



Research Paper

Agrarians Perception towards Growth of agriculture investment in Northern Region of Kerala – an age wise Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Kerala is one of the leading agricultural states in the country and also one of the largest producers of rubber, coconut, pepper and coir. The topography of the land spreads over the Western Ghats, is well patented for its flora and fauna diversity and is famous as the Biodiversity Paradise'. Despite these dynamic features, agriculture in Kerala is suffering from hurdles due to the declining of the number of cultivable areas, low productivity per unit of labour and prevalence of small and fragmented holdings. Being a state with nearly hundred percent literacy and a more significant percentage of highly educated youth, the agriculture sector in Kerala has been experiencing the hitches from young generation who prefer white collar jobs, which resulted in an aversion to the agriculture sector. The present study throws lights on Agrarians Perception towards Growth of agriculture investment in Northern Region of Kerala – An age wise Analysis

KEY WORDS: Agriculture investment, Agrarian society and Agriculture Growth Perception

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I. INTRODUCTION

Kerala is the southernmost state in India and is famous for its abundant resources like fertile soil, rainfall, pleasant sunshine, and humidity. The state has diverse climatic conditions ranging from tropic, sub-tropic to moderate climate and has been divided into 26 different agro-ecological zones. The topography of the land spreads over the Western Ghats, is well patented for its flora and fauna diversity and is famous as the Biodiversity Paradise'. Despite these dynamic features, agriculture in Kerala is suffering from hurdles due to the declining of the number of cultivable areas, low productivity per unit of labour and prevalence of small and fragmented holdings. Being a state with nearly hundred percent literacy and a more significant percentage of highly educated youth, the agriculture sector in Kerala has been experiencing the hitches from young generation who prefer white collar jobs, which resulted in an aversion to the agriculture sector. Young farmers and agricultural workers pay little attention to the farming sector in the state due to the uncertainty in income, insecurity in farm production and the poor marketing networks.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Santhakumar & Narayan (1999) carried out an investigation to study agricultural trend and prospects of Kerala to comment on prospects of agriculture growth shortly, with the factors affecting the performance of agriculture as the primary objective. The study concluded that the agricultural status of Kerala shaped with factors like price factors, changes in the landholding pattern, factors of agro-climatic change, which influenced the cropping pattern and the level of output.

Eapen (1999) considered the pattern of agricultural Development with the 11 commercial crops to be a major determinant of rural diversification in Kerala. The growth of commercial crops resulted in relatively high levels of rural non-agricultural employment like agro-processing, trade and commerce, transport and other services. The study asserts that it was a process of commercialisation, which instigated a relatively high level of rural non-agricultural employment rather than rapid industrialisation or urbanisation.

Krishnan, Vasisht, & Sharma (1991) analysed the growth trend of area, production and productivity of the major crops of Kerala, using 17 years (1970-71 to 1986-87) time series data for analysis, the significance

of instability of those variables and to evaluate percentage contribution of area and productivity moving increased production of major crops in Kerala.

Pillai (1994) deeply analysed every aspect of agriculture in Kerala during 1958-59 to 1989-90. In this study, secondary data were used for its analysis. The relative share of agriculture and allied sector in the State Domestic Product, cropping pattern, land utilisation pattern and annual growth rates of area, production and productivity of major crops were taken into consideration for the study.

Need and Scope of the Study

From the relevant studies which are conducted according to the situations of Kerala agriculture are mainly based on the problems and prospects of agriculture and its priority after liberalisation but there was considerably less number of studies related to the agriculture growth perception towards farmers. This paper mainly focusing on the agriculture growth perception of the different age group of farmers in northern region of Kerala.

Introduction and Research Design

This study is a sample survey of selected districts of northern region of Kerala, i.e. Malappuram, Kozhikode, Palghat and Wayanad, which are dominating in different Agriculture crops. In this study, an earnest attempt has been made to analyse the perception of agrarians in Kerala with particular reference to northern region.

In the bottom line, household farmers are the ones who can experience and react to the changes in the sector in particular. Therefore, the study has considered taking household farmers' direct perception about such changes experienced over time. To delimit the study on to a specific area, the scope of this study is particularly paying attention to the age categories of farmers. To reiterate, the researcher is of a strong opinion that these four districts would be able to represent the total districts of Kerala. The following objectives justify the scope of the study as well.

The study still used the sample size of around 600 Questionnaires circulated to the farmers, out of these 540 farmers marked their responses and returned. But, out of which, 32 responses were found to be incomplete and not suitable for proper analysis. Hence, the researcher opted such responses out. Finally, the researcher ended up with 508 questionnaires which were found to be usable for further analysis.

Objectives of the Study

The broad aim of this study is to identify and understand the level of awareness and perception towards agriculture investment among the farmers. In numerous situations, such as the Physical, economical and social construction has been a challenging task because of many reasons. However, the study earnestly attempts to investigate how farmers are reacting to such challenges and opportunities around the agricultural investment. To dig in deep, the present study explores two specific objectives. They are as follows

- To study the effect of demographic factor age on the Agriculture Growth Perception of agrarians in the northern region of Kerala.
- To suggest strategies for strengthening agriculture and allied sectors in Kerala.

Definition of Key Terms

Investment: The word "investment" maybe be defined in many ways by different theories and principles (Sahan & Mikhail, 2012; Syed & Miyazako, 2013a; Williams, 1938) . To be more specific, investment is the application of money for making more money in the future. From an economic perspective, investment is the utilisation of available resources to augment income or production output down the line (Johnson, 2006).

Agriculture Investment: Agricultural investment is mainly involved with investing funds in agricultural and allied activities by government, public or private investors to generate incomes leading to capital formation in the sector. At a global scale, there is growing evidence that tells the productive investments in the agricultural sector especially in the developing countries can substantially reduce poverty and hunger. Agricultural development to a great extent depends on the synchronized growth of farm-level production and productivity and the value chains linked to it (Syed & Miyazako, 2013b).

Agrarian Society: An agrarian society (or agricultural society) is a group of people whose economy is based on producing and maintaining crops and farmland. In other words, is a society whose wealth and prosperity are primarily based on agriculture (Cervantes-Godoy & Dewbre, 2010). More than half of the people living in that society make their living by farming (Crossman, 2017).

Agriculture Growth Perception: The perception of investors or agrarians differs from different diverse factors like age, income, the experience of investing, investment objectives and individual social needs (Haritha & Uchil, 2016). The perception of individual elements concerning different macroeconomic variables seems to be disturbing the market behaviour (Dasgupta, n.d.).

Hypotheses of the Study According to Kerlinger (1986), 'A hypothesis is a conjectural statement of the relationship between two or more variables'. Further (Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Danghi & Dewen, 2016; Zikmund, 2012; Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2013) views that a hypothesis is written in such a way that it would be proven or disproven with valid and reliable data.

H01: There is no significant difference in Agriculture Growth Perception across various Age categories of agrarian society in the Northern region of Kerala

Variables of the Study

A variable which is normally a "cause" is known as an independent variable (because its value does not depend on any other variables). Through the study, the researcher has found one independent variable Age and one dependent variable Agricultural Growth perception.

Data Analysis and Interpretations

The information gathered through the questionnaire from the respondents was processed and analysed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS Version 22). The relationship of agriculture growth perception of household farmers has to be checked out with different determinants or variables which would make a severe impact on it. The hypotheses testing is related to the statistical comparison of means by using One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The primary data collected and collated using questionnaire from household farmers has been processed, analysed and conclusions were drawn by the application of statistical techniques with the help of IBM – SPSS & AMOS. This section is exclusively devoted for the simple frequency, pie chart, and Histogram presentation of categorical variable considered under the study.

Age Profile of Household Farmers Age of the farmers is quite important to know the perception level. Interestingly, the age of a respondent will be providing many insights such as risk tolerance level in the investment, investment preference as the stage of life cycle and investment decisions are correlated, interests, and so on

Table No: 1 Household Farmers' Age Profile

Class Interval	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
26-35	70	13.2	13.8	13.8
36-45	110	20.7	21.7	35.4
46-55	204	38.3	40.2	75.6
Above 55	124	23.3	24.4	100.0
Total	508	100.0	100.0	

Age Group Table 1 depicts the age group of the household farmers. It is observed that the dominant age group is 46-55 and the minimum number of respondents lies between the 26-35 range. Evidently, quite less number of young bloods are ready to undertake farming as a primary job. 70 (13.8%) out total respondents are below 35 but above 26 of age. The age group between 36-45 years only cover 110 (22%) of farmers. The study revealed that the majority of the respondent engaged in the agriculture sector in between 46-55 years cover 204 (40%), as farming is their traditional system of income generation and the family background in the area of agriculture also compelled them to continue to be in the sector. The analysis revealed that 24% of the respondents include in the group above 55 years old still engaged in this sector because of the obsessive interests.

Testing of Hypotheses = In order to check the difference in the agriculture growth perception among the household farmers across farmers demographic characteristics such as Age Group. One-way ANOVA has been applied to test the statistical differences of agriculture growth perception varying across different demographical characteristics of the respondents.

H01.1: There is no significant difference in Agriculture Growth Perception across various Age categories of agrarian society in the Northern region of Kerala

The hypothesis investigates whether there is any significant difference in the mean of Agriculture Growth Perception (Dependent Variable) among the household farmers across various age groups.

Table No: 2.Descriptives of AGP Vs Age Group

Age Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
26-35	70	3.5523	.51812	.06193
36-45	110	3.6426	.50526	.04817
46-55	204	3.7560	.27747	.01943
Above 55	124	3.7667	.32577	.02926
Total	508	3.7060	.39247	.01741

Table No: 3 Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
4.095	3	504	.007

Table 3 shows the result of Levene's Test the homogeneity of variances of responses. The p-value is less than 0.05 which implies that the variance of the studying variable is not homogeneous. However, to satisfy the homogeneity assumption, the robust test of mean's equality or Welch's ANOVA (See Table: 4) will be used to see the difference.

Table No.4 One way-ANOVA on AGP across Household Farmers Age Group

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	3.064	3	1.021	6.860	.003
Within Groups	75.032	504	.149		
Total	78.096	507			

Table No .5 Robust test of Equality of Means

Test	Statistics	df1	df2	Sig.
Welch	4.875	3	194.770	.003

Table No: 6 Post Hoc Tests-Multiple Comparisons Dependent Variable:

(i)AGE	(j) AGE	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Level	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
26-35	36-45	-.09029	.07846	.659	-.2942	.1136
	46-55	-.20374*	.06490	.012	-.3739	-.0336
	Above 55	-.21441*	.06849	.012	-.3933	-.0355
36-45	26-35	.09029	.07846	.659	-.1136	.2942
	46-55	-.11345	.05194	.133	-.2485	.0215
	Above 55	-.12412	.05636	.127	-.2703	.0220
46-55	26-35	.20374*	.06490	.012	.0336	.3739
	36-45	.11345	.05194	.133	-.0215	.2485
	Above 55	-.01066	.03512	.990	-.1015	.0802
Above 55	26-35	.21441*	.06849	.012	.0355	.3933
	36-45	.12412	.05636	.127	-.0220	.2703
	46-55	.01066	.03512	.990	-.0802	.1015

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Tables 6.22, 6.22.1, and 6.23 explain the result of One-way ANOVA done at 5% level of significance. The p-value (Classical One-way ANOVA has been replaced with Welch's ANOVA) is less than 0.05, implies that there is statistically significant difference between Agriculture Growth Perception across various age groups of the household farmers, $F(3,504) = 6.860$, $p < 0.05$, $n_2 = 0.04$. Games-Howell Post-Hoc Testing revealed significant difference between pairs of age with the age group 26-35; Youth ($M = 3.5523$, $SD = 0.51812$) and 36-45; Middle Aged ($M = 3.6426$, $SD = 0.50526$) having less understanding than those who are age between 46-55 ($M = 3.7560$, $SD = 0.27747$) and old aged ($M = 3.7667$, $SD = 0.32577$). Games-Howell post-hoc is performed as the sample size (n) across different age groups (more than 3) are not equal. However, the size of the effect is small as eta-squared is found (n_2) < 0.2 .

These findings indicate that age agriculture growth concept best understood by the age group of 46 or more. Thus, the null hypothesis (H01.1): There is no significant difference in Agriculture Growth Perception across various Age categories of agrarian society in the Malabar region of Kerala is Rejected.

III. FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This portion is the outline which represents findings of the study followed by conclusion resulting from the extensive study of the literature, analysis and interpretation of facts and figures, primary survey, and the comprehensive discussion on the subject matter carried out through the study. The paper also encompasses the suggestions based on the results of hypotheses testing and the observation made during this study. Finally, the paper concludes laying the direction for the future research.

Findings of the Study

Demographic Characteristics of Household farmers (Age) After analyzing the demographic characteristics of the farmers in the Northern region of Kerala, it is discerned that a maximum number of respondents lies in the age group of 46-55 and least number of respondents lies in the 26-35 age group. In the present study of sample size 508, 70 (13.8%) farmers belonged to the age of below 35 years and the age group between 25-35. The age group of 36-45 years only covers 110 (22%) farmers. The study has revealed that majority of the respondents engaged in the agriculture sector is in the age group of 46-55 years which cover 204 (40%) farmers. This is because farming is their traditional source of income and the agricultural family background also compelled them to continue in this sector. The study reveals that 24% of the respondents included in the group above 55 years old, still engaged in this sector because of their interest in the farming and by the family condition.

The study went on to see if there are any considerable differences in the Agriculture Growth Perception across various age groups of farmers. The result put out that there is a significant difference in agriculture growth perception across multiple age categories. Thus, it was ascertained that the term agriculture growth perception is best known by the age group of 46 or more.

Suggestions to Government & Policy Makers

On a strategic and broad horizon, the following crucial points have to be adopted as a hands-on remedial measure at both the state and centre government policy formulation level. These measures can strengthen the agriculture at household level.

- The government must encourage the Young blood to start farming activities.
- Promote hi-tech agriculture.
- Promote farmers participation in agri-business ventures.
- Identification and conversion of fallow lands into cultivable lands.
- Promote R&D to know the apt farming method to be adopted in a particular locality.
- Educational and training programs can be held to promote farming.
- Loans and subsidies provided to the farmers must be observed.
- Promote awareness campaign to encourage youth population to take farming as a primary job option by providing more subsidies and financial exclusively to youth.
- Farmers must consider agriculture as the full-time dedicated job rather than as a parallel income source.

Directions for the future study..

- Applications of the study can be extended to other parts of Kerala State as well.
- Sample size can be enlarged in the same study to understand the depth of agriculture growth perception.
- The same study can be carried out in a better way with multiple group perception (gender-wise) if the sample size balances between the gender groups.

Limitations of the Study

There are some potential limitations that are likely to pose challenges to the reliability and validity of the data collected and analysed. They are briefed down below:

- The study is based on the sample of a few selected districts that is Malappuram, Kozhikode, Palakkad, and Wayanad which do not represent the overall characteristics of Kerala State.
- A sample of not more than 508 out of indefinite farming populations, therefore all non-sampling errors expected may occur in this study as well.
- The survey is done on a perceptive angle of farmers, that too most of them are technically illiterate, which could be affecting the accuracy of the survey.
- The perception cannot be generalised as the sample size was mostly biased to male farmers.

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