

# Impact of Dynamic Employment Preferences of the Youth on the Agricultural Labour Force in Kegalle District, Sri Lanka

**\*Wedage, W.G.C.D.K. and Wattage, P.**

Department of Agribusiness Management, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences,  
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

\*wchaminthi@gmail.com

The agriculture sector of Sri Lanka is increasingly challenged to meet the increasing demand for essential food items. The recent economic crisis, COVID-19 pandemic, and resource rivalry have had impacts on sharpening the current situation of the local food industry. Migration of people for employment in foreign countries has increased dramatically due to the prevailing unfavorable economic conditions in the country where agriculture is the main local employment of the population. This study aims to compare the employment preferences of the Sri Lankan youth population by considering agriculture, further education, non-agricultural local employment, and foreign employment into account. The objectives of the study are to find the choice of the younger generation between foreign employment and engagement in agriculture and to find the factors that affect youth preference. A sample of 150 youth participants (15-29 age range) was taken from four DS divisions of the Kegalle district in 2022 by using a convenient sampling technique and a choice experiment method was used for the experiment. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted to gather primary data. The questionnaire was designed with socio-economic and attitudinal questions important for analyzing, interpreting, and validating results. SPSS software was used to analyze the data. Results revealed that the youth population highly prefers foreign employment over engaging in agriculture based on the perception of the current situation of the country, the education level of youth individuals, the recent work of the respondents, and insufficient government support for agriculture. The study found that, the preference of youth for engaging in foreign employment has a significant impact on the reduction of the agricultural labour force in the study area. The potential of absorbing youth in agriculture must be exploited to increase agricultural production in the country.

**Keywords:** Agriculture, Choice Experiment, Employment, Labour Force, Perception, Youth