

Empowering Women in Sustainable Agriculture: Development of Country

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Abstract: Women are essential contributors to agriculture and rural economies, yet their potential remains underutilized due to persistent gender-based disparities in access to resources, land, education, and decision-making. This paper examines the role of women in sustainable agriculture and explores strategies for their empowerment as a critical pathway to achieving food security, environmental conservation, and rural development. It highlights how empowering women—through access to land rights, training, financial services, and leadership opportunities—can significantly enhance agricultural productivity and promote environmentally sustainable practices. Drawing on case studies and global data, the study underscores the need for gender-responsive agricultural policies, inclusive technologies, and community-based interventions that recognize women as change agents in sustainable food systems. The research concludes that sustainable agriculture cannot be fully realized without the active participation and empowerment of women, making gender equality a cornerstone of long-term agricultural resilience and sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the backbone of many economies, especially in developing countries. Women constitute a significant portion of the agricultural workforce, yet their potential is often overlooked. Empowering women in agriculture is not just a matter of social justice but a necessity for sustainable development. This paper seeks to analyse the impact of women's empowerment in sustainable agriculture on the overall development of a country.

Agriculture remains a fundamental pillar of economic and social stability in many developing nations. Women constitute nearly half of the agricultural labour force globally, yet they face persistent marginalization in access to resources, land, and decision-making. Recognizing women as key drivers of sustainable agriculture is critical for national development, food security, and climate resilience.

OBJECTIVES

- To identify challenges faced by women in the agriculture sector.
- To analyse the role of women in promoting sustainable agricultural practices.
- To evaluate the impact of women's empowerment on national development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- 1) Setboonsarng, S., & Gregorio, E. E. (2017). - Green agricultural technologies can mitigate climate change in the benefit of rural economies, environments, and societies. Sustainable farming practices are essential to interdisciplinary research, policymaking, and social action for mitigating climate change.
- 2) Asyhari, Asyhari, Budhi Cahyono, Siti Sumiati, Dyana Wijayanti, Naila Najihah, and Choiril Anwar-The empowerment of villagers in Manggihan Village, Getasan District, Semarang Regency basically means to improve people prosperity. It could be achieved through the improvement of economic activities in the region. The production of organic fertilizer and vegetable planting with *green house* system in Manggihan village could potentially provide competitive and sustainable contribution to the farming sector and people prosperity.
- 3) Brumfield, R. G., & Ozkan, B. (2023). - Suzanne's Project was the first farm management training session the women in the pilot project had attended, although they had been farming for an average of 18.7 years on a mean farm size of 5.3 ha (13.10 acres) (Brumfield et al. 2016a).
- 4) Rui, G. U. (2021).- In recent decades, more and more attention has been paid to gender differences in poverty analysis. Among them, microfinance, training, and cooperatives are the common means to empower women for poverty reduction.
- 5) Li, J., Li, J., Nassani, A. A., Naseem, I., & Zaman, K. (2024).- The United Nations

Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality emphasises the importance of empowering women and girls in all walks of life. The corporate working environment continues to promote male-biased policies that limit women’s ability to advance to top management positions. CSR can be advanced by maximising the potential of women in the workplace.

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining:

- Literature review of UN reports, academic papers, and policy documents.
- Qualitative interviews with women farmers and NGO workers.
- Case studies from regions in India.

Women's participation rate in the agricultural sectors is about 47% in tea plantations, 46.84% in cotton cultivation, 45.43% growing oil seeds and 39.13% in vegetable production

METHODOLOGY

Analysis

Agriculture has highest estimated percentage distribution of female workers followed by manufacturing as per the Annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Report 2021-22

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As per the Annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Report 2021-22, the estimated percentage distribution of workers at All-India level in usual status by broad industry division as per National Industrial Classification (NIC) 2008 is as below:-

Broad industry division as per NIC-2008	Male (%)	Female (%)	Person (%)
agriculture	38.1	62.9	45.5
mining & quarrying	0.4	0.1	0.3
manufacturing	11.8	11.2	11.6
electricity,water,etc	0.7	0.2	0.6
construction	15.6	5.0	12.4
trade, hotel & restaurant	14.7	5.9	12.1
transport, storage & communications	7.5	1.2	5.6
Other services	11.2	13.6	11.9

Government has taken various steps to improve women’s participation in the labour force and quality of their employment. A number of protective provisions have been incorporated in the labour laws for equal opportunity and congenial work environment for women workers. These includes enhancement in paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks, provision for mandatory crèche facility in the establishments having 50 or more employees, permitting women workers in the night shifts with adequate safety measures, etc.



As per the Annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) report 2021-22, the estimated female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in Haryana on usual status for age 15 years and above is 19.1%. District-wise estimates are not captured in PLFS reports.



In India, Agriculture employs about 80 percent of rural women. Empowering and mainstreaming rural women workforce in agriculture can bring paradigm shift towards economic growth. It will enhance food and nutrition security and alleviate poverty and hunger. It's a winwin strategy for achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

The workforce participation rate for rural females is significantly higher at 41.8 percent against urban women participation rate of 35.31 percent.

- Women comprise 33% of the agriculture labour force and 48% of the self-employed farmers in India.
- With growing urban migration by men, the agriculture sector is being managed by women.
- Women contribute to agriculture through multiple roles as cultivators, entrepreneurs, and labourers.
- About 60–80% of the food produced in India can be attributed to the efforts of rural women.
- Rural women are also engaged in allied fields including livestock rearing, horticulture, post-harvesting operations, agro/social forestry, fishing, etc.
- Most labour-intensive manual operations in agriculture such as cattle management, fodder collection, milking, threshing, winnowing, etc., are performed by women.
- The community management role played by rural women helps ensure the dissemination of information and extension at the community level.

CONCLUSION

- 1) Nearly 63% workers are female in the agriculture sector at the pan-India level, while the estimated percentage distribution of female worker in the manufacturing sector is 11.2%, according to the annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Report 2021-22.

- 2) Empowering women in sustainable agriculture is not merely a social imperative but an economic strategy for national development. Countries that invest in women's agricultural potential achieve stronger food systems, better environmental outcomes, and more equitable growth. A future-ready agricultural sector must be inclusive, sustainable, and gender-responsive.
- 3) The research emphasises gender equality as a key goal for sustainable farm and rural development. Rural women's empowerment may stimulate farm and rural entrepreneurship and promote environmentally friendly and resilient farming.

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