

Status of Women as Farmers in India: A Review

¹M Rajeshwari Devi, ²Dr. G. N. Nimbarte

¹Doctoral Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, VNIT, Nagpur, India

²Associate Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, VNIT, Nagpur, India

Email – ¹mayanglambamrajeshwari@gmail.com, ²gnimbarte@gmail.com

Abstract: Drawing on the findings of multiple studies conducted extensively on the status and position of women in farmwork, the real situation of their ownership and control over land, the presented study identifies the barriers to empowerment of women in the Indian agricultural scenario. It has been established that clear recognition and demarcation of the actual work that women put into the farming process will not only women their due recognition but this will also boost the developmental goals of the nation.

Key Words: Gender inclusive development, Land ownership, Status, Women farmers, Work-power distribution.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The status of women in agriculture has always been a topic of crucial significance, particularly in developing countries like India, where agriculture plays a pivotal role in the economy and sustenance of millions. Women have been actively engaged in farming activities throughout history, yet their contributions and challenges have often been overlooked and underestimated. In recent years, however, there has been increased recognition of the vital role that women farmers play in the agricultural sector and the need for a comprehensive review of their status.

India, with its vast agricultural landscapes and diverse regional practices, presents a compelling case study to examine the status of women as farmers. Despite advancements in various spheres, including women's empowerment and gender equality, disparities persist within the agricultural sector. Women farmers face multifaceted challenges, ranging from limited access to resources, discriminatory social norms, and lack of recognition to insufficient policy support and inadequate representation.

This review aims to explore and analyze the current status of women as farmers in India, shedding light on the opportunities, constraints, and potential interventions required for their empowerment. By examining existing research, policy frameworks, and grassroots initiatives, the researcher aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues affecting women farmers and the efforts being made to address them.

The review will encompass various dimensions, including land ownership and tenure, participation in decision-making processes, labour rights, and the overall socio-cultural context in which women engage in farming activities. By critically examining these aspects, researchers can identify the barriers preventing women from fully participating in and benefiting from agriculture, as well as the strategies and best practices that have proven effective in promoting their empowerment.

Understanding the status of women as farmers in India is crucial not only from a gender equality standpoint but also for achieving broader developmental goals. Enhancing the productivity and well-being of women farmers has the potential to contribute to food security, poverty reduction, and sustainable rural development. It requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach that addresses the complex web of factors influencing women's engagement in agriculture and creates an enabling environment for their empowerment.

By conducting this review, the aim is to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on women's empowerment in the agricultural sector and provide insights and recommendations for policymakers, researchers, development practitioners, and stakeholders working towards gender-inclusive agricultural development in India. Only by recognizing and addressing the specific challenges faced by women farmers can we harness their immense potential and create a more equitable and sustainable future for agriculture in the country.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Ref. No.	Title	Year	Objectives	Methodology	Findings
1	Powering the Women in Agriculture: Lessons on Women Led Farm Mechanisation in South India	2013	To analyse how an initiative on farm mechanisation by a local government in Kerala in South India evolved into a formal organisation that provides sustainable livelihood options to women and small and marginal farmers and revived the rice production system.	Case analysis method is used. Data were collected by interactions and focus group discussions with people's representatives, trained members of the organisation, farmers and experts of the state agricultural university. A semistructured questionnaire was used to elicit responses systematically.	Women can be more instrumental in addressing concerns on the sustainability of livelihood systems. The case highlights the need for evolving context specific organisations to address emerging socio-economic and environmental issues.
2	Participation in Decision Making -A Study of Female Farmers in the Rural Area of Sikkim in North-Eastern India	2012	To study the role of female labour in farming sector: a study of state of Sikkim	Data was collected from 230 female farmers through interviews using a pre-designed schedule from 24 circles from all the four districts of Sikkim State in North-Eastern India. Based on their subjective judgments, Descriptive as well as inferential statistics were used to analyze and interpret the data of decision making in fourteen crop production and animal husbandry activities	The finding of the data has shown that they do participate in decision making for some of the activities in which their independent participation is more than that of men. Moreover, joint involvement in decision making was observed in agricultural/animal and the related activities even though women perform more in agricultural related activities than men.
3	The credit status of farming females-A study of rural area of Sikkim in North-Eastern India	2013	The objective is to study the Role of female labour in farming sector: a study of state of Sikkim.	The data was collected from 230 female farmers through interviews using a pre-designed schedule from 24 circles from all the four districts of Sikkim State in North-Eastern India. Based on their subjective judgments, female farmer's credit status has been measured and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS).	The findings show that 48% of the sampled farming females avail credit, of which only 34% of them avail it on their name. 43% of the sampled farming females avail credit from the formal institution and 30% of them avail it for the personal purpose.
4	Do women like to farm? Evidence of growing burdens of farming on women in rural India	2021	The study investigates whether the concentration of women's labour contributions to	The study selected four districts in each state based on a maximum-variation principle to capture the variations in local agro-climatic and agro-ecological	To conclude that for farming in India to thrive and ensure fulfilling lives for women farmers, the policymakers need to address rural women's discontent.

			agriculture has improved their autonomy in decision-making	contexts (Map 1). Using data from the 2011 Census, two villages in each district were selected, making it a total of eight villages in each state. In each of these 16 villages, a house-listing (census) exercise was conducted before selecting the sample and we found 3,235 households in Gujarat and 2,770 in West Bengal. By using a stratified-random sampling technique, we then selected 50 households from each village. In total, we interviewed 800 female farmers. Our questionnaire, finalized beforehand after phases of pilot testing, aimed at retrieving the 'hidden' gendered data that official statistics fail to extract	
5	How Many and Which Women Own Land in India? Inter-gender and Intra-gender Gaps	2021	The objective is to measure inter-gender gaps in agricultural land ownership through multiple indicators, and changes over 2009–2014 across nine states	This research article has used unique longitudinal data. also analyses intra-gender gaps, and identifies the factors—individual, household and regional—affecting a woman’s likelihood of owning land.	Despite significant advancement towards equality in inheritance laws, women are found to constitute barely 14% of landowners owning 11% of agricultural land in rural landowning households, averaged across states. Moreover, women are significantly more likely to inherit land as widows than as daughters, highlighting the divergence between the legal strengthening of daughters’ rights and the social legitimacy that widows’ claims continue to enjoy over daughters’ claims.

3. FINDINGS :

It can be inferred from the mentioned literature that there is a dire need to recognize the work of women in farming activities in view of their substantially under-represented status in the current scenario. In cases like Sikkim, women have been found to enjoy equal decision-making rights in which may seem to be an ideal distribution but is in fact disproportionate to the amount of work that both men and women put in with the woman getting the short end of the stick. The gap lies with the way work done by women farmers is counted and measured because their contribution to the pre and post production activities do not fall under any official category. Recommendations for sex-differentiation of all farm activities have been made in order to collect the real data of women’s contribution to the far work. An intrinsic issue that is simultaneously under process is the inter and intra gender gaps in women’s ownership of land. Despite the legal protection of daughter’s right to inherit land, it is the widows who have been reported to be the first in line to inherit land and this handover is also in the form of a leftover.

4. CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the review paper on the status of women farmers in India sheds light on the significant challenges and opportunities faced by women in agricultural activities. The findings highlight the multifaceted nature of gender disparities and the urgent need for comprehensive measures to address them. The review emphasizes that women farmers play a pivotal role in the Indian agricultural sector, accounting for a substantial proportion of the workforce. Despite their contributions, women face numerous barriers and discrimination, including limited access to resources, land ownership, credit, and technology. These disparities hinder their productivity, income, and overall well-being.

Furthermore, social and cultural norms often restrict women's decision-making power, mobility, and access to education and training opportunities. These constraints not only impede their economic empowerment but also perpetuate gender inequalities in rural communities.

However, the review also highlights positive developments and potential pathways for empowering women in agriculture. Initiatives such as government policies, programs promoting women's entrepreneurship, and collective action through self-help groups have shown promising results in improving women's access to resources, enhancing their skills, and strengthening their agency.

This review paper suggests a multi-dimensional approach involving policymakers, civil society organizations, and local communities to achieve meaningful progress. This approach should focus on implementing gender-responsive policies, providing targeted investments and support for women farmers, promoting gender-inclusive agricultural technologies, strengthening women's land rights, and fostering an enabling environment for women's participation and leadership in decision-making processes.

Ultimately, the review paper emphasizes the importance of recognizing and addressing the unique needs and contributions of women farmers in India. By empowering women in agriculture, not only can their livelihoods be improved, but it can also contribute to food security, rural development, and the overall achievement of sustainable development goals.

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