Perceptions and Conditions of Young Agricultural Entrepreneurship in Northeastern Thailand

มุมมองและเงื่อนไขการเป็นผู้ประกอบการเกษตรรุ่นใหม่ ในภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือของประเทศไทย

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บทคัดย่อ: การพัฒนาผู้ประกอบการเกษตรรุ่นใหม่เป็นนโยบายสำคัญของประเทศไทยมากว่าทศวรรษ เพื่อเสริมสร้างศักยภาพกำลังคนในภาคเกษตร การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษามุมมองและเงื่อนไขการดำรงชีพและการประกอบอาชีพของผู้ประกอบการเกษตรรุ่นใหม่ในภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือของประเทศไทย โดยดำเนินการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพใน 2 ระยะ ระยะที่ 1 ศึกษามุมมองต่ออาชีพผู้ประกอบการเกษตรรุ่นใหม่ จากการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกผู้ให้ข้อมูลสำคัญ 3 กลุ่ม ได้แก่ ผู้ที่ไม่เคยเป็นผู้ประกอบการเกษตรรุ่นใหม่ (30 ราย) ผู้ที่เป็นผู้ประกอบการเกษตรรุ่นใหม่ (40 ราย) และอดีตผู้ประกอบการเกษตรรุ่นใหม่ (20 ราย) ระยะที่ 2 ศึกษาสภาพที่เป็นอยู่ของผู้ประกอบการเกษตรรุ่นใหม่ จากการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการ Young Smart Farmer จำนวน 60 ราย ข้อมูลถูกวิเคราะห์ด้วยการวิเคราะห์เชิงเนื้อหาและเชิงประเด็น พร้อมการเปรียบเทียบข้ามกลุ่มสถานะและข้ามช่วงรุ่น (X, Y, Z) ผลการศึกษา พบว่า ผู้ประกอบการเกษตรรุ่นใหม่ถูกมองว่าเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของหน่วยธุรกิจครัวเรือน โดยมี 3 มิติหลัก ได้แก่ (1) การมีเงินและทรัพย์สิน (2) ความอบอุ่นของครอบครัวและเครือข่ายอาชีพ และ (3) ความเป็นอยู่ที่ดีและความสะดวกสบาย เงื่อนไขสำคัญของแต่ละมิติประกอบด้วย รายได้และทรัพย์สิน การสนับสนุนและความมั่นใจจากครอบครัว/เครือข่าย และสุขภาพกับโครงสร้างพื้นฐาน โดยทุกช่วงรุ่น ให้ความสำคัญในลำดับเดียวกัน คือ ด้านเศรษฐกิจ รองลงมาคือด้านความสัมพันธ์ และด้านความ-เป็นอยู่ที่ดีตามลำดับ ผลการศึกษาชี้ให้เห็นว่าหน่วยงานที่เกี่ยวข้องควรพัฒนาผู้ประกอบการเกษตรรุ่นใหม่ผ่านการผลิต

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ที่นำรายได้และตลาดเป็นตัวตั้ง ควบคู่กับการพัฒนาช่องทางตลาดและทักษะการบริหารจัดการธุรกิจเกษตรให้สอดคล้องกับบริบทของคนรุ่นใหม่

คำสำคัญ: ธุรกิจการเกษตร ผู้ประกอบการ คนรุ่นใหม่ มุมมอง อาชีพ

Abstract: Developing young entrepreneurs in agriculture has been a key policy priority in Thailand for more than a decade to strengthen the new-generation workforce in the agricultural sector. This qualitative study examined the perceptions and conditions of young entrepreneurship in agriculture (YEAs) in Northeast Thailand. The research was conducted in two phases. Phase 1 explored occupational perceptions through in-depth interviews with 30 non-YEAs, 40 current YEAs, and 20 former YEAs. Phase 2 examined the living and entrepreneurial conditions of 60 YEAs participating in the Young Smart Farmer program. Data were analyzed using content and thematic analysis, with comparisons across YEA status groups and Generations X, Y, Z. The findings indicate that agricultural entrepreneurship is perceived as a household-based business practice characterized by three core dimensions: (1) money and assets, (2) family warmth and occupational networks, and (3) well-being and convenience. Key conditions underlying these dimensions include income and asset holding, family and network support with confidence, and health and infrastructure. Across generations, priorities followed a similar order, with economic conditions ranked the highest, followed by relational and well-being conditions. The results suggest that relevant agencies should strengthen YEAs through income- and market-led production, enhanced market access, and agribusiness management skills tailored to new-generation cohorts.

Keywords: Agricultural business, entrepreneurship, new generations, perspectives, occupation

Introduction

Agricultural entrepreneurs (AEs) apply technical expertise and entrepreneurial orientation to engage in farm-level production, processing, service, and marketing, integrating innovation and market awareness (Pindado and Sánchez, 2017). Unlike traditional farmers, AEs focus on value creation through innovation and market integration while managing day-to-day farm operations (Frese, 2000). They enhance capacity to manage risks and adapt to volatile markets (Liang *et al*., 2017), contributing to rural development (Mensah, 2019).

Globally, the FAO emphasizes transforming traditional farmers into AEs through Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) to enhance productivity, food security, and climate resilience (FAO, 2018). Thailand has actively promoted agricultural entrepreneurship, with young entrepreneurs in agriculture (YEAs) as a central policy priority for over a decade to strengthen the new-generation agricultural workforce (Department of Agricultural Extension (DOAE), 2018).

A flagship policy is the Young Smart Farmer (YSF) program, launched in 2014, targeting individuals aged 17-45 (overlapping generations X, Y, and Z) for training in technology andadaptive

thinking (DOAE, 2019). Complementary initiatives by the Ministry of Industry, OSMEP, and Thai Chamber of Commerce (e.g., YEC) further support YEAs with technology, management training, and market-oriented skills (OSMEP, 2019, 2020).

Despite sustained policy support, official reporting on the successful conversion of YSF participants into stable and sustained YEAs remains limited, particularly in terms of outcome-based indicators that capture long-term occupational stability. National data show about 20,000 YSF participants (2015-2023), with 6,000 in Northeast Thailand (Thairath Online, 2022). However, statistics primarily document participation, not long-term continuity. Field observations indicate many discontinue agricultural entrepreneurship for more stable occupations. This pattern of discontinuation highlights a critical policy and research concern, as it raises questions about the alignment between YEAs' occupational expectations and the conditions necessary for sustaining agricultural entrepreneurship as a viable career.

Although studies in Thailand have examined youth engagement in agriculture and identified determinants of YSF success, existing evidence remains limited in several important respects. First, there is a lack of systematic analysis comparing YEAs' occupational perspectives and living conditions across Generations X, Y, and Z. Second, limited attention has been paid to differences across YEAs' status groups, such as current, former, and never-engaged YEAs, as a basis for understanding occupational stability and discontinuation. Third, few studies integrate perceptions and living conditions within a single analytical framework that directly informs development pathways for agricultural entrepreneurship (Sukkumnoed, 2018; Poungchompu and Phuttachat, 2025).

Northeastern Thailand provides a particularly appropriate empirical context for addressing these gaps. The region has diverse agricultural systems and wide socio-economic variation (National Statistical Office, 2017). All 20 provinces have actively implemented YSF, producing 6,000 participants, offering a policy-relevant population for examining continuity (Suphakij, 2023). To address the identified research gaps, this study examines how YEAs and potential YEAs conceptualize agricultural entrepreneurship and which living and entrepreneurial conditions they perceive as essential for sustaining engagement in the sector. The analysis compares perspectives across YEAs status groups (never-been, current, and former YEAs) and specifies practical indicators (income, assets, networks, confidence, infrastructure, health). Details on how these indicators differ across generations are elaborated in the results and discussion sections.

Accordingly, this study investigates YEAs' occupational perspectives toward agricultural entrepreneurship and examines their living and entrepreneurial conditions**,** with explicit attention to generational differences. The findings contribute to academic discussions on youth entrepreneurship in agriculture and provide policy-relevant insights for agencies responsible for agricultural development, land management, enterprise promotion, and youth capacity-building. Specific development pathways and stakeholder-oriented recommendations are presented in the concluding section based on the empirical findings.

Materials and Methods

Stage of study

This study employed a qualitative research design to examine perspectives and conditions associated with sustaining agricultural entrepreneurship. It addressed two objectives: (1) occupational perspectives on agricultural entrepreneurship; (2) living and entrepreneurial conditions for sustainability. The study was conducted in 20 provinces in Northeastern Thailand, a region that represents the largest agricultural base in the country, accounting for approximately 47% of all agricultural landholders nationwide (Office of Agricultural Economics, 2023). This region has also been a focal area for agricultural entrepreneurship promotion for more than a decade**,** particularly through YSF. Approximately 6,000 YSF participants were registered in the Northeast, making it one of the most policy-intensive and empirically relevant areas for examining pathways into and out of young agricultural entrepreneurship.

Purposive sampling was employed as the primary sampling strategy to recruit information-rich cases, particularly current YEAs verifiable through official records. Snowball sampling was used as a complementary technique to identify former and non-YEAs. The combined use of purposive and snowball sampling was intended to ensure analytical coverage across different entrepreneurial status groups rather than statistical representativeness. Fieldwork was organized across five provincial clusters to reflect geographic and agricultural diversity: (1) Nong Khai, Loei, Udon Thani, Nong Bua Lamphu, Bueng Kan; (2) Nakhon Phanom, Mukdahan, Sakon Nakhon; (3) Surin, Nakhon Ratchasima, Buri Ram, Chaiyaphum; (4) Roi Et, Khon Kaen, Maha Sarakham, Kalasin; (5) Ubon Ratchathani, Si Sa Ket, Amnat Charoen, Yasothon. This clustering approach facilitated systematic field organization while allowing comparison across different agro-economic contexts. Data collection was implemented in two sequential stages, with findings from stage 1 informing the design and focus of Stage 2.

Stage 1: Studying perspectives on agricultural entrepreneurship (AE) among the younger generation.

Stage 1 explored how agricultural entrepreneurship is conceptualized, valued, and prioritized. The study began with a brainstorming session as a preliminary data-collection technique to elicit shared meanings and evaluations. Predefined topics guided the session. This step was undertaken to refine the analytical scope of the study and to ensure that subsequent interview questions reflected field-relevant perspectives rather than researcher-imposed assumptions. Participants included 30 representatives from the Young Smart Farmer (YSF) working group who had more than two years of experience in agricultural entrepreneurship**,** plus three officials' agricultural extension officers from the Office of Agricultural Extension Region 4, who participated to provide contextual and programmatic insights. These officials were included to support contextual interpretation and validation of emerging themes, not as primary analytic subjects. Data were collected October 29-30, 2020.

Outputs from the brainstorming session were used to identify key informant categories, refine interview guides, and specify subtopics for in-depth field interviews. Subsequent in-depth

interviews were with informants aged 17-58 (Generation X: 1965-1979; Generation Y: 1980-1996; Generation Z: 1997-2005). Informants were categorized: 30 non-YEAs, 40 current YEAs, 20 former YEAs (total 90). Interviews were conducted using purposive sampling combined with snowball sampling. For current and former YEAs, eligibility criteria included registration as AEs with DOAE and ≥1 year of experience. For non-YEAs, eligibility required being in the target age range and having sufficient exposure to agriculture. This criterion was applied to ensure that perspectives reflected experiential evaluation rather than abstract opinion**.** Recruitment used organizational lists and networks, with referral chains deliberately capped to reduce over-reliance on any single network and to minimize network bias. Data collection was January 5-28, 2021. The final sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation (Guest *et al*., 2006; Hennink *et al*., 2017).

Stage 2: Studying the conditions of agricultural entrepreneurship among YEAs

Stage 2 examined the living and entrepreneurial conditions associated with sustaining agricultural entrepreneurship among current YEAs**,** building on stage 1 findings. This sequential design ensured that the analysis of conditions was grounded in field-derived perceptions rather than predefined structural assumptions. Interview subtopics were derived from Stage 1 themes. Data used purposive sampling to identify information-rich cases of current YEAs with sustained engagement. Purposive sampling was selected to ensure that participants possessed direct, ongoing experience with entrepreneurial practice. Participants were categorized by activity: farm-level, processing, and service-provider YEAs. A total of 60 current YEAs were interviewed between February 18 and April 10, 2022.

Rubric-based evaluation of perceptions and conditions

To compare across generational cohorts (Generation X, Y, and Z), the study employed a rubric-based evaluation approach to quantify perceptions and conditions. This approach was selected to bridge qualitative depth with analytic comparability. An analytic rubric with a four-level ordinal scale (0-3) was used: 0 = slightly important, 1 = moderately important, 2 = very important, 3 = most important. The four-point scale was intentionally selected to avoid a neutral midpoint and to encourage respondents' evaluative differentiation (Preston and Colman, 2000; Lozano *et al*., 2008).

The rubric comprised three criteria:

1. Economic conditions (income adequacy/stability, asset holding).
2. Family warmth and occupational networks (household support, adviser/peer networks, confidence).
3. Well - being and convenience (infrastructure, health).

Clear level descriptors and concrete evidence examples were specified for each level for consistent scoring.

Validity and reliability procedures

A brainstorming validation session was conducted after initial scoring, involving 30 representatives from the YSF working group and one relevant official, to review rubric interpretation and confirm face and content validity (Sandelowski, Voils, and Knafl, 2009). Source triangulation was achieved by integrating data from brainstorming sessions, in-depth

interviews, and validation discussions, while investigator triangulation was applied through independent review and comparison of rubric interpretations during the validation session.

Inter-rater reliability (IRR) was assessed through independent scoring and consensus checking; however, formal statistical indices (e.g., Cohen's Kappa or ICC) were not calculated. This remains a methodological limitation, and IRR was ensured through repeated calibration. After validation, the study reported level distributions (0-3) for each item and summarized central tendency using the modal level (Mode). Final validation data were collected on October 7, 2023.

Data analyses

Data were analyzed across Stages 1 and 2 using the 6C qualitative analysis technique (Borisutdhi, 2015), with an embedded rubric-based quantizing step for systematic comparison. This analytic strategy was designed to ensure that qualitative interpretations of "perceptions" and "conditions" could be traced transparently from raw data to comparative results. (C1) Concurrent analysis during collection of refined interview probes. This step ensured that the data captured sufficiently rich evaluative content relevant to occupational perspectives and sustaining conditions. (C2) Open coding for occupational perceptions and living/entrepreneurial conditions used theoretical sensitization from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Bourdieu's practice theory. Maslow's framework informed the ordering of needs-related perceptions (e.g., income security, well-being), while Bourdieu's concepts of capital and practice supported the interpretation of economic resources, social networks, and habitual engagement in entrepreneurship. Codes were consolidated into rubric-relevant indicators for the three criteria. This step directly operationalized theoretical constructs into measurable qualitative indicators. (C3) Comparative analysis across Generations X, Y, and Z and status groups. Rubric scores are summarized by reporting percentage distributions across the 0-3 levels, with the central tendency as the modal level (Mode). This procedure enabled comparison of evaluative priorities and perceived conditions without assuming interval-level measurement. (C4) Pattern confirmation via cross-case comparison examined consistency, convergence, and divergence across generations/ status. This stage provided the empirical foundation for linking findings to generational dynamics and entrepreneurial trajectories. (C5) Empirical findings were synthesized into analytic outputs and visualized via tables/figures. (C6) Insights synthesized intopolicy-relevant implications, proposing an integrated support platform across economic, network, and well-being dimensions. These implications were explicitly derived from empirical patterns observed in the data.

Results

1. Perceptions of Agricultural Entrepreneurs (AE)

Findings are reported by entrepreneurial status groups and generations.

1.1. Definitions of AE by agricultural entrepreneurs' status

Field interviews revealed that perceptions of "agricultural entrepreneurs (AE)" varied systematically by entrepreneurial status (non-YEAs, current YEAs, and former YEAs), while remaining broadly consistent across Generations X, Y, and Z.

Non-YEAs (across generations) perceived agricultural entrepreneurs as small-scale agribusiness

operators who differ from traditional farmers through value-added activities in processing and marketing, supported by household agricultural backgrounds, capital, and specific skills.

Current YEAs across generations defined AEs as household members who have developed from traditional farming backgrounds into entrepreneurial roles. They highlighted the use of existing household resources, such as land, capital, family labor, and specialized expertise, as the foundation of agricultural-related businesses involving production, processing, services, and marketing. Income generation through modernized practices was consistently emphasized.

Former YEAs (across generations) viewed agricultural entrepreneurship as a transitional stage in a farming career, emphasizing that without value addition or market control, it remains indistinguishable from traditional farming, and highlighting the importance of financial planning and gradual entry through secondary engagement

Across all groups, AE was commonly described as a household-based activity involving one or more members engaged in agricultural production, processing, services, and marketing in new or adapted forms that generate income for household distribution.

1.2 Valuation of Agricultural Entrepreneurship (AE)

Participants' valuation of AE converged on three core aspects: money and assets, family and social connections, and well-being and convenience. Across all generations and status groups, participants ranked having money and assets as the most importance (Mode = 3), followed by having family and social connections (Mode = 2), with well-being and convenience the lowest (Mode = 1). As shown in Figure 1, participants' valuation of agricultural entrepreneurship followed a consistent hierarchy, with money and assets ranked the highest, followed by family and social connections, and well-being and convenience.

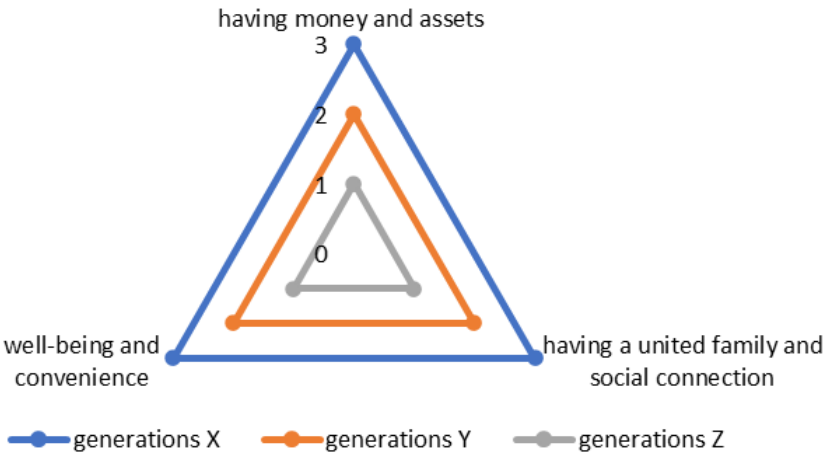


Figure 1: YEAs' valuation of AE across three dimensions (overall, all generations)

2. Conditions of YEAs in Agricultural Entrepreneurship

2.1 Economic conditions: Having money and assets

Economic conditions were described by current YEAs as foundational for sustaining agricultural entrepreneurship. Participants emphasized two indicators:

1) **Income adequacy and stability**, referring to the ability of agricultural income to cover operational costs and household needs

2) **Asset holding**, referring to land, capital, and resources required across start-up, operational, and waiting-for-returns phases.

Insufficient or unstable income was commonly associated with increased reliance on supplementary employment and higher likelihood of exit from agricultural entrepreneurship. Figure 2 summarizes participants' valuation of the economic condition, highlighting the centrality of income adequacy and stability, together with asset holding.

2.2 Relational conditions: Having a united family and social support

Participants described family acceptance and social support as conditions that strengthened confidence and persistence. Two indicators were identified:

1) **Supportive partner**, referring to shared tasks, advice, and emotional support;

2) **Confidence to continue**, referring to perceive encouragement from family and community.

Lack of such support was associated with higher stress, isolation, and reduced motivation. As illustrated in Figure 3, relational conditions—particularly partner support and confidence to continue—were valued as key supports for occupational persistence.

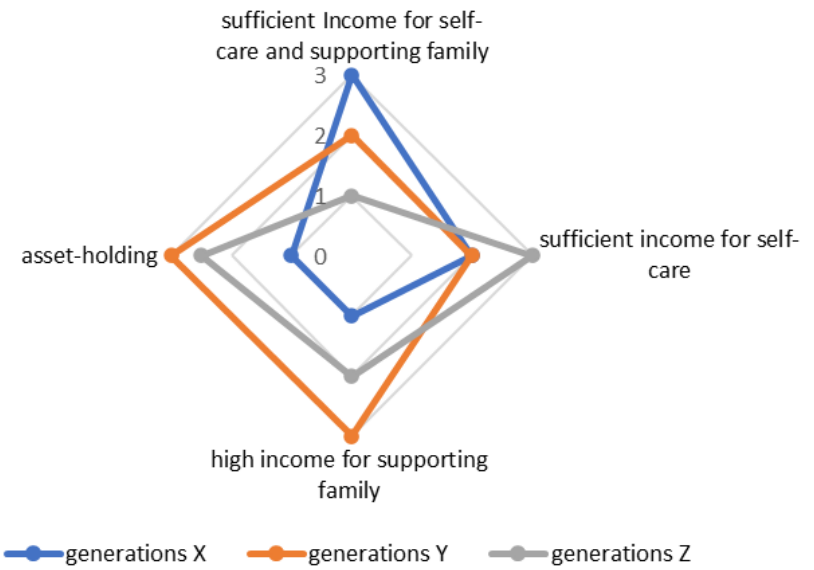


Figure 2: YEAs' valuation under the condition of "having money and assets"

2.3 Well-being and convenience

Well-being and convenience were described as enabling conditions that affect work continuity.

Participants identified:

1) Physical and mental well-being, supporting work capacity and consistency

2) Infrastructure and tools, reducing workload and facilitating daily operations.

Limited infrastructure and poor health were associated with reduced efficiency and higher likelihood of discontinuation. Figure 4 presents participants' valuation of well-being and convenience, emphasizing health and infrastructure as enabling conditions for continuity.

Common patterns and key generational differences

Across Generations X, Y, and Z, three common patterns were observed: 1) Economic viability as necessary for stability; 2) Family/social support as a coping resource; 3) Well-being as a continuity condition. Key differences in economic and relational priorities; well-being showed strong convergence. Table 1 compares the valuation patterns of AE conditions across Generations X, Y, and Z, highlighting both shared priorities and key differences.

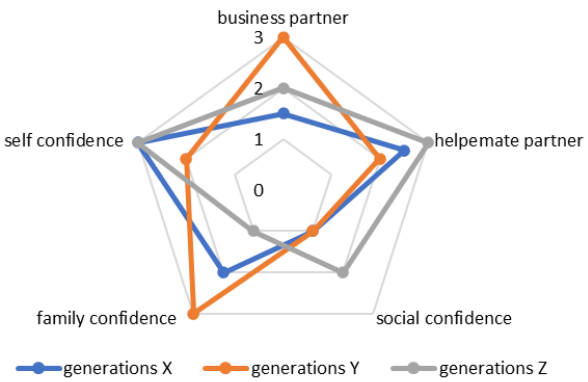


Figure 3: YEAs' valuation under the condition of "having a united family and social connections"

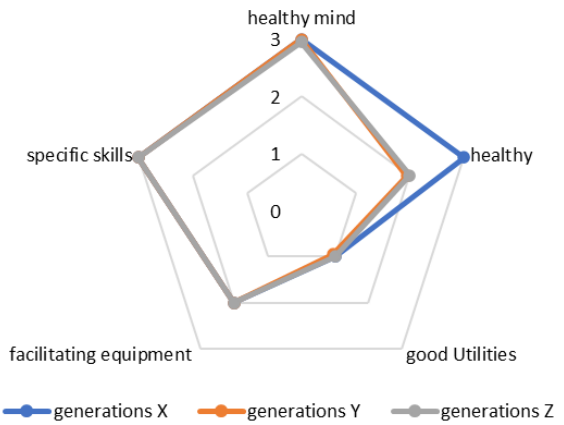


Figure 4: YEAs' valuation under the condition of "well-being and convenience"

Table 1 Comparison of valuation of AE conditions by Generations X, Y, and Z

AE condition	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
Having money and assets	Emphasis on sufficient income for self-care and family; low focus on asset accumulation	Emphasis on high income and asset accumulation for family security	Balanced emphasis on sufficient income and initial asset holding
Having a united family and social connections	Strong emphasis on self-confidence and partner support	Strong emphasis on family endorsement and business partners	Emphasis on self-confidence and partner support (hybrid pattern)
Well-being and convenience	High priority on mental well-being and specific skills	High priority on mental well-being and specific skills	High priority on mental well-being and specific skills

Discussion

This section discusses the empirical findings by interpreting them through relevant theoretical frameworks and existing literature, with explicit reference to the identified research gaps.

Occupational perspectives toward agricultural entrepreneurship

The findings demonstrate that perceptions of agricultural entrepreneurship are structured primarily by entrepreneurial status rather than generation alone. From the perspective of Bourdieu's practice theory, AE is a household-based practice mobilizing economic, social, and embodied capital. Current YEAs' emphasis on resource use and value addition indicates successful capital conversion; former YEAs' view of AE as transitional suggests disruption. This finding responds directly to the research gap regarding the lack of systematic analysis comparing YEAs' perspectives by entrepreneurial status. It shows occupational meanings evolve with engagement, extending studies that conceptualize AE as an individual choice by demonstrating its embeddedness in household dynamics.

Economic conditions and Maslow's hierarchy of needs

The consistently high valuation of money and assets across generations underscores economic security as the foundation of agricultural entrepreneurship, corresponding to physiological and safety needs in Maslow's hierarchy. Generational differences observed in the results reflect life-stage positioning rather than fundamentally different value orientations. Generation X emphasized household stability, Generation Y income growth/asset accumulation for family, and Generation Z minimum viable income for self-care/entry. These patterns support Maslow's proposition that occupational decisions are shaped by prioritized needs under specific life circumstances. This discussion clarifies why economic instability is a key driver of YEA discontinuation, extending literature by showing how unmet basic needs constrain sustainability (FAO, 2024; Funmilayo *et al*., 2022).

Family warmth, social capital, and occupational persistence

Family warmth and occupational networks emerged as secondary but structurally significant conditions supporting entrepreneurial continuity. Interpreted via Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000), they provide bonding/bridging capital, reducing uncertainty.

The generational configurations of social support identified in this study refine existing understandings of social capital. Generation X and Z emphasized helpmate/partner support (bonding ties); Generation Y emphasized family endorsement/business partners**.** This differentiation suggests that social capital operates through life-stage-specific relational arrangements rather than uniform mechanisms. This finding directly addresses the research gap concerning insufficient attention to relational conditions in explaining YEAs stability and discontinuation. It demonstrates social capital's role in sustaining long-term engagement under uncertainty. (Putnam, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986).

Well-being, embodied capital, and continuity

The strong cross-generational convergence in valuing mental well-being challenges the assumption that well-being represents a higher-order or optional condition. Instead, the findings indicate that psychological readiness and physical capacity are treated as prerequisites for sustained entrepreneurial practice.

Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of embodied capital**,** mental resilience and specialized skills function as durable dispositions that enable YEAs to cope with uncertainty and maintain continuity. The particularly high valuation of specialized skills among Generation Z reflects a compensatory strategy for limited economic capital, highlighting the importance of human capacity in early-stage entrepreneurship. This discussion extends existing research by demonstrating that well-being contributes indirectly to sustainability through its effects on productivity, decision-making, and persistence**,** supporting findings by Milot-Lapointe *et al*., (2021) and Sackey and Nock (2022).

Integrating perceptions, conditions, and discontinuation: addressing research gaps

First, it provides a systematic comparison of occupational perspectives and conditions across Generations X, Y, and Z**,** demonstrating that generational differences are structured by life-stage needs rather than divergent values. Second, it explicitly incorporates entrepreneurial status (non-YEAs, current YEAs, former YEAs) to explain persistence and discontinuation. Third, it integrates perceptions and living conditions within a single analytic framework**,** showing that discontinuation arises when economic, social, and well-being conditions fail to align. Discontinuation should therefore be understood not as individual failure but as structural misalignment between required and available forms of capital. This interpretation extends existing Thai studies on youth and agri-entrepreneurship (Sukkumnoed, 2018; Poungchompu and Phuttachat, 2025) by providing an empirically grounded explanation for exit trajectories.

Implications for development pathways

The integrated interpretation of findings suggests that sustainable agricultural entrepreneurship requires coordinated support across economic, social, and well-being dimensions. Fragmented interventions focusing solely on skills training or financial access are unlikely to ensure continuity if relational

and psychological conditions remain weak. This discussion provides the conceptual foundation for the policy recommendations presented in the following section, which are structured by generational needs and stakeholder responsibilities. (FAO, 2018; Milot-Lapointe *et al*., 2021).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study examined young entrepreneurs in agriculture (YEAs) by integrating occupational perspectives, living and entrepreneurial conditions, and discontinuation risks across generations X, Y, and Z in Northeastern Thailand. The findings demonstrate that agricultural entrepreneurship is the best understood as a household-based practice shaped by the interaction of economic resources, social relations, and well-being capacities.

Across generations, economic viability —particularly income adequacy and asset holding—emerged as the foundational condition for sustaining agricultural entrepreneurship, consistent with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. However, the study further shows that economic resources alone are insufficient. Family warmth, occupational networks, and mental well-being play critical supporting roles in enabling persistence, buffering uncertainty, and sustaining motivation.

Generational differences were found to reflect life-stage positioning rather than fundamentally different value orientations. Generation X prioritized income stability and health continuity, Generation Y emphasized income growth and asset accumulation to meet household responsibilities, and Generation Z focused on entry-level income sufficiency and skill development. Discontinuation occurs when these prioritized needs are unmet and when available forms of capital cannot be effectively mobilized or converted**,** supporting Bourdieu's practice theory. By explicitly incorporating entrepreneurial status (non-YEAs, current YEAs, former YEAs), this study advances the literature by explaining why some individuals persist in agricultural entrepreneurship while others exit**,** even under similar structural conditions. Discontinuation should therefore be interpreted as a structural outcome rather than an individual failure.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen continuity and reduce discontinuation risks among YEAs. Recommendations are structured by generation and specify responsible stakeholders to enhance feasibility and accountability.

For Generation X: Policy support should prioritize income stabilization for household security through market-led production and reliable marketing channels, alongside health-friendly work design and labor-saving technologies to sustain work continuity. Responsible stakeholders include DOAE and provincial extension offices, with support from TCC/YEC networks and BAAC.

For Generation Y: Interventions should focus on enabling income growth and asset accumulation through enterprise expansion tools (e.g., costing, investment planning, and partnerships) and improving access to land and operating capital via feasible long-term arrangements. Key stakeholders include DOAE, TCC/YEC networks, land management agencies, and financial institutions.

For Generation Z: Support should emphasize entry-stage incubation through mentoring, skill certification, and small-scale test-market projects, complemented by staged start-up financing and rapid advisory or welfare support to mitigate early-stage discontinuation. Responsible stakeholders include DOAE, provincial offices, universities/TVET institutions, TCC/YEC networks, BAAC, and relevant local agencies

Suggestions for Future Research

1. Investigate strategies and institutional mechanisms that promote continuous learning and skill development among farmers transitioning into YEAs.

2. Explore longitudinal pathways and decision-making processes influencing farmers' transitions into, persistence in, and exit from agricultural entrepreneurship.

3. Design and evaluate integrated support programs that simultaneously address economic, social, and well-being dimensions to enhance the sustainability of YEAs.

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