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Integration Through Agricultural Jobs: The Foundations Agriculture for Refugees and Migrants (FARM) Program and Its Impact on Canadian Society and Industry

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Literature Review



- Suffer from poverty, underemployment, downward mobility, poor housing, limited or lack of access to services as well as discrimination
- Face barriers to integration into society: communication, training, social and economic integration
- Labour shortage in the Canadian agricultural industry
- Higher rates of unemployed immigrants have provided the basis for a new pilot project being undertaken by a settlement agency in Alberta
- Lack of empirical research on the impacts of how training in agriculture offers earlier opportunities for economic integration and social integration

Methodology



- May to November 2018
- 20 participants : 15 newcomers (on 5) and 5 employers (on 6)
- Exploratory/Qualitative
- Semi-structured interviews: 10 Questions
- Social representation of their experiences
- Lexicometrical Analysis

Research Questions

To what extent does the FARM program have an impact on the socioeconomic integration of newcomers into the Canadian workforce?

How can the FARM program be scale-able and accessible to more employers, agencies and participants?



Research Findings



Theme I: Employment & Recruitment Challenges



Newcomers

93% faced employment issues and find it hard to find a job, with no Canadian experience (53%) and have language problems (40%)



Are these issues addressed by the program?

Yes (67%)

- Provided a training and work experience (47%)
- Improved their resume (20%)
- Improved their English (13%)

No (33%)

- Too short and seasonal
- Focused too much on the soft skills
- I had the skills back home
- Didn't find a job

Employers

100% are facing issues in their recruitment process



- Main issue is to find qualified and trained agricultural workers
- Yes, the program addresses the worker agricultural skill gaps for their organization

Theme II: Benefits of the FARM Program



Newcomers

100% perceived that the program provided them benefits for their social and economic integration



- Gained from a Canadian agriculture experience (33%)
- Provided financial support (27%)
- Provided a Canadian experience (27%)
- Met people from diverse countries and backgrounds (20%)
- Helped to get a job (20%)

Employers

100% agreed that the program addresses the worker agricultural skill gaps for their organization



- Cost effective solution – trainees gained training and skills (100%)
- I will hire program trainees instead of hiring Seasonal Agricultural Workers and Temporary Foreign Workers (60%)
- I would feel more comfortable to let them go, if they were Seasonal Agricultural Workers and Temporary Foreign Workers (40%)

Theme III: Overall Experience



Newcomers

79% satisfied with the classroom training and 80% with the practicum



Classroom training

- Learned farming vocabulary and technical tasks (53%) – needs improvement: more farming vocabulary (27%)
- Prepared a cover letter/resume and how to search for a job (20%)

Practicum

- Recommend employer and would like to be hired (93%)
- Good to find employment (53%)
- Learned the equipment and techniques (47%)
- Too short - extend the length (33%)
- Helped to get a Canadian experience (27%)

Employers

100% would hire a FARM student and would recommend the program to another organization



Classroom training

- Increase vocabulary and agriculture pre-knowledge basic farming techniques (40%)

Practicum

- Respect the schedule (40%)
- Better match between newcomers and employers (40%)

Hiring and recommendation

- Create awareness to promote the program (80%)
- Help and support newcomers (60%)
- Offer more intakes during season (60%)
- Provide education in agriculture (40%)

Theme IV: Future of the FARM Program



Newcomers

100% recommended that the Canadian government continue the funding of this program to support and help immigrants to find employment



53% would pay with their own money to attend the program

- Value of the training
- Helps their life
- Find work and start a career
- Get higher pay

Employers

93% recommended that the government continue the funding of the FARM training program and will be also beneficial if the industry were funding their own program



- Need skilled employees
- Provide more accessible workers
- Depends on the quality and cost of the training
- Needs to increase the bottom line of their organization
- Need to be trained in the right season
- Get both programs
- Benefits will remain the same if the industry provided a similar program
- I don't care where workers are from

Future of the Program



- Express their social representations on the effectiveness of this training
- Enhance teaching and learning process for future intakes
- Determine how socioeconomic integration of the newcomers into the Canadian workforce was facilitated by the training
- Propose a model for continuity, replicability and scalability

Limitations



- Size of the sample
- Time constraints
- Availability and reliability of data
- Cultural Issues
- Lack of previous research studies on the topic

Questions

