

“The role of women in Indian agriculture”

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ABSTRACT

In India and many other developing countries, rural women make up a significant portion of the labour force. Nearly every aspect of agriculture relies on the labour of women. Women's contributions to agriculture, from planting seeds to marketing agricultural goods, are widely acknowledged. Women make up 43% of the agricultural workforce in the developing countries, yet they often have less access to essentials like water, fertiliser, and market outlets. In terms of dollars, kilogrammes, and hours put in, women in India form the backbone of the country's food production system. Women's contributions to agriculture and its ancillary sectors—from primary crop and animal production to horticulture and post-harvest processing to agroforestry and fisheries—are substantial and vital. Certainly, the kind and level of women's participation in agriculture vary widely among geographic areas.

Keywords : Role, Government Initiatives, Issues, and Suggestions etc.

ABSTRACT

In India and many other developing countries, rural women make up a significant portion of the labour force. Nearly every aspect of agriculture relies on the labour of women. Women's contributions to agriculture, from planting seeds to marketing agricultural goods, are widely acknowledged. Women make up 43% of the agricultural workforce in the developing countries, yet they often have less access to essentials like water, fertiliser, and market outlets. In terms of dollars, kilo-gram, and hours put in, women in India form the backbone of the country's food production system. Women's contributions to agriculture and its ancillary sectors—from primary crop and animal production to horticulture and post-harvest processing to agro forestry and fisheries—are substantial and vital. Certainly, the kind and level of women's participation in agriculture vary widely among geographic areas.

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INTRODUCTION

Women are an essential element of the agricultural labour and the Indian economy. When it comes to farming in India, it's the women who do the heavy lifting. Women, who make up the vast majority of farm workers, have consistently shown high standards of both physical and intellectual productivity. Her education would transform rural India via a variety of well planned initiatives. Women's participation and leadership in agriculture varies widely among nations. Women in Asia are responsible for almost half of the food supply. In most cases, the proportion of women working in agriculture increases in direct proportion to the family's economic status. Despite playing an essential role in agricultural progress and related industries, women have almost no access to agricultural information, services, or production assets and very little say over their own incomes. There are a disproportionate number of women working in agriculture. In rural areas of India, women make up the vast majority of the labour force (84%). Seventy-three percent of these women are employed in agriculture, with the vast majority (96%) working in rural regions. Women are integral members of farming communities worldwide, and they play a wide range of responsibilities (including decision-making) and have varying degrees of influence over resources and earnings.

OBJECTIVES

- Women's contributions to agriculture in India will be measured.
- The importance of cooperatives in empowering women farmers in India will be evaluated.
- Evaluation of India's governmental programmes supporting women farmers
- To quantify the issues facing Indian women in the agricultural industry.
- The purpose of this study is to analyse the proposals of Indian agricultural women.

EVALUATION OF PRIOR WORK

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According to the research literature, women have crucial roles in the agricultural sector.

Zar Quresh's (2005) research emphasises the value of education for rural women and suggests teaching them how to grow flowers and store food.

According to research conducted by Nisha N (2008), weeding was the most common task assigned to labourers, followed by harvesting and postharvest activities. Since agriculture in the study region slows down in the summer, more women in the labour force were out of work than usual, prompting them to look for other means of support, such as NREGS projects, building and tiling, and other similar trades. The research found that the lack of job opportunities for women in the agricultural sector had a profound effect on the household income, family spending, and debt load of the workers surveyed. Because of this, many workers left their jobs and went in search of employment elsewhere. Having more people in the labour force is not always associated with a higher standard of living. Therefore, increased asset and income levels and educational attainment must go hand in hand with it.

Research by Tahir Munir Butt et al. (2010) shows that women in rural areas, together with males, play a significant role in agricultural sectors such as crop cultivation, animal production.

The late Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, said, "We can't ignore the importance of women who comprise half of our population in nation building. The upholder of tradition must also be ushered for modernity. We should look to science for greater social justice and equality of opportunity" (1988) Family culture, societal dynamics, and gender roles are all shaped by India's agricultural culture. Women who work in agriculture in any capacity—whether as subsistence farmers or wage workers—represent a significant population. Poverty, marginalisation, and gender inequality are all exacerbated by the fact that agriculture is intrinsically linked to concerns like economic autonomy. Most non-industrial countries still rely heavily on agriculture for both export profits and domestic employment and subsistence.

WHY INDIAN WOMEN ARE VITAL TO THE COUNTRY'S AGRICULTURAL ECOSYSTEM

In ancient India, women had far more equality. All religious and social ceremonies performed by early era Aryans were open to both men and women. However, the status of women has deteriorated throughout time. The term "gender" is often used to the feminine members of society. Historians have long speculated that women were the first to domesticate agricultural plants, so kicking off the science and practise of farming. Women in those prehistoric times began farming after harvesting seeds from local plants while their husbands went out hunting. Since then, women have been pivotal in many agricultural fields, including farming, cattle raising, gardening, harvest processing, forestry, fishing, and more. Significance Women contribute more to agriculture than men do, both in terms of the number of activities they do and the amount of time they invest, and this is true whether we are talking about subsistence farming or industrial agriculture. India's cultural identity is inextricably intertwined with the success of its farmers. First, rural India is the primary source of income for roughly 75 percent of India's households. Second, nearly 70% of India's poor (770 million people) live in rural regions. Third, India's ability to feed its expanding population and developing middle class rests on the country's ability to cultivate cereal crops and expand its output of fruits, vegetables, and milk. To achieve this goal, the agricultural industry must quickly become productive, competitive, diverse, and sustainable. India's agriculture sector is among the world's most important. About 63% (or about 125 million acres) of the land under cultivation in the nation receives rainwater irrigation, while the other 37% does not (70m ha). In addition, almost 65 million acres of land in India are covered by forests. Resulting Effects of the Green Revolution The agricultural industry in India is the fourth biggest in the world, according to statistics from 2012.

Purpose of the Study/Statement of the Issue

Women's issues in agriculture are particularly pressing and upsetting, consequences including elevated social standing, self-assurance, and food security for communities is significantly augmented when women are the focus of solutions rather than men and boys. Land tenure insecurity, land quality concerns even when land ownership is secure, agricultural land management challenges, and the need for associated infrastructure are all issues that need to be

addressed. There is parity between men and women in agricultural labour, yet women still earn less than men do for the same effort.

COMPANIES' IMPORTANCE TO INDIA'S WOMEN FARMERS

The cooperative movement has been lauded for its ability to empower women farmers via a sense of community and shared purpose, as well as to combat gender inequity. The success they've had in India has been substantial. Cooperatives made up of solely women are especially important in empowering and educating women in settings where they are traditionally excluded. Women's involvement in cooperatives remains limited, which some have hypothesised is because they believe males to be more naturally suited to careers in agriculture and the economy. However, males make up over 95% of cooperative members, whereas just 7.5% of women do so. Despite this, women-only cooperatives including credit unions, grocery businesses, and restaurants have thrived and offered their customers a wide variety of benefits. More over half, or 54 percent, of the group's members are employed in some kind of agriculture.

FARMING PROGRAMS FOR INDIAN WOMEN BY THE GOVERNMENT

Department of Agriculture has made an effort to include gender concerns in the development agenda and guarantee women's equal and full involvement in all agricultural development initiatives. To "engender" agriculture, the Department of Agriculture and Cooperatives (DOAC) created a series of schemes and programmes tailored specifically to the needs of women in the agricultural industry. These initiatives included providing selected farm women with access to training, extension, input, managerial, and entrepreneurial support. All these initiatives took somewhat different paths to the same goal: to aid women farmers in every way possible. Extension assistance was supplied via "On field Demonstration," "Mahila-Goshties," and "Study Tours," while "skill-based" capacity development activities provided the technical back- ups. Services That Help Farmers Succeed In India, women farmers do a lot of the work. Multiple studies have confirmed this. However, the findings from these studies were not adequately considered Farmers' knowledge, attitude, and abilities will be improved via training and technical guidance, and they will be helped to make choices on the acceptance of new research findings. Notably, both male and female farmers may benefit from these initiatives and programmes. The agricultural extension services in India have focused mostly on male farmers and hence have avoided addressing the systemic issue of the marginalisation of women in agriculture. Male extension staff seldom talk to female farmers. It is true that women farmers in India have not benefited equally from the country's extension programmes. Currently, there is a need for improvements, changes, and redesigns in the way that extension services are delivered in India in order to more effectively target farm women. One that takes a unified approach The 1980s saw the beginning of an integrated strategy that aimed to empower women economically by making them structurally eligible for up to 40% of development's benefits. As opposed to addressing people's demands for agriculture-related services, these methods focused on bolstering people's economic and political standing. In 1993–1994, the Government of India initiated a programme to help close the gender gap among farmers in Northern India. This project's reach is restricted, reducing its overall influence. Programs like this deserve recognition for paving the way in this area. Centers for Agriculture and Agricultural Development (KVKs) When it comes to disseminating useful agricultural technology throughout the nation, ICAR is a major player. Since April 1996, all of these frontline extension programmes have been integrated into KVKs. At KVKs, they have created specialised courses for women. The constructive role that women play in agriculture was overlooked by these programmes, which focused mostly on issues like home economics. Whatever has been done so far in this regard seems to be confined to small, inconspicuous areas. These initiatives, although commendable, are nonetheless too little to significantly alter the agricultural landscape as a whole. Women's participation in the work of NGOs has been an integral part of their mission from the start. They have also stepped up their focus on women's social equality. As a result, women's contributions to agriculture have received less notice. Therefore, women farmers' engagement in and gain from India's main extension institutions is negligible. It is important to identify and examine the factors that contribute to farm women in India having limited access to extension services.

The Struggles Facing Women in India's Agricultural Sector

The Role of Women in Indian Society:-

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Sowing, transplanting, weeding, and harvesting are typical tasks for a female agricultural worker or cultivator in India, and these activities fit naturally within the context of a home and family life. As a kind of unpaid subsistence labour, many women also work in agriculture. Men, in contrast, account for 81.1% of the total. In India, men and women have a wide-ranging educational divide, with an estimated 52-75% of agriculturally active women being illiterate. The average income gap between men and women is 30 percent across all occupations. Many women also engage in agriculture for the sake of survival, sometimes without compensation. Most Indian women are very reliant on the expansion and stability of the agricultural industry, however they have limited career options due to a lack of education and mobility in the workforce.

Allotting Time:

Women not only do difficult agricultural labour for little wages, but they are also responsible for the well-being of their families. They perform housework, tend to their children's needs, and either engage in or benefit from subsistence agriculture. Research on how women spend their time has shown that on average, Indian women spend 25 hours per week caring for their homes and children and 5 hours per week volunteering. Equal time is devoted to farming by both men and women, which includes the 30 hours of unpaid labour. In many households, daughters help out in place of their mothers or do extra chores for free. The opportunity cost of a girl's time spent on activities stereotypically assigned to women is greater than that of a boy's. Girls undertake a disproportionate amount of housework compared to males, which might affect their academic performance. Indian Women's Property Rights Gender inequalities also exist in the distribution of other crucial resources, such as land. Owning property in one's own name is a privilege seldom afforded to women. Even though they have legal title to property, they may not be able to make decisions about how to use it, whether to sell it, take out a mortgage on it, or even buy more land. Female-headed homes make up just 14.9% of all households in India. Since many women do not have the assets or property ownership necessary to qualify for a loan, getting credit might be challenging. Women's economic and social security are threatened when they are denied access to finance or limited say in home matters. Possibilities to acquire land are crucial to human growth, as is the absence of oppression and violence. From the findings of a research conducted in 2005 on the topic of domestic violence and property ownership. A study of women who owned both land and a home found that just 7 percent experienced physical violence and 16 percent experienced psychological abuse.

Rural Banking:-

In addition, partly because it is usually the male members of a group that get credit, women have restricted access to this most critical contribution. Women need to be recognised as producers in order for credit practises at banks and other institutions to be more inclusive.

IDEA OF INDIA'S WOMEN IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR

Improvement of one's abilities Through education and experience in a variety of fields, Improving women's access to technology Creating equipment for use in the field Animal husbandry , Creating offspring through artificial insemination, mushroom farming floriculture, extra cash needs, veterinary science

The formation of support groups i. to aid financially ii. to create jobs

The economic value of women's contributions are projected via three stages:

1. Data collection and presentation;
2. A monetary value placed on the idealised image of economically independent farmwomen.
3. Making Available Resources for Financial Action Sharing ownership stakes fairly

CONCLUSION

According to the results, the percentage of working-age women has dropped significantly from 27.9% in 1961 to 25.7% in 2001. In other words, the women are taken out of the agricultural sector and placed in the service sector. Also discouraging women from entering the agricultural workforce are salary gaps for equivalent work performed by men and women. The Justice Verma Committee has placed an emphasis on taking a holistic view of women's rights. Nearly 40

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crore women, or 60% of the world's female population, rely on agriculture and related industries. However, due to male-biased laws, these women are denied entry to land and water that males have access to on an equal basis. Because of this, a fresh look at the state of women's empowerment in agriculture is urgently needed. The government must show concern for its citizens by showing interest in finding solutions to their issues. This means that the government must do more than just come up with "the plans," but must also monitor their implementation to see whether they are effective. The agricultural sector's female labour force will benefit greatly from this solution.

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