

## Role of women in Agriculture

■ FATIMA BUCHH, NEELOFAR KHAN AND FARHAT JAN

Received: 26.03.2012; Revised: 20.04.2012; Accepted: 20.05.2012

See end of the paper for authors' affiliations

Correspondence to :

**FATIMA BUCHH**  
Womens Studies Centre,  
University of Kashmir,  
KASHMIR (J&K) INDIA

■ **ABSTRACT** : Agriculture is a contraction of escalation and poverty diminution in Srinagar where it is the focal occupation of the meagre. But the agricultural sector in Barakpora is underperforming, in parts because women, who represent a key reserve in agriculture and the rural economy through their roles as farmers and labourers almost everywhere, face more rigorous constraints than men in access to fruitful resources.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Women, Role, Agriculture

■ **HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER** : Buchh, Fatima, Khan, Neelofar and Jan, Farhat (2012). Role of women in Agriculture. *Asian J. Home Sci.*, 7 (1) : 144-147 .

Women make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies in all developing countries. Their roles diverge significantly among and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world, where economic and social forces are transforming the agricultural segment. Rural women often manage intricate households and pursue numerous livelihood approaches. Their activities typically include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, caring for family members and maintaining their homes. The Indian social systems exhibit momentous disparities. Their traditional roles are not identical in all strata of society, norms and taboos governing their roles and behaviours within and outside the family, the structure of family organizations and social practices and the positions accorded to women in a community differ considerably across regions, cultures and levels of socio-economic development. Women in rural areas generally bear primary responsibility for the nutrition of their children, from gestation through weaning and throughout the critical period of growth. In addition, they are the principal food producers and preparers for the rest of the family. Despite their contributions to food security, women tend to be invisible actors in development. Often, their work is not recorded in statistics or mentioned in reports. As a result, their contribution is poorly understood and often

underestimated.

Women make important contributions to the agricultural and rural economies of all regions of the world. However, the exact contribution both in terms of magnitude and of its nature is often difficult to assess and shows a high degree of variation across countries and regions. Women constitute one half of the nation's population *i.e.*, half of its human resource, make a significant contribution to economic and social development, as citizens, workers and mothers, therefore, emancipation of women and their involvement in developmental efforts should be considered as economic and social progress. Women are featured mostly in welfare programmes for health, education and child care, but not in the designing and implementation of developmental programmes. They are generally employed in the poorest paid, lowest skilled, least regular, most marginal and arduous jobs, because of the constraints imposed upon them as 'women' (Roy *et al.*, 1984).

In 2007, women made up about 41 per cent of total employment in agriculture globally. FAO's projections through 2010 indicate that of the percentage of economically active women in least developed countries, more than 70 per cent work in agriculture. In developing countries, most women's work is devoted to agriculture. Women are involved in every stage of food production.

According to Swaminathan, the famous agricultural

scientist, some historians believe that it was woman who first domesticated crop plants and thereby initiated the art and science of farming. While men went out hunting in search of food, women started gathering seeds from the native flora and began cultivating those of interest from the point of view if food, feed, fodder, fibre and fuel (Samanta, 1995).

Women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields including in the main crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post harvest operations, agro/social forestry, fisheries, etc. is a fact long taken for granted but also long ignored. The nature and extent of women's involvement in agriculture, no doubt, varies greatly from region to region. Even within a region, their involvement varies widely among different ecological sub-zones, farming systems, castes, classes and stages in the family cycle. But regardless of these variations, there is hardly any activity in agricultural production, except ploughing in which women are not actively involved. In some of the farm activities like processing and storage, women predominate so strongly that men workers are numerically insignificant (Jamali, 2009). Studies on women in agriculture conducted in India and other developing and under developed countries all point to the conclusion that women contribute far more to agricultural production than has generally been acknowledged. Recognition of their crucial role in agriculture should not obscure the fact that farm women continue to be concerned with their primary functions as wives, mothers and homemakers (Rana and Suktan, 1989).

### Objectives :

- To ascertain whether rural women are extensively involved in agricultural activities.
- To analyze whether their opinions were also considered and their involvement in taking the final decision.
- Types of health hazards faced by farm women.

### RESEARCH METHODS

The study has been undertaken in "Brakpora" village of Tehsil Anantnag, Srinagar. A total of 60 farm women were selected as respondents through purposive random sampling technique. The selected samples were interviewed personally using pre-tested well structured interview schedule. The data were collected from two sources: In case of primary data, the information was collected through questionnaire-cum-interview schedule. The data for this study were collected mainly by interviewing the farm women with the help of questionnaire. The data were collected regarding decision making process in the agricultural fields, time spent in fields etc. The secondary data comprised of information collected from books, journals, newspapers, magazines and internet. The data obtained from the survey were carefully scrutinized and consolidated. The data were then tabulated and

represented through various figures and tables.

### RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

An overview of Table 1 reveals that female workers working in agricultural fields were younger *i.e.*, 48.3 per cent in the age group of 20-30 years. In the age group of 30-40 and above lesser percentage of women was participating. A similar study conducted by reported the findings John E. Dunlop (1999).

**Table 1: Age of the respondents**

Age in years	No. of respondents	Percentage
20-30	29	48.3
30-40	14	23.4
40-50	12	20.0
Greater than 50	5	8.3
Total	60	100

Education is an important tool for social development. The high level of illiteracy rate among women preference in agriculture activities was found. The study reveals that the educational level of the respondents was very low. Table 2 indicates that 81.6 per cent of the respondents were illiterate whereas only 18.4 per cent of the respondents were literate. This clearly reflects that due to engagement in agricultural activities young girls do not go for formal schooling.

**Table 2: Educational status of the respondents**

Educational status	No. of respondents	Percentage
Literate	11	18.4
Illiterate	49	81.6
Total	60	100

Women make essential contribution to the agricultural and rural economics, their role vary considerably between and within regions and are changing rapidly, where economic and social forces are transforming the agricultural sector. Rural women often manage complex household and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Table 3 depicts that women take up farm activities because of economic reasons (73.4%).

**Table 3: Reasons for taking part in farm activities**

Reasons	No. of respondents	Percentage
Professional linking	16	26.6
Economic reasons	44	73.4
Spending of leisure time	0	0
Total	60	100

An overview of Table 4 indicates that the average for women's share of total time use in agricultural activities was

4-6 hrs by 71.7 per cent of the respondents. A similar study by Jain (1999) revealed that female time-use in agriculture varies widely depending on the crop and the phase of production cycle, the age and ethnic group Punia and Jain (1986).

**Table 4: Time spent in agriculture activities**

Hrs/day	No. of respondents	Percentage
0-2	0	0
2-4	16	26.7
4-6	43	71.7
6-8	1	1.6
8 and above	0	0
Total	60	100

Women employed as wage labourers receive lower wages than men do. The study revealed that 40 per cent of the respondents got Rs.150/day (Table 5). The situation is worse particularly in case of women. Women not only get pushed into low wage jobs but they are even paid lower remuneration than their male counter parts.

**Table 5: Wages paid**

Wages/day	No. of respondents	Percentage
150	24	40.0
180	3	5.0
200	19	31.6
250	14	23.4
Total	60	100

The decision making process is an important segment of every household because it makes implementation of a plan or programme quite easy. The study revealed that women's suggestions are not given due consideration in the decisions pertaining to agricultural sector and important family matters (Table 6). Bala (2003) reported that women did not decide independently about any farm operation but participated in almost all the decisions.

**Table 6: Decision making in agriculture**

Decision making	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Head of the family	60	100
Others	0	0
Total	60	100

Women in agriculture have high incidence of injuries and health problems. Most of them have practically no education, training or access to information on the risks involved in their work. Exposure to poor working conditions has serious repercussions. The health problems which women have range from respiratory to health palpitation (Table 7).

**Table 7: Health problems**

Health problems	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Respiratory problem		
Yes	20	33.4
No	40	66.6
Skin problem		
Yes	41	68.4
No	19	31.6
Headache		
Yes	47	78.3
No	13	21.7
Heart palpitation		
Yes	17	28.3
No	43	71.7

The tasks done on agricultural fields by women and men have certain common patterns. In general, men undertake heavy physical labour of land preparation and jobs which are specifically related to women were time consuming tasks like weeding (21.6%), sowing (60%) and to carry out repetitious work etc (Table 8).

**Table 8: Tasks carried out by women farmers**

Task	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Ploughing	1	1.7
Sowing	36	60
Weeding	13	21.6
Transplanting	10	16.7
Total	60	100

### Conclusion :

The present study concludes that the women plan a significant and crucial role in agriculture and allied fields. Research reveals that women's participation was more in cutting, picking, weeding, etc. However, women didn't participate in ploughing of field, plant protection measures and marketing. The study also divulges that age, educational level, type of tasks carried out by them etc. do not affect the women's participation in agriculture. Women are intensely involved in farm activities apart from their legitimate role as wives and mothers. Men alone cannot achieve success in farming without women. Therefore, there is need to encourage female farmers, by making available all that is necessary for successful farming. The contribution of women in agriculture should be maximized by implementing solutions to the specific problems they encounter. The existing women's group in the village should be organized by strengthened to increase women's access to extension services, credit facilities, land tenure should be reviewed and even marketing services.

---

Authors' affiliations:

NEELOFAR KHAN AND FARHAT JAN, Institute of Home Science,  
University of Kashmir, KASHMIR (J&K) INDIA

---

## ■ REFERENCES

**Anonymous** (1984). Report of All India Coordinated Research Project for the year 1983-84, Department of Home Management P.A.U., LUDHIANA, PUNJAB (India).

**Jamali, Khalida** (2009). The role of rural women in agriculture and it's allied fields. *European J.Social Sci.*,7(3).125-128.

**Punia, R.K.** and Jain, Rajni. (1986). *Ownership control and use of land by women, role of development programmes in socio-economic status of women's held at HAV*", Hissar March 21-22.

**Rana, M.S.K.** and Sultan, Z. (1989). NARC Training Institute, National Agricultural Research Centre, Islamabad. *Pak. J.Rural Development & Admini.*, **21**.

**Ray, G.L.** Sagar, Sharma, R.L., S. Singh, T.R. (1984). *Indian J. Extn. Edu.*, **4** (1): 43-46.

**Samanta, R.K.** (1995). *Women in agriculture – Perspective, issues and experiences*", M.D. Publications Pvt. Ltd., NEW DELHI (India).

\*\*\*\*\*