

RESEARCH ARTICLE :

An assessment of awareness level of school going rural youth towards agriculture

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SUMMARY : India is a developing nation and the youth constitutes almost more than half (65%) of the population of the nation. The rapid growth and diversification of developmental activities have resulted in much needed expansion of employment opportunities, but at the same time have triggered rural to urban migration. This trend has inadvertently resulted in shift of farm labour to non-farm sectors. In the present scenario, creating awareness about agriculture among school going rural youth is a dire need. The present study was conducted to assess the socio-economic status of rural youth, to find out the awareness level of school going rural youth regarding agriculture and its various aspects and to analyze the correlation between socio-economic status of rural youth with their awareness about agriculture. The sample from three villages *viz.*, Kavita, Chikalwas and Thoor consisted of 450 youth selected from three classes *i.e.* 7th, 8th and 9th. Standardized tool developed by Aggarwal (2005) was used to collect data for socio-economic status. Checklist was prepared to find out awareness about agriculture. Data was analysed by using correlation, frequency and mean and percentage distribution. Results revealed that there was significant relationship between socio-economic status and agriculture awareness of rural youth. Majority of the respondents were from low and medium socio-economic status and had average awareness about agriculture and its various aspects. Proper steps should be taken at G.Os and N.G.Os level for channelizing youth towards agriculture for its sustainability.

KEY WORDS :

Agriculture,
Awareness,
Socio-economic
status

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BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Agriculture is the pulse of our country and by and large forms the backbone of national economy. A vast majority of Indian population are engaged in agriculture. It has become imminent to reorient agricultural practices to make them intellectually satisfying and economically rewarding for the youth. India has the largest youth population in the world that is poised to increase further in the coming decade. Nearly 70 per cent of India's population is below the age of 35 years

making India the youngest nation in the world and interestingly 70 per cent of them live in rural areas. To sustain food security, it is imperative to encourage farmers to continue with agriculture, wherein the rural youth have a crucial role to play. In the current scenario, there is a big challenge of retaining youngsters in agriculture due to various socio-economic factors, including profitability in agricultural pursuits. Rural youth are the future of the agricultural sector.

Agriculture can be turned as driving force

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in Indian economy but it is must to know its shortcoming and think to address them. Indian agriculture can be reached to new heights by channelizing the creative energies of the youth through development of skills, knowledge, awareness and attitudes about agriculture. Creating awareness regarding agriculture is important so that agriculture can be adopted as a profession by rural youth. Awareness also helps youth to know about advanced technology. It will also reduce rural migration. There is a need to build positive attitude towards agriculture.

Young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults and more than 75 million youth worldwide are looking for work, according to the UN International Labour Organization (ILO, 1996). Due to their limited access to assets (in particular land), markets, finance and education and skills training, youth are often unemployed or work informally – often in unpaid, very low-skilled, insecure and sometimes hazardous jobs (IFAD, 2012). Large-scale migration of rural youth from farming to urban areas has caused concern among the agricultural policy makers, since, such a trend, if not checked, is likely to affect agricultural activities in the future. Thus, checking migration and retaining youth in agricultural sector is currently a big challenge. Agriculture is defined as the science and art of farming work or business of cultivating the soil, producing crops and raising livestock. Agriculture awareness includes basic knowledge about agriculture like use of pesticides, fertilizer and manure, crop production, livestock management, soil and water conservation, weeding, watering of plants, ways to improve crop yield, seed quality, financial help for agriculture provided by government, processing of food, technology used in preservation, employment in agriculture etc. Today's youth lacks knowledge regarding various technical aspects of agriculture.

Now-a-days due to various factors migration of rural youth from village to city is at fast pace. Today's youth are not aware of the contribution made by agriculture in country's progress, growth and development. Government of India has launched various schemes for retaining youth in agriculture. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce agriculture as a separate field in school curriculum at pre-secondary education level so that they will come to know about government schemes, projects and benefits and most important it will create awareness among youth so that they can earn good enough money from

agriculture. Agriculture does not mean only cultivation but various other options are also open which can be opted by the youth like horticulture, floriculture, fisheries, entomology, beekeeping, agriculture teacher, nursery raiser, manure producer, veterinary doctor, gardener, dairyman, farmer, agriculture inspector, seed store in charge, soil specialist, manure specialist, agriculture researcher, tractor driver, poultry in charge etc. Keeping these facts in mind, an attempt was made to find out the socio-economic status of school going rural youth and their awareness about agriculture.

Objectives :

- To assess the socio-economic status of rural youth
- To find out the agriculture awareness of rural youth
- To analyze the corelation between socio-economic status and agriculture awareness.

RESOURCES AND METHODS

Sample and locale :

A sample of 450 youth (with equal number of boys and girls) in the age range of 11-17 years from schools of three operational villages of All India Co-ordinated Research Project on Home Science *viz.*, Kavita, Chikalwas and Thoor was selected. The sample was selected from three classes *i.e.* 7th, 8th and 9th.

Tool and its description :

Standarized tool developed by Aggarwal (2005) was used to collect data on socio-economic status. A checklist developed by AICRP-CD scientists on awareness about agriculture which consisted questions related to awareness about use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, soil and water conservation, organic farming, cropping system, food processing and basic knowledge about agriculture etc. was used to find out awareness level of youth.

Analysis of data :

Data was analysed by using corelation, frequency, mean and percentage distribution.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

It is revealed from Table 4 that majority (62.4%) of rural youth were from low socio-economic status and remaining (37.6%) were from medium socio-economic status. None of the respondent's belonged to high

category. Table 5 depicts frequency distribution and percentage about awareness of respondents on agriculture aspect. It is clearly revealed from Table 6 that majority (62%) of the respondents had average awareness whereas 21 per cent had good awareness followed by 17 per cent of the respondents having poor awareness about agriculture.

Table 7 depicts correlation between socio-economic status and agriculture awareness of rural adolescents. It is clearly evident from the Table 7 that there is significant relationship between socio-economic status and

agriculture awareness of rural youth. Low awareness about agriculture may be because most of them belonged to illiterate or less educated families where parents were not knowledgeable about various technical aspects of agriculture such as pesticides, weeding, soil erosion, banking and finance, preservation, livestock management, water and soil erosion etc. Education enables the individual farmers to know how to seek for and apply information on improved farm practices. This is because as the individual gained the ability to read, he is able to extend the scope of his experience through the print

Table 1: Socio-economic status of the rural youth

(n=450)

Sr. No.	Socio-economic status	N	%
1.	Education status of the respondents		
	Illiterate	-	-
	Primary education	-	-
	High School	450	100
	PUC	-	-
	Degree	-	-
2.	Education status of the respondents father		
	Illiterate	206	45.77
	Primary education	122	27.11
	High School	103	22.88
	PUC	19	4.22
	Degree		
3.	Occupation status of the respondents father		
	Unemployed	41	9.11
	Labourer	107	23.77
	Caste occupation	21	4.66
	Small business/Shop	49	10.88
	Cultivation	232	51.55
	Business / Agriculture	-	-
4.	Education status of the respondents mother		
	Illiterate	270	60
	Primary education	129	28.66
	High School	51	11.33
	PUC	-	-
	Degree	-	-
5.	Occupation status of the respondents mother		
	Unemployed	76	16.88
	Laborers	132	29.33
	Caste occupation	2	0.44
	Small business/Shop	9	2.00
	Cultivation	231	51.33
	Business / Agriculture	-	-

media. Lack of literacy excludes the small scale farmers from being active participants in development. The most important effect of illiteracy on society is that it works as an inhibitor. That is to say, the more illiterate people there are in a country, the harder it will be for the country to develop. This is supported by Ozowa (1995) in his study that a general lack of awareness among traditional farmers in Nigeria can be attributed to the high level of illiteracy, which in turn contributes to the low level of adoption of agricultural production technology. It is widely acknowledged that farmers with basic education are more likely to adopt new technology and become more productive. With basic education they are better equipped to make more informed decisions for their lives and for their communities and to be active participants in promoting economic, social and cultural dimension of development (UNESCO, 2007).

Most of the adolescents were from low income

families where parents cannot afford to buy latest agricultural equipments and hence, cannot transfer this knowledge to their children. Most of the rural adolescents belong to families who possess no agricultural land. Income is crucial in agricultural information use because the higher the income of the farmer, the more likely he would seek and obtain information for use. With improved income, the farmer will be better disposed to spend more on recommended farm practices that would further increase his farm earnings.

Table 5 and 6 depicts frequency distribution and percentages about awareness of respondents on agriculture aspect. It can be seen from the table that majority of the rural youth are aware of the fact that use of pesticides has increased the yield of crop but they have little knowledge about the fact that pesticides can not be used in organic productions. Majority of respondents are not aware that pesticides are used for

Table 2: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

			(n=450)
Sr. No.	Socio-demographic characteristics	N	%
1.	Present age of the respondents		
	10-12 years	100	22.25
	13-15 years	290	64.45
	> 15-17 years	60	13.6
2.	Ordinal position		
	1 st born	180	40.00
	Later borns	270	60.00
3.	Type of family		
	Nuclear	260	57.79
	Joint	190	42.25
4.	Size of the family		
	Small (1-4)	159	35.35
	Medium (5-8)	259	57.55
	Large (>9)	32	7.11
5.	Type of marriage of the respondents parents		
	Consanguineous	450	100
	Non-consanguineous	-	-
6.	Religion		
	Hindu	450	100
	Muslim	-	-
	Jain	-	-
7.	Caste		
	Upper	78	17.30
	Backward	142	31.55
	Lower	230	51.15

Table 3 : Distribution of the respondents on the basis of facilities available (n=450)

Sr. No.	Particulars	N	%
1.	Type of house		
	Thatched	35	7.77
	Kucha	181	40.22
	Mixed	160	35.55
	Pucca	74	16.48
	Mosaic floor	-	-
2.	Size of house		
	Spacious	30	6.66
	Medium	280	62.22
	Small	140	31.11
3.	Land size		
	Landless	136	30.22
	< 2.5 acres	292	65
	2.5 to 5.0 acres	22	4.88
	>5.0 acres	-	-
4.	Dairy animals		
	No animal	-	-
	< 2 animals	110	24.44
	> 2-5 animals	180	40
	> 5 animals	160	35.55
5.	Material possession		
	No materials	-	-
	1-10 materials	445	98.90
	11-20 materials	5	1.09
	>20 materials	-	-
6.	Water facility		
	At home	12	2.66
	In front yard/well	44	9.77
	Community tap/ bore well	181	40.28
	Open tank	213	47.33
7.	Power supply		
	For all rooms	-	-
	Bhagya Jyothi	211	46.88
	No electricity	239	53.11
8.	Drainage system		
	No facility	320	71.11
	Kucha	130	28.88
	Pucca	-	-

Table 4 : Socio-economic status of the rural youth

Category	N	%
Low	281	62.4
Medium	169	37.6
High	-	-
Total	450	100

pest control, if pesticides are used they should be used safely and farmers should not use more chemicals but they should opt for organic farming. Majority of rural youth are aware that pesticides are used for pest control and increase in yield. It can be because of the fact that use of pesticides is common and almost every farmer use pesticides in some way or the other. Results also reveal that rural youth have less awareness that pesticides should not be used for organic production and safety measures should be taken. It seems that they are not approached for telling them harmful effects of pesticides and safety measures neither by functionaries, other significant adults nor through mass media.

Regarding their awareness about fertilizers, majority of the respondents (55%) were unaware that animals and birds provide rich manure though they were aware of the fact that fertilizers are used for enhancing soil health. 41 per cent of the respondents were aware of the fact that crop yield depends on quality of seeds and use of high yielding seed varieties increase crop production. Majority of respondents (75%) do not know that agriculture is multidisciplinary science (includes crop production, livestock management, soil and water conservation etc.). There is a need to create awareness among rural youth that agriculture is a major sector of Indian economy which provides sufficient food supply to Indian population and Indian agricultural system is largely nature dependent.

Table 5 further depicts that majority of rural youth do not know that soil erosion pollute lakes and rivers, proper manuring increase crop production, damage by insects in crops can be reduced by taking proper measures, agriculture employs a large number of people in India, world food supply has increased as a result of improved technology and processing adds more to the cost of food than raw food. It was good to note that majority (84 %) know that weeding is necessary for good yield and about fifty per cent of the youth know that over and under watering is harmful for crops and about 77 per cent of them know that fertilizers are used for

enhancing soil health.

Majority of the respondents (75%) do not know that technology is an effective way of preservation of fruits and vegetables which are perishable in nature. Majority of the respondents were aware of the fact that bee-keeping is done for obtaining honey and weeding is necessary for good crop yield.

It was noted from Table 5 that 67 per cent respondents do not know that banks and other finance organizations provide loans for agriculture purpose. The

banking sector has played a crucial role in developing the rural economy by providing credit and creating financial awareness. Availability and access to adequate, timely and low cost loans from banks and other financial institutions/sources is of great importance especially to small and marginal farmers. Such financial help is essential for establishing sustainable and profitable farming systems. Most of the farmers are small producers engaged in agricultural activities in areas of widely varying potential. Experience has shown that easy access to

Table 5: Mean and percentage distribution of agriculture awareness		(n=450)			
Sr. No.	Statements	Yes	%	No	%
1.	Use of pesticide has increased the yield of crops.	327	73	123	27
2.	Research has improved farming method in our country.	285	63	165	37
3.	Soil erosion does not pollute lakes and river.	54	12	396	88
4.	Pesticide can not be used in organic production.	90	20	360	80
5.	Biotechnology has increased the pest resistant of plants.	261	58	189	42
6.	Crop sown in July-Aug. and harvested in Oct. is called <i>Kharif</i> .	327	69	123	31
7.	Agriculture is the major sector of Indian economy.	330	73	120	27
8.	Agriculture provides sufficient food supply to India population.	375	83	75	17
9.	Indian Agricultural system largely nature dependent.	297	66	153	34
10.	Agriculture includes plant and animal production and its marketing.	255	57	195	43
11.	Unwise agricultural land use results in soil degradation.	279	62	171	38
12.	Agricultural education includes crop production, livestock management, soil and water conservation.	300	67	150	33
13.	Fertilizers are used for enhancing soil health	345	77	105	23
14.	Agriculture employs a large number people in India.	132	29	318	71
15.	Pesticides should be used safely.	153	34	297	66
16.	The world food supply has increased as a result of improved technology.	198	44	252	56
17.	Organic method of farming is more useful.	246	55	204	45
18.	Farmers should not use chemicals in crop production.	138	31	312	69
19.	Processing, adds more to the cost of food than raw food.	156	35	294	65
20.	Pesticides are used for pest control.	180	40	270	60
21.	Weeding is necessary for good yields.	378	84	72	16
22.	Over or under watering is harmful for crops.	231	51	219	49
23.	Banks and other finance organizations provide loans for Agriculture purpose.	147	33	303	67
24.	Fruits and Vegetables are perishable in nature.	177	39	273	61
25.	Technology is an effective way of preservation of fruits and vegetables.	111	25	339	75
26.	Proper manuring increase crop production.	180	40	270	60
27.	Agriculture is multi-disciplinary science.	111	25	339	75
28.	Bee keeping is done to obtain honey.	234	52	216	48
29.	Crop yield depends on quality of seeds.	144	32	306	68
30.	Use of high yielding seed varieties increase crop production.	186	41	264	59
31.	Damage by insects in crops can be reduced by taking proper measures.	216	48	234	52
32.	Animals and birds provide rich manure.	204	45	246	55

financial services at affordable cost positively affects the productivity, asset formation and income and food security of the rural poor. The major concern of the Government is, therefore, to bring all the farmer households within the banking fold and promote complete financial information. For accomplishing this purpose, awareness among rural youth can be created by educating them regarding various schemes related to agriculture provided by financial institutions.

Good awareness of few rural youth about agriculture as a field may be due to the fact that they belong to farming community and are exposed to information and knowledge about agriculture frequently and have a mindset to know more about agriculture. Good awareness about weeding, watering and use of fertilizers may be because of their exposure to agricultural methods used at home or community level.

About 71 per cent of the respondents said that agriculture does not provide employment. It is must to aware rural youth that agriculture is the largest provider of livelihood in rural India. It contributes 25 per cent to India's GDP. It has a share in national income and it is the largest employment providing sector. Case studies where people are earning good money from agriculture needs to be included in the course curriculum of rural youth so that mindset of school going rural youth regarding employment in agriculture can be changed and they can be motivated to think positive towards agriculture as a profession.

Awareness among school going rural youth can be created by village functionaries, schools, mass media, family and government can also play a key role. If awareness about agriculture is not created then rural youth will not be motivate to adopt this profession and

the positive attitude towards this profession will never develops.

Conclusion :

It can be concluded that the socio-economic status of rural youth is significantly related to their agriculture awareness. It can be justifiably said that socio-economic status affects the person's knowledge and awareness about agriculture. More attention should be paid to the socio-economic conditions of the small scale farmers. Where these conditions remain poor, the farmers are unlikely to be active participants in agriculture development. Study revealed that rural youth had average awareness regarding agriculture, their age old profession. Education is the only solution in creating awareness regarding agriculture and its allied fields among school going rural youth. It is necessary to teach agriculture in elementary and secondary stage of education like arts and science etc. The provision of education, however, needs to be flexible to local conditions. Especially in rural areas, enrollment in education might be higher if schooling (times, holidays) were inline with agricultural seasons, making it easier to combine education with rural work. There is a need to support the development and implementation of primary and secondary school curricula that are relevant to the rural and agricultural context and pastorate societies. The rural youth engaged in agriculture and allied activities should be given scientific knowledge and skill about these activities. It is must to encourage rural youth to avail the quantum of opportunities in agriculture and allied areas. Proper steps should be taken at G.Os and N.G.Os level for channelizing youth towards agriculture for its sustainability.

Table 6: Awareness level of respondents about agriculture

Category	N	%
Poor	78	17
Average	279	62
Good	93	21
Total	450	100

Table 7: Correlation between socio-economic status and agriculture awareness of rural youth

Sr. No.	N	Socio-economic status	Agriculture awareness	t-value
Socio-economic status	450	1.000	.278*	4.90
Agriculture awareness	450	.278*	1.00	

Correlation is significant at 0.05% of level

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