



Role of Horticulture in Women Empowerment

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Rural women entrepreneurship is passing through a transition period. The Indian rural economy is also experiencing an entrepreneurial need. The program aims to help the women self-help groups to earn improved livelihoods by organizing them into cooperatives. Farmers need to adopt a set of postharvest technologies which are cost effective and appropriate for reducing losses by keeping perishable produce fresh for longer period or processing them into durable products, viz., juice, pulp, concentrate, etc., to fetch a better return on their produce.

Horticulture is one of the biggest growing sectors of agriculture. The horticulture crops have potential of providing more employment and income from unit area than field crops. Women play a significant role in horticultural operations such as nursery raising, planting, weeding, harvesting and seeds storage, whereas men mainly take care of marketing aspects. Thus the role of women are conned to major field operations.

Women play an active role in various production and postproduction activities of horticultural crops. The number of women engaged in agriculture has increased continuously in the past two - three decades due to various factors such as migration of men to urban areas, increase in the demand of labour force in construction and other sectors. The data on the women involved in horticulture sector are scanty however the involvement of women in various operations of cultivation and post harvest handling and storage is very high. Horticultural crops are different from field crops in respect of their cultivation practices. Majority of fruits, vegetables, ornamental and plantation crops are not directly seeded. They are raised through seedling production in nursery beds and thereafter planting in the main fields. The seed cleaning, preparation of seed and sowing in the field is done by the women irrespective of the crops. Their participation in these activities is more than 80 per cent. The involvement of women in land preparation activities such as stubble collection, manure application and cleaning of field in nursery and field is more than 60 per cent. The participation of women in transplanting of vegetables is more than 80 per cent. The participation of women in frequent watering and proper nurturing of the newly planted seedlings is very high. Among various intercultural operations such as irrigation, weeding thinning, crop watch, weeding is most crucial and Horticulture is one of the largest sectors of agriculture in India. Women workers are exclusively involved in harvesting of the fruits, vegetables, flower and spices.

Role of Women in Fruit Production

Fruit crops play vital role in economy of the nations and provide basic needs like food, fodder, fuel, feed, fibre. They are termed as "Protective Foods" owing to their richness to serve as sources of vitamins and minerals in diets. Fruits are easily digestible and contain ample amount of different organic acids and digestive enzymes, roughage and natural fibres

and they are energy giving materials having high calorific value. Fruit production is remunerative and has high productivity per unit area. It is well known that women play significant role in production and post production activities, such as nursery management, intercropping, grading, processing, value addition, packaging etc. The nature and extent of women's involvement in fruit production varies greatly from region to region crop to crop, operation to operation depending on agro-climatic and socio-cultural variations. In north India, women mostly participate in fruits processing and kitchen gardening. In south India, besides these operations, women also participate in nursery technology. Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India has started National Agricultural Technological Project and Technology Mission of Horticulture, National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) at national level for women empowerment through various activities like development of nursery, value addition, processing and marketing of fruit crops. In order to encourage women to be self-reliant and reap advantage of the benefits under this scheme, several initiatives have been taken under Technology Mission such as:

Organization/ identification of women groups which would act as a network for channelising the horticultural support.

Need-based assessment of women farmers in terms of the horticulture support such as input, technological and extension support.

- Prioritizing the activities of individual women groups on the basis of the need based assessment.
- Providing adequate organizational and financial support to the women groups.
- Providing technical training in horticulture and allied areas to women farmers.

Role of Women in Vegetable Production

Vegetables occupy around 4 % area in the Country. India is the largest producer of okra, cauliflower. The production growth rate of vegetables is 3.5 %. While export growth rate is 20 percent. The annual export of vegetable is around 2000 crore. Vegetable cultivation has become highly commercialized. But still there is a wide gap between current production and potential productivity. Women participation in the family farming system is crucial to the sustenance of rural economy. The farm women need to be involved in olericulture sector to push up considerable increase in production level and area under vegetables. Vegetables are vital source of minerals, vitamins and dietary fibers and thus play an important role in human nutrition in supplying adequate quantity of free radicals, antioxidants and micronutrients. Women play an active role and extensive involvement in crop production, horticulture, and livestock and fisheries sector. Around 85 percent of the total female labourers are employed in agriculture sector in rural India. The number of women in agriculture sector is increasing continuously during last few decades due to several reasons such as migration of men to urban areas, low growth rate of agricultural sector, seasonality of work.

As compared to any other cereal and pulse crop, raising vegetable needs experience and constant attentions. Most of the vegetables are not directly seeded they are raised through seedling production in nursery beds and thereafter planting in the main fields. Raising the seedlings of vegetables, require constant attentions and proper experience about the method of nursery bed preparation, sowing depth, plant density in per unit area and further proper nurturing of emerging seedlings. The women usually perform these operations. These crops require frequent watering and proper nurturing of the newly planted seedlings. Women workers perform this work very efficiently with utmost care. Weeding is another difficult operation in vegetable farming. Vegetable being short duration crop, lose their yield potential if they are left unweeded. Women workers not only at their own field but also as laborers are engaged in this work. Vegetables differ than other agricultural crops and are harvested at

frequent intervals based on their horticultural maturity. Women workers are exclusively involved in harvesting of the vegetables such as pea, chilli, okra, tomato, brinjal etc.

Role of Women in Floriculture

Floriculture is a labour-intensive activity, wage payment forming roughly one-third of the costs of production. It is estimated that floriculture has a potential to generate direct employment for about 20 workers / ha. The indirect employment generation in the wide production chain covering plastic, paper, carton, agro-chemicals, transport and other services is in 1:2 ratio. It indicates that even a modest floriculture programme can generate millions of jobs, predominately for young women one of the significant peculiarities in the employment pattern in floriculture industry is the inclusion of more women because of their manual skills, aesthetic sense and delicacy. The increasing demand of flowers and commercialization of floriculture has changes the concept of traditional flower cultivation. The modern flower cultivation would require reorientation of farmers and his family members so that they too can avail the multitude of opportunities provided by the modern trends. So they can shift from the cultivation of cereals, fruits and vegetables to flowers. Value-added advantage in floriculture is very high because flowers, especially for export markets are high value commodity. The many fold difference in the income of flower crops make them as fastest and most lucrative form of agriculture in India. The cultivation of flowers would enable disadvantaged communities to escape the spiral of poverty and unemployment.

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