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What determines youth participation in Agriculture? A Case of Polder farming practices in Southwest Coastal Areas of Bangladesh

Mohammad Ali^{1,2}, Sadika Haque¹, Manoranjan K. Mondal³, Md. Fuad Hassan¹, Mst. Tania Parvin⁴, Ranjitha Puskur⁵, Humnath Bhandari³, S. V. Krishna Jagadish⁶, Sudhir Yadav^{7,8}

1 Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh, Bangladesh. 2 The Business Standard, Dhaka, Bangladesh. 3 International Rice Research Institute, Bangladesh. 4 Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University, Gazipur, Bangladesh. 5 International Rice Research Institute, India. 6 Texas Tech University, Lubbock, USA. 7 The University of Queensland, St. Lucia, Australia. 8 International Rice Research Institute

Revitalization of the agricultural sector through youth participation is essential to better adapt to changing climate and to support sustainable development. However, youth participation in agriculture has been declining in developing countries such as Bangladesh. Only a limited number of scientific studies have been conducted to address this concern. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the factors that affected the perception and participation of youth (18-35 years of age) in agriculture, considering the polder agricultural practices in the coastal zones of Bangladesh. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used in this study. The quantitative data were randomly collected from 270 young men (64%) and women (36%) from Polder 30 located in the Khulna District of Bangladesh, from October 2017 to February 2018. Additionally, three focus group discussions were conducted to obtain in-depth insight into youths' perceptions of agriculture. The determinants of participation choice were identified using the logit regression model, whereas the perception data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and qualitative content analysis. The empirical findings reveal that factors such as gender, farming experience, agricultural and youth development training, and access to credit positively affected youths' decision to participate in polder agricultural practices. On the contrary, their age and plan to migrate to cities inversely influenced their decision. The perception results highlight that these youths perceived agriculture as a low-status, less remunerative, and less respectable occupation than other livelihood options. Moreover, the nature of the work, restricted access to land, and fewer work opportunities often contributed to such negative attitudes of youth toward agriculture. Therefore, it is recommended that the government, as well as policymakers, should adopt appropriate measures through smart agricultural education, extension services, and training, and provide access to new technologies and adequate credit facilities to change the attitude of youth toward agriculture that will contribute to achieving sustainability in agriculture and food security in Bangladesh.

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