

Familiarity Threatens Cameroon: The Motivations of Students who Choose Agriculture

Cynthia Mkong

Background

- Over 90% of the rural households on the African continent work in the agricultural sector. Almost two-thirds of the continent's population (61%) is under 25 years of age.
- Agriculture is the backbone of the economy in Cameroon, and should be taught at all levels.
- Cameroon's agricultural sector is very important to the country. It employs over two-thirds of its workforce (70%) and generates almost a third (30%) of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- In October 2018, Cameroon's Ministries of Education and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development issued a joint decision to include agriculture in all curricula from 2019 forward.

Challenges and Opportunities

- In Cameroon, 17% of the cohort was not in employment, education, or training in 2014.
- Almost a quarter (23%) of Cameroon's young women is unemployed and 11% of its young men.

- Agriculture has rarely been part of the school curriculum through secondary school until 2018.
- According to Fader, Gerten, Krause, Lucht and Cramer (2013), Cameroon was at least 85% food self-sufficient in 2013.
- A young person aiming to study modern agronomy, crop science, plant breeding, or agricultural economics are open to opportunities in a few specialized institutions:
- University of Dschang
- Benguela Agricultural Practicing School (Yaounde)
- Community Development School of Kumba
- Catholic University Institute of Buea
- University of Buea.

Findings

- Contact with agricultural experts: Experts' limited awareness of the value of the agricultural sector in the country and/or failure to model work opportunities with exciting new technologies could have been a further discouragement to students. Familiarity with agriculture therefore leads to contempt.



- Perceived employment opportunities: Educators and mentors to highlight positive trends and emerging opportunities in the sector. The study found that students who perceive good opportunities for gainful employment in agriculture are more likely to major in agriculture.
- Pre-university farming experience: Students with farming experience prior to enrolling in higher education are less likely to choose an agricultural major. This phobia is associated with drudgery and irksomeness observed and/or experienced.
- Pre-university academic performance: This study also revealed that excellent students are less likely to take up agriculture as a university major. The study revealed that excellent students are less likely to take up agriculture as a university major, and it is often a last choice.
- Mother's level of education: An increase in mother's level of education increases students' chance of

taking up agriculture. This is most probably due to mother's increased awareness of the strengths and opportunities in the agricultural sector as their level of education and exposure increases.

- Family wealth is a plus: Students from homes with higher monthly incomes are more likely to take agriculture as a university. This may be associated with their relative ease to secure startup capital for their agribusiness.

Recommendations

- Agriculture will rise in stature as both a field of study and an occupation if:
- The attractiveness and work condition is improved in the sector.
- Implementation of effective policies to improve female education and household income at all levels.
- Educators should continue to encourage both young women and men to engage in the sector.

