

Perceived Barriers, Opportunities, and Motivation for Agricultural Entrepreneurship of Rural  
Colombian Students Who Participated in Dual-Credit Programs

Carlos A. Parra Salinas  
University of Caldas

Neil A. Knobloch  
Purdue University

Lilly Hall 915 W. State Street  
West Lafayette, Indiana, USA.  
Phone: (765) 494-8439  
Fax: (765) 496-1152  
Email: [nknobloc@purdue.edu](mailto:nknobloc@purdue.edu)

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### **Introduction/Need for Research**

The Department of Caldas, located in the Western Central part of Colombia, has experienced decades of post-conflict transformation and the economic crisis of the agricultural sector (e.g., coffee). The socio-economic conditions in the Caldas Department resulted rural youth not being interested in the agricultural sector because there are few opportunities for jobs and personal development. In this context, dual-credit programs can engage rural high school students to earn college credits while completing high school. Additionally, dual-credit programs provide the opportunity for rural students to engage in entrepreneurship activities through agricultural education. Students who participate in dual-credit programs show a desire to start new rural business and to adopt new technologies, which create opportunities for the development of the agricultural sector in Caldas. However, different factors can affect students' intentions. For example, entrepreneurship is an important strategy for long-term economic growth and initiative, invention and overall entrepreneurial spirit needs to be developed in young people (Stefanovic, Rankovic & Provic, 2011). Moreover, education fosters student entrepreneurship and supports them to start their own business (Yildirim, Cakir & Askun, 2016). To address agricultural issues, it is necessary to motivate rural college students in agriculture and entrepreneurship address 21st century challenges, such as food security, water scarcity, climate change and rural development by bringing fresh perspectives and new ideas.

### **Conceptual or Theoretical Framework**

Expectancy-value motivation served as the theoretical framework for this study. This theory was chosen because Wigfield and Eccles' (2000) model of EVT identifies contextual factors (i.e., perceived barriers and affordances), expectancies, and task values that may influence why students choose and do not choose to participate in educational activities. For the study, college students participated in a dual-credit program, which had academic and entrepreneurship components. College professors taught agriculture courses for dual-credit, and students created and implemented a business plan, which is similar to Supervised Agricultural Experiences. The purpose of the study was to describe college students' motivations and what they perceived as barriers and opportunities to participating in entrepreneurship development in a rural coffee region in Colombia.

### **Methods & Procedures**

This exploratory study was conducted with 100 students enrolled in a dual-credit program to describe the motivations of the rural youth to engage in agricultural entrepreneurship, and their perceived barriers and opportunities regarding rural entrepreneurship. We conducted a survey to collect data during March and April 2019, the students were sent an e-mail with the invitation to complete the online Qualtrics questionnaire. There were 82 rural youth who responded to the questionnaire in a five-week period. The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from existing questionnaires (Zimmerman & Chu, 2013; Stefanovic, Prokic & Rankovic, 2010; Marinic, Zathurecky & Spicak, 2015) and a panel of graduate students and experts reviewed the questionnaire to establish face and content validity, respectively. The questionnaire consisted of 42 items organized into three sections: (1) students' motivations to develop entrepreneurial activities; (2) perceived barriers to develop rural entrepreneurship; and, (3) perceived opportunities to develop rural entrepreneurship. A five-point anchored rating scale was used to

measure the three variables. The questionnaire was translated into Spanish was peer reviewed by a Spanish speaker for translation accuracy. The results were translated into English. SPSS statistical software was used to analyze the data.

### Results & Discussion

Regarding students' motivations to participate in agricultural entrepreneurship, three motivations were rated the highest: (1) For my own satisfaction and growth; (2) to be my own boss; and, (3) to build a business to pass on the family (Table 1). Regarding perceived barriers, the students perceived three factors as most important when deciding to venture or to continue into agricultural entrepreneurship were: (1) Obtaining short-term financial capital; (2) obtaining long-term financial capital; and, (3) weak economy. Finally, students perceived the most important opportunities to obtain success in the agricultural entrepreneurship were: (1) Knowledge about maintenance of accurate records; (2) good general management skills; and, (3) honest reputation.

Table 1. Frequencies of the top three motivations, barriers and opportunities

Motivations	Percentage Agreement				
	1	2	3	4	5
For my own satisfaction and growth	0	1	19	16	64
To be my own boss	0	6	13	20	61
To build a business to pass on the family	0	4	17	21	58
Barriers	Percentage Agreement				
	1	2	3	4	5
Obtaining short-term financial capital	0	4	32	37	27
Obtaining long-term financial capital	0	6	27	41	26
Weak economy	2	10	25	32	31
Opportunities	Percentage Agreement				
	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledge about maintenance of accurate records of sales/expenses	0	3	20	18	59
Good general management skills	0	6	13	20	61
Honest reputation	1	3	16	21	59

Note. Rating scale = (1) not important; (2) low importance; (3) some importance; (4) important; (5) very important.

These results suggest a motivated entrepreneur is more likely to be creative, innovative and loyal, which is fundamental for the development of agricultural entrepreneurship activities (Papageorgiou, Giorgalli, & Petrou, 2013). Additionally, these results support it is difficult for farmers to obtain loans from the banking system in the rural areas. Finally, these results support the importance of managerial skills and education to develop entrepreneurship and potentially successful businesses (Zimmermen & Chu, 2013).

### Conclusions & Recommendations

This study describes college students' motivations to be entrepreneurs and the barriers and opportunities they perceive as future agricultural entrepreneurs in rural Colombia. Although dual-credit students are struggling with high rate of unemployment and low opportunities in the rural areas, the college students showed a desire to start their own businesses and generate a project that improves their living conditions and those of future generations. Future studies should investigate the relationships among motivation, perceived challenges, and perceived opportunities, and unpack college students' understandings and motivations to be entrepreneurs.

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