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Date: 29-01-2021
Time: 3.00 PM
Venue: Dr. Dwarakinath hall

Seminar I

Feminization of Agriculture: Prospectus and Challenges

Synopsis

Farm women play an important role in contributing to economic growth of the country. A farm woman is an individual who involves with farm work, who is the primary contributor of labour and decision making to a farm on a daily basis. The activities performed by them include producing agricultural crop, cleaning animals, preparing food, working in rural enterprises, engaging in trade and marketing, caring family members and maintaining their homes. But it is unfortunate that her role is not adequately recognized and properly her contribution not qualified in the male-dominated society. Women are intensely involved in agriculture yet their knowledge about the new technologies is limited because of different sociological factors which affect their ability to generate higher livelihoods for themselves and their families. Thus, it is important to think scientifically about women empowerment not only for equity reasons but also for the sake of efficiency to rise the agricultural production and rural livelihood. Keeping these aspects in view, the present seminar has been conceptualized with the following objectives.

1. To understand the concept of feminization of agriculture
2. To study the challenges, steps taken for the upliftment of women in agriculture and way forward
3. To review the related research studies

Feminization of Agriculture

Feminization of Agriculture is understood as “a measurable increase of women’s participation in the agricultural sector”. This is either an increase in the percentage of women in the agricultural workforce within overall female workforce or it is also sometimes seen as women taking over those gendered agricultural tasks which were once done only by men. Economic survey (2017-2018) says that with developing rural to city migration of men, there is feminization of agriculture sector, with increasing role of women in more than one sector such as cultivator, entrepreneur and labourers.

Challenges and steps taken for the upliftment of women in agriculture

Lack of access to land, technology, training, extension services, productive resources and financial assistance limits their ability to develop agricultural livelihood. Women face health hazards in the cultivation of many crops and plantations due to lack of training, lack of protective gears and long working hours. Despite more work for longer hours when compared to male farmers, women farmers have lower wage rates and at times remain unpaid. There are special provisions for women farmers in national schemes: 1. National Mission on Agricultural Extension & Technology (NMAET)- a) ATMA -Support for Women Food Security Groups b) ACABC- Back ended composite subsidy c) Mass Media Support to Agricultural Extension-outreach to women 2. Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)- special coverage to weaker section 3. National Mission on Oilseeds & Oil Palm (NMOOP)- promoting women groups 4.

Integrated Scheme for Agricultural Marketing (ISAM)-storage infrastructure projects 5. National Food Security Mission (NFSM)-30 per cent allocation to women beneficiaries 6. National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) 7. Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM)-training programmes.

Way forward

Provision of credit without collateral under the micro-finance initiative of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development should be encouraged. Women -centric strategies and dedicated fund for women farmers in government schemes. Jharkhand government initiative of registering land in name of women for rupee one. Document best practices of addressing gender and equity issues in the Agriculture and allied programmes. Involve women in organizations for empowerment processes, reward the gender sensitive taluk/district.

Extension strategies enhancing farm women

i) Training and skills imparted to farm women ii) Employment of women in aspects of agricultural extension service iii) Organize women into functional groups iv) Gender sensitive extension approaches v) Development of new extension training materials.

Research studies

Goudappa *et al.*, (2012) found that a large percentage of the farm women participated in the decision-making process at awareness and initiating solutions for problems revealed that the agricultural operations viz., hand weeding (80.00%), harvesting (75.83%) and irrigation (74.16%) but the final decision making was mostly rested with the men only.

Sowjanya *et al.*, (2016) concluded 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, & grading operations are also done by farm women.

Conclusion

In agriculture women are farmers, workers and entrepreneurs, but almost everywhere they face more severe constraints than men in accessing productive resources, markets and services. Closing the gender gap in agriculture would produce significant gains for society by increasing agricultural productivity, reducing poverty, hunger and promoting economic growth. The persisting gender gap in access to and control of resources remains an important concern which has not only kept women in a vicious circle of low productivity but also questions about sustainable growth of the sector. The need of the hour is on how to bridge the gender gap and empower women with new knowledge and technology is a great challenge, particularly in the context of socio-economic and climate related changes.

References

- GOUDAPPA, S.B., SUREKHA S. AND REDDY, B.S., 2012, Participation of farm women in decision-making process on agricultural operations in Yadgir district of Karnataka. *Indian Research Journal of Extension Education Special Issue*. **1**: 138-141.
- SOWJANYA, S., MANJUNATH, B. K., SUDHA, C. K. AND SRIKANTH CHOUDARY L.V., 2016, Rural women participation in farming activities of Shivamogga district of Karnataka State. *Advances in Life Sciences*, **5**(6): 2044-2048.