A STUDY ON THE ROLE PLAYED BY WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE SECTOR IN INDIA

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Abstract: "When women are empowered and can claim their rights and access to land, leadership, opportunities and choices, economies grow, food security is enhanced and prospects are improved for current and future generations", Michelle Bachelet - Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women

Agriculture is the spine of the Indian Economy as over 70% of rural family depends on agriculture as their primary means of livelihood. Gradually, it has been realized that rural women play a vital role in agricultural development as their essential involvement in the field of agriculture, food security, horticulture, processing, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, and other allied sectors, but regardless of women's far-reaching and stippled contribution in agriculture, they carry on to have less admittance than do men to modern agricultural inputs. As a consequence, their farm work is labor intensive and yields meager economic returns. Their contribution does not receive due recognition. The overall Share of Agriculture & Allied Sectors (Including agriculture, livestock, and forestry and fishery sub sectors) in terms of percentage of GDP was 13.9 percent during 2013-14. (As per the estimates released by central statistics office).

Keywords- Women, agriculture, development, economy, role.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the majority of developing nations, including India rural women acts as the most effective and efficient workforce contributing in the development of an economy. Rural women is able to manage multifaceted works, which include producing agricultural crops, nursing animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining all the household chores without any hussles, numerous of these activities are not defined as “economically active employment” contributing to the GDP of nation even though they are indispensable part for the wellbeing of rural households. Agriculture is the core option available for Rural Women, and it should approach with enhanced admittance to land and resources for the anticipation, adaptation and alleviation of climate change, collective with rural women learning how to deal with cultural confrontation and adapting to various demonstration of this phenomenon. Understanding the significance of rural women in agriculture is an essential aspect of gender relations. In many countries, the role of women in agriculture is considered just to be a "help" and not an important economic contribution to agricultural production. Women took care of the health of the soil through organic recycling and promoted crop security through the maintenance of varietal diversity and genetic resistance. Women put in their full effort in agriculture and rural economic activities, their roles differ significantly among and within section of the world where financially viable and societal forces are changing the agriculture sector. Women show their contribution in every field actively but the gender gap hinders their productivity and reduces their contributions to the agriculture sector and to the achievement of broader economic and
social development goals. Concluding the gender gap in agriculture would produce remarkable gains for society by escalating agricultural yield, dipping poverty, hunger and will encourage economic growth. Swaminathan, the famous agricultural scientist explains that woman was the first one who domesticated crop plants and in this manner initiated the knack of farming whereas the men went out for hunting in search of food; women started gathering seeds from the native vegetation and cultivated them from the view point of food, feed, fodder, fiber and fuel. Women continue to play a significant role in the maintenance of fundamental life sustaining systems such as land, water, flora and fauna.

The female share of the agricultural labour force in southern asia shows an upward trend during the last thirty years, but still female participation in agricultural labour force have to be increased.
From the following data we can interpret that India is much ahead than many countries in proportion of labour in agricultural activities that is supplied by women. However, much have to be still done.
A - Employed population as a share of total adult population, by sex and sector

Percentage of total male and female population, respectively

B - Distribution of male and female employment, by sector

Percentage of male and female employment, respectively

Note: The data cover only a subset of the countries in each region. Definitions of adult labour force differ by country, but usually refer to the population aged 15 and above.

From the data it can be interpreted that in Asian countries female share of agricultural labour force is on an average only.

II. OBJECTIVE

- To know the position of women
- To assess the role of women in agriculture and allied activities

III. WHY WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

India has a principally agrarian economy 70% of its population is rural; of those households, 60% engage in agriculture as their primary source of income. It has been India's most imperative financially viable sector and in this important sector woman plays a fundamental job, because it is basically a household enterprise. Women in India are major producers of food in terms of value, volume and number of hours worked almost 63 percent of all economically active men are occupied in agriculture as compared to 78 per cent of women. Almost 50 percent of rural female workers are classified as agricultural laborers and 37% as cultivators. About 70 percent of farm work was performed by women. It is observed that women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields including, main crop production, live-stock production, horticulture, post-harvesting operations, agro/social forestry, fishing etc.; it is a fact long taken for granted but ignored since ages. Thus for the following reasons why the women are required in agriculture
In order to eradicate poverty- Rural women play a major role in improving the overall well-being of their households and communities by achieving food and nutrition security, generating income and improving rural livelihoods.

To ensure food security- Agriculture is the mean to economic growth, when women can learn the finest way to nurture and cultivate their own nutritious food, they can feed their children and sell at markets, which ensures food security.

To increase their individual yields- removing the gender gap and providing women with the same resources as men could increase their individual yields by 20-30% that would in turn improve agricultural production in the developing nations.

To increase economic contribution- women up to the same level of resources as men provides an important opportunity to improve overall productivity. Research also indicates that women are more likely than men to use their incomes to improve the well being of their families and communities. This is especially the case for children, as greater investments in education, health and nutrition for them will have long-lasting value.

IV. MULTI DIMENSIONAL ROLE OF WOMEN

Women in agriculture- women are involved in both crop and livestock production at subsistence and commercial levels ,they work in agriculture as farmers on their own account, as unpaid workers on family farms and as paid or unpaid laborers on other farms and agricultural enterprises.. They produce food and cash crops and manage mixed agricultural operations often involving crops, livestock and fish farming. All of these women are considered part of the agricultural labour force.

Women in modern contract farming- Evidence shows, however, that female farmers are largely excluded from modern contract-farming arrangements because they lack secure control over land, family labour and other resources required to guarantee delivery of a reliable flow of produce. While men control the contracts, however, much of the farm work done on contracted plots is performed by women as family labourers.

Women in domestic activities- women also carry day to day household chores like cooking, child rearing, water collection, fuel wood gathering and house hold maintenance.

Women as livestock keepers- Within pastoralist and mixed farming systems, livestock play an important role in supporting women and in improving their financial situation, and women are heavily engaged in this sector.

Women in fisheries- Women have rarely engaged in commercial offshore and long-distance capture fisheries because of the vigorous work involved but also because of their domestic responsibilities and/or social norms. They are more commonly occupied in subsistence and commercial fishing from small boats and canoes in coastal or inland waters.

Women in forestry - Women contribute to both the formal and informal forestry sectors in many significant ways. They play roles in agroforestry, watershed management, tree improvement, and forest protection and conservation. Forests also often represent an important source of employment for women, especially in rural areas. From nurseries to plantations, and from logging to wood processing, women make up a notable proportion of the labour force in forest industries throughout the world.
V. PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE
Gender biasness is one of the major problems faced by the women
Lack of awareness and lower access to modern technologies
Constraints on time and mobility due to various other household responsibilities
Lack of training and less access to productive resources
Lack of opportunity and meager exposure
Low wages and incentives
Physical and mental stress
Non recognition of women despite of their active contribution
Health and safety issues

VI. SUGGESTIONS TO OVERCOME THE PROBLEM
• Education should be imparted to all irrespective of gender
• More of awareness programs should be conducted
• Women club and organization should be setup for open discussions
• Women should be exposed to new technologies
• Contribution of women should also be recognized
• Equal wage and incentive schemes should be provided for equal work
• Proper health and safety measures should be taken into consideration