

AGRICULTURE FORUM FOR TECHNICAL EDUCATION OF FARMING SOCIETY

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Women's Role in Agriculture and Entrepreneurship

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for millions of rural families, and women play a crucial role in agricultural production and resource management. They are actively involved in a wide range of farm activities, including seed selection, sowing, transplanting, weeding, irrigation, harvesting, threshing, processing, and storage of agricultural produce. Women also contribute significantly to livestock rearing, poultry farming, dairy management, and other allied agricultural enterprises. Their efforts help ensure food and nutritional security for families and communities. In addition to farm work, women manage household responsibilities and preserve valuable traditional knowledge related to farming practices and natural resource conservation. Through their dedication and hard work, they promote sustainable agricultural development and strengthen rural livelihoods. As a major component of the agricultural workforce, women are indispensable to agricultural growth, poverty reduction, and overall rural development.

2. Major Roles of Women in Agriculture

Farm Production Activities

Women actively participate in various farm production activities that are essential for successful agriculture. They help in seed selection, seed treatment, and land preparation before sowing. During crop growth, they perform sowing, transplanting, weeding, irrigation management, and application of organic manures. Women also play a major role in harvesting, threshing, winnowing, drying, and storing agricultural produce. Their contribution improves productivity, farm efficiency, and sustainability.

Pre-Sowing Activities

Women play an important role in pre-sowing activities that lay the foundation for successful crop production. They carefully select healthy and high-quality seeds to ensure better germination and yield. Women also participate in seed treatment to protect seeds from pests and diseases. Additionally, they assist in land preparation activities such as cleaning fields, removing weeds, and helping prepare the soil for sowing, thereby improving crop establishment and productivity.

Crop Production Activities

Women actively contribute to crop production activities throughout the growing season. They participate in sowing seeds and transplanting seedlings to ensure proper crop establishment. Women perform weeding and intercultural operations to reduce weed competition and promote healthy plant growth. They also assist in irrigation management by ensuring timely water application. In addition, women apply organic manures to improve soil fertility and support sustainable agricultural production.

Harvesting Activities

Women play a crucial role in harvesting and post-harvest operations. They participate in harvesting crops at the appropriate stage to minimize losses and maintain quality. Women are actively involved in threshing and winnowing, which help separate grains from harvested plants and remove impurities. They also undertake drying and storage of produce to preserve quality, prevent spoilage, and ensure food availability for household consumption and market sale.



3. Women in Allied Agricultural Sectors

Women play a significant role in allied agricultural sectors, contributing to household income, food security, and rural development. Their participation extends beyond crop production to livestock rearing, poultry farming, fisheries, and horticulture.

Livestock and Related Enterprises

Women are actively involved in managing livestock and performing daily animal care activities, making them essential contributors to allied agricultural enterprises.

Dairy Farming

Women play a crucial role in dairy farming by carrying out daily activities such as feeding and milking animals, cleaning sheds, and ensuring proper hygiene. They are responsible for animal care and management, including monitoring animal health, providing water and feed, and assisting in basic healthcare practices. Their continuous involvement helps maintain animal well-being, improves milk production, enhances livestock productivity, and contributes significantly to household income and food security.

Poultry Farming

Women play an important role in poultry farming by managing day-to-day activities in poultry units. They provide feed and water to birds, maintain cleanliness and hygiene, and ensure proper care for healthy growth. Women are also involved in collecting, grading, and storing eggs, as well as marketing eggs and poultry products. Their participation helps increase household income, improve nutrition, and support rural livelihoods and economic development.

Fisheries

Women contribute significantly to the fisheries sector through fish processing, marketing, and value addition activities. They are involved in cleaning, sorting, drying, smoking, and packaging fish products to improve quality and shelf life. Women also participate in selling fish and fish-based products in local markets. Their involvement enhances product value, increases profitability, generates employment opportunities, and supports the livelihoods of fishing communities and rural households.

Horticulture

Women play a key role in horticultural activities such as nursery management, vegetable cultivation, and floriculture. They are involved in raising seedlings, preparing planting materials, watering plants, and maintaining nurseries. Women also cultivate vegetables and flowers for household consumption and commercial purposes. Their participation improves nutritional security, creates employment opportunities, enhances farm diversification, and provides additional income, thereby contributing to the economic well-being of rural households.

4. Women and Agricultural Entrepreneurship

Meaning of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship refers to the process of identifying opportunities, organizing resources, and establishing businesses to generate income, employment, and economic growth. In agriculture, entrepreneurship enables women to become financially independent and contribute to rural development.

Agricultural Entrepreneurship Areas

Women are actively involved in various agricultural enterprises, including:

- Dairy enterprises
- Poultry farming
- Mushroom cultivation
- Beekeeping
- Organic farming
- Seed production
- Nursery raising
- Food processing units

Through these enterprises, women create employment opportunities, add value to agricultural products, and increase household income. Their entrepreneurial activities promote self-reliance, strengthen rural economies, and improve the overall welfare of their families and communities.

5. Benefits of Women Entrepreneurship

Economic and Social Benefits

Women entrepreneurship plays an important role in improving the economic and social conditions of families and communities. It provides opportunities for income generation, self-employment, and empowerment.

Economic Benefits

Women entrepreneurship provides several economic benefits to individuals, families, and communities. It increases household income by creating additional sources of earnings and helps generate employment opportunities for others. Entrepreneurship promotes financial independence, enabling women to support themselves and their families. Higher income levels contribute to an improved standard of living through better access to food, healthcare, housing, and education. Women-owned enterprises also reduce poverty and stimulate local economic growth.

Social Benefits

Women entrepreneurship generates significant social benefits by enhancing women's decision-making power within households and communities. It improves their social status, confidence, and leadership skills. Increased income enables families to invest more in children's education, health, and overall well-being. Entrepreneurship also encourages greater participation of women in community development activities and local institutions. As a result, it promotes gender equality, social empowerment, and sustainable development while strengthening the social fabric of rural communities.

6. Challenges Faced by Women

Despite their significant contribution to agriculture and rural development, women face several constraints that limit their productivity and opportunities. Economic challenges include limited access to credit, finance, and ownership of land and productive assets. Educational barriers such as low literacy levels and inadequate technical knowledge restrict their ability to adopt improved practices.

Social challenges include gender discrimination, heavy workloads, and cultural restrictions that limit decision-making power. Women also face technological constraints due to limited access to modern machinery, information, and digital literacy. Addressing these challenges is essential for empowering women, improving livelihoods, and achieving sustainable agricultural development.

7. Government Schemes Supporting Women

Major Support Programs

National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)

The National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) is a major government initiative aimed at reducing rural poverty and empowering women. It promotes the formation and strengthening of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to encourage collective savings, credit access, and mutual support. NRLM supports income-generating activities such as agriculture, livestock rearing, small businesses, and micro-enterprises. It also provides training, financial assistance, and market linkages to improve livelihoods. The scheme enhances women's economic independence and rural development.

Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP)

The Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) is a government scheme aimed at empowering women farmers by strengthening their skills and capacities. It provides training in improved agricultural practices, sustainable farming techniques, and resource management. The program also facilitates access to inputs, technology, and support services. MKSP helps women become more productive, self-reliant, and

confident in agricultural activities, thereby enhancing their income and overall rural livelihoods.

Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)

The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) is a government scheme that provides financial assistance to small and micro enterprises, including those run by women. It offers collateral-free loans to support start-ups and expansion of small businesses such as agriculture-based enterprises, dairy, poultry, and food processing units. PMMY helps women access easy credit, encouraging self-employment and entrepreneurship. This scheme promotes financial inclusion, income generation, and economic empowerment in rural and urban areas.

Stand-Up India Scheme

The Stand-Up India Scheme is a government initiative designed to promote entrepreneurship among women and other underrepresented groups. It provides bank loans ranging from ₹10 lakh to ₹1 crore for setting up new enterprises in manufacturing, trading, and service sectors. The scheme encourages women to start their own businesses by offering financial support, guidance, and institutional credit. It promotes self-reliance, job creation, and economic empowerment, thereby strengthening women's role in entrepreneurship and rural and urban development.

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana (DAY-NRLM)

The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana (DAY-NRLM) is a government scheme focused on promoting skill development, self-employment, and livelihood opportunities for rural women. It organizes women into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and provides training, capacity building, and financial support for income-generating activities. The scheme also facilitates

access to credit, markets, and resources to strengthen rural livelihoods. By enhancing skills and entrepreneurship, DAY-NRLM helps women become self-reliant, improve household income, and contribute to sustainable rural development.

8. Strategies for Empowerment

Women's empowerment in agriculture can be STRENGTHENED through several key measures. Capacity building through training programs and skill development workshops helps women improve their knowledge and farming skills. Financial inclusion ensures easy access to credit and promotes Self-Help Groups (SHGs), enabling women to start and expand enterprises. Technology access, including digital literacy and modern agricultural tools, increases productivity and efficiency in farming activities. Market linkages through Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and e-commerce platforms help women farmers sell their products at better prices. Policy support, such as gender-sensitive agricultural policies and equal participation in decision-making, ensures fair opportunities for women. These combined strategies enhance women's empowerment, improve livelihoods, and promote sustainable rural development.

CONCLUSION

Women play an indispensable role in agriculture and rural entrepreneurship, contributing significantly to farming, livestock management, processing, and marketing activities. Their involvement ensures food security, income generation, and overall rural economic development. Empowering women through education, financial support, access to modern technology, and improved market linkages can greatly

enhance their productivity and efficiency. Such support enables them to fully utilize their potential, improve livelihoods, and actively participate in decision-making. Ultimately, empowering women is essential for sustainable agricultural growth and rural transformation.