


The Greek Perspective on Foreign Farm Workers and Agricultural Labor [†]

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Abstract: Apart from immigrants in Greece who have papers, and perhaps can enjoy greater stability in their lives, there is a very large number of informal immigrants who are faced with the fear of deportation from the country daily. With this in mind, qualitative research was carried out by conducting in-depth interviews with farmers (head of the farm) and quantitative, online research was undertaken using students studying agronomy and/or people who lived in rural areas; the research material was distributed through agricultural/agronomic forums in order to better understand perceptions of agricultural work and find out the main reasons as to why the integration of immigrants and farm workers in Greece is considered to be so difficult.

Keywords: agricultural labor; field research; countryside

1. Introduction

A major obstacle for the integration of immigrants into Greek society is socially constructed perceptions defined by xenophobia and racism; varied actions need to be taken and strategies need to be designed and put into practice (Maroukis, 2012) [1].

The main objective of this research was to identify what the perception in Greece is regarding rural life, but also the perspective that people have of farm work, its requirements, and its negatives and positives. At the end of the survey, it was considered important to examine what the sample of respondents thought about rural life and living conditions and to make an effort to establish how realistic a depiction of the countryside the sample had. Through the questionnaires that were drawn up and distributed to 365 people, it was possible to draw very important conclusions and, after their processing, to adequately answer the aforementioned questions.

In the end, the results of the research were basically quite in line with the questions that were formulated at the beginning, as many of our initial assumptions were verified; however, as it will be seen below, there were some results that were beyond what was expected.

2. Materials and Methods

The main goal of the survey was to better understand the Greek perspective on foreign farm workers and agricultural labor. To do this, two types of questionnaires were created which, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, were not only compiled online but also answered via the internet, since it was considered too risky to conduct the questionnaires in person. The first questionnaire was aimed exclusively at people who were farm heads and was drawn up with the main purpose of elaborating on the perspective that farmers themselves have on farm work. The second questionnaire was essentially aimed at urbanites and dealt with the perspective on working in the countryside. Here, it was deemed necessary



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that the sample should be big enough for its results to have significance, and so it was answered by a larger number of people who varied in age, social status, work, whether they were employed in the agricultural sector or not, and several other characteristics. The large participation in this questionnaire was considered to be positive as the large sample of 365 respondents, who were found after the distribution of the questionnaire to social networks, groups of agricultural students, and agricultural forums, enabled us to better understand the opinion held by a part of society on the present issue. The questionnaires were compiled through Google Forms and the results were processed in autumn 2022; the most important questions will be presented through tables and diagrams in Word to make them easier to read and understand.

3. Results and Discussion

Working in the countryside was considered to be very demanding and have a higher degree of difficulty than most occupations (61.1% and 57.5%, respectively), but most of the respondents did not believe that rural work offers a higher income than conventional occupations, nor that it has more free hours. An important element of the survey, which was characterized as being unexpected, was the answers given to the question of whether working in the countryside is mainly a “male” occupation, since 56.1% of the sample disagreed with this wording and only 20.2% agreed, with the remaining 23.8% not taking a clear position. When the questionnaire was drawn up, it was assessed that there was a significant probability that most respondents would agree with this wording because of the very common manual nature of working in the countryside, but this was not verified, possibly (also) because of the fairly high educational level of the sample. Moreover, a majority agreed that working in the countryside offers a sense of freedom and independence (46.5%) and is very demanding (74.6%), while few believed that experience in other similar occupations is required (just 17.8%). Finally, most of the respondents seemed to believe that the effect of foreign workers living in rural areas on the quality of life there either depends on the amount of workers living in each area (33.2%) or is negative (31.5%) (see Figures 1–4).

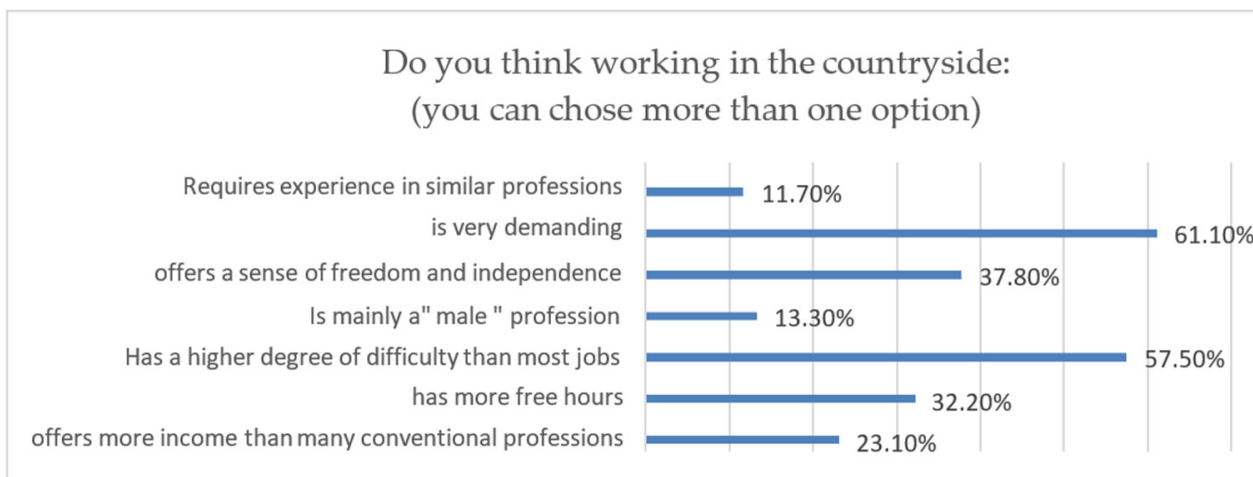


Figure 1. Views on working in the countryside. Source: Field Research 2022.

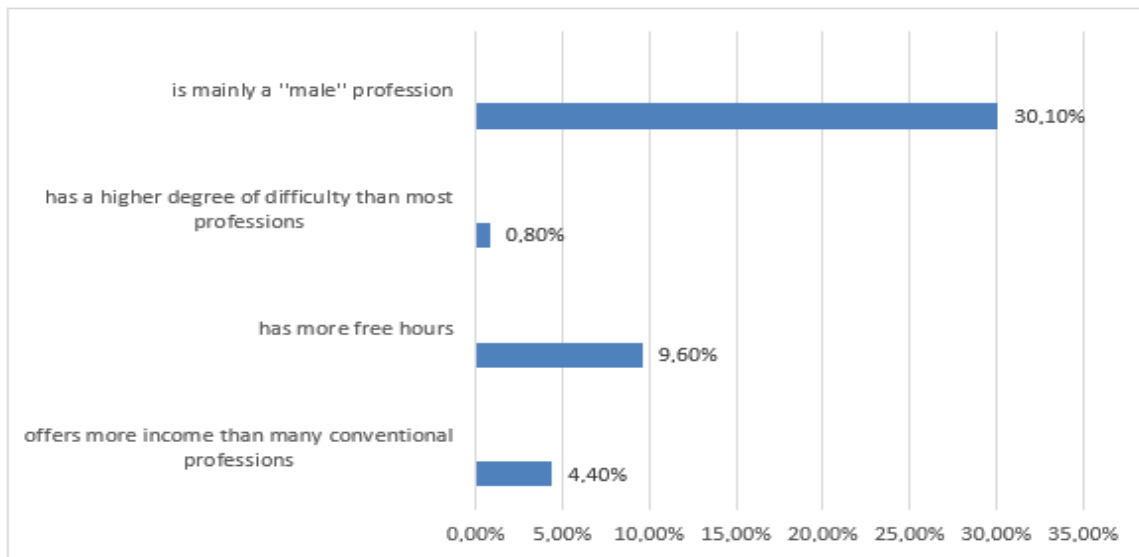


Figure 2. Views on agricultural work in Greece. Source: own edit, 2022.

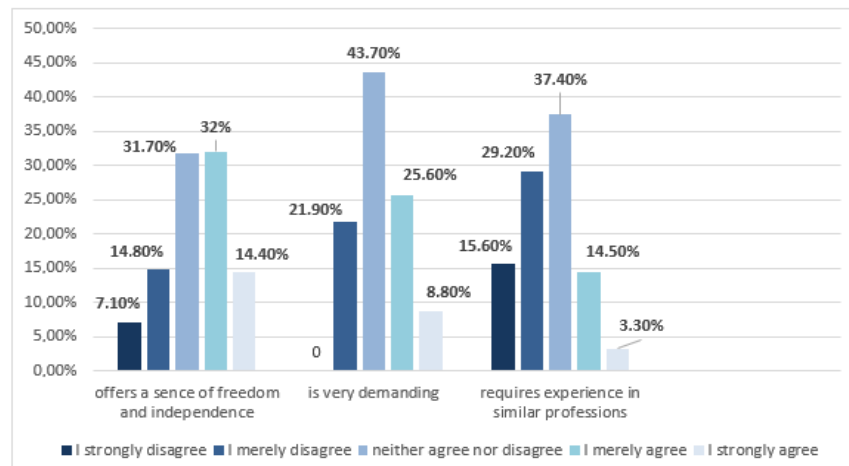


Figure 3. Perceptions on agricultural work in Greece (2). Source: own edit, 2022.

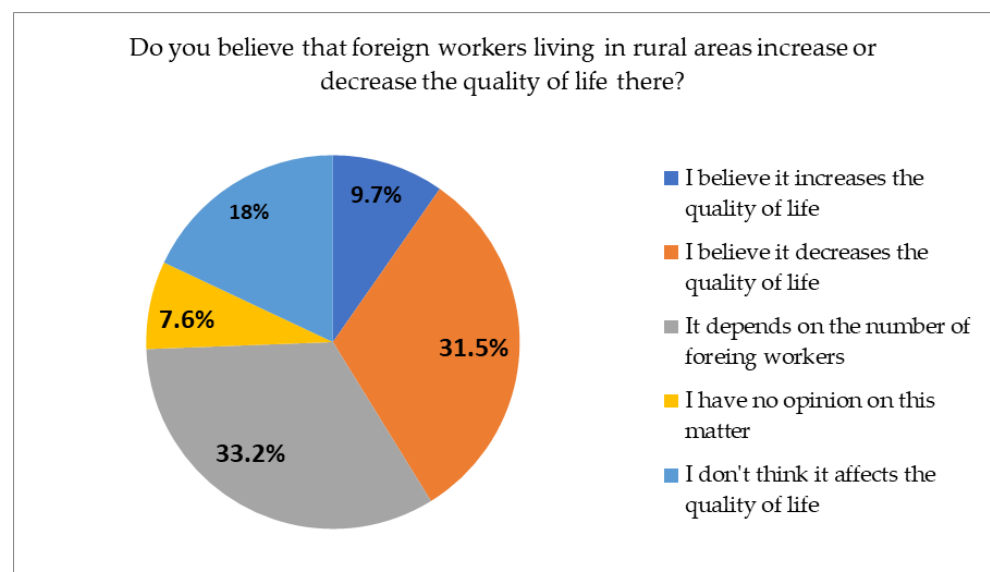


Figure 4. Perspective on foreign farm workers. Source: own edit, 2022.

4. Conclusions

Thanks to the results of the research, we managed to draw some very useful conclusions in relation to the questions that we asked at the beginning. Perceptions on agricultural labor show us that there are still mostly antiquated notions on the issue, and it turns out that there is still a lot of work to be done so that conservative perceptions change and the urbanite can better understand what agricultural labor really is and evaluate it more objectively.

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Data Availability Statement: Data are unavailable due to privacy concerns.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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