



## The Role of Women in Agriculture: Breaking Barriers, Driving Change

Shubham Singh<sup>1\*</sup>, Rishabh Yadav<sup>1</sup>, Suneel Kumar<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction:

Throughout history, women have played a vital role in agriculture worldwide, making essential contributions to farming and rural economies, especially in developing countries. Unlike men, who often inherit farming, women typically enter farming through marriage. Their roles vary widely depending on where they live, but they're changing quickly in many places as farming evolves. Women work in agriculture in different ways, from running their own farms to helping out on family farms or working for others. They do lots of hard work like weeding, cutting grass, picking crops, and collecting wood for cooking. With more people and land getting worn out, finding enough wood for cooking is getting harder, and getting clean drinking water is a big problem in rural areas. Women also take care of farm animals, milking cows, processing milk, and making ghee. But now women are breaking barriers and emerging as leaders and innovators, driving change at the grassroots level. Through cooperatives, associations, and grassroots organizations, women are

mobilizing their communities, advocating for their rights, and spearheading initiatives that promote sustainable agriculture and rural development.

### Status of Women in Agriculture

According to the 2011 Census, 55 percent of female main workers were agricultural laborers, and 24 percent were cultivators. However, only 12.8 percent of operational holdings were owned by women, showing a big difference in land ownership between men and women in agriculture. Additionally, women tend to own 25.7 percent of smaller farms, which are marginal or small holdings. In rural areas, 41.8 percent of women are part of the workforce, compared to 35.31 percent in urban areas. Despite their important role, women often face many obstacles that stop them from fully taking part in farming. It's really important to understand and tackle these barriers so that women in agriculture can be empowered and rural communities can change for the better.

### Barriers Faced by Women in Agriculture

**Barriers to Participation:** Despite their significant contributions, women

*Shubham Singh<sup>1\*</sup>, Rishabh Yadav<sup>1</sup>, Suneel Kumar<sup>2</sup>*

*<sup>1\*</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Agricultural Extension Education*

*<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Soil Science and Agricultural Chemistry*

*Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel University of Agriculture and Technology, Meerut, (U.P.) 250110, India*

encounter various barriers that limit their participation and impact in agriculture. These barriers may include limited access to land and productive resources, unequal access to education and training opportunities, cultural and societal norms that prioritize men's roles in agriculture, and discriminatory legal and institutional frameworks.

**Limited Access to Land and Resources:** Land ownership is often skewed towards men in many societies, denying women access to land for cultivation and other agricultural activities. Additionally, women may face challenges accessing essential resources such as credit, seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural extension services, further hindering their productivity and economic empowerment.

**Educational and Training Gaps:** Lack of access to education and training opportunities can limit women's knowledge and skills in modern agricultural techniques, technology adoption, and business management. Investing in education and training programs tailored to the needs of women farmers is essential for enhancing their productivity and resilience in the face of changing agricultural practices and environmental conditions.

**Cultural and Societal Norms:** Deep-rooted cultural and societal norms often dictate gender roles and responsibilities, relegating

women to subordinate positions within agricultural households and communities. Challenging these norms and promoting gender equality is crucial for enabling women to fully participate in decision-making processes, access resources, and exercise their rights in agriculture.

**Gender-Based Discrimination and Stereotypes:** Deep-rooted gender norms and stereotypes perpetuate discrimination against women in agriculture, limiting their opportunities for leadership and decision-making.

**Lack of Access to Financial Services and Markets:** Women face challenges in accessing credit, financial services, and markets, which restricts their ability to invest in their farms, expand their businesses, and access lucrative markets.

**Unpaid Care and Domestic Responsibilities:** Women bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic responsibilities, which constrains their time and energy for agricultural activities and entrepreneurship.

**Unsafe Working Environments:** Women may encounter unsafe working environments in agriculture, including exposure to hazardous chemicals, extreme weather conditions, and inadequate sanitation facilities, which jeopardize their health and well-being.

## Approaches for Increase Women's Participation in Agriculture

- ❖ Advocating for policy reforms and legal frameworks that guarantee women's land rights and ownership, ensuring equitable access to land and resources.
- ❖ Implementing targeted education and training programs that equip women with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to adopt modern agricultural practices and technologies.
- ❖ Developing gender-sensitive extension services that address the specific needs and priorities of women farmers, including access to information, training, and support.
- ❖ Promoting financial inclusion and microfinance initiatives tailored to women farmers, providing access to credit, savings, insurance, and other financial services.
- ❖ Launching women's empowerment and leadership programs that build women's capacity for leadership, decision-making, and entrepreneurship in agriculture.
- ❖ Harnessing technological innovations and digital solutions to overcome barriers to women's participation in agriculture, including mobile banking, e-commerce platforms, and digital extension services.
- ❖ Engaging communities in gender mainstreaming efforts that challenge

gender norms and stereotypes, promote women's rights, and foster greater gender equality and social inclusion.

- ❖ Investing in infrastructure and facilities to improve working conditions for women in agriculture, including access to clean water, sanitation facilities, protective gear, and shade shelters, can create safer and more conducive environments for agricultural work.

## Conclusion

Women have always played a crucial role in farming, but they still face many challenges like not having enough land, resources, or chances to learn. To fix this, we need to change policies, give them better education and training, provide services that understand their needs, include them in financial programs, support their empowerment, use new technology, involve communities, and improve infrastructure. When we empower women in farming and make things fair, we don't just help them, but also improve life in rural areas, make sure people have enough food, and make our planet healthier. It's really important that we see and use the amazing abilities of women to make farming better for everyone, now and in the future.