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A review on role, status and major constraints of women in agro-allied sector

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Abstract

The role of women in agriculture and allied sector has been multitude since ages. Yet they face huge constraints for defining their status. This paper tried to inspect the accessible literature sources those throw light on different roles played by women in agriculture. Profound studies could be available regarding the participation, contribution and extent of involvement by stakeholders in agriculture, animal husbandry and household activities. It also examined the status of women with available research w.r.t. education, employment and empowerment. The major constraints faced by women in agro-allied sector especially property or land rights and decision making capacity are also studied by researchers well which have been compiled in this review paper. The main motive behind most of the research and policy makers being empowerment of women folk involved in agriculture, the conclusion included the suggested measures of well-known researchers.

Keywords: farm-women, agro-allied sector, participation, contribution, role, constraints, empowerment, literacy, gender, property right

Introduction

Contrary to the general perception about women in India that they don't work outside, surveys show that an enormous level of them work (Women of India, 2006, Wikipedia). The National Statistical Organization too acknowledges the fact that there is a genuine under-estimation of farm-women commitment as laborers. Further, there are far less women in the paid workforce than there are men.

In country like India, agribusiness and associated modern divisions utilize as much as 89.5% of service of female workers Women in Asia.

The process of women's empowerment is conceptualized in terms of personal assertions and confidence, ability to protect themselves as women, attaining economic independence, ownership of productive assets, and provide leadership in both women and community related issues at all levels. Veerabhadraiah *et al.* (1999) [5].

Enabling ladies add to social turn of events is very important. Financial advancement in any nation whether created or immature can be accomplished through social turn of events. Gurumoorthy (2000) [18] Therefore it is extremely necessary pertinent to synthesize the topic in a holistic manner and review the pertinent research papers before stepping ahead in policy and related aspects.

The paper inspected ongoing accessible proof to reveal insight into the dimensions concerning role of women in agriculture, status of women and constraints faced by them along with suggestion at the end. Here the role being subdivided into participation, contribution, animal husbandry involvement and household involvement. Status being subdivided to education, employment and empowerment status. Further major constraints included property rights and decision making abilities of women in agro-sector. Some of the dimensions could not be included like credit sources, SHG groups, entrepreneurship options etc. due to time constraints.

Gender perspectives in development and agricultural research

An increased focus on gender equality and women's rights has led to the creation of some myths or statistically unfounded stylized facts about women in agriculture that have been adopted by development practitioners and programs. Doss *et al.* (2018) [16].

Policies that ensure equal access to land, regulations and open access to credit, and economic development strategies, encourage competitive and efficient markets through which women farmers can succeed. Brauw *et al.* (2008) [10].

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Role of women in agriculture and allied sector

Participation of women in agriculture

Comparatively large proportion of women participates in seed storage, winnowing, harvesting and care of animals. Women belonging to the middle age group, having frequent urban contracts and with formal education, coming from lower castes and possessing small land holdings participate in agricultural operations in larger proportions than others.

Resilient and resourceful rural women contribute in a multitude of ways through different livelihood strategies for lifting their families and communities out of poverty. They work as unpaid and or self-employed on-farm and non-farm laborers.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) says that women are mostly denied of the right to own land. (Sridhar Lalitha, 2003) [44].

With the technological changes, the ratio of female to male workers has been declining. The introductions of modern methods of cultivation have resulted in a gradual displacement of women since all the new methods are generally taught to men only. Bhasin and Malik (1975) [5].

Ladies spend 2.08 hours in agricultural activities, 3.16 hours for animal husbandry practices besides 5.03 hours for domestic work. Verma and Malik (1984) [51]

Most of the rural school-going girls work on farms, milking of the buffaloes and feeding of cattle. Haque (1968) [19].

Social participation does not affect participation in agricultural operations. Higher participation in agricultural operations is positively associated with the attitude of women towards improved seeds, fertilizers and seed storage. Singh (1968) [31].

Contribution of Women towards Agriculture

Women shoulder almost entire responsibility of household activities and child rearing and also make a substantial contribution in farming. Jain and Verma (1992) [20].

The level and pattern of women's contribution and their participation in the decision-making process at the existing level of resource use in hill economy. Tripathi (1999) [52].

As compared to joint families, the females in the nuclear families make maximum contribution of work days to the agricultural production activities. Proportion of the female labor in the agriculture is invariably greater than that of males. Chaudhari and Sharma (1961)

Participation of farm women is higher in the uprooting of seeds and transplanting as regards pre-harvest agricultural activities along with storage of agricultural produce. Bala (2000) [4-5].

Women mostly involve themselves with income generating activities like stitching, embroidery, dari-making, shawl-making, pappad-making and jam squash preparation. Batish *et al.* (2001) [9].

In Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland, women play a significant role in retail selling of Ginger. Rana *et al.* (1998).

Involvement in Household Activities

In Sikkim, though men and women do almost all works from land preparation to seed storage. But at the same time, their role depends more on the family situation than on gender or ethnicity. In a family with more male members, male works in the fields, whereas in families with fewer men, women work equally with men. (Rahman *et al.* 2009)

As the age of women increases, their participation in agriculture as well as allied activities decreases. As the annual

income of the family increases the participation in some agricultural activities, *viz.* winnowing, stripping, decreases but increases in some allied activities like cleaning, repair of cattle shed, etc.

Homemakers spend on an average 52 hours and 46 minutes on household activities per week in case of Wisconsin female farm homemakers. In addition, 8 hours are devoted to farm or business, etc., making a total of 60 hours and 46 minutes. May and Ruth (1953) [46].

The routine activities of farm-women include manuring, weeding, hoeing, harvesting, carting, thrashing and sugarcane production. Women participate in these activities with men-folk. As compared to joint families, the females in the nuclear families make maximum contribution of work days to the agricultural production activities. Chaudhary and Sharma (1961) [14] Shobha (2001) [47].

In different seasons throughout the year, female members in rural families spend 52.9 hours per week on house hold activities. The meal preparation takes 10.2 hours, sewing and mending 3.1 hours, care of children 6.8 hours care of adults 0.04 hours per week. Manning (1968) [29].

The size of family and the liking of task also affect the time spent in homemaking activities by the home makers, in family fathers participate only in marketing work of house. Girls help their mothers in daily routine activities such as cleaning of the house, washing of clothes and cooking meals, etc.

In families having full time servants, the mothers and the daughters do not actually participate in cooking, sweeping and other domestic work. In such cases, the mothers mostly supervise the work. Indispensable labour force required in Delhi territory on the farm throughout the year for carrying out most of the farm operations. Kahlon and Brar (1967) [22].

Women have multitude of responsibility for farm and household production. Major problem faced by women is that their work as family labor most of the time gets underestimated Pankajam (2001) [34].

Women and Animal Husbandry

Women spend significantly more hours (than men) in animal husbandry operations such as cleaning of cattle shed, preparation of cow dung cakes, ghee making, etc. which clearly points to the enormity of work load being carried out by women in the farming community.

Animal Husbandry is predominantly a male affair in case of high, economic status as majority of them employ, permanent male labor to look after the animals, whereas it is predominantly a female affair in case of farmers of medium and low socioeconomic status. (Verma, 1992) [20].

In dairy farming activities, farm women's participation is more in management of dung, providing drinking water to animals, milking of animals, processing of milk, marketing of milk, keeping record of milk and care of animals. In activities of vegetable growing farm women's participation is more in nursery raising and transplanting, weeding and hoeing and cleaning of vegetables. Bala (2000) [4-5].

On an average, a woman devotes 3.5 hours per day for animal husbandry activities while only 1.6 hours per day devoted by men in this category. (Verma, 1992) [20].

Status of women in agriculture

Education amongst Farmwomen

The relationships between gender literacy and field production to analyze the farming outcomes through its measurement are generally problematic. Specifically, the majority of the literature that addresses the roles of education

and gender relies on relationships of the measures in which policy makers are interested. But it hardly implements the data and information generated from field level survey.

In India, illiteracy is very high amongst women therefore they prefer to stay in agriculture sector because other sectors need more skills.

The socio-economic condition of women involve in lace making and reasons for choosing lace making an occupation is due to the majority of the respondent's educational level was below primary school. The educated lace making women earn more income as compared to illiterate women. It may be due to their levels of education, which enable them to earn money by learning new techniques and designs in lace making. Raju (1998) [38].

As the level of education increases in case of husbands and the wives, decision-making practices also increases. Wilkening (1959) [54].

Employment and Skill development amongst Women

Employment amongst Women in farming is seasonal generally. Income generating activities and women's empowerment in the rural areas through self-help group has brought a significant change in the participation of group members in diversifying income generating economic activities in rural areas. The group approach has become more and more significant in alleviating poverty and promoting income generating activities in the rural areas. Raghavendra (2001).

Economic empowerment of women requires transfer of skills of management and control of economic activities to enable women to feel confident and empowered. Saguna (2001) [41].

Most educated married women seek employment to supplement family income and to attain economic independence. Economic necessity is the main factor motivating women to take up employment. Sandhu (1989) [16].

Majority of the working women belong to nuclear types of family with large family size having low annual income.

If sowing and harvesting of paddy will be mechanized, there would be a large scale displacement of female labor. The increase in the demand for female labor lead to rise in the share of causal labor in paddy cultivation. Subrahmanayam (1999) [47].

Women's empowerment status

Women's empowerment status is assessed by their economic, educational and health status, participation in household decision-making process, political awareness and psychological strength. Education with employment makes women significantly effective in respect to social awareness, independence and decision-making. Gaur (2004) [18].

It is difficult to overstate the importance of women in developing countries like India. Though women account for 60% of work in agriculture and food production. There is also an increasing trend towards feminization of agriculture owing to conflicts and rural-urban migration. Nandal (2006) [31].

Major Constraints faced by Women

Large size of family, illiteracy, ignorance, lack of training, poverty and unemployment as the reasons for women to engage in agriculture. various problems of female agricultural workers such as wages at lower rates, work discrimination, wage discrimination, problem of technological advancements, absence of opportunity for professional growth, harsh work conditions and seasonal nature of employment. Tikoo (2006)

[49]. Lack of technical knowledge is the major problem faced by farm women in agricultural activities. In dairy farming activities, majority of the respondents faced problems of maintenance of hygiene in the cattle sheds and keeping

In vegetable growing activities farm women face problem in identifying the insect-pests, diseases and their symptoms. The general problems faced by the respondents particularly in agriculture and subsidiary occupation is more physical work and no fixed working hours. Bala (2000) [4-5].

Property Rights in Farm Activities

India is dominated by the rural population and due to backwardness, bulk of them are engaged in primary activities. Among the occupations, majority of the people are engaged in primary activities in India. Bhasin (1995) [6].

Women belonging to landless, small and medium land holding categories are actively involved in agricultural activities like weeding/intercultural operations (59.40 per cent), harvesting (72.60 per cent) and post-harvest activities (57.00 per cent). The participation of women belonging to large land holdings does not exceed 25.00 per cent in such activities.

In rural areas the women belonging to higher caste families are socio-economically better and possess some landed properties. Due to their higher social status, they do not like to engage themselves in difficult field work or in the fields of lower caste people. Sadangi *et al.* (1996) [40].

Decision-making Capacity of Women

The decision-making practices are influenced in particular by age and education. Families with heads of households under 45 years of age are more likely to carry out various decision-making practices than those who were above this age in Michigan. With the increase in the education of husbands and wives, their role in the decision making also increases. Schoemaker (1963) [44].

Females living in rural areas fully participate in decision making and are often deciders in the matters related to family as well as farming. Radhukar and Junghare (1962) [35].

Husbands in comparison to their wives have a high degree of influence. In case of husbands there is positive relationship between their contributions of ideas and suggestions and influence exercised by them during the family decision-making at that time. Kenkel (1957) [25].

For wives there is a significant relationship between the influence and performance of action in the social and emotional areas while making the decision. The joint decision-making in the farm families as a function of status and role. Wilkening (1959) [54].

Economic and social status have little association with decision involvement; only income and education level of spouses appear to affect wife's involvement in decisions pertaining to the farm activities. Wilkening and Bhardwaj (1968) [55].

Majority of the decisions are made by the husband in the rural households jointly with wife or alone. Rajagopal and Jagteshwari (1972) [37].

Most of the male respondents consult their family members before taking decisions on any aspect of farm operations. Women play a dominant role in the decision-making especially in the matters of the home-management, agricultural marketing and sale and purchase of land in Khanjhawala block of Delhi. Arya (1964) [1].

Conclusion

Women should be empowered not only in financial terms but also of socialization-attitudinal and motivational. There is no need for much inventions and innovations to make, certain simple technologies available to rural women, what needed is reorientation of the same, mobilization and realization of women friendly environment in the rural areas. Devasia (2001) [15].

Literacy level, experience, decision making, family education, financial support and manpower support are found to have association with entrepreneurial performance. Thangamani and Kasthuri (1999) [50].

Women should be seen as functioning members during the time spent turn of events and change. Strengthening of ladies can be viably accomplished if poor ladies could be sorted out into bunches for network support just as for attestation of their privileges in different administrations related their financial and social prosperity.

In India, women are inclusive of the most significant objectives when it comes to any policy arrangement with regard to the improvement. In this way, their interests must be set at the top on the need rundown of the nation's improvement motivation. Kumar and Rani (2001) [39].

In urban India women have great number in the workforce and they are at standard with their male partners as far as wages, position at the work place Singh and Hoge (2010) [30].

More demonstration on farm holdings, involvement of more women farm extension workers, developing improved technology for reducing hardships faced by women in farm activities, conducting need-based training programme of women farmers and provision of credit facilities for small scale and cottage industry. There should be close follow-up action after imparting training in different farm activities. Chandravati, Rao and Raju (1999) [13].

Complementary rules are needed to aid the boom of home markets along with investments in nearby infrastructure and services to improve conditions for ladies's access to markets and monetary gains along with improved running standards in rural regions.

Women are part of the society and their problems should be treated as society's problems. Women's emancipation would lead to family emancipation, and ultimate emancipation of the country. It is in the men's interest that efforts should be made to improve women's social, economic and political empowerment. Rao (2002) [39].

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