



Feminization of Agriculture: Concept, Impact and Government Initiatives

(*Payal Choudhary¹, Dr. V.S. Jaitawat², Sunil Kumar Sharma³ and Vikash Kumar Meena¹)

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Extension Education, Rajasthan College of Agriculture, MPUAT, Udaipur

²Professor, College of Agriculture, Agriculture University, Jodhpur

³SMS, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Pokaran

*Corresponding Author's email: choudharypayal657@gmail.com

Women have a crucial role in agricultural output, particularly in small-scale and subsistence farming. They often provide the majority of farm labor and contribute significantly to household food security. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that women account for 43% of the worldwide agricultural labor force, with certain places seeing a 50% increase. In India, women account for up to 30% of the agricultural workforce. According to NSSO figures, women's participation in agricultural activities in India increased from 12.8% in 2005-06 to 13.9% in 2012-13. The 10th Agriculture Census (2015-16) found that female operational holdings increased by 14% compared to 2010-11.

Concept of Feminization in Agriculture

The term "feminization of agriculture" implies women's increased participation and involvement in agricultural activities, which challenges established gender roles. It represents a movement from traditionally male-dominated agriculture to women taking up responsibilities in farming, livestock rearing, agribusiness, and entrepreneurship.

Approaches for empowering women in agriculture

1. We offer education and skill development in agricultural methods, financial management, and entrepreneurship.
2. Implementing digital activities to increase awareness, education, and financial information.
3. Providing stable land tenure and legal protection for women's land rights.
4. Offering financial services targeted to women's requirements and encouraging the usage of relevant technology.
5. Increasing access to markets and market knowledge.
6. Designing agricultural policies and plans that benefit women.

The impact of Feminization of Agriculture in India

Feminization of agriculture in India has positive and negative effects on women and their societies. Some of the key impacts are:

- **Socio-economic empowerment of women:** Women's involvement in agriculture has led to increased income and economic empowerment, enabling them to improve their living conditions and support their families.
- **Gender equality:** Providing women with greater control over agricultural resources such as land, water, and farming inputs can lead to improved outcomes. The feminization of agriculture defies gender conventions and promotes equality.

- **Food security:** Women's participation in agriculture improves food security in rural regions by holding them accountable for providing nutritious food for their family.
- **Health:** Women's involvement in agriculture has led to improved health for themselves and their children, as they are more inclined to invest in healthcare and nutritious food.
- **Education:** As women's incomes increase, they are more likely to invest in their children's education, particularly for girls. This leads to improved educational outcomes and increased social mobility.

Government initiatives

Government initiatives in India specifically focused on women's empowerment in agriculture:

1. Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP)
2. Stree Shakti Package for Women Entrepreneurs
3. National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) – Women Self-Help Group (SHG) Component
4. Mahila Coir Yojana
5. Priyadarshini Scheme for Women Organic Farmers
6. Mahila E-Haat
7. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)
8. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme
9. Ujjwala Yojana – Free LPG Connection Scheme for Women

Extension Strategies enhancing farm women

- Training and skills imparted to women i) training in latest advances in agriculture ii) training in leadership to motivate to play role of change agent
- Employment of women in aspects of agricultural extension services
- Organize women into functional groups
- Gender sensitive extension approaches
- Development of new extension training material



Special provisions for women farmers in national scheme

- 1. National Mission on Agricultural Extension & Technology (NMAET) – Sub-Mission on Agricultural Extension (SAME):**
 - **Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA):** Support for Women Food Security Groups (FSGs)- Rs.0.10 lakh per group/year to achieve food security at the domestic/house hold level through setting up of kitchen garden, promoting off farm activities such as piggery, goat-rearing, bee-keeping etc.
 - **Agri-Clinics & Agri-Business Centers (ACABC):** 44% Back-ended composite subsidy towards cost of project to women as compared to 36% to men.
 - **Mass Media Support to Agricultural Extension:** One day specially allocated to cover areas of core competence women farmers in programmes of All India Radio & Doordarshan.
- 2. Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH):** Assistance for horticulture mechanization also available grower associations/ farmer groups/ Self Help Groups/Women farmer groups having at least 10 members, who are engaged in cultivation of horticultural crops.
- 3. Integrated Scheme for Agricultural Marketing (ISAM):** 33.33% Rate of Subsidy (on capital cost) for women as compared to 25% for men. Maximum Subsidy Ceiling is Rs. 500.00 lakhs for women as compared to Rs.400.00 lakhs for men.
- 4. National Food Security Mission (NFSM):** At least 30% allocation of the funds is for women farmers Provide training based on cropping system to farmers including weaker section of women.
- 5. National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA):** At least 50% of the allocation is to be utilized for small, marginal farmers of which at least 30% are women beneficiaries/farmers.

Conclusion

The feminization of agriculture marks a substantial shift in India's conventional agricultural environment. Women's greater participation in agriculture benefits not only individual households, but also rural development, food security, and gender equality. Honouring and appreciating women's efforts in agriculture is critical to attaining long-term and inclusive progress in rural India. Training and skills imparting program should take place for farm women. Aside from women's participation in research, efforts have been made to develop technology that will be suitable for female use.

References

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