

FLO REPORT ON
WOMEN PARTICIPATION
IN INDIAN
AGRICULTURE

2019-20



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INDEX

Message by Sh. Parshottam Rupala, Union Minister of State, Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Govt. of India	01
Message by Sh. Suresh Prabhu, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha.....	03
Message by President FLO	05
1. Introduction.....	07
2. Employment Patterns Affected by the Pull and the Push Factors.....	10
3. Feminisation of Agriculture	12
4. Female Farmers and their Challenges	14
5. Government Policies.....	20
6. Indian: Female Farmers in Indian States	22
7. Recommendations	26



परशोत्तम रूपाला
PARSHOTTAM RUPALA



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कृषि एवं किसान कल्याण
भारत सरकार
Minister of State For
Agriculture & Farmers Welfare
Government of India
D.O. No.....MOS(A&FW)/VIP/2019-20/



FOREWORD

I am happy to see that FICCI Ladies Organization (FLO) has taken up the initiative of empowering women economically at all levels- grassroots, middle and senior. I am particularly impressed to see that women in agriculture is a special focus area for FLO.

Women form a majority part of the agriculture work force and therefore it is very pertinent to bring women in this sector to the forefront. If equal opportunities are provided to women, the agricultural sector will yield better results and provide adequate boost to the economic development of the nation.

A 37 year old business chamber for the women and by the women, FLO has been focusing on many issues which are economically and socially very relevant and it is a very prestigious platform for discussion and exchange of ideas.

Women must be seen as equal partners in sustainable development and it is smart economics to invest in women. I assure the full support of the Ministry in making this possible.

I would like to congratulate FLO, led by President Harjinder Kaur Talwar, for initiating the focus on this important sector of Indian economy and bringing out this set of analysis and recommendations on Women Participation in Indian Agriculture.



(PARSHOTTAM RUPALA)

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23rd April, 2020



FOREWORD

I am happy by this wonderful initiative taken by FICCI Ladies Organization. It is the need of the hour to instil the importance of women in agriculture and facilitate their growth and increased participation in this sector.

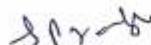
It is very heartening to see the premier women business chamber of the nation taking great interest in the agricultural sector, which is the backbone of Indian economy and a strong pillar on which Indian industry rests.

I am happy that FLO is bringing together this report on Women Participation in Indian Agriculture, which recognizes the role of women in agriculture sector and play an important role at all the stages of the agricultural value system.

Heartiest congratulations to FLO, very ably led by Harjinder Kaur Talwar and for championing this worthy cause.

I wish FLO, all the very best for all endeavours and initiatives.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Suresh Prabhu".

Suresh Prabhu

Member of Parliament



MESSAGE



Dear friends,

Bill gates has rightly said, *"Investments in agriculture are the best weapons against hunger and poverty, and they have made life better for billions of people."*

Women are of vital importance to rural economies and the agriculture sector. They are important for ensuring food security and preserving the local agro biodiversity.

Women comprise 49 percent of the human capital, out of which over 75 percent economically active women in India are associated with the Agriculture sector.

While the men mostly venture out of the villages in search of livelihood, the womenfolk are relegated into working in the fields from dawn to dusk, in addition to her traditional role of caregiver in the family.

In spite of their vital contribution to the economy, these women are mostly invisible and unheard. Be it due to gender inequality or patriarchal society norms, they face a lot of discriminations.

As the President of FLO and also as an individual, I am hugely passionate towards attaining economic empowerment and this has to begin with women in agriculture given the above statistics. I began my term by launching the Agriculture Initiative nationally and have done my best to work towards facilitating the growth of women in agriculture.

FLO has collating a report on Women Participation in Indian Agriculture to analyse the role of women in agriculture and provide solutions on how women in agriculture can get their due share and be recognised.

With in-depth research, state wise analysis was created and we have come up with reasons as to what stops the growth of women in the field of agriculture and recommended solutions for the same.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts student of SRCC College for helping us in doing the primary research.

Regards,

Harjinder Kaur Talwar

President, FLO



1

Introduction

Agriculture in India remains an important sector because of its positioning in the country's economy and social fabric. Even though, agriculture's share in the Indian economy declined rapidly to now stand at 15.4%, it still employs more than 50% of the Indian population. The second important reason is the fact that the majority of India's poor (around 770 million people) are found in rural areas. Agriculture is, therefore, not only important in terms of employment and numbers, but also in the terms of India's food security. In order to meet the needs of the growing Indian population and the rising incomes, agriculture would have to evolve into a productive, competitive, diversified and a sustainable sector.

Women are the backbone of the rural panorama and agriculture in particular. The agriculture sector employs 80% of all economically active women in India, which breaks down into 33% of them being part of the agriculture labour force and the remaining being part of the self employed farmers. However, even after such high participation rates, only 12.8% of operational holdings are owned by women. Moreover, there is concentration of operational holdings (25.7 %) by women in the marginal and small holdings categories.

According to Agricultural scientist-economist, M Swaminathan, ***"some historians believe that it was women who first domesticated crop plants and thereby initiated the art and science of farming. While men went out hunting in search of food, women started gathering seeds from the native flora and began cultivating those of interest from the point of view of food, feed, fodder, fibre and fuel."*** Being an important part of the labor force, they make significant contributions to agriculture and the rural economy of the country. With the transformation of the economic and social aspects of agriculture, the role of the women has become diverse. In addition to managing the household, they also pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Even though it is common knowledge the women farmers in India carry out most of the big farming jobs from sowing to harvesting, they still face issues in accessing the resources as compared to their male counterparts. While the Economic Survey 2017-18 highlighted the fact that there is a feminisation of Indian agriculture due to the



migration of male farmers to urban areas, the gender gaps in the Indian agriculture would hurt the pace of growth of this sector. These gaps are clearly visible not only in the ownership of landholding, but access to finance, bargaining abilities in the market etc. as well.

According to the Nobel Prize winner, Sir Arthur Lewis, economic development is always about getting people out of agriculture and of agriculture becoming a less important part of the economy (not in absolute terms but as a share of GDP and employment) over time. The reason agriculture cannot be the dominant and permanent source of livelihood is its productivity. Hence, the living standards it sustains can never approach, and have historically never approached those in manufacturing and services. That, of course, means that industrialisation and urbanisation must provide those higher productivity alternatives to agriculture. But this must happen along with and in the context of, rapid productivity growth in agriculture, to produce greater food supplies for the people, provide rising farm incomes, and permit the accumulation of human capital.

While Lewis' idea of economic development talked about transition of farmers into better job offers while also leaving more productive farms for future, the reality is far from that. While the transitions have happened and India is expected to achieve the ambitious goal of doubling farm income by 2022, and the agriculture sector in India is expected to generate better momentum in the next few years due to increased investments in agricultural infrastructure such as irrigation facilities, ware-housing and cold storage, the fate of agriculture will also depend upon the "pull and push" of agriculture. Migration shows higher number of male farmers moving to urban areas, the women are left to face the challenges of gender gaps in Indian agriculture.

Women make essential contributions to the agricultural development and allied and household activities, and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. These activities include producing agricultural crop, cleaning animals, preparing food, working in rural enterprises, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes. About 63% of all economically active men are engaged in agriculture as compared to 78% of women. Traditionally, women have always played an important role in agriculture as farmers, co-farmers, wage labourers and managers of farms. They have conventionally been producers of food from seed to kitchen. They carry the heavier work burden in food production and because of gender discrimination, get lower returns for their work. The multiple role of women lead to a

significant contribution in real terms to the productive system. But it is unfortunate that her role is not adequately recognised and her contribution not qualified properly in the male dominated society. They have been under represented in the development process. Despite their dominance of the labor force, women in India still face extreme disadvantages in terms of pay, land rights and representation in local farmers' organisations. Apart from this, women face many challenges due to limited access to productive resources in agricultural production which prevent them in enhancing their productivity.

To counter this gender gap, the Economic Survey 2017-18 cleared the Government's stance about having an "inclusive and transformative agricultural policy". In terms of women empowerment in Indian agriculture the Survey stated:

"To ensure mainstreaming of women in the agriculture sector, the government is earmarking at least 30% of the budget allocation for women beneficiaries in all ongoing schemes programmes and development activities. Besides focusing on women self help groups (SHG) to connect them to micro credit through capacity building activities and to provide information and ensuring their representation in different decision-making bodies."



2

Employment Patterns Affected by the Pull and Push Factors

With the development of economy, there is a natural tendency of excess workers from low productivity agriculture to migrate to higher productivity sectors which offer improved opportunities for better production and higher wages. There are two major factors which cause such a migration of labour away from agriculture. The first is the "Pull" factor. It constitutes the event where there is a faster creation of job opportunities in the non agricultural sector due to the accelerated economic growth. This causes a pull on labour away from the agricultural sector to higher paying sectors.

However, in recent times, the Indian economic growth has lost its momentum which has caused a low pull factor. In addition to that, the non agriculture sector demands labour from the informal pool which is usually part of small scale enterprises. These non-agriculture sectors also have relatively lower productivity which weakens the full factor. The only way India will have a strong and sustained pull sector is through a period of sustained and high growth.

The "Push" factor is highlighted by the pattern of labour supply from the agriculture sector. This supply is affected by many reasons, the first of them being the low and uncertain wages in the agriculture sector. This supply has been controlled through various income augmenting social welfare programmes such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN), etc. at the centre level. In addition to these, there also have been schemes at state levels like Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) in Odisha and Rythu Bandhau Scheme in Telangana. The rise in rural wage distorts the urban labour market and the "push factor" gets weakened. Supported by a number of Government schemes, including MGNREGA, Rural wages have been growing by 17% on an average since 2006-07 and have outstripped urban wages (Goldman Sachs, 2014).



The second reason for the “push” factor is the nature of agricultural jobs. Being seasonal in nature, it leaves the farmers unemployed during the lean season and thus forces them to migrate out of the agricultural sector to seek permanent jobs. This point will have many implications on the policy recommendations of this paper.

However, the effect of both these factors has not been identical on both the genders. Due to the societal structure, the female farmer don't experience the “pull” factor from the urban area as they are expected to stay back and take care of the household and the farm in the absence of the male farmer. Women have to face the blunt of shrinking resources while not having the opportunity to venture out into different employment sector.

3

Feminisation of Indian Agriculture

Women make significant additions to agricultural output and productivity in rural economies all over the world. However, their contribution is only an approximate estimation as it is difficult to assess it, both in terms of magnitude and its nature. In addition to that, this same contribution shows a high degree of variation across countries and regions. A female farmer in Latin America would make different contributions as compared to the one in South Asia. Similarly, contribution made by a female farmer in Haryana would be very different from the one in Odisha.

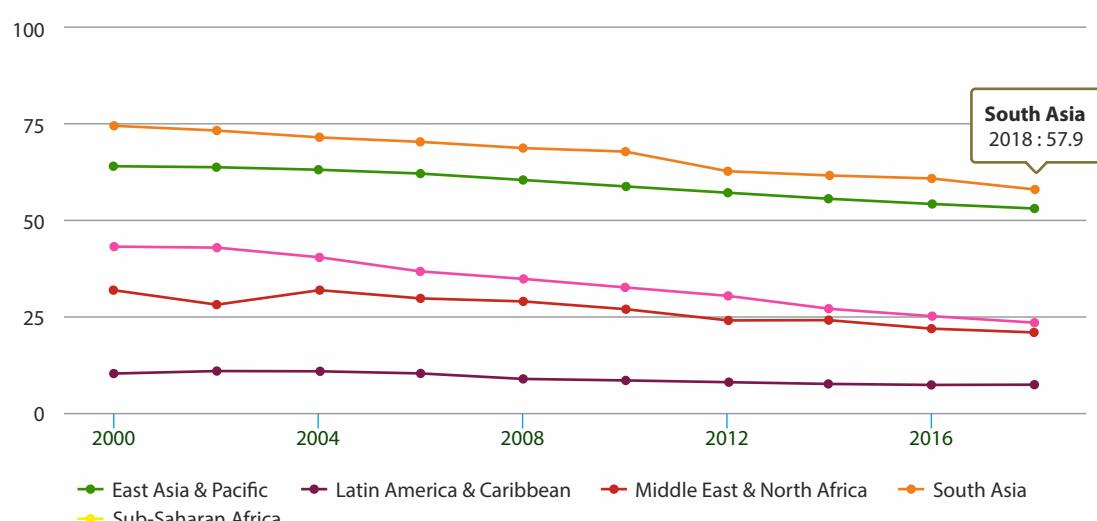
Owing to this problem, there are two different data sets which measure the contribution of female labour in agricultural sector:

1. Statistics on women's share in the economically active population in agriculture
2. Time use surveys, which document the time spent by men and women in varied activities

3.1 Economically Active Population in Agriculture

In this measure, the person reporting agriculture as his or her main economic activity is considered a part of the agricultural labour force

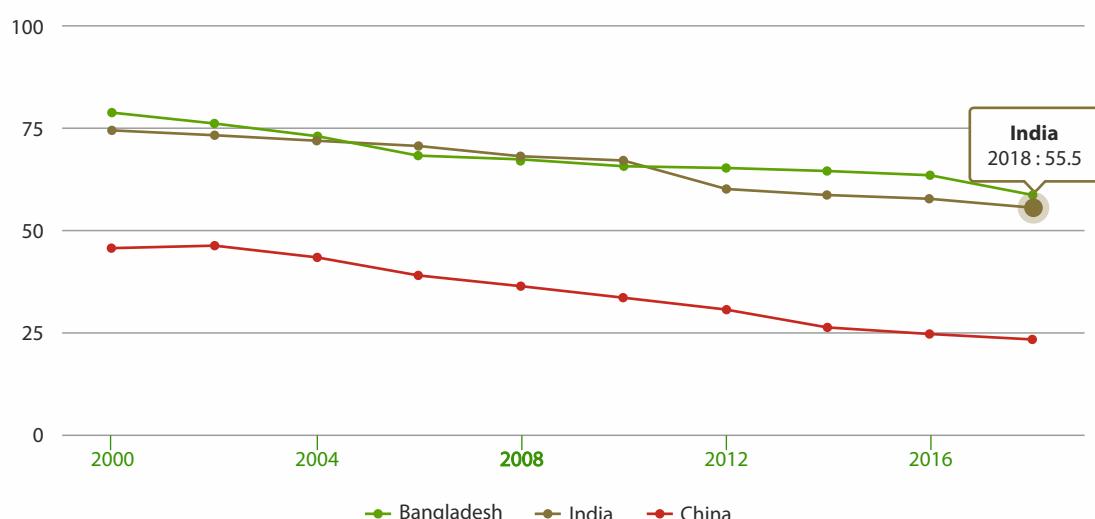
Figure 1: Female Agriculture Labour Force (Comparison 1)



Source: World Bank Indicators

The global average is dominated by South Asia, followed by the Sub-Saharan Africa. The Asian average is dominated by Bangladesh which stands at 58.5%, closely followed by India at 55.5%. India fell behind Bangladesh post the 2010 period, after which; female agriculture labour force decreased

Figure 2: Female Agriculture Force (Bangladesh, China and India)



Source: World Bank Indicators

3.2 Time Use Surveys

Time use surveys provide a more complete account of time use by men and women than is available from the labour force statistics reported above. Such studies usually are not nationally representative and are not directly comparable because they usually cover small samples, report on different types of activities (that are not always clearly specified) and use different methodologies.

The time use survey data shows within-country variations. Time use studies permit a rich analysis of what men and women do in agriculture and how their roles may differ by crop, location, management structure, age and ethnic group. They offer policy-relevant information about where, when and how to target interventions aimed at women, and how to bring men into the process constructively. Given the variability in gender roles in agriculture, generalisations about time use from one region to another are not appropriate.



4

Female Farmers and Their Challenges

The female farmers in India have to face a double whammy situation when it comes to their positioning in the agricultural markets. This situation manifests from two assumptions, first, farming is predominantly a masculine profession, and second women can't be involved in direct agricultural roles but can only play supportive roles.

The first assumption is countered by data and research which highlights women's presence on farms across the country. According to a 2018 study by Oxfam, agricultural sector employs 80% of all economically active women in India; they comprise of 33% of the agriculture labour force and 48% of the self-employed farmers. The counter to the second assumption comes from research studies which point out that females are involved in the entire value chain of agriculture, be it food production or allied income generating activities like cattle and livestock management.

Even after having such significant participation levels, female farmers face several issues like:

- A. Poor access to credit
- B. Lesser capacity building opportunities
- C. Lack of Technology

(these will be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs)

According to government estimates, the wage gap between male and female farmers is as wide as 25%. There is a distinct mismatch between women's contributions to agriculture and the benefit they get from it. According to FAO's report "The Role of Women in Agriculture", if women in rural areas had the same access to technology, financial services and markets as men, we could see a 20-30% increase in yields on women's farms which would raise the agricultural output in developing countries by 2.54%.

The paradox of high participation of women with limited benefits from agriculture needs to be countered through various policies and developmental interventions which place the females at an equal footing with their male counterparts. The good part is that there are already successful models in allied agricultural services which show the positive convergence of female participation and the benefits they get from it. One such sector is dairy, where over 73% of livestock related work is carried out by women. Out of the 22 million people engaged in livestock keeping, over 16 million are women. This sector is a classic example of how women's full potential was harnessed by creating clusters of productive cooperatives. These cooperatives then ensured women's access to and control of productive and natural resources such as land, livestock and credit which strengthen their influence and social empowerment.

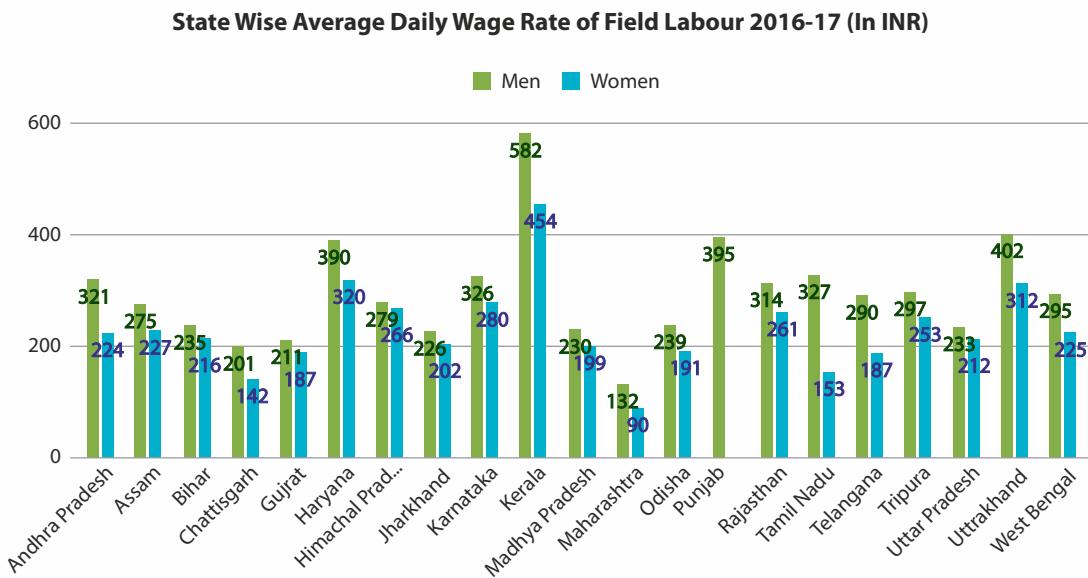
Although women play a fundamental role in various stages of food production, their activities vary from region to region and crop to crop. Their role in agriculture can rightfully be seen as multi dimensional. However, their varied roles also give rise to various challenges. Women face many challenges in agriculture.

4.1 Gender Gap

In India, the typical worksheet of a female farmer is limited to less skilled jobs, such as sowing, translating, weeding and harvesting which often fit within the framework of domestic life and child rearing. Women are only allowed to practice skilled work in the absence of the male member. In addition to that, many women participate in agricultural work as unpaid subsistence labourers. It has become a norm where the women are confined to work in particular sectors with limited skillset due to their disadvantaged position with respect to human capital and bargaining power. As males migrate to urban areas in search of non farm activities, women are confronted with the dual responsibility of carrying out farm and non farm activities. In such instances, they face meagre wages, long hours, hazardous work and sexual harassment (WTO, 2010).



Figure 3: State wise average daily wage rate of field labour 2016-17



Source: Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Government of India

4.2 Social Constraints

Except for a few matrilineal societies in Meghalaya and Kerala, the remaining Indian society is patriarchal in nature, and the woman's position is not considered at an equal footing with that of a man. While men have the choice to migrate to urban areas or more skilled sectors for better employment, a woman's role in the society prevents her from doing so. Due to the migration of male members, the percentage of females employed in agriculture remains high in both urban and rural areas. This shows that the benefits of better job opportunities are only transferred to the male members.

Figure 4: Gender wise percentage of labour employed in Agriculture

Broad industry division	category of worker		38 th (1983)	43 rd (1987-88)	50 th (1993-94)	55 th (1999-00)	61 st (2004-05)	66 th (2009-10)	68 th (2011-12)	PLFS (2017-18)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
Agriculture	Rural	Male	77.5	74.5	74.1	71.4	66.5	62.8	59.4	55.0
		Female	87.5	84.7	86.2	85.4	83.3	79.4	74.9	73.2
	Urban	Male	10.3	9.1	9.0	6.6	6.1	6.0	5.6	5.4
		Female	31.0	29.4	24.7	17.7	18.1	13.9	10.9	9.1

Source: NSSO Data

In most societies, women are responsible for activities like child rearing, other household chores, rearing of small livestock, etc. This kind of work is unpaid and further limits a female's capacity to engage in income earning activities. In addition to

that, the nature of jobs like child rearing and household chores requires women to stay near their home, thus limiting their options to work for a wage. Time allocation studies have shown that women work significantly more than men if care giving is included in the calculations. (Ilahi, 2000; Kes and Swaminathan, 2006; Budlender, 2008).

4.3 Land Ownership Issues

The efficiency and productivity of female farmers are hindered due to the lack of land rights for them. Due to lack of awareness and lower literacy rates of female farmers, they are unaware about their rights of succession and are also prevented from accessing better skilled labour sectors. Even after having a significant share of workload, they rarely participate in decision making process when it comes to purchase of fertilisers, pesticides or equipments. Even though more females are depended on agriculture, they are unable to access the benefits incurred from land. The societal structure also adds to this problem, where males dominate the decision when it comes to expenditure and resource allocation within the household. Increasing women's control over land can positively and significantly influence the welfare of the country's next generation. A study on land rights for women in West Bengal recently found that 39.9 per cent of the households surveyed have had to part with land or raise loans at high interest rates in order to pay dowry. In fact 79 per cent of the families who sold land to pay for dowry were Muslim, a community where dowry was not a tradition. In addition, the people who were selling or mortgaging their lands for dowry were agricultural labourers and marginal farmers (WTO, 2010).

Figure 5: Gender wise percentage of ownership of various agricultural related enterprise

Board activity code	Sex of Owner				No. of employees under ownership of			% employees under Female owner
	Male	Female	Total	% Female Owners	Male Owners	Female Owners	Total Owners	
(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Activities relating to agriculture other than crop production & plantation	557244	52310	611375	9%	1131472	102828	1239717	8%
Livestock	8607401	2546345	11191189	23%	15201517	3679536	18962765	19%
Forestry and Logging	442221	124475	568018	22%	920902	209192	1133376	18%
Fishing and aqua	443234	38637	482926	8%	767052	61794	831403	7%
Sub Total: Agricultural Activities	10050100	2761767	12853508	21%	18020943	4053350	22167261	18%

Source: NSSO Data



Even though a higher percentage of women are employed in agricultural, they are not entitled to ownership rights which are lowest (at 9%) in activities relating to agriculture other than crop production and plantation. Their share increases in livestock, forestry and logging ownership but their average remains below 25% in aggregate agricultural activities ownership as well.

The 2005 Amendment to the Hindu Succession Act was looked upon as a legal victory for women's rights in terms of property inheritance. Even though the Amendment came into force in 2005, many states like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Karnataka have modified version of the law in force. However, the new Amendment was criticised on certain fronts:

- A. The retention of the Hindu Joint Family and the introduction of daughters as coparceners acts in opposite directions. This may lead to legal complexities like, a daughter will be the coparcener and member of the joint family of her father, and after marriage she will retain these rights and would go on to become a member of another joint family (her husband's family). Further, her own daughter would be the member of two joint families by birth (her father's family and her maternal grandfather's family), and a third upon her marriage. Such complexities would marginalise women and would hinder the efficient implementation of the law.
- B. Making daughters coparceners will decrease the shares of other class I female heirs, such as the deceased's widow and mother, since the coparcenary share of the deceased male from whom they inherit will decline. In states where the wife takes a share on partition, as in Maharashtra, the widow's potential share will now equal the son's and daughter's. But where the wife takes no share on partition, as in Tamil Nadu or Andhra Pradesh, the widow's potential share will fall below the daughter's
- C. The state government failed to take active steps to implement the new law in terms of agricultural land. There was a deadlock because it was argued that agricultural land was under the State List and hence states would have the sole right to make laws on the same. According to a survey by Indian Human Development, 83% of the agricultural land is reportedly inherited by the male members while less than 2% of the land is inherited by the female counterparts.

While the Amendment paved the way of granting equal inheritance rights to female, there are some bottlenecks which still need to be countered.

4.4 Financial Constraints

For the amount of same work done, women are paid lower wages as compared to men and face severe exploitation. The wage differential happens due to lower education level and less work experience of females. This also reduces their bargaining power to negotiate due to which they are bound to accept lower wages and irregular working conditions. Women have no ownership rights over either crop or livestock, and income from all activities (except income from small poultry) usually belongs to men (National Commission for Women, 2005). Intra-household inequality can also weaken a woman's position outside of the home (Kapadia, 1993 and 1995). Women are over represented in jobs characterised by low wages, high job insecurity and generally poor labour standards. When women have limited decision making ability within the household or low access to resources and household income, they are more likely to accept lower wages. Kantor (2008) notes that for most women in northern India, labour market participation is a survival strategy for the household, not a means of improving standards of living or voice in the household.

4.5 Lack of Skills and Extension Services

Agricultural productivity is often reduced due to erratic change in climate caused by failed monsoons, droughts, crop failure due to floods, etc. Women farmers lack proper training in the sustainable use of natural resources which addresses the needs of their local conditions. Women are deprived of these skills because agricultural programmes traditionally focus the need of male farmers. For example, innovations in Mechanisation, has often been done to alleviate the burden of tasks traditionally undertaken by male farmers. This problem arises from the fact that women are not considered as primary participants of the agricultural labour force. Women are not perceived as 'farmers' even when they do most of the farm work. As a result, agricultural extension and information on new technologies are almost exclusively directed to men, even when women are increasingly responsible for farm work (Kelkar, 2011).



5

Government Policies

The Government has been committed to make agriculture more inclusive for women through women exclusive schemes and schemes with components specifically meant for the females. The Economic Survey of 2017-18 already stated Government's commitment to this cause.

There are multiple schemes in the 'Farm Women Handbook' which are women centric and take into account various needs of the female farmers. The Government also shows commitment towards its goal of strengthening the position of females in agriculture through "Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana" (MKSP), which is a sub component of the Deen Dayal Antodaya Yojana-NRLM (DAY-NRLM). The scheme identifies female as farmers, and works with the objective of capacity building in the agro-ecological sustainable practices. It has a clear vision to reach out to the poorest of poor households and expand the activities of "Mahila Kisan". The scheme strengthens the smallholder agriculture through promotion of sustainable activities such as:

1. Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture (CMSA)
2. Non Pesticide Management (NPM)
3. Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBMF)
4. Pashu-Sakhi model for doorstep animal care services
5. Sustainable Regeneration and Harvesting of Non-Timber Forest Produce

So far, 36.06 lakh women farmers have benefited through 84 projects in 24 States and Union Territories. The Centre has allotted a total of INR 847.48 crore towards implementation of approved projects. The Department of Agriculture Cooperation and Farmers Welfare also provides additional support and assistance to female farmers under various schemes mentioned in the "Farm Women Handbook", some of them are:

5.1 Integrated Scheme for Agricultural Marketing (ISAM)

Policy Component	Specific provision (only for women)
Storage Infrastructure	33.33% Subsidy (on capital cost) for women as compared to 25% for men. Even the maximum subsidy ceiling is higher than that for men.

5.2 Integrated Scheme for Agricultural Marketing (ISAM)

Policy Component	Specific provision (only for women)
Support for Women Food Security Groups (FSGs)	Established and supported under ATMA Cafeteria as a mandatory activity at INR 0.10 Lakh/group per year at domestic/household level to promote off farm activities
Representation of Women Farmers in decision making bodies	Mandatory representation of women farmers in State, District, Block Farmer Advisory Committees, ATMA Governing & ATMA Management Committee at District Level
As Beneficiary	At least 30% of total scheme beneficiaries are women and minimum 30% of resources meant for programmes are to be allocated to women farmers extension and women extension functionaries

5.3 Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation (SMAM)

Training Programme	Training Programmes on Gender friendly Equipment for Women farmers are to be conducted by Farm Machinery Training & Testing Institutes
As Beneficiary	At least 30% of the fund allocation was to be made to women

5.4 National Food Security Mission (NFSM)

As Beneficiary	At least 30% of the fund allocation was to be made to women
Promotion of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and marketing support for value chain integration (to un- registered farmer groups, SHGs of Women & others etc. for local marketing of pulses and millets)	INR 2 lakh per group of 15 farmers (for one time support only)



6

Indian Agriculture: Female farmers in Indian States

Agriculture is a part of the State List of our Constitution, wherein the states have been given the power to legislate on the matter. Agriculture is placed as Entry 14 in the State List along with several ancillary matters, while some agriculture related activities have been included in the Union and the Concurrent List. Agriculture is considered a multi dimensional activity, which is why the framers of the Constitution distributed the various matters related to agriculture between the States and the Union in a threefold pattern. Agriculture and most matters ancillary to or directly connected with it, were placed within the exclusive legislative and executive competence of the States.

Many states have often voiced their concerns about the involvement of Central Government in agriculture doesn't give them the exclusive State Jurisdiction that they should have on a subject in the State List. Some of the issues as mentioned in the inter state council secretariat report are:

1. A State Government observed "Agriculture, including animal husbandry, forestry and fisheries should be exclusively a State subject and, therefore, the present entries in the Union and Concurrent Lists constricting this jurisdiction, should be dropped".
2. The Union Government has made deep in-roads-in the States'sphere of activity by introducing a number of Centrally Sponsored Schemes in agriculture and allied sectors. The matching contribution for these schemes on the part of the States, reportedly, puts heavy burden on their finances and distorts their plan priorities.
3. Some less developed States have suggested a more liberal approach and flow of larger agricultural credit to them from NABARD and other financial institutions.

In terms of "feminisation of agriculture", the Indian states vary from each other in many aspects. The status of female farmers in some states are as follows:

Nagaland: Although Nagaland is a state that had to struggle for the recognition of its ethnicity a lot, it never had to suffer for rights over land. After their 9 point agreement

on legislative and executive powers, they settled on the issues of administration and ownership. Very frankly, land rights in Nagaland is a touchy issue. This is due to the fact that women are only gifted land provided they are married in the same village. If they are married into a different village, gifting them land will reduce the area of the village. Gifting land to daughters post marriage is a common phenomenon, but what is more common these days is the purchasing of land by women themselves due to high literacy and amendments to the laws pertaining to inheritance in Nagaland. To increase women's awareness overall, a 33% reservation pattern has also been proposed for urban administrative bodies.

Kerala: The determining factors in Kerala are the birth rates and fertility rates along with literacy rates. Marumakkathayam was a system of matrilineal inheritance prevalent in what is now Kerala. Descent and the inheritance of property was traced through females. The word literally means inheritance by sisters' children. This shows how women have always been given a better space in Kerala succession. During the menstrual phase, women may not have enough strength to work on the field, but data reveals that Kerala has worked on it by modifying their way of working. Even when there are a lot of women involved in agriculture, the level of productivity has been high. There has also been a reduction in fertility rates, given that literacy is high, so people practice family planning. This has also added to an increased number of working hours overall available for women since pre and post pregnancy leave is minimised.

Kudumbashree scheme in Kerala has helped mobilise SHGs and ensure credit support by state. It has helped initiate training in jobs traditionally dominated by men like tree climbing. Data reveals that after training women earn competitive wage rates.

Punjab: There are four leading canons governing succession to an estate amongst agriculturists. Firstly, that male descendants invariably exclude the widow and all other relations. Second, that when the male line of descendants had died out, it is treated as never having existed, the last male who left descendants being regarded as the proprietor. Thirdly, that a right of representation exists, whereby descendants in different degrees from a common ancestor succeed to the share which their immediate ancestor, if alive would succeed too. Fourthly, women, other than the widow or mother of the deceased are usually excluded by near male collaterals, an exception being occasionally allowed in favour of daughters, chiefly amongst tribes



that are strictly endogamous. The general rule of succession under the Customary Law in Punjab is that succession first goes to the direct male lineal descendants of the last owner to the exclusion of female descendants, and failing them, subject to certain life estates in favour of some female, to the collaterals, among whom the right of representation exists. In comparison with other states, even after being agriculturally dominant, Punjab is one of the states where not so many women are engaged in farms. Overall, productivity is high and the contribution remains considerably significant.

Haryana: In the state of Haryana, women's involvement is mostly in vegetables and not grains. Further, women mostly work as labourers as they tend to be averse to risk. They are bound by household duties and also patriarchal customs. They are more active in tasks such as grading and harvesting as opposed to tasks like sowing, irrigating etc.

Uttar Pradesh: In Uttar Pradesh, while women are active in animal husbandry and in the dairy industry, they are not respected as leaders. If a family owns land, it is mostly the man that takes up the work of farming and the woman looks after the house. This leads to women having less representation in FPOs. Traditionally, husbands don't want their wives to work outside their homes. However, if women are involved in animal husbandry or activities that can be participated in at home, they do not face opposition. The involvement of women in the role of labourers is high as this area grows a lot of vegetables which tends to involve women. The involvement of women in agriculture is mostly from lower caste and income groups. 18% of the land in UP is owned by women and most of the property is bought in the name of the woman's husband.

Bihar: In Bihar, men do not want women to be involved in agriculture and therefore, husbands prevent their spouses from working.

South India: In South India, there is the persistence of a historically feminised agriculture wage labour force. The trends show decreasing 'domestic work' as occupation and increasing real gender wage differential. Women cannot bargain for wages due to the pressure to restrict bargaining. Activities like sowing, weeding, transplanting and harvesting are done by women while activities such as ploughing, transporting, clearing fields, irrigation and guarding crops are done by men. Women of landholding families do not cultivate but maintain close ties with female labourers which makes it easy to get cheap female labour. Women accept lower wages as men

do what is labelled as 'heavy work'. Issues such as class and caste prevent unionisation of female labourers.

The Himalayas: In the Himalayas, there has been the trend of feminisation of agriculture. Women are leading the process of rural revival. Restoration is underway with regenerative farming techniques to grow organic products, medicinal plants, pickles and herbs. While men and children move to cities, women work on farms. Women are organised and NGOs aid in creating a market for them. Women work on small landholdings which they own.

Maharashtra: Women suffer after their husbands commit suicide due to lack of education, social security, and absence of skills. Debt burden has led to many women also committing suicide. Micro finance institutions focus on vulnerable women who spend money on non-productive activities and then default. Some widows do not get pension when the farmland isn't registered on their husband's name.

Goa: The Civil Code of Goa, based on Portuguese Law, gives greater recognition to women rights with respect to land ownership.

While many States have done their own policies like the income augmenting policies of Odisha and Andhra, but a conflict between the States and the Centre can also create roadblocks for the implementation of centrally sponsored schemes. Agriculture activities and practices have a lot of regional variations and varied aspirations which can be handled efficiently by the State Governments. However, being a major sector in the economy, agriculture also needs some uniformity in terms of how it is regulated and the opportunities that it creates for those who are employed in it. In this regard, the National Commission on Agriculture's observation is most appropriate where it states "Therefore, from the point of view of agricultural development, what is more important is the increasing interdependance of Central and State interests and the realisation that there is hardly any problem of agricultural development that cannot be solved with mutual co-operation and commitment between the Centre and the States. Centre and States are to be regarded as parts of a single system in which the right relationship between the two is to be guided by the criteria of efficiency and economic "necessity" and ensured through understanding and adjustment."



7

Policy Recommendations

- 1. Creating a proper database:** The existing way of calculating female participation in agriculture in terms of economic activity leaves out females who might not be treating agriculture as their primary activity. A lot of women do unpaid jobs like water and fodder collection, work on family lands, etc. which are not included in the database which calculates the female labour force in agriculture. Agriculture is a dynamic sector, so the database must also include women's needs and the allied agriculture sectors where they contribute. Such a sub categorisation would allow to have better women centric policies.
- 2. Improving Female Landholding Patterns:** Even after contributing in high numbers to the agriculture output, females only own 12.8% land holdings. A higher degree of ownership by women should be put up as eligibility criterion requiring land titles to be either possessed by a non-male member or have at least 50% shared ownership by non-males, making an exception for male owners who do not have a living spouse or mother. The challenge would be to ensure adequate coverage while avoiding leakages. The centralised database under The Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP) can serve as the reference point to avoid leakages. In addition to this, proper implementation of the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 needs to be done and the legal complexities arising due to it needs to be avoided. In *Babu Ram vs Santokh Singh*, the Supreme Court clarified that "succession" is under the Concurrent List. This gives the Centre to implement the law in its totality.
- 3. Putting an End to Forcible Land Relinquishment (Haq-Daan) by Women:** In order to circumvent the laws of the Hindu Succession (Amended) Act, 2005, many families pressurise the family to relinquish their inheritance rights in favour of their brother through practices like Haq Daan. Like all other transfer of immovable properties, this should also require registration and payment of stamp duties. Also, to protect female rights, such relinquishment should take place in front of a local City Magistrate. Further, socio legal awareness campaigns need to be conducted to sensitise females about their equal inheritance rights.

4. **Improving the land leasing framework:** Post Independence, state governments either restricted or banned agricultural land leasing in an attempt to protect tenant farmers against exploitation at the hands of the landlords. However, over time, research showed that leasing prohibition instead of protecting farmers, had negative effects on agriculture growth. In states, where land leasing is banned, female farmers have to work as informal tenants. Being informal in nature, they are unable to access credit or government input subsidies or sell their crops at Minimum Support Price (MSP). Also, in case of crop failure, they are not entitled to crop insurance as well. In order to prevent such exploitation through informal structure of land leasing, the existing framework in different states needs to be modified (Recent example being that of Uttar Pradesh).
5. **Women only benefits:** Women must have preferential treatment under government schemes such as Fertiliser Subsidies, Farm Loan Waivers, Crop Insurance, Free Electricity for Tubewells, and even possibly the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme. Since we want to encourage greater degree of ownership exercised by women, we can put an eligibility criterion requiring land titles to be either possessed by a non-male (women or third gender), or have at least 50% shared ownership by non-males, making an exception for male owners who do not have a living spouse or mother. The challenge would be to ensure adequate coverage while avoiding leakages.
6. **Enabling "Scientific & Climate Resilient" Smart Women Farmers:** Women farmers have limited access to technology, mechanisation and access to farm energy. In the absence of specialised tools, females completely rely on human labour. This technology and energy deficits trap can alleviate poverty levels in cases where human labour is the main source of farm energy. Labour saving technologies and tools could help improve the livelihoods of women smallholder farmers. The effective adaptation of smallholder farmer agrisystems and livelihoods to climate change will require increased access by farmers to labour saving technologies and tools. Female farmers can be empowered through farmer participatory design and user lead innovation. The benefit of user led innovation is that women will be enabled to design their own tools based upon their cultural, soil and cropping system and the nature needs in agriculture practices. In order to make their practices climate resilient, female farmers can



either be directly or indirectly involved in the Sustainable Livelihoods and Adaption to Climate Change launched by National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (NIDPR). Of the targeted cadre of 200 certified climate smart community resource persons, at least 33% should be women.

7. **Support the formation of Female Farmer Producer organisations (FPOs):** This has to work in two ways. Firstly, preferential Mandi access and prominent listings on e-NAM should be reserved for women only FPOs. Secondly, capacity building workshops for the FPOs must be conducted to enhance their efficiency and bring about peer group pressure amongst the members for effective functioning. In addition to the Credit Support by NABARD, capacity building through skill development, business planning, technology extension and exposure visits, tie ups with agricultural university, etc. must be done for the female farmers.
8. **SHG Model:** SHGs act as a platform for empowering women through financial inclusion and social development. However, the main challenge is implementing this model at country level, because until now, 85% of the SHGs were in 4 southern states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh (undivided). Programmes like Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana (DAY), can enable women SHGs to be an effective tool in poverty reduction and livelihoods generation through capacity building and skill training. The SHG model has multiple benefits for the female farmer. Firstly, it will help them fight the underemployment or unemployment during the lean agriculture season, by providing them with an additional option. Secondly, it also acts as a source of income augmentation for these farmers who can also earn money through traditional arts, agricultural products, and allied agricultural services. Lastly, it increases the collective bargaining power of female farmers in case they didn't get themselves registered as FPOs. In a way SHGs can be an informal version of FPOs.



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