

Role of Women in Agriculture Development

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Agriculture in India defines familiar tradition, social relations and gender roles. Female in the agricultural sector, either through traditional or industrial means, subsistence or agricultural laborer, represents a momentous demographic group. Agriculture is directly tied to issues such as independence, making agency and education and services.

As per Census total female 55 per cent agricultural 24 per cent cultivators. 12.8 per cent operational owned by reflect the disparity in landholdings



economic decision-abilities, access to health

2011, out of main workers, were labourers and were However, only of the holdings were women, which gender ownership of in agriculture.

Moreover, there is concentration of operational holdings (25.7 per cent) by women in the marginal and small holdings categories.

Female Share

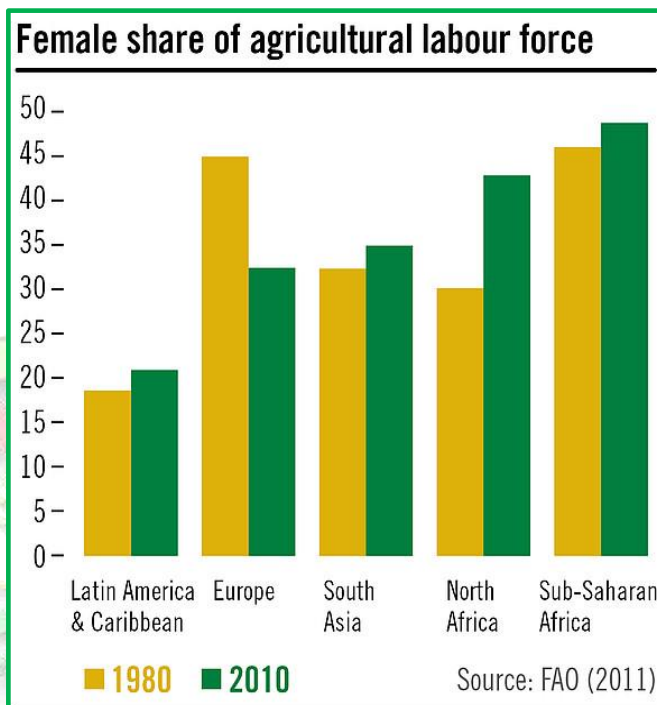
Compared to men, women and girls are still more severely affected by poverty, hunger and disease. When food is scarce, female family members often get the smallest portions. On the labour market, women are literally paid starvation wages. Mothers also suffer most from lack of medical care and balanced diets. The responsibility for the survival of their children commonly demands additional sacrifices from them. In Africa and large parts of Asia, women in rural areas bear the main responsibility for taking care of children and elderly.

They also constitute the majority of the agricultural labour force in small-scale and subsistence farming. Since official statistics do not capture unpaid work, be it in the garden, in the field or in the household, they insufficiently represent women's actual share in

agricultural work. Women in Africa and Asia who live in rural areas are often doubly affected by discrimination.

Women are the backbone of the rural and national economies. They comprise 41% of the world's agricultural labour force, which rises to 78% in some countries. As farmers, women in subsistence production ensure the survival of millions of people in every part of the world. Women, in sustenance economies, are producing and reproducing wealth in partnership with nature, as experts in their own right with environmental knowledge of nature's processes. Women's livelihood strategies and their means of food security are diverse and difficult, from cleaning-up seed, to cultivating field crops, to house gardening and forests and waste lands.

These alternate modes of knowledge and livelihood are not known to conventional agricultural scientists, who cannot associate women's expertise, information, work and skills with society, food security and the creation of wealth. More than half of the world's food is grown by women. Women's work is equally wide-ranging and multifaceted that continues throughout the year, and they perform multiple tasks in the realm of agriculture.



Women's original knowledge and skills are vitally compulsory for the food production and sustainable agriculture. They are the power on the interface of livestock keeping with farming. The entrenched social and religious norms that define women's role as secondary and subordinate keep women vulnerable and dependent and allow women's exploitation as agricultural workers and farmers. Neither ensuring that the majority of rural women neither do own land, nor have access to productive resources.

Multi-Dimensional Role of Women:

- Agricultural Activities: Sowing, transplanting, weeding, irrigation, fertilizer application, plant protection, harvesting, winnowing, storing etc.
- Domestic Activities: Cooking, child rearing, water collection, fuel wood gathering, household maintenance etc.
- Allied Activities: Cattle management, fodder collection, milking etc.

Despite women's extensive and varied participation in agriculture, they continue to have less access than do men to modern agricultural inputs. As a result, their farm work is labor intensive and yields meager economic returns.

Feminisation

Economic Survey 2017-18 says that with growing rural to urban migration by men, there is 'feminisation' of agriculture sector, with increasing number of women in multiple roles as cultivators, entrepreneurs, and laborer's. Globally, there is empirical evidence that women have a decisive role in ensuring food security and preserving local agro-biodiversity. Rural women are responsible for the integrated management and use of diverse natural resources to

meet the daily household needs. This requires that women farmers should have enhanced access to resources like land, water, credit, technology and training, which warrants critical analysis in the context of India. In addition, the entitlements of women farmers will be the key to improve agriculture productivity. The differential access of women to resources like land, credit, water, seeds and markets needs to be addressed.

With women predominant at all levels-production, pre-harvest, post-harvest processing, packaging, marketing – of the agricultural value chain, to increase productivity in agriculture, it is imperative to adopt gender specific interventions. An ‘inclusive transformative agricultural policy’ should aim at gender-specific intervention to raise productivity of small farm holdings, integrate women as active agents in rural transformation, and engage men and women in extension services with gender expertise.

References

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