

Research Article

Role performance of women in farm activities in hilly areas of district Poonch of Jammu division

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SUMMARY : Women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields. Rural women's work ranges from crop production to harvesting operations, from live stock rearing to raising babies. In addition to her daily work routine, consisting of, cooking, cleaning and other domestic chores, rural women are also heavily involved in all aspects of country's agricultural sector. From crop production to livestock rearing, rural women are expected to regularly engage both domestic and commercial aspects of society. Despite such a huge contribution, her role has yet not been recognized. By and large they have remained invisible workers. Therefore, efforts were made to analyze the work performed by women in agriculture. The study was undertaken in Poonch district of Jammu division. A total of 150 farm women were selected as respondents through proportionate random sampling. The selected respondents were interviewed personally using pre-tested well structured interview schedule. The data were analysed using appropriate statistical tool. The findings showed that cutting, picking, cleaning of grains, drying of grains, storage, processing, weeding, winnowing were the major farm operations, which are mainly performed by farm women. Participation of farm women in agriculture was significantly affected by socio-economic variables like –age, family income, land holding.

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KEY WORDS :

Participation of farm women, Role performance, Invisible workers

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

It is the proven fact that women in India are the backbone of food security. Women are playing a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields including crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post harvest operation, agro/social forestry, fisheries etc. There is a greater involvement of women under various agricultural operations along with house arrangement. It is estimated that women are responsible for 70 per cent of actual farm work and constitute up to 60 per cent of the farming population (Chayal and Dhaka, 2010). Over the years women cultivators are typically and wrongly characterized as economically inactive and women cultivator play only a supportive role in agriculture as farmers' wives (Samanta, 1994). Rural women have been equal partners in

agricultural development, their role and participation have been more pronounced in the lower socio-economic strata of the rural society. Paradoxically the contributions of the women have not been quantified, recorded and recognized, with the result they have been neglected from the main stream of development, may it be research, education or extension (Singh *et al.*, 2008).

In district Poonch of J&K state, the women folk are playing a great and very significant role in the development of agriculture. The working women are largely concentrated in the primary sector essentially in agriculture, either as cultivators, agricultural labours or rearing the goats and sheeps. In the agriculture and vegetable production, operations women are constantly at work, taking the tools and implements to the field, breaking earth, digging, land preparation, carrying manure / fertilizers, mixing, transplanting/ sowing,

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weeding/ hoeing, irrigation, harvesting, curing, threshing, drying, cleaning, grading etc., carrying head loads of fodder, firewood, water, seeds, flour, grazing cattles, sheep and goats besides dewooling of sheeps etc. Women perform all type of difficult works with great care though are of lesser strength to men but it is most unfortunate that the role of women in agriculture has not been highlighted much. By and large they have remained invisible workers. Keeping the above background in mind, an attempt was made to analyze the participation of women in farming operations in the hilly district of Jammu division.

RESOURCES AND METHODS

The study was undertaken in Poonch district of Jammu, J&K state to analyse the participation of women in agriculture and farm activities. District Poonch of Jammu & Kashmir state is located along the south western Indo Pak LOC and situated between 33° 25' to 34° North latitude and 73° 25' to 74° 33' East longitude. The district Poonch is situated at a height of 3300 MSL and spread over an area of 1674 sq kms with geographical area of 1.14 lac hectares. It is surrounded by the Line of Control (LOC) on three sides and is separated from Kashmir Valley by the mighty Pir Panjal range in the north. The literacy rate is 51.07 per cent. The people of Poonch district are mainly dependent on agriculture and government jobs. The terrain is hilly with little fertile land. Majority of the fields in this district are situated across the hilly slopes. Overall cropping intensity of the district is about 166 per cent. The women of district Poonch have to perform all the duties with hill variation. Agriculture being primary and others like animal husbandry and goat, sheep rearing as secondary occupation. Because of difficult terrain, small and scattered land holdings make women involvement more significant as they manage a wide range of farming activities. The population of study consisted of farm women involved in agriculture and allied activities. A sample of 150 farm women was selected through proportionate random sampling. Selected respondents were interviewed personally using well structured pre tested interview schedule. The amount of work done by farm women in various farm activities was found by using the following criteria score category and the mean. weighted score was found out for individual farm activities as per procedure given by (Chahal and Dhaka, 2010)

Amount of work done :

Category	Score
Least	1
Less than half	2
More than half	3
Major	4
Complete	5

The data thus, collected were analyzed using appropriate

statistical tool to infer results.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The socio-economic characteristics of respondents were analyzed and presented in Table 1. which depicts that majority (51.3 %) of the respondents belonged to middle age group followed by young age (32 %) and old age (16.66 %) group. The results indicated the fact that the young, energized and talented women were being involved in agriculture, for want of other more remunerative and economically variable ventures in the villages. Similar findings have been reported by

Table 1 : Socio-personal characteristics of respondents (n=150)

Sr.No.	Variables	Categories	N	%age
1.	Age	Young (20-35)	48	32
		Middle (36-50)	77	51.3
		Old (above 50)	25	16.66
2.	Education	Illiterate	30	20
		Primary	39	26
		Junior High school	28	18.66
		High school	22	14.66
		Intermediate	23	15.33
		Graduate and above	8	5.33
3.	Caste	Upper	32	21.33
		Backward	73	48.66
		Lower	45	30
4.	Occupation	Main - Agriculture	89	59.33
		Subsidiary	34	22.66
		Service	27	18.00
5.	House	Kachcha	30	20
		Mixed	87	58
		Pucca	33	22
6.	Family type	Joint	98	65.33
		Single	52	34.66
7.	Land holdings	Small	85	56.66
		Medium	48	32
		Large	17	11.33
8.	Crops grown	Maize	104	69.33
		Wheat	10	6.66
		Paddy	19	12.66
		Vegetables	7	4.66
		Fruit plants	10	6.66
9.	Animals held	Cows	33	22
		Buffaloes	31	20.66
		Sheep	56	37.33
		Goat	30	20

Sreenivasulu and Rao (2005) and Chayal and Dhaka (2010). Formal education has always been considered as an important asset of an individual for development. Education facilitates for the understanding and interpretation of facts. Results revealed that majority (26%) respondents were from primary level, (20%) were illiterate, (18.66%) were from junior high school, (15.33%) intermediate, (14.66%) from high school and only (5.33%) were graduate. Financial compulsions, lack of encouragement, traditional outlook towards daughters education and militancy might be the reason for this result. Neelaveni *et al.* (2002) and Sreenivasulu and Rao (2005) also reported similar findings.

Results on cast categories indicate that maximum (48.66%) were from backward class (30%) were from schedule caste and rest of respondents (21.33%) belonged to upper class. It was also revealed that majority (59.33%) of respondents were having main occupation as agriculture, (22.66%) as subsidiary and (18%) as service. The primary occupation of the respondents is agriculture only and few of them were having subsidiary occupation, hence, mostly they depend on crop production for their annual income for sustenance of family. This calls for immediate attention of the concerned agencies to provide necessary infrastructure and financial support for establishment of economically viable units in the district. These findings are substantiated with finding of Sreenivasulu and Rao (2005).

The data indicated that majority (58%) of the farm women were having mixed house (22%) were having pucca houses and (20%) were residing in kuccha houses. It is also revealed that (65.33%) belonged to joint family followed by (34.66%) were from single family. Similar findings have been reported by Singh *et al.* (2009). Result on land holding depicts that majority (56.66%) had small holding (32%) medium and (11.33%) were having large land holdings. The size of holding affects the state of economic motivation. It may be due to the fact that almost all were small and marginal land holders and engaging themselves in intensive cultivation. They want to earn more income from limited area. The similar observations have been reported by Singh *et al.* (2009). Being the hilly region and less availability of irrigation facilities majority of the women grew maize crop (69.33%) followed by paddy (12.66%), wheat (6.66%), fruit crops (6.66%) and vegetable crops (4.66%). It is also evident from the data that majority of respondents (37.33%) were having sheep followed by buffalo (20.66%) cows (22%) and goats (20%). Livestock is the primary subsistent activity used to meet household food needs as well as supplement farm incomes. It is common practice in the rural areas of Poonch to give an animal as part of a women's dowry. The traditional knowledge of rural women in dairying and their self interest because of its potential as quick and regular source of additional income by the sale of milk besides catering the homely needs. It is evident that the women are

playing a dominant role in the livestock production and management activities. These findings are substantiated with finding of Khalida Jamali (2009).

The participation of selected respondents in farm activities was analyzed and is presented in Table 2 which revealed that cutting, storage and processing are the major farm operations wherein women participation was 98.66 per cent. The probable reason might be the expertise of respondents in estimating the quantity required for family consumption and also their knowledge as well as experience on storage practiced earlier Singh *et al.* (2004) and Chayal and Dhaka (2010) also reported that the farm operations in which the participation of women was 100 per cent were cleaning the produces, cutting, picking, storage and processing. It was observed that cutting, cleaning, winnowing, weeding, gap filling, grading, shifting produce to threshing floor, thinning cleaning of field farm operations and nursery raising in which the participation of women was more than 90 per cent. The least involvement of farm women was found in ploughing of field (4.66%) marketing (3.33%) and plant protection measure (2.66%). This might be to avoid the ambiguity and criticism in

Table 2 : Participation of farm women in farm activities (n=150)

Sr. No.	Farm activities	N	%age
1.	Ploughing of field	7	4.66
2.	Cleaning of field	135	90
3.	Leveling of field	14	9.66
4.	Raising nursery for seedling	132	88
5.	Sowing	124	82.66
6.	Transplanting	112	74.66
7.	Manure application	97	64.66
8.	Fertilizer application	35	23.33
9.	Weeding	138	92
10.	Thinning	134	89.33
11.	Gap filling	122	81.33
12.	Irrigation	34	22.66
13.	Plant protection measures	4	2.66
14.	Cutting	148	98.66
15.	Picking	145	96.66
16.	Shifting production to	145	96.66
17.	threshing floor	138	92
18.	Threshing	145	96.66
19.	Winnowing	145	96.66
20.	Drying of grains	145	96.66
21.	Cleaning of grains	140	93.33
22.	Grading	148	98.66
23.	Storage	5	3.33
24.	Marketing processing	148	98.66

case of any loss incurred and more over lack of technical knowhow. These results are in close conformity with those of Chayal and Dhaka (2010).

It is vivid from the Table 3 that the mean weighted score was highest for weeding, cutting, picking, shifting of produce to threshing floor, threshing, winnowing, drying of grains, cleaning of grains, grading, storage and processing were major farm activities which were completely done by farm women. Similar results were reported by Singh *et al.* (2004) and Chayal and Dhaka (2010). The farm operations including cleaning of field, raising nursery for seedling, sowing, thinning and gap filling in which major amount of work done by farm women. They do more than half work of transplanting and manure application. In case of ploughing of field, leveling of field, fertilizer application, plant protection measures and marketing least amount of work was performed by women. Choudhary and Singh (2003) also reported that the role of women in ploughing of field, application of manure and fertilizer was found to be very less.

Table 3: Amount of work done by farm women in various farm activities

Sr. No.	Farm activities	Work done (MWS)
1.	Ploughing of field	0.5
2.	Cleaning of field	4.5
3.	Leveling of field	0.5
4.	Raising nursery for seedling	4.5
5.	Sowing	4.5
6.	Transplanting	4.0
7.	Manure application	3.5
8.	Fertilizer application	1.5
9.	Weeding	5.0
10.	Thinning	4.5
11.	Gap filling	4.5
12.	Irrigation	1.5
13.	Plant protection measures	0.5
14.	Cutting	5.0
15.	Picking	5.0
16.	Shifting production to threshing floor	5.0
17.	Threshing	5.0
18.	Winnowing	5.0
19.	Drying of grains	5.0
20.	Cleaning of grains	5.0
21.	Grading	5.0
22.	Storage	5.0
23.	Marketing	0.5
24.	Processing	5.0

The present study concludes that the women play an significant and crucial role in agriculture and allied fields. Research showed that farm women's participation was maximum in cutting, picking, cleaning of grains, drying of grains, storage, processing operations and major part of cleaning of field, raising nursery for seedling, weeding, shifting production to threshing floor, winnowing and grading operations are also done by farm women. In case of leveling of field, fertilizer application they do least amount of work, whereas there is no participation of farm women in ploughing of field, plant protection measures and marketing activities. The study also depicts that age, family income, land holding influence the women participation in agriculture. Type of family, education level, caste were not effected by the women participation in agriculture. In this direction, extension personnels should focus on farm women by giving more exposure on technical knowledge, marketing, intelligence and managerial skill.

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