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**Payal Jaiswal**  
Ph.D. Research Scholar,  
Department of Agricultural  
Economics, College of  
Agriculture, IGKV, Raipur,  
Chhattisgarh, India

**Dr. AK Gauraha**  
Prof. and Head, Department of  
Agri-Business and Rural  
Management, College of  
Agriculture, IGKV, Raipur,  
Chhattisgarh, India

**Dr. KNS Banafar**  
Dean, College of Agriculture &  
Research Station, Janjgir  
Champa, IGKV, Raipur,  
Chhattisgarh, India

#### Correspondence

**Payal Jaiswal**  
Ph.D. Research Scholar,  
Department of Agricultural  
Economics, College of  
Agriculture, IGKV, Raipur,  
Chhattisgarh, India

## Constraints faced by women workers in northern hills of Chhattisgarh

**Payal Jaiswal, Dr. AK Gauraha and Dr. KNS Banafar**

### Abstract

Women are vital human resource and play a significant role in agricultural and allied sectors undertaking both on-farm and off-farm activities. Yet their contribution has not been recognized and they are considered as 'invisible farmers'. Considering this, the present study has been conducted to analyze the constraints faced by women labourers in agriculture and allied sectors. A total of 150 households were randomly selected using snowball sampling technique method. The selected women labour respondents were interviewed personally using pre-tested well-structured interview schedule. The finding showed that the major constraints that farm women faced were lack of alternative employments with a mean score of 65.26 followed by No regular work or seasonal work. Low wages got third position with mean score of 61.66. Low literacy level got fourth position followed by Lack of trust in women's capacity. Working area distance, lack of time for personal needs, Lack of training in farm activities and Excessive burden of work in the family are the other major constraints faced by women agriculture labourers.

**Keywords:** invisible farmers, constraints, women labourers, snowball sampling

### Introduction

Agriculture is an engine of growth and poverty reduction in developing countries where it is the main occupation of poor. Many women, in developing countries, are major producers of food. Nearly 63% of all economically active men are engaged in agriculture as compared to 78% of women. Swaminathan, the famous agricultural scientist, describes that it was women who first domesticated crop plant and thereby initiated the art and science of farming. While men went out hunting in search of food, women started gathering seeds from the native flora and begun 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. Women in India are major producers of food in terms of value, volume and number of hours worked. In rural India, the percentage of women who depend on agriculture is as high as 70%. In 2009, 94% of the female labor worked in cereal production, while 1.4% worked in vegetable production and 3.72% were engaged in fruits and spice crops. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, Indian women represented a share of 21% and 24% of all fishers and fish farmers respectively. Rural women play a vital and crucial role not only in agricultural production i.e crop production but also allied activities such as horticulture, livestock poor-harvest operation, tending animals, agro-forestry, fisheries etc.

Despite of this much contribution of women in agricultural sector, the face of farming is stereotypically male. Women have less access than men to agricultural related assets, inputs and services. Their hard work has not only been unpaid but also remained mostly unrecognized. They perform on a daily basis the most tedious and back-breaking tasks in agriculture, animal husbandry and homes. They are invariably paid lower wages than men for the same agricultural work. Land ownership titles are most often in a man's name. Only 11 percent women have access to land holdings, that too, mostly as small and marginal farmers (Yojana 2012) [7]. Only 5 percent of women farmer are benefited from extension services (Tiwari, 2010) [10]. Despite their eagerness they have often not been able to take advantage of opportunities from new technologies, innovations and markets. Viewing these facts the present study investigates the constraints faced by women farmer in agriculture as its specific objective.

The main economic constraints were scattered holdings, limited resources of purchase inputs, unavailability of labour to carry out work, small size of holding, insufficient irrigation, non-availability of loans at the proper time and costly inputs. The social problems which the farm

women faced in the adoption of agricultural technology were caste, customs, tradition and religious beliefs in the case of poultry. Other problems were non-availability of technical knowledge, lack of skill in technical knowledge and non-availability of information on various topics resulting in a negative attitude (Sharma, 1992) [8]. The main constraints in taking decisions about rice production technology were a lack of technical knowhow (100%); lack of education in women (92%), men thinking that they know better (72%), the dominance of men in agriculture (69%) and opportunities not provided by men (59%) (Vaish, 1999) [9]. Keeping these factors in mind the present study was examined the constraints faced by farm women and remedial measures suggested by them to overcome these constraints.

### Methodology

Korea and Surajpur district from North Hill of Chhattisgarh was selected purposively for study. Two blocks Baikunthpur and Khadgawan from Korea district and Ramanujnagar and Bhayathan from Surajpur district were randomly selected for the research work. Thereafter group of villages from each block was selected randomly. After complete enumeration of villages 150 households [marginal, small and medium farmers] was randomly selected using snowball sampling technique method. It was difficult to find women working as a agriculture labour of large size farm households, so we have taken only three categories of farmers i.e. marginal (0 to 1 ha.), small (1 to 2 ha.) and medium (2 to 4 ha.).

Garrett Ranking Table is used to find out the constraints faced by women agriculture workers in the study area. The agricultural women labourers identified and ranked the factors responsible for being unemployed and getting lower wage rate according to their preferences. The following formula is used to convert the order of factors into ranks.

$$\text{Per cent Position} = \frac{100(\text{Rij} - 0.50)}{\text{Nj}}$$

Where,

Rij = Rank given for the ith reason by jth respondent

Nj = Number of factors ranked by jth respondent

The per cent position is obtained and it is converted into scores using Garrett's table. After that, the scores of the individual labourer for each of the factors are added and then divided by the total number of labourers who had responded. The mean score is the rank in descending order of magnitude. In order to identify the main reasons for dispute in farm work of agricultural women labourers, the Garrett's Ranking Technique is employed to rank the sources of problem.

### Result and Discussion

Garrett's ranking table shows the constraints and problems faced by women labourers in agriculture and allied sectors. It is clear from table 1 that among the general/personal constraints faced by the sample respondent's lack of alternative employments was the most important constraint gathering a mean score of 65.26 followed by No regular work/ seasonal. The sample respondents don't have regular access to work as agriculture production activity is season bound, people remain unemployed during slack season and it was evident from the mean score of 63.66. Kaleeswaran, *et al.* (2015) [2] and Tiwari (2010) [10] also found seasonal nature of the demand for labour as one of the major constraints in their studies. Low wages was another major problem with mean

score of 61.66. Slathia (2015) [5], Tiwari (2010) [10] and Das (2015) [3] also found low wages as an important constraint faced by farm women. Low literacy level comes next with mean score of 60.99. Illiteracy were supported by findings of Slathia (2015) [5] Subadevi, *et al.* (2015) [1], Pooja, *et al.* (2016) and Das (2015) [3].

Lack of trust in women's capacity got a mean score of 53.47. Health issues is also important issue with women labors with mean score of 40.07. Working area distance is far from home of the respondents came next and got a mean score of 39.37. Kaleeswaran, *et al.* (2015) [2] also found unable to report for duty on time due to distance as a constraint in his study. The other major constraints were lack of time for personal needs supported by finding of Kaleeswaran, *et al.* (2015) [2] got a mean score of 38.71. Lack of training in farm activities are also the major constraints in findings of Kaleeswaran, *et al.* (2015) [2], Slathia (2015) [5], Pooja (2016) and Tiwari (2010) [10] got a mean score of 38.64. Excessive burden of work in the family and in the field is also the constraint in findings of Kaleeswaran, *et al.* (2015) [2] and Pooja (2016) got a mean score of 36.19.

**Table 1:** General Constraints Faced by Women Labour

S. No	Constraints/problems	Mean score	Rank
1	Excessive burden of work in the family and in the field	36.19	X
2	Low literacy level	60.99	IV
3	Lack of time for personal needs	38.71	VIII
4	Distant working location	39.37	VII
5	Lack of trust in women's capacity	53.47	V
6	Lack of alternative employments	65.26	I
7	Lack of training in farm activities	38.64	IX
8	Low wages	61.66	III
9	No regular work/ seasonal	63.66	II
10	Health issues	40.07	VI

The following suggestions can be made for the improvement of the socio-economic position of the agricultural labourers:

- The first thing is to create and strengthen the agriculture infrastructural facilities.
- Cropping intensity should be increased by increasing irrigated area.
- Measures should be taken to enhance women's literacy rates.
- Setting up of agri clinics, agri business centers for women labourers to improve their skills and efficiency.
- Providing alternative employment opportunities for women, as agriculture is very much affected by vagaries of nature.
- Non-farm employment opportunities should also be provided in the rural areas by establishing agro-industries (Cottage industries etc.).
- Provide technology training and input support to women to take advantage of emerging high-value agribusiness sector.
- Promotion of self-help groups, helps to make the farm women economically independent and socially sound.
- Wage rate policy should be implemented at grass root level.
- Awareness programmes about health should be conducted in order to make women fully aware about healthcare
- Looking to the great opportunities in allied sectors (Dairy, Poultry, Pigry, Goatry) women should be

encouraged and strengthen through training, technology and awareness programmes.

- Women must be involved in decision-making bodies that have the potential to introduce structural changes.
- Public works programmes should be for longer period in year

### 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 produce not mostly goods and services but are the prime sources of accelerating human race. Thus, from the point of view of increasing labour force as well as of involving themselves in production and service activities, their active participation cannot be overlooked. However, the rural women have been under represented in the development process and particularly this is true in case of India. The male-dominated society never recognizes their proper contribution. Insurance and old age pension facilities should be created exclusively for women agricultural labourers.

Women's wage work is considered a threat to the male ego and women's engagement in multiple Home-based economic activities leads to under remuneration for their work. Their occupational choices are also limited due to social and cultural constraints and lack of supportive facilities such as transport, and accommodation in the formal sector of the labor market.

There must be growth and development of farm women by recognizing their technical and economic constraints and putting into place a structured and organized strategic plan to overcome these constraints. Government, non-government, local agencies and people themselves can take some steps to overcome these constraints. They can greatly enhance the capabilities of these women through funding and skill development by imparting training.

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