

Essay Question

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

Agricultural activities have always been the backbone to most of Pacific Island Country's economy. With the turn of the new century, much of the vast traditional and cultural links to the mother-earth have been diverted with much focus on the modern socio-economical activities. The concept of agriculture is a complicated issue itself, concerning rural development and the growth of a community or country. Agriculture is a conception that is "interlinked" with other elements to the elaboration of the capacity building, and wellbeing of a community.

This essay will discuss two challenges faced by my local community, Chea village in the Solomon Islands. Moreover, this essay will discuss the constructive resolutions that need to be undertaken thus, addressing the issues at hand.

Primarily, a major challenge to the young people of Chea village is the lack of information and initiation of agricultural long-term activities, which aids in rural development. The short-term vision of obtaining a mini cash-crop project, which benefits both producer and consumer, is sometimes the misinterpretation of such significant activities. Most young farmers in the village lack the ambition of involving in long term agricultural activities that would develop the livelihood of individuals and a community as a whole. Most young subsistence farmers and non-farmers regularly participate in domestic agricultural activities, however; the majority do not depict crop growing and farming to be off a higher status and important to the overall development of the community, simply because they do not poses such knowledge required. ✓

A practical example to this phenomenon, is the lack of information needed by an enthusiastic young person having abilities to maintain a farming project, that would not only enable him to earn a sufficient revenue, but play an integral part in the development of food security and improvement in the community. Moreover, the lack of constructive ideologies on how to implement traditional knowledge into the context of modern semi-subsistence or commercial agricultural projects alters the perception of most young people in my community, as to how important crop growing and farming practices are to the development of not only the rural community, but also the nation and region.

The concept of "thinking outside the box" is not often an apparent approach of evaluation in the rural community status, thus; when confronted with such opportunities young potential farmers are not able to understand fully the benefits and values of taking part in these types of socio-economical activities.

The second challenge perceived is the lack of resources, and inspiration to start a successful agricultural project. Quite often, young farmers are allured into the concept of a small agricultural enterprise, on hearing accounts of successful partakers, involving in the agricultural sector. These young local farmers often would understand the mainstream events of such projects, but felt neglected due to the minimal yet critical support, from the outside community to sustain a complete design and scheme, on how to establish a successful agricultural venture. Without the proper guidance and supervision necessary, young farmers are often left to believe that these forms of undertakings are not suitable for them.

A realistic case is of a young farmer who is more than willing to enter into the commercial production of certain crops, however; later discouraged by the fact that there are virtually no directions given by relevant authorities on how to initially get the saplings or seedlings to begin with. Moreover, these types of young farmers are often felt ignored due to the lack of backing and infrastructure that enables commencement.

The solutions, which I think should address the first issue, are as follows. Relevant authorities such as the Ministry of Agriculture or Ministry of Commerce should put up an action plan in which officers would go into communities addressing the need of incorporating the traditional knowledge and commercial agricultural techniques to sustain the wellbeing of not only individuals but also the community in total. The concept of food security, along with the employment opportunities that would be available should be highlighted.

Moreover, emphasis should be on agricultural production that would bring development to the rural community. Most importantly, would be the issue on how this concept of bridging the traditional knowledge and commercial agricultural techniques is of significance in this modern era. In executing the action plan, authorities should address and educate young people in a specific manner, enabling them to feel responsible for the communities' welfare. In knowing that they are needed in these types of initiatives for the betterment of the community, produces a positive response.

The following solutions address the second issue. Relevant authorities should set up a department, which provide information and resources needed by young farmers. Without the proper nurturing of young people, the goals proposed by the Youth in Agriculture Strategy will not practically eventuate. The department should invest in mini-workshops that instruct the young potential farmers on how to start and expand small farming projects. This department

should fully focus on the development of these young people, in terms of crop growing and farming projects. Workshops are targeted to develop the minds of these young people, to perceive a future reality of establishing such farming projects, thus, developing the community's wellbeing.

Moreover, aid in the form of materials needed for the commencement of mini projects should be rendered to those young farmers who are willing to partake in Agricultural activities thus, facilitating the development of the rural community. Funding should be assisted to these farmers, rather than putting financial aid in other areas of agriculture that divest the full potential of rural development.

In conclusion, the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with other Government sectors and NGO's should implement a "bottom up approach" strategy, which involves the young people of grass-root level to understand their value in rural development. Direct confrontation should be made available to associate young farmers and the community's welfare. Feeling part of the community would stimulate positive feedbacks. Furthermore, assessment evaluation should be continuously done to support in areas that are continually required by farmers.

Word count = 997 words.

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.

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