



Feminization of Agriculture: Reflections from the Female Participation in Training Programmes on Agriculture and Allied Activities

Manisha Bhatia* and Jugraj Singh Marok,

Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Langroya, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar (Nawanshahr)-144516 (Punjab)

ABSTRACT

Women are actively involved in agriculture and contribute significantly in agriculture and allied activities. Despite their active involvement in all aspects of agriculture like crop selection, land preparation, seed selection, cold storage handling, marketing and processing, their work is unorganized, unvalued and unrewarded. Active involvement of women in agriculture clearly indicates the feminization of agriculture referring to increasing presence or visibility in agriculture labour force, whether as agricultural worker, independent producers or unremunerated family workers. Is this trend of visibility of women in agriculture equally visible when it comes to capacity building of farmers? Is women participation in training programmes proportionate to their participation in agriculture and allied activities? The present paper was an attempt to find an answer to this by looking at the various vocational trainings conducted in the field of agriculture and allied activities from gender lens. The trainings conducted in the field of poultry, dairy, bee-keeping, mushroom cultivation and agricultural engineering during the last five years (2010-2014) in Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar were analyzed. The study indicated that although the participation of females in training programmes related to agriculture and allied activities has increased especially in dairy and mushroom cultivation but it was not in proportion and according to the rate of participation of females in agriculture or their representation in the population.

Key Words: Feminization, Capacity building, Women participation, Training programmes.

INTRODUCTION

Women form an integral part of the society. Human Development Index report states that women is half of the world's population, yet they do 2/3rd of the total work, earn 1/10th of the total income and own less than 1/100th of the total property of the world. This indicates that despite their sizable population and proportionate contribution to the work, women have a little access to the resources and little say in the decision making. Women are perceived as second sex dependent on men and irony is that not only men but also most women hold the same view about themselves because of the traditional orientation. The reason for such a view is also due to the perceived roles, constraints and needs of men and women in our society.

Gender role differs from biological role of men and women, although they may overlap. Aside from raising children, women are expected to prepare all meals, maintain the homestead and in rural areas they assist in crop and animal production. Women work as agricultural labour, unpaid worker in the family farm enterprise but despite the involvement of women in agriculture men are generally labeled as 'farmers' and women as 'child raisers and cooks'.

Contribution of women in agriculture and allied activities is indicative from the fact that 48 per cent of the India's self employed farmers are women and there are 75 m. women engaged in dairy as against 15 m. men and 20 million in animal husbandry as compared to 15 m. men. These impressive figures are indicative of active

involvement of women in agriculture and allied activities thus resulting in feminization of agriculture – a term which broadly refers to the increasing presence or visibility in agriculture labour force, whether as agricultural worker, independent producers or unremunerated family workers. If this is true the same trend of women participation should also be represented in various training programmes conducted for the capacity building of farmers in the field of agriculture and allied activities. In view of the critical role of women in the agriculture as producers, Sidhu (2011) suggested that benefits of training should reach women in proportion to their participation pattern. Participation of women in training programmes will enhance their skills and strengthens faith in them for effective and independent performance of farm operations and help them to make a shift from physically enduring operations to specialized tasks. There is need to focus on gender related data in agriculture and related sectors to build a better understanding and proper balancing of resources. This might be a step towards gender sensitization and thereby creating a more favourable gender relations and work environment.

As per Census 2011 of the total cultivators 9.37 per cent are females in Punjab while female agricultural labourers form 21.97 per cent of the total agricultural labourers. The corresponding figures for Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar were 8.01 per cent female cultivators and 38.35 per cent of the female agricultural labourer. Females in the district participate in harvesting and weeding as indicated in the study conducted by Sidhu (2011). Similarly Goyal *et al* (2003) conducted a study in Balachaur and Saroya blocks of Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar district found that farm women were participating in weeding, harvesting and least participation in plant protection measures, raising nursery, for seedling and ploughing. With very small landholdings in this area, the major activities of farming which were mostly drudgery laden were performed by women. Seed treatment and fertilizer application were male centered operations. The high level of women participation in farm operations is attributed to very small landholding in the foothills which lead to menfolk

seeking another employment opportunities outside the village leaving women to perform most of the task at the farm land.

KVKs are one of the agencies which are actively involved in training the farmers and farm women in agriculture and allied areas thus encouraging and developing skills for self-sufficiency and indirectly contributing to women empowerment. The study was undertaken with the objective to ascertain the proportionate number of women enrolled for training conducted at KVK, Langroya Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar in the field of dairy, poultry, bee-keeping, mushroom cultivation and agricultural engineering. Further, is the number of female trainees equal to the number of male trainees?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to analyze the visibility of women in capacity building trainings conducted by the KVK, gender wise data of the participants in the vocational trainings conducted in the field of poultry, dairy, bee-keeping, mushroom cultivation and agricultural engineering during the last five years (2010-2014) were collected. The vocational trainings conducted in the field of home science were excluded purposively as the aim was to know the participation of rural women and their capacity building in the field of agriculture and allied activities only. In order to focus on the trends of female participants in these training programmes the data were analyzed in the form of percentage and percentage point change both annually for the years under study and also overall percentage point changes during the last five years.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data (Table 1) revealed that during the year 2010, the number of female participants was not more than 3 in any of the training programme which indicates that their participation was negligible. There was no female participant in trainings on poultry. No training was conducted in the field of agriculture engineering during this year. Similarly in the year 2011, the number of female participants was only 9 in mushroom cultivation with no female participants in bee-keeping.

Table 1. Gender wise distribution of participants in vocational trainings in agriculture and allied activities (2010-2014)

Year		Dairy	Poultry	Bee keeping	Mushroom cultivation	Agricultural Engineering
2010	Male	48	25	33	21	-
	Female	1	0	3	2	-
	Total	49	25	36	23	-
2011	Male	49	20	12	35	-
	Female	4	1	0	9	-
	Total	53	21	12	44	-
2012	Male	44	15	28	22	-
	Female	6	0	1	7	-
	Total	50	15	29	30	-
2013	Male	6	12	75	29	10
	Female	2	1	6	13	2
	Total	18	13	81	42	12
2014	Male	37	5	42	34	10
	Female	10	6	16	20	0
	Total	47	11	58	54	10

The trend remained same in the year 2012. The number of female participants increased in next year with their number rising to 13 in trainings on mushroom cultivation. The participation of females was quiet visible in all the trainings programmes. During 2014, an upward trend in the participation of females in various training programmes was observed, the number being highest again in trainings on mushroom cultivation followed by trainings on bee-keeping. Participation of females in various training programmes needs to be looked in terms of their proportionate participation with respect to males.

Animal husbandry is predominantly a female affair in case of farmers of medium and low socio-economic status. On an average a women devotes 3.5 hr/d for animal husbandry activities against only 1.6 hr/d devoted by men in this category. Women accounted for 93 per cent of total employment in dairy production. Depending upon the economic status, women perform the tasks of collecting fodder, collecting processing dung. Women undertake dung composting and carrying to the fields. Thus, most of the activities related to dairy are being performed by females only with

very little male involvement but when it comes to capacity building and training the participation of females was only 12 per cent in the year 2012 and 11 per cent in 2013.

Trainings on dairy seem to have a steady increase in the female participation over the years in reference. The representation of females in the trainings on dairy was only 2 per cent in 2010 which increased to 21 per cent in 2014. Thus one-fifth of the total participants of dairy training during the year were females. There was no representation of females in training programmes related to poultry in 2010 while year 2014 witnessed an increase of about 27 per cent. Of the participants who took training on bee keeping 8 per cent were females in 2010 while in 2014 their representation was 27 per cent (Table 2). Mushroom cultivation seems to be gaining popularity among the females as only 9 per cent females got trained in this field in 2010 but their proportion increased to 37 percent in 2014. Agricultural engineering trainings were not very popular among the female as indicative from 16 per cent female participation in these training programmes in 2013 while none of them participated in 2014.

Table 2. Percentage of female participants in vocational trainings in agriculture and allied activities (2010-2014).

Training Course	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Dairy	2	7	12	11	21
Poultry	0	5	0	8	27
Bee keeping	8	0	3	7	27
Mushroom cultivation	9	20	23	30	37
Agricultural Engineering	-	-	-	16	0

The participation of females in the training programmes reflect that although the trend of female participate in agriculture and related activities has increased over time but still it was not proportionate to their active involvement in agriculture and allied activities. This may be due to the fact that they were not interested or not allowed to take trainings to upgrade their skill and technical know-how. This reflects the patriarchal mindset which results in involving women in all labour intensive activities but when it comes to capacity building they are kept at backstage. Despite their significant contribution in agriculture women are excluded from community meetings they have no access to education and training which limit their capacity for proactive involvement. This results in women having a little access to the resources and little say in the decision making.

The data revealed that mushroom cultivation which is less labour intensive and relatively easy was most popular among the females while agricultural engineering training programmes which involves relatively more technical knowledge and machinery was least popular. But is the trend of female participation same throughout the reference period under study?

Data on annual percentage points change indicated that female participation increased by 5 percentage points during 2011 and 2012 respectively in poultry. The change in these

trainings was 10 percent points during 2014. In case of trainings in poultry a change of 5 percent points was recorded in 2011 while the change in female participation in training programmes was high as indicated in 19 percent points change in 2013. In case of trainings on bee-keeping the changes are quiet substantial. From a percent points change of -8 in 2011 the change is quiet impressive, it changed by 20 percent points in 2014. Female participation in trainings on mushroom cultivation had seen a downward trend as indicated by annual percent points change. This may be due to the fact that the participation of females in these trainings was already higher in 2011. A steep hike is seen in the participation of females in the training programmes in year 2014 as indicated by the maximum annual percent points change during this year. This may be attributed to the efforts to rope in and involve various self-help groups existing in the district in various training programmes of KVK.

Percent point change during the five years is maximum in case of trainings on mushroom cultivation followed by poultry, dairy and bee keeping. This further substantiated the fact that there has been a steady increase in the participation of females in the training programmes related to agriculture and allied activities during the period of five years especially in case of dairy and mushroom cultivation. This indicates a step towards capacity building of rural women and in

Table 3. Percent points change in female participation in trainings in agriculture and allied activities.

Training Course	Annual Percent Points Change				Percentage point change during five years
	2011	2012	2013	2014	(2014-2010)
Dairy	5	5	-1	10	19
Poultry	5	-5	8	19	27
Bee keeping	-8	3	4	20	19
Mushroom cultivation	11	3	7	7	28
Agricultural engineering	0	0	16	-16	0

turn empowerment of women but still it was not proportionate to the rate of participation of females in agriculture. The representation of females in these training programmes was not even in accordance of their representation in the population. Thus further efforts are needed to encourage women participation in such capacity building programmes. Also an in depth follow up study is needed to ascertain the capacity building and role of females who had undergone such training programmes in the decision-making process.

CONCLUSION

The present study conducted to explore the participation of females in various vocational trainings conducted at KVK SBS Nagar from last 5 years. The study pointed out the fact that the participation of females in these training programmes related to agriculture and allied activities has increased over a period of time. There was an increase in the percent points change in the females participating in these vocational

training programmes during the period in reference but was not in proportion and accordance to the rate of participation of females in agriculture or their representation in the population. Hence, efforts are needed to rope in more females in various capacity building programmes of KVK with a missionary zeal.

REFERENCES

- Sidhu K (2011). Agro Climatic Zone wise Analysis of Women in Farming in Punjab. *Journal of Home Economics* **33**(1) 47-52.
- Goyal G, Randhawa V, Kaur R, Kaur V and Pannu K (2003). Women Participation in Agri-Operations. *Journal of Family Ecology* **5**:167-171.
- Stuadt K A (1973). Women Farmers and Inequalities in Agri services. *Rural Africana* **29**:81-93.
- Census (2011). Office of Registrar General and Census Operations. Government of India.
- Kumar A, Tanuja S and Chahal V P (2012). Role of Women in Livestock Husbandry, Fisheries and Aquaculture for their Empowerment. *Indian Farming-Special Issue on Women in Agriculture: Opportunities for Inclusive Growth* **61** (12):21-24.

Received on 15/3/15 Accepted on 20/4/15