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Involvement of tribal farm women in agricultural development in Meghalaya

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Abstract

The study was conducted in East Garo Hills district of Meghalaya. Altogether 110 randomly selected rural women were included as sample of respondents for the study. The study reveals that more than 50 per cent tribal farm women participated jointly with family members in harvesting (63.34 %), intercultural operation (58.18 %), storing of harvested crops (55.45 %). In addition to this, a large percentage of tribal farm women (70.91%) did not contributed labour at all in application of pesticides, 68.18 per cent in land preparation and 64.55 per cent in seed treatment, It is also found that more than 50 per cent of tribal farm women contributed labour independently in cooking, care of children & elderly persons and washing clothes. Again, more than 50 per cent of tribal farm women were jointly engaged in feeding and taking care of the animals. It is interesting to note that 80.00 per cent of tribal farm women independently engaged in weaving.

Keywords: Involvement, tribal women, Meghalaya, agricultural development

Introduction

Women are the molder and builder of any nation's destiny. They play a significant role in any economy. In the word of Reddy (2003) ^[1] women are regarded as the backbone of the rural scene. Most of the women perform various types of work for their livelihood and agriculture is considered as the biggest sector where large number of rural women takes part actively.

More specifically the tribal population of India constitutes about 67.6 million and woman in the tribal community constitutes half of the tribal population. It has been observed that rate of participation in farming is higher among the tribal population than the other castes of the state. More precisely the participation in the farming is higher in hill tribes than non-tribal societies. The women of hill areas take active part in every area of farming and in most of the tribal areas, the percentage of women worker is equal to men or even higher (Das 1992) ^[2].

Although involvement of farm women with respect to farm related practices is vital for achieving greater success towards economically sustainable agriculture, it is most unfortunate to say that the role of farm women in farming has not been highlighted. Further scanty efforts have been made by the researcher to find out the extent of involvement of tribal farm women in farming and the relationship between the extent of involvement of tribal farm women and their socio economic condition. Keeping this in view present study has been planned.

Materials and Methods

The involvement of tribal farm women is measured in terms of their participation in cultivation of crops and participation in homestead activities. The study was conducted in West Tripura district of Tripura. A multistage purposive cum stratified random sampling design was followed. Altogether 1500 rural women were included as sample of respondents for the study. To measure the participation in different activities of cultivation of different crops 20 different activities (pre harvest and post harvest activity) were selected and these were presented to the respondents to give their comment in three point continuum viz., independent participation, joint participation and no participation. Later frequency and percentage were calculated separately. Again, for measurement of participation in different homestead activities, 16 homestead activities (major homestead, livestock and allied homestead activity) were selected and respondents were asked to give their responses in three point continuum, viz, independent participation, joint participation and no participation. After that frequency and percentage were calculated separately for each activity.

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Results and Discussion

The data presented in Table 1 indicated that nearly 39%, 29% and 25.1% of rural women contributed labour independently in transplanting/ planting/ sowing of seeds, nursery raising and cleaning of harvested crops respectively. Furthermore, it appears that more than 50% rural women participated jointly with family members in harvesting (59%), compost making (57.8%), application of manure (57.0%), storing of harvested crops (56%), collection of seeds and cleaning of harvested crops for marketing (55.5%), seed cleaning (55.0%), intercultural operations (53.2%), seed storage (52.0%) and grading of harvested crop for marketing (51.6%). This is in agreement with Kaur, R and Mahajan, N (1993) [3] findings which state that women were more involved in lighter works that does not require great physical effort but care and patience, such as transplanting, planting, weeding, thinning, harvesting etc. In addition, it was found that a large percentage of rural women (73.1%) did not contributed labour

at all in application of pesticides, 68.5% in marketing, 59.3% in land preparation, 59.0 % in application of fertilizer, 57.8% in seed treatment and 56.5% in fencing.

Again participation of respondents were categorized into three parts namely, major homestead activities, livestock activities and allied homestead activities. It is observed from the Table 2 that more than 50% rural tribal women contributed labour independently in cooking, and care of children and elderly persons and washing clothes. Further it was noted that more than 50% rural tribal women were jointly engaged in feeding and taking care of the animals. It is interesting to note that 68.7% rural tribal women independently engaged in weaving. From the findings it can be seen that most of the rural tribal women in the study area performed dual roles in their day to day life, which meant that they spent more time and effort than the men. Therefore, rural tribal women might not have the time to have regular contact with extension agents or to attend extension activities.

Table 1: Distribution of tribal farm women according to their participation in different activities of cultivation of different crops

(N= 110)

Sl. No.	Participation Activity	Independent Participation		Joint Participation		No Participation	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
A	Pre harvest activity						
1.	Land preparation (selection/ cleaning of lands)	2	1.82	33	30.00	75	68.18
2.	Layout of plots	23	20.91	39	35.45	48	43.64
3.	Compost pit making	12	10.91	41	37.27	57	51.82
4.	Fencing	15	13.64	39	35.45	56	50.91
5.	Buying of seeds	9	8.18	40	36.36	61	55.45
6.	Seed treatment	6	5.45	33	30.00	71	64.55
7.	Nursery raising of seedlings	22	20.00	53	48.18	35	31.81
8.	Transplanting/ planting/ sowing of seeds	43	37.27	54	49.09	13	11.82
9.	Intercultural operation (weeding, earthing up, thinning, irrigation, pruning/ training etc.)	28	25.45	64	58.18	18	16.36
10.	Application of fertilizer	14	12.73	32	29.09	64	58.18
11.	Application of manures	12	10.00	33	30.00	65	59.09
12.	Application of pesticides	7	6.36	25	22.73	78	70.91
B	Post harvest activity						
13.	Harvesting	29	26.36	70	63.64	11	10.00
14.	Cleaning of harvested crops	27	24.55	55	50.00	28	25.45
15.	Grading of harvested crops for marketing	34	30.91	58	52.73	18	16.36
16.	Storing of harvested crops	30	27.27	61	55.45	19	17.27
17.	Marketing	39	35.45	49	44.55	22	20.00
18.	Seed collection	7	6.36	45	40.91	58	52.73
19.	Seed cleaning	34	30.91	48	43.64	23	20.91
20.	Seed storage	32	29.09	50	45.45	28	25.45

Table 2: Distribution of tribal farm women according to their participation in different homestead activities

(N= 110)

Sl. No.	Participation Activity	Independent Participation		Joint Participation		No Participation	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
A. Major homestead activities							
1.	Cooking	61	55.45	49	44.55	0	0
2.	Collection of Fuel wood	47	42.73	42	38.18	21	19.09
3.	Fetching water	64	58.18	44	40.00	2	1.82
4.	Maintenance of house	67	60.91	43	39.09	0	0
5.	Washing cloths	79	71.81	31	28.18	0	0
6.	Care of children/ elderly person	85	77.27	25	22.73	0	0
B. Livestock activities							
7.	Collection of fodder	39	35.45	59	53.64	12	10.91
8.	Feeding of animal	49	44.55	48	43.64	13	11.82
9.	Care of animal	43	39.09	50	45.45	17	15.45
10.	Cleaning animal shed	51	46.36	41	37.27	10	9.09
11.	Milking of animal	39	35.45	42	38.18	29	26.36

C. Allied homestead activities							
12.	Processing food	76	69.09	21	19.09	13	11.82
13.	Preservation of fruit/ vegetable	55	50.00	19	17.27	26	23.64
14.	Festival/special occasions	52	47.27	51	46.36	7	6.36
15.	Weaving	88	80.00	18	16.36	4	3.64
16.	Tailoring	36	32.73	16	14.55	58	52.73

Conclusion

There is some evidence that despite the contribution made by rural tribal women in food security they are not being well served by the existing extension system in developing countries. They are in urgent need of understanding and acquiring new knowledge and skills on cultivation of different crops, so that they could contribute more effectively to the production process. So, the findings of this research will help in understanding of the rural tribal women for smooth running of the agricultural system for sustainable agricultural development.

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