

## Participation, awareness and health problems of women in agriculture

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### ABSTRACT

An attempt was made to elicit the information regarding participation, awareness and health problems of women in agriculture. A survey of 150 rural women was conducted through personal interview method. It was observed that the activities such as weeding, cotton picking, dibbling etc. were solely performed by women. Women spent more than six hours per day in the field. They performed all agricultural tasks in traditional manner and were unaware of the new technologies. Bodyache, headache, pain in knees, hands, shoulder were the common health problems reported by rural women.

**Key words :** Farm activities, Health problems, Awareness, Farm women

Rural women play an important role in agriculture. The contribution of farm women in Indian agriculture is estimated to be 50-60 per cent (Anonymous, 1981). About 60 per cent of agricultural operations are handled exclusively by women (Sri Sankari and Uma, 1995). In truth, women are involved in all aspects of agriculture, from crop selection to land preparation, to seed selection, planting, weeding, pest control, harvesting, crop storage, handling, marketing and processing.

The multifarious duties performed by the farm women in home, farm and allied fields make their life quite miserable as the tasks are quite tedious and time consuming. Most of the women have to work hard for performing various household and farm activities from early morning to late evening without rest (Sethi, 1991). Studies brought out that the farm activities were physically strenuous due to long hours of bending and standing in the field (Shrivastava, 1985; Borah and Kalita, 1998)

It is necessary to have a detail examination of women folk and its effect in terms of physical and mental health. It is necessary to analyze them in terms of physical stresses, the postural positions and their effect and occupation related health problems. Hence this study was undertaken with the objectives to know the participation of selected respondents in farm activities, to determine awareness of the selected respondents regarding drudgery reducing technologies related to farm activities and to know health problems faced by selected respondents while performing farm activities.

### METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in five villages of Parbhani district namely, Erendeshwar, Ukhalad wadi, Asola, Bharswada and Tamaswadi. Two self-help groups (comprised of 15 rural women in each group) in each

village, thus a total of 150 farm women were enrolled and survey of these farm women was conducted by personal interview method. The main objective of the survey was to know their participation in farm activities and health problems/hazards in agriculture and awareness regarding new farm technologies.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected were tabulated and presented herewith.

#### *Occupation of the selected families*

From Table 1 it is clear that out of total families surveyed, 88.66 per cent families were land-holding families and only 11.33 per cent families were landless. The percentages of large and medium land holding category families were similar *i.e.* 24 per cent, whereas 40 per cent families were the small landholders.

#### *Performance of farm activities individually or jointly with male/female members:*

The information regarding participation of selected 150 farm women in farm activities is presented in Table 2.

It was observed that maximum farm women (88-96%) performed cotton picking, weeding, cotton stalk uprooting, uprooting of seedlings individually without any help of male members. The activities performed by women jointly with male members were maize shelling, preparation of tillage, manuring, sowing and threshing.

#### *Frequency of performance of farm activities:*

Majority of the farm women performed all the selected farm activities in winter and rainy seasons. The activities, which were performed in summer season were