



Role of Women in Agriculture

Vikas Chandra Gautam¹, Himanshu Umriyal¹, Disha Agarwal¹, Priya²

¹Ph.D. Scholar Department of Agricultural Communication GBPUAT Pantnagar Uttarakhand

²PhD Scholar S.V.P. University of Agriculture and Technology, Modipuram, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh

ABSTRACT

This article highlights the role of women in agriculture across various sectors such as crop production, livestock management, forestry, fisheries, and rural labour markets. It emphasizes that women's empowerment in agriculture is not just a matter of gender equality but is essential for sustainable development and food security. Despite their significant contributions, women face socio-cultural barriers and limited access to resources and opportunities. The abstract encapsulates the importance of empowering rural women in agriculture through equitable access to land, credit, technology, and markets, along with investments in education and training programs tailored to their needs. By addressing these challenges, the article argues, the full potential of women in agriculture can be unlocked, leading to increased productivity, income generation, and gender equality in rural communities.

INTRODUCTION

There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing.

-Swami Vivekananda

In 2024, International Women's Day will have the subject 'Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress,' with an emphasis on combating economic disempowerment. The 8 March date was chosen after Russian women demanded "bread and peace" during a war-time strike in 1917. Four days into the strike, the tsar was forced to abdicate, and the provisional government granted women the right to vote.

According to NITI Ayog rural women are the leading advocates for the 'New India's social, economic and environmental development. In India 80.00 percent of rural women work in



agriculture. Rural women worker's empowerment and mainstreaming in agriculture can lead to a paradigm change in favour of economic growth. It will improve the security of food and nutrition while reducing hunger and poverty. It's a win-win strategy for achieving sustainable development goals by 2030. In rural areas the principal source of income for 80.00 percent of all economically active women is the agriculture and allied sector of which 33.00 percent are employed in the agriculture industry and 48.00 percent are independent farmers. In order to boost agricultural output rural women are involved at all levels of the value chain including production, pre- harvest, postharvest processing, packaging and marketing.

Did You Know?

- Women make up 43% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries
- Women farmers are less productive than men due to less access to land, water, seeds, training, and credit
- If women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase farm yields by 20-30%
- This increase in agricultural output could reduce the number of hungry people in the world by up to 150 million people.

Women in agriculture:

Women play vital roles in agriculture and rural economies across developing countries. Women are employed in agriculture as paid or unpaid labourers on other farms and agricultural businesses, as well as self-employed farmers and unpaid labourers on family farms. Their contributions vary widely within and among regions, evolving rapidly due to economic and social shifts in the agricultural sector. For instance, the rise of contract farming and modern supply chains for lucrative agricultural goods offers unique prospects and obstacles for women compared to men. These distinctions arise from the diverse roles and duties of women, alongside the limitations they encounter. Around the world, women play a significant role in the rural and agricultural economies. However, it may be challenging to determine the precise contribution's type and amount, and there is a lot of variations between various countries and regions. An



overview of the research on women's participation in rural labour markets and agriculture is provided in this paper. It also examines gender distribution trends in rural communities as they relate to demographic trends in such places.

Women in the agricultural labour force

In Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa, women who are employed are more likely to be employed in agriculture than in other sectors. In Southern Asia, almost 70% of working women and over 60% of working women in sub-Saharan Africa are employed in the agricultural sector. Furthermore, women who work are equally as likely as males to work in agriculture in the majority of developing nation regions. The main exception is Latin America, where women are less likely than males to engage in agriculture and the industry provides a very minor source of employment for them. Currently, women play a significant role in generating income through agricultural activities, but have little control over income. They often operate on a small scale and have better access to the local market, frequently at a reduced cost. The challenge is to aggregate their small-scale production and improve the access to markets. This needs capacity development for access of women to technology, financial services and markets.

Women in livestock management

India ranks 1st in milk production in the world with about 23.00% share of the world's total milk production. In goat rearing, India stands second with a goat population of 148.88 million. Women make up about 69.00% of the total workforce involved in the livestock sector. Although rural women have significant participation in dairy and goat farming, their contribution is underrated in India. Women play crucial roles in livestock management, contributing significantly to various aspects of animal husbandry and care. Their responsibilities often include feeding, watering, milking, and overall health management of livestock. In many rural settings, women are primary caregivers for animals, ensuring their well-being and productivity. Additionally, women may engage in breeding and reproduction management, as well as processing and marketing of livestock products. Despite their essential contributions, women in

livestock management often face challenges such as limited access to resources, training, and decision-making power. Empowering women in this sector can enhance animal welfare, increase household income, and promote gender equality in rural communities.

Women in forestry

In India, women play important roles in forestry, contributing to various aspects of forest management and conservation. They contribute to the preservation and conservation of forests, agroforestry, tree improvement, and watershed management. Their responsibilities encompass collecting firewood, fodder, and non-timber forest products essential for household use and income generation. Women often possess traditional knowledge of local flora and fauna, aiding in sustainable forest utilization. Additionally, they engage in activities like nursery management, tree plantation, and soil conservation, promoting environmental sustainability.

Women in fisheries and aquaculture:

Around 45 million people worked full- or part-time in the main fishing industry globally in 2008. Women play integral roles in fisheries and aquaculture, contributing to various aspects of the sector's value chain. Their responsibilities include fish harvesting, processing, marketing, and trading. In many coastal communities, women are involved in artisanal fishing, using traditional methods or engaging in small-scale aquaculture activities such as fish farming or shrimp cultivation. Women are more commonly occupied in subsistence and commercial fishing from small boats and canoes in coastal or inland waters. For example, in West Africa, the so called “Fish Mamas” play a major role.

Women workers in rural labour markets:

Women workers in rural labour markets play pivotal roles across various sectors, contributing to agricultural production, livestock management, agro-processing, and other rural industries. Their responsibilities encompass tasks such as planting, harvesting, weeding, and tending to livestock, alongside engaging in non-farm activities like handicrafts, food processing, and small-scale entrepreneurship. However, women often encounter challenges such as limited

access to land, credit, and technology, as well as lower wages and inadequate social protection compared to men. Empowering women in rural labour markets through equitable access to resources, education, training, and supportive policies can enhance productivity, income generation, and gender equality, ultimately fostering sustainable rural development.

Environment for farm women

The socio-cultural and technological context impacting rural women's involvement in agriculture is constantly evolving. Despite significant changes, rural women continue to encounter deep-rooted socio-cultural barriers that hinder their ability to make independent social and economic decisions. These barriers, originating within the family and community, pose challenges to women's mobility and aspirations for socio-economic advancement, especially as smaller family sizes become more common. Balancing their various roles, including reproductive, community, and productive duties, presents a complex challenge for women striving for holistic development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the empowerment of women in agriculture is not just a matter of gender equality; it is essential for sustainable development and food security. Rural women are the major contributors in agriculture and its allied fields. Her work ranges from crop production. From household and family maintenance activities, to transporting water, fuel and fodder. Rural women are pivotal in driving economic growth, enhancing food and nutrition security, and reducing poverty. Rural women are at the forefront of driving economic growth and environmental sustainability, making significant contributions to agricultural production, livestock management, forestry, fisheries, and rural labour markets. Despite their vital roles, women face formidable socio-cultural barriers and limited access to resources and opportunities. Efforts to empower women in agriculture must prioritize equitable access to land, credit, technology, and markets, as well as investing in education and training programs tailored to their needs. By addressing these challenges, we can unlock the full potential of women in agriculture, leading to increased productivity, income generation, and gender equality in rural communities.



References

Satyavathi, C. T., Bharadwaj, C. and Brahmanand, P. S. (2010). Role of farm women in agriculture: Lessons learned. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 14(3), 441-449.

Patil, B. and Babus, V. S. (2018). Role of women in agriculture. *International journal of applied research*, 4(12), 109-114.

["NITI Aayog Budget Allocation Increased by More than 20%".](#) Press Information Bureau. 23 February 2023. Retrieved 16 February 2023

Empowered role of women in agriculture- https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacu998.pdf