

# Factors Influencing Tillage Students' Decision to Diversify into Horticultural Food Production

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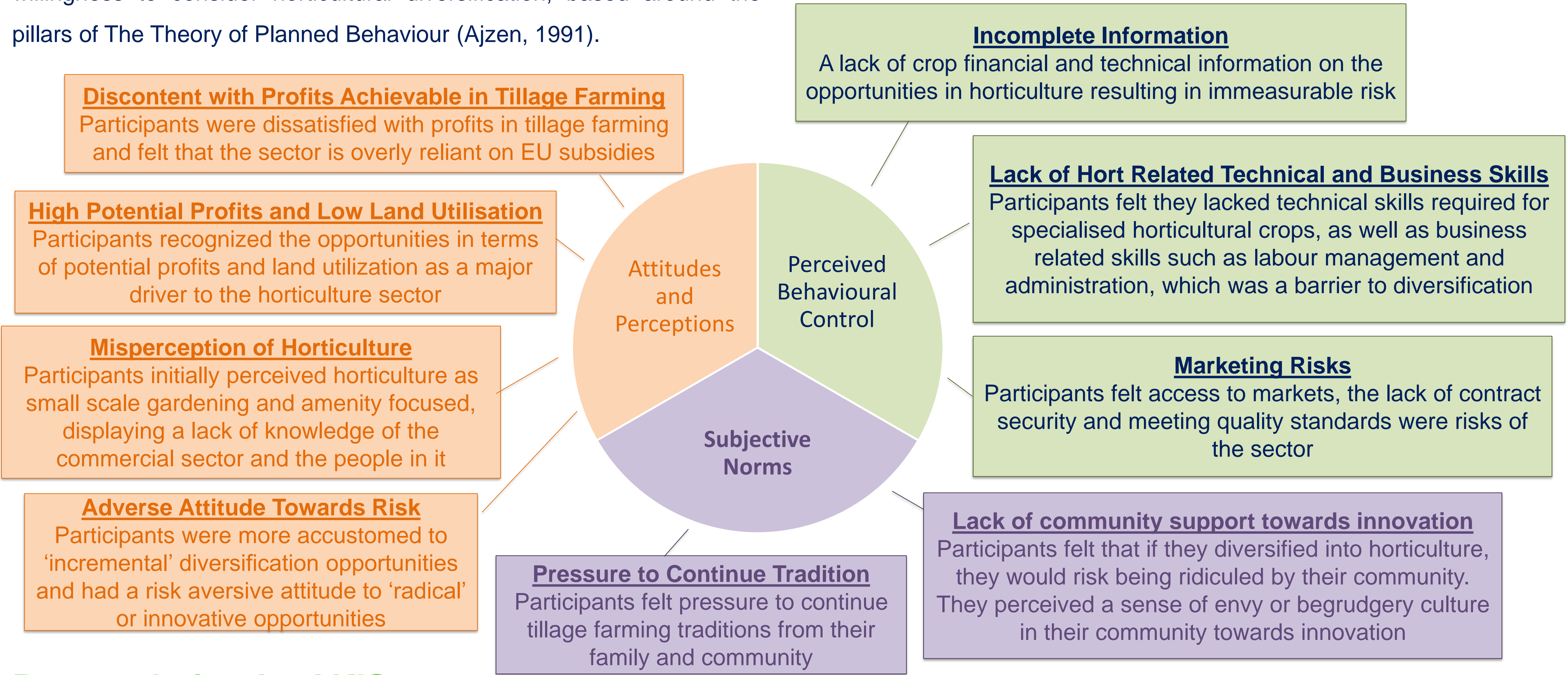
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## Introduction

Due to shifting market trends and agricultural policy objectives, diversification is an option being promoted and built into EU agriculture and rural development policy (Turner *et al*, 2006). Horticulture has been recognised as a sector that contains opportunities for growth, particularly through import substitution (DAFM Foodwise 2025). This poster highlights some of the key factors that were found to influence tillage students' decision around horticultural diversification and some of the proposals for the 'Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System' that emerged. A perceived lack of technical, financial and market information on horticultural opportunities is causing uncertainty and risk, from the perspectives of tillage students in this study. Misperceptions of the horticultural industry and social pressures around continuing tradition play a major role in suppressing innovation into the horticultural sector.

## Results

The graphic below highlights the factors that influence participants' willingness to consider horticultural diversification, based around the pillars of The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).



## Proposals for the AKIS

The AKIS has a responsibility to maximise the innovative capacity of the agricultural and horticultural sectors and based on the evidence of this study, the following initiatives are proposed.

- Increase innovation and diversification modules in Agricultural Colleges - Increased exposure to horticulture and young 'champions' of diversification to help develop positive attitudes and social norms conducive to innovation.

- Promote cross-sectoral collaboration among advisors – Farm visits, seminars and events where farmers and advisors have the chance to share knowledge of opportunities outside their immediate sector.
- Investment in the horticultural sector – Further research of the opportunities in the horticultural market is required. Investment in AKIS resources to generate and disseminate the required technical information for the sector to take advantage of the opportunities

## Acknowledgements and references

For further details and links to the references Ajzen, (1991), DAFM Foodwise 2025 (2015), Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun, (2012) and Turner *et al*, 2006, please contact Eoin Sweetman at the email address at the top of the page.