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### Assessing the willingness of agricultural students to pursue farming as a career path

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#### Abstract

Career choice significantly impacts an individual's future, society, and the nation. This study investigates the willingness of agricultural students at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) to pursue farming as a career path. A survey was conducted to explore their career goals and the factors influencing their decisions of 132 students. The data was analyzed using a logit regression model to identify critical predictors of students' likelihood to choose farming. The results highlighted that student with farming background, access to agricultural land, and exposure to entrepreneurship are more inclined towards farming as a career. These factors not only provide a sense of familiarity and confidence but also reduce the perceived risks associated with farming. Conversely, students without such background showed less interest due to limited resources, lack of exposure and better opportunities in other sectors. The study emphasizes the need to promote farming as a viable and rewarding career choice through targeted interventions such as entrepreneurship training, policy support, and financial incentives. Enhancing access to resources and creating awareness about sustainable and profitable farming practices can motivate more students to consider farming as a long-term career. These measures could strengthen the agricultural workforce and contribute to the sector's development and food security.

**Keywords:** Career choice, agricultural students, farming, logit regression, entrepreneurial exposure, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU)

#### 1. Introduction

Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy, an education in agriculture and allied sectors open doors to various career options for agricultural graduates and postgraduates. India has one of the best and world's largest agricultural education systems. Students pursuing formal agricultural education at the tertiary level are well-equipped to tackle the sector's contemporary demands and challenges. However, this does not necessarily ensure they will pursue careers in agriculture (Baker *et al.*, 2013) [3].

But most of the young people attracted to the urban areas for better stable, well-paying jobs, resulting in a reduction in potential farmers. This trend raises grave concerns for the future of agriculture in India, where fewer youths are choosing a career in farming. Youths would often consider a career in farming as the last option (Ridha *et al.*, 2017) [8]. (Adejoh *et al.*, 2016) [1] highlighted that agricultural engineering (65.8%) and food science (56.7%) emerged as the primary areas of interest in agriculture. However, only 2.5% of respondents showed interest in pursuing a career in agricultural education.

Tafere and Woldehanna (2012) [9] highlighted two key factors contributing to young people's declining interest in

agriculture. First, many youth aspire to careers outside of farming, as non-agricultural jobs are perceived to be less physically demanding, more secure, and financially rewarding. Second, even those who may wish to engage in agriculture face significant barriers, primarily lack of access to or control over essential productive resources, especially land.

Agricultural students represent a key demographic with the potential to transform the farming sector. Their educational background provides them with technical knowledge, modern skills, and exposure to innovative practices, making them ideal candidates to lead advancements in agriculture. However, several factors influence their willingness to pursue farming, including their socio-economic background, access to resources like land and capital, exposure to entrepreneurial opportunities, and perceptions of farming as a viable career. According to Coopmans *et al.*, (2021) [4], farming often poses more personal risks than other occupations. Zaremohzzabieh *et al.*, (2021) [10] noticed that youth who consider themselves risk-takers have a higher intention to become a farmer.

This study focuses on assessing the willingness of agricultural students at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University

(TNAU) to choose farming as a career path. It explores their career aspirations, examines the factors influencing their decisions, and identifies critical predictors of their inclination towards farming. By analyzing data through a logit regression model, the study aims to uncover the role of farming backgrounds, resource availability, and entrepreneurial exposure in shaping students' career preferences. By fostering interest in farming among students, this study seeks to contribute to the development of a skilled agricultural workforce, ensuring the long-term growth and resilience of the sector.

**2. Research Methodology**

The study was conducted in Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), located at Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu, as it is one of the prominent institutions in India, offering agricultural education to students. A sample of 132 Agricultural students were selected as respondents for this study. Data was collected using a well-structured questionnaire, which included questions on demographic background, family farming history, economic perceptions of farming, access to land, and exposure to agricultural entrepreneurship. A cross-sectional survey design was employed to collect data. The survey aimed to capture Agricultural students' career preferences and factors affecting their willingness to pursue farming. Percentage analysis was worked out to get meaningful interpretation of the results. The logistic regression analysis also used to

relationship between a binary dependent variable and one or more independent variables. The formula for logistic regression is as follows:

$$\text{Logit (P)} = \log (P/1-P) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_k X_k$$

where:

- Logit (P) is the log odds of the dependent variable P.
- P is the probability of the event occurring (e.g., willingness to pursue farming).
- P/1-P is the odds of the event occurring.
- $\beta_0$  is the intercept term.
- $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_k$  are the coefficients for the independent variables  $X_1, X_2, \dots, X_k$ .
- $X_1, X_2, \dots, X_k$  are the independent variables (e.g., family background in farming, perceived economic viability, access to land, exposure to entrepreneurship).

**3. Results and Discussion**

The results of the logistic regression analysis reveal the significant variables that affect students' career choices. Four variables were analyzed viz family background, economic prospects, access to land, and entrepreneurial exposure. Each variable shows a statistically significant relationship with the likelihood of choosing farming as a career, with odds ratios and p-values indicating the strength and significance of these factors (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Factors influencing willingness to Pursue Farming as a Career

Variable	Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Standard Error	Odds Ratio (Exp( $\beta$ ))	p-value
Family Background (FARM_BG)	1.30	0.55	3.67	0.015*
Economic Prospects (ECON_PROS)	1.70	0.60	5.47	0.003**
Access to Land (LAND_ACCESS)	1.15	0.52	3.16	0.025*
Entrepreneurial Exposure (ENT_EXP)	1.50	0.58	4.48	0.008**

\*Note: \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01

**Family Background (FARM\_BG)**

Students from farm families are significantly more likely to pursue farming as a career, with an odds ratio of 3.67 (p = 0.015\*). This indicates that such students are over three times as likely to choose farming compared to those without a farming background. The familiarity with agricultural practices, coupled with access to family-owned resources, makes farming a more viable and attractive career option.

**Economic Prospects (ECON\_PROS)**

Economic prospects emerged as the most influential factor, with the highest odds ratio of 5.47 (p = 0.003\*\*). This finding suggests that students who perceive farming as financially rewarding are more than five times as likely to consider it as a career. It underscores the critical role of economic incentives, such as income potential and financial security, in shaping students' career decisions within the agricultural sector.

**Access to Land (LAND\_ACCESS)**

Access to agricultural land significantly increases the likelihood of students choosing farming, with an odds ratio of 3.16 (p = 0.025\*). Students with land access are over three times as likely to pursue farming compared to those

without land. This highlights the importance of land availability as a key enabler for entering into agricultural profession, reducing entry barriers and facilitating career aspirations in farming.

**Entrepreneurial Exposure (ENT\_EXP)**

Entrepreneurial exposure also plays a pivotal role, with an odds ratio of 4.48 (p = 0.008\*\*). Students who have prior exposure to entrepreneurial activities are about 4.5 times more likely to choose farming as a career. This finding reflects the evolving perception of farming as a business opportunity, driven by innovation, agribusiness ventures and the potential for entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector.

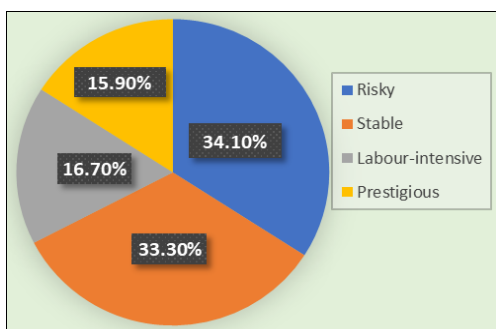
**3.1. Perception**

Perception has a significant influence on a person's behaviour. Students' perceptions of agricultural sector, whether positive or negative, play a pivotal role in shaping their attitudes toward pursuing higher education or careers in agriculture (Obayelu & Fadele, 2019) [6]. Many students view agriculture as a labour-intensive profession that is less profitable and less capable of sustaining their livelihood compared to the opportunities provided by white-collar jobs (Mukembo *et al.*, 2014) [5].

**Table 2:** Students Perception on Farming as a Career (n=132)

S. No.	Students Perception	Number of respondents	Per cent (%)
1.	Risky	45	34.10
2.	Stable	44	33.30
3.	Labour-intensive	22	16.70
4.	Prestigious	21	15.90
	Total	132	100.00

From the above Table 2, 34.10 per cent of the students believed that farming is a risky job. This is because of factors like uncertainty over changes in market prices, global climate change, and so forth followed by 33.30 per cent of students believed that farming is a secure job. Therefore, most of the students come to realize that farming is an employment opportunity that provides steady employment if facilitated with land and modern inputs. 16.66% students feel that farming is a labor-intensive profession. It appreciates that the work related to this agriculture is physically demanding, though. But awareness about mechanization that reduces manual work and the changing perception may bring down the above perception. Only 15.90 per cent of the students believe farming is prestigious (Figure 1). Therefore, farming might not be highly esteemed as a career by comparison to jobs in government sector or industries. This could be because of devaluing this vocation by society, which indeed is the backbone for food security and the economy. The views suggest that apprehension over risks, social pride in agriculture, and its modernization should be used to continue making the profession appealing to future generations.



**Fig 1:** Students Perception on Farming as a Career

**3.2. Future Aspirations**

Future aspirations refer to the hopes, goals, and ambitions that individuals have for their future. They can encompass various aspects of life, such as career achievements, educational milestones, personal growth, or contributions to society. Future aspirations serve as a driving force that guides decision-making, shapes plans, and inspires individuals to work towards their desired outcomes.

**Table 3:** Future Aspirations of Agriculture students Towards their Career (n=132)

Plan to pursue farming:	Numbers	Per cent (%)
Yes	38	28.78
No	11	08.33
Maybe	83	62.87
Future plan of career		
Govt employee	77	58.33
Business/Entrepreneur	36	27.27
Successful farmer	15	11.36
Private employee	4	03.03

From Table 3, the result also portrays a mixed view that agricultural students do have or do not have the keenness to indulge themselves in farming as a profession. There were 132 students polled; among them, only 38 had a very keen interest in farming. Another 11 students said that they were not interested at all. More than half of the students, that is, 83, opined that they might do (maybe). This vagueness depicts that a greater number of students are either not sure or have not made up their minds about taking farming as a career choice. If the respondents were asked if they would want an ideal job of their favorite career as an ideal farmer, then 11.36 percent of respondents answered yes that they wish to become an ideal farmer; more so, the desire of being an ideal government employee came forth among a greater number of students, which was 58.33 percent, who seek stability and security. Others mentioned that they would want to seek employment in private sectors, 03.03 per cent of students, while 27.27 per cent of students wish to become their own bosses. Now, that means basically getting into some form of a commercial kind of business or an agribusiness, for example, or any business ventures as a whole. These statistics might suggest that, even though people may be interested in farming and agricultural activities, the number of those interested in purely government employment is considerable.

**4. Conclusion**

The study assessed the factors influencing agricultural students' willingness to pursue farming as a career. The findings highlight the significant role that family background, economic prospects, access to land, and entrepreneurial exposure play in shaping students' career decisions. Specifically, students from farming families were more likely to choose farming, reflecting the influence of family resources and familiarity with agricultural practices. Economic prospects emerged as the most influential factor, with students who perceived farming as financially rewarding being more inclined to pursue it as a career. The availability of agricultural land also increased the likelihood of students considering farming, as it eliminated one of the primary barriers to entry. Additionally, entrepreneurial exposure was found significantly impact to the students' career choices, reflecting the evolving nature of the agricultural sector, where farming is increasingly seen as a viable business opportunity.

These findings suggest that fostering a favourable economic environment, enhancing access to land, and promoting entrepreneurial skills can encourage more agricultural students to pursue farming as career (or) profession. To support this shift, policy interventions should focus on improving financial incentives in agriculture, facilitating land access, and incorporating entrepreneurial education into agricultural curricula. This study underscores the importance of addressing both traditional and modern factors in promoting farming as a career path, particularly in the face of global challenges such as climate change and evolving agricultural practices.

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