

# From the Lens of Women Agripreneurs: Exploring the Perception, Challenges and Communication Competencies of Women Agripreneurs

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the perception of women engaged in agribusiness, a field that is often perceived as a man's domain. The study aims to identify the challenges encountered by women agripreneurs, how they use their communication skills to manage their businesses, and the level of knowledge they possess in agriculture and agribusiness. Purposive sampling was used to select female owners of agribusiness and are incubatees at the Agriculture and Food Technology Business Incubator (AFTBI) located at Central Luzon State University, Nueva Ecija, and were interviewed via call due to the pandemic. The study reveals the importance of women's role in agriculture and agribusiness, which significantly contributes to a country's economy. The COVID-19 pandemic and climate change were identified as significant challenges affecting female business agripreneurs, along with difficulties in obtaining raw materials on time. Results indicated that women agripreneurs are competent in communication and effectively use various strategies and platforms to manage their agribusiness. The study concludes that despite the challenges, women agripreneurs possess sufficient knowledge, skills, and communication competencies to successfully manage their agribusiness.

**Keywords:** Agribusiness, Entrepreneur, Agripreneur, Women, Competence

## INTRODUCTION

Women have long been subjected to discrimination and hardships due to societal stereotypes that label them as vulnerable and weak. This oppression continues to this day, with women in different countries experiencing various forms of discrimination, such as being battered wives without access to their own income to support their children or not having the right to express their thoughts. These societal standards are passed down from culture to culture and tradition to custom, perpetuating gender inequalities.

Despite these challenges, studies have shown that women have demonstrated their significance and leadership in business through effective communication. Werhane et al. (2007) found that women who prioritize communication are more successful in building strong relationships with their workers, while Buttner (2001) discovered that women entrepreneurs use relational approaches to networking, even with their employees.

Furthermore, the process of urbanization is occurring at a rapid pace in developing nations, leading to a significant change in the demand for agricultural products. Simultaneously, the digitization of value chains is enabling the availability of transparent information regarding the pricing and transportation of goods. These transformative developments within food systems create favorable conditions for the emergence of agripreneurship, which the combination of the word entrepreneurship and agriculture, encompassing activities both on the farm and beyond the farm gate (Dougherty, 2019).

In Benguet, Philippines, a study found that women can overcome obstacles and misconceptions to establish profitable agricultural businesses. However, female business leaders face a gender gap that prevents them

from accessing financing and resources necessary for expansion. They also have to contend with time constraints due to unpaid household duties, such as fetching fuelwood and water, that keep them from participating in community-based climate adaptation initiatives, as noted by Behrmann et al. (2014).

To better understand the nature of women's entrepreneurship and improve their chances of success, researchers must go beyond economic perspectives and use empirical research designs. In particular, investigating the communication skills used by female entrepreneurs to lead and manage their businesses can provide new insights into how they overcome challenges.

Women all over the world are increasingly taking the risk of entering the field of agripreneurship, leading to a greater understanding of their strategies for engaging in agricultural businesses and identifying communication challenges they face. This research can help break down gender barriers and enable women to reach their full potential in the business world.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Generally, the study aims to document the perception, challenges and communication competence of women in agripreneurship. Specifically, it aims to:

1. To describe the perception of women agripreneur to agriculture and agribusiness
2. To identify the challenges faced by women engaged in agripreneurship
3. To relate the communication competence of women agripreneurs in dealing with their agribusiness.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study utilized a qualitative research design to determine the communication competence of women in handling agricultural business. The participants were five (5) female agripreneurs who are also incubatees at the Agriculture and Food Technology Business Incubator (AFTBI) located at Central Luzon State University, Nueva Ecija, Philippines. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants that were relevant to the study.

Following data collection, the researcher used a thematic analysis approach to group the data based on the respondents' answers. Additionally, the coding process was conducted by the researchers to reduce and categorize the data.

### **RESULT OF THE STUDY**

#### **Demographic of the Respondents**

As presented in Table 1 (see last page), the women agripreneurs included in this study are not solely dedicated to agricultural entrepreneurship, but also engage in other businesses and occupations. For instance, participant A has a food business and is currently an incubatee for three (3) years. Participant B is the owner of Mom's Sweet Creation and rice farming is her primary business. She has been an incubatee for four (4) years. Participant C, who is also an incubatee for three (3) years, owns a rice farming business, serves as a president at the Rural Improvement Club at Sto. Domingo Chapter. On the other hand, participant D not only owns Blitz Kreig Animal Diagnostic Center but is also a professor and researcher at a university. She has been an incubatee for three (3) years. Lastly, participant E, who is an incubatee for a year, owns Tilapia Ice Cream and Vera Bela Bread. She is also a faculty member and researcher at a university. Despite engaging in various occupations and businesses, these five (5) empowered women have managed to achieve success in the agricultural sector.

It is worth noting that this study provides insight into the success of women agripreneurs who have been

able to manage and balance their various roles and responsibilities. This highlights the importance of diversity in the agricultural industry, not just in terms of the crops and livestock raised, but also in terms of the individuals involved in the sector.

### **Perception of Women Agripreneurs in Agriculture and Agribusiness**

Agriculture involves more than just planting crops; it also requires learning about new technologies. This study shows that agriculture relies on technology, innovation, and modernization, as the industry no longer solely depends on manual labor. Technology integrations have enabled growth and development in agriculture. Participant C, an agripreneur for 21 years, emphasizes the importance of studying new technologies to improve harvest and soil health, as well as learning from other farmers, including old farming traditions.

*“As an agriculturist, agriculture is not just about planting that you have to learn to plant and that’s it, however, you also need to study new technologies to improve the harvest and take care of the soil and also getting some ideas from other farmers is good. When it comes to the old traditions there is also a lot to learn about old farming but as we venture there are so many things we have learned in their various fields for agriculture. And also, it is not also just for men, but also for women.”*

Children should be taught agriculture from a young age, as stated by Participant A, who believes that agribusiness and agriculture are essential to a country’s backbone. It is not just women who should be involved in agriculture; it should be open to everyone since food is a crucial societal need. Children and youth should also be exposed to agriculture, starting from small steps such as planting the remaining leaves and stem of sweet potato.

*“Actually, for me, ever since agribusiness or agriculture is the backbone of the country, so actually everyone should be focused, ‘not just women but also the youth. So that is very important because that is where our food comes from, so for women since they will be mothers, their children should be taught agriculture from a very young age. Even in a small way like planting the remained leaves and stem of sweet potato.”*

Agribusiness is a challenging path, as expressed by Participants A and E, particularly for those with limited knowledge of handling the business. However, Participant B, the owner of Mom’s Sweet Creations and a rice farming business, believes that women can also participate in agribusiness and succeed without compromising their family relationships.

*“Very challenging because it takes much time, and aside from this, some of us have different business.”*

*“I realize that women are not just designed to be housewives. Women can compete in business – especially in agribusiness. It is not just “men”. Women can do it too. We can do this without sacrificing the family because the women will be able to balance that.”*

Participant D, an animal test kit manufacturer for three years, believes that gender is not an issue in agribusiness, as long as individuals know how to handle their business. As entrepreneurs, both men and women should know the art of negotiation, marketing, and promoting their products.

*“As an entrepreneur, it has no gender issue. You have to know the art of negotiation, marketing, and promoting your products – gender is no issue. That is why there is no gender issue, even in age.”*

Participants’ responses were based on their experiences, personal preferences, and gender standpoint. Gill & Ganesh (2000) noted that women becoming entrepreneurs can promote economic development and women’s independence. However, Fielden and Dawe (2004) suggested that societal factors may hinder the

advancement of women entrepreneurs,

and women continue to face challenges in growing their businesses in a male-dominated environment (Sinha, 2005).

### **Opinion of Women Agripreneurs towards the Domination of Women in Agriculture**

The modern era has seen an increasing number of women enter the agricultural business, and according to participants B and C, they are open-minded and hands-on in this field. Women are no longer limited to the roles of housewives or office workers, but they can also become successful agripreneurs. Participant E believes that women should take pride in their involvement in agribusiness, and their ability to multitask gives them an edge. Additionally, empowering women in agribusiness can lead to economic gains for women, their homes, and their communities, according to Duflo et al. (2012).

*“Now, the women are open-minded in agri-business. They seem to be empowered. The woman can do it because many of them have become success stories of women who have ventured into agribusiness. So, women can think that “we are not just a housewife or office worker” can dominate agribusiness. Women can do what men do in agribusiness.” -Participant B*

*“For us women, it does not matter if we are women. We do not think that only men should be farming. Women should also get involved because women are more hands-on. Although I have people in the fields, I am the one who tells them, “Oh, here’s what you have to do.” Despite their puzzled expressions, I explained that I was telling them this so that we could have a broader understanding of farming”. .” -Participant C*

*“That is something that we are proud of. The women in agribusiness are one of a kind, and I would say that business people can do it. Businesswomen can do it too. I do not see any difference, especially since women are expected to be more capable of multi-tasking. So, women usually wear many hats.” .” -Participant E*

However, participant D has a different perspective, stating that women and men should be business partners rather than competitors. She believes that women have unique qualities such as nurturing and care, which make them great business leaders, and they should accept men as partners. This is supported by a 2015 study conducted by talent management system Saba Software, which found that assisting team members to develop their talents and strengths is an essential component of leadership, and women’s caring nature can aid in achieving this.’

*“It is not dominating, but we must partner with men. The touch of a woman once engaged in business is unique. They think of me as a mother and not a boss in our company. The man has a different mindset. The woman details think the men are pretty general-overseer. So, it would help if you were open-minded. If you are a female agribusiness owner, you should also be open to boys because we were made to be together. You cannot be the only one who is good.”*

It is essential to note that while participants share different views on whether women dominate the agricultural sector or not, they all agree that women can be successful in agribusiness. This highlights the importance of women’s involvement in this field and the need to break gender stereotypes to create a more inclusive and diverse agricultural industry. A 2015 study by talent management system Saba Software, conducted by the Poll & Paige (2015) remarked, “One of the most important components of leadership is the ability to assist your team members in developing their talents and strengths. “Women are inherently caring, which may translate to assisting people around you to achieve in the best of circumstances.”

### **Recommendation To Fellow Women To Enter Agribusiness**

Women play a crucial role in agriculture and business, and their participation in these sectors should be

encouraged. During a recent discussion, participants emphasized the significance of women's involvement in agriculture and business,

citing reasons such as the need to provide food for their families and the potential for financial gain.

Participant A highlighted that women bear children and want to ensure that their children have access to nutritious food. Therefore, involving women in agriculture and business is essential for them to appreciate how food is produced. Even if women are at home, they should find a way to contribute to the production of food. Participant A shared her personal experience of planting seeds with her brother during vacations.

*"To me, it is important because they are the ones who create the baby. So, what does the baby need, food, what does the child need, food? Women should be involved in agriculture and business, not just those who are at home. Even if they are at home, they should find a way to provide even a little food, because what I do. When I have time, I will plant."*

Participant B recommended that women engage in business, particularly in the agriculture industry, which can be a reliable source of revenue for everyone. Women are skilled in operating enterprises, and agriculture has been a crucial source of livelihood for centuries. Women can create businesses that produce food and generate income for their families.

*"I am in the rice field business. I always encourage my sister and son to get involved in our business. I would recommend it as a source of income for women because women are good when it comes to business."*

Women also train other women in agribusiness, emphasizing the importance of financial education and management training. By doing so, they help women become more objective in managing farm businesses, preventing detrimental practices from being passed down from generation to generation.

*"If I can, I also train women, and I persuade them to not just stay at home and do not just rely on their husband's income. We need each other's help so that we can make our lives better and grow, and, of course, for our future to teach our children to survive."*

According to participant D, women should be more strategic in their lives and not rely solely on their partners for financial support. The traditional role of women as stay-at-home caregivers is no longer applicable, and women must be independent and have their own businesses.

*"All of my ladies, I tell them that in today's time, the plain housewife is no longer applicable. You should all have your own business and have your own money. Be independent of your husband."*

The increasing involvement of women in agriculture and business has led to the emergence of female entrepreneurs who provide training to others who want to enter the business world, specifically in the agriculture sector. According to a 2008 report, approximately 45 million individuals worldwide were directly engaged in agriculture full-time or part-time, with women making up to 30% of overall employment in fisheries, including primary production. The Women in Agribusiness forum is one example of a platform that addresses the challenges that women in agribusiness face and aims to overcome them collectively. Encouraging women's involvement in agriculture and business can lead to greater food security, financial stability, and empowerment of women.

### **Advantage of Women in Agripreneurship**

The participation of women in the agricultural business brings numerous benefits. According to participants A, B, and C, women are resourceful in finding solutions to problems, and they possess nurturing abilities. Women in agribusiness can immediately identify a problem and come up with a strategic solution. This demonstrates their advanced thinking and resourcefulness. For instance, women can easily replace a goat

with a rabbit when faced with a shortage of livestock.

*“Women are incredibly resourceful. Women are more strategic. When the women see a problem, they can immediately find a solution. And then women are advanced thinkers. You already have in mind the possible problems, which in your mind will also be the solution to the problem. That is the advantage of women in agribusiness. For example, if I no longer have a goat, the rabbit will replace it. That is how women are: strategic, advanced-minded, and resourceful.”*

Furthermore, participants C and D highlighted the nurturing quality of women and their hands-on approach to agripreneurship. Women’s ability to nurture is a critical advantage in agribusiness. They bring a different management style that complements that of men, who tend to be more focused on leadership. Women’s nurturing approach helps to ensure that businesses run smoothly, and finances are well-managed.

*“We are women because our ability is nurturing. That is the number one quality of women. Men are more on leaders but look at our mothers and fathers. The mothers are the bosses of the house because when they hold the money, it will go well. Although, men are also needed in business because they have a different point of view. The only thing we have is because we are nurturing, and our management style is a bit different.”*

A study in Africa ‘Women in Agribusiness: Practical steps into entrepreneurship’ It is apparent that Africa requires firm policy and investment initiatives if efforts in these areas are to result in critical mass and a substantial proportion of women effectively and sustainably venturing out as entrepreneurs. The subject of the 3rd Conference for Women in Agribusiness reflected this feeling. Fotabong (2017) encouraged the women at the conference, saying, “Women’s capacity to organize and mobilize in taking care of their concerns gives higher odds of them receiving the help they need in order to build their enterprises.

In conclusion, the contribution of women to agribusiness is significant, as they possess unique skills and qualities that are valuable to the industry. Therefore, it is necessary to encourage and support women’s participation in agribusiness, which will lead to sustainable and inclusive growth in the sector.

### **Challenges Encountered by Women Agripreneurs**

The study participants highlighted the challenges they encountered in managing their business. One common theme that emerged from their responses was the impact of the pandemic on their businesses. Participant A mentioned facing difficulties in marketing her products due to the pandemic restrictions and closures of establishments. However, she persisted in her business as she believed it was her passion.

*“The challenge is that I have a hard time marketing my product since there is a pandemic. During the last pandemic last year, almost all of my colleagues’ businesses had to stop. They could not stand it anymore and switched to another business because they had no clients because of the pandemic. However, it did not stop me. Even if the orders are not as many as before, it is the number one rule not to quit. If you like the business, you are doing, and you have to keep going no matter what problems you encounter.”*

Participant B faced challenges in the shelf life of her products, as she did not use preservatives. She also faced difficulties with returned products from resellers due to spoilage from lack of refrigeration. Additionally, getting raw materials posed a challenge for her. Similarly, participant D also faced challenges with delayed raw materials due to the pandemic. As a manufacturer of test kits, the delay in materials could impact the reliability of her products and put lives at stake.

*“The shelf life spreads, because I do not put preservatives on them. The biggest challenge for me was how to make that product last without preservatives. I have achieved that because Dulce De Leche has a shelf life of 6 months. Then another, consignment is very difficult to charge, or sometimes the products will be returned because they were not sold, so that you will lose money. Even getting raw materials is difficult.”*

**-Participant B**

*“Because of the pandemic, the raw materials took a long time to arrive. Some people say that I should make test kits for COVID-19. Moreover, I said I did not want to, and because I am a veterinarian, I only make test kits for animals. I can also forecast the different infections of animals because I am updated on the movements of diseases abroad. So, we thought, let us work ahead so that if it enters the Philippines, we will have a ready test kit.”* **-Participant D**

Participant C highlighted the impact of changing weather patterns and natural disasters on her crops, which could result in lower sales. She also faced challenges in pricing and finding reliable business partners.

*“First of all, the climate, because in today’s weather, the climate is changeable and the harvest we are expecting were not met. Then the pesticides. Because I am more of an organically based person, we do not depend too much on chemicals, and then, of course, when you harvest, the pricing, your people, of course, not everyone is a good business partner.”*

Participant E, as a woman in agribusiness, spoke about the additional challenges of balancing multiple roles as a mother, wife, and boss. However, she saw these challenges as opportunities and prioritized her hobbies accordingly.

*“As a woman in agribusiness, I would say that most women are multitaskers. You are a mother, you are a wife, and you have a daughter. I am a mother, and I am a wife, I have a daughter, I am a daughter, I am a sister, I am a boss. As long as we know how to use our hobbies in different situations, it is very challenging, and then you have to know your priority.*

In conclusion, these women agripreneurs encountered various challenges in managing their businesses, but they viewed them as opportunities for growth and learning. It is essential to acknowledge and address these challenges to ensure the success and sustainability of women-led agribusinesses.

## **Resilience of Women Agripreneur**

This theme emerged from the study participants’ responses, which pertained to describing and considering the challenges they have encountered in the years of managing their business, and whether they have thought of quitting on their chosen field.

Participant A believes that building a successful business requires a lot of courage and passion. Every successful independent owner and entrepreneur must have a driving passion that propels them ahead, a fundamental conviction that keeps them going even when others do not share their vision. She states that one common piece of advice given to budding entrepreneurs is to follow their passion and build a business rooted in something they are already passionate about. This way, it will be easier for them to push through tough challenges and stick it out.

Participant C exhibits her resiliency as she never considered quitting her job whenever problems arose. Instead, she thought of other ways to continue profiting. Research suggests that psychological resilience helps entrepreneurs become less vulnerable to stressful circumstances.

*“It never occurred to me to stop farming; instead, I devised alternatives because it will be a long time before I can plant rice again, so I alternated by planting vegetables and counting the days between when I planted and when I harvested another crop.”*

Participant D plans to become a full-time entrepreneur after retiring as a government employee. She wants to create profitable jobs for her countrymen and encourages her children to dream of being an entrepreneur.

*“I have been working in the government for a long time, so I want to be a full-time entrepreneur. We should create jobs for our countrymen. Let us be an income generator for other people. Do not stay as an employee; if you have little capital, start a business.”*

Participant E believes that giving up means that you do not want to do it anymore, but from a different perspective, you want to continue. She encourages herself by saying that she loves her job. She considers her employees who would be affected by her decision because of a particular problem that is only normal for a businesswoman.

*“Quitting means you do not want to do it anymore, but I convince myself that I love it because I should be grateful. I should be thankful. Sarcastically, I enjoy my job, and as a result, I have been able to hire people and create jobs for them. When I stop, what about them? I said if it were just me, I would be okay, but I think of them. So, when I see them, they are my inspiration.”*

Four out of five female participants stated that they did not think of quitting their career as an entrepreneur in agriculture. Instead, it became a reason for them to improve what they do even more. According to Muntasir & Jayawarna (2019), women stayed longer in their businesses than men. The researchers examined data from 2009 to 2016 and discovered that 16.3 percent of female business owners quit each year, compared to 18.6 percent of male company owners and entrepreneurs.

However, Participant B mentioned that she thought of stopping her business when the pandemic hit. She found it difficult to get raw materials and give them to her resellers because of the virus spreading. She also had trouble marketing her products at CLSU because of the limited movement that was implemented.

*“I thought of stopping it first because it was difficult for me to get raw materials. It was also difficult to give it to my resellers because of a pandemic with a virus spreading. So, I thought, I do not want to produce while there is a pandemic. Besides, I cannot get into CLSU because it is easier to market my products there. After all, at CLSU-AFTBI, the size of their autoclave helped me because it is bigger”*

### **Women Agripreneurs Dealing with failure**

Attitudes about failure may be learned via an entrepreneur’s life and work experience. Closing a firm is highly related to a more positive attitude toward failure. A positive mental attitude about failure may be a valuable advantage for entrepreneurs, as it may assist them in dealing with and learning from their mistakes and moving on. The findings suggest that entrepreneurs’ views about failure are not uniform. Instead, this attitude may be modified by fresh experiences and knowledge. In this section, five (5) participants stated their experiences dealing with failure in their business, specifically in agribusiness, and discussed how they surpassed it. Participants A, B, C, D, and E expressed themselves as follows:

According to participant A, a positive attitude is a must, particularly in doing business and dealing with failure, as struggles and challenges are parts of being an agripreneur. Because if she quits, she will end up jobless, and she does not want to be like that.



*“You should keep doing what you are doing. Do not get intimidated by what is happening in your surroundings. As long as you do what you have to do, I am also thinking: what should I quit right away? Nothing? You know, I am not used to that.”*

Similar to participant A, participant B is optimistic about the trials that come to her. She believes in the positive side of every situation, and she always understands her customers. Participant B also said that a single failure does not hinder her because as long as she does not achieve what she wants, she will not stop working. According to Churchill (1938) “Optimists find chances in every hardship.” Even if obstacles are in the way, remember that optimists are creative thinkers who can rebound from setbacks.

*“I am optimistic about failures. For example, the batch of my order was damaged. I see it as a lesson that “this is how it should be, so it should not be like this.” I am taking notes of that. For example, the batch of cheese pimienta I made was thin. I still need to add something.”*

Various participants’ statements focus on the positive attitude towards dealing with failure. Participant C labeled herself as an easy-going person, which is why she is not easily rattled when inconveniences arise. In order to continue her business, she needs to have the strength of willpower to overcome any challenges. Because failure defines the success, she will be able to achieve.

*“Because I am an easy-going person, I do not worry too much about failure because that is how it is when it comes to business. There are days when your sales are good in business, and there are also days when you cannot sell. So, when you are in your moment, you have to be strong.”*

Participant D believes in her faith as she stated that there are no vast problems that she has experienced so far because of her continued faith. Her style of managing her business is “no debt allowed” when it comes to her test kits for continued production to tailor the demands of her customers.

*“There is no big problem yet. Because of our style of doing business to avoid massive problems, there is no debt. If you buy test kits, give us two weeks to mix and produce your test kits. In those two weeks, he must be patriotic because our mixture is always fresh. Your products should also be tailored to the needs of your customers.”*

On the other hand, participant E also has positive attitude towards dealing with failure. Instead of delving with failure, she used it to be more creative and innovative as she learned new things that will help her and her business.

*“Because of this pandemic, we have to be creative, I studied on my own, aided by YouTube experimentation. I like pastries and everything else, but I would not say I like bread at all. However, I managed to create a product that will help my business.”*

As seen above from the statements of the five participants, most of the respondents did not believe in the concept of “failure.” They see it as an opportunity. Through innovation and positive behavior, they surpassed the challenges they have encountered, and also, the participant is a strong-willed individual when it comes to facing failures in their business. Hence, engaging in businesses requires positive attributes to achieve success. Leadership success involves both hope and reality. According to Collins (2009), “a successful business leader must be able to accept painful facts while never losing hope when presented with organizational obstacles.” Furthermore, the author emphasized that financially successful companies have executives that do not sugarcoat issues while dealing with employees.

### **Communication Competence of Women Agripreneurs**

This part documented the communication competence of women agripreneurs towards their business. The

researcher asked questions regarding their communication competence towards their business, such as what skill they impose when dealing with the stakeholders and customers, even with their employees, and the barrier they have encountered in communication. This assessment of their communication competence is based on the five characteristics of a competent communicator, such as self-awareness, adaptability, empathy, cognitive complexity, and ethics, according to Floyd, K. (2012) for his study titled “interpersonal communication.”

### **Women Agripreneurs’ Perception on Importance of Communication in Agribusiness**

Participant A mentioned that communication is essential in running agribusiness. However, there must be training to be successful, and the Department of Agriculture provides such training to agripreneurs like them. According to Ferry (2011) of Michigan State University Extension, communication should be a valuable tool in your agricultural enterprise. Effective communication should be expected, regular, and rewarded and removing communication obstacles, being cool in all situations, and resolving any misconceptions are all simple strategies to increase communication on your farm. Gaining a thorough knowledge of verbal and nonverbal communication skills will help employees in leadership roles with their workforce, as well as increase farm productivity and employee job satisfaction.

*“Communication is essential. However, there must be training, of course. Moreover, actually, at the Department of Agriculture, there is communication training. The government somehow also has a program for the whole year to train. So, they should also know that in their areas, there is training, so they should not only know how to plant, but also have a guide or an idea, especially with the help of the government to communicate well with business partners.”*

While participant B stated, in communication, an entrepreneur must be honest with their customers in order for them to gain the trust of their consumers, and she also stated that her “talkative” personality led her to the success she is experiencing at present because she knows how to get along with her customers. This can be related to Davd’s (2019) statement wherein he stated that honesty and open communication is a principle that virtually all businesses profess to embrace, but few achieve. The value of an open corporate environment cannot be emphasized while a firm may exist without open communication, few prosper without it.

*“I am a bit talkative. It is also important that you are honest with what you are selling about what ingredients there are not any preservatives. My buyers have to believe me, so you have to have good communication skills so that you can show people that what you are saying is true, so communication is essential.”*

According to participant C, every business partner should have two-way communication to communicate better. Participant C also said that a businesswoman or even a businessman should study how to communicate with their business partner. Because the message passes from the sender to the recipient and back to the sender, it is a complete communication system. According to Nueman’s (2008) assertion that “interaction is vital when employing a two-way communication lens,” two-way communication in business can take horizontal and vertical forms. However, different individuals have different notions about what “interaction” means in this context.

*“If you do anything with other businessmen, then you have to tie up with them if you like their offers or our offers. Accordingly, it will start until you two are partners. The one that will entice you to expand your business is that you will also study your business partner to see if he is really a good partner or not. As a result, good communication skills are essential in business.”*

*Need to adapt to the stakeholders you are dealing with.* Participant D stated that similar to the development communication, an entrepreneur should know how to adjust to whomever stakeholders she faces. Participant

D also mentioned that when she is facing a scientist, she acts and talks like a scientist, and whenever she is with her family, students, and farmer, she speaks like one. Based on her statement having to adapt to the environment and people quickly would make a difference. Identifying the audience is crucial when establishing what information to include whenever they are with their stakeholders and how to build the information hierarchy and relationship with them.

*“You need to be able to adapt to the stakeholders you are dealing with. You should be sensitive to what is needed. When I am with scientists, I speak like a scientist. However, as a mother, grandmother, farmer, or student, you have to adapt. It is like developmental communication. You know how to communicate with stakeholders.”*

Participant E believes that truthful communication with her customers and employees would build a good relationship between them. Also, she revealed that having good communication skills is crucial when having a business, and communication should always be data-based.

*“Communication skills are critical, the way you talk, I believe. A few people are in sales; they are good talkers, but there is no communication. Because it is part of the job that you need to talk about, the consumer or the client communication should always be data-based. Tell the truth to your customers. You must be truthful with the people you serve. If you speak to your heart, you will be able to communicate with it.”*

Several researchers have emphasized the significance of communication skills in the success of women-owned small businesses. Women entrepreneurs stressed communication as a vital component for creating effective connections with workers and others (Werhane et.al. 2007). Similarly, Buttner (2001) discovered that women entrepreneurs employed relational network-building strategies, even with their staff. The ability to communicate effectively is critical for success in many parts of life. McCroskey et.al, (2003), discovered that frequency of communication influenced trustworthiness in a study involving 50 top managers in international firms.

### **Most Effective Communication Strategies Used by the Women Agripreneurs**

Participant A reiterated that in her younger years, advanced technology was not relevant, she did not have an idea about online marketing but what she did is that she encourages herself to train as she stated that she is now studying online marketing with Mr. Dibo lim for her to improved her skills in managing and communication her products to her customers and participant A also mentioned that investing and learning new strategies is crucial.

*“I am 57 years old, and when I was younger, there was no internet, no technology, and I did not know how to do online marketing, so what I have done is train. As I previously stated, I am studying online marketing and the cost of training is also high. However, I need it, so I cannot do without it. So, in order for me to improve my business, I need to invest time in learning a new method on how to market your product. That is so important now.”*

Similar to participant B, participant C also communicate directly with her business partners as her strategy for a faster negotiation, and based on her statement, she analyzed her partners meticulously. Therefore, they could have a good deal.

*“I communicate directly with business partners, when selling rice, with the number of buying stations or millers, you cannot stick to just one buyer, because you will find out who has the highest price value, and there you can negotiate. Even if he is your business partner, just let him know I cannot afford your price. There is no pain as long as you have good communication with each other.”*

Face-to-face conversations that occur during the formation and maintenance of the commercial partnership are critical to any business alliance in which can be related to Faraj et al. (2021). “A solid communication process is dependent on the organization’s history, which is essential for long-term success. Communication, together with certified competencies, is the key to efficiency.”

According to the participants, being empathic, polite, and honest with your customer will lead them to effective communication and successfully negotiate with their subordinates. They will also gain the trust of their partners and customers. As per participant E, professionalism or soft skill” is one of the keys to running her business, and it is becoming more crucial for career advancement, as executives strive to promote those who can convince, influence, and inspire their teams, clients, and customers. According to Huckle (2019) “every profession requires some kind of negotiation and good communication skills, whether with your team and management or with vendors, clients, or partners.”

Women’s enterprises were often smaller than men’s and more active locally than nationally hence, women’s networks typically included individuals they had known for a long time. Similarly, Renzulli et.al. (2000), discovered that women tend to respect their kinship while forming business networks. Women entrepreneurs viewed communication as critical to managing relationships with workers, governments, and social networks Buttner, (2001) and Werhane et al., (2007). As a result, women entrepreneurs may develop their unique communication styles to form connections with workers or others.

### **Communication Platforms used by Women Agripreneurs in Agribusiness**

This theme discussed the communication platforms used by the female agripreneur to promote their business.

As per participant C, she prefers direct communication with her business partners in promoting her business. In rice farming, it is not relevant to use online communication platforms, such as social media.

*“When it comes to selling rice, you do not use social media to promote our yields but we prefer a direct transaction.”*

Both participants A and B, used online communication platforms such as Facebook for promoting their products. This is relevant in this 21st century, as the modernization of technology is rampant. Social media is online communication that allows interaction with customers and sharing information in real-time. According to Carton (2019), for most of human history, we have built technology that makes it simpler for us to communicate with one another.

*“Communication is, of course, you are in business, so you need to know how to communicate on the internet, right? In an email, on Facebook, in all sorts of online communications, I have my Facebook page”*  
– Participant A

*“I used social media. I have a Facebook page. One way to promote it.”* – Participant B

While participants D and E also used social media and Zoom application as their communication platform for their business as they arranged webinars for the people who wants to know about their products.

*“I have audio-visual pre-recorded (webinars), although the only problem here is that it is in English. However, I did something that has been translated into Tagalog now that the company has a website. There is also a Facebook page. If anyone wants a copy, I put the PowerPoint presentations there. Also, I have infographics that I can share at any time with whoever wants them.”* -Participant D

*“We have Zoom or Google Meet, depending on what the product is. We were always invited to seminars and divisions, for our product won an international award. In addition, we post on social media.”*

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## -Participant E

Based on the four participants' responses, an internet-based form of communication is their platform to promote their product to a broader audience. Social media is a potent communication channel that significantly affects both cities and distant locations. It is, however, only a minor part of the digital transition that we are experiencing. Not only has digital transformation affected businesses and made the globe more accessible, but it has also altered the way people interact. According to Oberlo, there have been 3.2 billion social media users worldwide as of 2019, accounting for around 42 percent of the world's population. In addition, there are roughly 4.5 billion internet uses across the world today. These statistics are proof of the growing dominance of digital media in our daily lives. Social media has realistically proved the need for "round-the-clock contact.". A glance at the leading two platforms, Facebook and Twitter, reveals firms relaying messages during non-working hours. The participants also use visual presentations, online webinars, and seminars to promote their products. However, participant B stated that she does not use any online platform to promote her business; instead, she meets with her business partners to negotiate with them.

## Barriers in Communication Encountered by the Female Agripreneurs

This part discussed the barriers in communication encountered by the female agripreneurs, contemplating their perception of communication. Participants expressed themselves as follows:

*"There is no problem with communication. You need to know how to communicate. Of course, you need to be honest with who you are in front of."*

According to participants, there were no barrier to communication as long as you know how to communicate appropriately with the stakeholders and customers. This only indicates that women agripreneurs knows how to deal with communication barriers. On the contrary, participant B stated that she encountered one communication barrier in her years of dealing with customers and partners.

*"The miscommunication. If they do not understand what you are saying, sometimes that is the barrier. They cannot understand you. For example, if someone orders me in bulk, I say that they need to refrigerate it but they will not follow it which leads to spoilage of the product."*

The barrier for participant B is the miscommunication with her business partners, resellers, and customers. Some of her resellers have returned her products because they were spoiled, but to the defense of participant B, the resellers did not follow her instructions.

Miscommunication is one example of a lack of alignment in an individual's mental state, especially one in which they disagree on the presence or outcome of communication. Miscommunication can be interpreted as a demand for action failure misunderstanding or both. As per the other participants, barriers are more on the behavior as according to the four participants, to communicate well with their clients being humble and empathic is crucial. All administrative activities need communication, which is a way of communicating information and making oneself known by another or others (Sanchez & Guo (2005)

## CONCLUSIONS

After conducting research on women in agriculture and agribusiness, it can be concluded that agriculture has evolved and now incorporates technology and innovation. It is important for the general public, and particularly women, to recognize agriculture as a catalyst for economic growth and development.

Women agripreneurs have demonstrated their knowledge and proficiency in agriculture and agribusiness, and have developed unique strategies to run their businesses. Additionally, gender is not a barrier for

success in the field of agriculture and agribusiness, as women have proven their worth in this sector.

However, women agripreneurs do face challenges such as the pandemic, climate change, and supply chain disruptions, yet they have been able to overcome these obstacles with their resilience and perseverance. The research also found that women agripreneurs are competent in communication and have developed effective communication skills and strategies to run their businesses successfully.

Overall, women agripreneurs are important players in agriculture and agribusiness, and their contributions should be recognized and supported.

## RECOMMENDATION

As a result, the following suggestions are now made:

1. Department of Agriculture, a government agency in the Philippines, should continue the training regarding agriculture and business for women who aspire to be an agripreneur.
2. It could be recommended that there is a need to conduct more studies on the communication competence of women in the field of agribusiness.
3. There should be more studies and documentation towards the challenges of women agripreneurs and their success story to empower women in the agribusiness sector.
4. Future research in this area should aim for a larger and more diverse sample size. By including a broader range of participants, the study can provide more comprehensive insights into the experiences and challenges faced by women Agripreneurs in the Philippines. Additionally, researchers should consider employing more robust sampling methods to minimize selection bias and ensure a more representative sample.

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Table 1. Demographic profile of the participants

Code	Business	No. of years as Agripreneuers and Incubatee	Occupation/ Other Business
Participant A	Mushroom Business	3 years agripreneur; 3 years incubatee	Food related business
Participant B	Spreads	5 years agripreneur; 4 years incubatee	Rice Farming
Participant C	Rice Farming	21 years Agripreneur; 3 years Incubatee	President of Rural Improvement Club
Participant D	Animal Test Kit	2 years Agripreneur; 3 years Incubatee	Researcher, Faculty member
Participant E	Ice cream and bread	2 years in tilapia ice cream & almost a year in Vera Bela Breads; 2 years incubatee	Faculty member /Researcher