

# Women in Agriculture – Shaping the Modern India

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## INTRODUCTION

India has a national tradition bound to agriculture fertility. Agriculture in India defines familiar tradition, social relations and gender roles. Women in the agricultural sector, either through traditional or industrial means, subsistence or agricultural laborer, represents a momentous demographic group.

Swaminathan, the famous agricultural scientist describes that it was woman who first domesticated crop plants 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 began 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 environmental sustainability through the maintenance of varietal diversity and genetic resistance.

The women are the backbone of agricultural workforce but worldwide her hard work has mostly been unpaid. She does the most tedious and back-breaking tasks in agricultural farm activities, animal rearing and management of household task.

The nature and extent of women's involvement in agriculture, no doubt, varies greatly from region to region. Even within a region, their involvement varies widely among different ecological sub-zones, farming systems, castes, classes and stages in the family cycle.

But regardless of these variations, there is hardly any activity in agricultural production in which women are not actively involved.

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 programs usually give sole title and hence the security needed for obtaining production credits to the husband.

## THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE AND ITS ALLIED FIELDS

Rural women executes many labor intensive jobs such as weeding, hoeing, grass cutting, picking, cleaning of field, harvesting and storage of grains etc. Women are also expected to collect wood from fields. These woods are being used as a major fuel source for cooking. Because of the increasing population pressure, over grazing and desertification, women face difficulties in collection of firewood.

Clean drinking water is another major problem in the front of women in rural areas. Like collection of wood, fetching water from remote areas is also the duty of women. Because a woman from agriculture background is responsible for farm activities, keeping of livestock and its other associated activities like milking, processing of milk and preparation of milk products and utilization of these products.



Women performing various agriculture activities at farm

Livestock is the primary subsistent activity used to meet household food needs as well as supplement farm incomes. The majority of farms own some livestock. The pattern of livestock strength is mainly influenced by various factors such as farm size, cropping pattern, availability of range-lands including fodder and pasture. It is common practice in the rural areas to give an animal as part of a women's dowry.

Studies have revealed rural women earn extra income from the sale of milk and animals. Mostly women are engaged in cleaning of animal, sheds, watering and milking the animals. Rural women are also responsible for collection, preparing dung cakes an activity that also brings additional income to poor families. Evidently, rural women are involved in almost all livestock related activities. Except grazing, all other livestock management activities are predominantly performed by females. Majority of women are involved in shed cleaning and collection of farmyard manure. Males, however, share the responsibility of taking care of sick animals. It is evident that the women are playing a dominant role in the livestock production and management activities.

#### MULTI-DIMENSIONAL ROLE OF WOMEN

1. Agricultural Activities:- Sowing, transplanting, weeding, irrigation, fertilizer application, plant protection, harvesting, winnowing, storing etc.
2. Domestic Activities:- Cooking, rearing of children, water collection, fuel wood gathering, household maintenance etc.
3. Other Activities:- livestock management, fodder collection, milking etc.

Mainly rural women are engaged in agricultural activities in three different ways depending on the socio-economic status of their family and regional factors. They are work as:

- Paid Labourers.
- Cultivator doing labour on their own land.
- Managers of certain aspects of agricultural production by way of labour supervision and the participation in post harvest operations.

#### MAJOR ISSUES FACED BY WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE SECTOR

- Few land holding by women farmers
- Lack of information about banking sector

- The neglected participation of decision making in household as well as farm related activities
- Lack of access to use of productive access
- Women performing all un-mechanized work
- Low educational status of farm women
- Women earn less wages than men even for performing same tedious job
- Women do not know their legal rights and are not aware about their legal rights
- Lack of information about various government scheme benefitted for women farmers.
- Lack of information about agricultural marketing system

[3] <https://www.fao.org/3/am307e/am307e00.pdf>

#### PROPOSALS FOR THE RECOGNITION OF WOMEN CONTRIBUTION IN AGRICULTURE

- Training and knowledge dissemination of women farmers should be done village to village about women rights and related scheme by the government
- Formation and promotion of women-led policies in agriculture sector
- More services and vocational trainings should be provided to poor farm women for land, agriculture and livestock management.
- Acknowledgement of labor work of working women in the field of agriculture should be accounted in monetary terms
- Banks and other financial institutions should develop policies which prioritize specially women in agriculture.
- Equal wages should be fixed by the government for women farmers.
- Extension programs regarding awareness and counseling of existing legal rights and government policies, agriculture marketing system should be provided in rural women farmers.
- Training program to empower rural women farmers by enhancing their skills should be provided.

#### REFERENCE

- [1] <https://www.dhanuka.com/blogs/women-the-unsung-warriors-of-indian-agriculture>
- [2] [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329916126\\_Role\\_of\\_Women\\_in\\_Agriculture](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329916126_Role_of_Women_in_Agriculture)