

RESEARCH ARTICLE :

To examine the pattern and composition of woman labour employed in Latur district

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SUMMARY : In this paper an attempt has been made to study the pattern and composition of woman labourer employed. The present study conducted in Latur district from Marathwada region of Maharashtra state. 60 women labourers were selected from 10 villages of two blocks for the study. The result revealed that the labourers got maximum number of days of employment in harvesting (52.17 days) which accounted for 24.92 per cent of total days employed in a year in agriculture, followed by weeding (49.08 days) which accounted for 23.44 per cent of total days employed in a year in agriculture, sowing (31.39 days), threshing and winnowing (26.48 days), application of fertilizers (21.68 days), Stubble collection (15.07 days), Thinning and gap filling (13.5 days). The women labourers did the operations mostly by hand. They received wages in cash for all operations except harvest and post harvest operations.

KEY WORDS :

Pattern,
Composition,
Women labourer,
Employment

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BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Agriculture in India is the vertical backbone of the country and is regarded as the largest sector of the country's economic activity. Labour is one of the primary factors of production. It is considered to be important not only because it is productive but also because it activates other factors and makes them useful for production purposes. When we talk about agricultural labour, women labourers has a special significance. women is the molder and builder of any nation's destiny. They are regarded as the backbone of the rural scene. Women workforce outside the four walls is larger in rural areas than in

urban India. Anonymous (1979) revealed that women are responsible for 50 per cent of food production in the developing world. Most of the women perform various types of work for their livelihood and agriculture is considered as the biggest unorganized sector where large number of rural women takes part actively. While women have always played a key role in agricultural production, their importance both as workers and as managers of farms has been growing, as an increasing number of men move to non-farm jobs. Women constitute 40 per cent of the agricultural work force and this percentage is rising. An estimated 20 per cent of rural households are *de facto* female headed, due to widowhood,

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desertion, or male outmigration.

RESOURCES AND METHODS

Multistage sampling design was adopted for selection of district, tehsils, villages and women labourers. In first stage Latur district was selected purposively from Marathwada region of Maharashtra state. In the second stage Ausa and Renapur tehsil from Latur district were selected purposively. In third stage from each tehsils five villages were selected purposively. In fourth stage six women labourers were selected from those ten villages randomly. Thus, a total of 60 women agricultural labourers from ten villages were selected for collecting the required data for the present study. To study the pattern and composition of woman labour employed in agriculture tabular analysis method with averages and percentages was employed.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The result with respect to pattern and composition of woman labourer employed in agriculture were obtained and presented in Table 1. Result revealed that the women labourers were mostly involved in sowing, weeding, harvesting and post harvest operations. These operations are very tedious, time consuming and require skill. The operations requiring heavy manual labour like ploughing, land preparation, making bunds etc. are performed by men. The labourers got maximum number of employment days in a harvesting (51.17 days) which accounted for 24.92 per cent of the total employment days in a year. It was followed by weeding (49.08 days) which accounted for 23.44 per cent of the total employment days in a

year. The labourers also got employment in sowing operation for 31.39 days, which accounted for 15 per cent of the total employment days in a year. The women labourers also involved in other operations like threshing and winnowing (26.48 days), application of fertilizers (21.68 days), stubble collection (15.07 days), thinning and gap filling (13.5 days) which together accounted for only 36.64 of the total employment in agriculture in a year.

Harvesting is the major operation in the study area in most of the crops. Harvesting operation involves drudgery, and also the time consuming operation, labourers had to bend down long hours to do this operation, so mostly performed by women. Since the land holding size were small, it was not profitable for the farmers to use mechanical harvester. So they hire manual labour for this operation.

Weeding is also the major operation in most of the crops cultivated in study area. Chemical weeding is done only in initial stages and is done by male labour. In the later stages hand weeding is preferred which is monotonous and time consuming. So this activity has been women's domain for several decades. The introduction of green revolution technologies resulted in men increasingly confining themselves to mechanical operations like using tractor or spraying insecticides, women were left with operations involving drudgery and physical burden. The post harvest operations include threshing, winnowing, sundrying and storage. All these are female oriented jobs. The labourers did the operations mostly by hand. Sowing was done with hand. Weeding was done by hand or *Khurpi*. Harvesting was done using sickle. Threshing was also done by hand using stick. Some labourers used

Table 1: Operations carried out by women labourers in crop production

Sr. No.	Operations	Type of implement	wage cash or kind (in Rs.)	Number of days Worked			Total days
				<i>Kharif</i>	<i>Rabi</i>	Summer	
1.	Stubble collection	Hand	80.5	6.15 (7.26)	6.2 (7.57)	2.73 (6.39)	15.08 (7.20)
2.	Sowing	Hand	95.83	12.95 (15.29)	12.32 (15.03)	6.12 (14.33)	31.39 (15.00)
3.	Thinning and gap filling	Hand	88.66	6.95 (8.20)	6.02 (7.35)	0.53 (1.24)	13.5 (6.45)
4.	Weeding	Khurpi/ Hand	100	21.2 (25.02)	19.82 (24.19)	8.06 (18.87)	49.08 (23.44)
5.	Application of fertilizers	Hand	100	7.98 (9.42)	8.28 (10.10)	5.42 (12.70)	21.68 (10.35)
6.	Harvesting*	Sickle, Hand	10-15 kg. of food grains or Rs.100	19.81 (23.38)	20.23 (24.68)	12.13 (28.40)	55.17 (24.92)
7.	Threshing and winnowing*	Stick, thresher, winnower	10-15 kg. of food grain or Rs.100	9.68 (11.43)	9.08 (11.08)	7.72 (18.07)	26.48 (12.64)
Total		-	-	84.72 (100.00)	81.95(100.00)	42.71 (100.00)	209.38 (100.00)

(Figures in parentheses indicates percentages)

*For harvesting, threshing and winnowing operations wage rate offers in kind that is 10-15 kg food grain like Wheat, Jowar, Bajra

threshers. Winnowing was done using hand winnower. Women labourers did not have any technical skill to use machines for these operations.

The labourers worked for 7-8 hours with a lunch break and tea break in between. During harvesting they start their work early in the morning and worked till afternoon. The wages for all the operations except harvesting and post harvest operations were received in cash.

The wage rate for women labour in the study area ranges between Rs.80- Rs.100. This was 30-40 per cent less compared to the wages received by men in the region (Rs.150). The minimum wages prescribed as per the minimum wages Act, 1948 is Rs.125 per day. But the women labourers getting very low wages, compared to the minimum wages prescribed. The wage rates were the same during peak and lean seasons.

The wage rate in the study area showed a tremendous increase over the years. The labourers received kind wages for harvest and post harvest operations. These operations are taken as a single entity. The labourers got 10 kg. to 15 kg of food grains like wheat, jawar, bajara for each harvest day irrespective of the yield. The results are not in the consensus with the hypothesis that women are involved in all activities of agriculture. Similar work related to the present article was also done by Mohite and Shelke, 2013.

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