

Rural youth employment prospects in agriculture: a survey of university students in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam

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1. Background

- Rural communities in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta (VMD) face uncertainty (e.g. sustainability of triple rice production; salinity; income diversification; migration).
- Prospects for rural youth in their local community appear limited, especially in farming - other career pathways may be more desirable.

What are the likely pressures of climate change on achievement of career goals for rural youth in the VMD?



2. Our approach

- Online survey of undergraduate agriculture, economics and sociology students at two VMD-based universities (CTU and AGU) in October-November 2021 ($n = 442$).
- Six focus group discussions (FGDs) at CTU with undergraduate students of agriculture, economics and sociology (two FGDs per study area, $n = 56$) to enrich understanding of the issues.
- Quantitative analysis of survey data; thematic analysis of qualitative survey responses and FGD information (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3. Youth career goals

- Two-thirds of respondents majored in agriculture at university (86% of females; 57% of males).
- Broadly, career goals often included a stable career, financial security, and having an 'interesting' role.
- Some participants desired careers outside the VMD, while others sought roles in tourism, technology, management, government or university.
- About 19% of survey respondents sought employment in agricultural services and extension.
- **Only 3% of respondents wanted to work as a farmer.**

4. Impacts of climate change on agricultural careers

- 45% of survey respondents believed climate change had negatively affected their career prospects.
- Impacts in agriculture described by survey and FGD participants included reduced yield/productivity, salinity, unpredictable weather, need for new farming methods. Fewer employment opportunities in farming/agricultural services were predicted.
- Some participants were re-thinking an agricultural career (i.e. working in another sector), though some saw career opportunities in climate change adaptation for agriculture.

5. Implications

- Youth career options in agriculture appear exposed to climate change risk, though there may be some opportunities in adaptation support.
- Farming is a largely undesirable career option for university students.
- A variety of employment opportunities in rural regions of the VMD will be required to encourage young people to establish their career in the region.



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More information

