



Stepping Up to the Plate to Meet Future Food and Fibre Demands: Using Social Cognitive Career Theory to Inform the Australian Agriculture Industry's Workforce Strategies

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The current world population of 7.3 billion is expected to reach 9.7 billion by the year 2050 (Linehan et al., 2012). This means the Australian agriculture industry faces a significant challenge to increase productivity to help meet the growth in global food and fibre demands. Essential to a productive and sustainable agriculture industry, is the ability to attract and retain a capable and engaged workforce. The current research project aimed to provide empirical evidence specific to the Australian agriculture context to support the development of farm worker attraction and retention strategies.

A quantitative study of the core constructs in Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) was conducted to understand the utility of this well-established career development theory in a previously unexplored population. Farmworkers responded to items measuring (a) self-efficacy, (b) expected work conditions and outcomes, and (c) goal-directed activity. The data was then analysed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to understand the relationships between these core SCCT constructs. The findings have provided some initial evidence to inform workforce strategy development and prompted future research considerations.

This presentation will meet the following learning objectives: (a) demonstrate a practical way to test career development theories in previously unexplored contexts, (b) illuminate the relationships between the SCCT constructs for farm workers, and (c) discuss the application of evidence to inform workforce strategies for the Australian agriculture industry. The information from this session will be useful for anyone interested in the application of SCCT in research or wanting to learn more about the current and future career opportunities for people on farms.