



Women participation in agriculture sector in India

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Abstract

Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy. It is an important growth and poverty reduction. Women play a vital role in building this economy. Women's participation rate in the agricultural sectors is about 47 per cent in tea plantations, 46.84 per cent in cotton cultivation, 45.43 per cent growing oil seeds and 39.13 per cent in vegetable production. The physical strain of Agricultural Activities of women are Sowing, transplanting, weeding, irrigation, fertilizer application, plant protection, harvesting, winnowing, storing, threshing, etc and agriculture allied activities such as dairy and poultry farming is also dominated by women. Women in India are major producers of agriculture commodities in terms of volume and value and numbers of hours worked. A progressive and a broad-minded approach, and recognition of the role of rural women will play a vital role to help our country grow and prosper. The present paper focus on the participation women in agriculture is extremely significant.

Keywords

Women, agriculture, labor, employment and wages etc.

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1. Introduction

Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy. Women play a vital role in building this economy. Over the years, there is a gradual realization of the key role of women in agricultural development and their vital contribution in the field of agriculture, food security, horticulture, processing, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, and other allied sectors. The bountiful land of India has undergone a renaissance in the field of agriculture. Agricultural sector employs not only four-fifth of the entire economically active women in the country, but also nearly half of India's self employed farmers are women. There was a time when Savitribai Phule championed the cause

of women folk in the villages during the British era and strove hard to bring equal rights for women in the Indian hamlets. It is commonplace to see such dynamic women entering the field of agriculture and this is a positive trend towards bridging the gender gap. A progressive and a broad-minded approach, and recognition of the role of rural women will play a vital role to help our country grow and prosper.

In the age-old days, men were predominantly hunters, while women stayed home, kept guard of the house, did the domestic work and also tilled the ground to grow basic produce. The responsibility has grown manifold now with women entrepreneurs keen on understanding the new methodologies in farming, resource management to grow more using less, livestock management and also understanding how to avail loans and subsidies which are provided by the government in order to promote women emancipation in the agrarian areas.

But the undeniable fact remains that India's agricultural industry, which employs 80 to 100 million women and the sector cannot survive without their labor. Even now, agriculture supports 58 per cent of the population, as against about 75 per cent at the time of independence.

Women make up about 33 per cent of cultivators and about 47 per cent of agricultural laborers. In rural India, the percentage of women who depend on agriculture for their livelihood is as high as 84 per cent. These statistics do not account for work in livestock, fisheries and various other ancillary forms of food production in the country. Women's participation rate in the agricultural sectors is about 47 per cent in tea plantations,

46.84 per cent in cotton cultivation, 45.43 per cent growing oil seeds and 39.13 per cent in vegetable production. While these crops require labor-intensive work, the work is considered quite unskilled. Women are heavily involved in seed selection, sowing, planting, harvesting and other aspects of farm.

1.1 Role of Women in Agriculture

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. **Livestock:** women are engaged in cattle management such as cleaning of animals, watering of cattle and milking the animals. It is evident that women are predominant role in live stock activities. Poultry farming is one of the major sources of rural economy. The rate of women in poultry farming at household level is the central in poultry industry. Even though rural women are not using modern management techniques, such as vaccination and improved feed, but their poultry enterprise is impressive. Every year, income from poultry farming has been rising. In order to generate more and more income, rural women often sell all eggs and poultry meat and left nothing for personal use. Due to poverty and lack of required level of proteins most of women have got a very poor health. Most of women suffer from malnutrition.

2. Review of Literature

Varsha Amuthakumar (2018) in her article she has analyzed the trends in the participation of men and women in agriculture. In her study the time series data has been used to depict a decline in the participation of the entire workforce, especially amongst women. It was evident from the study that the major proportion of individuals engaged in agriculture by women workforce.

Nishi Slathia (2014) her study mainly focuses on the significant role of women in the agriculture sector. The paper also focuses on the difficulties faced by them in terms of less access to productive resources which do not recognized her as active productive member. The study descriptively interprets the importance of women participation in the field of agriculture.

3. Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of the study are as follows;

- To examine the trends in female and male participation in Indian agriculture sector.
- To study the daily wages disparities in female and male workers in India

4. Methodology of the Study

The data of the study mainly based on secondary sources. Data set has been collected from Census of India and Sta-

tistical Profile of Women Labour, Ministry of Labour and Employment. The period of the study is from 2008 to 2017.

5. Result and Discussion

Women are said to be the backbone of rural economy. Their association with agriculture is an age-old practice. Women constitute about half of the world's population, their labour contributes to 60 percent of the hours worked, contributing up to 30 percent of official hours. Yet women receive only 10 per cent of the world's income and own less than one per cent of the world's property (Gupta, 1987). The key role of women is realized in agricultural development and their vital role in the field of not only agriculture but also food security, horticulture, processing nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, and other allied sectors have rose over the years. The most important productive work force in the economy of majority of the developing nations including India is formed by women. As most of rural Indian women are engaged in one or the other activities relating to agriculture, all of them could be considered farmers in some sense. Rural women play a vital and crucial role not only in agricultural production i.e., crop production but also allied activities such as horticulture, livestock poor-harvest operation, tending animals, agro-forestry, fisheries etc. Most of the work that women do, such as collecting fuel, fodder and water, growing vegetables and keeping poultry for domestic consumption go unrecorded in the census of our country.

Table 1. Trends in Percentage of Female and Male Employed in Indian Agriculture

Year	Employment in Agriculture (percentage of female employed)	Employment in Agriculture (percentage of male employed)
2008	67.6	47.1
2009	66.6	46.8
2010	65.4	46.2
2011	63.1	42.6
2012	62.3	42.4
2013	62.5	42.4
2014	62.0	41.7
2015	61.6	41.0
2016	60.6	40.1
2017	59.9	39.3

Source: ILO, ILOSTAT Database (March 2017)

The Table 1 shows the trends in percentage of female and male participation or those who were employed in agriculture field in India. While analysing the table we can easily points out that the percentage of both male as well as female workers were follows a decreasing trend. The percentage of female employed in Indian agriculture has been declined from 47.1 in 2008 to 39.3 in 2017.

Statistical Profile of Women Labor, Ministry of Labor & Employment



Table 2. Work Participation Rate by Sex in India 1971 – 2011

Year	Males	Females
1971	52.61	12.11
1981	52.62	19.67
1991	51.61	22.27
2001	51.68	25.63
2011	53.30	25.50

Source: Office of the Registrar General, India.

Table 2 shows that the female work participation rate in India has been much lower than the male work participation rate. From this table, it can be observed that female work participation rate in India has increased from 12.11 in 1971 to 25.50 in 2011.

Table 3. Rural Male and Female Work Participation in India 1971 – 2011

Year	Males	Females
1971	53.62	13.42
1981	53.77	23.06
1991	52.58	26.79
2001	52.11	30.79
2011	53.00	30.00

Source: Office of the Registrar General, India.

Statistical Profile of Women Labour, Ministry of Labour & Employment

Table 3 reveals that the rural female participation has been drastically increased from 13.42 per cent to 30.00 per cent during 1971 to 2011. Where the total rural male participation was nearly stable the above said time period.

6. Hard Work, But Low Wages for Women

Women farmers earn 22 per cent less than their male counterparts. As farmers and agricultural labourers, women contribute significantly to food security of the country, but they are paid 22 per cent less than their male counterparts, shows a report on agricultural statistics released by the Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare. While wages of both male and female farmers increased in the last decade (2006-17), the wage disparity continues and the women farmers continue to earn less. The wage gap was the highest during 2012-14 when women farmers received nearly 27 per cent less than the men during the period. Though there has been a marginal reduction in wage gap (by 4.43 per cent) between 2012-13 and 2014-15, nothing much seems to have changed, shows the data on All India Annual Average Daily wage rate covering 20 major states. In fact, the wage disparity once again figured prominently during 2015-16 when women farmers received 25.37 per cent less than the male farmers. Table 4 indicates the annual average daily wage rate of field labourers in India during 2007-08 to 2016-17. Comparatively the daily wage rate of female labourers was less than that of male workers.

Table 4. All India Annual Average Daily Wage Rate of Field Labour during 2007-08 to 2016-17

Year	Wages (in Rupees)	
	Male	Female
2007-08	91	70
2008-09	108	82
2009-10	124	95
2010-11	149	115
2011-12	183	134
2012-13	214	158
2013-14	229	178
2014-15	268	200
2015-16	281	218
2016-17	296	228

Source: Directorate of Economics & Statistics

Statistical Profile of Women Labour, Ministry of Labour & Employment

Table 5 shows the percentage of female main workers to total female population under various categories during 1981 to 2011. The percentage of female workforce in agricultural laborers to total female population has been increased from 6.46 percent in 1981 census to 41.1 percent in 2011 census. As compared to the percentage of total women workers engaged in household industry and other fields, the agricultural field shows a rapid increase in the total female workforce that it has been employed which was depicted above in percentage. The total female cultivators also steadily increased from 4.65 per cent to 24.0 per cent during 1981 – 2011 (census).

7. Problems faced by Women in agriculture sector

- In all agricultural activities there is an average gender wage disparity, with women earning only 70 percent of men's wage.
- Gender biasness is one of the major problems faced by the women
- In India only 14.9 per cent of households are female headed. Access to credit is difficult, since women lack many of the prerequisites for lending such as assets or ownership of property
- Physical and mental stress of the women
- Healthy and safety issues of problem

8. Conclusion

The study concludes that the women participation has increased from 13.42 per cent to 30.00 per cent during 1971 to 2011. Because majority of male members of households migrate to cities to find an alternative source of livelihood. While men migrate, the responsibility of taking care of the family



Table 5. Percentage of Female Main Workers to Total Female Population under Board Categories – 1981-2011

Census Year	Percentage to Total Female Population				
	Female Main Workers	Cultivators	Agricultural Labourers	Household Industry	Other Workers
1	2	3	4	5	6
1981	13.99	4.65	6.46	0.64	2.24
1991	15.93	5.51	7.05	0.55	2.82
2001	14.68	5.11	4.51	0.95	4.11
2011	25.5	24.0	41.1	5.7	29.2

Source: Office of the Registrar General, India.

lies on women's shoulders and wage rate was higher in male to compared to female so government should concentrate in equal wage men and women.

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