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The Intention of Syrian Youth to Work in Agriculture: Exploring the Drivers

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Abstract

Young peoples' engagement in agricultural employment increasingly becomes a global challenge. Especially educated youth often choose not to work in this sector and shift their career to other sectors. In Syria, even among agriculturally educated students, this has become a persistent challenge and contributed to a labour shortage in agriculture. This study conducted in 2019 aims at investigating the factors that affect the intention to work in agriculture among tertiary education students in Syria.

A sample of 150 students from the Faculty of Agriculture at Tishreen University (Latakia, Syria) was interviewed face-to-face using a structured questionnaire. We used a binary logistic regression model to examine the factors influencing the students' intention to future work in agriculture (dependent variable, 1= yes/0= no). The results revealed that the students have a higher intention to work in agriculture if they had some farming experience before entering university. Their intention to work in agriculture is 27 times higher than their peers with no previous farming experience ($p < 0.05$), which was the strongest predictor in the model. Another significant factor that increases the probability of intention to work in agriculture was the father's occupation as a farmer (odds ratio is 0.26, $p < 0.05$). Contrarily, positive parents' opinions on agricultural jobs, friends' influence on studying agriculture, and contentment to the rural way of living significantly decrease the intention to work in agriculture with odds ratios of 0.6, 0.7 and 1.14 respectively. The results reveal that there is a potential to attract the young educated Syrians to work in agriculture. However, this needs to make the agricultural sector and rural areas appealing to the young generation. Providing support and investment for practical agriculture training before starting tertiary education could motivate the students to seek agricultural employment. Additionally, investment in improving the rural infrastructure (especially with relation to modern technologies) will undoubtedly attract more youth to rural living, however, this is a very difficult task in particular because of the conflict in Syria.

Keywords: Agricultural labour, intention to work in agriculture, Latakia, youth