

ANALYSIS OF CONSTRAINTS FACED BY FARM WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE-A STUDY IN SAMASTIPUR DISTRICT OF BIHAR

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Abstract: Women are vital human resource and play a significant role in agricultural and allied sectors undertaking both on-farm and off- farm activities. Yet their contribution has not been recognized and they are considered as ‘invisible farmers’. Considering this, the present study has been conducted to analysis the constraints faced by farm women in agriculture and allied sectors. A total of 100 farm women were selected as respondents through random sampling. The selected respondents were interviewed personally using pre-tested well structured interview schedule. The finding showed that the major constraints that farm women faced were dual role played by women at farm and home (90 %), male dominance (82%), and lack of credit (76%). Lack of decision-making power, poor contact with extension agents, lack of knowledge and skill and their illiteracy also hindered their progress. Women perform all un-mechanized agricultural tasks and perform multiple tasks, which add more burden to them.

Keywords: Farm women, constraints, agriculture.

Introduction

According to Food and Agriculture Organization (2011), women farmers account for more than quarter of the world’s population. Women comprise, on an average 43 percent of the agricultural work force in developing countries, ranging from 20 percent in Latin America to 50 percent in Eastern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. As farmers, agricultural workers and entrepreneurs, women constitute the backbone of India’s agricultural and rural economy. They constitute approximately 50% of agricultural and livestock workers. In rural India, the percentage is as high as 84%. Doss (2011) clearly showed that women comprise about 43% of the agricultural labour force globally. The mode of female participation in agricultural production varies with the landowning status of farm households. Their roles range from managers to landless laborers. Moktan & Mukhopadhyay (2012) found that farm women had participated in all identified agricultural activities to a great extent. In over all farm production, women’s average contribution is estimated at 55% to 66% of the total labour with percentages, much higher in certain regions.

Despite of this much contribution of women in agricultural sector, the face of farming is stereotypically male. Women have less access than men to agricultural related assets, inputs and services. Their hard work has not only been unpaid but also remained mostly unrecognized. They perform on a daily basis the most tedious and back-breaking tasks in agriculture, animal husbandry and homes. They are invariably paid lower wages than men for the same agricultural work. Land ownership titles are most often in a man's name. Only 11 percent women have access to land holdings, that too, mostly as small and marginal farmers (Yojana 2012). Men often either take or dictate the decisions concerning farming and women have to compulsorily carry out. Farm produce is marketed commonly by men and that gives them complete control over household finance. With grossly inadequate access to education and technology, a host of other socio-economic factors have an adverse impact on the lives of women farmers in recent years. Only 5 percent of women farmer are benefited from extension services (Tiwari, 2010). Despite their eagerness they have often not been able to take advantage of opportunities from new technologies, innovations and markets.

Viewing these facts the present study investigates the constraints faced by women farmer in agriculture as its specific objective.

Methodology

The study was conducted in the Samastipur district of Bihar. The selection of the district was made purposively with the consideration of agriculture as the main source of livelihood of rural people. Out of 20 blocks two blocks were selected for this study. A total of four villages from the two blocks namely Harpur and Mahmadda from Pusa block and Gorai and Madhurapur from Kalyanpur block were selected for this study. Hundred farm women as respondents were selected. The data were collected with the help of a pre-tested interview schedule. The selected respondents were interviewed personally with the help of a well structured and pre-tested interview schedule in order to get relevant information and to draw the conclusion.

Result and discussion

Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents: Table 1, revealed that majority of the women who participate in home farm and allied activities were belonged to middle age group (68%). This age was regarded as the most active and potential for different farm and allied activities. This was supported with the similar study conducted by Puneetha (1989). Table 1, also depicted that respondents of forward caste showed least participation (9%) while the respondents of backward caste (63%) followed by SC/ST (28%) showed more participation

in all agricultural activities. Most of the women farmer (52%) were illiterate & belong to low income group (38%). Most of the respondent have joint type of family & have no social participation (88%). Land is regarded as an income generating assets in the rural areas. The findings about land distribution depicted in table 1, were supported by the findings of Prasad and Singh(1992) who found that rural women belonging to small, marginal or landless agricultural labourers household bore a disproportionately large share of the family's work plus there proportion in agricultural activities was also higher.

Table 1: Socio-economic indicators

Independent Variables	Frequency
Age	
Young (20-30) yrs	19
Middle Age (30-50) yrs	68
Old (>50) yrs	13
Marital Status	
Married	86
Unmarried	0
Divorce/Widow	14
Caste	
Forward	9
Backward	53
SC/ST	27
Education	
Illiterate	52
Read & Write	14
Primary	23
Middle	7
High school	2
Graduate & above	2
Family type	
Joint	63
Nuclear	37
Size of land holding	
Landless	33
Marginal	45
Small	11
Medium	11
Family Income	
Low (<25000)	38
Medium (25001-50000)	30
Medium high (50001-75000)	18
High (>75001)	14
Social Participation	
No participation	88
Member of one organization	12

Constraints faced by respondents: The major constraints faced by respondents are depicted in Table 2. The constraints faced by women farmer are categorized as socio-personal, financial and technological constraints. The perusal of table indicated that playing dual role of a housewife and working women was perceived as a very important problem by 90% of the selected respondents. Male dominance (82%) and lack of decision making power by women were also the major constraints that hindered the growth of women as farmer. Illiteracy (55%) and lack of knowledge and skill (49%) were the other factors that hindered their growth as agricultural workers. Since women are considered as secondary workers in the area of agriculture hence they were not found to be actively involved in the dissemination of knowledge about new technology given by extension workers. As a result they were found to remain confined in their traditional package of practices. Lack of credit was the main financial constraint for 76% of women farmers. The findings were supported by Fabiyi et. al., (2007), Desmukh et. al., (2007) & Owolabi et. al.,(2011).

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to the constraints faced by respondents.

Constraints	Percentage	Ranking
Socio-personal		
Education	55	VIII
Lack of land holding power	45	XI
Male-dominance	82	II
Lack of decision-making power	67	IV
Dual role at farm and home	90	I
Financial constraints		
Lack of money/credit	76	III
Difficulty in taking loans	30	XII
Technological constraints		
Lack of knowledge and skill	49	X
High cost	66	V
Un availability	54	IX
Poor contact with extension agent	63	VI
Lack of improved tools specific for farm women	60	VII

Conclusion

The Indian economy is dependent on agriculture and more than 70 percent of our population living in rural areas is engaged in agriculture. Among the rural population, women are associated directly or indirectly with agriculture. Hence farm women must be recognized as an important unit contributing to the economic growth of the country. They must be supplied with opportunities for self development and self employment. This is the best way to make

use of the natural and potential capabilities of rural women. The result of the study showed that the rural women seldom have a control over the production resources like land, credit, finance, knowledge and skill and decision facility. The constraints were related with their social, economical, financial and technological conditions.

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