

Entrepreneurial Performance of Farmers Practicing Mixed Cropping in Salem District of Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

This study was taken up in three selected villages of Tharamangalam block of Salem district. By resorting to proportionate random sampling method, 120 farmers practicing mixed cropping were selected as respondents. The respondents were interviewed personally by a well structured and pre-tested interview schedule. The collected data were analysed and tabulated using appropriate statistical tools. Majority of the respondents were found to be medium in their entrepreneurial performance. The respondents possessed high level of entrepreneurial traits viz., self-confidence, credit orientation, and achievement motivation. The entrepreneurial traits found to be medium were innovativeness, competition orientation, management orientation, risk orientation, leadership ability, marketing ability and knowledge about the enterprise. They had poor decision making ability. They perceived their enterprises as profitable ventures.

Key words: Entrepreneurial performance, farmers, mixed cropping.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship plays a critical role in the growth of India, which has abundance of natural and human resources. Besides being the vehicle of agricultural development, entrepreneurship can solve acute problems like unemployment, concentration of wealth in few selected hands, imbalance in regional development, increasing wastage of youth in destructive activities etc. An agriculture entrepreneur is one who operates on best production techniques to obtain the maximum possible output, which is feasible with current technology, socio economic and physical environment. All round development of agriculture is possible with effective exploitation of human resources and material resources. So it is very crucial to study to what extent our farmers are progressive, innovative, forward looking and willing to diversity their occupations. Thus there is a need for conducting systematic research to clarify the characteristics of entrepreneurs. At the present situation, development of farmer is the primary concern of the country and entrepreneurial behaviour of the farmers assumes greater importance. In the coming years, the prospects of rural sector could depend very much upon the availability of farm enterprises. The present study was therefore designed to address the

field of entrepreneurship in mixed cropping. Entrepreneurial performance of farmer practicing mixed cropping has been the special focus of this study.

Materials and methods

The study was conducted in three selected villages of Tharamangalam block of Salem district as it had maximum area under mixed cropping. A sample size of 120 farmers practicing mixed cropping was selected as respondents by using the proportionate random sampling technique. The data were collected by using the well structured and pre-tested interview schedule. Entrepreneurial performance was operationally defined as the combination of entrepreneurial ability, marketing ability and perceived profitability of farmers. The entrepreneurial performance was computed using the following equation.

$$EP = EA + MA + PP$$

Where,

EP is Entrepreneurial performance

EA, the Entrepreneurial ability

MA, the Marketing ability

PP, the Perceived profitability

Entrepreneurial ability has been operationalized as the extent of entrepreneurial traits possessed by the individual respondents. The entrepreneurial traits were selected based on the opinion of judges in the field of entrepreneurship development and agricultural extension. The selected traits were self-confidence, decision making ability, risk orientation, innovativeness, credit orientation, competition orientation, management orientation, leadership ability, achievement motivation and knowledge about the enterprise. The selected traits were measured by using the available measurement procedures.

Marketing ability referred to the capacity or tendency of the entrepreneur to identify the market trend to sell the produce for greater returns. In this study, marketing ability was studied under 10 dimensions namely, use of additional channel, price fixing criteria, consumer segmentation, publicity, strategy during price fall, record keeping, expenditure incurred on transport, place of market, collection of money and sources of market information. The procedure was developed and used to study the marketing ability of the respondents.

Perceived profitability was operationalized as the degree to which an enterprise has been perceived to be relatively advantageous in terms of economic profit. Farmers perception regarding the profit was measured on four point continuum viz., 'least profitable', 'somewhat profitable', 'profitable' and 'most profitable' with the scores of 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are discussed as follows:

ENTREPRENEURIAL PERFORMANCE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Results on distribution of respondents according to their entrepreneurial performance are presented in Table 1.

Table1. Distribution of respondents according to their entrepreneurial performance

(n=120)

S. No.	Category	Number of respondents	Per cent
1.	Low	25	20.83
2.	Medium	63	52.50
3.	High	32	26.67
	Total	120	100

It could be observed from the table 1 that most of the respondents (52.50 per cent) were found to be medium in their entrepreneurial performance followed by 26.67 per cent of the respondents with high entrepreneurial performance. One-fifth of the respondents were found to have low entrepreneurial performance. The medium level of entrepreneurial attributes and medium level of marketing ability might have enabled the respondents to be medium in their entrepreneurial performance. This finding is in line with the findings of Sabale *et al.* (2014) who also reported that majority of the respondents were found to have medium level of entrepreneurial performance.

Entrepreneurial traits of the respondents

In this section, the entrepreneurial traits of the respondents viz., self-confidence, decision making ability, innovativeness, credit orientation, competition orientation, management orientation, risk orientation, leadership ability, achievement motivation and knowledge about the enterprise are discussed.

The results on distribution of respondents according to their entrepreneurial traits are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to their entrepreneurial traits.

(n=120)

S.No	Entrepreneurial traits	Low		Medium		High		Total
		No.of respondents	per cent	No.of respondents	per cent	No.of respondents	per cent	
1	Self confidence	21	17.50	38	31.67	61	50.83	100.00
2	Decision making ability	58	48.33	38	31.67	24	15.00	100.00
3	Innovativeness	32	26.67	72	60.00	16	13.00	100.00
4	Credit orientation	23	19.17	31	25.83	66	55.00	100.00
5	Competition orientation	22	18.33	69	57.50	29	24.17	100.00
6	Risk orientation	34	28.33	69	57.50	17	14.17	100.00
7	Risk orientation	21	17.50	59	49.17	40	33.33	100.00
8	Leadership ability	18	15.00	78	65.00	24	20.00	100.00
9	Achievement motivation	24	20.00	42	35.00	54	4.00	100.00
10	Knowledge about the enterprise	17	14.17	72	60.00	31	25.83	100.00

Self-Confidence

Half the proportion of the respondents (50.83 per cent) had high level of self confidence and about one-third of the respondents (31.67 per cent) had medium level of self confidence. Only a little proportion of the respondents (17.50 per cent) were found to have low level of self confidence. As many of the respondents had formal education and possessed leadership which in turn might have enabled them to be self-confident.

Decision making ability

Around half the proportion of the respondents (48.33 per cent) were found to have low level of decision making ability followed by medium (31.67 per cent) and high (15.00 per cent) levels of decision making ability. This otherwise means most of the respondents took joint decisions in consultation with their family members. The predominance of joint families might have enabled the respondents to take only joint decisions.

Innovativeness

Sixty per cent of the respondents had medium level of innovativeness followed by 26.67 per cent of the respondents with low level of innovativeness. Only a smaller proportion (13.33 per cent) of the respondents were found to have high level of innovativeness. This might be due to the fact that majority of the respondents were in the middle age group and also they were educated. This made them to adopt innovative ideas much earlier than others.

Credit orientation

Majority of the respondents (55.00 per cent) possessed high level of credit orientation followed by 25.83 per cent and 19.17 per cent of the respondents who possessed medium and low levels of orientation towards credit. As majority of the respondents were educated, they might have realized the need of credit for doing agricultural operations, which in turn might have enabled them to have high orientation towards credit.

Achievement motivation

A little more than two-fifths of the respondents (45.00 per cent) were having high degree of achievement motivation followed by 35.00 per cent of the respondents with medium degree of achievement motivation. Only one-fifth of the respondents (20.00 per cent) had low degree of achievement motivation. The formal educational level of respondents coupled with leadership might have helped them to develop a strong sense of achievement motivation.

Management orientation

Majority of the respondents (57.50 per cent) had medium level of management orientation followed by around thirty per cent of the respondents (28.33 per cent) with low level of management orientation and 14.17 per cent of them with high level orientation towards managerial activities.

Competition orientation

Majority of the respondents (57.50 per cent) had medium level of competition orientation followed by high (24.17 per cent) and low (18.33 per cent) levels of orientation towards competition. The medium level of innovativeness and risk taking ability of the respondents might have enabled them to be medium in their competition orientation.

Risk orientation

Half the proportion of the respondents (49.17 per cent) had medium level of risk orientation followed by one-third of the respondents (33.33 per cent) with high level of risk

orientation. Only 17.50 per cent of them had low level of risk orientation. Risk is the biggest challenge for famers involved in mixed cropping under rainfed conditions. The high achievement motivation and self-confidence of the respondents might have enabled them to have better orientation towards risk in their farming.

Leadership ability

Majority of the respondents (65.00 per cent) had medium level of leadership ability followed by one-fifths of the respondents (20.00 per cent) and 15.00 per cent of the respondents with high and low levels of leadership ability, respectively. As the respondents were educated and highly self confident, this in turn would have enabled them to acquire leadership qualities.

Knowledge about mixed cropping

Most of the respondents (60.00 per cent) had medium level of knowledge about their enterprises followed by high (25.083 per cent) and low (14.17 per cent levels of knowledge. This might be due to the fact that most of the respondents possessed medium level of social participation, information source utilization, scientific orientation and cosmopolitaness. Moreover, as they have attended training programmes on mixed cropping, they might have acquired knowledge on this.

Perceived profitability

The results on distribution of respondents according to their perceived profitability are presented in the table.3.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to their perceived profitability

(n=120)

S.No	Category	Number of Respondents	per cent
1.	Least profitable	-	-
2.	Somewhat profitable	8	6.67
3.	Profitable	72	60.00
4.	Most Profitable	40	33.33
	Total	120	100

It is observed from the table 3 that majority of the respondents (60.00 per cent) perceived their enterprises as profitable followed by one-third of respondents (33.33 per cent) who perceived their enterprises as most profitable ventures. It was perceived to be 'somewhat profitable' only by 6.67 per cent of the respondents. No one was perceived their enterprise as least profitable. The famers cultivate three crops in mixed cropping. Even one crop fails, the farmers could get income from other two crops. This would have enabled the respondents to perceive their enterprise as profitable one. This finding is in line with the findings of Sakthivel (2011).

Marketing ability

The results on distribution of respondents according to their marketing ability are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of respondents according to their marketing ability.
(n=120)

S.No	Category	Number of respondents	Per cent
1.	Low	31	25.83
2.	Medium	66	55.00
3.	High	23	19.17
	Total	120	100

More than half the proportion of the respondents (55.00 per cent) were found to have medium level of marketing ability followed by one-fourth of the respondents (25.83per cent) who were found to have low level of marketing ability in marketing their produce. About one-fifth of the respondents (19.17 per cent) had high level of marketing ability. The low to medium level of marketing ability of the respondents might be due to their joint family system which might have prevented them to make proper market decisions. This finding is in line with the findings of Janani et al. (2016).

CONCLUSION

The overall entrepreneurial performance as well as the entrepreneurial traits of the respondents were found to be medium. Hence it is necessary to improve their entrepreneurial performance by designing entrepreneurship development training programs (EDTPS) suitable for farmers practicing mixed cropping. Training on production technology of crops under mixed farming may be imparted to the farmers so as to equip them with knowledge and skill components. Entrepreneurial training on market components like market segmentation, grading the produce, value addition, price fixing criteria, assessing market demand etc. may be imparted to the farmers practicing mixed farming.

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