Exploring the start-up landscape for new farm enterprises

Last apply date
2022-11-14

Project work period
Spring 2023

Opportunity type
Master

Subjects
Industrial Engineering and Management, Production engineering

Credits
30 hp

Description on how to apply
See below

Background

Over the past few decades, we have seen several traditional industries disrupted by new innovations, often as a result of new entrants - start-ups who have realised new product or process innovations, or reshaped an entire industry with a new business model. Start-ups play an important role in enacting change, supported by a growing body of research. However, the opportunities and circumstances for new start-ups to enter into certain industries remain scarcely studied. This remains true for the agri-food industry, and especially for farm enterprises. Starting a new farm enterprise is difficult; attaining knowledge, support, and accessing land represents but a few hurdles. Yet, supporting new entrants into farming is
important, given the continued large decline in farm enterprises, and the fact that farmers constitute an ageing workgroup, with the average age of 55-58 years (2013 statistics).

Moreover, farming has been a traditional and slow-moving industry that, given recent events in the world, economic constraints, and sustainability challenges, needs to fundamentally change in the coming decades. On this note, start-ups could play a fundamental role in rethinking what farming is, or could be - which makes it worthwhile to study the support system around them.

The Study

This master thesis project aims to explore the landscape of new farm enterprises, to map and identify key stakeholders, activities and support structures, or the lack thereof. Moreover, it should aim to compare the cases under investigation. The study may also pay specific attention to the role of collaboration at the focal firms’, i.e., what collaborations exist, and the historic importance of such collaborations.

The expected purpose of the study revolves around developing a better understanding of challenges and opportunities in new venture creation, within the context of farming.

Gathering of empirical data may be done through interviews with the proposed stakeholders and relevant constituents. The study also entails a literature review to highlight the state of the art in agricultural entrepreneurship. The study could also include recommendations for how start-ups within the sector could be further supported by the industry, or through improved policy.

The students are expected to initiate contact with relevant farms in collaboration with the supervisor. Farms may be located anywhere in Sweden, and can be either focused on urban agriculture, and/or new farmers in rural settings, possibly a mix of both.

Qualifications

We are looking for two Chalmers students with an interest in organisational development and innovation management. Courses in organisational and management topics are helpful.

Further information and application

Planned start: January 2023

If you are interested, please contact Robin Meijer at the Division of Innovation and R&D Management before November 11. Attach a CV and a short cover letter describing why this project interests you.

Contact

Robin Meijer (planned supervisor) - robin.meijer@chalmers.se
Maria Elmquist (examiner) - maria.elmquist@chalmers.se