

A STUDY ON PROBLEMS FACED BY STUDENT AGRI ENTEPRENEURS IN SALEM DISTRICT

THIRUNEELAN P

MBA Export and Import Management

Department of Management Studies, Periyar University, Salem.

Dr. V. R. PALANIVELU

Professor, Department of Management Studies, Periyar University, Salem.

Dr. T .SRIVIDHYA

Guest Lecturer, Department of Management Studies, Periyar University, Salem.

Abstract:

This study looks at the challenges faced by student agripreneurs in Salem District, Tamil Nadu, India. It focuses on students who run agricultural businesses and examines the difficulties they face, such as getting funding, finding markets, using the right technology, dealing with regulations, and getting proper guidance. The study combines interviews and surveys to gather information. The goal is to identify the main barriers stopping these young entrepreneurs from growing their businesses. Ultimately, this research aims to encourage more young people to enter agriculture and improve their chances of success.

Introduction:

India's agricultural sector plays a vital role in the economy and provides livelihoods to many people. However, a major concern is the declining interest of young people in agriculture. To ensure a sustainable and thriving agricultural industry, it is important to encourage youth participation. Agricultural entrepreneurship offers a promising way to revive the sector by introducing innovation and improving rural livelihoods, particularly among students.

Student agripreneurs, with their education, enthusiasm, and access to modern technology, have the potential to bring positive changes to agriculture. However, they face several challenges, including limited market access, difficulty in obtaining funding, complex regulations, lack of mentorship, and the need for specialized skills in modern farming. Additionally, regional factors such as

infrastructure, climate, and traditional farming methods also impact their success.

This study focuses on Salem District in Tamil Nadu, an area with a strong agricultural background but also facing issues like youth migration from rural areas and the need for technological advancements in farming. Understanding the challenges faced by student agripreneurs in this region is crucial for developing targeted support systems and solutions. The study aims to identify the key issues, explore their causes, and suggest practical solutions to promote youth involvement in agriculture. The findings will be valuable for policymakers, educational institutions, support organizations, and other stakeholders working to strengthen youth entrepreneurship and agricultural development in India.

Review of Literature:

Youth entrepreneurship has gained significant attention globally as a potential solution to unemployment and economic growth (Ćóćkalo et al., 2020). Research highlights the importance of fostering an entrepreneurial environment to increase youth entrepreneurship potential, particularly in developing countries with high youth unemployment rates (Ćóćkalo et al., 2020; Malyadri & Sumana, 2012). Studies have explored the motivations, challenges, and opportunities faced by young entrepreneurs, emphasizing the need for education, mentorship, and access to resources. However, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the specific needs and qualities of youth entrepreneurs, especially in developing countries (Malyadri & Sumana, 2012). In India, youth entrepreneurship is seen as a channel for talented young people to explore their potential and address unemployment issues. Governments and local communities recognize the importance of fostering youth entrepreneurship to stimulate regional growth and build prosperity (Baporikar, 2015).

Agricultural entrepreneurship is an emerging field that addresses the challenges and opportunities faced by farmers in a rapidly changing sector. Entrepreneurs in agriculture face numerous challenges, such as limited access to basic facilities, financial resources, and infrastructure in rural areas. However, the sector also presents opportunities for innovation and growth. Agri-entrepreneurship is viewed as a new paradigm in response to liberalization and sustainability concerns, emphasizing deliberate strategies to enhance farm resilience (Condor, 2020). Research in this field spans various topics, including entrepreneurial

processes, collective projects, and the impact of business environments on entrepreneurial orientation. Environmental issues, management difficulties, and marketing challenges also impede young agripreneurs' success (Tashi Dendup et al., 2021). Students pursuing agribusiness careers face additional barriers such as balancing academic commitments with business operations and limited awareness of modern agricultural technologies. Other significant challenges include obtaining certifications, low confidence levels, and high competition (Jyoti et al., 2024; A. S & V. S. Kumar, 2023). To address these issues, researchers recommend targeted interventions like enhanced access to credit, entrepreneurial training, and public-private partnerships (Jyoti et al., 2024). Additionally, promoting climate-smart agriculture, providing micro-credits, and improving enterprise management skills could foster a more supportive environment for young agripreneurs (Tashi Dendup et al., 2021).

Young entrepreneurs face limited access to crucial resources such as land, credit, training, and markets. In India, where 73% of the population depends on agriculture, rural entrepreneurship is vital for economic development. However, small farmers struggle with productivity and market linkage. A study in Haryana revealed that while youth are motivated by entrepreneurial skills and access to raw materials, they encounter obstacles like certification difficulties, loan access, and limited awareness of modern technologies. To address these issues, interventions are needed in policy, institutional, technological, and individual capability areas. Recommendations include enhancing access to credit, providing certification support, offering entrepreneurial training, and fostering public-private partnerships to promote sustainable rural development (Jyoti et al., 2024).

Agripreneurship plays a crucial role in developing sustainable small and medium-sized farms, with farmers viewing their work as a business (Arumugam & Manida, 2023). However, student agripreneurs face complex challenges, including agricultural sustainability, biosecurity issues, low innovation, and unfavorable government policies. Green entrepreneurs in Salem District also struggle with various obstacles, though age does not correlate with the influence to start a business using technical knowledge (Rajkamal et al., 2022). Factors influencing agripreneurship behavior include personality traits, psychological factors, and perceived government support (Boye et al., 2022). To overcome challenges, students are advised to start Farmer Producer Organizations, learn farming basics, and develop management skills.

Key Themes in Agripreneurship Challenges:

The literature emphasizes numerous main problems experienced by student agripreneurs in Salem District, Tamil Nadu, affecting their capacity to create and grow agricultural companies. These challenges are categorized into financial constraints, technological barriers, market access, regulatory complexities, and the need for mentorship and skill development.

1. Financial Constraints: One major challenge for student agripreneurs is the difficulty in accessing financial resources. Many young entrepreneurs struggle to secure funding because they lack collateral and a financial history. Traditional banks and financial institutions often see student-led agribusinesses as high-risk, making it hard for them to obtain loans. Although government grants and subsidies exist, they are often difficult to access due to complex application processes and a lack of awareness among students.

2. Limited Market Access: Student agripreneurs struggle to find suitable marketplaces to sell their products due to inefficient supply networks and limited market connections, making it difficult to compete with larger agribusinesses. Fluctuating agricultural prices and dependence on middlemen further reduce their profit margins. Additionally, a lack of knowledge about modern marketing strategies, such as e-commerce and digital platforms, limits their ability to reach a wider market.

3. Technological Barriers: Despite having access to advanced technology through academic institutions, many student agripreneurs struggle with its practical application due to limited exposure to precision farming tools, irrigation systems. Additionally, low awareness of climate-smart agriculture and sustainable farming practices makes it difficult for them to adapt to environmental challenges.

4. Regulatory Complexities: Stringent regulatory requirements and policy restrictions create significant challenges for student agripreneurs, making it difficult to navigate licensing and certification processes needed to establish and run their businesses. Additionally, compliance with environmental and food safety standards is a major hurdle due to limited guidance and resources.

5. Need for Mentorship and Skill Development: The research highlights the lack of established mentorship programs for student agripreneurs. Many do not have access to professional mentors who can provide advice on business management, marketing techniques, and financial planning. There is also a need

for specialized training in agribusiness management, sustainable farming, and value addition to improve entrepreneurial skills.

6. Regional and Infrastructural Challenges: Infrastructure limitations, rural-to-urban migration, and dependence on traditional farming methods significantly affect the success of student agripreneurs in Salem District. Poor road connectivity, inadequate storage facilities, and post-harvest losses create obstacles for young entrepreneurs, while unpredictable weather conditions further threaten agricultural productivity.

7. Psychological and Social Barriers: Student agripreneurs often face discouragement from social expectations and a lack of support from family and friends. Agriculture is sometimes seen as a less profitable career choice, leading to low confidence and fear of business failure among young entrepreneurs.

Discussion and Future Directions:

The literature proposes many strategies to encourage student agripreneurs, including financial aid, increased market linkages, technological integration, policy reforms, and structured mentorship programs. By addressing these difficulties with targeted interventions, policymakers, educational institutions, and support organizations can establish a favorable atmosphere for student agripreneurs.

Future research should investigate the long-term effects of government initiatives, technological improvements, and skill development programs on student agripreneurs. Furthermore, longitudinal studies that track the growth of student agripreneurs can provide more detailed information about the effectiveness of assistance measures that have been adopted.

Conclusion:

A review of studies shows that student agripreneurs play a key role in improving agriculture through innovation, sustainability, and modern business practices. However, several challenges slow down their growth, including financial difficulties, limited access to technology, complex regulations, and weak market connections. Many young agripreneurs struggle to secure funding due to a lack of financial history and difficulty accessing government schemes. Traditional banks also see them as high-risk, making it harder to get loans. Even though they learn about modern farming technologies in academic institutions, they often find it difficult to apply them due to limited training and lack of equipment.

Government regulations add to the challenges, as students face complicated licensing processes and strict environmental and food safety rules. Bureaucratic delays make it harder for them to set up their businesses legally. In addition, poor market connections and reliance on middlemen reduce their profits, making it difficult for young agripreneurs to sustain their businesses in the long run.

To address these issues, a well-rounded approach is needed. Providing hands-on training, entrepreneurship programs, and digital marketing skills can help students develop the knowledge needed to succeed in agribusiness. Mentorship programs connecting young entrepreneurs with experienced professionals can offer guidance and support, helping them navigate business challenges. Governments should also simplify regulations, improve access to financial aid, and create dedicated support networks for student agripreneurs.

Encouraging more students to participate in agriculture through awareness programs, startup incubators, and supportive policies can strengthen the agribusiness sector. By overcoming financial, technological, and legal obstacles, student agripreneurs can drive agricultural innovation, create jobs, and boost economic growth. Strengthening these efforts will not only promote sustainable agriculture in India but also attract more young people to the sector, ensuring its long-term success.

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