



## Empowerment of farm women – still a long path ahead

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### ABSTRACT

Women are essential to economic development. A woman is the nucleus of the family, particularly, in rural India. Women share abundant responsibilities to perform wide spectrum of duties both at home and outside but their participation is considered as normal by the society. Women are the backbone of agricultural workforce but world wide their hard work has mostly been unpaid. She does the most tedious and back-breaking tasks in agriculture, animal husbandry and homes. These tasks not only demand considerable time and energy but also are sources of drudgery for rural women which are not yet precisely identified and quantified. The result is that women's needs for comfortable work participation remain neglected. Although gender empowerment has been a buzzword in development circles, the concept remains ambiguous. Emancipation of women is an essential pre-requisite for economic development and social progress of the nation. Women who are being considered as backbone of food security have to be imparted education and knowledge on innovative agricultural technologies for a holistic empowerment.

Women are essential to economic development, especially in rural and agricultural economies. A woman is the nucleus of the family, particularly, in rural India. She not only collects water, fuelwood, fodder and food but also plays a significant role in preserving the culture, grooming the children and shaping their destiny. Therefore, Founder of Bhartiya Agro Industries Foundation (BAIF), Late Dr. Manibhai Desai had emphasized that although women represent only 50 per cent of the total population, they contribute 75 per cent to the development of our society while men contribute only 25 per cent. Unfortunately, in spite of their laudable and vulnerable roles, which cannot be substituted by machine or men, women have been neglected since generations. This is happening inspite of a woman being recognized by our ancient saints and culture as not merely a mother but as a superior scholarly Institution. It is said in *Manu Samhita (Chapter II, Para 145)* a Guru who teaches Veda is 10 times superior to an ordinary teacher and the father is 100 times more than a teacher, but the mother is 1000 times more

superior than the father.

For the rural women, the day starts early in the morning with the responsibilities of fetching water, fodder, fuel and cooking food. She takes care of the children and members of the family, their health, orientation and education and attends to various income generation activities. She manages all the household matters, looks after the family assets and livestock, handles the purchases and finance, works for almost 14-16 hours and is the last to sleep at night. Still, when you ask her children what their mother does? Most of them instantly reply nothing. There is no recognition for her hard work, just because her work is not evaluated in terms of money. She often falls sick, but does not complain and this goes unnoticed by others in the family as they continue to work as usual for the sake of the family. She manages the family very efficiently with meagre means, but is still treated as illiterate. Women are ignored in matters, which are of concern to them as well. As a result, today women are the worst sufferers in the society due to