

ROLE OF WOMEN IN VEGETABLE CULTIVATION

Dhriti Solanki¹ & Neeta Lodha²

ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to find out extent of participation of farmwomen in vegetable cultivation. The sample consisted of randomly selected 100 farmwomen from Machavaram Mandal of Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. Findings revealed that 60 percent respondents fell in the category of medium level of participation. An activities predominantly performed by the farmwomen includes sowing, intercultural operations, transplanting and preparation of vegetables for marketing. Joint participation of man and woman was observed in activities - application of manure and fertilizer, preparation of solution for spray, spray of insecticide and harvesting. Majority of the respondents were not involved in activities like seed selection, irrigation and procurement of inputs, plant protection and selling of vegetables.

Key words : Vegetable Cultivation, Procurement, Plant Protection

INTRODUCTION :

Since ancient days women have played a key role in the domestication of plants and animals, in initiating settled cultivation and in the maintenance of biological diversity. At present also majority of women in rural India are associated directly or indirectly with agriculture production, processing and distribution. Of the three distinct farming communities in India viz., male farmers, women farmers and young farmers the second group alone (women farmers) perform more than 60 per cent of on farm operations.

Like crop production, women have major share of work in vegetable cultivation right from the preparation of land to ultimate disposal of produce in the market. In the field she does operations like levelling of field, preparation of seed beds for raising seedling, transplanting, weeding, hoeing, irrigation, earthing, harvesting, etc. Joshi (1999) has mentioned that women participated in different horticultural operations like transplanting (82.79%), interculture operations and harvesting (79%), nursery preparations (67%), plant protection (56%). Less number of studies have been under taken with respect to participation of farm women in vegetable cultivation to that of agriculture. Therefore, the present study has been undertaken with the following specific objective :

To study extent of participation of farm women in vegetable cultivation practices.

METHODOLOGY :

The present study was conducted in four villages of Machavaram Mandal in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh having highest area under vegetable cultivation. Sample for the study consisted of 100 farm women, 25 from each village, identified on random basis. Personal

interview technique was used to collect the data from the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION :

The results of the study indicated that majority of the respondents were below 30 years of age, belonged to reserved caste categories and nuclear families, had vegetable cultivation as their main occupation and had land holding up to 1 hectare.

Participation of Farm Women In Vegetable Cultivation Practices

Overall Participation—On the basis of overall participation of the respondents in vegetable cultivation practices, they were categorized into three categories viz. low, medium and high. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by their extent of participation in vegetable cultivation practices

N = 100

S. No.	Category	F / %
1.	Low	18
2.	Medium	60
3.	High	22

The data presented in Table 1 reveal that majority of the respondents (60%) fell in the category of medium level of participation whereas, 22 and 18 per cent respondents belonged to high and low level of participation, respectively.

Component-wise Participation—In order to have indepth knowledge regarding the women's involvement in various vegetable cultivation practices, component-wise participation of the respondents was assessed.

A perusal of Table-2 reveals that the farm women participated in all the thirteen activities of vegetable cultivation. Activities like sowing (86%), intercultural operations (71-72%), transplanting (68%) and

preparation of vegetables for marketing (63%) were predominantly performed by the farm women. Similarly activities like harvesting, protection of crop from birds and animals and land preparation were also performed independently by nearly 50-60 per cent of the respondents. However, in the activities like seed selection, irrigation, procurement of inputs and plant protection, participation of women was found to be less as the male members mainly performed these.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by their participation in vegetable cultivation N=100

S. No.	Practices	Independently f/% members f/%	Jointly with family f/%	No participation
1.	Selection			
	(a) Selection of crop	—	10	90
	(b) Selection of vegetable variety	—	10	90
2.	Procurement of inputs			
	(a) Seeds	—	17	83
	(b) Fertilizers	—	18	82
	(c) Insecticides/pesticides	—	18	82
3.	Land Preparation			
	(a) Ploughing	—	10	90
	(b) Layout of the field	52	23	25
4.	Application of manure and fertilizer	25	43	32
5.	Sowing of seeds	86	1	13
6.	Transplanting of seedlings	68	5	27
7.	Interculture operations			
	(a) Weeding	72	15	13
	(b) Hoeing	72	15	13
	(c) Earthing	71	16	13
	(d) Thinning	71	16	13
8.	Irrigation	—	15	85
9.	Plant protection			
	(a) Preparation of solution for spray	—	42	58
	(b) Spraying of insecticides	—	32	68
	(c) Dusting	—	1	99
10.	Protection of crop from birds and animals	53	15	32
11.	Harvesting	49	31	20
12.	Preparation of vegetables for marketing			
	(a) Washing	63	13	24
	(b) Trimming	63	13	
	(c) Grading	63	13	24
13.	Selling of the vegetables	39	1	60

The results are in line with the study conducted by khandelwal (1991) who revealed that the women mainly carried out activities like preparation of seedling, transplanting, trimming and washing of vegetables.

Critical examination of Table 2 reveals that majority of the women (90%) were not involved in activity selection of crop and seed variety and these were the male dominated tasks. Similarly the male members of the family mainly performed procurement of inputs for

vegetable cultivation like seeds, fertilizers, insecticides, 17 etc.

Regarding land preparation, it was found that majority of the respondents (90%) were not involved in ploughing because it requires more muscle power and hence difficult to be performed by women. Besides, the traditional custom of the society also does not allow ploughing of land by women. Further it was observed that 52 per cent respondents performed layout of the field individually whereas, 23 per cent respondents performed this task jointly with male members of the family.

With respect to application of manure and fertilizers in the field, more than 40 per cent respondents performed the task jointly with the male members whereas one fourth of the respondents performed it independently. In 32 per cent cases no participation of women was observed in the activity. It was found that 86 and 68 per cent respondents solely performed activities like sowing and transplanting, respectively as these were mainly the female dominated tasks. The result is in conformity with the study conducted by Sirohi (1996) reported that sowing activity was totally performed by the farmwomen.

It was found that activities like weeding, hoeing, earthing and thinning were performed by more than 70 per cent of the respondents independently. Only in 13 per cent cases the male members of the family did this activity. The farmwomen reported that they mostly did interculture operations individually and in some operations like earthing and hoeing men were also involved. Similar findings were presented by Agarwal (1993) that women labour contribution for weeding was provided to the extent of 70 per cent.

In case of irrigation of crops it was found the male members mainly performed that only 15 per cent respondents assisted their counterparts in the activity and in 85 per cent cases there was no involvement of women and the activity.

With regard to plant protection, it was found that in aspect like preparation of solution for spray, which is somewhat technical in nature, no independent participation of the respondents was observed however, in 42 per cent cases they helped the male members in preparation of the solution.

Regarding spraying of solution in the fields, it was reported that majority of the respondents (68%) had no involvement in the activity. The male members also predominantly performed similarly dusting of chemicals. Poor involvement of respondents in plant protection might be due to the lack of technical knowledge on part of the women. Besides, use of insecticides / pesticides was also considered risky by the farmwomen and therefore it was mainly performed by the male members.

Protecting the vegetable crop from birds, animals, etc. was the activity in which more than half of the respondents (53%) were involved independently whereas, in 32 per cent cases watching was mainly done by the male members of the family. In case of harvesting also good involvement of women was observed as 80 per cent of the respondents were involved in harvesting either independently or jointly with family members. In support to above findings Mathur (1999) concluded that in harvesting of crop there was 100 per cent participation of farm women and the task was performed always jointly with other members of the family.

With regard to marketing of produce it was found that though majority of women (60%) had no involvement in selling of vegetables directly however, 63 per cent respondents were involved in the activities

like washing, trimming and grading of vegetables for marketing.

CONCLUSION :

Based on the findings it could be concluded that activities like sowing, transplanting, interculture operations and preparation of vegetables for marketing were performed independently by majority of the respondents whereas, in the activities like seed selection, procurement of inputs, irrigation and plant protection least participation of women was observed as the tasks were mainly performed by the male members of the family. In some of the activities viz. application of manure and fertilizer, preparation of solution for spray and harvesting joint participation of men and women was observed.

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