



## **POSSIBILITIES TO PROMOTE THE AGRICULTURAL MECHANIC PROFESSION**

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### **Abstract**

MEGFOSZ (Hungarian Association of Agricultural Tool and Machinery Distributors) has started a program to promote the profession six years ago. This year became necessary to review the running program and find more effective tools to make more attractive the agricultural mechanic profession. This paper shows the results of the research based on two surveys answered by 855 young people. The main conclusions of the research pointed out what should be changed in the communication channels and messages to make a more effective marketing program.

**Keywords**

agricultural mechanic, sector promotion, communication

### **Introduction**

Labor shortage in recent years has grown a very important problem in the agricultural machinery sector. To resolve this situation MEGFOSZ (Hungarian Association of Agricultural Tool and Machinery Distributors) has started a program to promote the profession six years ago. This year became necessary to review the running program and find more effective tools to make more attractive the agricultural mechanic profession.

### **Methodology**

The paper shows the results of the researches, which searched the tools of a more effective program to promote the agricultural mechanic profession. First it was made a deep interview with the colleagues of MEGFOSZ and the members of Presidency. The

focus of this research was to find the answers for the questions how they see the current situation and how they operate the program. Then a focus group research was conducted with students, newly graduated and experienced professionals, teachers, employers and institutions. The question was: What are the specialties of the field of mechanical engineering that can be built upon to promote the profession?

Based on the first two qualitative researches it was made two questionnaires. First questionnaire contained 4 questions, which was answered by 101 students at the AGS exhibition in Mezőhegyes. The questions were: What is the programme's reputation and perception of the profession? Where is it worth promoting the program? The second questionnaire contained 15 questions and it was answered by 754 young people using the google forms questionnaire posted on facebook. The second survey's questions were based on the first 3 studies.

### **Results**

The presentation of results focuses to increase the efficiency of the MEGFOSZ promotional program. For this reason only that results will be presented which is needed for the conclusions. In the second questionnaire it was searched the answer which aspects are important when choosing a profession. Similar question has already explored in the first survey too. The results of the two studies are mutually reinforcing each other. In both cases, work in nature (fieldwork, plants, animals), flexible working hours (freedom) and using the latest technologies (innovation) were important (see Fig. 1). The results also show that working in office is the least important

aspect. Knowledge that can be used internationally and travel opportunities are also not so important to respondents, which we think is good news, as it may

confirm that the young professionals do not plan to leave the country in the future.

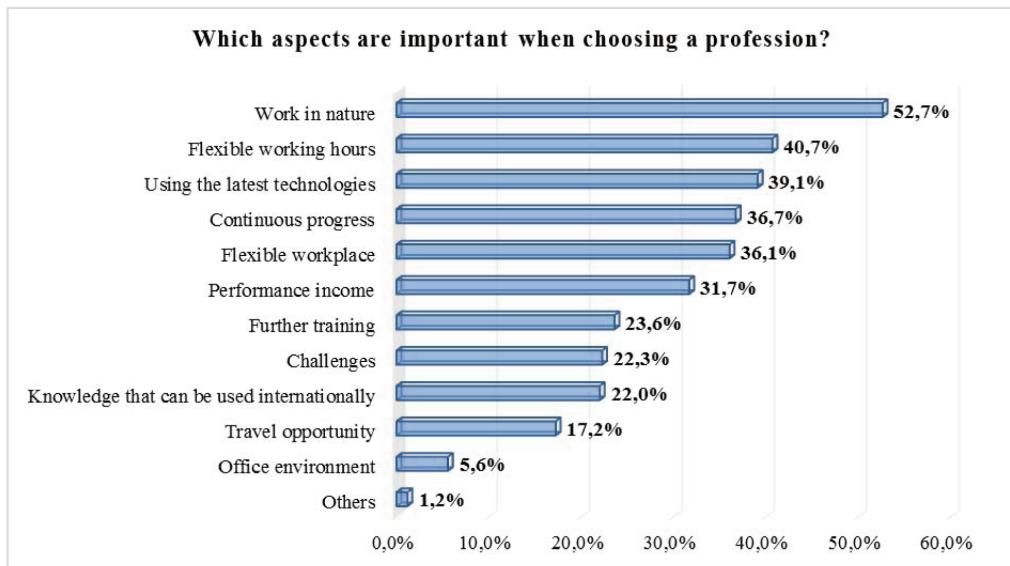


Figure 1. Which aspects are important to you in your future profession?

With the next question we sought to find out what does agricultural mechanic profession mean for young people and what they think about this profession. In the previous survey it has also already examined this question, and its results strengthen the answers of this questionnaire. Nowadays, more than

half of young people identify the agricultural mechanic with modern machinery and technology, well-equipped workshops. But it is important to mention that, a significant proportion, 42% of young people think that the profession means still dirty and oily work (see Fig. 2).

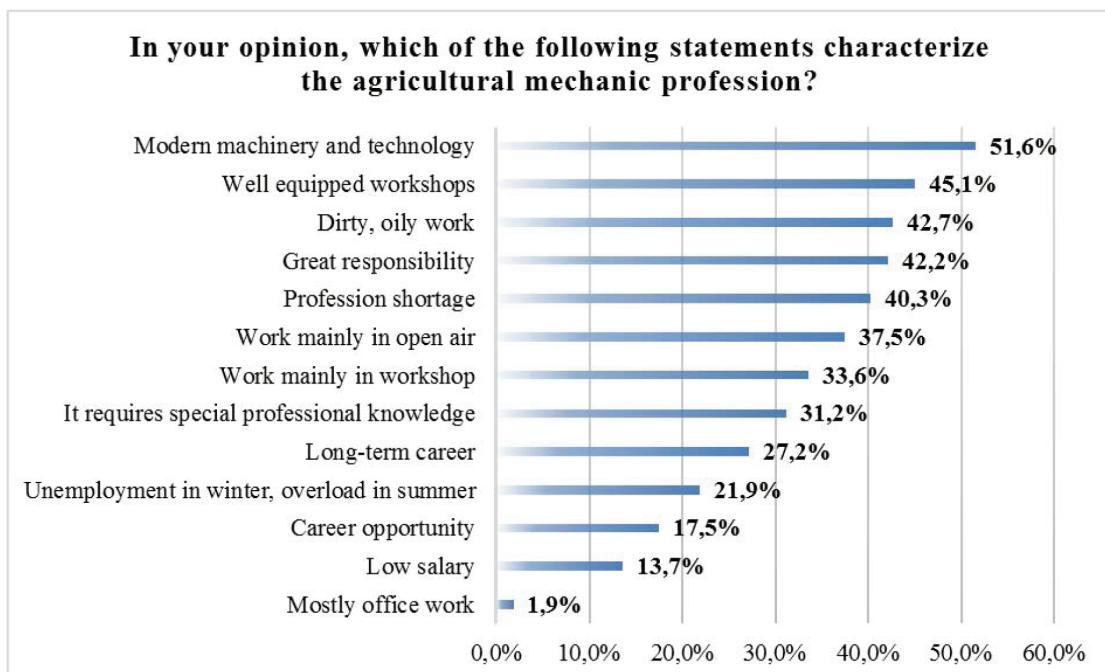


Figure 2. In your opinion, which of the following statements characterize the agricultural mechanic profession?

Young people's perception about the profession is ambivalent. For this reason it was asked how to attract people to agricultural mechanic profession. More than half of those surveyed believe that organizing modern machine demonstration is the best way to attract young people to the profession. Provision of

vocational trainings can also help to make more attractive the job when they gain a better understanding of the profession, and they can use there modern machines that they do not meet at school (see Fig. 3).

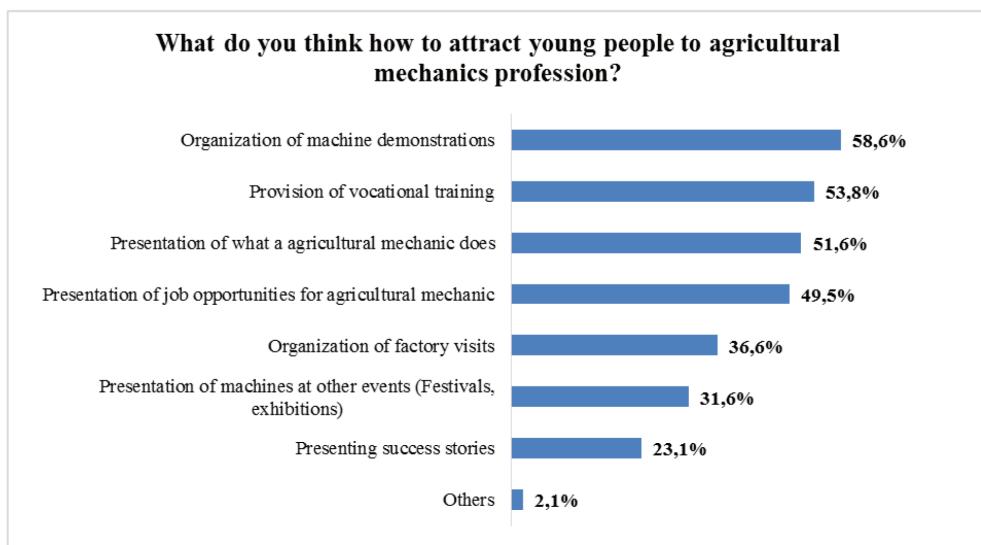


Figure 3. What do you think how to attract young people to agricultural mechanics?

Generally, one of the most common inhibitory factors for any decision is the uncertainty because of lack of information. This could be eliminated if we show for young people what an agricultural mechanic does exactly. Based on this they could make a better decision what they would like to work later, and everybody can avoid any later disappointments due exaggerated expectations. Informing young people about specific job opportunities can improve the image of the profession because they will have information how well they will be payed and what kind of positions they will be able to fill. It was an interesting result that presenting success stories is considered to be the least useful. The background of this fact could be that a story does not give a very realistic picture about the profession and may create excessive expectations, which will lead to disappointments.

In the next phase of the survey it was examined what platforms should be used to get through efficiently to students before they choose a career. To communicate with students who are facing a career choice it was offered the Internet as the main tool with a particularly high rate (Figure 4). TV was mentioned in second place, ahead of facebook. This was an interesting result because, based on the answers of other questions, the program "Become an Agricultural Mechanic!" was get to know from social media. The response rate also confirms the credibility of the

survey, because at the time of the examination the program had a much stronger appearance on Facebook than on television.

The next group of recommended platforms are events, instagram and youtube appearances. Based on this result, the attendance at events was in the right proportion, but it is suggested to MEGFOSZ reinforce the instagram and youtube appearances, as instagram has only just started and the program is barely present on youtube. According to the survey, newspapers and radio play little role in reaching young people. These two media mainly play a role to get at parents, so it is recommended to use newspapers and radio with parental contents.

Upon graduation, the gateway to the world of work opens to newcomers. The crucial question in the first instance is whether they will remain on the chosen path. Research shows that 70% of them stay in the profession they are studying and are trying to find a job (see Fig. 5). Fortunately, this result confirms that young people are quite committed to agricultural mechanic. Only 9% who are disappointed and confident that they do not want to stay in their profession but want to switch. It is important for the future that there are 21% more respondents who are still uncertain. The "Become an Agricultural Mechanic!" program needs to pay close attention to them to keep them motivated and skilled in the profession.

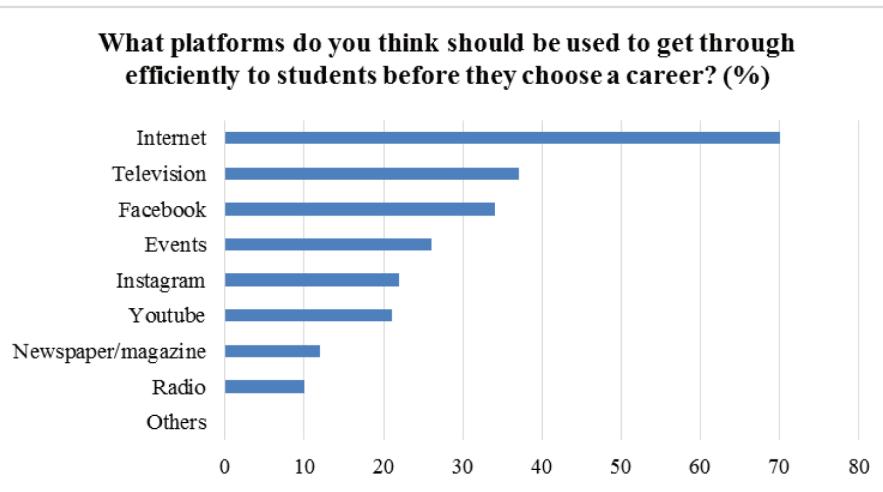


Figure 4. What platforms do you think should be used to get through efficiently to students before they choose a career? (%)?

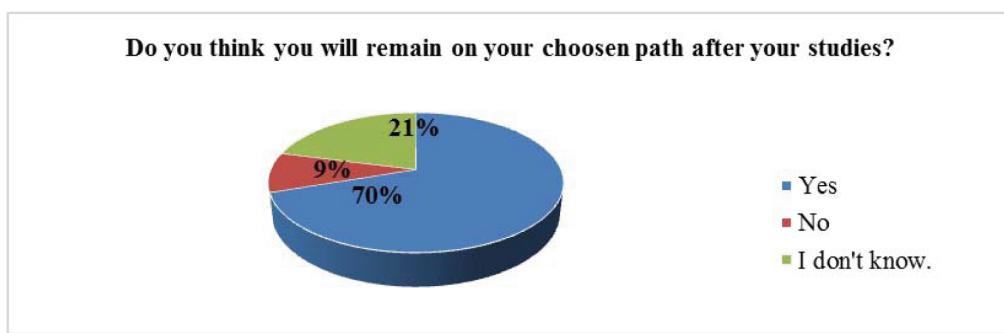


Figure 5. Title of the figure

It has been revealed above that most young people do not plan to give up their profession, but some of them do not seclude themselves from other opportunities. It can be seen that 46% love their profession and do not plan to change, but there is a significant 42% who are currently satisfied but open to change (see Fig. 6). This can mean staying in his/her current profession, but also if they receive a good opportunity they easily lure into a related

profession like the automotive industry. This openness characterizes the younger age group. They can easier adapt to new situations or change jobs. For this reason it is highly recommended to develop a program that will help young people start their careers and stay in their profession. If this succeeds, they will be satisfied with their job and will not change their profession in the future.

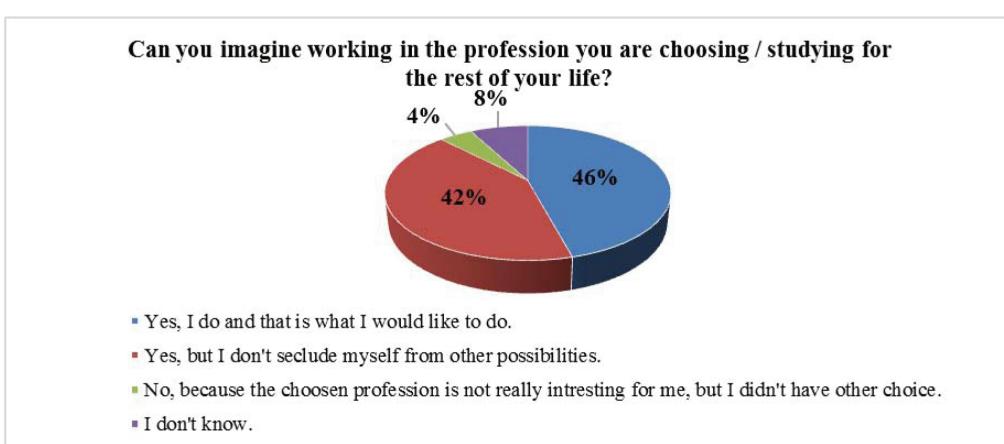


Figure 6. Can you imagine working in the profession you are choosing / studying for the rest of your life?

## Conclusions

In Hungary 82% of young people would take up work near their place of residence. The agricultural mechanic profession is not well known or often has an unfavorable image. It would be a great help to gain a better image of the profession by obtaining information on the modern technology and the high technical level of the latest agricultural machinery [1,2,3,4]. Young people are overwhelmingly committed to their chosen profession, but 42%, especially younger ones, are open to change. We propose to develop a program to help young people start their careers and stay in the profession.

One of the most common inhibitor factors of decisions is uncertainty due to lack of information. This can be eliminated by showing to young people what an agricultural mechanic does. We propose to draw the attention of young people to the enormous technical development of the last years [5], which was mainly for the convenience of the producers and to repair quickly the machines.

The current training system has not been able to keep up with the significant technical and technological development of the last years in the case of knowledge and equipment [6,7]. Dual training system, vocational training programs, thesis writing, summer internships, company visits, events, exhibitions are all program points that can help to solve the previous two points. We propose that career guidance in schools should not only be campaign-oriented, but a continuous and well-planned activity.

The qualitative research and the two questionnaire surveys confirmed that the Internet is the most important channel for reaching young people. In addition to the classic web appearances, we propose also to use Facebook, instagram and youtube for reaching young people. The latter two are barely

present now in the MEGFOSZ program. Parents can be reached mainly by television and the newspaper in addition to the classic Internet content.

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