

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overall objective of the study is to examine the factors affecting less youth participation in smallholder agriculture sector in Sri Lanka. The specific objectives are to examine youth perception on farming as an occupation, identify and analyze pull factors and push factors of youth participation in agriculture and discuss ideas of youth and other stakeholders to increase youth participation in smallholder agriculture. Primary data were collected through questionnaire survey, key informant discussions and focus group discussions. Field survey was carried out in Nuwara Eliya, Matale, Hambantota, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Kurunegala, Ampara, Batticaloa and Monaragala districts. Total sample was 533 including 33 agricultural graduates and undergraduates from various universities. The respondents belonged to age group 15- 29 years.

Type and degree of youth participation differ by farming system or crop cultivated. Of the total sample 70 percent were engaged in agriculture related various activities full time, part time or as family labourers while 7.3 percent were engaged in agriculture related industries or businesses. Of the total sample, 58.2 percent stated that they would like to engage in full time farming while 39.6 percent and 2.3 percent of respondents said that they do not like to engage in full time farming and do not have clear idea respectively.

Majority of the respondents who were willing to engage in full time farming have agriculture related long time experience, land and labour. On the other hand most of them do not have adequate skills, training and education for a 'good job'.

Youth participation in smallholder agriculture is significantly associated with the factors of age, marital status, availability and accessibility of highlands, paddy lands, extension services, market facilities and higher education. Further, factors like gender, size of paddy land, family income, and non availability of social security scheme or pension system, lack of or non recognition for farming also affect youth participation in agriculture.

To attract youth for farming several suggestions are made such as strengthening existing young Farmer Organizations, establishing new young Farmer Organization in an effective way such as providing necessary assistants, establishing corporate industries and businesses for youths, increasing the number and enhancing the quality of AIs service, introducing high tech agriculture, assisting youth to practice them and making sure quota system for agriculture related government jobs (specially for para- statal bodies and extension service) for members of farm families, providing special facilities to young farmers such as training and loans with minimum interest rates.