

RESEARCH NOTE

## **Contribution of Rural Women in Post Harvest operations -A case of Southern Rajasthan**

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### **INTRODUCTON**

Women and agriculture in India seem synonymous terms. One can not think of agriculture without women. There is hardly any activity in agriculture except ploughing, where women are not involved. In some of the activities she is relatively rather more efficient than men. As far as post harvest operations are concerned a few operations viz. winnowing, drying and storage of produce are predominantly performed by women, whereas in operations like harvesting and threshing of crop and transportation of produce they act as a "Co-partner" of their counterparts. Therefore, looking to the involvement of women in post harvest (PH) operations a study was conducted with the specific objective to assess involvement of women in various PH operations starting from harvesting to marketing of the produce.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The Rajasthan state is divided by Aravali hills into two distinct climatic regions viz Arid and Humid region. For the purpose of the study humid region was selected due to the reason that it dominates the Arid region in terms of production of major cereal crops viz, wheat, maize and paddy. From the four agro-climatic zones of humid region two

zones viz, IV b (Tribal) and V (Non-tribal) were selected firstly, on the basis of production of major cereal crops and secondly, zone IV b has been identified as Tribal zone whereas zone V is a Non-tribal zone. Therefore to have a meaningful comparison between two agro-climatically similar but culturally different areas these zones were selected.

From zone IVb, Dungarpur and Banswara and zone V, Kota and Bundi districts were selected. From each identified district two tehsils and from each tehsil five villages within the radius of 20 kms. from the tehsil headquarter were selected randomly. Further, the farm families based on land holdings were classified into three broad categories viz. marginal, small and big (marginal - less than one hectare, small - 1 to 2.5 hectare and big - above 2.5 hectare of land). From each identified village nine households, taking 3 each from marginal, small and big farm family groups were selected randomly. One female family member from each household was selected for final sample. Thus, the sample consisted of 360 farm women (marginal 120, small 120 and big 120). The data were collected through personal interview method with the help of specially structured schedule.

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### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Involvement of women in harvesting and threshing operation

Mechanization seems to be replacing women labour from activities like harvesting and threshing. However it was found that women contribute partially with men in these operations. Table 1 highlights that harvesting and threshing of wheat and paddy crop were not predominantly performed by women yet, it was found that more than 90 percent

of women was found to be negligible as these tasks are considered to be men's tasks. Shifting of produce from farm to threshing yard and to the home, was performed jointly by men and women (68.05 percent).

#### Involvement in Storage and Marketing

'Storage' of produce is virtually performed by women. It is evident from Table 2 that treatment of storage structure or gunny bags, sorting of grains for seed purpose and its safe storage were solely performed

**Table 1 : Percentage distribution of women involved solely or partially in harvesting and threshing component.**

Component	Zone IV b (Tribal)		Zone V (Non-tribal)		Overall	
	Solely	Partially	Solely	Partially	Solely	Partially
Harvesting	0.00	180 (100.00)*	03 (1.66)	177 (98.33)	03 (0.83)	357 (99.16)
Threshing (wheat, paddy)	0.00	180 (100.00)	0.00	176 (97.77)	0.00	356 (98.88)
Moisture test during threshing	0.00	14 (7.77)	05 (2.77)	18 (10.00)	05 (1.38)	32 (8.88)
Maize threshing (shelling, beating)	5 (2.77)	165 (91.66)	02 (1.11)	158 (87.77)	07 (1.94)	323 (89.72)
Shifting of crop (Farm to threshing floor and home)	0.00	132 (73.33)	0.00	113 (62.77)	0.00	245 (68.05)

\* Figures in parentheses show percentage

women assist their counterparts in performing these activities. Likewise threshing of maize which was performed conventionally hand beating in both tribal and non-tribal areas was done jointly by men and women.

In aspects like solution of technical problems and moisture test during threshing which are technical in nature, the involvement

by 42.50, 63.33 and 57.22 per cent respectively.

Further, it was observed that decisions related to selection of place for storage bin and construction of bin were taken jointly by 86.11 and 87.77 per cent respondents respectively. Use of fumigants and chemicals for rat control was considered risky by the

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**Table 2 : Percentage distribution of women involvement solely or partially in storage component.**

Component	Zone IV b (Tribal)		Zone V (Non-tribal)		Overall	
	Solely	Partially	Solely	Partially	Solely	Partially
Selection of place for storage structure	22 (12.22)*	158 (87.77)	28 (15.55)	152 (84.44)	50 (13.88)	310 (86.11)
Construction of storage bin	17 (9.44)	163 (90.55)	10 (5.55)	153 (85.00)	27 (7.50)	316 (87.77)
Treatment of structure/gunny bags	18 (10.00)	162 (90.00)	135 (75.00)	26 (14.44)	153 (42.50)	188 (52.22)
Sorting of grain for seed purpose	110 (61.11)	45 (25.00)	118 (65.55)	19 (10.55)	228 (63.33)	64 (17.77)
Safe storage of seeds	110 (61.11)	27 (15.00)	96 (53.33)	18 (10.00)	206 (57.22)	45 (12.50)
Use of fumigants	11 (6.11)	15 (8.33)	56 (31.11)	10 (5.55)	67 (18.61)	25 (6.94)
Preparation of poison bait	48 (26.66)	4 (2.22)	70 (38.88)	06 (3.33)	118 (32.77)	10 (2.77)
Disposal of dead rats	52 (28.88)	3 (1.66)	85 (47.22)	03 (1.66)	137 (38.05)	06 (1.66)

\* Figures in parentheses show percentage.

farm women. Therefore, activities like use of celphos (74.44 per cent), preparation of poison bait (64.44 per cent) were predominantly performed by male members of the family. Similarly purchasing of chemicals or fumigants was also considered as males responsibility.

### CONCLUSION

On the basis of the findings it could be concluded that in post harvest operations,

a few operations viz, drying of produce, moisture test after drying, protection of produce, treatment of storage structures or gunny bags, sorting of grains for seed pupose and its safe storage were perdominantly performed by women. Whereas marketing and use of fumigants was considered to be men's task. Therefore, it could be concluded that in all operations of post harvest women are involved. She is either performing theses task solely or assisting their counterparts.