

Subject II

Gender Equality and Resilient Agriculture

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The 82nd Annual Conference of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics chose "Gender Equality and Resilient Agriculture" as one of its discussion topics on purpose because little research has been done on gender mainstreaming, empowerment, asset ownership, gender-sensitive value chains, and farmers' collectives for women. The Society received a total of eleven research papers (two were withdrawn) that covered a range of topics connected to gender equality and resilient agriculture. The papers were grouped under the following sub-themes: (i) Gender mainstreaming and disparity; and (ii) Markets Access, Farmer Collectives, and Institutional Finance. Only four papers were presented during the session. The papers covered various dimensions related to farmer collectives, aggregation aspects, marketing activities, capital accumulation, socio-economic constraints, and other relevant gender issues.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. According to the study on the collectivisation of women in agriculture, the farmers' negotiating power increased as a result of the collectivization. This resulted in the project area's crop diversification toward high-value crops and an increase in women's income.
2. A major impediment to the development of agriculture is gender discrimination in the agricultural labour market. Regularly paid workers are far more likely to face wage discrimination than casual workers. While gender differences are important in West Bengal and at the national level, caste differences are the main cause of wage discrimination in Bihar.
3. Differences in crop output and input use effectiveness across farms with male and female heads as well as between female-headed farms were noted. In terms of agricultural productivity and input utilisation effectiveness, male-headed farms outperformed female-headed farms. Compared to female-headed farms, the farms with male heads had more varied cropping patterns. It emphasises on the necessity of assisting households headed by women in adopting resilient agricultural methods for increased and sustainable crop production. This includes enhancing their access to inputs, technology, and extension services.
4. It was noted that female agricultural labourers in rural areas receive lower wages than their male counterparts. Moreover, delays in wage payment and shortage of employment due to migrated laborers are other problems faced by female workers.
5. Along with geographical differences, agroecology and cropping patterns greatly contribute to the gender gap in agricultural wage rates. Additionally, wage disparity was not uniform across villages within States. In rainfed single-

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crop villages, there was a noticeable wage gap, whereas in irrigated multi-crop villages, the gap was much smaller.

6. Rural residents benefited significantly from the Self Help Groups. It has aided them in improving their socioeconomic condition. Comparing SHG members' communication levels to those of non-SHG respondents reveals significant differences. The micro-finance movement positively impacts members' ability to express their feelings and has made people more confident to express themselves. Also, SHG is having a good impact on members in their ability to save. The SHG can contribute to changes in economic conditions, social status, and decision-making and increase women's outdoor activities.
7. Collectivisation is crucial for gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. Establishing farmers' collectives is essential for ensuring stronger negotiating power, access to financial credit, and farm insurance, as well as for enhancing farmers' income. The women-led producer companies/organizations that have been supported by various initiatives are performing well in generating a fair amount of turnover over time. On the output side, however, only a few of them were able to have a considerable impact by establishing connections with corporations, building their own market facilities like warehouses, and, engaging in public procurement of some crops where relevant.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Due to the fact that men control the assets and a number of other socio-cultural limitations, it is crucial to increase the proportion of women members in mixed-member PCs. This can be done by giving joint shareholdings.
2. The main issues that women farmers confront include a lack of suitable storage facilities, an inadequate transportation system for getting their produce to market, delayed information regarding procurement, and a lack of timely access to institutional financing and finance.
3. States like Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha are regional niches in terms of the significant concentration of women producer enterprises; therefore, it is necessary to identify the enabling circumstances. It is crucial to replicate success stories, and it may be investigated whether various models could be utilized in other states. Along with determining the advantages of the programme in supporting women entrepreneurs, the institutional mechanisms to increase the income of women needs to be researched.
4. Women's empowerment greatly benefits from equal access to participation and decision-making for women in all spheres of society, including the family and the nation's social, economic, and political life. By altering social attitudes and local customs, women can actively participate and be involved in entrepreneurship. Women farmers and business owners would benefit from having access to centralized documentation of government programmes and initiatives.
5. In the practice of raising cattle, women play a significant part. In the rearing of cattle, female casual workers contribute more than their male counterparts. How can livestock be used as a secondary revenue source? In order for women

- to thrive and reach their full potential, a favourable environment for their development must be created through sound economic and social policies.
6. Priority must be given to gender-related research for useful policy insights on gender mainstreaming. The most effective models and processes for gender mainstreaming could be selected. Gender-related studies and documentation need to be addressed at both the micro and macro levels.
 7. Building capacity is a crucial element of successful mainstreaming. Building capacity is essential for fostering professional competence and self-assurance in areas like marketing, management, leadership, production, and efficient financial administration.
 8. Research has found that men typically have an advantage when it comes to holding assets, which suggests that they typically own more assets and assets of higher value than women given the gender norms that govern asset ownership. Despite the enormous progress made towards equality in inheritance laws, women own only 14 per cent of the land and 11 per cent of the agricultural land, on average, in rural landowning households. Asset ownership is crucial for eradicating poverty, and women's ownership of assets is linked to favourable development outcomes for both the household and the individual. Furthermore, land ownership has a significant impact on creditworthiness; granting women joint rights to agricultural land could result in more control over savings and financial resources. More empirical studies in the Indian context are the need of the hour.

WAY FORWARD

Numerous government initiatives have increased the representation of women in local government and had positive results. The role of women in R&D, extension, local bodies, farm management, and local support services may be highlighted. Evidence of the impact of these initiatives and interventions would help take corrective actions and improve their effectiveness. It would be crucial to know how this participation affected the priorities and monitoring agenda. Further, evidence of contribution towards fulfilling the SDGs would be vital.

Women who have access to ICT can learn more about markets and financing. There exists few research on the effects of gender and women's micro-entrepreneurship in rural areas. Evidence of how ICT and digitization have benefited female agribusiness owners and agripreneurs may be produced. In several regions of the nation, women-led SHGs were successful in integrating women into the mainstream of decision-making. They strengthened forward and backward linkage for consistence growth and greater outreach.

Interestingly, many women SHGs have developed their own production, processing, and marketing innovations to add marginal value at each stage of value chains. The case studies with objective evidence may be helpful in various success stories in agribusiness (horticulture, sericulture, animal husbandry & fisheries, mushroom, vermi-compost, herbal products, plantation crops) and secondary agriculture activities related to agro-forestry, NTFPs, bamboo, jute, khadi & handicrafts, and other micro-industries.