



THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN ECONOMICS OF FARM MANAGEMENT- A REVIEW

Dr.Surya Prakasa Rao Gedela

Associate Professor & Principal Investigator

UGC-MRP-EFMWR

P.G.Department of Economics

G.V.P.Degree College (A), Visakhapatnam.

Introduction:

Over the last several decades, considerable effort has been made throughout the world to provide women farmers and women on the farm with efficient, effective, and appropriate technology, training, and information. The positive effects are beginning to show in agricultural production statistics and in indices of family welfare. Yet these successes still fall far short of what is needed at a time when public sector investments in agricultural research and extension are under pressure, when ever-greater demands are being placed on rural women in the face of rapid social transformation, and, in an increasing number of areas, when evidence of environmental degradation is mounting.

Women constitute about 48 percent of the total population in India. 78 percent of women who are economically active are engaged in agriculture compared to 62 percent of men. More than 75 percent of rural women belong to SC and ST communities. Female main workers constitute 16.2 percent of the main workers of 31.2 percent, out of which 34.6 percent of female main workers are cultivators, 43.6 percent agricultural labourers, and 4.6 percent are engaged in allied sectors such as livestock, forestry and fishery. The above figure shows women play a vital role in stages of food production. Despite their tremendous contribution to agriculture and the economy of the country, they continue to be overloaded, exploited and disadvantaged. Their access to agricultural extension services information and credit is limited. In this context, an attempt has been made to review the role of women in economics of farm management in different aspects.

The need for Gender analysis:

The term gender describes the socially determined attributes of men and women, including male and female roles. (In comparison, *sex* denotes the physical and biological differences between males and females.) Gender has proven to be an essential variable for analysing the roles, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities, incentives, costs, and benefits in agriculture. Innumerable development projects, government programmes, research studies, and theoretical models have demonstrated that the improvement of women's access to agricultural research and extension services must begin with an analysis of men's and women's participation in the agricultural



production process along two related dimensions: their role in agriculture and their role in the household.

Gender Analysis in Agriculture:

It is now widely demonstrated that rural women, as well as men, throughout the world are engaged in a range of productive activities essential to household welfare, agricultural productivity, and economic growth. Yet women's substantial contribution continues to be systematically marginalized and undervalued in conventional agricultural and economic analysis and policies, while men's contribution remains the central, often the sole, focus of attention.

Women are typically, and wrongly, still characterized as "economically inactive" in statistical surveys of agriculture, a result that tells us more about survey methodology than about reality (Janelid, 1975). Agricultural extension services still do not attach much importance to reaching women farmers or women on the farm. Policy makers and administrators typically still assume (in the face of the empirical data) that men are the farmers and women play only "supportive role" as farmers' wives (Samanta, 1994).

The Changing Social Structure in Agriculture

As the composition and structure of rural households change (Snyder, 1990), gender responsibilities are under-going rapid change, typically with rural women becoming more responsible for household food security and children's welfare. One powerful indicator of these changes is the incidence of female-headed rural households, which is on the increase in most developing countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, women head an estimated 45 per cent of rural households in Kenya, 35 per cent in Malawi, 30 to 40 per cent in Zambia, and 15 per cent in Nigeria (ECA, 1973; Keller, 1986; World Bank, 1992a; FAO, 1993).

Typically, female-headed households are among the poorest, with the lowest level of food security (Heyzer, 1992), but in areas where female headship is the norm, as in the Caribbean, female headship can be a poor predictor of agricultural output, household welfare, or income status (Jiggins, 1994). In other cases, where women have had access to agricultural resources and services in their own right, as in parts of the Kenyan Highlands, women farming alone or with only sporadic assistance from migrant husbands have proved themselves more than capable of increasing farm productivity, efficiency, and profit (Jiggins, 1994; Saito & Weidemann, 1990).

Data summarized by the FAO serve as gross indicators of the potential overall size of extension's female clientele (covering *female farm operators and female-operated farms*) and their distribution among large, medium, and small farms. Case study data from twelve countries (Burkina Paso, Cameroon, Rwanda, Senegal, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Philippines, Colombia, Mexico, Egypt, Yemen) indicate the following in the study areas:

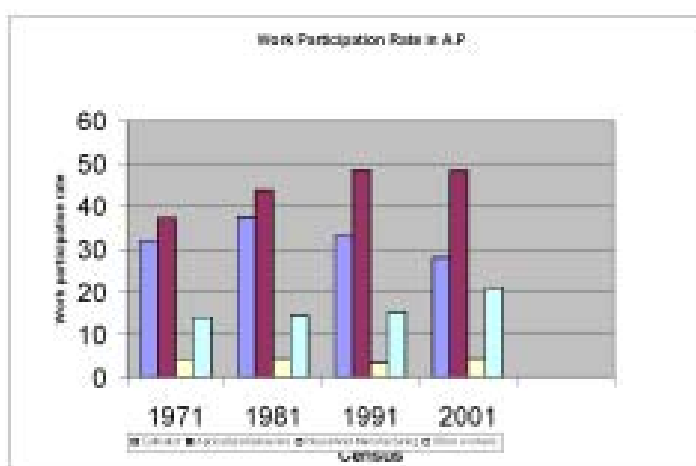


1. 25 per cent of large farms were operated by women.
2. 19 per cent of medium-sized farms were operated by women.
3. China and Indonesia both had an exceptionally high proportion of women operators of large and medium-sized farms.
4. The numbers and percentage of women operators were greatest on small farms.
5. Except for Indonesia, Philippines, Senegal, and Yemen, the percentage of female-headed farms was above 15 per cent, and in Mexico (61.46 per cent), Egypt (28.10 per cent), and Kenya (27.09 per cent), they accounted for a quarter to two thirds of all farms studied.

The reduction in the farm work force participation further triggers the distress among the farmers. While the share of workforce dependent on agriculture in Andhra Pradesh has come down to 62.3 percent in 2001 from 70.4 percent in 1961 (Venkateswarlu, 2003b), a recent study by Jayati Gosh & Chandra Sekhar (2006) on Agrarian crisis in AP, reiterates that the total agricultural employment in terms of usual status has barely increased during the period 1993-94 to 1999-2000 and in terms of daily status the employment has declined sharply.

Table-I: Work Participation Rate in AP By Industry Division: Rural (In percentages)

Census	Cultivator		Agricultural labourers		House hold Manufacturing		Other workers		Total workers (Main+Marginal)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1971	26.32	5.7	19.21	18.12	3.12	1.03	11.6	2.52	60.2	27.37
1981	27.05	10.4	19.03	24.76	2.71	1.77	11.4	3.09	60.2	40.03
1991	22.59	10.57	21.67	26.93	1.62	1.67	12	3.3	57.9	42.48
2001	18.35	9.58	22.21	26.14	1.81	2.66	15.9	4.9	58.3	43.28





It can be seen from Table-1 or the above figure reveals that in the rural sector the share of cultivators has fallen from 26.32 percent in 1971 to 18.35 percent in 2001. The above data also indicates the acceleration in marginalization process that the sector has been facing. Small farmers have become marginal farmers and marginal farmers have become agricultural labourers. In fact, with wages rising in the farm sector, marginal farmers have found it more advantageous to drifting to farm labour than the small farmers.

Constraints and opportunities:

The constraints affecting rural women's ability to improve yield, profit, and efficiency in agriculture include

1. Women's legal and cultural status, which affects the degree of control women have over productive resources, inputs such as credit, and the benefits which flow from them (Olawoye, 1989);
2. Property rights and inheritance laws, which govern access to and use of land and other natural resources (Jiggins, 1989a);
3. The relationship among ecological factors such as the seasonality of rainfall and availability of fuel wood, economic factors such as product market failures, and gender-determined responsibilities such as feeding the family, which trade off basic household self-provisioning goals and care of the family against production for the market (Jiggins, 1989b; Horenstein, 1989); and
4. The way that agricultural services are staffed, managed, and designed (FAO, 1993; Saito & Weidemann, 1990; Gittinger et al, 1990).

Improving Women's Access to Extension

Agricultural extension strategies traditionally have focused on increasing production of cash crops by providing men with training, information, and access to inputs and services. This male bias is illustrated in farmer training centres, which have been established to provide residential training on technical subjects. Most of the training centers do not provide separate washing and sleeping accommodations for men and women and do not provide facilities for the care of babies or young children, factors which may prevent women from attending the centres. Second, women's daily workloads do not usually allow them to be absent from home for residential training; even attending short courses may cause insuperable problems in arranging substitute care for children or the home. And third, even where attendance of women is quite high as a proportion of the total, women are given instruction mainly in home economics and craft subjects, not technical agriculture (Staudt, 1973; Perraton, Jamison, & Orival 1983). Further, in the overwhelming majority of countries, extension services have been staffed predominantly by men. Only in countries such as the Philippines have



women field staff been deployed in sufficient numbers and with sufficient resources to become effective agents of change among women farmers.

Decision Making:

The decision making process is an important segment of every household because it makes implementation of a plan or programme quite easy. In the Indian rural society both husband and wife are jointly responsible for making decisions on matters like family obligations, purchase of household articles etc.,. However, women suggestions are not given due consideration in the decisions pertaining to agricultural sector and important family matters. It is because the majority of the women are illiterate have little time to know the about the latest technology of farming and restricted mobility due to several cultural taboos. Hence the most important activity is the extent of the participation of women in decision – making in agriculture. The following are the main decision making areas are jointly responsible both women and men in farm management.

1. Land Preparatory activities: Preparation of land for farming is an important activity in optimum management of the agricultural farm. Hence the activities like ploughing, leveling, soil testing and application of cow dung manure can be considered as the most important preparatory activities for land for farming. Taking right decision with regard to these activities plays a vital role in getting best returns from farming. So that a variable of this kind has been considered for this study to grab the extent of participation of women member of the family in taking decision in this regard.

2. Seeds type selection: The selection of seed is an important parameter of successful farm management. The decisions regarding seed type selection like choosing traditional seeds or modern seeds. The traditional seeds are prepared by their own households and procurement of modern seeds either from trader or Government suppliers. Taking right decision with regard to these activities plays a vital role in getting best returns from farming. So that a variable of this kind has been considered for this study to grab the extent of participation of women member of the family in taking decision in this regard.

3. Time of sowing: The Time of sowing is an important factor for successful of agricultural farm. Time of sowing depends on different farm seasons like Khariff, Rabi and summer. The balance between vegetative and reproductive growth, determined by temperature relative to sowing time, is critical to yield. Taking right decision with regard to these activities plays a vital role in getting best returns from farming. So that a variable of this kind has been considered for this study to grab the extent of participation of women member of the family in taking decision in this regard.

4. Use of fertilizer: Fertilizers are used for better growth of the farm. In general the farmers are using two types of fertilizers namely organic and in-organic. The decision regarding use of fertilizer depends on the farm condition and availability. Organic



fertilizers are cow dung, manure etc., and the in-organic materials are composite of different combinations of chemicals. Taking right decision with regard to these activities plays a vital role in getting best returns from farming. So that a variable of this kind has been considered for this study to grab the extent of participation of women member of the family in taking decision in this regard.

5. Use pesticides: Pesticides are used for recovery from various crop diseases for better productivity. Farmers are using both traditional and non-traditional pesticides. Traditional pesticides like dry neem leaves, gamaxion etc., and non-traditional pesticides composite of different combinations of chemicals, which is manufactured by national and multinational companies. Taking right decision with regard to these activities plays a vital role in getting best returns from farming. So that a variable of this kind has been considered for this study to grab the extent of participation of women member of the family in taking decision in this regard.

6. Time of weeding: Weeding is a process of removing unwanted crops growing along with farm. These unwanted crops will decrease the growth of the farm. Hence the decision regarding time and process of weeding is very important for best yields. Taking right decision with regard to these activities plays a vital role in getting best returns from farming. So that a variable of this kind has been considered for this study to grab the extent of participation of women member of the family in taking decision in this regard.

7. Selection of crop variety: The demand of crop is highly influenced by crop variety. The return on the crop may vary according to the chosen crop variety. The decision regarding which crop variety to select is most important decision in farming. So that a variable of this kind has been considered for this study to grab the extent of participation of women member of the family in taking decision in this regard.

8. Engagement of hired labour: This decision enables the farmer to appoint right person at right place in right number. Hired labour is one of the costs associated with farm production. So in order to increase the marginal productivity in agriculture it is necessary to avoid over engagement of labour. So that a variable of this kind has been considered for this study to grab the extent of participation of women member of the family in taking decision in this regard.

9. Time of harvesting: The produced crop should be harvested in right time to gain better returns. In farming it is very important to decide the time when to harvest that crop so that the end-produce will not be perished. So that a variable of this kind has been considered for this study to grab the extent of participation of women member of the family in taking decision in this regard.

10. Storage of farm produce: The harvested crop must be stored in required manner for processing of end produce, to wait for better market price. So the decision regarding storage of farm produce is crucial for getting best returns. So that a variable of this



kind has been considered for this study to grab the extent of participation of women member of the family in taking decision in this regard.

11. Marketing of farm produce: This decision determines how the end-produce moving from farmer to consumer through various channels like middlemen, wholesaler, trader, agent, retailer or directly to consumer. The return on farm is highly influenced by the type of channel and their commission in consumer price. So that a variable of this kind has been considered for this study to grab the extent of participation of women member of the family in taking decision in this regard.

12. Purchase of Farm machinery: Farm machinery / equipment reduce various resources like human efforts, money, processing time and increases quality significantly. So that a variable of this kind has been considered for this study to grab the extent of participation of women member of the family in taking decision in this regard.

13. Farm Credit: Farm credit is required by needy farmers to initiate the process of farming. The various sources like Commercial Banks, Co-operative Banks, Money Lenders, SHG's, Traders, Friends and Relatives etc. The decision to get credit from appropriate sources will determine the return on farming. So that a variable of this kind has been considered for this study to grab the extent of participation of women member of the family in taking decision in this regard.

Suggestions:

The following suggestions are made for improving and redesigning training programmes for women in farm management:

1. Design and develop training programmes that upgrade women's needs and skills.
2. Allocate sufficient time to enable women to acquire new skills and adjust schedules to fit women's existing workloads.
3. Provide training in agricultural and other productive activities, not just home and family welfare topics.
4. Emphasize activities for which there is an actual income-generation potential.
5. Ensure the involvement and full participation of women from poorer and less educated backgrounds.
6. Use trainers who are not only technically competent and up-to-date, but who empathize with the needs and aspirations of rural women.
7. Provide practical field experience in innovative agriculture.

References:

1. FAO (1982). *Guidelines: Women in land and water development*. Rome: FAO, Land and Water Division.
2. FAO (1993). *Agricultural extension and farm women in the 1980s*. Rome: FAO.



3. Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) (1966). *Rural economic survey of Nigeria: Household enquiry - 1963/64 and 1964/65*. Lagos: FOS.
4. Janelid, I. (1975). *The role of women in Nigerian agriculture*. Rome: FAO.
5. Jiggins, J. (1989). How poor women earn income in sub-Saharan Africa and what works against them. *World Development*, 17 (7), 953-963.
6. Jiggins, J. (1989). Agricultural technology: Impact, issues and action (chapter 1, part I). In R. S. Gallin, M. Aronoff, & A. Ferguson (Eds.), *The women and international development annual: Vol. 1*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
7. Jiggins, J. (1994). *Changing the boundaries. Women-centred perspectives on population and the environment*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
8. Keller, B. (1986). Development for rural Zambian women. In 1985: *Training for agriculture and rural development*. Rome: FAO.
9. Venkateswarlu, A.,(2003), "Changing Workforce Structure in India and Andhra Pradesh: 1961-2001," *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, Vol.46, No.4, October-December, 2003.
10. Chandrasekhar & Jayati Ghosh (2004), "Agrarian Crisis in Andhra Pradesh," *Business Line*, October, 5th 2004