

Entrepreneurial knowledge of rural women in carrying out agro-based income generating activities in Assam

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ABSTRACT : The present study was conducted in six districts of Assam. Two districts from each zone, namely Jorhat and Dibrugarh of Upper Brahmaputra Valley Zone, Udalguri and Darrang from North Bank Plain Zone and Kamrup (M) and Kamrup (R) of Lower Brahmaputra Valley Zone were selected randomly. All total 240 rural women from 24 villages of selected zones and who were mostly engaged in both vegetable cultivation and livestock rearing were included as respondents for the study. The respondents were interviewed with the help of well structured interview schedule. The findings revealed that 44.32 per cent of rural women had low level of knowledge in vegetable cultivation whereas 40.45 per cent and 15.23 per cent of rural women had medium and high level knowledge, respectively. It was also observed that maximum number of rural women (42.77%) had medium level of knowledge in rearing of livestock whereas 39.49 per cent and 17.74 per cent of rural women had low and high level knowledge, respectively.

KEY WORDS : Level of knowledge, Vegetable cultivation, Livestock rearing

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INTRODUCTION

Women of rural areas work as agricultural labour, as farmer, as co- farmers, as family labour and manage the farm and farm enterprises. Their contributions to the production of fruits and vegetables in the homestead along with poultry and livestock rearing, vegetable and fish cultivation, tree planting and crop processing bring a substantial share in the total family income. Rural women can empower themselves technically to cope with the changing times and productively using their free time and existing skills for setting and sustaining enterprises

through individual or collective income generation programme. Rural women possess abundant resources to take up enterprises. She has the benefit of easy availability of farm and livestock based raw materials and other resources. They can do wonders by their effectual and competent involvement in entrepreneurial activities. The rural women are having basic indigenous knowledge, skill, potential and resources to establish and manage enterprise. Different study states that entrepreneurship is the only solution for increasing the economy of rural women as they are having human and nonhuman resources to take up an enterprise. Hence,

there is a need of proactive initiatives that can bring rapid changes in the socio-economic development of women through the use of tools such as agro-enterprise activities, credit and savings and business management and only a need based extension strategy can fulfill the objectives of any developmental initiative planned for overall empowerment of rural women.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in six district of Assam. Two districts from each zone, namely Jorhat and Dibrugarh of Upper Brahmaputra Valley Zone, Udalguri and Darrang from North Bank Plain Zone and Kamrup (M) and Kamrup (R) of Lower Brahmaputra Valley Zone were selected randomly. All total 240 rural women from 24 villages of selected zones and who were

mostly engaged in both vegetable cultivation and livestock rearing were included as respondents for the study. The respondents were interviewed with the help of well structured interview schedule and analyzed by using suitable statistical techniques like, mean, frequency, percentage, standard deviation and correlation.

OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

The results obtained from the present investigation are summarized below :

Existing entrepreneurial knowledge of rural women in vegetable cultivation :

The findings presented on the Table 1 shows that majority (45.00%) of the rural women were having medium level of knowledge about nursery production,

Table 1 : Frequency and percentage of rural women according to existing entrepreneurial knowledge in vegetable cultivation (n=240)

Sr. No.	Activity	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Nursery production	Low < 3.16	72	30.00
		Medium 3.16 to 5.74	108	45.00
		High > 5.74	60	25.00
2.	Land preparation and planting	Low < 3.38	67	27.92
		Medium 3.38 to 4.92	129	53.75
		High > 4.92	44	18.33
3.	Production practices	Low < 1.79	55	22.92
		Medium 1.79 to 3.26	137	57.08
		High > 3.26	48	20.00
4.	Nutrient management	Low < 2.74	146	60.83
		Medium 2.74 to 4.84	81	33.75
		High > 4.84	13	5.42
5.	Plant protection	Low < 1.01	186	77.50
		Medium 01.01 to 4.12	45	18.75
		High > 4.12	9	3.75
6.	Harvesting	Low < 2.45	76	31.67
		Medium 2.45 to 6.34	111	46.25
		High > 6.34	56	23.33
7.	Storage	Low < 2.76	146	60.83
		Medium 2.76 to 5.08	81	33.75
		High > 5.08	13	5.42
8.	Price fixation	Low < 3.09	82	34.16
		Medium 3.09 to 6.87	108	45.00
		High > 6.87	50	20.84
9.	Marketing	Low < 3.06	130	54.00
		Medium 3.06 to 5.84	74	31.00
		High > 5.84	36	15.00

30.00 per cent had low level and the remaining (25.00%) had high level of knowledge, respectively. Majority of the rural women (53.75%) had medium level of knowledge in land preparation and planting, followed by 27.92 per cent and 18.33 per cent of rural women had low and high level knowledge, respectively. It also indicates that majority (57.08%) of the rural women had medium level of knowledge regarding production practices whereas number of rural women found in low and high level knowledge category were 22.92 per cent and 20.00 per cent, respectively. Regarding knowledge level of rural women regarding nutrient management the Table 1 shows that majority (60.83%) of the rural women had low level of knowledge regarding nutrient management whereas number of rural women found in medium and high level knowledge category were 33.75 per cent and 5.42 per cent, respectively.

It is evident from the Table 1 that the knowledge of 77.50 per cent of rural women was low in the aspects of plant protection whereas 18.75 per cent of rural women had medium and only 3.75 per cent of rural women had high level of knowledge. It might be due to the reasons that these types of activities are generally undertaken by the male members of the family. Majority (46.25%) of the rural women had medium level of knowledge regarding harvesting whereas number of rural women found in low and high level knowledge category were 31.67 per cent and 23.33 per cent, respectively. So, they were accustomed of doing this work. Majority of the rural women (60.83%) had low level of knowledge in storage and planting followed by 33.75 per cent and 5.42 per cent of rural women had medium and high level knowledge, respectively. It is evident from the Table 1 that the knowledge of 45.00 per cent of rural women

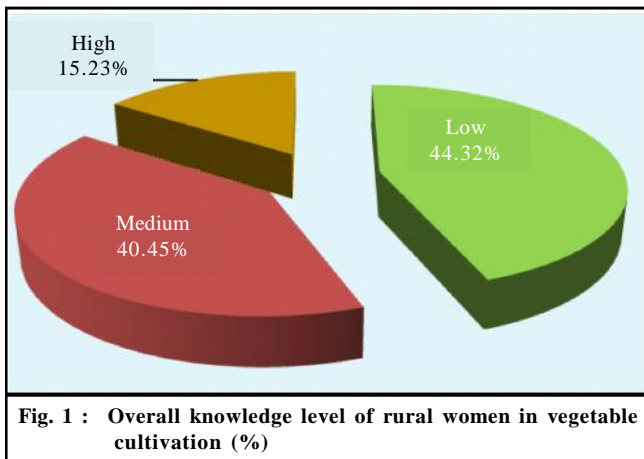
Table 2 : Frequency and percentage of knowledge of rural women in different activities of rearing of livestock

Sr. No.	Activities	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Selection of site	Low < 4.03	54	22.50
		Medium 4.03 to 5.24	138	57.50
		High > 5.24	48	20.00
2.	Construction of shed	Low < 1.6	32	13.33
		Medium 1.6 to 3.4	179	74.59
		High > 3.4	29	12.08
3.	Selection of breed	Low < 0.91	124	51.67
		Medium 0.91 to 2.15	45	18.75
		High > 2.15	71	29.58
4.	Feeding	Low < 2.56	48	20.00
		Medium 2.56 to 4.92	137	57.08
		High > 4.92	55	22.92
5.	Breeding	Low < 2.02	146	60.83
		Medium 2.02 to 4.14	81	33.75
		High > 4.14	13	5.42
6.	Management	Low < 1.24	67	27.92
		Medium 1.24 to 2.92	129	53.75
		High > 2.92	44	18.33
7.	Health care	Low < 1.79	178	74.17
		Medium 1.79 to 3.47	35	14.58
		High > 3.47	27	11.25
8.	Price fixation	Low < 3.43	72	30.00
		Medium 3.43 to 6.03	108	45.00
		High > 6.03	60	25.00
9.	Marketing	Low < 3.06	132	55.00
		Medium 3.06 to 5.84	72	30.00
		High > 5.84	36	15.00

was medium in the aspects of price fixation whereas 34.16 per cent of rural women had low and only 20.84 per cent of rural women had high level of knowledge and majority (54.00%) of the rural women had low level of knowledge regarding marketing whereas number of rural women found in medium and high level knowledge category were 31 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively.

Overall entrepreneurial knowledge level of rural women in vegetable cultivation :

It was evident from the Fig. 1 that 44.32 per cent of rural women had low level of knowledge in vegetable cultivation whereas 40.45 per cent and 15.23 per cent of rural women had medium and high level knowledge, respectively. It might be due to non-recognition of rural women as full-fledged farmer for which they were not invited to participate in the agro-based training organized for improving the farmer's knowledge and skill by concerned Government and Non- Govt. Organizations / Institutions.



Existing entrepreneurial knowledge of rural women in techniques of rearing of livestock:

Initial entrepreneurial knowledge on selected activities of rearing of livestock was presented in Table 2. The knowledge of rural women on nine different activities of livestock rearing namely selection of site, construction of shed, selection of breed, feeding practices, breeding practices, management, health care, cost estimation and marketing were calculated.

The findings presented on the Table 2 shows that majority (57.50%) of the rural women were having medium level of knowledge about selection of site, 22.50 per cent had low level and the remaining (20.00%) had

high level of knowledge, respectively and majority of them (74.59%) had medium level of knowledge in construction of shed followed by 13.33 per cent and 12.08 per cent of rural women had low and high level knowledge, respectively. The findings presented on the Table 2 also indicated that majority (51.67%) of the rural women had low level of knowledge regarding selection of breed whereas number of rural women found in medium and high level knowledge category were 18.75 per cent 29.58 per cent, respectively and majority (57.08%) of the rural women had medium level of knowledge regarding feeding whereas number of rural women found in high and low level knowledge category were 22.92 per cent and 20.00 per cent, respectively. The knowledge of 60.83 per cent of rural women was low in the aspects of breeding practices whereas 33.75 per cent of rural women had medium and on 5.42 per cent of rural women had high level of knowledge and majority (53.75%) of the rural women had medium level of knowledge regarding management whereas number of rural women found in low and high level knowledge category were 27.92 per cent and 18.33 per cent, respectively. Majority of the rural women (74.17%) had low level of knowledge in health care, 14.58 per cent and 11.25 per cent of rural women had medium and high level knowledge, respectively the knowledge of 45.00 per cent of rural women was medium in the aspects of cost estimation whereas 30.00 per cent of rural women had low and only 25 per cent of rural women had high level of knowledge. The findings presented on the Table 2 shows that majority (55.00%) of the rural women had low level of knowledge regarding marketing whereas number of rural women found in medium and high level knowledge category were 30.00 per cent and 15.00 per cent, respectively.

Overall entrepreneurial knowledge level of rural women in rearing of livestock :

Fig. 2 shows the overall knowledge level of rural women. It is seen that maximum number of rural women (42.77%) had medium level of knowledge in rearing of livestock whereas 39.49 per cent and 17.74 per cent of rural women had low and high level knowledge, respectively.

Relationship between knowledge and selected independent variables :

The relationship between knowledge and selected

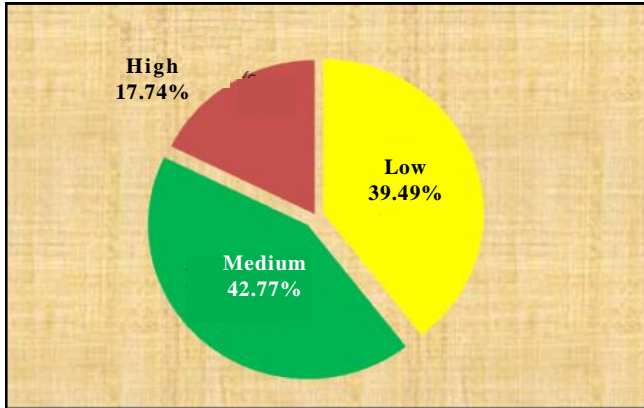


Fig. 2 : Overall entrepreneurial knowledge level of rural women in rearing of livestock (%)

independent variables are presented in Table 3. The finding reveals that knowledge of rural women in vegetable cultivation was significantly and positively related with age, organizational membership and socio economic status. It further reveals that there is no significant relationship between knowledge of rural women in vegetable cultivation and marital status, caste, education, family occupation, family type, family size, land holding, family occupation and mass media exposure.

Table 3 : Relationship between knowledge in vegetable cultivation and selected independent variables

Sr. No.	Independent variable	'r' value
1.	Age	0.243*
2.	Marital status	0.135
3.	Caste	0.033
4.	Education	0.126
5.	Land holding	0.019
6.	Family occupation	0.088
7.	Family type	0.004
8.	Family size	0.004
9.	Organizational membership	0.267**
10.	Socio-economic status	0.243*
11.	Mass media exposure	0.068

* = Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 – tailed)

** = Correlation is highly significant at the 0.01 level (2- tailed)

Relationship between level of knowledge of rural women related to rearing of livestock and selected independent variables :

The relationship between knowledge and selected independent variables are presented in Table 4. The finding reveals that knowledge of rural women in rearing of livestock was significantly and positively related with education, socio-economic status and mass media

exposure. It further reveals that there is no significant relationship between knowledge of rural women in rearing of livestock and age, marital status, caste, family occupation, family type, family size, land holding, family occupation and organizational membership. Similar work related to the present investigation was also carried out by Negi and Upadhyay (2012); Borah and Kalita (2016). Islam *et al.* (2013); Saikia *et al.* (2013 and 2016) and Devi *et al.* (2012).

Table 4 : Relationship between level of knowledge in rearing of livestock and selected independent variables

Sr. No.	Independent variable	'r' value
1.	Age	0.088
2.	Marital status	0.005
3.	Caste	0.187
4.	Education	0.347**
5.	Land holding	0.027
6.	Family occupation	0.120
7.	Family type	0.061
8.	Family size	0.078
9.	Organizational membership	0.120
10.	Socio-economic status	0.308**
11.	Mass media exposure	0.248*

* = Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 – tailed)

** = Correlation is highly significant at the 0.01 level (2- tailed)

Conclusion :

The rural women had low level of knowledge in vegetable cultivation and medium level in rearing of livestock. The analysis of the situation suggested that skill development training, continuous assistance from extension personnel about production process and production management, developing linkages with input suppliers and markets, accessing to current and reliable market information and ensuring easy availability of low cost high yielding breed/variety could lead to economic empowerment of rural women through agro- based enterprises.

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