



Journal of Applied Sciences

ISSN 1812-5654

science
alert

ANSI*net*
an open access publisher
<http://ansinet.com>

Acceptance, Attitude and Knowledge Towards Agriculture Economic Activity between Rural and Urban Youth: The Case of Contract Farming

A.S. Bahaman, L.S. Jeffrey, M.S. Hayrol Azril and U. Jegak

Laboratory of Rural Advancement and Agricultural Extension, Institute for Social Science Studies,
Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Abstract: This study attempts to investigate whether rural and urban youth have any difference on acceptance, attitude and knowledge towards contract farming. Agriculture indeed has been an important factor for development in Malaysia. Contract farming is one of the agricultural activities which is still in its infancy stage in Malaysia that offers huge benefits for the interested parties. Youth acceptance, attitude and knowledge can be considered as the key for this new industry to be sustained, but do youth in Malaysia have a good level of acceptance, attitude and knowledge towards contract farming? Data was gathered through a survey questionnaire on a total of 400 rural and urban youth who are currently studying in various tertiary institutions throughout Malaysia. Data were analyzed using SPSS where analyses such as frequency, mean, standard deviation and independent sample t-test were performed. Interestingly, urban and rural youth have similar level of acceptance, attitude and knowledge towards contract farming. Based on the independent sample t-test, there is no significant difference in acceptance, attitude and knowledge on contract farming between rural and urban youths. Based on the results, it can be concluded that contract farming can be a mechanism to attract more urban and rural youth to be part of agriculture community in Malaysia. To do this, more promotion and information on contract farming should be exposed to the youths. It is recommended that agriculture agencies and agriculture related universities to take the responsibilities of introducing the concept of contract farming to the youth.

Key words: Youth development, agriculture development, economic development, agriculture extension, concept of contract farming

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture has become the main agenda of a number of Asian countries and this includes Malaysia. Agricultural sector has recorded a significant achievement and its role has been intensified. The focus will be on the concept of new agriculture. Among the focuses are on production of high quality, added value product and large scale commercial farming. To achieve this, a number of new agricultural activities have been introduced. Recently, the emergence of contract farming activities such as leech rearing, worm rearing, herbs and mushroom have attracted interests among the public.

There are five main things to be highlighted in this study namely youth, attitude, acceptance, knowledge and contract farming. Youth is the pillar of a community, but who are the youth? Who can be included in this category? The United Nation defines youth as those whose age range between 15-24 years old. The Malaysian Youth Council on the other hand has other view, they

define youth as those whose age range between 15-40 years old. Based on the official website of the Malaysia Institute for Youth Development Research Centre, currently youth constitutes 42% of the Malaysian citizens while the current rate of unemployment among youth in Malaysia is 4%.

Attitude can be formed based on an individual's degree of like or dislike on something. Usually attitude portrays either positive or negative views toward a person, place, thing or event. This can be described as the attitude object. People can also be conflicted or ambivalent toward an object, meaning that they simultaneously possess both positive and negative attitudes toward the item in question (Breckler and Wiggins, 1992).

Chirelstein (2001) defined acceptance as an express act or implication by conduct that demonstrates assent to the terms of an offer in a manner invited or required by the offer, this results in the formation of binding contract. The exercise of power conferred by an offer by performance of

some act. The act of a person to whom something is offered or tendered by another, whereby the offered demonstrates through an act invited by the offer an intention of retaining the subject of the offer.

Finally, the study focused on contract farming. According to Glover (1987), the concept of contract farming can be understood as an institutional arrangement that combines the advantages of agriculture productivity such as quality control, coordination of production and marketing. It also involves smallholder production which includes superior incentives and equity considerations.

It seems that in many parts of the world, agriculture activities and rural people cannot be separated. It can be proved that agriculture can increase the income of the rural poor and provide bigger employment opportunities (Omelehin *et al.*, 2007; Uddin and Takeya, 2006). Moreover, according to studies done by Lenihan *et al.* (2009) and Cellier (1999) rural community have better level of acceptance and attitude towards agriculture activities due to a number of factors. It may be particularly related in rural locations due to their process of undergoing rapid transformation of the agricultural system, economic base, and related land uses. On the contrary, Sharp and Smith (2003) noted through their study that there is a negative and significant relationship between rural and urban communities towards agriculture activities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted for 10 months beginning from July 2009 till March 2010. A simple random sampling was used to select the respondents of the study. A total of 400 respondents from three universities and one agriculture college were selected as the respondents for this study. The selected universities and college were Universiti Putra Malaysia (central zone), Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (East coast zone), Northern University of Malaysia (Northern Zone) and Rubber Industry and Smallholders Development Authority (RISDA) College (Southern zone). The primary data was obtained through a survey using self-administered questionnaire. From the pre-test analysis, it was identified that the cronbach alpha of all constructs were between 0.80-0.92, exceeding Nunnally (1978) recommended threshold of 0.7. Thus, the instrument used in this study showed a good level in term of reliability. Prior to the data collection, respondents were briefed on the objective and procedure to respond to the questionnaire. To fulfill the objective, descriptive analyses such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used while inferential analysis such as independent sample t-test was

employed to determine any significant difference in acceptance, attitude and knowledge towards contract farming.

RESULTS

Who are the respondents in this study? Table 1 provides a clearer picture on this query, based on the results analyzed, this study found that majority of the respondents are females (70.8%), Malay (90.0%), age between 20-21 years (40.2%) with the mean age of 20.78 years and are taking degree course (75.0%). This study also revealed that a total of 31.8% of the respondents spend between 300-400 Ringgit Malaysia a month while a total of 50.0% are taking agriculture course. Almost two third (59.5%) lived in urban areas, a large majority of them have no family agriculture background (75.5%) and

Table 1: Socio-demographic of respondents (n = 400)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Gender				
Male	117	29.2		
Female	283	70.8		
Ethnic				
Malay	360	90.0		
Chinese	15	3.8		
Indian	14	3.5		
Others	11	2.7		
Age (years)				
18-19	111	27.8		
20-21	161	40.2		
22-24	128	32.0	20.78	1.53
Zone (the university located)				
UUM	100	25.0		
UPM	100	25.0		
UMT	100	25.0		
RISDA College	100	25.0		
Level of recent education received				
Degree	300	75.0		
Diploma	100	25.0		
Monthly expenditure (Value in Ringgit Malaysia)				
<200	57	14.2		
201-300	102	25.5		
301-400	127	31.8		
>401	114	21.5	395.85	217.18
Courses taken				
Agriculture	200	50.0		
Economic	100	25.0		
Others	100	25.0		
Locality				
Rural	162	40.5		
Urban	238	59.5		
Family background (n = 381)				
Have agriculture background	79	19.8		
Do not have agriculture background	302	75.5		
Received information regarding contract farming				
Yes	219	54.8		
No	181	45.2		

slightly more than half of the respondents (54.2%) have received information regarding contract farming.

In relation to acceptance toward contract farming among youth, referring to Table 2, a total of 71.8% of the respondents have a high positive acceptance towards contract farming. More than a quarter of the respondents (28.1%) moderately accept contract farming. Data presented depicts that none of the respondents have a low level of acceptance.

A twelve-items instruments were used to measure the respondents acceptance towards contract farming. Three highest mean score recorded by statement of CF industry is a potential industry nowadays ($M = 7.86$), followed by CF has the ability to attract investors ($M = 7.63$) and Compared to other farming methods, CF has so much to offer ($M = 7.61$). It can be seen based on the mean score that majority of the respondents agree CF is a potential industry nowadays. Hence, more efforts need to be geared towards attracting youth to invest in contract farming as the returns out of it can be immense and worthwhile. It is evident that this modern method of farming has a wider prospect to improve the livelihood of youth and all government related agriculture agencies should play a major role in drawing the youth to participate actively in the field of contract farming (Table 3).

Table 2: Overall level of acceptance towards contract farming (n = 400)

Levels	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Low (1.0-3.33)	0	0.0	7.29	1.15
Moderate (3.34-6.67)	113	28.2		
High (6.68-10.0)	287	71.8		

Table 3: Acceptance towards contract farming (n = 400)

Statement/score percentage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Mean	SD
CF is a potential industry nowadays	-	-	0.2	1.2	5.8	10.5	17.8	29.2	22.2	13.0	7.86	1.45
CF has the ability to attract investors	-	-	0.8	2.5	8.8	11.5	18.8	24.8	21.2	11.8	7.63	1.60
Compared to other farming methods, CF has so much to offer	-	-	0.2	2.5	7.8	11.0	21.0	28.0	21.0	8.5	7.61	1.49
CF encourages transfer of technology	0.2	-	0.2	3.2	7.2	11.2	20.8	28.5	20.0	8.5	7.56	1.54
CF is an agreement between farmers and contractors	-	0.5	1.2	2.2	10.8	11.2	20.0	21.8	18.2	14.0	7.53	1.73
CF results in higher yields	-	-	1.0	3.0	8.5	13.2	21.5	27.8	16.8	8.2	7.43	1.55
CF is a sustainable industry	0.2	-	0.5	4.0	9.0	14.5	23.0	25.0	15.0	8.8	7.33	1.60
CF is a prestigious profession	-	0.5	0.5	2.2	11.2	13.2	25.5	28.5	13.0	5.2	7.23	1.49
CF has a guaranteed market for the products that have been produced	-	-	1.5	2.0	12.8	14.2	23.0	26.8	11.8	8.0	7.23	1.58
CF assures quality and high production	-	-	0.8	4.5	12.8	12.2	24.0	27.5	13.5	4.8	7.15	1.54
Accept all the information regarding CF disseminated to me	0.5	1.0	2.0	5.2	18.2	17.8	19.5	19.5	10.8	5.5	6.72	1.78
CF involves low risks	1.0	1.0	4.2	10.0	22.2	18.0	15.8	13.8	10.0	4.0	6.25	1.90

Table 4: Overall level of attitude toward contract farming

Levels	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Low (1.0-3.33)	3	0.8	7.33	1.38
Moderate (3.34-6.67)	119	29.8		
High (6.68-10.0)	278	69.4		

Are the respondents studied have a good level of attitude towards contract farming? Table 4 reveals majority of the respondents (69.4%) were found to have a high positive attitude towards contract farming. It can be noted that only 0.8% of the respondents have a low attitude towards contract farming thus provides us that contract farming has the potential to be a sustainable agriculture activity.

Table 5 shows distribution of respondent's response to measure attitude towards contract farming. Willing to seek for more entrepreneurship opportunities regarding CF recorded the highest mean score ($M = 7.74$), followed by the statement of willing to take the opportunity to attend training on CF as the second highest mean score ($M = 7.64$) followed by the statement of Willing to seek further knowledge on CF as the third highest mean score ($M = 7.63$). The lowest mean score recorded by the statement of feel comfortable if I get involved in CF ($M = 6.71$).

Do Malaysian youths have a better level of knowledge on contract farming which is crucial to ensure its sustainability? Based on the overall mean score of 7.54 (from maximum 10.0) it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents studied have a high level of knowledge on contract farming. It can be noted that a large majority of the respondents (73.3%) have a high level of knowledge on contract farming (Table 6).

Based on the mean score ($M = 8.20$) it can be concluded that the statement of CF involves animal rearing, fisheries, farming and plantation recorded the highest mean score while the lowest mean score was

Table 5: Attitude towards contract farming (n = 400)

Statement/score percentage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Mean	SD
Willing to seek for more entrepreneurship opportunities regarding CF	-	0.2	1.2	3.5	8.8	9.8	14.2	25.5	17.8	19.0	7.74	1.78
Willing to take the opportunity to attend training on CF	0.2	0.2	2.0	3.0	8.5	11.0	17.0	23.2	16.2	18.5	7.64	1.83
Willing to seek further knowledge on CF	-	0.2	1.0	2.8	7.8	13.0	18.0	25.2	16.0	16.0	7.63	1.69
More prepared to be involved in farming as a result of CF	-	-	0.8	3.8	10.0	11.5	18.0	24.2	17.8	14.0	7.56	1.70
CF improves standard of living	-	-	0.5	2.0	8.2	12.5	24.0	28.8	16.0	8.0	7.48	1.46
Feel more productive being involved in CF	-	1.0	1.2	3.5	8.5	13.8	21.2	24.2	17.0	9.5	7.36	1.70
Feel more professional if i'm involved in CF	-	0.2	1.8	3.5	9.8	14.2	19.5	25.8	15.0	10.2	7.34	1.69
More motivated to work when i am involved in CF	-	0.2	1.5	3.0	10.5	13.8	22.0	24.0	12.8	12.0	7.33	1.71
Career objectives will be achieved if i involve in CF	0.2	0.8	1.8	3.5	11.5	16.0	19.2	23.2	14.5	9.2	7.18	1.76
CF is acceptable for me even if I do not get enough profit than other farming methods	1.2	0.5	2.2	4.0	17.5	17.5	24.0	17.5	9.0	6.5	6.72	1.79
Feel comfortable if I get involved in CF	-	0.2	1.0	5.5	16.5	20.8	27.0	17.2	6.0	5.8	6.71	1.56

Table 6: Overall level on knowledge on contract farming (n = 400)

Levels	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Low (1.0-3.33)	2	0.5	7.54	1.25
Moderate (3.34-6.67)	105	26.2		
High (6.68-10.0)	293	73.3		

Table 7: Knowledge on contract farming (n = 400)

Statement/score percentage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Mean	SD
CF involves animal rearing, fisheries, farming and plantation	-	-	0.5	0.8	3.5	8.5	16.0	25.2	21.8	23.8	8.20	1.48
CF provides alternative markets for small market	0.2	0.8	0.8	1.0	6.8	10.0	16.0	30.2	21.0	13.2	7.77	1.61
CF provides larger opportunities for local products to enter global market	-	0.5	1.2	1.2	7.2	10.5	19.0	25.8	22.0	12.5	7.71	1.61
CF guarantees consistent supply to the markets	0.2	-	0.5	2.0	6.8	10.0	19.2	30.8	19.5	11.0	7.70	1.52
The government offers CF schemes through their agencies such as FAMA and DOA	0.2	0.8	0.5	1.8	6.5	12.8	19.0	30.8	14.0	13.8	7.62	1.62
CF entrepreneurs provide opportunities for the general public to participate in contract farming as investors	-	0.2	1.0	0.8	9.0	8.8	22.5	29.2	20.0	8.5	7.61	1.49
CF can save middle man cost	0.2	-	1.2	3.0	8.5	13.2	20.5	26.5	14.0	12.8	7.47	1.67
CF is not a multi level marketing scheme	1.2	0.5	3.5	8.8	12.8	13.2	17.0	19.0	11.2	12.8	6.91	2.09
Opportunities for CF is abundance especially in the field of health and raw meat products	1.0	1.0	3.8	5.8	11.2	14.5	22.5	20.5	13.0	6.8	6.87	1.91

Table 8: Comparison between rural and urban youth towards acceptance, attitude and knowledge on contract farming

Variables	n	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Acceptance towards contract farming				0.120	0.905
Rural	162	7.30	1.17		
Urban	238	7.28	1.13		
Attitude towards contract farming				-0.673	0.501
Rural	162	7.28	1.45		
Urban	238	7.37	1.32		
Knowledge on contract farming				1.090	0.276
Rural	162	7.62	1.26		
Urban	238	7.48	1.25		

recorded by the statement of Opportunities for CF is abundance especially in the field of health and raw meat products (M = 6.87) (Table 7).

The prime discussion unveils the status of acceptance, attitude and knowledge on contract farming among the respondents. The pursuing question is there any difference in acceptance, attitude and knowledge on contract farming among the rural and urban respondents. To achieve this objective, independent

t-test was performed. The independent t-test was conducted in order to compare the mean score on acceptance, attitude and knowledge towards contract farming between rural and urban respondents.

Based on the analysis done, it can be concluded that there was no significant difference in the mean score of acceptance towards contract farming between urban youth and rural respondents ($t(398) = 0.120, p > 0.05$). The means of 7.30 and 7.28, respectively for urban and rural youth were too small to be significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Do rural and urban respondents have different levels of attitude towards contract farming? Data presented in Table 8 shows results of independent sample t-test. The difference in mean attitude score between urban and rural respondents was insufficient ($t(398) = 0.501, p > 0.05$). This proves that there was no significant difference in attitude towards contract farming between rural and urban respondents.

Do those who live in rural areas have a better level of knowledge regarding contract farming compared to those who live in the urban areas? The independent t-test performed tell us that those who live in rural areas recorded ($M = 7.62$, $SD = 1.26$) and those from urban areas ($M = 7.48$, $SD = 1.25$; $t(400) = 1.090$, $p = 0.276$) thus it can be concluded that there was no significant difference between the two groups studied. An inspection of two mean scores bring us to a prediction that locality (between rural and urban) does not contribute much to the knowledge of contract farming among youth in Malaysia.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results gained, it can be concluded that contract farming has the potential to be positively accepted by the youth. Findings unveiled here support the study by Norsida (2008), who stressed that youth have positive acceptance towards agriculture activities that can generate more income for them. Burch *et al.* (1990), Frick *et al.* (1995) and Guo *et al.* (2007) through their studies noted that rural community will accept contract farming better than the urban community. This happens due to the benefits and profits it offers such as lower risk and bigger chance to invest on a large scale. Results of this study opposed to what have been found by Burch *et al.* (1990) and Frick *et al.* (1995). Based on the independent t-test done, there is a possibility that urban youth in Malaysia is starting to accept agriculture activities such as contract farming thus the result gained here is in line with what have been done by Shaffril *et al.* (2010). Result gained here also opposes to what have been found by Lenihan *et al.* (2009), who emphasized that positive attitude is related to the rural community. Based on the independent t-test results urban and rural people posses equal level of attitude towards contract farming due to some issues such as their continuous process of undergoing rapid transformation of the agricultural system, economic base, and related land uses. Sharma (2007) in her study noted that rural youth perceived better and posses a better level of knowledge on agriculture activities but her study cannot be applied to the situation in Malaysia especially in the contract farming case. Rural and urban youth were found to posses' equal level of knowledge towards contract farming through this study.

CONCLUSION

From the results gained, it can be concluded that youth in Malaysia have a higher and better acceptance,

attitude and knowledge towards contract farming. From the independent t-test done, there is no significant difference found on the factor of locality (rural and urban) for acceptance, attitude and knowledge on contract farming. These similarities doesn't mean that there is no new steps need to be conducted to strengthening youth participation in agriculture activities especially on contract farming. Specific course on contract farming can be introduced in the universities in Malaysia while related agriculture agencies can use effective channel such as mass media to disseminate more knowledge and information regarding contract farming to the community especially youth.

REFERENCES

- Breckler, S.J. and E.C. Wiggins, 1992. On Defining Attitude and Attitude Theory: Once More with Feeling. In: Attitude Structure and Function, Pratkanis, A.R., S.J. Breckler and A.C. Greenwald (Eds.). Hillsdale, Erlbaum, NJ.
- Burch, D., R.E. Rickson and I. Thiel, 1990. Contract farming and rural social change: Some implications of the Australian experience. *J. Environ. Impact Assess. Rev.*, 10: 145-155.
- Cellier, G.A., 1999. Small-scale planted forests in Zululand, South Africa: An opportunity for appropriate development. *New For.*, 18: 45-58.
- Chirelstein, M., 2001. Concepts and Case Analysis in the Law of Contracts. 4th Edn., West Group, Eagan.
- Frick, M.J., R.J. Birkenholz, H. Gardner and K. Machtmes, 1995. Rural and urban inner-city high school student knowledge and perception of agriculture. *J. Agric. Educ.*, 36: 1-9.
- Glover, D.J., 1987. Increasing the benefits to smallholders from contract farming: Problems for farmers organizations and policy makers. *World Dev.*, 15: 441-448.
- Guo, H., R.W. Jolly and J. Zhu, 2007. Contract farming in China: Perspective of farm household and agribusiness firm. *J. Comp. Econ. Stud.*, 49: 285-312.
- Lenihan, M.H., K.J. Brasier and R.C. Stedman, 2009. Perception of agriculture's multifunctional role among rural Pennsylvanians. *J. Res. Rural Sociol. Dev.*, 14: 127-149.
- Norsida, M., 2008. Persepsi belia tani dan keperluan pendidikan pertanian. *J. Pembangunan Belia*, 1: 99-114.
- Nunnally, J.C., 1978. Psychometric Theory. 2nd Edn., McGraw-Hill, New York, ISBN-10: 007047849X.

- Omelehin, R.A., E.A. Nuppenau, J. Steinbach and I. Hoffman, 2007. Determinant of crop-livestock enterprise combination adoption and its impact on crop productivity among resource-poor rural farmers in Zamfara grazing reserve. *Asian J. Agric. Res.*, 1: 35-49.
- Shaffril, H.A.M., J.L.D. Silva, J. Uli and B. Abu-Samah, 2010. Socio-demographic factors that impinge youth acceptance towards contract farming: The case of contract farming in Malaysia. *American-Eurasian J. Agric. Environ. Sci.*, 7: 242-246.
- Sharma, A., 2007. The changing agriculture demography of India: Evidence from rural youth perception survey. *Int. J. Rural Manage.*, 3: 27-41.
- Sharp, J.S. and M.B. Smith, 2003. Social capital and farming at the rural-urban interface: The importance of non-farmer and farmer relations. *Agric. Syst.*, 76: 913-927.
- Uddin, M.T. and H. Takeya, 2006. Employment patters and income generation of farm household in integrated farming of Bangladesh. *Int. J. Agric. Res.*, 1: 32-40.