

A study on work pattern of hill farm women of Uttarakhand

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Received: 24.01.2012; Revised: 20.02.2012; Accepted: 23.04.2012

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Women play a pivotal role in all household, farm and allied activities. Women's contribution to the Indian agriculture and allied activities is a recognized factor. They participate in several activities such as harrowing, transplanting, weeding, picking etc. Hence, the present study was undertaken to determine the extent of participation of women in different activities and also the time spent in performing these activities. A total sample of 900 women respondents from three different zones of Uttarakhand was selected and data were collected through personal interview method on frequency of performance, time spent on each activity and their perception. Five point scales were used to record the frequency of each activity performed by women. The analysis showed that farm women spent maximum time in transplanting activity and in dairy maximum time was spent in cutting of fodder.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Work, Farm women, Frequency of performance, Degree of difficulty

■ **HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER** : Ojha, Pragya, Narwal, Kavita and Tripti, Basant (2012). A study on work pattern of hill farm women of Uttarakhand. *Asian J. Home Sci.*, 7 (1) : 79-82.

Nearly two-third of Indian population lives in the villages and depends mainly on agriculture and other related occupations for their livelihood. They work very hard, but live a poor life due to number of constraints, such as poor village community facilities and resources. The women who play a pivotal role in all types of household, farm and allied activities are deprived from most of the privileges of life. Their work is not recognized in any statistical terms. Several research studies over the years have confirmed that women work for 14-18 long hours (Kaur and Punia, 1986 and Ancheta, 1982) of manual work daily on farming operations, livestock raising, fetching fodder, fuel and water from distant places and expending more total energy (Batliwala, 1982) a day. They are deprived from the right of decision-making in important household affairs, adequate food, proper education and recognition in household and social affairs. The contribution of women to the Indian agriculture and allied activities is a recognized factor. Women as agricultural labourers participate in several activities such as weeding, sowing, transplanting, harvesting, and storage. Gender blindness towards women's involvement in work is partly the result of paternalistic biasness and also of women themselves who have been conditioned by their culture and society to

under value the worth of their work. Though modernization of agriculture is taking place at a rapid pace, but the jobs attended by women remain more or less the same. Assessment in Indian Himalaya depicted that a pair of bullock work for 1,064 hours, a man for 1,212 hours and a woman for 3,485 hours in a year on one-hectare farm. Thus, the present study is proposed with the following objectives:

- To find out the extent of participation of women in different activities.
- To study the total time spent in performing different tasks.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

An inventory of all the different activities performed by farm women was prepared and thus the activity profile of 900 women respondents from three different zones of Uttarakhand was studied. The data were collected personally regarding types of activities performed (household, farm and allied activities), frequency of performance, time spent on each activity and their perception regarding each activity performed by them. Time spent in doing each of these activities per year was calculated on the basis of time spent per day and the number of days a particular activity is being performed.

Frequency of performance of each activity was obtained on five point scale and calculated the number of days/month each activity is performed. The scores were given as daily – 5, alternate day – 4, weekly – 3, fortnightly – 2, seasonal/monthly – 1. Difficulty score of each activity performed was also obtained on five point scale given as easy – 1; very easy – 2; neutral – 3; difficult – 4; very difficult – 5.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The average performance frequency score of women from three zones was maximum in washing vessels and serving food (4.99) followed by sweeping (4.98) and fetching water (4.96). The activity of knitting was carried out seasonally *i.e.* having the lowest performance frequency score (1.47). Maximum time was spent in cooking food (1416.35 hrs/yr) as compared to the other household activities. Similar results were reported by Dilbagi *et al.* (2006). Least time was spent in grinding and pounding *i.e.* 84.82 hrs/day. Difficulty score was maximum for bringing fire wood (4.36) followed by mopping and plastering (3.57), washing clothes (3.37), dusting (3.42) and chopping vegetables and serving food were perceived as very easy tasks. Bringing fuel wood was considered the most difficult of all the tasks mainly because the women had to bring wood from very far off places. Mopping was done in

both squatting as well as bending posture and plastering also requires a lot of physical activity. Thus, it was found to be difficult task (Table 1).

It is evident from Table 2 that majority of the women were involved in performing various farm activities such as cutting/ uprooting (85.52%), weeding (79.32%), bundling (74.20%), picking/diffing (72.79%) and removing of stalks & stubble (70.81%). Almost all farm activities were carried out seasonally with a frequency performance score of 1 as compared to transportation of manure *i.e.* animal waste which is carried out almost daily (4.87). Women spent maximum time in transplanting (327.68 hr/year) followed by transportation of manure (138.05 hr/ year) (Table 2).

Transplanting, cutting, uprooting, weeding and fodder collection activities were performed by maximum number of women. Time spent and difficulty score of these activities were also found high indicating the maximum drudgery score for these activities.

The difficulty score was maximum for transplanting (4.66) followed by weeding (4.12) as these activities are performed in continuous bending and squatting posture. Transplanting was considered as the most difficult task as it was continuously performed in field with standing water which causes severe backache in the workers by end of the work. (Table 2).

Table 1: Activity profile of farmwomen while performing household activities

| Sr. No. | Activity | Percentage of women performance | Performers frequency score | Time spent (hr./yr.) | Difficulty score |
|---------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| 1. | Bringing firewood | 65.12 | 2.23 | 219.81 | 4.36 |
| 2. | Cleaning of cereals | 99.06 | 4.82 | 114.96 | 2.43 |
| 3. | Cutting vegetable | 99.38 | 4.42 | 94.09 | 1.85 |
| 4. | Grinding and pounding | 69.96 | 2.40 | 84.82 | 2.87 |
| 5. | Cooking activity | 96.71 | 4.97 | 1416.35 | 2.51 |
| 6. | Washing vessels | 99.53 | 4.99 | 189.16 | 2.45 |
| 7. | Cleaning of kitchen | 99.47 | 4.95 | 104.86 | 2.04 |
| 8. | Serving food | 96.98 | 4.99 | 128.71 | 1.69 |
| 9. | Dusting | 95.1 | 3.52 | 212.07 | 3.42 |
| 10. | Sweeping | 99.58 | 4.98 | 134.97 | 2.55 |
| 11. | Mopping/plastering | 98.19 | 3.88 | 164.41 | 3.57 |
| 12. | Fetching water | 84.19 | 4.96 | 111.25 | 2.75 |
| 13. | Washing clothes | 98.4 | 4.27 | 387.78 | 3.37 |
| 14. | Personal care | 99.18 | 4.97 | 108.2 | 1.46 |
| 15. | Knitting | 49.03 | 1.47 | 90.38 | 2.39 |
| 16. | Chatting with friends | 95.18 | 4.97 | 172.36 | 1.46 |

Dairy :

Majority of the women were involved in feeding animals (36.39%), collection of fodder (35.81%) and bringing fodder (35.69%). Performance frequency score was maximum in case of collecting dung and milking (5), cleaning shed (4.99) and feeding animals (4.98) under dairy.

The time spent by women was maximum in case of

collection of fodder (254.68 hr/year) and bringing of fodder (132.07 hr/year), because cutting and collecting activity was performed only fortnightly and the amount of fodder required for the cattle was brought twice a week. Difficulty score was maximum for collection of fodder (4.13) and bringing fodder (3.65) under dairy activities (Table 3).

Table 2: Activity profile of farmwomen while performing farm activities

| Sr.No. | Activities | Percentage of women performance | Performance frequency score | Time spent (hr. /yr.) | Difficulty score |
|--------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. | Removing of stalks and stubble | 70.81 | 1 | 6.30 | 3.54 |
| 2. | Harrowing | 53.75 | 1.16 | 20.57 | 2.81 |
| 3. | Transportation of manure | 56.49 | 4.87 | 138.05 | 2.30 |
| 4. | Spreading of manure | 52.74 | 1.69 | 26.50 | 3.17 |
| 5. | Transplanting | 53.74 | 1.32 | 7.68 | 4.66 |
| 6. | Dibbling | 48.64 | 1.24 | 19.73 | 3.91 |
| 7. | Weeding | 79.32 | 1.02 | 33.38 | 4.12 |
| 8. | Dusting | 41.19 | 3.08 | 37.2 | 2.16 |
| 9. | Cutting/uprooting | 85.52 | 1 | 23.90 | 3.73 |
| 10. | Picking/diffing | 72.79 | 1.11 | 12.43 | 2.75 |
| 11. | Bundling | 74.20 | 1 | 7.01 | 2.59 |
| 12. | Heaping | 72.95 | 1.16 | 4.36 | 2.88 |
| 13. | Threshing | 27.67 | 1.03 | 12.92 | 3.1 |
| 14. | Winnowing | 55.93 | 1 | 8.29 | 3.24 |
| 15. | Sieving | 49.89 | 1.003 | 10.02 | 3.23 |
| 16. | Bagging/matting | 52.28 | 1 | 4.67 | 2.48 |
| 17. | Transportation | 55.93 | 1 | 6.01 | 3.46 |
| 18. | Storage | 41.02 | 1 | 12.56 | 2.81 |

Table 3: Activity profile of farmwomen while performing allied activities

| Sr.No. | Activities | Percentage of women performance | Performance frequency score | Time spent (hr. /yr.) | Difficulty score |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Dairy | | | | | |
| 1. | Cutting and collection of fodder. | 35.81 | 2.86 | 254.68 | 4.13 |
| 2. | Bringing fodder | 35.69 | 3.08 | 132.07 | 3.65 |
| 3. | Feeding animals | 36.39 | 4.98 | 74.89 | 1.90 |
| 4. | Collecting dung | 34.74 | 5 | 82.08 | 2.18 |
| 5. | Cleaning shed | 35.05 | 4.99 | 113.00 | 2.24 |
| 6. | Milking | 28.26 | 5 | 55.97 | 2.25 |
| Tea plantation | | | | | |
| 1 | Planting of tea | 26.61 | 1 | 187.98 | 5 |
| 2. | Weeding | 33.45 | 1 | 240 | 5 |
| 3. | Manuring tea nurseries | 33.45 | 1 | 384 | 4.5 |
| 4. | Pruning | 33.45 | 1 | 384 | 4.5 |
| 5. | Tipping | 33.45 | 1 | 327.99 | 4.5 |
| 6. | Picking/plucking | 33.45 | 1 | 1440 | 5 |

Tea plantation :

Thirty three per cent of rural farm women of Nainital district were engaged in all tea related activities *i.e.* weeding, manuring of tea nurseries, pruning, tipping and plucking. However, comparatively less women were involved in planting tea (26.61%). Maximum time was spent for tea plucking (1440 hr/ year). Similar results were reported by Awasthi (2002). Plucking of tea leaves, planting of tea, weeding were perceived to be very difficult tasks (5). Tea plucking was perceived to be the most difficult task as the women had to pluck tea leaves for eight hours in continuous standing posture.

Conclusion :

In household activities maximum time was spent in cooking food. Manure (cattle dung) was carried almost daily to the field. Transplanting is perceived to be the most difficult task in farm operations. Maximum time was spent in cutting of fodder required for animals. Tea plucking activity was perceived as a very difficult task as this activity was performed in continuous standing posture.

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