

# Employment & Empowerment Opportunities for Women in Secondary Agriculture the Indian Perspective

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## Abstract

Women are the backbone of rural development and national economies. Women not only support their households by doing domestic jobs but they contribute in other supporting jobs of the house inmates. They work in fields, for crop growth and development, maintenance of crops in the fields, harvesting, primary and secondary processing, marketing and ultimate consumption as well. However, the contribution of women (especially belonging to the particular household) to most of these works goes unnoticed and unpaid. Agriculture is the major player in supporting livelihoods and socio-economic development of the nation and almost 70 per cent of the population depends on it directly or indirectly. After tapping almost the full potential of agriculture and its primary activities viz; growing and harvesting the crop; we must focus on secondary agriculture. Secondary agriculture supports primary agriculture by adding value to the basic produce, creating facilities for primary processing and stress management in agriculture, and adding value to basic agro commodities to allow farmers to get better returns from their harvest. Women being the major participant in these activities at one step or other can avail an opportunity to get paid for the work they perform, thus generating an income for their households. They can be empowered through training and exposure learning in these secondary agriculture techniques and hence can be a major work force for such ventures which could show a new way to the country's economy and socio-economic upliftment of its population.

**Keywords** Empowerment, Employment, Secondary agriculture, Value Addition.

### Introduction

Women have always been the major role player in almost all jobs of households, farms and socio-economic activities of the society. However being the silent worker of the society and considered as 'weaker', most of the activities of women go unnoticed or are considered as part of their day to day activities which are obvious to be done by them. However, women have proven themselves as better learners, workers and performers in every field. Various government initiatives, developmental programmes, societies and NGOs are working day and night for better livelihood and socio-economic status of women.

Agriculture is one such occupation which absorbs most of these silent workers. It is evident that women are involved in almost all sort of agricultural activities both at farm viz., preparation of land, sowing, irrigation, weeding, harvesting and almost all operations in-between and off-farm activities like cleaning, drying, storage and now even transport and marketing also involves women. In addition to all these agricultural based activities all sort of allied activities i.e., animal rearing, gardening (kitchen or backyard), processing and preservation of harvest and sometimes the region specific activities like bee-keeping, mushroom growing, silk worm rearing, poultry, goatry, rabbitry etc are also supported by women in the household. However, the condition of women in all regions of the country is not pitiful. In some parts of the country they are 'head' of the household and are respected for what they do. They are both socially and economically independent and strong enough to run a household on their own.

### Aim of the study

The aim of the present study was to assess the activities in and out of the households women are silently involved in. Especially the agricultural operations where women contribute a lot but still these contributions go unnoticed. It is now high time when these efforts of women are considered seriously and they are paid for it so that they could contribute generously to the family income. Women are naturally supported with various mental and physical strengths and they can do better in learning and performing various types of activities. They are good learners, good performers and these qualities can be tapped for uplifting their lifestyles and improving their livelihoods. Secondary agriculture offers many operations in which women can be involved and be treated as a major role payer for their own empowerment through employment.



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**Review of Literature  
Secondary  
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Today India holds 7<sup>th</sup> position in global export of agri-products and is considered as self-sufficient in respect of its food demand. The report of the Committee constituted to assess the possibilities of Doubling Farmers' Income (2018) justifies the involvement of farmers in increasing the 'vertical elasticity' of resources viz., land and labour. The activities that could add to their income in the limited sources of land and other inputs. Any activity that gainfully utilizes agricultural waste, makes the produce saleable (cleaning, grading, sorting) and all kinds of on or off-farm activities like bee-keeping, mushroom cultivation, silk worm rearing, backyard poultry and other bird farming, sheep and goat rearing, piggery and many more which adds to their income, utilizes their land and free time when the season of crops i.e., Rabi, Kharif, Zaid are over are considered as activities of 'secondary agriculture' (Business Standard, 2018). However, the US perspective of 'secondary agriculture' is a little different from ours and it connects both primary and secondary agriculture activities in continuation. Here, sowing, tilling, growing and harvesting are considered as 'Primary agriculture' operations and in continuation the activities that could be on-farm or off-farm viz., assembling, ripening, sorting, grading, drying, storing and preservation operations are considered as 'secondary agriculture'. But changing the basic form of the produce using processing techniques is totally excluded from 'secondary agriculture'. Today, agriculture as a whole is being taken as an enterprise, which is the source of income and encompasses two major segments in it;

1. Production segment: It includes all sort of on-farm activities cultivation and maintenance of produce and all related practices
2. Post production segment: It begins as soon as the produce is harvested or with the output from the on-farm activities and includes the transformation of produce/ output for the benefit of farmers. The activities like cleaning, sorting, grading, packaging etc that attracts the consumers to pay feasible prices for their produce.

Agriculture being the major 'Economic sector', especially in a country like India which holds very strong roots in land and land resources, the major production activities that are 'income generating' can be divided as (Fig. 1):

Primary	Agriculture & Mining
Secondary	Industrial sector
Tertiary	Service sector



**Indian perspective**

Various committees and technical advisors have elaborated 'Secondary Agriculture' in their own terms and views. Secondary Agriculture is not new to the Indian subcontinent and the Technical Advisory Committee on Secondary Agriculture (TACSA, 2007) stated the term (Secondary Agriculture) as 'very broad' as they referred to it to include 'all food and non-food bio-resources based products for human and industrial use'. It intended to include using edible parts of crops as well as non-edible parts like husk, straws, roots etc,. Lately, a committee<sup>1</sup> on 'Doubling Farmers Income' suggested Secondary Agriculture as an 'Enterprise' 'that involves the agricultural community directly and provides equal growth opportunities to the primary sector. Agriculture linked Secondary level activities can include various economic activities from both the secondary and tertiary sectors'. Various productive activities at enterprise level, as included in Secondary Agriculture are:

1. Utilization of raw materials, the primary product and by-product of agriculture and other bio-resources available locally in its rural agrarian neighborhood.
2. Deploys locally available skills or a high level of rural manpower, to operate/ manage/ maintain the production of goods and services
3. Can easily be categorized under Micro, Small or Medium Enterprise Development Act, 2006

Involvement of women in these activities is quite appreciable. Approximately 86 per cent of rural females are involved in agriculture (Indoria and Balai, 2018). However, the nature and extent of their involvement in these agricultural based activities differs with various agro-production systems (Nagaraja, 2013). These can be social, economic, cultural or even need based activities. It is also evident from many studies

that women are blessed to have basic indigenous knowledge and they have basic skill and potential to utilize resources in a better way (Indoria and Balai, 2018). Being socially mobile they can be the best instruments for entrepreneurial activities that could be helpful in economic development of the society through employment generation activities. This could be uplifting for them as well as the society especially the fellow women of the area and around.

#### **Women in Secondary Agriculture**

The changing scenario of agriculture is demanding a change in the role of women as well. Today the paradigm of agriculture is shifting from traditional farming to adopting 'secondary agriculture' activities.

With the government's initiative of 'Doubling farmers' Income' there is dire need to connect all the three sectors; primary, secondary and tertiary sectors together (Kushankur Dey, 2019). According to Ashok Dalwal committee's report submitted in February, 2018; secondary agriculture is an activity conducted at farm/ enterprise level in four folds:

1. Sustainability of production
2. Monetisation of farmers' produce
3. Strengthening of extension services
4. Recognising agriculture as an enterprise

Yadav et.al., (2020) endorses secondary agriculture as a venture that will help uplift the primary agriculture activities. Accordingly, some of the avenues of secondary agriculture viz., development of plant nurseries, bio-fertilizers and compost, bio-pesticides and organic alternatives of plant protection, agro-tourism, plant based dyes, colours, flavours, weaving crafting etc., have great potential in generating income and utilizing the primary agriculture produce as well as waste. These products are in demand and promise better returns. Also these products are environment friendly and most of them have a better end use rather than using them as feed, fodder or for burning.

1. Waste from fruits & vegetables: Rich in bioactive compounds; source of polyphenols, fibre, food grade ethanol, citric acid, gums and pectin, colour, flavour etc
2. Traditional agricultural crop waste: Bran, oil, gluten, husk and fibre, de-oiled meals, germs, protein
3. Floriculture waste: biofuels, bio-ethanol, compost, organic acids, pigments, dyes, aromas and perfumes, handmade paper, fibre, gums etc.
4. Weeds and non-agri/ forest plants: secondary metabolites as ethno-botanical sources, pharmaceutical extracts, high value metabolites and chemicals

#### **Women's Empowerment**

Role of women in different sectors of life cannot be denied. Be it rural or urban, women in each household perform multiple tasks for the betterment of livelihood of the household and society as well. Some of these are unpaid (mostly considered as their household chores), some are paid (service or job roles) and sometimes they are underpaid as well with respect to their male counterparts. Economic survey of the year 2017-18 clearly indicates that with growing rural to urban migration by men, there is 'Feminization' of agri-sector with increasing number of women in multiple roles as;

1. Cultivators
2. Entrepreneurs
3. Labourers

Education, social equity, economic status or financial stability, political participation along with improved and/ or good health status are major attributes that contribute towards the empowerment of women (Amrit Patel, 2012). The World forum now considers that addressing gender issues in agriculture and related activities is the way out to achieve desirable sustainable growth. It is the right time to empower women with new knowledge and skills in the field of secondary agriculture so that they may participate in the mainstream without any gender disparity and lack of knowledge. With these changing roles of women and becoming economically independent and decision makers, the world is now progressing at a faster pace. Globally there is empirical evidence that women have a decisive role in ensuring food security and preserving local agro-biodiversity. Many efforts on the part of Government departments, Educational institutions, NGOs have contributed in changing the socio-economic status of these women and the society as well. With the setting up of National Resource Centre for Women in Agriculture (NRCWA) at Bhubaneswar (1996) and other ICAR institutes and Krishi Vigyan Kendras working

towards the upliftment of women, now 'Role of women' in agricultural operations is being noticed and heard. They are moving from

1. 'Unpaid' to 'Skilled' workforce
2. 'Beneficiaries' to 'Active participants' in shaping empowerment.
3. 'Unrecognised' to 'Enlighted'

### **Empowerment Strategies**

The literary meaning of 'Empowerment' is 'the act of bestowing or granting power or authority on someone'. As women in our society is considered as weaker or deprived, hence providing her with power to do something or take decisions for family or society is termed as 'Women Empowerment'. Being a central part of the society, this 'Empowerment' has the ability to bring about social, economic and civil freedom for women. Women are empowering and women are being empowered. Empowerment is a gradual process which is achieved through education, transfer of feasible knowledge and technologies, conducting trials at suitable places in verified conditions and through several out-reach programmes targeting especially the women. Various Government and Non-Government agencies are working towards empowering women in the areas of knowledge, skill, decision making etc., so that they become socially and economically independent. Strategic planning and enforcement are bringing gainful results in the overall development of women. Some of the strategies include:

1. Awareness programmes
2. Creating awareness amongst the target group or population is the first step towards the success of any initiative. Various awareness programmes on health and hygiene, sanitation, education will make women more aware and vigilant towards themselves and their own interests. They will consider themselves as 'beneficiary' and not a 'deprived' one.
3. Educational interventions
4. Education and knowledge go hand in hand. In a country like India, education for girls is sometimes obstructed due to geographical conditions, economic status, social bindings and many more. Therefore short term education programmes, technical education and knowledge dissemination will prove to be beneficial for women, who are otherwise
5. Transfer of technologies
6. Women are well versed in adapting to the new technologies as is evident from some visible examples of solving household chores to working and managing at the farms and backyards. Training women on new technologies will add to its adaptation more quickly.
7. vFeasibility trials
8. Introducing technology kits, having responses on a particular technology; women are more true to it. Conducting feasibility trials involving women would have a wider impact as compared to others.
9. Out-reach programmes
10. Approaching women through various outreach programmes may somewhat ensure its wider adaptation.

### **Conclusion**

1. Women are engaged in a number of agro-oriented activities ranging from seed-bed preparation, weeding and horticulture and fruit cultivation to a series of post harvest activities, to their domestic use and marketing as well.
2. These 'Secondary Agricultural' operations which are performed by women as a 'Responsibility' and now when 'Secondary Agriculture' itself has become an essential contributor towards 'national economy' we should encourage the ones (Women) who are already skilled and knowledgeable in this task.

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