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Involvement of women in crop husbandry activities

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Abstract

The study was conducted in two randomly selected Bhawarna and Baijuath blocks of kangra District of Himachal Pradesh. Five villages from each block were selected randomly. Later on a sample of one hundred and twenty five farm women from these villages having actively involved in crop husbandry activities was taken through population proportionate random sampling procedure and data were collected using an interview schedule. In general high extent of involvement of the farm women in making decisions as well as actual participation was noted in during harvesting as well as post harvesting farm operations. However, more physical participations in uprooting and transplanting of the seedling, earthing ups, hoeing and weeding etc. was also noted. The poor involvement was observed both in making decisions as well as physical participations of these women in case of handling the chemical farm inputs, and some miscellaneous activities.

Keywords: Crop husbandry, women in agriculture, extent of involvement, decision making.

Introduction

Women constitute a major proportion of economically active population of our country particularly in the agricultural sector. They also constitute 48.5 per cent of the total population (Savithri and Sujathamma, 2001) of our country and about two-third of the manual labour in farming is shared by rural women (Singh *et al.*, 1996). Further they also share a variety of domestic and other indoor economic development activities including the care of their children and other dependent family members. It is realized that the women do not only participate in various crop production operations, but also in other farm operations i. e. produce processing and its storage and managements etc. In the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh more than fifty percent of the human population is comprised of the women playing their significant role in crop husbandry and other allied farm activities. Though the participation of women in agricultural, household and other activities is well known but their contributions in these activities yet remained unnoticed, unrecognized and unrewarded. Therefore from the strategic point of view, it is desirable to know the existing status of women's involvement not only in their physical participation in crop husbandry activities but also in concerned rational farm decision also which may help them to empower and receive a desirable degree of recognition in the farm sector. Accordingly this investigation was conducted with its following principal objectives:

i) To assess the extent of involvement of the women in making the farm decisions.
ii) To ascertain the extent of involvement of farm women in crop husbandry activities.

Material and methods

The study was conducted in randomly selected two blocks i.e. Bhawarna and Baijnath of Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. Five villages from each of these blocks were chosen randomly. Out of total households of these villages, a list of those which primarily depended only on agriculture, by cultivating at least on one acre of land and having involved the women actively in crop husbandry activities at least since last five years was prepared. Then a sample of one hundred and twenty five farm women was taken through population proportionate random sampling technique. The data were collected through a specially constructured an interview schedule.

To assess the extent of decision making and participation of women in various farm operations, a list of the probable farm decisions making and farm participation activities, were finalized with the help of the concerned social scientists. Accordingly 29 activities for decision making and 39 for participation in crop husbandry were finalized and each was measured on three point continuum i.e. always, some time or never by awarding their respective score of 3,2 and 1

respectively. Then the extent of participation was categorized into three levels i.e. low, medium and high for each activity on the basis of their mean scores and standard deviation of all the concerned activities.

Results and Discussion

Involvement of the women in making farm decisions

The extent of involvement of the women in various farm oriented decisions has been depicted through table 1.

Table 1. Extent of participation of farm women in making decisions in crop husbandry

Sr. No.	Activities	Mean score	Rank	Extent
A) Pre- harvesting				
1.	Crops to be grown	1.62	11	Medium
2.	Area under different crops	1.47	15	Medium
3.	Number of land preparatory tillage	1.04	25	Low
4.	Use of farm yard manure	1.35	18	Low
5.	Crop varieties	1.49	14	Medium
6.	Type of seed (Desi/ improved)	1.59	12	Medium
7.	Sowing technique (direct/line/nursery)	1.74	8	Medium
8.	Thinning/ gap filling	1.89	6	High
9.	Application of chemical fertilizer	1.22	20	Low
10.	Application of insecticides	1.22	20	Low
11.	Application of pesticides	1.18	22	Low
12.	Application of weedicides	1.21	21	Low
13.	Seed treatments	1.28	19	Low
14	Number of hoeings	1.84	7	High
15	Number of irrigations	1.14	23	Low
16.	Stage/ time of irrigations	1.46	16	Medium
B) During harvesting				
17.	Stage of harvesting	1.84	7	High
18.	Harvesting technique	2.06	4	High
C) Post harvesting				
19.	Threshing the crop	2.34	3	High
20.	Disposal of farm produce	2.87	1	High
21.	Package of farm produce	2.69	2	High
D) Miscellaneous				
22.	Sale/ purchase of land	1.14	23	Low
23.	Land tenurial system	1.07	24	Low
24.	Farm credits	1.18	22	Low
25.	Choice of farm implements	1.68	10	Medium
26.	Choice of farm machinery	1.52	13	Medium
27.	Labour employments	2.03	5	High
28.	Mixed cropping	1.70	9	Medium
29.	Marketing of farm produce	1.40	17	Low

It is clear from the table that among the pre harvesting activities, thinning/ gap filling and number of hoeing to be done were noted as the major activities where the farm women actively participated in making the rational decisions. The other activities viz., sowing techniques, crop to be sown, type of seed (desi/improved), crop varieties, area under different crop were found to be with medium level of extent of such decision making involvements of these farm women with mean score values of 1.74, 1.62, 1.59,1.49 and 1.47 respectively. On the other hand these women showed poor participation in making the decision regarding land preparatory tillage (1.04), number

of irrigations (1.14) and application of pesticide, insecticide, weedicide and even about chemical fertilizers (1.18-1.22).

Further high extent of decision making participation of the farm women was noted regarding stage (1.84) and technique (2.06) of crop harvesting. The results revealed that highest extent of involvement was observed regarding all the post harvesting farm operations like threshing the crop (2.34) package (2.69) as well as disposal (2.87) of the farm produce. The more decision making participation of women in all the above farm activities might be to avoid losses during the crop growing and farm produce processing and to make these operations relatively more economical. The low or poor participation in some of the above mentioned activities might had been due to their poor knowledge and interests etc. towards those activities.

Involvement of the women in farm activities

The actual participation of the farm women in various crop husbandry activities has been given in table 2.

Table 2. Extent of participation of farm women in crop husbandry activities

Sr. No.	Activities	Mean score	Rank	Extent
A) Pre-harvesting				
1.	Breaking the soil clods	2.53	12	High
2.	Ploughing the fields	1.02	31	Low
3.	Pudding the field	2.00	17	Medium
4.	Application of farm yard manure	2.51	13	High
5.	Seed bed preparation	2.02	16	Medium
6.	Uprooting the seedling	2.71	7	High
7.	Transplanting the seedling	2.90	2	High
8.	Seed treatment	1.33	20	Low
9.	Sowing the crop seed	2.09	15	Medium
10.	Purchase o fertilizers	1.26	21	Low
11.	Application of fertilizers	1.05	29	Low
12.	Purchase of insecticides	1.26	21	Low
13.	Application of insecticides	1.01	32	Low
14	Purchase of pesticides	1.25	22	Low
15	Application of pesticides	1.04	30	Low
16.	Purchase of weedicides	1.22	23	Low
17.	Application of wedicides	1.01	32	Low
18.	Earthing ups	2.26	14	High
19.	Manual weeding	2.51	13	High
20.	Hoeing operations	2.60	10	High
21.	Irrigation application	1.21	24	Low
B) During harvesting				
22.	Cutting the crop	2.95	1	High
23.	Picking operations	2.95	1	High
24.	Plucking operations	2.95	1	High
25.	Collecting the farm produce	2.80	3	High
C) Post harvesting				
26.	Threshing	2.72	6	High
27.	Cleaning the farm produce	2.66	8	High
28.	Grading the farm produce	2.62	9	High
29.	Packing the farm produce	2.62	9	High
30.	Winnowing	2.78	4	High
31.	Storing the farm produce	2.54	11	High
32.	Dehusking	2.73	5	High
33.	Grading of cereals/ pulses grains	2.78	4	High
D) Miscellaneous				
34.	Preparing/ maintenance of irrigation channels	1.36	18	Low
35.	Preparation of field bunds	1.34	19	Low
36.	Purchase of farm implements	1.08	28	Low
37.	Getting repair of farm implements	1.09	27	Low
38.	Bird scaring	1.14	26	Low
39.	Watching the farm	1.16	25	Low

It is noted that among the pre-harvesting farm operations, the women participated more in transplanting of seedlings (2.90), uprooting the seedlings (2.71), hoeing (2.60) breaking the clods (2.53), manual weeding (2.51) and applications of farm yard manure (2.51), followed by medium participation in sowing the seed (2.09), seedbed preparation (2.02) and paddling the field (2.0). It may be due to the labour oriented nature of these activities for which the hired labour was not available to them or otherwise was costly. The results also showed that their participation in the purchase and use of chemical inputs *viz.*, fertilizers, insecticide/ pesticides and weedicides etc. has been low which might be due to their lack of awareness and knowledge to handle such

operations or might avoided being poisonous and of fearful nature. Pattnaik (1994) also revealed poor involvement of the women in fertilizer and pesticide application but Dash (2000) reported more involvement of the farm women in fertilizer application.

It is interesting to note that high participation of the farm women was noted during as well as post harvesting period like, cutting/ Picking/ plucking (2.95), Collecting the farm produce (2.80), threshing (2.72), cleaning (2.66), grading (2.62), winnowing (2.78) dehusking (2.73) and grinding of cereal/ pulse grains etc. of the concerned crops . It may be due to the immediate need, timely completion and safe anticipations a well as profitable market disposal of the farm produce. Sangwan *et al.* (1990) also quoted similar involvements of these farm women. Cleaning, winnowing and storage of farm produce were also noted as major activities of the female labour force by Bala (1992).

Level of participation in crop husbandry activities

The overall levels of participation of the farm women in crop cultivation operation were also worked out. It is observed from the table 3 that a majority of about 65 percent of the farm women were bracketed in medium level of work participation followed by about 22 per cent who were in low level. Perhaps the majority of the farm women might have also been involved in other multifarious domestic or non farm activities simultaneously.

Table 3. Frequency distribution of farm women under different level of their participation in crop husbandry

N=125

Level	Score range	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
Low	68-72.19	27	21.60	-	-
Medium	72.20-79.68	81	64.80	75.94	3.75
High	79.69-87	17	13.60	-	-
	Total	125	100.00		

Conclusion

It may be concluded that the farm women showed their high extent of participation during and post harvesting farm operations followed by transplanting, uprooting the seedlings, earthing ups, weeding hoeing and breaking the clods etc. Further their poor participation has been in handling the farm chemical inputs and other miscellaneous activities. It is there fore suggested that the training need intensity of these farm women particularly in their highly involved farm operations may be assessed and required training be imparted if needed to improve their farm oriented work performance. Further, they may also be made aware and educated about their poor involvements in their farm operations.

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