

Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Views on Agriculture and Agricultural Careers

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Introduction

- The current gap in students pursuing agricultural careers and experienced, upcoming leadership in agriculture is approaching a crisis state.
- Between 2020-2025, an average of **59,400 positions** are projected to open each year in the food, agricultural, renewable natural resources, and environmental industries for college graduates, which is a projected **2.6% increase** in openings from the past five years (Fernandez et al., 2020).
- There are estimated to be only **35,000 college graduates** to fill the positions (Fernandez et al., 2020).

Purpose

To gain a better understanding of agriculture teachers' perspectives on students' career plans after high school

Objectives

- Objective 1** { Describe the perceptions held by agriculture teachers in Pennsylvania on their students' views concerning agricultural careers
- Objective 2** { Identify which factors contribute most to students' views on agriculture from the teachers' perspective
- Objective 3** { Identify teachers' perceptions of students' views on apprenticeships in agriculture

Theoretical Framework

- **Super's (1990) self-concept theory**
- Defines the process of career choice and development as the way the person's self-concept is developed and implemented
- States self-concept is the interaction among physical and mental growth, personal experiences, and environmental uniqueness and stimulation

Methods

Population

- Agriculture Teachers in PA
- $N = 255$
- $n = 85$

Survey

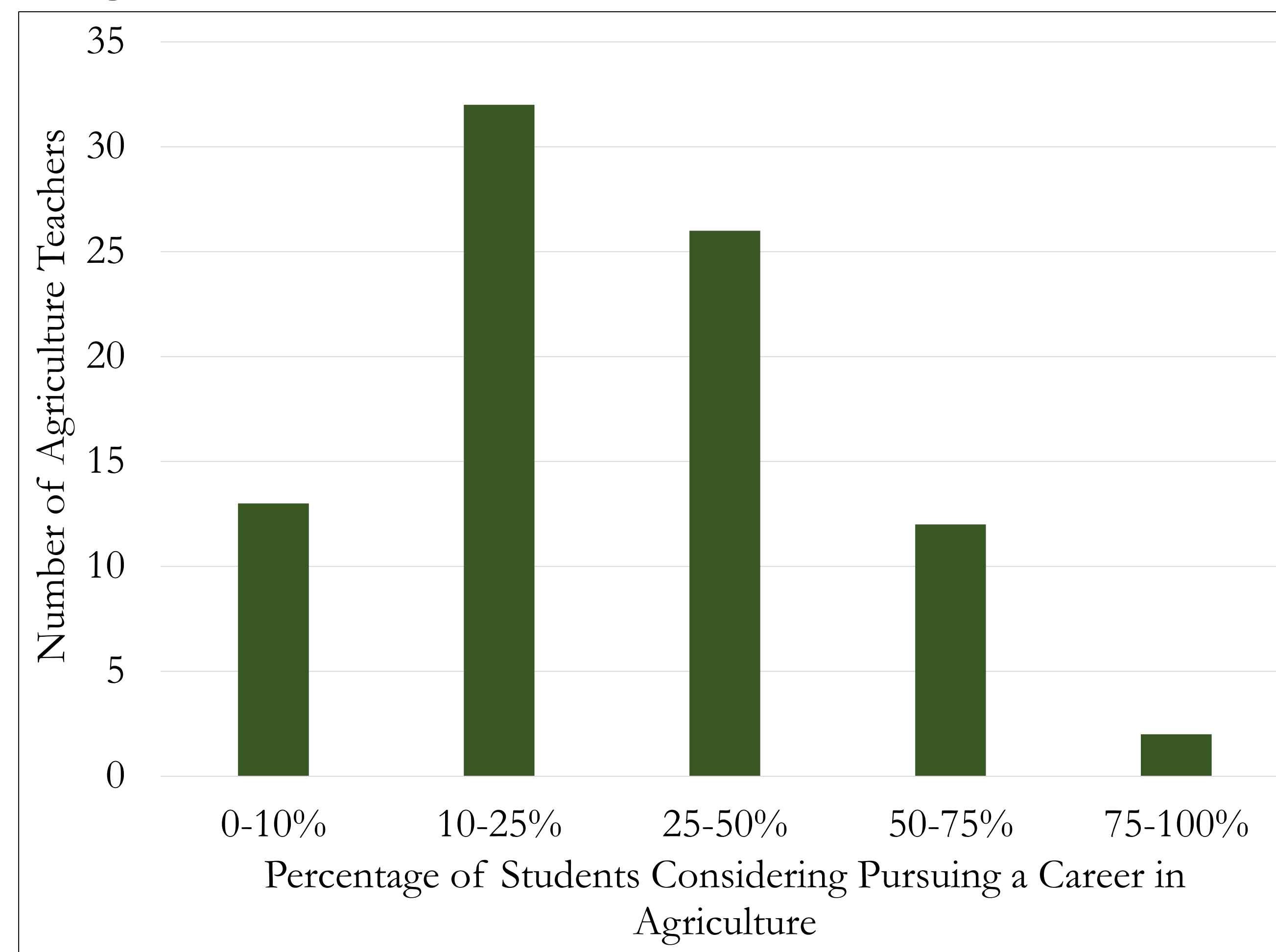
- Qualtrics® survey questionnaire
- Sent via email
- Asked teachers to rate how their students view agriculture, agricultural careers, and apprenticeships

Data Analysis

- SPSS version 28
- Descriptive statistics
- Frequencies

Figure 2.

Agriculture Teachers' Perceptions of Students Considering Pursuing a Career in Agriculture



Results



Most agriculture teachers perceived that their students view careers in agriculture as **viable career options** ($n = 55, 64.7%$).

Over half of the agriculture teachers estimated that **less than 25%** of their students are considering pursuing a career in agriculture ($n = 45, 52.9%$).

Most agriculture teachers agreed **income** impacts their students' decision to choose the field of agriculture ($n = 64, 75.2%$).

Table 1.

Agriculture Teachers' Perceptions of Apprenticeship Opportunities

To what extent do you think your students would agree with the following statements?	Strongly disagree		Somewhat disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Somewhat agree		Strongly agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
An apprenticeship is beneficial to the students.	2	2.4	7	8.2	18	21.2	35	41.2	23	27.1
Students would pursue an apprenticeship in an agricultural field if the opportunity was there.	2	2.4	3	3.5	11	12.9	49	57.6	20	23.5

Most agriculture teachers agreed that **apprenticeships** would be **beneficial** to their students ($n = 58, 68.3%$).

The majority of agriculture teachers agreed that their students would **pursue an apprenticeship** in an agricultural field if the opportunity was there ($n = 69, 81.1%$).



Conclusions and Recommendations



- Results indicate there is a discrepancy between agriculture teachers' perception that students believe a career in agriculture is viable and agriculture teachers' beliefs about their students' intentions to pursue a career in agriculture.
- Perhaps this discrepancy could be caused by students' hesitation regarding the profitability of agricultural careers.
- Further research is needed to understand profitability as a barrier to pursuing a career in agriculture and explore the disconnect between agriculture teachers' apparent desire to place in apprenticeship style opportunities and the lack of those opportunities present in current school-based agricultural education (SBAE) programs.
- It is recommended that qualitative research be conducted to understand the barriers that agriculture teachers face when implementing apprenticeship style placements in their supervised agricultural experience (SAE) programs.

References

Fernandez, J. M., Goecker, A. D., Smith, E., Moran, E. R., & Wilson, C. A. (2020). *Employment opportunities for college graduates*. USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. <https://www.purdue.edu/usda/employment/>

Super, D. E. (1990). A life-span, life-space approach to career development. In D. Brown & L. Brooks, *Career choice and development: Applying contemporary theories to practice* (pp. 197-261). Jossey-Bass.