

## **Participation of Women in Agriculture Sector in India**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Agriculture can be an important engine of growth and poverty reduction. But the sector is underperforming in many countries in part because women, who are often a crucial resource in agriculture and the rural economy, face constraints that reduce their productivity. India is a developing and predominately agrarian economy. 70% of its population is rural, of those households, 60% engage in agriculture as their main source of income. 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. It is observed that women play a significant role in agricultural development and allied activities including main crop production, live-stock production, horticulture, post-harvesting operations etc. About 70% of farm work is performed by women. Women farmers do not have equal access to productive resources and this significantly limits their potential in enhancing productivity. The present paper shows that the contribution of women in agriculture is extremely significant. The study is based on only secondary data which were collected from books, journals, government reports, websites and NSSO data.

**Key words:** agriculture, women participation, India, employment.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Agriculture is the first culture that man learnt to practice as a means of living and a way of life. It is the primary sector of any economy either it is developed or developing. Agriculture is considered as the backbone of the Indian rural economy and is a family enterprise. It is an important engine of growth and poverty reduction. India's economic security is heavily dependent on agriculture. In terms of employment, it is the most important source of income, especially for rural women. According to 2011 World Bank Data only, 17.5% of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is accounted for by agricultural production. Based on 2012 data, India is home to the fourth largest agricultural sector in the world. It has an estimated 180 million hectares of farmland with 140 million of which are planted and continuously cultivated.

Women play important roles in agriculture, undertaking a wide range of activities relating to food production, processing and marketing; and beyond farming, they are involved in land and water management: most often they are collectors of water, firewood and fodder. They have access to a store of local knowledge on the medicinal use of plants; they have been in the forefront of soil conservation programmes; and it is women who perform most of the household labour devoted to animals (Commonwealth, 2005). Women participation in agricultural production therefore cut across various subsectors: planting, weeding, harvesting, processing, and marketing as well as

tending livestock. This necessitates their integration into planning, policies, and programmes for effective and sustainable development of a nation (FAO, 2003). Hence, the role of women in

agricultural production in the developing nations, including Nigeria, can never be overemphasized (Damisa and Yohanna, 2007; and Kishor, Gupta, Yadav, and Singh, 1999).

Despite their dominance of the labour force, women in India still face extreme disadvantage in terms of pay, land rights and representation in local farmer's organizations. Apart from this, women face many challenges due to limited access to productive resources in agricultural production which prevent them in enhancing their productivity.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

- To find out women participation in agriculture in India.
- To explain women status in agriculture sector in India.
- To study the women participation in Indian economy
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## **REVIEW LITERATURE:**

The review of literature is pertaining to the study indicates that women participation in agriculture sector.

Bala (2010) cited in his working paper regarding engagement and participation of women workers in almost all activities of agriculture but there is discrimination in wages even if they do same type of work as male labor. Further despite of their extensive and active involvement in agriculture of India, they are not considered for decision making in farm activities. Women participation in agriculture will be acknowledged when women farmer will actively participate to build and improve their knowledge and gain access to new and necessary information to make use of most of them in their farming activities. By linking the knowledge and information flow amongst women socio economic progress can be achieved (Dhaka et. al, 2012).

Chayal, Dhaka, and Suwalka (2010) in their study of the analysis of role performed by women in agriculture in India found that there is greater involvement of women in various agricultural operations. They concluded that policy intervention could enhance women participation in actual farm work to as high as 70%. In addition, they found landholding, age, and family income greatly influence women participation in agriculture and recommended for effective policy intervention in order to boost women socio – economic structure.

MakkinaSuneeta (2014), 'Female labour participation in agriculture : A case of AP'– “The rural area female total workers are increasing than the male total workers, indicating and increase in women work force participation rate in agricultural activities.”

According to the 66th round of the National Sample Survey (June 2009- June 2010), the workers population ratio (W.P.R.) for women, according to the usual status (Considering both principal activity and subsidiary activity), in rural and urban areas was 26.1% and 13.8% respectively. Female labour force participation depends on availability of male workers, cropping pattern, productivity of male workers, productivity of land, size of the holdings and the population depending on agriculture.

## **STATUS OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE:**

Globally women constitute half of the world's population and produce half of the agricultural products according to a UN report. This indicates the contribution of women in the

economic prosperity of the nations, whose lifeblood is agriculture, through their participation in agriculture as cultivators, agricultural laborers and casual helpers. Their labor plays a key role in the survival of millions of families. The problem of poverty cannot be tackled without providing

opportunities of productive employment to rural women. Women are important economic agents in India, particularly in the context of poverty. Women's income in the poverty groups is critical for household survival. Three quarter of women all over to world live in rural areas and work in agricultural sector and a wide range of related activities. In addition, a large number of women in rural areas, like their men folk depend on daily wages earned in agricultural operations. Though they work hard for long hours, they get very less money leading to indebtedness. Yet they continue to depend on the land owners for employment and loans. They are frequently tortured by the landlords for their personal interest and enrichment. They are treated as sub-servant or personal property. Thus, their dependence on agriculture makes the land lords utilize freely the services of all the members of the families. In the process of economic exploitation the female agricultural laborers even become the targets of sexual harassment. Farmers, particularly women, face a high degree of economic, legal, and institutional uncertainties when investing in their land and other resources.

Most of the rural women laborers are landless, homeless and belong to the socially and economically depressed classes of the society. Rural agricultural women in our society are exploited and denied their basic rights. Their inherent dignity and equal inalienable rights are not recognized in the society. Though, their socio-economic status, the nature and mode of work and the way of people's life have been changed along with the new development in the society. But the society particularly, rural society is not still ready to accept any change in women's role, work position and status because of the orthodox and conservative beliefs in villages.

## **WOMEN CONTRIBUTION IN AGRICULTURE AND ALLIED ACTIVITIES:**

Swaminathan, M S, 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, fibre 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.

## **MAIN CHALLENGES FACED BY FEMALE FARMERS IN AGRICULTURE SECTOR:**

- Women have unequal land rights. They hardly enjoy land ownership rights directly in their names. Limited rights or access to arable land further limits livelihood options and exacerbates financial strain on women, especially in women-headed households.
- Women have limited access to use of productive resources.

- Women perform all un-mechanized agricultural tasks and perform multiple tasks which add more burden to them due to lack of equipment and appropriate technology.
- Women have little control over decision making process, either inside home or out side home. Without access to capital or household decision making abilities women lack the resources that are for their labor stability and stability of their household.
  
- Few women holding of agricultural productive resources such as land, animals and machinery.
- Poor women farmers are less able to purchase technology to adapt to climate change due to lack of access to credit and agricultural services. They often have low productivity due to inability to invest in things such as improved seeds and soil replenishment.
- Women farmers in agricultural sector suffer from high illiteracy rate among them. They do not know their legal rights.
- Women earn less wages, especially in joint, informal and private sector.
- Miss applying some laws and regulations in favor of women such heritage legislation.
- Lack of market intelligence and inadequate information put women farmers under unfavorable situation with weak bargaining power with the buyers.
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## **WOMEN LABOUR PARTICIPATION IN ECONOMY:**

As per census 2011, the work force participation rate for female at the national level stands at 25.52% compared to 53.26% for males. In the rural sector, it was 15.44% for female workers and 53.76% for male workers. As per census 2011, 41.1% of female main and marginal workers are agricultural labourers, 24.4% are cultivators, 5.7% are house hold industry workers and 29.2% are engaged in other works<sup>8</sup>. As per National Sample Survey (68th round), the worker- population ratio for females in rural sector was 24.8 in 2011-12 while for males it was 54.3. In urban sector, it was 14.7 for females and 54.6 for males. In the rural sector, 59.3% females were self-employed, 5.6% females had regular wage/salaried employment and 35.1% females were casual labours compared to 54.5%, 10% and 35.5% males in the same categories respectively in 2011-12. A total of 20.5% women were employed in the organization sector in 2011 with 18.1% working in the public sector and 24.3% in the private.

The labour force participation rate for women across all age-groups (25.3 in rural sector and 15.5 in urban sector) compared with 55.3% and 56.3% for men in the rural and urban sector respectively 2011-12 (NSS 68thRound). The unemployment rate for women of all ages was at par with men at 1.7 in the rural areas in 2011-12. It was 5.2 for women and 3.0 for men in urban sector during the same period.

## **CONCLUSION:**

India should not make mistake in underestimation of the women power in any of the fields. Women power is now being coming up in the spheres of education, industries, factories, banking, corporate entrepreneurs, and agriculture and so on so forth. It has been surveyed and proved that the women have vital role to play in the development of the agriculture sector. The work participation rate has increased from 1961 to 2011 enormously. As per the census of 2011, the workforce participation rate for females at the national level stands at 25.51% compared with 53.26% for males. In the rural sector, females have a workforce participation rate of 30.02% compared with 53.03% for males. In the urban sector, it is 15.44% for females and 53.76% for

males. As per National Sample Survey (68th Round), the worker population ratio for female in rural sector was 24.80% in 2011-12, while that for males it was 54.30%. In urban sector, it was 14.70% for females and 54.60% for males. In the rural sector, females have a workforce participation rate of 30.02% compared with 53.03% for males. In the urban sector, it is 15.44% for females and 53.76% for males. As per National Sample Survey (68th Round), the worker

population ratio for female in rural sector was 24.80% in 2011-12, while that for males it was 54.30%. In urban sector, it was 14.70% for females and 54.60% for males.

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