

ESSAY

b) Choose two challenges related to agriculture or rural development in your community or country and describe how you think they should be addressed.

Fiji has abundance of unutilized land lying idle and unproductive. If the land is utilized and made productive, then Fiji has real potential to revolutionise the agriculture sector by involving the youths in the sector. Such an initiative will have multiple effects; the chief being retention of youths in the village and, thus, solving the problem of urban drift and other social problems associated with it.

However, the challenge is to make the land available to the youths through decisive policy implementation and national incentives. The second challenge is to teach youths skills in agriculture which would enable them to be productively involved.

The onus is on the national leaders and community leaders to get together to solve land problems and make land available to our youths. Presently, acres of land lie idle with no one benefitting from it. This can be attributed to the inability of leaders to solve land tenure problems, and lack of foresight made on the part of landowners to visualize the benefits of making the land available for productivity, rather than letting it lie idle.

If the land is made available to the youths, then more of our youths will be gainfully employed and contributing to the nation, rather than being a burden on the society. Moreover, this initiative will reduce the urban drift which leads to other social problems such as unemployment, crime, squatter settlements and poverty.

The second challenge is to teach youths skills in agriculture activities so that they are able to utilize the land. The youths need to be taught skills in general farming, crop farming, vegetable farming, animal- husbandry, chicken farming, bee farming and other such skills. This is possible through our education system.

Our schools should offer more vocational programmes in agriculture disciplines. The focus should shift from academic subjects to vocational subjects which are skill-oriented. Presently, there are vocational subjects being offered at some schools. However, these are few and the status of the programme is quite low. There is, thus, a need to offer more vocational education in our schools, and make the programme more attractive. Moreover by doing this, other problems associated with the education system would be solved.

One of these is the inclination of our youths to focus on tertiary education in academic disciplines. As it is not all are able to attain tertiary education, and thus, do not have any skills to rely on. Moreover, not all graduates are able to secure white-collar jobs. Therefore, initiative in the agriculture sector will solve a lot of other associated problems. For instance, youths who drop out from mainstream education will have an opportunity to learn a skill, and be productive. Moreover, fewer students will go for tertiary education and white-collar jobs, thus easing the government's problem of looking for jobs for the graduates.

For an effective vocational programme in Agriculture, a relevant and pragmatic curriculum needs to be developed, which will meet the needs of the nation. The relevant government ministries (Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education, Lands Commission) need to work together to formulate the curriculum. Moreover, the curriculum needs to be a local incentive based on the needs of the present times, not copied from other countries whose socio-economic situation is different from ours.

To be able to effectively implement the curriculum more teachers need to be trained. This might cost money, but in the long-run will benefit the country. The proportion of students opting for academic disciplines is significantly higher at the present time. There is, thus, a need to balance this. More and more students need to go for skilled-based training in agriculture in order to tap the real potential of the nation.

A major concern for the government, if this initiative is taken into consideration, would be to secure markets for products of the youths employed in the agriculture sector. This is important because if the markets are not secured, the youths will not make much money if there is a glut of supply of the products. This will deter others from taking up farming. If this aspect is addressed properly, and the supply of products are aplenty, then there is potential for the youths to make real money, more than they would make as graduates.

Therefore, for our country to develop, more focus should be put on the agriculture sector and rural development. For this to happen, unutilized land needs to be made available to youths to make it productive. The youths also need to be taught skills in agriculture to be able to work the land. This means that major reforms are needed in the education sector.

Number of Words: (784 words)

Name: Chrisnrita Tolonga Aumanu

Form: 5R

School: Xavier College

Age: 17

PACIFIC AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY POLICY NETWORK (PAFPNet)

YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE ESSAY, NEWS, ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

Application Form

Applications should be accompanied by this form and addressed to Ms Miriama Kunawave, PAFPNet Secretariat, Land Resources Division, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Private Mail Bag, Suva to arrive no later than 22 October, 2010. Communication will be limited to winners only or those requesting the return of original materials. Applications may alternatively be submitted by Fax (No. +679 338 6326), hand delivered to the SPC Suva office or emailed to lrhelpdesk@spc.int. Please call +679 3370733 – ext 35344 for further details.

Contact details

Name	CHRISNAITA TOLONGA AUMANU
Age	17
Sex	<input checked="" type="radio"/> F <input type="radio"/> M
Tel/fax	6676414 / 9365610
Email	xavier@connect.com.fj
Country	FIJI
School or Organisation and position (if applicable)	XAVIER COLLEGE – STUDENT – FORM 5R