

## FEMINISING AGRICULTURE: A step towards Women Empowerment

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Women are the key to the success of any human. This is because, if we consider any personality, there stands a woman as a pillar of support in their achievement, be it directly or indirectly.

It is rightly said that “if you educate a man, you educate an individual; if you educate a woman, you educate a nation”.

Women from the very beginning of the civilisation were considered as dependents and were mistreated. In this patriarchal society, women are not given equal opportunities as men. But they are the real strugglers. They have crossed all the roadblocks and entered in every field. Be it in science, space or agriculture, you can find a women showing the zeal and leaving her footprints behind.

Agriculture, being the backbone of the Indian economy, employs about 70 % of the workforce. India’s economy is majorly dominated by the farm sector, depicting a rise in the GDP for the past five consecutive quarters. Agriculture was the only sector that showed positive GDP growth of 3.4 % in Quarter-1, 2020-21 results. It has added Rs. 14,815 crores in the June quarter, showing a silver lining during this economic crunch (NSO).

Agriculture and allied sectors serve as the source of livelihood to the majority of the population. It ensures food security in a nation. Globally, Agriculture is in a transitional phase. It is broadening its scope rapidly. Modernisation in Agriculture with exceptional technology is grabbing the attention of people. Agribusiness activities like protected cultivation, value addition, high-tech agriculture, global marketing etc. is spreading extensively and organic farming is gaining the importance gradually.

India is the world’s largest producer of milk and pulses, 2<sup>nd</sup> largest producer of rice, wheat, sugarcane, fruits and vegetables.

**WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE**

[www.justagriculture.in](http://www.justagriculture.in)

In ancient times, when men were engaged in hunting and gathering, women started growing crops. Evolution began there up on and agriculture came into existence. Now, the Indian economy is primarily dominated by agriculture and 63% of the workforce in agriculture is women. **15 October is celebrated as Women Farmer's day.**

Women play a crucial role in agriculture. About 80% of economically active women are engaged in agricultural work. According to the Economic Survey (2017-18), due to an increase in migrations among the male from rural to urban, there is a feminisation of agriculture.

Besides production, agriculture involves various activities. Women work in multiple roles from sowing to harvesting, post-harvest management, processing, poultry and dairy management, etc. 43% of the total agricultural labour force constitutes women. About 55-66% of women are employed in farm production, 94% of women are involved in dairy and 51% of women are engaged in Forest-based activities.

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE**

India is an agrarian economy. Females are revolutionising the field of agriculture. 36 % of farmers are women. According to USDA, 56 % of farms account for females being the sole decision-maker.

Opportunities in agriculture and allied sectors prevail at different stages of the agriculture process like the input stage, farming stage, value chain, processing and marketing stage. For women, there are opportunities in numerous areas. This includes vegetable farming, cultivation of fruits, food grains, pulses and oilseeds etc.

- Most of the farm activities like sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, winnowing and processing are predominately done by women.
- Rural women are mostly involved in dairy farms. They undergo different activities from cleaning the sheds, milking, feeding the cattle to make dung cakes.
- In villages, most of the households have poultry as an additional source of income and women play a major role in maintaining them.
- Women are largely employed in the preparation of various fruits and vegetable preserved items like chips, papad, Squashes, Jam, Jelly, Marmalade, pickles, Ketchup, etc.

- Beekeeping would be a better alternative for rural women as it is a growing venture and even an illiterate can start with no land requirement.
- There is immense scope for women entrepreneurs in developing the greenhouse concept, herbal plantation, dairy & poultry development, animal husbandry, grading and packaging of Agri products, sericulture, horticulture and many more. Besides the above-mentioned enterprises, women have better opportunities in Fish/prawn farming, Mushroom cultivation, gardening & landscaping and floriculture etc.

### **CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE**

Though women are actively involved in agricultural activities, they are barred from making farm decisions and starting Agri-enterprises. This is due to social clichés prevalent in society.

Obstacles faced by women are

- Lack of professional education
- No direct ownership of the property or farmland
- An improper balance between family and career obligations
- Poor financial support
- Lack of market knowledge
- The Complicated procedure of availing loan from banks
- Weak linkages between government and women entrepreneur

### **STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE**

Strategies must be formulated to empower women in the agriculture sector.

- The government should aid in strengthening education to women by providing scholarships, free education etc.
- Self-help groups (SHG) should be developed and women should get access to these groups. This helps in empowering women with similar socio-economic conditions
- The Loan Procedure should be simplified for starting enterprises by women.
- MSME sector should perform exceptionally to promote women empowerment. This will lead to the creation of new jobs.

### **CONCLUSION**

Women are the superpower of any nation and have shown their charisma in all the fields including agriculture. A major category of the workforce in the Agriculture sector is women. From sowing to harvesting, feeding the cattle to taking care of poultry, women

impart a major role in agriculture. Huge opportunities wait for women in this sector. There are many areas, viz. protected cultivation, hydroponics, vertical farming, dairy, poultry, beekeeping, mushroom cultivation, etc. where women can develop.

Though women play a key role in agriculture, their work is camouflaged. To owe justice to their hard work, they must be educated and skills should be imparted through training. Women agripreneurship should be encouraged to recognise their potential and uplift their socio-economic conditions. Equal opportunities, as of men should be given to women in land owning, starting a business or availing loans.

The government should further take a step to recognise the potential in the women and implement policies like Agri Udaan, Dairy Entrepreneurship Development Scheme to promote agripreneurship among women. This would help in feminising agriculture and contributing to women empowerment.

