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Risk Management Strategies of Microagribusiness Firms in Benguet

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Abstract

An increasing speed of change in the food and agribusiness industries is causing more risk and uncertainty. In order to assist agribusiness firms and other relevant businesses, this study provides a general overview of risk sources and ways to manage them. It aimed to identify the risk management strategies of microagribusiness firms. Quantitative research was employed, specifically a descriptive survey. A structured survey questionnaire was the instrument used for the 33 micro-agribusiness owners in the selected municipalities of Benguet.

Results indicated that most respondents are mostly in their middle age, most are college graduates, and most have been managing and operating a business for 2–5 years with few employees. The respondents' level of awareness and their implementation of the different types of risks in agribusiness firms are both high. Risk awareness and the implementation of risk management strategies have a moderately positive but significant relationship. When respondents are compared according to their profiles, there is no significant difference both in their level of awareness and their implementation of the different types of risks. Through thematic analysis, there were common themes derived from the challenges they encountered in the implementation of financial, operational, human resource, regulatory, and hazard risk management. These were: lack of supplies; it should be on a cash basis; regular and close supervision of employees; high regulatory fees; difficulty going to regulatory bodies; and lack of information on insurance. The results of this study will hopefully provide a framework for helping micro-agribusiness firms manage risks.

Keywords: Risk, Risk Management Strategies, Micro-agribusiness Firms

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the agribusiness firms' essential functions is managing risk in their operations, whether they are in production, processing, or trading activities. In the food and agribusiness industries, risk and uncertainty are rising due to the rapid pace of development. Moreover, the drivers of that uncertainty are also changing, especially now that a pandemic has afflicted the entire world and agribusiness firms in the Philippines are affected. This is why having a risk management strategy for any kind of business entity, big or small, provides a planned and logical approach to recognizing, evaluating, and controlling them. Agribusiness firms, as an important sector, should stay competitive and grow and should not easily cease operations, especially when uncertainty or a pandemic occurs.

The research conducted determined risk management strategies among micro-agribusiness firms in the selected areas of Benguet that helped them stay competitive even if a pandemic had negatively impacted their



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business. Results of this study may increase awareness of the risks and how to manage them, which can be used to help agribusiness and other related firms. It may also serve as a basis for the concerned government agencies and private entities to identify and implement suitable activities to aid agribusiness firms.

MICRO BUSINESSES

Microbusinesses have up to P3,000,000 in total assets, a small number of staff, and low sales volumes. Every business is subject to possible losses from uncontrolled risks. Sound risk management should lower the chance that a certain incident will arise; if it does, it should reduce its impact and protect business wealth. For the study, the researcher will base the classification of the respondents according to their assets.

AGRIBUSINESS

Chait [1] defined agribusiness as the term used to describe businesses that are engaged in agriculture or that make agricultural inputs, like seed supply, agrichemicals, and farm machinery manufacturing. She further points out that, in contrast to small, individual farms, agribusiness is a huge agricultural corporation, and agribusiness firms can be either small or large, self-governing or corporate.

Fleet [2] concludes in his study that the agribusiness sector is made up of all organizations and is essentially the application of business administration concepts as well as procedures to services and goods that are related to agriculture.

RISK

Hubbard [3] pointed out that risks are incidents or exposures that create inconsistency and instability in performance. These can have both upside and downside potential outcomes. A previous study [4] explained risk as the uncertainty and adversity of the outcome of an event valued by humans or organizations.

According to Kehinde et al.'s [5] study, management in an organization perceives risks as benefits that are represented throughout the company's strategy that need to be recognized, evaluated, addressed, avoided, and monitored

RISK MANAGEMENT

SimpleRisk [6] explained that risk management is making sure that management detects, analyzes, and responds rightly to risks that may badly affect the accomplishment of business goals. Another study [3] stated that risk management entails the detection, evaluation, and prioritization of risks.

Meanwhile, another study emphasized that risk management [7, 8] allows an organization to efficiently, effectively, and accurately achieve its goals and objectives, as cited in a study [9]. Cinar et al. [10] reiterated that defining and classifying them is a crucial component of managing them. Additionally, Panigrahi [11] stated in his study that risk management stresses the reality that a business' survival depends greatly on its ability to prepare for and anticipate change instead of waiting for it and then reacting.

RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

According to a study [12], in any organization, there is no single solution to risk management. Further, he emphasized that the choice of a consistent order of activities in carrying out the strategy for risk management



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has a favorable impact on the results when environmental variables, both external and internal, are taken into consideration.

In addition, a study [13] provided major strategies for managing risk. These are cautionary or precautionary, discursive, and risk-informed strategies. A suitable strategy could be a combination of these three strategies. Cole [14] discussed in his article the different strategies a company could adopt to manage the different kinds of risks it will experience. These include avoiding, reducing, sharing, and retaining the potential hazards. This is supported by another study [15], which identified similar risk management strategies that an organization can adopt to ensure that the negative effects of risks are minimized, which include reducing, avoiding, accepting, or transferring the risk.

Ondiek and Muathe's [16] strategies specified in their study are financial, operational, human resource, regulatory, and disaster risk management strategies, as cited in a study [17]. They claimed that a company's productivity is affected by how it manages these strategies. Further, the firm should keep its previous records to be able to predict future risks.

On the other hand, a study [17] stated that the risk of micro, small, and medium-sized agribusiness firms was managed by budgeting, marketing, and investment strategies. They further suggested that the agribusiness enterprises do regular capacity building, especially on record-keeping. Prioritized the following in the sector's risk management strategies: maintaining a financial record that is precise and up-to-date, executing fundamental financial analyses along with a viable management system for marketing, budgeting cash flow, and outflows. They also stated that agribusiness owners decide which strategies to employ and how to integrate them in accordance with their objectives, attitudes toward risk, and financial and personal conditions.

Van den Boom [18] pointed out that financial risk management plays a significant role. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) used this method to deal with their credit, interest rate, liquidity, and exchange rate risks.

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design. A quantitative research design was used in this study, specifically a descriptive survey. A structured survey questionnaire was used to gather the data. This was used because of its objectivity and reliability.

Sampling and Participants of the Study. To select the respondents for the study, the researcher utilized purposive sampling. To confirm the legitimacy of the businesses, a list of registered micro-agribusiness firms was requested from the licensing office of each municipality. This was the basis for determining who the respondents were. The respondents were the firm's managers or owners, who were knowledgeable and able to provide the data required for the study.

Data collection techniques and procedures. The primary tool used to collect pertinent data was a structured survey questionnaire. The tool was submitted for tool validation before it was distributed to the respondents. Unstructured interviews were conducted for further validation of the respondents' answers to the study. The researcher administered the questionnaire during the respondents' free time and collected the same after they had finished answering. A date and time were set for the retrieval of the answered questionnaire; this was done if the respondents had opted to answer it some other time.



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Before the actual gathering of data, a letter was forwarded to the different municipal mayors asking permission to get the list of registered micro-agribusiness firms in the study area as well as permission for the conduct of the study. For ethical purposes, the paper was submitted for ethics review to ensure that the research study was carried out in an ethical and responsible manner. Further, the respondents consent was sought before the questionnaire was administered.

Analysis of the Data. The different variables were identified, described, and analyzed. The level of awareness and implementation was determined and summarized using each indicator's mean. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) is utilized to determine if there is a significant relationship between the level of risk awareness and the level of risk management strategy implementation. The significant difference between the level of risk awareness and the level of risk management strategy implementation was examined using analysis of variance (ANOVA). Thematic analysis was used to generate a common theme and frequency counts to identify problems or challenges they have encountered during the implementation of risk management strategies.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' ages ranged from 36 to 51 on average. Most of them are college graduates with an average of 2 to 5 years of experience managing a business. Their firm has been mostly operating for 2 to 5 years, mostly with 1 to 2 employees.

Table 1 shows that the respondents' awareness of the different types of risks in agribusiness firms is high, which implies that they are mindful of the various components that could endanger their business operations. Furthermore, regulatory risk has the highest average mean, demonstrating that they are sufficiently aware of the regulatory risks given that every business must obtain permission every calendar year before they can sell their products or begin operations and that failing to do so has repercussions. It can be claimed that since this is done every calendar year, they are well aware of the risks involved if it is not observed. And since they are categorized as microbusinesses, they are the ones who process their business permits since they usually manage their business and/or do not have enough employees to process it, which makes them aware of the risks. This substantiates the study of Duong [19], which found that each employee's job and the various divisions in which they work affect their level of risk awareness. Their awareness of financial risks indicates that they are well aware of the many problems or risks that could have an influence on the sustainability of their firm's finances.

Table 1. Level of awareness

Types of Risks	Mean	Description
Financial	2.99	High Level of Awareness
Operational	2.78	High Level of Awareness
Human Resource	2.91	High Level of Awareness
Regulatory	3.12	High Level of Awareness
Hazard	2.95	High Level of Awareness



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Mean	2.95	High Level of Awareness
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A glimpse at Table 2 shows that the respondents generally execute the various measures to a high degree. This indicates that they consistently put into practice or observe the recognized means of controlling risks that can have a harmful effect on their business. This is related to the Berry-Stolzle and Xu [20] study, which demonstrates how risk management can lower a business's fiscal obligations, regulatory expenditures, bankruptcy, transaction expenditures, and prevent the lack of investment issue in a financially struggling firm, all of which can increase profits, as cited in a study [17].

The table further shows that regulatory, operational, and financial risk management strategies have the highest mean. This means that when it comes to these risks, they are highly knowledgeable about how to manage them. The result corroborates a study [9] that determined financial risk to be one of the highest priority risks and that it requires the most attention to be managed. Moreover, as discussed in their level of awareness of the risks, regulatory risk has the highest mean, and this correlates with how well they are implementing the strategies they have chosen. This can be associated with the fear of being penalized or being unable to operate when these regulatory risks are not being observed by the firm.

On the other hand, their management of risks as to human resources and hazards is lower than the other three risks. This may be the case given that they are merely microoperations and that some of the respondents serve as both managers and sellers at the same time. As a result, they may encounter human resources issues infrequently or not at all. Hazards have the lowest mean but still a high level of implementation, which signifies that the respondents are being cautious about the protection of their firm.

The result supports the study by Magaji et al. [17] that micro-agribusiness has the highest risk management strategies as compared to small and medium-sized agribusiness enterprises.

Types of Risk Management Strategies Mean **Description Financial** 3.26 Very High Level of Implementation **Operational** 3.34 Very High Level of Implementation **Human Resource** 3.16 High Level of Implementation Regulatory 3.38 Very High Level of Implementation Hazard 3.09 High Level of Implementation Mean 3.25 High Level of Implementation

Table 2. Level of implementation

Table 3 demonstrates a strong, positive, and moderate connection between the company owners' level of knowledge of the various risks and their level of application of the various risk management measures. This indicates that as their level of knowledge of the various risk types rises, so does their level of application of risk management measures, and vice versa.



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The results further imply that if they are fully aware of the different risks, they will be more proficient at managing them. Thus, for agribusiness owners to proficiently manage risks that could adversely affect their business, awareness of the different risks is necessary. According to the study by Doung [19], it is critical that management recognize and comprehend the risks inherent in business operations.

Table 3. Relationship between the firm owner's level of awareness and implementation

Criterion Variable

Explanatory Variables	Level of implementation of the different risk		
	management strategies		
	r	significance	Interpretation
Level of awareness of the different risk management strategies	0.514**	0.002	Positive moderate relationship

^{**}highly significant

Table 4 reveals that the respondents' level of awareness of the various kinds of risks is not statistically significant when contrasted with their profile. Agribusiness firm owners, regardless of their age or educational attainment, whether they are neophytes (less than a year of experience) or experienced (16–20 years of experience), whether their business has been in operation for less than a year or has been in operation for 20 years, or whether they have 1-2 or more than 2 employees, are highly aware of the various kinds of risks. The result further shows that the profile of the respondents has no impact on their awareness of the different risks.

Table 4. Differences in the level of awareness

Types of Risks			Ag	e (in ye	ars))		E1	
	20-35		3	86-51	52 & abo		oove	F value	Significance
Level of Awareness	3.00			2.85		3.08	8	0.454	0.639
Types of Risks		Educational Attainment							
								F value	Significance
Level of Awareness	Post Grad	College Grad		ollege dergrad		cational Grad	High School Grad		
	3.13	2.97	2	2.98		2.03	2.97	0.617	0.654
Types of Risks		Years of Experience in Managing							
	Business							F value	Significance
		Less han 1 2-5 6-10			11-15	16-20	1 value	Significance	
Level of Awareness	2.96	2.9	93	3.12		3.51	2.95	0.723	0.583



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Types of Risks		Years of					
	Less than 1	2-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	F value	Significance
Level of Awareness	2.83	3.11	2.81	4.00	3.51	1.497	0.230
Types of Risks		Numbe	F value	Significance			
	1-2	3-4	4-6	7-8	9-10	r value	Significance
Level of Awareness	3.10	2.81	2.84	3.20	3.38	0.916	0.468

Table 5 reveals that the level of implementation of the various kinds of ways to manage risks by the respondents is not statistically significant when they are compared according to their profiles. The agribusiness firm owners, young and old, regardless of their educational attainment, who have less than a year or more than one year of experience in managing a business, whether their businesses have been operating for less than a year or have been in operation for 20 years, or with 1-2 employees or more than 2 employees, have the same high level of execution for the various kinds of ways to manage risks. This implies that respondents' profiles do not influence their level of implementation.

Table 5. Differences in the level of implementation

				Age (in yea	ars)		F	ac.
Risk Management	20-	-35		36-51	52 & above		value	Significance
Strategies	3.3	38		3.05	3.45		1.631	0.213
Level of Implementation								
Risk			Educ	cational Att	ainment			
Management Strategies	Post Grad	Colle Gra	_	College Undergrad	Vocational Grad	High School Grad	F value	Significance
Level of Implementation	3.62	3.26	5	3.34	2.94	3.02	0.436	0.782
Risk	Yea	ars of l	Expe	rience in M	lanaging Bus	iness	F	
Management Strategies	Less than		2-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	value	Significance
Level of Implementation	3.34	3	3.11	3.22	3.31	3.84	0.661	0.624
		•	Years	s of Firm O	peration			Significance



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Risk	Less	2-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	F	
Management	than 1					value	
Strategies							
Level of	3.19	3.19	3.40	4.00	3.88	0.767	0.556
Implementation							
Risk		Num	F				
Management Strategies	1-2	3-4	4-6	7-8	9-10	value	Significance
Level of	3.31	3.17	3.29	3.04	3.81	0.916	0.468
Implementation							

The table below highlights the obstacles that respondents encountered in putting their protective measures strategies into practice. It further shows that in terms of financial risks, some of the respondents encountered challenges like insufficient capital as a result of the high price of the products and massive losses due to varied reasons that they have identified, like "high competition, no direct contact with manufacturers or companies, or the rising cost of gasoline affects prices." Thus, these affect their pricing since they get their products from a retailer, then sell them, so the outcome is that their price is higher, which makes customers prefer to buy where the price is lower. In the study of Yasmeen and Kunin [21], they found that MSMEs' biggest challenge is getting access to financing. Those who operate at the microlevel face obstacles when trying to get start-up financing, credit, and other financial services. When it comes to operational risks, they commonly face challenges like a lack of supplies and a cash basis referring to the inputs they are selling where the supply was affected by the pandemic. Their suppliers of inputs require them to pay on a cash basis, and they cannot do anything about it but pay so they will have products to sell. They were forced to close their stores for how many days due to the pandemic and the restrictions that it caused, so they had to preserve the quality of their products and, lastly, the competition that resulted in their unsold products.

For human resource challenges, they commonly encountered the need for regular and close supervision of their employee(s) because they lack knowledge of dealing with customers; therefore, they needed to be at the store to supervise them so they would not lose customers and to familiarize them with the use of their products, specifically pesticides. The respondents encountered challenges in regulatory risk management, like the high regulatory fees, which they also claimed were strictly monitored during the pandemic. Furthermore, they have difficulty going to regulatory bodies. These are the offices they visit every time they renew their permit and where they usually go for other requirements for their operation. When it comes to hazard risk, they claimed that they lacked insurance knowledge, which means that they were unaware of an insurance policy that would meet their needs and were unsure of which insurance provider they would use. Finally, the set-up of the building that they are renting poses a challenge to some of the respondents in implementing their risk management strategies.

Table 6. Challenges encountered

Risk Themes	Frequency
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Financial						
	Insuffic	cient capital	7			
	to varied reasons	7				
Operational						
	Lack of suppl	ies and Cash basis	7			
	Maintaining the q	uality of the products	2			
	Con	npetition	2			
Human Resource						
	Need for regular	and close supervision	7			
Lack of Commitment						
Regulatory						
High regulatory fees						
Difficulty going to regulatory bodies						
Hazard						
Lack of information on insurance						
	Set-up	of building	1			
\mathcal{E}						

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study implies that whatever the profile of the agribusiness owners, they were capable of managing the risks that could endanger their operation. Further, they were aware of the different risks that would endanger their business if ignored. They may be considered microenterprises, but they were able to implement their strategies to minimize those risks. Moreover, their level of implementation of risk management strategies moderately increases when their level of awareness of the different types of risks increases, and vice versa. Furthermore, the respondents' profiles do not influence their level of awareness or implementation of the different risk management strategies. Though they were able to implement their risk management strategies, there were challenges that they encountered along the way, most of which were out of their control.

To aid micro-agribusiness firms in being able to stay in operation whatever circumstances they encounter, it is recommended that extensive information dissemination about the different risks that will endanger their business be conducted, along with financial literacy. This can be done through seminars and trainings, and social media can be used along with other methods that are applicable to them. This can make them completely aware of the risks, enabling them to effectively manage those risks. Lastly, a similar future study should consider the other sectors of agribusiness firms.

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