



Comparative analysis of role performed by rural women of Assam in Post-harvest management

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ARTICLE INFO :

Article history :

Received : 18.11.2011
Sent for revision : 08.01.2012
Accepted : 28.03.2012

Key words :

Post harvest management, Thrpsing,
Marketing, Storage, Food security

How to cite this Article :

Deka, M.B., Saikia, Rekha Moni and Saikia, Sangeeta Bora (2012). Comparative analysis of role performed by rural women of Assam in Post-harvest management, *Adv. Res. J. Soc. Sci.*, **3** (1) : 10 - 13.

ABSTRACT

Post harvest operations form an important component of farm activities and is mostly performed by women. They play a vital role in subsequent processing and storage of the produce. In order to understand the participation pattern of farm women in post harvest activities, an attempt was made under extension component of AICRP-on Home Science. The study was conducted in six agro-climatic zones of Assam, covering a sample size of 3000 farm women belonging to five different land holding categories. The findings clearly indicated a distinct participation of women in most of the selected activities. Though the result varied between zones but the women contributed in drying, cleaning and storage in all the zones. Least participation was reported in threshing and marketing. Study points towards a need to technically empower women in post harvest know how so as to reduce post harvest losses during storage.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the most important activity in Assam. Women in rural Assam play major role in shaping the country's economy through their active participation in agriculture. At present the women work force in agriculture and allied sectors is estimated at about 61 million, which amounts to about 30 per cent of the total rural workers in the country. They actively participate in different crop production and post harvest activities such as seeding, uprooting, transplanting weeding, fertilizer application, plant protection, harvesting, threshing, and processing etc. However, most of the agricultural technologies used to increase the productivity of agricultural crops have traditionally been developed by considering men farmers as the main target audience than the women farmers. But women in rural areas produce over half of the food needed by the family, bear more responsibilities in household security

and its well being through their income generating activities. As a result women shoulder the bulk of both productive and reproductive works of the rural households and obliged to work longer working hours than their male counter parts (Hedija and Bezabih, 2003). In addition to traditional activities such as child bearing and rearing, cooking, collecting water and fuel wood etc., they are contributing more than 50 per cent of the total labour force in crop production and post harvest operations. Therefore the present study was undertaken with the following objectives : to study the zone wise participation profile of women in post harvest activities and to suggest recommendations for achieving food security.

METHODS

The state of Assam is divided in to six agro-climatic zones. For the purpose of the study, all the agro-climatic zones namely,