



Participation of Rural women in Agricultural activities and Extension programmes in Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

Rural Indian women are extensively involved in Agriculture. Although women play a central role in the rural economy through their contribution to the agriculture production process, their equitable participation in extension programmes remains minimal. This paper highlights the participation of women in various agricultural activities, extension programmes and constraints for their lower extension participation. The present investigation was conducted in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh during 2013. A simple random sampling technique was employed. One hundred and twenty rural women were personally interviewed using structured schedule. Great majority of rural women were involved in weeding (100.00%), harvesting and threshing (95.00%), sowing/transplanting (88.33%), storing (78.33%) and processing (73.33%) activities. Where as great majority of them never participated in farmer-scientist interaction meetings (91.67%), field days (90.80%), group discussions (87.50%), rythu sadassus (86.67%), demonstrations (80.03%) and polam badi programmes (79.17%). The constraints expressed for their lower participation in extension programmes were transportation difficulties (92.50%), lack of information (88.33%), lack of time (81.67%) and lack of female extension staff (67.50%).

Key words : Agricultural activities, Extension programmes, Participation, Rural women.

Agriculture is one of the largest enterprises of India which plays an important role in the country by contributing about one fifth of the national income, providing large employment opportunities, supplying adequate food grains to the growing population and giving a scope for earning foreign exchange through export, providing a base for industrial development. Rural Indian women are extensively involved in agricultural activities. According to the 2011 census as large as 30.58 percent of the total workforce engaged in agriculture are female work forces who are contributing a major proportion to the farm production as well as household income. According to FAO (1997) women produce between 60 and 80 percent of the food in most developing countries and are responsible for half of the world food production. Another study done by cited similar argument by saying that women produce between 60 to 80 percent of the food in most developing countries and are responsible for half of the world's food production. Badragheh and Abedi (2011) affirmed that rural women have played historical roles in agriculture development. Rural women play a key role in agricultural sector production by

working with full passion in production of crops right from the soil preparation till post harvest and food security activities (Habib, 1996; ESCAP, 1996; Ahmed & Hussain, 2004)

The women perform the maximum farm operations thereby contributing a lot towards the upliftment of the economic and social status of their families and finally, accelerating the pace of rural development (Singh and Seema, 2003). Women as a significant human resource can play their role effectively if they are provided equal opportunities and status as those of the men. Women farmers lack knowledge and skills of the latest technologies of farm-related operations, agricultural practices. Non availability of technology and inputs are the major constraints faced by farm women (Chandel *et al.*, 2008). They need to be enabled to use improved technology in their daily activities for which relevant education and training are to be imparted to them in the same measures, as they are available to men. Although women participation and involvement in agriculture sector is active but they are very far from agricultural extension education services throughout the world. The flow of scientific and technical information regarding farm-related

activities has to be examined and expanded to enable them to make significant productive contributions. Keeping in view the importance of women involvement in agriculture an attempt has been made with the following objectives.

1. To analyze the participation of women in agricultural activities
2. To analyze the participation of women in extension programmes
3. To analyze the constraints expressed by women for participation in extension programmes

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study was conducted during 2013 in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh. Three mandals Viz., Donakonda, Mundlamuru and Thalluru were selected. Two villages from each mandal were selected. From each of selected villages 20 rural women were selected randomly to represent the group. Thus, a total of 120 rural women were selected for the purpose of study. To analyze the participation of women in agricultural activities, all the possible activities were listed right from seed procurement to marketing. To analyze participation of rural women in extension programmes, ten extension programmes were structured on three point continuum i.e., frequently, rarely and never. Constraints were collected using open ended questions. The data were collected through personally interviewing the respondents with the help of a pre-tested structured interview schedule. The responses were scored, quantified, categorized and tabulated using mean, standard deviation, frequencies and percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Participation of rural women in agricultural activities

It could be inferred from table 1 that cent per cent of the women were involved in weeding. Almost all rural women were participated in weeding activities indicating their significant contribution for better and vigor growth and development of the crop at early growth stage. Moreover, traditionally in most areas of the country, weeding is considered as women's task (Bishop, 2004; Lemlem et al., 2010). Great majority of the rural women were involved in harvesting and threshing (95.00%), sowing / transplanting

(88.33%), storing (78.33%), fertilizer application (74.16), processing (73.33%) and irrigation (65.00%). Where as majority of them were not involved in marketing (89.17%), Seed / Planting material procurement (82.5%), pesticide application (78.33%) and land preparation (71.67%). Rural women play key roles in agriculture sector production by working with full passion in production of crops right from the soil preparation till post harvest activities (Ahmed and Hussain, 2004).

Rural women have been intensively involved in agriculture and its allied fields. They perform numerous labour intensive jobs such as weeding, hoeing, grass cutting, picking, and cotton stick collections. (Gupta, 2005). Ranjha *et al.* (2009) in their study concluded that women contribute in many activities, including farming, livestock maintenance, postharvest activities and household management. These women remain busy from dawn to dusk, as they have to supply food to men who are working in fields, fetch water and collect wood. They are equally efficient in seed bed preparation, sowing, fertilizer application, fodder cutting, weeding, inter-cultural operations, transplanting, husking, threshing, drying, storing cereals and fodder, harvesting and selling the product of crops, fruits and vegetables. Females in the rural areas of developing countries often devote more time in performing agricultural tasks than the males. They carry out these tasks in addition to domestic chores and they work for about 12 to 15 hours a day. Chayal *et al.* (2010) also concluded that the role of rural women in agriculture in developing countries is noticeable; they perform a lot of activities such as sowing, harvesting, and cutting. Picking, cleaning of grains, drying of grains, weeding, and winnowing are the major farm activities performed by rural women. Such examples were also given by Reddy (2003) and Sidhu (2011) who conducted research studies in India. Nazir *et al.*, (2013) concluded that majority (81.77 %) of the women had participation in harvesting and picking activities. About 70.88 % of respondents in the research area participated in sowing. More than half (54.20%) of the respondents were involved in processing related activities like winnowing, drying of grains and cleaning of grains.

Participation of rural women in agricultural activities.

N=120

S.No	Agricultural activity	Involved		Not involved	
		Freq	%	Freq	%
1.	Seed / Planting material procurement	21	17.5	99	82.5
2	Land preparation	34	28.33	86	71.67
3	Sowing/ Transplanting	106	88.33	14	11.67
4.	Fertilizer application	89	74.16	31	25.84
5	Irrigation	78	65.00	42	35.00
6.	Weeding	120	100.00	0	0.00
7.	Pesticide application	26	21.67	94	78.33
8.	Harvesting and threshing	114	95.00	6	5.00
9	Storing	94	78.33	26	21.67
10	Processing	88	73.33	32	26.67
11	Marketing	13	10.83	107	89.17

Participation of rural women in extension programmes

S.No	Extension programme	Participation					
		Frequently		Rarely		Never	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1.	Training programmes	8	6.67	28	23.33	84	70.00
2	Demonstrations	5	4.17	18	15.00	97	80.03
3	Kisan melas	10	8.34	22	18.33	88	73.33
4.	Group discussions	4	3.33	11	9.17	105	87.50
5	Awareness meetings	11	9.17	27	22.50	82	68.34
6	Polambadi programmes	7	5.83	18	15.00	95	79.17
7.	Field days	3	2.5	8	6.67	109	90.80
8.	Rythu sadassus	2	1.67	14	11.67	104	86.67
9	Rythu Chaitanya yatras	12	10.00	30	25.00	78	65.00
10	Farmer- Scientist interaction meetings	4	3.33	6	5.00	110	91.67

Constraints expressed by women for participation in extension programmes.

S.No	Constraint	Freq	%
1.	Tranportation difficulties for women	111	92.50
2.	Lack of information	106	88.33
3	Lack of time	98	81.67
4	Lack of female extension staff	81	67.50
5	Resistance from family members	79	65.83
6	Lack of social security	64	53.33
7	Cultural norms	61	50.83

Participation of rural women in extension programmes

It is evident from table 2 that great majority of the rural women were never participated in farmer- scientist interaction meetings (91.67%), field days (90.80%), group discussions (87.50%), Rythu sadassus (86.67%), Demonstrations (80.03%), Polambadi programmes (79.17%), Kisan melas (73.33%), training programmes (70.00%), awareness meetings (68.34%) and Rythu Chaitanya Yatras (65.00%). Butt *et al.*, (2010) in their paper “Role of Rural Woman in Agricultural Development and their constraints”, highlighted the fact that rural women along with men play an important role in the agricultural sector like crop production, livestock production as well as cottage industry. But, they have incomplete access to resources, agricultural extension, education services and newest technical knowledge and information sources. Their study was conducted in Okara district of Pakistan. It was concluded that cultural norms, male dominance and traditional belief system were the major social constraint faced by rural women as reported by more than 80 percent of the respondents.

Constraints expressed by women for participation in extension programmes

Constraints expressed by women for extension participation were presented in table 3. It could be inferred from table that transportation (92.50%), lack of information (88.33%), lack of time (81.67%), lack of female extension staff (67.50%), resistance from family members (65.83%), lack of social security (53.33%) and cultural norms (50.83%) were the major constraints hindering women to participate in extension programmes. Sadaf *et al.*, (2005) recognized the importance of the role of rural women in agricultural activities. But at the same time women face multiple problems and constraints such as lack of access to agricultural information and they need technical assistance in agricultural related activities.

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