

CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN FROM RURAL AREAS IN AGRICULTURE

Nikita Munj¹, Y.A. Lad² and Vishita Khanna³

1 Student, IABMI, AAU, Anand - 388110

2 Associate Professor, IABMI, AAU, Anand - 388110

3 Assistant Professor, IABMI, AAU, Anand - 388110

Email : yogeshalad@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Agriculture can play an important role in growth and poverty reduction. Women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields including in the main crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post-harvest operations, agro/ social forestry, fisheries, etc. In developing countries like India, agriculture continues to absorb and employ female workforce but fails to give them recognition of employed/hired labour. Women constituted 38% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries. It is also estimated that globally 43% of the agricultural labour force consists of women. Many Surveys shows that in general weeding and harvesting activities were predominantly carried out by females, thus overall labour burden of rural women exceeds then men. This piece of research is highlighting the role of women in agriculture and focusing on the obstacles to women growth. It also focuses on various ways to improve the participation of women in the agriculture sector.

Keywords: women, agricultural and allied activities, gender difference, women participation

INTRODUCTION

“You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.”- Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

“Swaminathan” the famous agricultural scientist describes that it was women who first domesticated crop plants and thereby initiated the art and science of farming. While men went out hunting in search of food, women started gathering seeds from the native flora and began cultivating those of interest from the point of view of food, feed, fodder, fibre, and fuel. Women have played and continue to play a key role in the conservation of basic life support systems such as land, water, flora, and fauna. They have protected the health of the soil through organic recycling and promoted crop security through the maintenance of varietal diversity and genetic resistance.

A major part of the country’s population earns its livelihood from agriculture. Our country has a wide and very old setup of agriculture of about 10 thousand years. The agricultural production in India covers field crops, fruit crop, plantation crop, livestock, forestry, fishery etc. So overall it is a huge industry which recruits or engages approximately 60 % of overall manpower of India. The rural population of our

country is mostly dependent on agricultural activity.

The agriculture sector has developed immensely with the infusion of science and technology. But women labour fails to get the recognition as an integral part of this industry. In developing countries like India, agriculture continues to absorb and employ 2/3rd of the female workforce although, the female labour force in developing nations still faces the oppressive status of being majorly responsible for family and household maintenance. Despite this, needs of women are ignored by rural development initiatives.

Women labour involved in agriculture have shown excellent results of productivity and economic vitality through multitasking.

OBJECTIVES

- (a) To study the role of women in agriculture and its allied fields.
- (b) To study the main obstacles to women growth in agriculture sector.
- (c) To study the gender differences in roles and activities in the agriculture sector.

- (4) To study the various ways to improve the participation of women in the agriculture sector.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is completely based on secondary data which has been collected from various research papers and sites.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Women in Agriculture and its Allied Fields

Rural women perform many jobs such as weeding, hoeing, grass cutting, picking, cotton stick collections, separation of seeds from fibre which is highly labourious. They also have to collect wood from fields as it is a major fuel source for cooking. Due to reducing forests, it is very difficult these days to collect wood (Gupta, 2005) and Patel et al., (2016).

Another issue is to collect clean drinking water and that also has to be done by women. They have to go far walking to fetch the water for their survival. Also, activities like keeping of livestock and its other associated activities like milking, milk processing, and preparation of ghee are also carried out by the women (Chandrama Goswami, 2013)

Livestock is the primary subsistent activity used to meet household food needs as well as supplement farm incomes. Studies have revealed rural women earn extra income from the sale of milk and animals. Majorly, cleaning of animal, sheds, watering and milking the animals is done by women. Rural women are also responsible for the collection, preparing dung cakes an activity that also brings additional income to poor families. Our Rural Economy is majorly dependent on poultry farming. Even though rural women are not using the advanced techniques for poultry management like vaccinations and feeds, their growth is commendable and income is rising every year. Most women suffer from malnutrition as they sell all eggs and poultry so that there is more earning and nothing is left for their personal use (Behera, 2013).

(A) Multi-Dimensional Role of Women

- (1) Agricultural Activities: - Sowing, transplanting, weeding, irrigation, fertilizer application, plant protection, harvesting, winnowing, storing etc.
- (2) Domestic Activities: - Cooking, child rearing, water collection, fuel, wood gathering, household maintenance

etc.

- (3) Allied Activities: - Cattle management, fodder collection, milking etc.

Mainly rural women are engaged in agricultural activities in three different ways depending on the socio-economic status of their family and regional factors. They are work as:

- Paid Labourers.
- Cultivator doing labour on their own land.

Managers of certain aspects of agricultural production by way of labour supervision and the participation in post-harvest operations.

Table 1: Statistics about women in Agriculture in India

Sr. No.	Subject	Numbers
1	Total Women Population	494.83 million
2	Total Women Workers	127.05 million
3	Total Women Main Workers	72.65 million
4	Total Women Marginal Workers	54.40 million
5	Total Women Owner Cultivators	41.30 million
6	Total Women Agriculture Wage Workers	50.09 million
7	Total Women Household Industry Workers	08.08 million
8	Total Women Other Workers	27.57 million
9	Total Women in Organized Sector	04.80 million
10	Total Women in Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Plantation,	01.32 million

Source: Census 2010

(B) Main Obstacles in Women Growth in Agriculture Sector

Most women do not have a holding of agricultural productive resources such as land, animals, and machinery. Neither do women have rights for decision making inside and outside the home nor are they given any help or automation for making their work easier. This increases their burden of work. Women workers in agriculture are uneducated and are not aware of their legal rights. They earn fewer wages, especially in private sector.

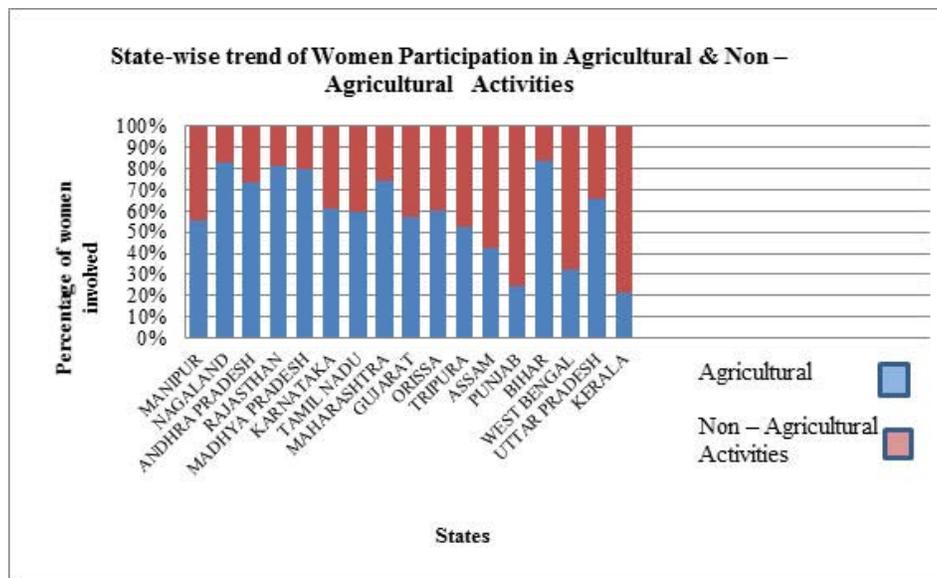


Chart: State-wise trend of Women Participation in Agricultural & Non – Agricultural Activities

Source: Census 2010

(1) Land: Land and labour are two basic factors available to rural people for income generation. Ownership of this land is mostly in hands of male and women are not entitled legal rights for the same, because of its role as security for credit and as a basis for entitlement to irrigation and other inputs, especially technology. Without title to land, women are not recognized, even by the state, as clients for extension services or as candidates for membership in institutions such as co-operative societies.

(2) Credit: No credit institutions, whether be formal or informal gives a loan to women who do not have ownership of the land. Pallavi (2007) characterizes the relation between women and money lenders as volatile and violent. She reports several cases of physical and sexual violence targeted against women for recovery of debts or to snatch land.

(3) Technology and extension: This is one of the most important constraints that women face. Technology developed is not women oriented. Innovation in this sector This is not to deny the importance of such innovations: the introduction of time-saving technology for household work can free time for income earning work (World Bank, 2008). Women are rarely considered as clients for agricultural research and development. Extension workers almost exclusively aim their advice at men’s activities and crops.

(4) Marketing In order to increase the income of households, it is essential to bring subsistence farmers to the market and to help small producers who are already there to benefit from it. Additional constraints for women include seclusion,

lack of literacy, knowledge, and information. Women have no representation in agricultural marketing committees and other similar bodies.

(5) Equitable wages The existence of widespread gender disparity in wages has already been pointed out. Gender disparity seems to be a particularly challenging problem that has persisted despite the existence of a statutory minimum wage and the equal wage statute.

(6) Literacy, education, and skills The importance of education for occupational mobility, especially outside the agricultural sector, is well known. Also, education can be very useful for enabling women to negotiate patriarchal regulation and to claim their rights over property (Kodoth, 2004).

(C) Gender Differences in Roles and Activities:

Analysis of the gender division of labour has revealed that women typically take on three types of roles in terms of the paid and unpaid labour they undertake. These three roles can be described as follows:-

- (a) The productive role:** Which contributes to income generation
- (b) The reproductive role:** Relates to child-bearing and child-rearing responsibilities borne by women
- (c) The community management role:** this refers to activities undertaken by women to ensure the provision of resources at the community level, as an extension of

their reproductive role.

✓ **More Work, Less Pay**

There is a drastic reduction in a number of days of employment per year. It is, therefore, becoming essential for men to migrate in search of better-paid work. Now, Women are replacing them and they are forced to work in harsh conditions as they are less mobile than men. The dependence of women labour on family farms, especially during the peak periods of sowing and harvesting has become very common (Singh and Punia, 1991).

Table 2: Average Wage Earning Received per day by casual labours in Agriculture Sector in 1999-2000

Type of Operation	Female (in ₹)	Male (in ₹)
(a) Manual Work in Cultivation	38.06	48.14
Ploughing	27.91	39.09
Sowing	32.73	41.81
Transplanting	28.37	38.78
Weeding	29.22	39.15
Harvesting	25.74	34.68
Other Cultivation activities	29.24	39.21
(b) Manual Work in other activities	27.65	39.27
Agricultural Activities	30.65	44.84
Forestry	41.30	61.59
Plantation	21.88	28.14
Animal Husbandry	55.73	57.74
Fisheries	27.96	42.64
Other Agriculture activities	27.34	42.31
(c) Non-Manual work in cultivation	34.98	56.49
(d) Non-manual work in activities other than Cultivation.	29.01	44.84

Source: Men and Women in India (Census Report).

(D) Opportunities for Rural Entrepreneurs

The government has taken many initiatives to train and educate women on various aspects of entrepreneurship so that women can become independent financially and in the decision-making process.

I-Training Initiatives

- (1) Small Industry Service Institutes(SISI's) : They provide guidance and training to small entrepreneurs both existing and perspective.
- (2) State Financial Corporation's(SFC's) : They play a vital role in the growth of the small and medium

enterprise. They provide financial assistance in form of term loans, guarantees, etc. In India, there are total 18 SFC

- (3) Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas(DWACRA) : This scheme was aimed to improve the socio-economic status of poor women in the rural areas through the creation of groups of women for income generating activities on a self-sustaining basis. They facilitate women to employment, skill upgradation, training credit and other support activities.
- (4) District Industrial Centres(DIC) : The major roles of DIC are to:
 - ◆ Provide technical support for project preparation
 - ◆ Provide information on sources of machinery and Equipment
 - ◆ Give Priority in power supply
 - ◆ Promote new Industrial estates
 - ◆ Provide Approval of project reports
 - ◆ Provide Training
 - ◆ Marketing Information
- (5) National Small Industries Corporations(NSIC's) : It comes under MSME. They promote aid and foster the growth of micro, small and medium enterprise. They have established technical centres throughout the country.
- (6) Support for Training and Employment For Women(STEP) : It aims to provide skills that provide employment to women and to provide competency and skill that enable women to become entrepreneurs.

(II) Mahila Vikas Nidhi: SIDBI has developed this fund for the entrepreneurial development of rural women.

(III) A consortium of Women Entrepreneurs of India: Which is a platform to assist women through different bodies like NGO's, Self Help Groups(SHG's) to help women entrepreneurs in their entrepreneurial activities like decision making, financial planning etc., SHGs (Self Help Groups) are promoting microenterprise through micro-credit intervention. Microenterprise is an effective instrument of social and economic development.SHG mainly focuses on providing both Managerial and financial assistance to the women to make them resourceful, self-sufficient and ready to start their business.

CONCLUSION

This study aims at understanding the role of women in agriculture. Participation of women from each state in

agriculture sector is commendable. There are few exceptions like Kerala, Punjab and West Bengal where women are actively participating in non-agricultural activities which include household industry, service sector etc. Thus the entire work can be concluded with the facts that women participation in agriculture is increasing with time and women are now acknowledged with the status of "agricultural worker". Though discrimination of wages and in working status still prevails for women labour due to the implementation of various policies and initiatives taken by the government this will further diminish in future.

Rural women are the major contributors to agriculture and its allied fields. Her work ranges from crop production, livestock production to cottage industry. From household and family maintenance activities to transporting water, fuel, and fodder. Despite such a huge involvement, her role and dignity have yet not been recognized. Women's status is low by all social, economic, and political indicators.

Women's wage work is considered a threat to the male ego and women's engagement in multiple home-based economic activities leads to under remuneration for their work. Women spend long hours fetching water, doing laundry, preparing food, and carrying out agricultural duties. Not only are these tasks physically hard and demanding, they also rob girls of the opportunity to study. The nature and sphere of women's productivity in the labour market is largely determined by socio-cultural and economic factors. Women do not enter the labour market on equal terms when compared to men. Their occupational choices are also limited due to social and cultural constraints, gender bias in the labour market, and lack of supportive facilities such as childcare, transport, and accommodation in the formal sector of the labour market.

REFERENCES

- Anonymous Labour bureau ministry of labour & employment government of India Chandigarh/Shimla 2012-2013
- Aruna Kanchi 2010: Women Workers in Agriculture: Expanding Responsibilities and Shrinking Opportunities: ISBN: 978-92-2-123759-4 (print)
- Behera, B.S 2013 : Gender Issue- The role of women in agriculture sector in India. *International journal of marketing, financial services and management research*: Volume 2, Issue 9
- Census of India, 2010, New Delhi, Planning commission
- Chandrama Goswami 2013: Contribution of sericulture to women income in Assam, A case study in Goalpara District of Assam, India. *International journal of scientific and research publication*, PP 31-53
- Gupta, M.P 2005: Empowerment of women in agriculture, *Daily excelsior*, 28 May 2005
- Gupta R, Gupta B.K (1987): Role of women in economic development. *Yojana*, 31(18):28-32
- Kathiriyi, J. B. D. M. Damasia, B. B. Kabaria 2013: *Role of Rural Women In Dairy Farming Of Rajkot District: Tamilnadu J. Veterinary & Animal Sciences* 9 (4) 239 – 247
- Manisha Mani and AlkaVasan 2014: SWOT Analysis of Innovative Rural Indian Women Dairy-preneurs: *International Journal of Innovation and Scientific Research ISSN 2351-8014* Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 552-555
- Mun Mun Ghosh, Arindam Ghosh 2014: Analysis of Women Participation in Indian Agriculture: *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* Volume 19, Issue 5, Ver. IV, PP 01-06
- Patel, G.J., Vahora, S. G. and Thorat, G. N. (2016). Training Needs of Tribal Farm Women in Soybean Production Technology. *Guj. J. Ext. Edu.*, 27(1): 107-109.
- Praveena Kodoth (2004): Gender, Property Rights and Responsibilities for farming in Kerala. *Economic and Political Weekly*: Volume 39, Issue 19
- Sahab Singh, Thakur G., Gupta P C. 2013: A Case Study on Empowerment of Rural Women through Micro Entrepreneurship Development: Volume 9, Issue 6 (Mar. - Apr. 2013), PP 123-126
- Sangeeta Upadhyay and C.P. Desai 2011: Participation of Farm Women in Animal Husbandry in Anand District of Gujarat; *Journal of Community Mobilization and Sustainable Development* Vol. 6(2), 117-121
- Singh S, Punia S, Yadav Ashok (2011). Evaluation of carfentrazone ethyl + metsulfuron methyl against broad leaf of weeds of wheat. *Indian Journal of weed science*, PP 12-22
- Vipinkumar.V.P Asokan.P.K 2014.: A Study of Self Help Group Dynamics of Women in Malabar Fisheries Sector: *Indian Res. J. Ext. Edu.* 14 (2), May 2014
- World Bank. 2008: Women in Agriculture, the Impact of Male Out-Migration on Women's Agency, Household Welfare, and Agricultural Productivity. Washington. DC: World Bank