

ROLE OF FARM WOMEN IN POST HARVEST OPERATION IN RICE CULTIVATION

Minaxi Pathok* and Mira Kalita**

Department of Family Resource Management

College of Home Science

Assam Agricultural University

Jorhat-785 013, Assam, India

ABSTRACT

The study was designed to analyze the role of farm women in post harvest operation in terms of role perceived, role performed, opinion expressed and knowledge possessed. The study was conducted in seven villages of upper Brahmaputra Valley Zone, Assam, India. The total sample comprised of 150 households, which were selected through multisage random sampling technique. The study revealed that 69% of the respondents had average perception regarding post harvest activities. As regards to role performance, only 24% played primary role. Majority of the respondents (72%) had favourable opinion towards post harvest activities. It was also observed that respondents with good knowledge about post harvest technology was very meager. The educational level of the respondents had positive and significant correlation with 'r' value + 0.38 and age of the respondents had non significant co-relation ('r' = 0.71) with the knowledge of the respondents towards post harvest technology.

INTRODUCTION

Farming is a family enterprise in India where a great majority of women worker i.e 86% of the rural women work in agriculture, either as cultivator or agriculture labourer. According to an assessment in the Indian Himalayan, a pair of bullock work for 1064 hours, a man for 1212 hours whereas a women for 3485 hours in a year on a farm of one hectare, which is more than a man and animal combined. An Indian farm women except ploughing, cart, driving, arranging farm inputs and marketing of produce, participate in all farm related activities. However, their participation is relatively more in post harvest activities than that of pre-harvest activities. But it is very disappointing to note that inspite of their major contribution in the home as well as in the farm, their recognition as "worker" is still under consideration. In the present context,

* *Professor and Head*

** *Research Associate*

there is an urgent need to direct research towards the farm role of women which will provide empirical data to analyze social and economic environment required for formulating developmental programmes related to agriculture. The present study is an attempt to analyze role of farm women in post harvest operations in terms of role perceived, role performed, opinion expressed and knowledge possessed. The study is related to those post harvest activities which come under paddy cultivation only.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in seven villages of the Upper Brahmaputra Valley Zone, Assam, India. The total sample consisted of 150 households, which were selected through multistage random sampling technique. Data were collected through personal interview by using structured interview schedule prepared specially for the study. The farm women who usually participate in the post harvest activities was the unit of enquiry. Role perceived, role performed and knowledge possessed by farm women were analyzed separately with the help of mean \pm S.D, Karl Pearson's co-efficient of co-relation was applied to find out of relationship of some of the selected variables and their knowledge regarding post harvest operations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics

It was found that 65% of the respondents belonged to the age group of 36-50 years. Majority of the respondents (72%) were literate. Out of which only 28 and 5% had high school and college level education respectively. Incomewise sample was highly heterogeneous. Annual income ranged from Rs 6000/- to Rs 55,000/-. Majority of the respondents (58%) belonged to small farmers, whereas, 32% and 10% belonged to marginal and large farmers. Although all respondents belonged to farming community, only 56% considered cultivation as the sole and primary occupation. Remaining 44% reported to have secondary occupation like service, petty trade, besides cultivation.

Role of Farm Women

Role of perceived

As far as role perception of farm women was conducted, only 8% had good perception regarding post harvest activities (Fig.1.). Further, analysis showed that perception towards farm activities like use of pesticides, keeping records, marketing of produce, management of byproducts were perceived as less important activities by most of the respondents.

Role Performed

As regards to role performance it was revealed that 24% played primary role, 63% played secondary role and a meager per cent (13%) played tertiary role (Fig 2.) Attempt was made to record the activities which were invariably carried out by women which revealed that in the areas like reaping of crops (95%), mopping of the threshing floor (88%), selection of grains for seed (87%), sundrying of grains after threshing (85%), heaping of grains (82%), cleaning of grains (81%), maintenance of granary/store (80%) women's participation was the highest.

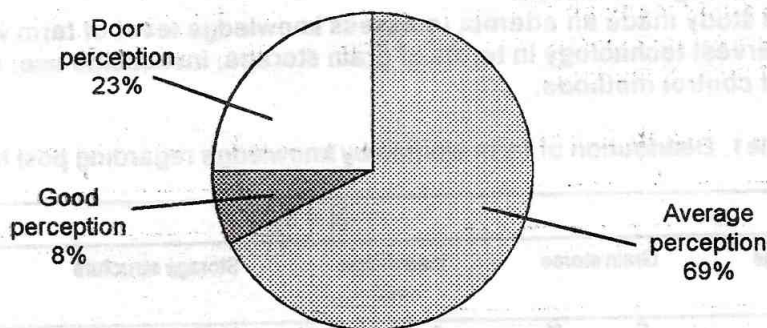


Fig. 1 : Total perception of the farm women

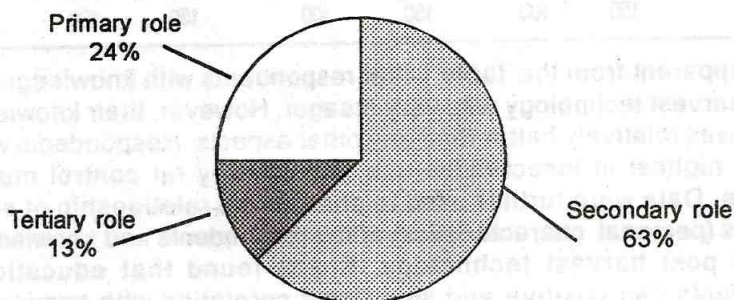


Fig 2 : Total role performance of farm women

On the contrary, participation of farm women was rare in the areas like transportation (15%), winnowing (12%) and rat control (5%). In the other areas like use of pesticides, account keeping and in management of by product and in marketing of produce, involvement of farm women was almost nil. Lack of education, conformity to tradition, lack of knowledge and hesitation to take part in the financial matter were the main reasons for non performance of few activities.

Opinion Expressed

It was revealed from the study that majority of the respondents (72%) had favourable opinion towards post harvest activities. According to the opinion of 48% of the respondents "participation of farm women is essential to minimize post harvest loss". Nearly 26% performed these activities in order to economize the post harvest operations. About 15% participated to ensure proper storage, and 11% involved in post harvest activities with a view to share farm role with their male counterparts. From the above findings it is apparent that economic factor is the main reason for the participation of women which was followed by social factor. However, all respondents viewed that post harvest activities are labour intensive and cumbersome.

Knowledge Possesed

The study made an attempt to assess knowledge level of farm women regarding post harvest technology in terms of grain storage, insecticide use, storage structure and rat control methods.

Table1. Distribution of farm women by knowledge regarding post harvest tchnology

N = 150								
Knowledge level	Grain storae		Insecticide used		Storage structure		Rat control method	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Good	17	11.33	-	-	6	4	12	8
Average	70	46.67	38	25.33	64	42.67	38	25.33
Poor	63	42.00	112	74.67	80	53.33	100	66.67
	150	100	150	100	150	100	150	100

It is apparent from the Table 1 that respondents with knowledge in all four aspects of post harvest technology was very meager. However, their knowledge towards grain storage was relatively better than any other aspects. Respondents with poor knowledge was the highest in insecticides use, followed by rat control method and storage structure. Data were further used to analyze the relationship of some of the seced variables (personal characteristics) of the respondents and knowledge of farm women towards post harvest technology. It was found that educational level of the respondents had positive and significant corelation with knowledge towards post harvest technology with 'r' value + ($r^{0.38} = -0.071$). Age of the respondents had non significant corelation.

From the study it is reflected that there is not much difference between role performance and role perception. The study also revealed that the farm women viewed post harvest activities as labour intensive. Regular performance of such laborious activities may lead to serious leath problems. It is high time to develop appropriate low cost and labour saving technologies for those activites which are dominated by women. Technology should be such which are ergonomically sound based on anthropometric measurements of the farm women. A desirable change in agriculture is possible if labour trends of farm women is recognized as 'work' and if wage policy is revised for the benefit of women.