

Women's Role in Agriculture

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Women are the flag bearers of change

Women are the epitome of development

Women are the backbone of society

Women are the soul of any country

So, this 50% population should be given their due credit for the chores that they have been doing from the past. The central role of women in any society ensures stability, progress and long-term development of a nation. They are the pivot around which the whole family revolves in our society. They are regarded as goddess of power, prosperity and learning. Over the ages the women's place in the society was determined by needs, ideas, dream and aspiration of man. He only determines norms of behavior, the way she should live, conduct herself in society and the things she should sacrifice for the wellbeing of family members. In agriculture sector also primary focus is given to only one gender. Male is the dominant decision maker of this industry and benefit seeker of the policies. Agriculture sector as a whole has developed and emerged immensely by empowering men with technology. But this emergence is incapable of lifting the status of women labor as an integral part of the industry.

In a developing country like us, agriculture continues to absorb and employ female work force but fails to give them recognition of an employed or hired labor. Agriculture contributes 15.96% (2019) to the GDP of the economy. It provides 55% employment in the country out of which 75% of full-time workers are woman. Role of women in this sector



cannot be ignored but they are suffering from wage disparity i.e., for the same amount of work they are paid less.

Rural women work in farm, handles her responsibilities and also fulfills her household duties. Among the household activities the primary job is of taking care of livestock or poultry farm. Livestock & poultry not only feeds her family but also allows her to earn that extra income. Rural women single handedly performs the back breaking activity of cattle management in most parts of the country which involves cleaning of the shed & animals, watering the cattle, milking, fodder collection, making of farm manure etc. They play a dominant role in livestock production and poultry. With the increase in rural men migrating to cities for better opportunities, women silently adorn many roles in the agriculture sector - from homemaker to labour to cultivator and even entrepreneur, roles of rural women are changing very rapidly in our country. Women have started to predominate every level of agriculture and its value chain.

But a large number of women still remain as the "invisible contributors" as they working in Indian farmlands as daily wage earners and are still the unknown and ignored as **Contributors to Indian Agriculture** .

Their employment is seasonal and provisional adding up to all sorts of uncertainties in their income cycle. Yet the number of these "invisible contributors" goes up every year, about 80% of economically active women in India are employed in agriculture sector. To increase the productivity of Indian farmlands and double the farmer's income gender specific interventions should be made. Women inclusive policies, women centric loans for small scale business, women driven entrepreneurial opportunities are the need of the day for rural India. Women centric agriculture extension efforts will allow them to shift their efforts in the right direction and establish their credibility in the rural society. When these women get empowered with opportunities and choices to make with regards to their career – only then will the society be liberated and the economy will grow with momentum. Only then food security will become a reality and further prospects for the current and future generations of women in rural society will evolve. Today, many countries tend to pay more attention to the agricultural sector than ever before, Indian government has also created policies understanding the role of women in agriculture and economy. Government has also started

implementing various schemes to improve the entitlements of women farmers which aim to bridge the policy gaps that exists in the sector. The future of India is changing and India is witnessing the biggest transfer of power not only in metropolitan cities but also in the countryside of our great nation. For you and me it is a blessing to witness this revolutionary shift in our society that was always biased to one gender. Gender equality now seems a



reality – not so far away.

Women - The unsung warriors of Indian Agriculture

Women are a vital part of Indian economy. Over the years, there is a gradual realization of the key role of women in agricultural development and their vital contribution in the field of agriculture, food security, horticulture, processing, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, and other allied sectors. Women form the backbone of agriculture in India, comprising the majority of agricultural labours, women have been putting in labour not only in terms of physical output but also in terms of quality and efficiency. Women are critical to the well-being of farm households. Aside from raising children, women are expected to prepare all meals, maintain the homestead, and assist in crop and animal production, all the while tending to the general health of their families. Perhaps, ironically, it is because women have so many responsibilities that they have been over-looked by agriculturalists and policy makers – it has been more convenient to label men as farmers and women as child raisers and cooks. In truth, women are involved in all aspects of agriculture, from crop selection to land preparation, to seed selection, planting, weeding, pest control, harvesting, crop storage, handling, marketing,



and processing. Whatever the reason for this neglect, the importance of developing farming technologies relevant to women has only recently been recognized.

Women play a major role in decision making process in traditional agriculture, but they are virtually not recognized as producer within their own right. Due to socio-cultural traditions the rural women have subordinate role in the society. They have inaccessibility to modern technology, credit, training and other facilities available to male workers and farmer. Their role has become passive due to ignorance of modern inputs and methods of cultivation. Their regain energy is spent in procuring fuel, fodder, food and water and has little time to improve, heir skills. In the process they have lagged behind their male colleagues in use of improved bullock drawn production and processing tools and machinery. Besides hand tools and improved bullock drawn implements, more than 240,000 tractors and 700,000 irrigation pumps are being introduced every year for mechanization of Indian agriculture. But these improved implements are exclusively handled by male workers. The women continue to perform farm operations which are full of drudgery such as transplanting, weeding, winnowing, shelling, decorticating, milling etc.

Rural Women form the most important productive work force in the economy of majority of the developing nations including India. Agriculture, the single largest production endeavor in India, contributing about 15.96% of GDP, is increasingly becoming a **Female Activity**. Agriculture sector employs 4/5th of all economically active women in the country. 48% of India's self-employed farmers are women. There are 75 million women engaged in dairying as against 15 million men and 20 million in animal husbandry as compared to 1.5 million men.

Beyond the conventional market-oriented narrower definition of 'productive workers', almost all women in rural India today can be considered as 'farmers' in some sense, working as agricultural labour, unpaid workers in the family farm enterprise, or combination of the two. Moreover, several farm activities traditionally carried out by men are also being undertaken by women as men are pulled away into higher paying employment.

Every woman's success should be an inspiration to another.

Currently in agriculture many women are progressing with zeal and enthusiasm to learn and adapt with their hardwork resulting in great success in terms of business-like livestock, poultry or even crop husbandry. They are the innovators who tend to attempt new things with calculated risk and turn out to be better managers of farm.



What we all need is one positive change in our thinking to let women get their due credit and let them fly in the boundless sky.