

Role of Agriculture: A boon for Women Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

Although there are many areas such as education, social equity, sound health and financial strength which are the indicator of women empowerment but agriculture may be the great source of women empowerment because a large portion of India's population resides in rural area. As we see there are many reasons of not updating the rural women in the area of scientific knowledge and technology. Addressing in valedictory session Smt. Pratibha Patel, President of India advocated empowering women with new knowledge and skills for agricultural development.

From the beginning government has tried to pay attention for making payment to rural people by adopting cashless transactions in various employment opportunities such as receiving wages for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Gurantee Act (MGNREGA) through the bank accounts for subsidy in respect of agriculture seeds, tractors tools etc. and dairy farmers for the milk sold to cooperatives or private sector. More than 26.5 Crore Bank accounts have been opened under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna with the aim to ensuring that holder of Jan Dhan Bank Account will become the flag bears of digital culture in the rural areas. The main purpose of this Yojna is to issue Rupay debit cards so that the card holders can make their purchase quite easy in rural or urban area. That's why 19.5 Crore cards have been issued by the government.

Agriculture sector can play a vital role in empowering the women but a collective action in respect of training in agriculture sector is required for women empowerment so that they can come together in a single platform to march further and it will be a boon for Indian economy in the coming years.

Introduction

Although there are many areas such as education, social equity, sound health and financial strength which are the indicator of women empowerment but agriculture may be the great source of women empowerment because a large portion of India's population resides in rural area. As we see there are many reasons of not updating the rural women in the area of scientific knowledge and technology. Addressing in valedictory session Smt. Pratibha Patel, President of India advocated empowering women with new knowledge and skills for agricultural development. When she was praising the efforts of National Agricultural Research for System for upcoming of women in the area of research and development, she adviced to establish Mahila Vikas Mandals in each village so that women could be educated in various parts of agriculture and concerned activities.

As per the report of 2011 of Food and Agriculture Organization, more than ¼ of total population of the world consists women farmers. Although 43% agriculture works are performed by women in developing countries yet their access is very low in comparison of men. If women are given proper guidance and training then production in agriculture sector can be increased by

20 to 30 percent. Due to increase in production, the number of hungry people can be reduced globally by 12 to 17 percent approximately.

Objectives of the study

The main objective is to examine the role of agriculture in women empowerment globally and in special reference of India. Which steps are taken by the Indian government to increase the capacity of women in agriculture so that women can be empowered? Suggest the measures which should be adopted for providing facilities to women so that their productivity can be increased in agriculture sector.

Framework at world level and in India

To improve the role of women in agriculture was the main target of International Food Policy Research Institute of Washington in last 15 years. IFPRI has committed to working on gender issues. In this respect a book 'Engineering Agricultural Research, Development and Extension' and Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) is launched. The WEAI is a fantastic tool which allows researchers to disempowerd women and gives advice to increase their decision making area and self dependence in respect of key areas.

In India it is assumed that women are the key of farming. They not only do the work in their farms but also look after their children and livestock. Their hard working is unpaid and unrecognized. They also do the agriculture work on daily wages. Daily wages paid to women is lower than man. Mostly men are the owner of the land. Only 11 percent women have access to land holdings. In rural areas of India major part of the day is spent by the women in growing food, collecting wood for fuel, cooking and take care of their children. All local food is mainly arranged by women in rural area. Resultant, selection of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides and maintenance of productive soil is the responsibility of women. Preservation and management of biodiversity is also the work of women Due to insufficient education and technology, wrong impact is seen on the lives of women farmers in recent years. Training of women farmers in respect of education and technology will change the productivity of agriculture in rural area.

Steps taken by Indian government

A plan of action can be used by us to empower the women in rural society. Development of technology kits and media mix and software will be fruitful. Others may be organizing stimulation programmes, conducting out reach programme, adoption of one village by each AICRP centre and using Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques for development for empowering women. Empowerment process will be successful with the contribution of educational interventions, transfer of technology etc. Some steps taken for empowering the women farmer are as follows-

1. One third seats of village panchayats have been reserved for women.
2. India is the first country in all over the world to establish a National Research Centre for Women in Agriculture (NRCWA) in Bhubaneshwar in 1996.
3. KVKs have trained more than 200000 farm women, girls and women extension workers.
4. Strategies used for empowerment of women include development of technology kits and media mix for dissemination of knowledge, development of software etc.
5. Occupational hazards of farm women.

6. Reducing drudgery of women in agricultural operations through use of improved tools and techniques.

Suggested measures to be taken

To attain the objective of women empowerment in rural sector, various effective measures can be adopted. Some of suggested measures are as follows-

1. Various schemes for example Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana have been launched by the Indian government for women SHGs which are sponsored by banks. Most women of these SHGs are those who are engaged in agricultural and animal husbandry work. Appropriate is necessary for empowering women in agriculture.

2. Different innovations and technology programmes which are being operated at NRCWA and other ICAR institutes level should be disseminated broadly so that rural women can be benefitted.

3. In State Agricultural Universities various courses are available for agriculture up gradation in which almost 36 percent girl's students are studying. It is the need of the hour that they should be properly trained and motivated so that they can become as a facilitator.

4. With the consultation of women in rural area, proper planning should be made for launching of programmes for so that we can achieve the goal of mobilizing women, forming groups, improving capacity and capability in technical, organizational and commercial sector.

5. It should be ensured that more and more women get access to land holdings.

Conclusion

Education, social equity and status, political participation and financial stability are the major factors that contribute to women empowerment. Agriculture sector can play a vital role in empowering the women but a collective action in respect of training in agriculture sector is required for women empowerment so that they can come together in a single platform to march further and it will be a boon for Indian economy in the coming years.

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