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## Occupational health problems faced by women agriculture activity

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### Abstract

Women in agriculture conducted in India and other developing and under developed countries, all point to the conclusion that women contribute for more to agricultural production than has generally been acknowledged. Recognition of their crucial role in agriculture should not obscure the fact that farm women continue to be concerned with their primary functions as wives, mothers and homemakers. Despite their importance to agricultural production, women face severe handicaps. They are in fact, the largest group of landless labourers with little real security in case of break-up of the family owing to death or divorce, inheritance laws and customs discriminate against them land reform and settlement programmes usually give sole title and hence the security needed for obtaining production credits to the husband. Agricultural development programmes are usually planned by men and aimed at men. Mechanization, for example alleviates the burden of tasks that are traditionally men's responsibility leaving women's burdens unrelieved or even increased. The excess burden of work on women of the farm work plus house work, also act as a stimulus to have many children so that they can help out with chores from an early age. Extension workers almost exclusively aim their advice at men's activities and crops.

**Keywords:** Women, agriculture, production, work

### Introduction

Women's occupations are thus fluid and multi-dimensional. Agricultural workers may dig and hoe and apply fertilizers and pesticides, but not all the workers will perform all of those tasks and where the tasks are segregated by gender, the health implications for men and women may be very different. Thus, it requires giving priority to women's access to education, information, science and technology, and extension services to enable improving women's access, ownership and control of economic and natural resources. To ensure such access, ownership and control legal measures, appropriate credit schemes, support for women's income generating activities and the reinforcement of women's organizations and networks are needed. This, in turn, depends on strengthening women's ability to benefit from market-based opportunities by institutions and policies giving explicit priority to women farmer groups in value chains. A number of other changes will strengthen farm women's contributions to agricultural production and sustainability. These include support for public services and investment in rural areas in order to improve women's living and working conditions, giving priority to technological development policies targeting rural and farm women's needs and recognizing their knowledge, skills and experience in the production of food and the conservation of biodiversity; and assessing the negative effects and risks of farming practices and technology, including pesticides on farm women's health, and taking measures to reduce use and exposure. Finally, if we are to better recognize farm women as integral to sustainable development, it is critical to ensure gender balance in decision-making at all levels and provide mechanisms by various organizations accountable for progress in the above areas.

### Methodology

The study was conducted in Kanpur district of Uttar Pradesh which was purposively selected for the study purpose, namely Kalyanpur was randomly selected from a total of ten Block in the district. Random selection of 5 villages was done from the selected block from which a total sample size of 100 farm women of landless, marginal and small farmer category was drawn through systematic random sampling method to conduct the present investigation. Depended and indepnded variables such as age, education, income, caste, Awareness, Participation, Agriculture Sector, etc. were studied.

## Result and Discussions

**Table 1:** Distribution of farm women according to educational standard N = 100

Education Standard	Frequency	Per cent
Illiterate	42	42.0
Up to Junior High School	30	30.0
High School	15	15.0
Intermediate	12	12.0
Graduate	1	1.0
Total	100	100.0

It was observed in the study area that the landless and marginal farmers engaged in agricultural activities were mostly of general caste, whereas, other caste farm women belonging to OBC and SC/ST category were engaged in caste occupations such as goat and pig rearing, pottery etc. Those engaged in agriculture worked as labourers and performed activities such as carrying farm produce, packaging, etc. Some of the farm women belonging to OBC caste were engaged in animal rearing activities as well.

**Table 2:** Distribution of farm women according to family size N = 100

Size of family	Frequency	Per cent
Up to 3 members	20	20.0
4 – 6 members	75	75.0
7 – 9 members	5	5.0
Above 10 members	-	-
Total	100	100.0

It is not very surprising to observe that in rural areas farm women had very limited knowledge about family planning because of being illiterate and thus, did not care too much about the number of children they gave birth to.

**Table 3:** Distribution of farm women according to problems faced during agricultural activities

Problems	Frequency		Mean score	Rank
	Yes	No		
Problems getting labourers	20	80	1.20	V
Poor working conditions	95	5	1.95	II
Poor climatic conditions	100	-	2.00	I
Restless working	90	10	1.90	III
Poor health of the worker	80	20	1.80	IV
Extra work load	95	5	1.95	II
Wage discrimination according to sex not work	95	5	1.95	II
Restriction from family members	-	100	1.00	VI

It is quite obvious that since farm women lack access to basic resources like land, water, electricity, lack of decision making power, lack of access to modern technology, farm tools and implements they face lot of problem while performing various agricultural activities. The extreme climatic conditions in North India make their condition even worse. Farm women have to carry the dual burden of both household and farm activities due to which they have to work for long hours without taking rest and sometimes overburdening with extra work load during harvesting season. Lack of proper nutrition and balanced diet with added responsibility of child bearing and rearing makes them physically weak and thus giving rise to many health hazards. Gender biasness and wage discrimination also adds to their worsening condition. Farmers, on the other hand, also seem to prefer women as agricultural workers. The farmer is faced with the increasing costs of production required for modern agriculture. He finds that he can squeeze his labour costs by using lower-paid women workers. Similarly, the work of women within family based agriculture is preferred because it is cheaper than hiring labour. Women agricultural workers although represent a big proportion of all women workers, continue to receive lower wages than men.

**Table 4:** Distribution of farm women according to the health problems perceived by them, related to various agricultural activities

Problems perceived	Frequency			Mean score	Rank
	Mostly	Sometimes	Never		
<b>Physiological problems</b>					
Irritation in eyes, nose, throat	75.0	20.0	5.0	2.70	V
Allergy	60.0	35.0	5.0	2.55	VII
Headache	90.0	7.0	3.0	2.87	II
Vomiting	10.0	60.0	30.0	1.80	XI
Nausea	20.0	65.0	15.0	2.05	IX
Swollen and sore hands and feet	80.0	20.0	-	2.80	II
Suffocation	15.0	55.0	30.0	1.80	X
Coughing	25.0	70.0	5.0	2.20	VIII
Dizziness	70.0	20.0	10.0	2.60	VI
Chest pain	10.0	65.0	25.0	1.85	X
Insect bite	75.0	25.0	-	2.75	III
Cuts and wounds	85.0	12.0	3.0	2.73	IV
Fatigue	90.0	10.0	-	2.90	I
Cancer	-	5.0	95.0	1.05	XII
<b>Respiratory problems</b>					
Breathing problem	60.0	24.0	16.0	2.44	I
Asthma	5.0	23.0	72.0	1.33	III
Adult onset asthma	-	5.0	95.0	1.05	VI
Lung diseases	4.0	13.0	83.0	1.21	IV
Emphysema	2.0	3.0	95.0	1.07	V
Chronic bronchitis	3.0	62.0	35.0	1.68	II
<b>Skin problems</b>					
Allergic contact dermatitis	45.0	33.0	22.0	2.23	V
Non-specific hand dermatitis	10.0	75.0	15.0	1.95	VI
Hand dermatitis due to use of chemicals	45.0	45.0	10.0	2.35	III

Eyelid dermatitis	2.0	75.0	23.0	1.79	VII
Swelling due to bee and wasp stings	43.0	40.0	17.0	2.26	IV
Sunburn	100.0	-	-	3.00	I
Skin cancer	2.0	10.0	88.0	1.14	VIII
Skin infection	50.0	37.0	13.0	2.37	II
<b>Psychological problems</b>					
Tension	90.0	7.0	3.0	2.87	I
Dullness	66.0	25.0	9.0	2.57	III
Boredom	45.0	35.0	20.0	2.25	IV
Fear of crop loss	85.0	15.0	-	2.85	II
Low cost benefits	25.0	75.0	-	2.25	IV
<b>Ergonomic problems</b>					
Backache	95.0	5.0	-	2.90	I
Body pain	90.0	10.0	-	2.90	I
Pain in elbow	78.0	23.0	-	2.78	II
Shoulder pain	90.0	10.0	-	2.90	I
Pain in knee	90.0	10.0	-	2.90	I
Pain in upper leg	65.0	35.0	-	2.65	IV
Pain in joints of arms	77.0	19.0	4.0	2.69	III
Spondylitis	40.0	45.0	15.0	2.25	V
<b>Reproductive problems</b>					
Abortion	20.0	50.0	30.0	1.90	III
Low body weight of the mother	80.0	15.0	5.0	2.75	II
Low body weight of the baby	40.0	30.0	30.0	2.10	III
Pain in abdomen	85.0	10.0	5.0	2.80	I
Bleeding	20.0	40.0	40.0	1.80	IV
Still birth	18.0	22.0	60.0	1.58	V
Poor lactation	15.0	50.0	35.0	1.80	IV

the farm women working in the field were young, illiterate and working as labourers they were mainly working for economic support for their family so were in socio-economic and mental stress and were also facing physical problems, ergonomic problems, skin problems and reproductive health problems, there is need of fall awareness about taking of healthy diet for their better health and decrease mental stress and physical stress among the rural farm women. Training about the health safety measures and nutrition education or medical system should be provided to them, through scientists, health experts and extension workers so that they perform their on farm activities in a better way and play positive role in agriculture sector for socio-economic upliftment at domestic and national level.

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