

Role of Women in Agriculture

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Abstract: *Women play a crucial role in all farm-related activities from land preparation to marketing. They contribute a higher proportion of labor in agricultural sector than men. However, they are not active in decision making. This research note discusses the impact of Green Revolution and mechanization on farm women in India. It stresses the need for a new agricultural research and extension agenda which integrates gender analysis into the process of technology generation and dissemination. It also comes up with future strategies to make women a more active part of important farm decisions both at the household and legislature level. This research note emphasizes the importance of balancing agricultural research systems, extension education, and policy-making bodies to attain women empowerment in agriculture.*

Keywords: Agricultural

I. INTRODUCTION

Women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields. The nature and extent of women's involvement in agriculture varies greatly from region to region. But regardless of these variations, women are actively involved in various agricultural activities.

As per Census 2011, out of total female main workers, 55 per cent were agricultural labourers and 24 per cent were cultivators. However, only 12.8 per cent of the operational holdings were owned by women, which reflect the gender disparity in ownership of landholdings in agriculture. Moreover, there is concentration of operational holdings (25.7 per cent) by women in the marginal and small holdings categories.

Rural women perform numerous labour intensive jobs such as weeding, hoeing, grass cutting, picking, cotton stick collection, separation of seeds from fibre, keeping of livestock and its other associated activities like milking, milk processing, preparation of ghee, etc. Details of activities taken up by women in Agriculture and its allied activities are as follows.

1.1 Agriculture

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 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.

The types of agricultural activities taken up by women include the following :

Sowing , Nursery management ,Transplanting ,Weeding ,Irrigation ,Fertilizer application ,Plant protection ,Harvesting, winnowing, storing etc. ,

1.2 Livestock

Livestock is the primary livelihood activity used to meet household food needs as well as supplement farm incomes. It is a common practice in the rural areas to give an animal as part of a women's dowry. Studies have revealed rural women earn extra income from the sale of milk and animals. Mostly women are engaged in cattle management activities such as Cleaning of animal and sheds, atering of cattle ,Milking the animals ,Fodder collection ,Preparing dung cakes ,Collection farm yard manure Except grazing, all other livestock management activities are predominantly performed by women. Men, however, share the responsibility of taking care of sick animals. It is evident that the women are playing a dominant role in the livestock production and management activities.

1.3 Poultry

Poultry farming is one of the major sources of rural economy. The rate of women participation in poultry farming at household level is central in poultry industry.

1.4 Feminisation of Agriculture

Economic Survey 2017-18 says that with growing rural to urban migration by men, there is ‘feminisation’ of agriculture sector, with increasing number of women in multiple roles as cultivators, entrepreneurs, and labourers. Globally, there is empirical evidence that women have a decisive role in ensuring food security and preserving local agro-biodiversity. Rural women are responsible for the integrated management and use of diverse natural resources to meet the daily household needs. This requires that women farmers should have enhanced access to resources like land, water, credit, technology and training which warrants critical analysis in the context of India. In addition, the entitlements of women farmers will be the key to improve agriculture productivity. The differential access of women to resources like land, credit, water, seeds and markets needs to be addressed.

With women predominant at all levels-production, pre-harvest, post-harvest processing, packaging, marketing – of the agricultural value chain, to increase productivity in agriculture, it is imperative to adopt gender specific interventions.

An ‘inclusive transformative agricultural policy’ should aim at gender-specific intervention to raise productivity of small farm holdings, integrate women as active agents in rural transformation, and engage men and women in extension services with gender expertise.

II. HOW WOMEN IMPACT ORGANIC FARMING

While it’s useful to acknowledge how the organic farming movement has opened doors for women in agriculture, an equally necessary acknowledgement is how the participation of women broadens and deepens the multiple goals of organic and sustainable farming.

While it’s important to avoid sweeping generalizations, existing documentation reveals some specific ways in which women approach farming differently than men do, expanding their objectives beyond the goals of traditional economics. Profit is important to women farmers, but so is quality of life, health and safety, community education, social and environmental justice, and civic duty.

While one approach isn’t necessarily better than the other, creating a more inclusive and innovative environment for solving some of agriculture’s pressing issues (climate change, soil depletion, and pollinator die-off, to name a few) is essential. The more ideas at the table – from all genders – the sooner we’ll find sustainable solutions. Women farmers who focus on collaboration and community improvement would be good voices to have at that table.

III. CONCLUSION

WOMEN ARE THE FUTURE OF ORGANIC FARMING

Evidence that organic farming helps to empower women’s voices across the globe and vice versa is compelling, but the work to give those voices equal value and influence has only just begun.

The comprehensive paper, Organic Agriculture and Women’s Empowerment, outlines areas of focus they deem necessary to promoting the role of women in global agriculture:

Women need to occupy a greater number of agricultural research positions in order to enrich the available body of research with women’s perspectives and self-identified objectives.

Women need more access to technical training. This includes training with farm equipment, but also a reexamination of how institutions like the U.S.’s extension service support and train farmers.

Women need access to capital funds for land and equipment, as well as financial support to purchase things like tools, seeds, and other farming inputs.

Agriculture needs more policies that target a reduction of the gender gap in farming and farm earnings, and supporting action to ensure such policies work toward meaningful change.

Agriculture needs to cultivate more women leaders, both to inspire a continued increase in women farmers and to steer action, research, and access in a direction that is supportive of and accessible to women.

It seems obvious, but maybe history just hasn't been paying attention: women make up half of the world's population, so sustainable economic growth (and all of the social and environmental benefits that stem from that) could be as easy as inviting more women to the conversation. In the words of former U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annon, "there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women." Women farmers are fully poised to benefit from and contribute to that process of empowerment, and it's time to start recognizing their contribution.

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