



Women in Agriculture: An Overlooked Phenomenon

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Abstract

In today's world, women's involvement is not limited to household chores only but also in other diverse areas of economic yield. Women in agriculture is a most overlooked phenomenon as the nature of work demands so much physical strength and so is always associated with masculinity. Due to the migration of rural men to urban areas in the search of better and highly paid jobs, Indian women are left behind on farms to make ends meet. Ergonomic characteristics of women are different from men workers and many agricultural projects are aimed at men with the assumption that they will somehow automatically benefit women. Hence due to the major involvement of women in farm operations with the ill-designed equipment, which does not match the female anthropometry that leads to drudgery. Due to the level of economic risks involved, industrialization of agriculture falls primarily within typically male areas of decision-making. Worldwide, women are impressively demonstrating that they are willing and able to use their qualifications and growing self-determination in order to directly increase social prosperity and preserve natural resources. Public and private development organizations, as also a growing number of governments and institutions, have today taken up the issue of gender mainstreaming in all of their programs and activities. Even though successes in this area are being obtained at a snail's pace, they can be observed in many regions of the world.

Keywords: Agriculture, women, gender equity.

Introduction

In today's world, women's involvement is not limited to household chores only but also in other diverse areas of economic yield. According to Statista, 2022, 905 million Indian populations reside in rural areas of the country which is larger than the urban population. The major economic activity of



the rural area is agriculture. According to Economic Survey, 2020-2021 agriculture's share in the gross domestic product (GDP) has reached almost 20 percent for the first time in the last 2 decades, making it the only vivid spot in GDP performance during 2020-21. Women in agriculture is a most overlooked phenomenon as the nature of work demands so much physical strength and so is always associated with masculinity. Due to the migration of rural men to urban areas in the search of better and highly paid jobs, Indian women are left behind on farms to make ends meet. Women are working in the fields spending 3,300 hours in fields without any pay and also the owner of that land is not given to them. Land ownership gives not only the freedom to grow on it but also increases their share in decision-making regarding any farm activity going on there. The land is an asset to the owner, a liability that makes the person feel secure from whom it belongs. Nearly 75% of the full-time workers on Indian farms are women, according to the international humanitarian group OXFAM. Female farmers produce 60% to 80% of the South Asian country's food also in unsuitable conditions of farm equipment. Ergonomic characteristics of women are different from men workers and many agricultural projects are aimed at men with the assumption that they will somehow automatically benefit women. Hence the major involvement of women in farm operations with the ill-designed equipment, which does not match the female anthropometry leads to drudgery. Introducing women-friendly improved farm tools and equipment can reduce drudgery in farm operations. Different farm activities involving women are transplanting, harvesting, threshing, drying, shed cleaning, fodder collecting, and mulching. Drudgery reduction is much needed as the frequency of health hazards reported is very high in all the farm activities which may lead to severe injury. Every second woman working on the farm has reported health hazards while transplanting and threshing followed by health hazards caused by shed cleaning in 47 percent of women and drying 33 percent, mulching 27.5 percent, harvesting 26.5 percent, and fodder collection 23 percent subsequently.

Due to the level of economic risks involved, industrialization of agriculture falls primarily within typically male areas of decision-making. The areas of economic risks involved merely include the competitive use of machinery, agrochemicals and high-breeding plant varieties; the cultivation of cash crops and the breeding of large livestock. Men's involvement in these often-risky activities has ruined many farmers in the past decades, forcing them to migrate to the slums of the cities and causing many to commit suicide due to extreme anxiety. Women in contrast tend to be more cooperative and cautious and try to curtail risk factors in food production, processing and supply, and they opt for social self-help and preventive health care. Men's forms of farming practice geared toward national and



international markets therefore often undermine female domains and competencies. Women frequently provide their families with food, from diversified cultivation of vegetables, fruits, tubers and herbs in their gardens, as well as from the rearing of small livestock. This kind of simplistic characterization do no justice to the complex gender relationships that differ according to region, history and culture. However, some basic lines of future development can be seen through, the biggest potential for innovation in order to achieve its goals of sustainability and development can also be recognized. The chances of escaping hunger and misery disproportionately increase if women become empowered in small-scale agriculture and regional development systems-oriented primarily towards local markets and supply, and where agricultural production of export and non-food crops is only a secondary possibility to achieve additional income. The FAO estimates that women comprise, on average, 43% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries. If they had equal access to productive resources, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 to 30%.

Worldwide, women are impressively demonstrating that they are willing and able to use their qualifications and growing self-determination in order to directly increase social prosperity and preserve natural resources. Women can make a decisive difference is not a new insight. Not only the World Bank, the FAO and public and private development organizations, but also a growing number of governments and institutions, have today taken up the issue of gender mainstreaming in all of their programs and activities. Even though successes in this area are being obtained at a snail's pace, they can be observed in many regions of the world.

Conclusion

In today's world women are involved in the diverse area of economic, production and farm activities. Still, the acknowledgment of women is overlooked due to many cultural, regional, or religious aspects. Women on farms do all the activities of cultivating, harvesting, and storing that too in unfavorable conditions which may cause severe health hazards as the task and tools are also designed according to the opposite sex. Women are not given any property rights. And the primary role in economic activities is also played by men due to risk financial risk involvement. Irrespective of all this, women are impressively demonstrating that they are willing and able to use their qualifications and growing self-determination in order to directly increase social prosperity and preserve natural resources. Many public and private development organizations, and a growing number of governments and institutions, have today taken up the issue of gender mainstreaming in all of their programs and activities. Even



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