

Role of Women in Agricultural Sector

Abstract

Women have played and continue to play a vital role in every sphere of agricultural activity. Operations that involve less physical labour and more drudgery, such as weeding, are left to women, and women undertake these tasks in addition to their primary function as housekeepers and home makers. Women work harder and for longer hours than men. Most importantly, they also work on more tasks than men. Therefore, for an economically viable and ecologically sustainable agriculture, the involvement of women in the process of modernization of farming practices is a must.

Keywords: Cultivate, Agriculture, Weeding, Mechanized.

Introduction

This paper examines the ways in greater integration through agriculture impact and men differently and ensures implications for growth. This paper finds that agriculture creates many jobs for women in agriculture sector. Jobs that bring many household resources under women control leads to greater earnings in the family. Although, women are more than ever finally employed. Differences in wages earned by women and men persist in all countries. Women also have less access to productive resources especially in developing countries. Due to these reasons and women's lower education level compel the women have a greater tendency to remain in subsistence agriculture. Professional women continue to face discrimination in hiring and promotion. The impact of liberalization and globalization on women is important not only because they represent almost half of the total population. But also because they face constraints. Which make them less beneficial from the liberalization? Once different impacts are ascertained well designed policy responses may aid women in taking advantage of greater openness to agriculture.

Swaminathan, the famous agricultural scientist describes that it was women who first domesticated crop plants and thereby initiated the 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, fiber 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. The international development community has recognized that agriculture is an engine of growth and poverty reduction in countries where it is the main occupation of the poor. Women make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies in all developing countries. Their roles vary considerably between and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world, where economic and social forces are transforming the agricultural sector. Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities typically include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes. Many of these activities are not defined as "economically active employment" in national accounts but they are essential to the wellbeing of rural households. This paper contributes to the gender debate in agriculture by assessing the empirical evidence in three areas that has received much attention in the literature: But the agricultural sector in many developing countries is underperforming, in part because women, who represent a crucial resource in agriculture and the rural economy through their roles as farmers, labourers and entrepreneurs, almost everywhere face more severe constraints than men in access to productive resources. Efforts by national governments and the international community to achieve their goals for agriculture to achieve their goals for agricultural

Shripad Kulkarni,
Assistant Professor,
Deptt. of Political Science,
University College of Arts,
Tumkur, Karnataka

economic growth and food security will be strengthened and accelerated if they build on the contributions that women make and take steps to alleviate these constraints. Among the rural women workforce, most of them are agriculture labour and some of cultivators. There are lot of variations in involvement of women in agriculture status, regions and crop selection. While the men are moving to cities for better occupations the women are taking care of cultivations and sometimes they used to work as farm labour to support their family needs. The weaker section of the women used to market their products such as selling vegetables. And other food crops in farmers market or door to door. Most of the women cultivators are involved in food crops rather than cash crops since cash crops need more marketing efforts which are traditionally taken care by men. The women in higher socio economic sections are not involved directly in cultivation or live stock and they used to help in labour administration, supporting activities and accounting, Ironically, we often define the men as farmers, in fact the women also equally involved in agriculture in all phases. If we think beyond the conventional definition of "FARMER", most of the rural women should be considered as farmers but they are ignored. "Friedman (1992) defined empowerment in terms of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' and central importance of 'power' in a political sense, not merely limited to a particular development activity. The involvement of women's associations in development projects at the grassroots' levels through direct involvement in the decision- making and implementation procedures. Not only empowers them, but also gives them the chance of contributing their own efforts to the main stream of the development of their communities" Still Indian society has some gender boundaries, but the rural women involve in multiple productive roles and it is necessary to give equal opportunity in agriculture. Most of the women farmers are marginal or small farmers, landless tenant farmers and farm labour they don't have enough land to cultivate, less knowledge, limited access to innovative technologies, low capital and less credit facilities. In order to empower and improve the women farmers' productivity they need to have proper farm training and capacity building programs to compete various challenges in their rural livelihood. Women land ownership plays a major role in their credit worthiness, if they have right on the agriculture land they will have access to financial resources and savings. Rural women have been acknowledged as the core food producers and processors. Banks should recognize them as entrepreneurs; loans and kisan credit cards have to be approved for them. Special support and market connectivity has to establish for rural women artisans to sell their agro based handicrafts. The farm labor wages should be the same without gender differences and the equal employment benefits have to be given in all rural schemes like NREGA. Sufficient political representation must be required by rural women in local level councils, it directs them as an equal partners in political, economical and legal decision making. We know that most of the developing

countries depend on agriculture for livelihood and food security. Agriculture needs manpower, if the manpower split into gender wise, amazing fact is that the women contribution is greater or equal to men.

Role of Women in Agriculture

Women have played and continue to play a vital role in every sphere of agricultural activity. Operations that involve less physical labour and more drudgery, such as weeding, are left to women, and women undertake these tasks in addition to their primary function as housekeepers and home makers. Women work harder and for longer hours than men. Most importantly, they also work on more tasks than men. Therefore, for an economically viable and ecologically sustainable agriculture, the involvement of women in the process of modernization of farming practices is a must. In developed countries, agriculture is managed by a small number of men because it is mechanized; except Japan, where mechanized operations are handled by women. Although opportunities and work may change, women continue to earn a substantial portion of the family income. They continue to dominate food processing industries, backyard livestock, and vegetable production. Agricultural modernization in India appears to have had mixed effects on women in small-cultivator households. For many, the financial intensiveness of adopting the high Yield Variety (HYV) package had increased the need for cash income, which either forces women to work as agricultural labourers to supplement the family income or increases their work in farming activities to avoid paying labourers. In households that have benefited from the technology package, women have been able to withdraw from agricultural labour, though this withdrawal has often translated into heavier work in the household (for example, cooking for hired labourers) rather than leisure or education.

The absence of men in the homes of a larger number of rural households, has forced women to seek additional ways and means of earning income to maintain themselves and their families. It is out of this necessity that farming the land is and has become an increasingly important means for survival in rural communities, especially for women.

It is therefore not coincidental that large numbers of women work along the entire agricultural value chain, and make significant contributions to family income and economic well-being. This is in addition to their traditional reproductive/domestic responsibilities.

The contribution being made by women in producing food in their backyards or in containers cannot be overlooked as they, too, are contributing in a significant way to securing food for their families, friends and communities alike.

There is a strong correlation between women's economic opportunity and access to affordable, safe food. Women make up over half of agricultural workers and livestock keepers in developing countries, and bear the primary responsibility for their families' food security. Yet they face significant gaps in accessing natural resources, knowledge, service and markets, which hinder their

productive capacity. Rural women have very hectic life. Her work starts from dawn and ends at dusk. The daily routine work begins from house cleaning fetching drinking water, dish washing laundry, preparing food for family, care of children, tailoring and sewing clothes. She manages these activities very smartly. Even though rural women supply half of the Pakistan's food production, yet her own food security is always at risk. Women farmers are frequently ignored in development strategies and policies. In most of the developing countries, both men and women farmers do not have access to adequate resources, but women's are even more constrained because of cultural traditional and sociological factors.

Feminization of Agriculture

About 85 percent of all rural women workers in India are in agriculture, according to the 2007 Report of the Sub-Group mentioned earlier. The 2001 Census showed that almost a third of all cultivators are women, and women also constitute over 46 percent of agricultural labourers. In stated like Uttaranchal with high migration of men to the plains, over 56 percent of cultivators are women. With such a significant presence in agriculture, why do women and their work tend to be invisible? Feminist scholars say that Labour relations on the farm and within households are in the form of family conjugal obligation. The length of time spent on agriculture and household activities and volume of work done are very high but these are under-valued as they are not market-based and are seen as part of women's obligations. Women actively involved in agriculture may be under-counted as they may be misreported as 'housewives' or as 'not working'.

But this situation is changing. A process of feminization of agriculture is increasingly under way. As population increases and land holdings get fragmented, dependence on subsistence production becomes unviable. Women seek local wage labour opportunities and men migrate for wage labour or even desert women. Women of households that own some land cultivate and manage it along with other livelihood and domestic tasks. The process of feminization is double edged, particularly for smallholder women farmers. On the one hand, with low access to land, labour, and other means of production, they have low potential for market gains. This increases their work burden, leaving less time for domestic tasks and childcare. On the other hand, it

also increases their access to social resources and decision-making opportunities. In agriculture, they acquire increased understanding and voice in the choice of crops, application of fertilizer, time to irrigate, hiring of labour, and investment in capital goods and inputs.

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. Agriculture is becoming increasingly 'feminised' globally as men move out of the sector more quickly than women. The reasons for increasing female representation in agriculture vary from voluntary and involuntary withdrawal of men from farming, to growing wage opportunities for women in export-oriented non-traditional crops and activities.

Main Obstacles in Women Growth in Agriculture Sector

Male workers are more mobile and risk taking and seeking job opportunities outside their own territories. In the case of women the choice is restricted to the extent to which the female member is able to exercise influence on the family. Married status, child bearing and rearing, education, attitude of the head and other family members, etc, may constrain the women's possibility of seeking jobs outside the locality. This would suggest that the decision roles for men and women cannot be looked as the same thing. The norms prescribed for male decision may differ from those of females.

1. Few women holding of agricultural productive resources such as land, animals, and machinery.
2. Women absence from decision making process, either inside or outside home.
3. Women perform all un-mechanized agricultural tasks and perform multiple tasks, which add more burden to them.
4. Women workers in agriculture suffer from high illiteracy rate among them and drop-out of schools.
5. Women do not know their legal rights.
6. Miss applying some laws and regulations in favour of women such heritage legislation.

Table 1: Level of Participation of Males and Females in Fruit Cultivation (%)

Sl. No	Operation	Hills(%)			Plains (%)		
		Male	Female	Jointly	Male	Female	Jointly
1	Land Preparation	47.37	15.79	36.84	72.22	5.56	22.22
2	Planting	26.32	44.74	28.94	27.78	5.56	66.66
3	Irrigation	23.68	47.37	15.79	66.66	5.66	27.78
4	Manuring	7.89	78.95	13.16	33.33	11.11	55.56
5	Training/Pruning	36.84	44.74	13.16	66.67	11.11	22.22
6	Plant protection	39.47	39.47	5.26	72.22	5.56	22.22
7	Harvesting	2.62	63.16	34.21	16.67	16.67	66.66
8	Marketing	39.47	39.47	5.26	27.78	33.39	66.66
9	Preservation/ Storage	2.63	76.32	21.05	27.78	16.37	55.55

Approaches Rural Women are Rarely Considered the Primary Clients of Agricultural

Research and development programs or users of improved technology. Technical training and extension programs are almost exclusively targeted at men, thereby denying women an opportunity to improve their skills and access new channels of communication and state-sponsored support services. Moreover, when fed through traditional systems that limit women's access to resources and impose a gendered division of labour that allocates to women the most tedious, labour-intensive, and poorly rewarded work, the introduction of technology has the tendency to increase the labour burden of some of the poorest rural women without necessarily increasing their gains. It is cleared from an examination of gender-related impacts of technological change in agriculture that one needs to bear in mind the intra-household allocations of labour, income, and access to land as factors constraining women or affecting their ability to benefit from change. To design technologies that match the realities experienced by the majority of poor producers in non irrigated, environmentally fragile areas, closing the gap between scientists' priorities and those of women farmers will need to be an essential strategy for a more equitable and sustainable Green Revaluation. This can be brought about by creating channels of communication through participatory research can signal their technical requirements to breeders, and through which breeders can learn from experienced farmers about the optimal management of local varieties under restrictive environmental conditions.

Household Technologies for Farm Women

Women's increased workloads in agricultural tasks, combined with dwindling natural resources, mean that they often have less time to meet other household needs. Although the amount of labour and resources required for maintenance of the household is tremendous, very little research has gone into and water of for postharvest activities such as food processing and preparation. The lack of women-specific technologies constrains their ability to produce enough food. Earn an adequate income, ensure household maintenance, and care for family members. This situation has led to changes in cooking habits and the preparation of fewer, less nutritious meals. In some instances child malnutrition has increased, as nutritional security often depends upon the availability of non food resources such as child and health care, clean water, and fuel supplies. As women's needs and priorities are excluded from the research agenda, they are often affected by the unintended side-effects of modern technologies introduced for the benefit of others. Experience has shown that technology development and dissemination is not gender neutral, and can have a devastating impact on women's access to resources and income generating activities as well as on their control over their own labour. If farm women have to adopt new technologies at the farm, they should be assisted in liberating themselves from the drudgery of household work. Technological innovations to reduce time and labour on household work are needed. The

most hazardous and time-consuming tasks of rural women are collecting fuel wood and its use in a smoke filled kitchen. Introduction and popularization of technological innovations like thermal efficient cook stoves, biogas, and solar stoves could help. Further development of low-cost housing is also essential. Use of alternate income-generation technologies like household-level food processing, rural and cottage industries have the potential to supplement family income. Water is scarce in most India villages. Popularization of water harvesting structures and water conservation, community afforestation/ reforestation will not only help conserve natural resources but also generate employment.

Training Needs of Farm Women

For quick adoption of technology by farm women, properly oriented training programmes, provision of credit, inputs and facilities, and effective dissemination of information are essential. Exact training needs of different categories of women should be identified. There is a need for training women in entrepreneurial and operational skills. One of the things generally overlooked is that change agents are mostly men, which restricts free participation and discussion by women. Encouraging women scientists and trainers, and identifying more women farmers as contact drawers and resource persons in villages would not only make effective. A two-way dialogue between extension personnel and women farmers needs to be encouraged. To be empowered, women have to be made self-reliant and free from discrimination. Exploitation and oppression. This could be achieved through gender-sensitive planning, which takes into consideration the impact of policies and programs on women, and is sympathetic to their needs.

Production Resources for farm Women

Farm women's access to production resources is restricted. Access to credit is difficult, since most women are not asset holders and do not own property, which is a prerequisite for lending agencies. Thus, access to one of the most important factors of production, such as capital, is denied. Agencies like National Bank for agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), banks, cooperative societies, and market yards could easily remedy this situation. Women's cooperatives should be revitalized with an increased focus on entrepreneurship. Women's active role in the decision-making process is not only warranted but essential. Farm information and communication support should highlight farm women.

Unless socially sound technological packages are coupled with appropriate services and policies, the fruits of scientific work will not automatically accrue either to women or man.

Innovative Strategies for the Future

Agricultural research and technology should pay more attention to meeting farm women's needs. This calls for reorientation of technology development not only toward the agro-climatic region but also towards the end user. New approaches to increase women's involvement in agricultural research are emerging in national and international institutions

such as international Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Food and agriculture organization (FAO). United Nations Development program (UNDP), International Institute of tropical Agriculture (IITA), Indian council of agricultural research (ICAR), and integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA). These seek not only to benefit women but also to benefit from them, especially in the areas of crop production and biodiversity. In peru, for example, the international potato Centre (CIP) is testing and screening staple food crops grown by women in sub Saharan Africa, such as sweet potato, to breed early maturing, high yielding varieties with some degree of drought tolerance. These crops are often used by women during famine and are eaten before the main harvest or when the staple harvest is poor.

In cote d' Ivoire, the West Africa Rice Development Association (WARDA) had been conducting surveys to identify the preferences of women and men farmers in adopting improves rice varieties. While men prefer short-stature high – yielding varieties, women are reluctant grow their varieties because of the difficulties in harvesting them while carrying infants on their back. As this constraint may lead women farmers to reject such varieties, WARDA has increasingly shifted its emphasis toward the development of medium –to tall-stature varieties. Technology cannot remain in isolation nor create cultural shock. Science as a magic wand alone cannot remove these gender iniquities. Farm women are confronted with the triple burden of farm work household duties, and child rearing. There is an urgent need for a new agricultural research and extension agenda that integrates gender analysis into the technology generation and dissemination process. Gender equity should form an important variable in the holistic analysis of farming systems in future.

Through their daily activities, experience, and knowledge, women have a major role in knowledge, women have a major role in agriculture and rural livelihoods. However, at all levels of policy planning, rural women are ignored and hampered by restricted rights to the resources they rely on to meet their needs. The autonomy provided by the law is merely statutory or symbolic, and rarely seen in real life. Through some improvements by way of reserving seats for women in panchayats and local governance have been achieved, there is still some distance to go before women in the rural sector can truly be considered “empowered.”

Aim Of the Study

The objective of this paper is to study the role of women in agricultural sector.

Conclusion

Rural women are the major contributors in 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 has yet not been recognized. Women's status is low by all social economic, and political indicators. Women's wage work is considered a thart to the 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 chils care, transport, and accommodation in the formal sector of the labour market. Women's labour power is consider inferior because of employees predetermined notion of women's primary role as homemakers. As a result of discrimination against female labour women are concentrated in the secondary sector of labour market. Their work is low paid, low status, casual, and lacks potential upward mobility. The majority of women in the urban sector work in low-paying jobs. For the recognition of women contribution in agriculture and its allied fields and reducing the gender issues, these are the following recommendations:-

1. Recognition of labour work of working women in the rural economy may be accounted in monetary terms.
2. More facilities should be provide to poor rural women for land, agricultural and livestock extension services.
3. Priority must be given to women in accessing credit on soft terms from banks and other financial institutions for setting up their business, for buying properties, and for house building.
4. Measures should be taken to enhance women's literacy rates. A separate education policy for women may serve the purpose.
5. Women must be involved in decision-making bodies that have the potential to introduce structural changes. This action will bring some changes in the gender will bring some changes in the gender relations in the society.
6. Women must be aware regarding their existing rights, access to judicial relief and redress, removing discrimination through legal reforms, and providing legal aid, assistance and counseling.

Finally it is concluded that the rural women are exploited by land lords for their personal good and enrichment. Women are personal good and enrichment. Women are treated as sub-servant or personal property. In this regard government must formulate policies to enhance their skills and their work should be counted in economic indicators. It is the concern, commitment, and collective action of agricultural research systems and policy makers that can empower rural women. These when combined with scientific and technological empowerment may yet usher in a true agrarian revolution.

References

1. Varma, Shashi K, *women in Agriculture: A Socio-Economic Analysis* Ashok Kumar Mittal Concept Publishing Company pp.14.

2. Deji, Olanike F., *Gender and Rural Development*, Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, PP.173-174
3. Giriappa S. *Role of Women in Rural Development*, Anil Mittal for Daya Publishing House. PP. 21-22.
4. FAO. (2003a). *FAO Focus: Women and the Green Revolution: Food and Agriculture Organization*.
5. *Gender, Technology and Development* Asian Institute of Technology SAGE Publications, New Delhi.
6. *ZENITH International Journal of Business Economics and Management Research*, Vol.1 issue 1, oct 2011, ISSN22498826.
7. <http://www.foo.org/docrep13/am307e/am307e00.pdf>
8. http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/magazines/allwomen/the-role-of-rural-women-in-agricultural-development_9503459#ixzz2Mlyg4
9. <http://www.nrmcindia.co.in/researchpaper.php>
10. <http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/9281Iled.pdf>