

Role of Women in Agriculture and its Allied Fields

Dr. Nisha Meena

Assistant Professor, Jagannath University, Jaipur Rajasthan

ARTICLE ID: 43

Introduction

As we all know, in the cities, a woman takes care of the entire house, as well as she does a job, in the same way, women in rural areas take care of animals. Together she plays an equal role in the field. Women are the backbone of the development of rural and national economies. They comprise 43% of the world's agricultural labor force, which rises to 70% in some countries. In India, 80% of the agricultural production comes from small farmers, who are mostly rural women. Women comprise the largest percentage of the workforce in the agricultural sector, but do not have access and control over all land and productive resources.

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 laborers 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 labor intensive jobs such as weeding, hoeing, grass cutting, picking, cotton stick collection, separation of seeds from fiber, 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.

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 Laborers.
- Cultivators doing labor on their own land
- Managers of certain aspects of agricultural production by way of labor 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.



Livestock

Livestock is the primary livelihood activity that is 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 that 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
- Watering of cattle



- Milking the animals
- Fodder collection
- Preparing dung cakes
- Collection of 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.

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.



Feminization of Agriculture

Economic Survey 2017-18 says that with growing rural to urban migration by men, there is ‘feminization’ of agriculture sector, with increasing number of women in multiple roles like cultivators, entrepreneurs, and laborers. 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 of production i.e. 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.

