



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

IN SCIENCE, ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT

Volume 10, Issue 5, May 2023



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

Impact Factor: 7.580



+91 99405 72462



+9163819 07438



ijmrsetm@gmail.com



www.ijmrsetm.com

Analysis Of Women's Participation In Indian Agriculture: Issues And Challenges

Divya Kaswa

Research Scholar, Law faculty, Jai Narain Vyas University, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India

ABSTRACT: Women's empowerment is a broad concept that has been defined in a number of different ways. It is a problem that is omnipresent in the entire world and has increased in several ways in current times. The ambition of female population to achieve socioeconomic empowerment is a dream, unless it is not realised and made possible till the last periphery of India. This is about the ones whose day starts before sunrise and lasts past sunset. These are India's female farmers, whose views tend to be disregarded or overlooked because of their gender and who strive to define their identity at the grassroots level amid patriarchal traditions and gender socialisation. In addition to their responsibilities as a wife, daughter-in-law, and mother, women also work in agriculture. However, discrimination based on gender persists in several guises. To start with, policies in India do not recognise women as farmers and hence, depriving them of institutional support through the bank, insurance, cooperatives, and government institutions. The Nobel Prize winning book "Poverty and Famines" authored by Amartya Sen, shows how poverty and disempowerment are the root causes of hunger. The objective of the present article is to develop the conceptual clarity of the terms women empowerment and gender discrimination in the context of Indian women farmers.

KEYWORDS: Agriculture, Women Empowerment, Women Farmers, Government Scheme, Gender Discrimination

I. INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector is India's primary source of income, and women play a significant role in its operation. Despite making up half of the agricultural industry's labour force, women producers are frequently disregarded, underpaid, and denied access to vital resources and funds. Due to their tenacity, innovation, and significance to the nation's overall food security, women farmers have recently garnered a great deal of attention. There are numerous types of obstacles that Indian women cultivators must surmount. Women producers confront numerous obstacles, the most significant of which is a lack of access to financial and material resources. Despite the significant contributions women make to agriculture, they frequently lack access to land, water, seedlings, fertilisers, and other necessities. Additionally, women are less likely to own land or property, making it more difficult for them to access traditional sources of financing.

Due to a lack of educational and professional advancement opportunities, women cultivators in India face additional challenges. Due to the limited educational opportunities rural women have access to, illiteracy is prevalent among this population. As a direct result, a substantial number of farmers have limited exposure with modern agricultural techniques. Women cultivators in India face additional obstacles in the form of gender-based discrimination. Women in rural areas face a variety of discriminatory practices, including unequal pay, restricted access to resources, and underrepresentation in decision-making positions. These biases make it much more difficult for them to access resources and retard their progress towards economic independence.

Despite the challenges they encounter, women cultivators in India continue to contribute significantly to the country's overall food production. They are responsible for a variety of tasks, commencing with the planting and transplanting of seedlings and extending through the harvesting and processing of products. By caring for livestock and poultry, they also contribute to the nation's food supply security. Rice, maize, and pulse crops are essential to India's food security, and female cultivators in India are primarily responsible for their production and management. These women are indispensable to both of these processes. In these smallholder agricultural communities, which produce the majority of these commodities, women make up a significant portion of the labour force. Women farmers have played a crucial role in advancing organic agriculture and demonstrating its benefits. The present article will further talk about the intricacies of the disparity and will highlight the legal framework behind women farmers.

II. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE FARMERS

There are numerous differences between male and female farmers, the most significant of which is that female farmers face a greater number of obstacles when it comes to managing their farms and competing on the international market due to their limited access to land, money, and technology. Despite this, research indicates that female producers are just as prolific as their male counterparts. This is due to the fact that women producers prioritise the cultivation of



nutritious, diverse crops and work harder. Successful women farmers may have a variety of positive effects on their communities and families, including an increase in revenue and investments in children's health and education, to name two examples. In a similar vein, women farmers' familiarity with the surrounding environment and time-honored agricultural practises makes them particularly effective in the disciplines of organic agriculture and agroforestry. The social and cultural expectations placed on women based on their gender, the lack of access to education and training, the use of potentially toxic substances, and the physical demands of their work all contribute to a unique set of obstacles that women farmers experience. Women producers are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change, but they also play a crucial role in the development and implementation of adaptation strategies that protect biodiversity. Empowering rural women may contribute to gender equality, women's rights, and the elimination of stereotypical gender roles. In addition, the emphasis rural women producers place on planting nutritious crops may enhance child nutrition. Despite the obstacles they face, women farmers are deserving of our support because they are capable of making significant contributions to agriculture and society, provided they have access to the necessary resources and assistance.

III. FACTORS THAT ARE LEADING TO DETRIMENT OF WOMEN FARMERS

Women producers in India face a significant barrier in the form of limited access to funding resources and facilities for agricultural initiatives. They lack access to essential agricultural inputs such as water, seedlings, and fertilisers. This diminishes the likelihood of their agricultural success. As a consequence, their productivity and ability to generate income suffer.¹ On the other hand, a number of government and non-government organisations, as well as private companies, have launched initiatives to address these issues. Through the provision of these programmes, which include training and access to financing, women farmers are given the opportunity to achieve greater success in their fields and earn a sufficient income to support themselves.

Moreover, women cultivators in India are subject to gender inequality, which further restricts their access to resources and retards their progress towards economic independence. If policies and programmes are implemented with the objective of achieving gender equality in the agricultural sector, disparities can be reduced and women's voice and influence can be enhanced.² Through the implementation of gender-sensitive laws and the support of women's self-help organisations, women can be assisted in overcoming the unique obstacles they face.

In addition to being healthier for the environment, organic farming may also increase a farmer's profitability and output quality. Not only do women producers in India have a significant stake in the success of organic agriculture, but they also stand to benefit significantly from its widespread adoption. It is impossible for India to meet its population's nutritional needs without the participation of female cultivators. As is evident in the village of Chinnappanahalli, located in the Indian state of Karnataka, they have adopted organic agriculture practises successfully, demonstrating both their fortitude and their innovative potential. To establish a sustainable and inclusive agriculture sector in India, it is crucial to acknowledge and value the contributions of women producers.

Due to a lack of access to resources such as education and technology, women cultivators in India are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Agricultural systems are being affected by a number of factors, including shifting weather patterns, an increase in the prevalence of parasites and diseases, and an increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events. Due to this, women producers, who frequently rely solely on agriculture for subsistence, are particularly vulnerable. To assist Indian farmers in adapting to the effects of climate change, India has established programmes to educate farmers on climate-smart agricultural practises. This includes agroforestry, conservation agriculture, and enhanced water management. In addition to facing discrimination and inadequate recognition for their contributions to the industry, women farmers face additional obstacles, such as being subjected to sexism. India is able to ensure that women farmers have equal participation in policymaking if it employs gender-sensitive policies and develops programmes specifically for women farmers. Women producers are essential to agriculture and play a crucial role in preserving seeds and promoting biodiversity, but they face obstacles when it comes to entering the market and receiving a reasonable price for their produce.

IV. SOLUTION FOR GENDER DISPARITY IN FARMING AND AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Despite these obstacles, women producers contribute significantly to agriculture and play an essential role in the preservation of seedlings. Women farmers rely heavily on livestock husbandry for income, but they face obstacles in

¹ Conversation, B. K. (2021, March 16). India's new farm laws overlook the struggles of the women who grow 80% of the country's food. *Scroll.in*. <https://scroll.in/article/989595/indias-new-farm-laws-overlook-the-struggles-of-the-women-who-grow-80-of-the-countrys-food>

² Ibid

the form of a shortage of veterinary services, education in animal health and management, and distribution and processing facilities for meat and other animal products. Despite these obstacles, livestock husbandry continues to be a crucial source of income for female producers. Access to resources, education, training, market connections, and recognition of the achievements of women producers are all obstacles that require government, non-governmental organisation (NGO), and public collaboration. Women farmers require not only access to financial resources and market connections, but also educational and training programmes that emphasise animal production. Possessing the right to own land is essential for empowering women farmers in India, as is expanding the number of land ownership options in order to encourage more women to become farmers.

To empower women farmers in India, it is necessary to adopt a comprehensive approach that addresses the multitude of obstacles they face. It is essential to have training and education programmes as well as market connections in order to advance sustainable agriculture. These programmes should foster indigenous and traditional knowledge.³ It is also possible for public policies and programmes to have a significant impact, particularly if they are designed to support environmentally responsible agricultural practises and products. Despite this, women continue to face numerous obstacles, such as limited access to resources, education, training, market links, and property ownership, as well as gender-based discrimination and violence.⁴ Together, the government, the public, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can overcome these obstacles.

Before Indian women cultivators can be granted equal rights and opportunities⁵, critical issues such as gender-based violence and discrimination must be resolved. It is common for women to be subjected to harassment and maltreatment within their homes and communities, which hinders their ability to engage in agricultural activities. Through the providing of secure spaces and the dissemination of information about gender equality and women's rights, it may be possible to mitigate some of these issues. Policies and programmes that seek to reduce gender-based violence and discrimination can also help provide a secure environment for agriculturally employed women.

Another obstacle that must be overcome is the underrepresentation of women cultivators⁶ in decision-making bodies. Women are frequently excluded from the decision-making process, diminishing their ability to advocate for their needs and influence agricultural laws and practises. Because women play an essential role in agriculture, this is a problem. With the aid of programmes that encourage their leadership and participation in policymaking, women's representation can increase. Policies and initiatives that encourage women's participation in decision-making have the potential to significantly increase the number of women in positions of authority that involve decision-making.

The efforts that female producers have made to improve dietary practises and food supply should be acknowledged as a final point. It is their essential responsibility to ensure that communities have access to nutritious sustenance. However, their efforts are impeded by obstacles such as limited access to markets and the inability to earn a living wage. These issues can be resolved by facilitating market connections for female producers and promoting the consumption of locally and traditionally produced foods. Connecting women producers with markets may be facilitated by the implementation of awareness-raising programmes that emphasise the significance of women's contributions to food security and nutrition, as well as the implementation of accessible market infrastructure.

empowering women cultivators in India requires employing a multifaceted strategy that addresses the plethora of daily obstacles they face. Collaboration between the public, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the government is required to surmount these obstacles. The economic independence of women can increase agricultural output, promote gender equality, and strengthen rural communities.

V. GOVERNMENT ROLE IN THE PROMOTION OF WOMEN FARMERS

Both the promotion of gender equality in agriculture and the provision of assistance for female producers are crucial government responsibilities⁷. There are a variety of methods that governments may employ to achieve this, including the following:

³ The economic role of women - in agricultural and rural development. (2000). *Austrian Development Corporation*, 12(1). https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/63755/994_The_economic_role_of_women.pdf?sequence=1

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Duckett, M. K. (2021, May 3). Empowering female farmers to feed the world. *Culture*. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/partner-content-empowering-female-farmers>

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Coordinator. (2021, February 5). Farm Laws: Impact on Women Farmers - JournalsOfIndia. *JournalsOfIndia*. <https://journalsofindia.com/farm-laws-impact-on-women-farmers/>

1. Enforcing laws that prohibit gender-based discrimination and granting land titles to women in order to ensure that everyone has equal access to land.
2. Providing female producers with funding and programmes that are tailored to satisfy their specific needs in terms of resources such as loans, technical skills, and instruments.
3. Make available training and capacity-building programmes to aid female producers in acquiring the knowledge and skills required for productive and environmentally responsible agriculture.
4. Through the provision of training on market access and the facilitation of partnerships with purchasers, assist with marketing and the development of value chains.
5. Ensuring that women producers are included in the agricultural policy-making process and decision-making bodies, and incorporating them into the process.

Despite the fact that certain administrations have already taken steps to encourage female producers, there is still a great deal of work to be done to ensure that women have equal access to agricultural resources, markets, and opportunities. The following are additional ways in which governments could assist women farmers.

Providing support services to victims of gender-based violence and enacting legislation making such abuse unlawful. Investing in rural infrastructure, such as roads, irrigation systems, and storage facilities, in order to increase production and market access. Providing women farmers with access to social safety programmes, such as financial transfers, food aid, and insurance schemes, during periods of economic hardship or in the aftermath of natural disasters⁸. Providing financial support for agriculture industry research and development activities oriented towards serving the needs of female farmers. Participating in advocacy and education initiatives to promote gender equality in the agricultural sector. Ensuring that females have the opportunity to participate in educational programmes in order to equip female producers with the necessary knowledge and skills for success. Assisting in the formation of women's cooperatives in an effort to expand their access to resources, markets, and educational opportunities. Ensure that gender dynamics are considered by extension services in order to provide female producers with the necessary support. In addition to providing specialised training and other forms of assistance, make it simpler for women to participate in decision-making procedures by establishing quotas for the proportion of women who should be represented. Addressing the disproportionate impact of climate change on female farmers by promoting climate-resilient agricultural practises and providing farmers with assistance to acclimatise to changing weather conditions.⁹ Assuring that female producers have access to medical care, particularly reproductive health-related services. Providing legal protection against discrimination and violence, in addition to aid with land rights and property ownership. Investing in research on the contributions of women to agriculture in order to raise awareness of the role of women in maintaining food security, nutrition, and biodiversity. Providing financial resources, educational opportunities, and other forms of support to facilitate the growth and development of agricultural businesses owned by women. It is essential to promote gender-sensitive education and awareness-raising programmes that combat gender stereotypes and advance women's empowerment in order to advance gender equality in society as a whole.¹⁰

Governments have the ability to promote gender equality in agriculture and unleash the full potential of women working in this industry through the development and implementation of policies and programmes that are tailored to the specific needs and obstacles that women producers face. This may contribute to the sustainable development process.

VII. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR WOMEN FARMERS

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights all safeguard the rights of women farmers. These documents recognise people's rights to equitable treatment under the law, the right to an education, and the right to a job. A number of nations have also passed laws and policies to advance gender equality in agriculture. For instance, the National Policy for Farmers in India acknowledges the crucial role played by women in agriculture and makes a commitment to ensuring that they have equitable access to resources such as land,

⁸ *Women's Land Rights in India and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*. (2021, June 22). Land Portal. <https://landportal.org/node/62786>

⁹ Move over 'Sons of the soil': Why you need to know the female farmers that are revolutionizing agriculture in India. (2018, November 15). *Oxfam India (OIN)*. https://www.oxfamindia.org/women-empowerment-india-farmers?gclid=Cj0KCQjwu-KiBhCsARIsAPzUF0DiH29AhP6o3pmvGEWEifs0lNKmlweZ5xjQZ0CwezsnUasqhfq24UaAj92EALw_wcB

¹⁰ Ibid

water, and credit facilities. Similar to this, the Agriculture Sector Wide Approach in Malawi recognises the necessity of promoting gender equity and advocates for the deployment of funds to aid in the growth of women farmers.

In India there are laws and policies on the welfare and betterment of women in farming. Some of them are as follows: National Policy for Farmers (NPF): The NPF pledges to give women equitable access to productive resources, such as land, water, and credit facilities, acknowledging the crucial role that women play in agriculture. By developing gender-responsive programmes and policies, the policy also seeks to advance gender equity in the agriculture industry. The MahilaKisanSashaktikaranPariyojana (MKSP) is a national programme that aims to empower women farmers by enhancing their capacities, expertise, and knowledge. Among other interventions, the programme offers training in financial literacy, capacity building, and sustainable agricultural practises.

Services for agricultural extension have been created in many Indian states to help women farmers with technical assistance and training. With a focus on empowering women farmers, these programmes provide advice on crop management, soil health, pest control, and other agricultural practises.

Women Farmers Entitlements Act: The Women Farmers Entitlements Act is a piece of legislation that would grant legal rights and protections to female farmers. By enacting this law, the government hopes to provide women farmers with access to financial options, markets, and government programmes and initiatives.

RMK, or RashtriyaMahilaKosh: A microcredit programme called the RMK lends money to female farmers so they can continue to pursue their agricultural endeavours. The program's objectives are to enhance women's economic empowerment and increase their access to credit facilities.

VII. INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE BETTERMENT OF WOMEN IN FARMING

There have been a number of government and non-government initiatives in India to promote women cultivators' economic independence. The MahilaKisanSashaktikaranPariyojana (MKSP) programme, for instance, was launched in 2010 by the Ministry of Rural Development with the goal of enhancing the agricultural capabilities of women farmers and increasing their access to financial assistance. In a similar vein, the DeendayalAntyodayaYojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), which was launched in 2011 by the Ministry of Rural Development, offers women's self-help organisations access to financial resources, educational opportunities, and networking opportunities in order to empower and strengthen these groups.¹¹

In addition, a number of non-governmental organisations in India have launched initiatives to improve the status of women cultivators. The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is one of these organisations; it assists women cultivators by providing them with access to education and financing. In order for India to meet the nutritional needs of its population, it is necessary to give women who cultivate the land more independence¹². In order to achieve this objective, it is necessary to surmount obstacles such as a lack of resources and credit facilities, a paucity of educational and professional development opportunities, and gender discrimination. Increasing the quantity of land, water, and financial resources available to female producers is one way to provide them with greater autonomy. The government may make it easier for women to establish businesses, acquire land and other properties, and start families by providing them with loans. If women's self-help organisations are encouraged and supported, it is conceivable that more women will have access to financial and other resources.

Education and training opportunities are another way to assist women producers in attaining financial independence.¹³ If women farmers had access to education and training, they would be able to increase their incomes and enhance their field output. It could be advantageous for women producers to receive training in areas such as company management and revenue, in addition to marketing and financial administration.

Organic farming is an environmentally sustainable practise that may be beneficial not only to producers but also to the planet. It is possible for women farmers in India to play a significant role in the development of the organic agriculture movement, and initiatives can be developed to provide them with the necessary training in organic agricultural techniques. However, these women face numerous obstacles as a result of patriarchal attitudes and norms, which typically prevent them from participating in agriculture and other historically male-dominated occupations.

¹¹ (2018). WOMEN'S LAND TITLE OWNERSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT: EVIDENCE FROM INDIA. *ADB ECONOMICS WORKING PAPER SERIES*, 559, Asian Development Bank. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/453696/ewp-559-women-land-title-ownership-empowerment.pdf>

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid



VIII.CONCLUSION

Women farmers in the agricultural business confront a variety of obstacles, including discrimination, restricted access to resources and markets, and violence based on their gender, among other issues. However, gender equality in farming may be facilitated, and help can be extended to female farmers by introducing policies and programmes that are customised to their individual circumstances. This can be done through the implementation of gender-inclusive agricultural practises. Equal access to land can be ensured, resources and training can be provided, marketing and value chain support can be provided, women's participation in decision-making processes can be promoted, and governments can address concerns about climate change and healthcare to empower women in agriculture and foster sustainable development. A more just and equitable future for women farmers and the communities they serve may be achieved via collaborative efforts directed towards achieving this goal. Therefore, the needs of women farmers should be given priority, and governments should invest in their development, so that these women may realise their full potential and make meaningful contributions to society. This would help them to fulfil their full potential.

To empower women in agriculture and generate sustainable development, governments may assure equitable access to land, give resources and training, support marketing and value chains, promote women's involvement in decision-making processes, and address climate change and healthcare issues. These are just some of the many things that can be done. These programmes may be altered to accommodate the one-of-a-kind challenges faced by women farmers. In addition, they promote gender equality in the agricultural sector and provide assistance to women farmers. A more just and equitable future for women farmers and the communities they serve may be achieved via collaborative efforts directed towards achieving this goal. Given the numerous obstacles that women farmers face in the agricultural industry, such as discrimination, restricted access to resources and markets, and gender-based violence, governments need to give priority to the needs of women farmers and invest in their development to enable them to reach their full potential and make valuable contributions to society. This is especially important in light of the fact that these obstacles exist.

REFERENCES

1. Conversation, B. K. (2021, March 16). India's new farm laws overlook the struggles of the women who grow 80% of the country's food. Scroll.in. <https://scroll.in/article/989595/indias-new-farm-laws-overlook-the-struggles-of-the-women-who-grow-80-of-the-countrys-food>
2. ²Ibid
3. ³The economic role of women - in agricultural and rural development. (2000). Austrian Development Corporation, 12(1). https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/63755/994_The_economic_role_of_women.pdf?sequence=1
4. ⁴Ibid
5. ⁵ Duckett, M. K. (2021, May 3). Empowering female farmers to feed the world. Culture. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/partner-content-empowering-female-farmers>
6. ⁶Ibid
7. ⁷ Coordinator. (2021, February 5). Farm Laws: Impact on Women Farmers - JournalsOfIndia. JournalsOfIndia. <https://journalsofindia.com/farm-laws-impact-on-women-farmers/>
8. ⁸Women's Land Rights in India and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). (2021, June 22). Land Portal. <https://landportal.org/node/62786>
9. ⁹Move over 'Sons of the soil': Why you need to know the female farmers that are revolutionizing agriculture in India. (2018, November 15). Oxfam India(OIN). https://www.oxfamindia.org/women-empowerment-india-farmers?gclid=Cj0KCQjwu-KiBhCsARIsAPztUF0DiH29AhP6o3pmvGEWEifs0lNKmlweZ5xjQZ0CwezsnUasqhfq24UaAj92EALw_wcB
10. ¹⁰Ibid
11. ¹¹ (2018). WOMEN'S LAND TITLE OWNERSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT: EVIDENCE FROM INDIA. ADB ECONOMICS WORKING PAPER SERIES, 559, Asian Development Bank. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/453696/ewp-559-women-land-title-ownership-empowerment.pdf>
12. ¹²Ibid
13. ¹³Ibid



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

IN SCIENCE, ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT



+91 99405 72462



+91 63819 07438



ijmrsetm@gmail.com

www.ijmrsetm.com