice | 68.75 | 57.14 |

| | | | |
|---|---|-------|-------|
| | Want to carry on the tradition of family | 0.00 | 7.69 |
| c | Wish their children to do farming in future | 50.00 | NA |
| 3 | Reasons for continuing by their wards | | |
| | Preservation of tradition | 46.00 | |
| | Want them to be food secured | 8.00 | |
| | Depends on their wards' decision | 12.00 | |
| | Wants them to be educated and get good job | 34.00 | |
| 4 | Willing to shift to work in factory with daily wage if given a choice | 52.00 | 71.43 |
| a | If yes, how far you are ready to go | | |
| | Nearby | | 67.86 |
| | Far | | 3.57 |

*NA= not applicable

As farming was the primary source of income for the adult and the senior farmers investing in farming was the only option to them for enhancing their family income. Some of them opined that they would invest only if they receive support from the government in terms of inputs *viz.*, seeds and fertilizers, technology and assured market prices. The reason was no different for the rural youths too in absence of much alternative income generating options in the remote villages. Only 2% of the adult and seniors stated that they were farming since childhood hence they would invest in it (Table 5). All these reflect that the investment decision is not an emotional decision but an income security issue for the farmers.

Nearly all the adult and senior farmers wanted to continue farming but about one-fourth of the rural youths were not. The lack of alternative choices was mentioned as the reason for so by 68.75% of the adult and senior farmers and 57.14% of the rural youths. For some of the rural youths it's continuing the tradition of the family. Half of the adult and senior farmers wanted their children to take up farming as occupation in future primarily for preserving the family tradition (46%) and about 8% desired that their children should not depend on others for food. About 34% of them wished that the next generation should acquire higher education so that could settle in a good job in future. In contrast, in the CSDS (2014) survey though 72% of the farmers liked farming, only 18% of them were willing to let their children take up farming in future. About 37% responded it depends on their children what they want to take up as an occupation. Interestingly, only 12% of the adult and senior farmers of Meghalaya were of the view that they would support their wards' decision on their choices for future occupations.

The mind-set of the rural youths was also reflected when they answered to a question about their willingness to work in a factory in daily wage. About 71% of them replied positively in comparison to 52% of adult and senior farmers. Only 4% of the willing rural youths were ready to go very far for the same. These all reflects the

difference in attitude towards the means of earning income and regularity in the income flow. Rural youths desired regular income whereas the adult and senior farmers were attached to their own way of life. This was also reflected in their choices of crops. The rural youths mostly cultivated cash crops *i.e.*, ginger, broom grass and turmeric whereas adult and senior farmers grew cash crops *i.e.*, Ginger and turmeric as well as the staple crop *i.e.*, rice (Annexure 2). This suggests that they in one hand sought to generate higher income from the cash crops and at the same time didn't want to compromise the household food security as their involvement in other occupations were minimal which could earn them alternate regular income.

4. Conclusions

This paper was an attempt to understand whether the people engaged in farming in Meghalaya are happy with farming. This paper is an attempt to understand that whether farming is liked by the different stakeholders in the hilly state of Meghalaya as an occupation? Whether they are ready to continue farming or opt farming as an occupation in the future? The analysis of primary data collected from three different set of samples using schedules containing both open and close ended questions revealed that majority of the respondents liked performing farming activities but about half of the rural youths and most of the agriculture students didn't want to take up farming as a principal occupation. Majority of the adult and senior farmers and 3/4th of the rural youths were willing to continue farming as they didn't have alternative choices but only half of the adult and senior farmers wished their children to take up farming. When given the options to shift to other non-farm jobs with daily wage, majority of the rural youths and half of the adult and senior farmers were willing to shift stating that it would provide them regular income, unlike farming. Farm related government jobs were mostly preferred by the agriculture students as their future primary occupation citing the reasons *viz.*, job security, regular flow of income and appreciation of white collar job in the society.

Majority of the adult and senior farmers and less than half of the rural youths were willing to invest in farming. Investment decision was found to be influenced either by expectation of earning better income in future and lack of alternative choices or they were the heir to carry on the farming tradition of the family. A large chunk of the farmers were dissatisfied with the returns from farming. Hence, policy should be initiated to reduce the production and price risk in farming to keep the farmers of Meghalaya in farming. Additionally, awareness programmes on benefits of Farmers Producer organisation (FPOs) and various schemes related to it may be organized by the stakeholders involving in formation of FPOs. As this may help the farmers to get an additional source of income and also averse the marketing risk. Youths can be motivated for agripreneurship as there are several benefits provided by the government for start-ups as well.

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Figure 1. Involvement and liking for field work

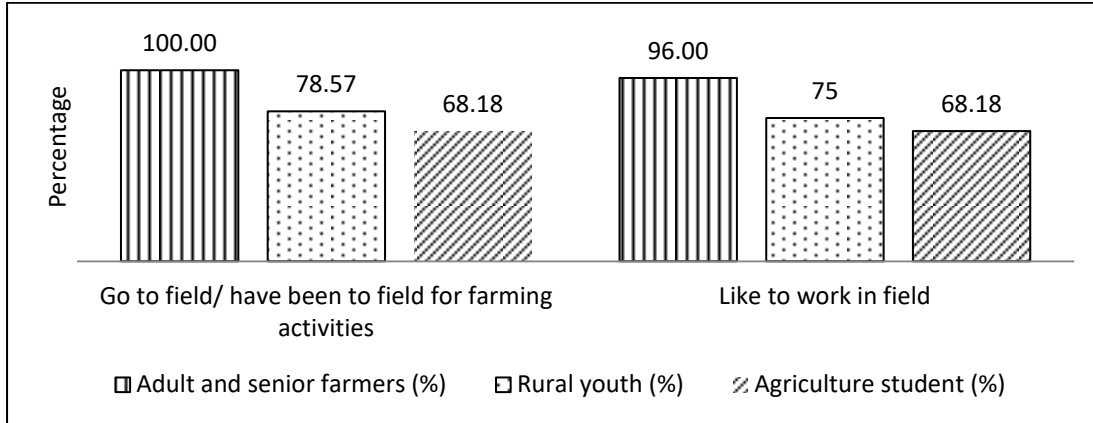


Figure 2. Time spent in work during peak and off season by adult and senior farmers

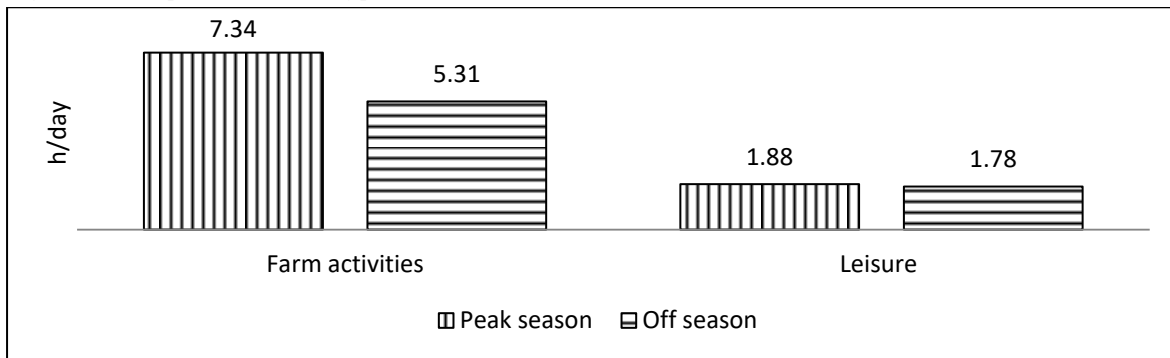


Figure 3. Difficulty in meeting needs with farm returns

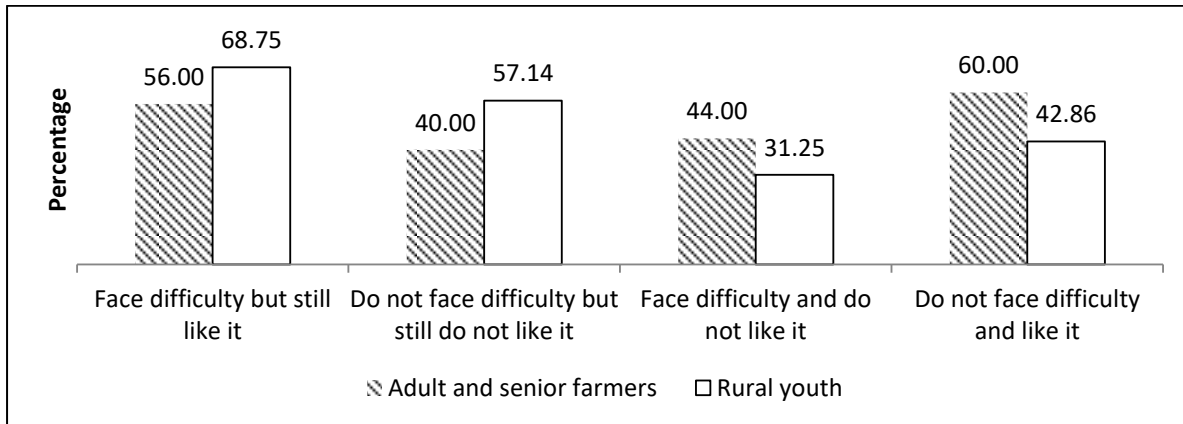


Figure 4. Rural youths' preference for farming as occupation

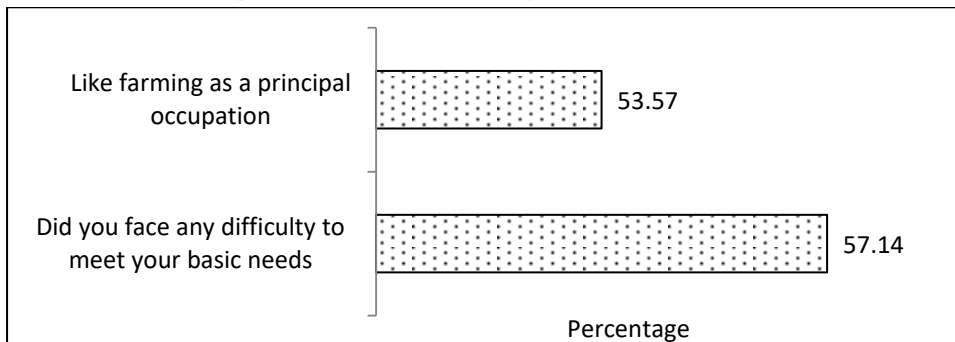
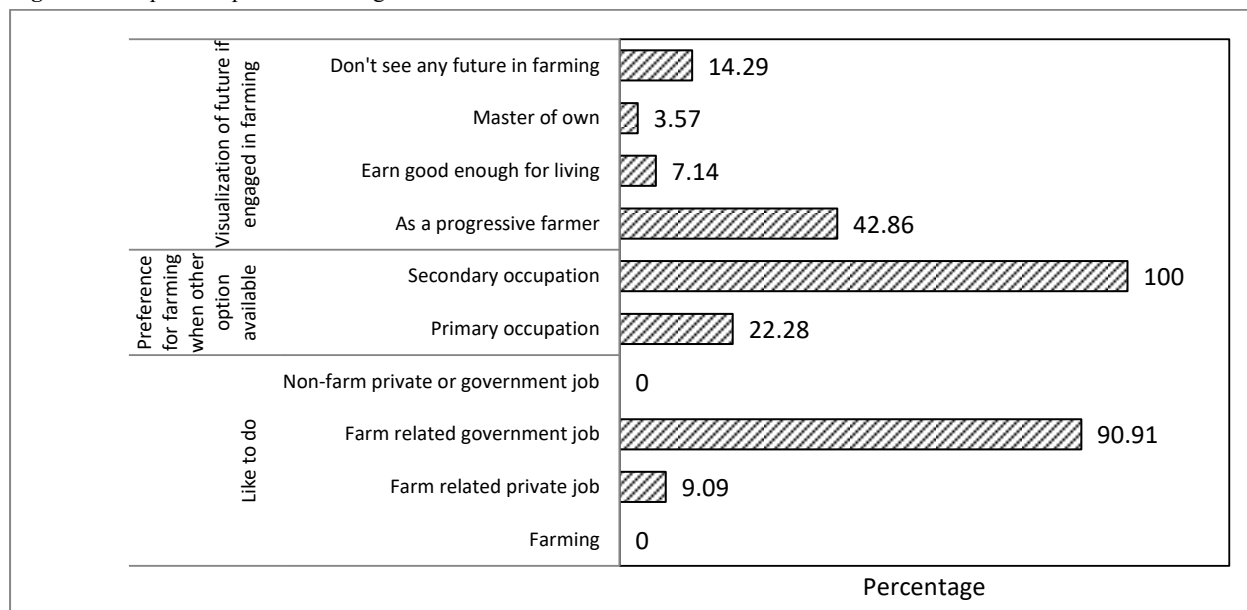


Figure 5.Occupational preference of agriculture students



Annexure 1

Frequency (%) of respondents involved in different farm activities

| Activities | Rural youth | Agriculture student |
|---------------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Land preparation | 45.45 | 6.67 |
| Sowing | 90.91 | 40.00 |
| Transplanting | 68.18 | 73.33 |
| Application of fertilizer | 4.55 | 13.33 |
| Weeding | 72.73 | 53.33 |
| Harvesting | 100 | 46.67 |
| Threshing | 9.09 | 6.67 |

Annexure 2

Crops cultivated by the respondents

| Major crops | Frequency (%) | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | Adult and senior farmers | Rural youth (n = 26) | Agricultural student |
| Ginger | 82.00 | 50.00 | 20.00 |
| Turmeric | 20.00 | 19.23 | 0.00 |
| Broom | 0.00 | 23.08 | 0.00 |
| Paddy | 62.00 | 38.46 | 80.00 |
| Toria | 48.00 | 30.77 | 13.33 |