

Role of rural women in agriculture and income generating activities

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ABSTRACT

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From the study it is evident that the income generating activities create additional income and employment during the off season and leisure time, which act as a supplement to the wage earnings and it has to be strengthened and encouraged. More and more training programmes need to be organized and preferably be oriented to products that suit the day to day changes in consumer preferences. To encourage the role of products a sort of community production cum marketing and storage centres should be setup, thereby farm women groups shall be made eligible to enter into the social systems which by it self get spread to all the rural areas so that the socio-economic condition of women could be improved so as to break the hard nuts of poverty. Finally she should be empowered in the overall development of the deprived women folk.

Key words : Rural women, Income generation, Economic development, Socio-economic conditions.

Agriculture has been and will continue to be the life line of the Indian economy. As the largest private enterprise in India, agriculture contributes nearly one fourth of the national GDP, sustains livelihood of about two-third of population and is the back bone of agro-based industry. In food sector alone, agriculture contributes Rs.250 thousand crores annually (Rai, 2004). It is a well known fact that women's income in a family is of paramount importance for nutritional, economic and educational upliftment of the family. Since women constitute almost half of the population in India, the burden shared by them for the socio-economic development is of two folds, one on the domestic front and the other on the economic front. It is ideal in the rural context that the women always prefer to work in groups, wherein they can learn from each other, mutually reinforce and generally face less social problems. In this direction concerted efforts are being made by Krishi Vigyan Kendras by encouraging group activities for improving the socio-economic condition of rural women. The related issues have been included in the present study. The study was under taken to analyze the role of women in agriculture and income generating activities as well as related constraints.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was carried out in the Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir state in the year 2008. district Kupwara is spread over an area of 2379 Sq Kms, which comprises of 367 villages, 3 Tehsils and 11 community development blocks. It has a total population of about 6.5 lakh. Population is concentrated mostly in rural areas and only 0.25 lakh lives in urban areas. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood of this district

(Anonymous, 2004). Different agencies like KVK, NAIP (National Agriculture Innovative Project) and state agriculture development department are operating in this district for the upliftment of rural poor women by imparting different vocational trainings and implementing different schemes. Twelve villages were randomly selected from three tehsils, practicing the enterprises such as tailoring, knitting, carpet weaving, embroidery, pickle making and jam making etc. The total sample size was 70. Data were collected personally by using structured interview schedule. Frequencies percentages were employed to analyze the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the Table 1 it has been found that maximum rural women (88.57 per cent) participated in both manuring of fields as well as transplanting of seedlings followed by threshing (85.71 per cent), harvesting (78.57 per cent), transportation and storage of produce (64.28 per cent), weeding, winnowing and cleaning (57.14 per cent). It is also evident that 51.42 per cent women actively participated in field preparations. It was also observed that an encouraging percentage of rural women participated in the operations like sowing (28.85 per cent), irrigation and chemical control (14.28 per cent). This increased inclination of rural women towards these agricultural operations may be partially the outcome of the efforts put in by the extension functionaries of the Agricultural University and the concerned development department. Further, it was found that highest participation was reported in *kharif* than in *rabi* season. This is because the women participate in greater number in *kharif* than in *rabi* season. In *rabi* season 71.42 per cent, 57.14 per cent, 54.28 per cent, 42.85 per cent, 28.85 per cent and

Table 1 : Involvement of rural women in farm activities during *kharif* and *rabi* season (n=70)

Sr. No.	Farm activities	<i>Kharif</i>		<i>Rabi</i>	
		Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1.	Field preparation	36	57.14	4	5.71
2.	Sowing	20	28.85	5	7.14
3.	Transplanting of seedlings	62	88.57	-	-
4.	Weeding	40	57.14	4	5.71
5.	Manuring of fields	62	88.57	20	28.85
6.	Harvesting	55	78.57	40	57.14
7.	Threshing	60	85.71	50	71.42
8.	Winnowing and cleaning	40	57.14	30	42.85
9.	Transportation and storage of produce	45	64.28	38	54.28
10.	Marketing of produce	1	1.42	1	1.42
11.	Irrigation	10	14.28	2	2.85
12.	Chemical control	10	14.28	-	-

5.71 per cent participated in thrashing, harvesting, transportation and storage of produce, winnowing and cleaning, manuring of fields, and field preparation, respectively. The percentage of involvement was very less and discouraging in the activities like marketing of produce and chemical control. These results are in agreement with the findings of Nataraju (1990) and Thejaswini *et al.* (2004).

It is evident from Table 2 that rural women have participated in a number of income generating activities. Among these, a maximum percentage (85.71 per cent) of women have participated in the vegetable preservation/drying followed by 74.28 per cent of women involved in carpet weaving. An equal number of participants (71.42 per cent) have taken part in helping the group members in initial arrangements and constant encouragement and

motivation to other group members. Sixty per cent of respondents have participated in tailoring, 57.14 per cent were found to participate in transportation of produce and pickle making. A good number of 42.85 and 35.71 per cent have participated in knitting and embroidery, respectively. It was also found that 28.57 per cent woman were involved in attending meetings and participated in other social organizations. There was a less percentage of rural women who participated in visiting other villages to see progress (14.28 per cent), marketing of finished items (8.57 per cent) and Jam making (7.14 per cent). One of the reasons of this active involvement of rural women in income generating activities may be due to the participation of these women in various vocational training programmes organized by KVK, NGOs and other concerned government departments. Only 1 per cent of

Table 2 : Role of rural women in other income generating activities

Sr. No.	Activities	(n=70)	
		Number	Per cent
1.	Knitting	30	42.85
2.	Tailoring	42	60.00
3.	Carpet weaving	52	74.28
4.	Embroidery	25	35.71
5.	Pickle making	40	57.14
6.	Jam making	05	07.14
7.	Vegetable preservation/drying	60	85.71
8.	Help the group members in initial arrangements	50	71.42
9.	Attending meetings	20	28.57
10.	Bank transactions	07	1.00
11.	Constant encouragement and motivations to other group members	20	28.57
12.	Constant encouragement and motivation to other group members	50	71.42
13.	To visit other villages to see progress	10	14.28
14.	Transportation of produce	40	57.14
15.	Marketing of finished items	6	8.57

participants took part in bank transactions. This might be due to illiteracy ground. These findings are also supported by the results of Thejaswini *et al.* (2004).

According to the observations (Table 3), majority of respondents indicated that lack of proper training (85.71 per cent), marketing problems (65.71 per cent), Lack of storage and ware-house facilities (64.28 per cent), high

findings are also supported by the results of Gidda (1999).

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Table 3 : Constraints in economic development as identified by the farm women (n=70)

Sr. No.	Issues	Number	Per cent
1.	Financial constraints	40	57.14
2.	Lack of proper training	60	85.71
3.	High cost of production	43	61.42
4.	Lack of storage and ware house facilities	45	64.28
5.	Social problems	40	57.14
6.	Marketing problems	46	65.71

cost of production (61.42 per cent), financial and social constraints (57.14 per cent) were the major obstacles faced by the farm women in taking part in income generating activities. Further, these women suggested that these issues be addressed for further improvement of the socio-economic condition of the rural women. These

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