



Women Participation in agriculture sector in hilly regions of Uttarakhand

Joshi C.S¹ . Chaudhary Tanuja²

¹Professor and Head of Commerce Department, M.B GOVT P.G College, Haldwani, Uttarakhand,

²Research Scholar, M.B GOVT P.G College, Haldwani, Uttarakhand

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 22nd November 2020

Revision Received: 5 January 2021

Accepted : February 2020

Key words: Hill farming, agriculture, women participation, feminization

ABSTRACT

With the men moving towards the non-farming jobs for more earning opportunities, the agriculture sector has become more feminized. Agriculture Census documented an increment in the percentage of female farmers but, the sector is still underperforming in various nations, and this is due to women, who are a significant resource in agriculture, especially in the rural economy, face various issues and challenges that reduce their productivity. Since the nature and extent of women engagement in the agriculture sector vary from region to region, and therefore, it becomes imperative to study the participation of women in the hilly regions of the Uttarakhand. The study is based on secondary data and in-depth study of facts highlights the fact that lack of land holdings, identity as farmers, unequal distribution of resources, technological barriers are the main constraint faced by the women in rural farming. Therefore, it is concluded that women-centric policies should be formulated that address the social, legal, and institutional barriers and educational opportunities and training should be provided to women farmers so that their efficiency can be improved.

1. Introduction

“When women thrive, all of the society benefits and succeeding generations are given a better start in life” - Kofi Annan

Women are the epitome of power and energy and have been playing a significant role in all economic activities of any nation. Their mettle has been proved in every sector, including the agriculture sector as well. Agriculture is an essential engine for the growth and development of any nation, especially developing ones, where women are a

significant contributor to the sector and play a significant role in agriculture and allied activities such as livestock rearing, even though this is not accurately measured on account of their work (Swaminathan, 2013).

They are often unpaid family labour. With time, as men are moving towards non-farm occupations and livestock rearing, agriculture is becoming more “feminised” (Sawminathan, 2013). More women are getting into farming in India, with the latest Agriculture Census documented an increase in the percentage of female farmers. However, the sector is underachieving in various

nations, and this is due to women, who are crucial resources in agriculture, especially in the rural economy, face issues and challenges that reduce their productivity (Doss, 2011). Since the nature and extent of women engagement in the agriculture sector vary from region to region and therefore, it becomes imperative to study the participation of women in the hilly regions of the Uttarakhand.

“When women thrive, all of the society benefits and succeeding generations are given a better start in life” - Kofi Annan

Women are the epitome of power and energy and have been playing a significant role in all economic activities of any nation. Their mettle has been proved in every sector, including the agriculture sector as well. Agriculture is an essential engine for the growth and development of any nation, especially developing ones, where women are a significant contributor to the sector and play a significant role in agriculture and allied activities such as livestock rearing, even though this is not accurately measured on account of their work (Swaminathan, 2013). They are often unpaid family labour. With time, as men are moving towards non-farm occupations and livestock rearing, agriculture is becoming more “feminised” (Sawminathan, 2013). More women are getting into farming in India, with the latest Agriculture Census documented an increase in the percentage of female farmers. However, the sector is underachieving in various nations, and this is due to women, who are crucial resources in agriculture, especially in the rural economy, face issues and challenges that reduce their productivity (Doss, 2011). Since the nature and extent of women engagement in the agriculture sector vary from region to region and therefore, it becomes imperative to study the participation of women in the hilly regions of the Uttarakhand.

2. Literature review:

Desai and Joshi (2019), in their article emphasis about the declining female participation in the era of economic growth and it was found by the authors that authors find a rise in education among both men and women, access to electricity, cooking gas, piped gas has reduced the time spent by women in domestic works and increase opportunities for paid work. However, the results of the National Sample Survey (NSS) documents the evidence for declining women participation in work, especially in

rural areas. The authors concluded that this decline in rural areas is due to crowding out of women in agriculture, where fragmentation of land has resulted in the reduction of farm size and demand for labours. Vishwakarma, (2018), in her article focuses on women’s participation in agricultural employment in Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. It was concluded by the author that though the population of female workers in Uttar Pradesh (83.92%) is more than Uttarakhand (72.84%), and female participation in agriculture employment (26.68%) is higher in Uttarakhand.

The article by News18, 2018 stated the conditions of the female farmers and the constraints faced by them. 70% of the women in India are farmers, but less than 13% of the women own any land. Without ownership of land, they cannot access any government schemes that are meant to support farmers. Legal restriction on claiming their right on land is another constraint faced by the female farmers of India.

Majumdar and Shah, 2017 conducted a study to map the role of women in agriculture. Authors concluded that despite new farm tools, rural women are left to use the traditional farming tools that reduced their efficiency, low income, drudgery, and occupational health risk.

Their contributions are not well recognized and fall under indirect material income, and their efforts are not acknowledged. Lacks of knowledge, inadequate training opportunities, illiteracy are a few factors that affect their existence as farmers. Therefore, it was suggested by the authors that gender budgeting, training extension services are need of hour.

Devi and Singh, 2015, in their study, define the role of women in agriculture and allied fields in Manipur state. The study is based on secondary data and concluded that women play a significant role in agriculture and development of allied fields like livestock production, crop production, post-harvest operation, fisheries, and horticulture, fisheries, and agro-forestry.

Prasad and Sharma, 2011, in her paper, emphasized the participation of rural women in agriculture and allied activities. The author said the participation of women in the sector is higher than men, and spend 29.35% of their time on agriculture activities but still are not recognized as the key player of the sector. It was further concluded by the author that active participation in the agriculture filed has not resulted in their empowerment.

Statement of problem

Women make important contributions to the agricultural and rural economies of all regions of the world. Their roles may differ between and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world, where economic and social factors affect and transform the agricultural sector (Doss, 2011). Despite the active role of women in the agriculture sector, existing review and secondary data are very limited to the involvement of women in agriculture. Though some research exists where researchers talk about the challenges and problems of the sector in general, but very limited data is available on the engagement of women and their role in agriculture. This limited data reflects the failure of the government and the respective agency to address gender inequality in the agriculture sector. A greater understanding of women's role and their participation in the sector and their working condition, as well as challenges faced by them, will enable the stakeholders to formulate policies that result in the development of the women and enhance their ability to improve their livelihood and increase their engagement in the agriculture sector.

3. Objectives of the study

- To critically analyze the women's participation in agriculture in hilly regions of Uttarakhand.
- To identify the constraints faced by women farmers in hilly areas.

4. Research Methodology

The study is descriptive; therefore, the descriptive design is adopted as a research design. The study is based on secondary data. Journals, newspapers, Government websites, reports have been used to elicit the relevant data.

Women participation in Agriculture Sector:

Aggregate data shows that women comprise about 43 percent of the agricultural labour force globally and in developing countries (Doss, 2011). According to an article in ICARDA, women comprise 60% share of the region's agriculture workforce in Middle East and North Africa. At a global level, there are more than 400 million women who are engaged in the farm work and are engaged in non-

mechanized farm occupations like winnowing, sowing, harvesting, and another form of labor-intensive processes. However, they still lack equal rights in land ownership in more than 90 countries.

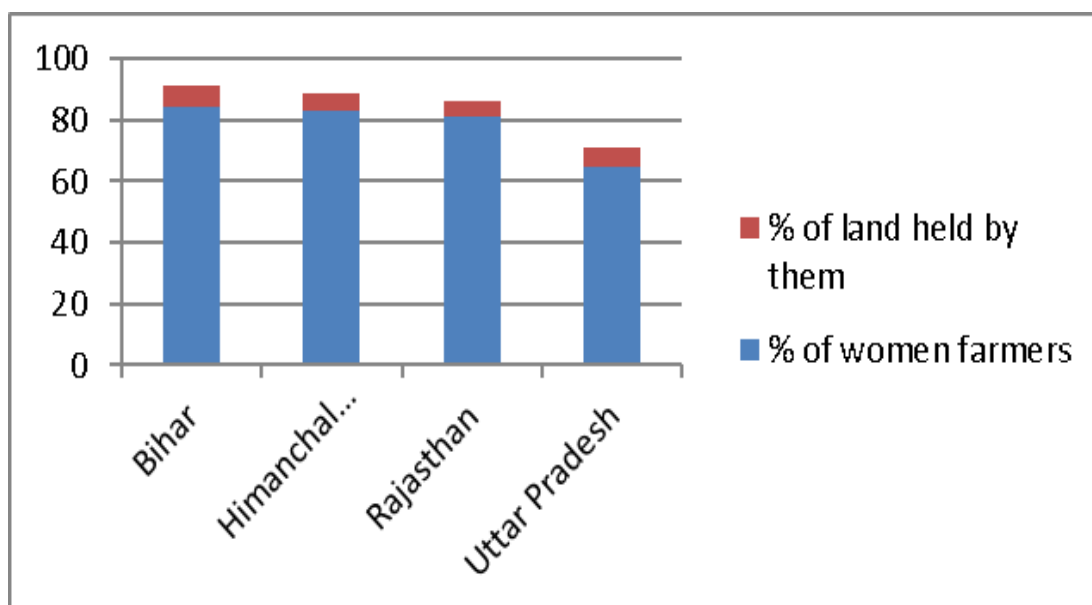
Women farmers have been a critical workforce in Indian agriculture as well. They are the backbone of the agricultural workforce. As per Census 2011, the number of the female workforce in agriculture has been increased from 54.2% to 63.1%. Out of every ten farmers, six happen to be women. It means a staggering 60% of the total farmers' population of India is women. Economic Survey 2017-18 states that with increasing rural to urban migration by men, the sector is witnessing a change in how it operates and is becoming more women-oriented. Figure 1 represents states with the highest % of women farmers and their landholdings. Bihar's agriculture sector is highly feminized, with 84% of the women engaged in farming activities, followed by Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

Saaliq, 2018, in his article, states that there have been various reports and surveys done in the last five years, say that 80% financially independent women in India are engaged in farm-related activities. Out of them, 48% are self-employed farmers, and 33% are working as agricultural labourers. National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) documents that women lead almost 18% agricultural households, thus evidencing the pivotal role played by the women in the agriculture sector.

Women participation in Uttarakhand:

Farming in the hilly and rural states has always been the preserve of the women. According to the great Swami Nathan, it has always been the women who have domesticated the crop plants and initiated the science of farming. They have always been and continue to be a significant component of the agriculture sector and efficiently contribute to protecting the land, flora, and fauna. It can be witnessed and understood in a past event like the Chipko movement in the year 1970, where women lead a famous movement to protect the forest from being disappearing due to extensive deforestation. Therefore, women and their contribution serve as the backbone of the agrarian economy of Uttarakhand.

Figure1. States with a high percentage of women farmers in comparison to their land holdings in different states



Source:news18.com

The agriculture sector provides livelihood opportunities to 75% to 80% of the population of the Uttarakhand; therefore, the government must come up with hill centric policy that can support the hill farmers. According to Prasad and Sharma, 2011, 90% of rural women in Uttarakhand contribute to up to 90% of the total work in agriculture and animal care. According to the 2011 Census, 64% of the women in Uttarakhand works as cultivators, and 84.4% of the women are agriculture labourers. The participation rate of women in the economy of the state is much higher than in several other states and also the national average. Despite the higher participation in the

agriculture sector, women have not been accepted as crucial labours (Vishwakarma, 2018).

According to Vishwakarma, 2018, women agriculture labour include farmers on their farms, unpaid workers on family farms, or others farms, and agriculture enterprise, women who are engaged in the crop and livestock production as well as fishing farming, women who are self-employed as well as women working on family farms, are all included in the women agriculture labour. Whereas, women who are engaged in domestic chores like fetching water and taking care of children and family are not defined as agriculture labour (FAO, 2010).

Table1: Agriculture labor/workers in Uttarakhand Agriculture sector:

Agriculture labour/ workers	Number	Percent
Male	874	47.8
Female	954	52.2
Total	1,828	100

Source: Human Development Report, 2018 (Uttarakhand)

Table 1 shows the number of female agriculture workers or labours is 954, and the number of male agricultural labour is 874. It indicates that women's participation in the sector is more than men. Women of state play a significant role in the development of agriculture and allied field, including post-harvest operation, livestock, fisheries, and others. But these rural women are mostly overburdened than men owing to their multiple occupations like cooking, taking care of family, washing clothes, utensils, and other house chores along with the tedious task of farming. According to Prasad, 2011, women in the state usually work for 16.49 hours daily, and the time consumed by agriculture-related work is 29.35% of their time. Moreover, yet they are not recognized as key players in the agriculture sector.

Further, lack of decision making on financial matters and other significant decisions, control over income-generating resources, and lack of independent economic status has marginalized women within and outside the home.

Constraint faced by the rural women farmers:

According to Lapsed Women Farmers Bill, 2011 women farmers include any woman living in the rural, urban, and semi-urban areas and is primarily engaged in the agricultural activity, though can be engaged in the non-agriculture activities, or any tribal women who is directly or indirectly agricultural activities or in the collection, sale of minor or non-timber forest produce by us usufructory rights. Despite bringing the various policies and continuous efforts of government and NGOs, female farmers face various constraints and have a long way to make themselves significant in farming.

- a) Lack of landholding: The benefits and credits of all the policies are calculated only based on landholdings. Thus, all the landless people, including women, are not entitled to any credit policies. According to Yadav 2013, the bill holds good only when the women farmers have entitlement to land. Women who own assets other than land are not entitled to any benefits of the policies.
- b) Lack of identity as farmers: One of the most significant constraints faced by the women farmers are they are not officially recognized as farmers. Bedi (2018), in her article, stated that census identifies anyone who operates in the piece of agriculture land as a cultivator. Cultivators who own the land are only defined as farmers. There are 3.6 female cultivators

but 87% of women do not own land; therefore, they are not recognized as farmers. Thus, they are not entitled to any benefits of the policies and cannot access institutional credit for farming

- c) Lack of resources: Women in the rural areas have less access to resources than men to the productive resources (FAO 2011). The gender gap exists for accessing various kinds of assets and services, including seed, fertilizers, land, livestock, extension, and financial services. Further, fewer opportunities for education and training limit them from adopting new technologies.
- d) Social barriers: India has been a male-dominated society; therefore, women are generally deprived of various financial and significant matters. They generally are overburdened with house chores and farm activities; thus, they are considered as mere helpers in the fields and are unpaid for these activities. Thus, they are not respected in the house and society.
- e) Technology barriers: Rural women are already burdened with house chores, and access to old tools specially customized for men to make their tedious task of the farm even more challenging and time taking. Along with this, the lack of access to new technologies reduces their productivity at the farm.

5. Conclusion and suggestion:

As per Census 2011, the number of the female workforce in agriculture has been increased from 54.2% to 63.1%. Out of every ten farmers, six happen to be women. It means a staggering 60% of the total farmers' population of India is women. 64% of the women in Uttarakhand work as cultivators and 84.4% of them are agriculture labourers. The participation rate of women in the economy of the state is much higher than in several other states and also the national average. The increasing participation of women in the sector reflects the feminization of the sector. Despite the increased women participation in the sector female still faces various barrier and challenges that hamper their productivity in the sector. Since many males are moving to another sector and urban cities for better income opportunities, it is women who are stepping forward for working in the field. In such a scenario, labeling them as mere cultivators and not recognizing them as farmers will deprive them of every opportunity to grow

and develop. According to the report by Oxfam India, the productivity of women is reducing due to the social, legal, and institutional barriers. Therefore, efforts and changes should be to reduce these social, legal, and institutional barriers.

Rural women have enormous potential to contribute to the development of the economy and rising GDP and can significantly contribute to revitalizing the agriculture sector; therefore, the barrier of gender disparity should be efficiently addressed. According to the FAO, 2011, if women are given the same resources as provided to the men, the agriculture growth in the developing countries would have increased between 2.5% to 4%, and the number of undernourished people in the world would have decreased by approximately 12%-17%.

Therefore, it is suggested that more efforts and attention must be given to the women empowerment in the agriculture sector by adding a few female-centric provisions. Rural women are overburdened with the house chores, farm work, and heavy farming tools add to their woes. Therefore, designing tools and instruments specially customized for women will enable them to perform their farm tasks in a simplified and timely manner and improve their productivity. Thus, it can be concluded that more efforts by the national and state government should be made and steps should be taken to strengthen the entire agriculture sector and remove the constraints faced by the women in the sector so that their conditions are improved and are recognized as key players of the sector.

6. References

- Bedi, B. (2018), The Centre Is Barely Serious About Recognising Women as Farmers, <https://thewire.in/women/women-farmers-agriculture-rights>
- Cherly Doss and team (2011), The role of women in agriculture; A Working paper. Agricultural Development Economics Division The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- Desai, S, and Joshi, O,(2019), The Paradox of Declining Female Work Participation in an Era of Economic Growth, The Indian Journal of Labour Economics Volume 62 Issue 55 page 71 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41027-019-00162-z>
- Handique, M. (2012), Multiple challenges facing women in agriculture gain focus, <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/JPaaxqyz8NB92DbHKqpurJ/Multiple-challenges-facing-women-in-agriculture-gain-focus.html>
- Majumdar, J. and Shah, P. (2017). Mapping the role of Women in Indian Agriculture, Annals of Anthropological Practice, Volume 41, Issue 2, page 46-54 <https://doi.org/10.1111/napa.12112>
- Prasad, N.K and Sharma, N.B. (2011), Rural women play crucial role in state agriculture, says study, <https://www.tribuneindia.com/2011/20110110/dplus.htm#2>
- Saaliq, S. (2018), What's troubling the main (and unnoticed) driving force in India's farmlands? <https://www.news18.com/news/immersive/women-farmers-of-india.html>
- Swaminathan, M. (2013), Gender Statistics In India A Short Note With A Focus On The Rural Economy http://www.mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/reports_and_publication/technical_paper/Them_paper_Gender.pdf
- Vishwakarma, N. (2018), Women's Participation in Agricultural Employment with Special Reference to Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand in India, Economic Affairs, Vol. 63, No. 2, pp. 371-374, DOI: 10.30954/0424-2513.2.2018.11
- Yadav, H. (2013), Waiting for Women Farmers Bill, <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/columns/waiting-for-women-farmers-bill/article22992105.ece>
- <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/10/indias-women-farmers>/<https://www.oxfamindia.org/women-empowerment-india-farmers>

7. Declaration

This is hereby to declare that there exist no conflicts of interest between the authors. Since the research is not funded by any agencies and is self-funded, the issue of conflict does not arise. Therefore, both the authors mutually agree to submit the paper in the journal for publication.