

Socio-economic status of farm women in Coastal Odisha

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■ **ABSTRACT** : In Indian society, women have a multi dimensional role. The largest number of women in India is engaged in farming operations either as cultivators or as supervisors or as agricultural labourers. A study was conducted to assess the socio-economic status of women in agriculture in coastal districts of Odisha during the year 2013-14. The findings suggested that majority of the farmers (63.14 %) were under BPL (Below Poverty Line). When male wage rate was compared to female wage rate for agricultural activities, females represented a lower value Rs. 186.66/day compared to male workers (Rs. 235.57±15.31), and it was statistically significant ($Z=11.71^{**}$, $p<0.01$) for male workers. The average total monthly income of the household was Rs. 3459.74. Women were earning less for both in agricultural (Rs. 292.33) and non-agricultural activity (Rs. 244.68) compared to male farmers (Rs. 859.96 for agriculture and Rs. 704.72 for non agricultural activity). The study clearly showed that there was gender inequality in case income of the women between the male and the female farmers.

■ **KEY WORDS**: Socio-economic status, Farm women

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Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy, yet it has always been a way of life rather than a business in India (Kumar, 1993). Most poor people in India are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. Agriculture is important sector of Indian economy as it contributes about 70 per cent to the total GDP and provides employment to over 60 per cent of the population.

Rural women participate for Agriculture and related activities. They contribute 75 per cent of the labour required for operations. About 36 million women are engaged on farm operations as main workers; from showing to harvesting and storing in bins and bags. They also participate in off –farm activities like processing

and marketing of farm products. Women play a significant role in farming and farm management activities, though most are engaged either as cultivators or helpers to cultivators or as agricultural labourers. They are actively involved in agricultural development and allied fields including crop production livestock production, horticulture post harvest operations, agro and social forestry, fishing etc. Hence, the present study is an attempt to assess the socio-economic status of women in agriculture sectors in coastal districts of Odisha.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

Five coastal districts were selected purposefully for the present study which has similar agro-climatic zones.

From the selected districts one block was selected and from each block two villages were selected at random.

The socio-economic status of the respondents was assessed during 2014-16 by conducting a household survey on social status, age, education, type of family and mean family size etc. to the married couple and who were above the age of 35 years and the women of the house were engaged in agricultural activity. Total 350 households were selected for the study.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The detailed analysis of the socio-economic condition of the women agricultural labours were discussed here.

Socio-economic status of the households:

Out of the total 350 HHs 97 HHs (27.7 %) were in general category followed by 93 HHs in SC (26.57%), 92 HHs (26.28%) in OBC and 68 HHs (19.44%) in ST categories. The majority of the households belonged to general category followed by OBC and SC category (Table 1).

Social status	No. of households	Percentage
GEN	97	27.71
OBC	92	26.28
SC	93	26.57
ST	68	19.44
Total	350	100.00

The findings indicated that 62.86 per cent of the families irrespective of occupation or farm acreage owned were of joint type and only 37.14 per cent were of nuclear family. The mean family size was 5.04. Out of the total HHs, 33.44 per cent families were small families and 54.85 per cent families belonged to medium families. Least % (11.71%) of households were having

Type of family	No. of households	Percentage
Nuclear	130	37.14
Joint	220	62.86
Total	350	100.00
Size of family		
< 4 Small	125	33.44
4-9 Medium	192	54.85
> 9 Large	41	11.71
Average size (Mean ± SD)	5.04±1.34	

large families (Table 2).

Similar trend in family size was also reported by Ismail and Mustaqim (2012) that most of the farming households in Malda district of West Bengal had medium size family which ranged between 5-8 members with average size of 5.73 members.

Regarding the type of ration card holdings majority of the farmers (63.14 %) were having BPL(Below Poverty Line) cards, followed by 21.73 per cent had APL (Above Poverty Line) card and only 15.13 per cent were having AAY (Antodaya Anna Yajona) cards (Table 3).

Table 3 : Economic status of the respondents as per the type of ration card holdings

Economic status	No. of households	Percentage
BPL	221	63.14
AAY	53	15.13
APL	76	21.73
Total	350	100.00

The mean age of the male farmers was 45.94 years and for the female it was 38.58 years. Most of the farmers were in the middle aged groups (Table 4).

Table 4 : Mean age of the respondents

Category	Age Mean ±SD
Male	45.94 ± 7.87
Female	38.58 ± 7.27

Among the males majority (34.85%) studied upto secondary education followed by 23.43 per cent studied high school and 67.00 per cent illiterate. Among the females 35.42 per cent were just literate followed by 31.73 per cent illiterates. Thirty three numbers (9.42%) of the male respondents attended college but only nine

Table 5 : Education of the farmers

Education	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate (M)	67	19.15
Illiterate(F)	111	31.73
Literate (M)	46	13.15
Literate (F)	124	35.42
Secondary(M)	122	34.85
Secondary(F)	78	22.28
High school(M)	82	23.43
High school(F)	28	8.0
College(M)	33	9.42
College(F)	9	2.57
Total Literate(M)	283	80.85
Total Literate(F)	238	68.28

numbers of female (2.57%) were in this category (Table 5).

The level of literacy in this area was 74.56 per cent against the state level 76.68 per cent (Census of India, 2011). Further analysis revealed that majority of girls was dropping the school after primary and secondary levels. Very few studied high school level (8.00%) and very negligible (2.57%) go to graduation stage indicating socio economic and educational backwardness of the area.

Mean wage rate of the households:

The comparison between mean wage rate between male and female are given in Table 6. Both the male and the female respondents were interviewed to know the wage rates for different types of work.

When male wage rate was compared to female wage rate for agricultural activities, females represented a lower value Rs. 186.66/day compared to male workers (Rs. 235.57±15.31), and it was statistically significant ($Z=11.71^{**}$, $p<0.01$) for male workers. Among the female workers the mean income from non agricultural activities

was Rs. 320/day and it was significantly higher (Rs. 412.03±34.54) in case of males. This difference in wage for non agricultural activities was also significant statistically ($Z=13.74^{**}$, $p<0.01$). The mean total income was noticeable higher among males Rs. 647.60 compared to females Rs.507.57 and it was statistically significant ($Z=18.66^{**}$, $p<0.01$).

These results were in line with the results of Yadav (2014) who stressed that there is inequality between male and female in agricultural sector in Maharashtra. The male were getting more wages compared to female labourer.

Behera and Behera (2013) also reported that though agriculture created many jobs for women, difference in wages earned by women and men persist in India.

Income of the households:

The average monthly income was categorized under agricultural work, non agricultural labourer (construction work of road and houses, traditional family business etc.), selling of livestock products and business/services and discussed in Table 7.

Statistically significant difference was seen in

Table 6 : Mean wage rate of the households			(n=350)
Type of work	Male	Female	Z score
	Mean ±SD	Mean ±SD	Mean ±SD
Agricultural laborer	235.57±15.31	186.66±14.41	11.71**
Non-agriculture laborer (Construction, local work, traditional occupation)	412.03±34.54	320.91±39.47	13.74**
Total	647.60±49.85	507.57±53.88	18.66**

** indicates signification of value at $P < 0.01$

Table 7: Average monthly income (Rs.) of the households		
Parameters	Categories	Mean± SD (Rs.)
Agriculture	Male	859.96±114.06
	Female	292.33±62.08
	Total	1152.29±168.85
	Z Score	9.01**
Non-Agriculture work	Male	704.72±32.54
	Female	244.68±15.10
	Total	949.40±47.70
	Z Score	7.65**
Selling of Livestock	Male	713.77±37.32
	Female	243.26±21.18
	Total	957.03±58.50
	Z Score	12.35**
Business/ Service	Male	424.76±20.39
Total Income of the households		3459.74±274.84

** indicates signification of value at $P < 0.05$

income of male when compared with income of female ($Z=9.01^{**}$, $p<0.05$). Females were earning very less (Rs. 292.33 ± 62.08) from agriculture compared to males (Rs. 859.96 ± 114.06). The total income was Rs. 1152.29.

Female were earning very less from non-agricultural labourer (Rs. 244.68 ± 15.10 .) compared to males (Rs. 704.72 ± 32.54). The Z test showed there was significant difference in income between the male and the females. ($Z=7.65^{**}$, $p<0.05$).

The total income from selling of livestock was Rs. 957.03 by both the groups and it was higher for males (713.77 ± 37.32) compared to females (243.26 ± 21.18). The difference of income from livestock among male and female was found to be significant statistically ($Z=12.35^{**}$, $p<0.05$).

During off season farmers were engaged in some sort of business or services. The mean income of households from business or services was Rs. 427.76.

The study revealed that farm and non-farm activities were the main sources of income and employment with negligible contribution of selling of live stock products and business or services.

It was fairly evident that with increasing population pressure, small and fragmented agricultural holdings and highly iniquitous distribution of land, etc., agriculture alone could not provide the solution for rural unemployment and under-employment in the state of Odisha.

Bhakar *et al.* (2007) also reported similar findings that within farm households, there were wide disparities in income between marginal and large farmers.

Singh (2013) also conferred the low income among UP farmers. The per-day per-capita income from agriculture has been found to be Rs. 15.00 for marginal farmers, Rs. 31.00 for small farmers, Rs. 45.00 for medium farmers and Rs. 84.00 for large farmers during 2011-12. Thus, all marginal farmers, who constitute over three-fourths of UP farmers, fall below the poverty line of Rs. 22.00 if they depend solely on agricultural income.

The findings of Birthal *et al.* (2014) were also in conformation with the findings that agriculture was the dominant source of income for farm household. The nonfarm income was more important for the households at lower end of land distribution.

Agriculture was the main occupation in the selected coastal districts of Odisha. Majority of the respondents belonged to general category followed by OBC and SC

category. The mean family size was 5.04. Majority of the farmers (63.14 %) were under BPL (Below Poverty Line). Among the males majority (34.85%) studied up to secondary education followed by 23.43 per cent studied high school and 67.00 per cent illiterate. Among the females 35.42 per cent were just literate followed by 31.73 per cent illiterates. With regard to wage rate females were getting very less wages both for agricultural and non-agricultural works compared to their male counter parts. The average monthly income of the women was also statistically significantly lower compared to the males.

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