

Constraints experienced by the farm women of Kerala and Manipur in achieving livelihood security

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ABSTRACT

The study was carried out among the farm women in the selected Panchayats of Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala and Ukhrul district of Manipur with an objective to delineate the constraints experienced by the farm women in achieving livelihood security. Fifteen respondents each were selected randomly from six identified Panchayats, thus making a total sample size of 90 respondents. Garrett's ranking technique was used to measure and prioritize the constraints faced by the respondents. Based on the obtained score, the major constraints faced by the farm women in Kerala in achieving livelihood security were insufficient funds, unavailability of good quality seed and inadequate land for cultivation. The major constraints perceived by the farm women in Manipur were inadequate government support, inadequate marketing facilities and insufficient irrigation facilities. These constraints need to be addressed properly in order to improve the livelihood security of farm women.

Keywords: Livelihood security; farm women; constraints; Kerala; Manipur

INTRODUCTION

Livelihood is the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for means of living; a livelihood is said to be sustainable when people can cope up with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance their capabilities and assets and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generations (Chamber and Conway 1992). A farm woman is a woman who owns, works on or operates in agricultural enterprise, either commercially or to sustain herself or her family. According to Trauger (2004), farm woman is an individual who assists in farm work and who is the primary contributor of labour and decision making to a farm on a daily basis.

Kerala is rated continuously high with higher literacy rates, women's empowerment, maternal health and lower infant mortality compared to many other Indian states (Parwez 2016). However, their position in society or public participation has not improved proportionately. Kerala has been witnessing a dichotomy of fallowing of farm land on one hand and

increasing dependence for food products on the other states. The crisis that the farming sector has been facing in Kerala, constantly affect the entire population particularly, women (<https://thekudumbashrestory.info/index.php/programmes/economic-empowerment/collective-farming>). The role of women in income generating activities is of paramount importance to the economic development of their households. The strengthening of women's participation in all spheres of life has become a major issue in the development discourse. Socio-economic development cannot be fully achieved without the active participation of women at the decision making level in society (Alemu et al 2022).

Agriculture and allied activities are the backbone of the economy of Manipur. Agriculture being the main occupation of the people, it has an important place in the economy of the state (<https://manipur.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/annexure-01-manipur-comprehensive.pdf>). Women contribute productive work force in the economy of Manipur. They play key role in agricultural development and there is vital contribution of them in the field of agriculture,

food security, horticulture, processing, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries and other allied sectors. Women are involved in all aspects of agricultural operations, from crop selection to land preparation, seed selection, planting, weeding, pest control, harvesting, crop storage, handling, marketing and processing (Devi and Singh 2015). With inadequate access to education and technology, women tend to lack behind in socio-economic terms. Regardless of their eagerness, they have not been able to take advantage of the opportunities from new technologies, innovations and markets.

The vital aspect of the goal of women's empowerment is connected to improving health and nutrition status, ensuring food security, eliminating hunger and reducing poverty (Wei et al 2021, Malapit and Quisumbing 2015). Women are intensely involved in agriculture yet their knowledge about the new technologies is limited because of different sociological and cultural factors which affect their potential and capability to generate higher livelihood for themselves and their families. Thus it is important to think scientifically about women empowerment not only for equity reasons but also for the sake of efficiency to raise the agricultural production and rural livelihood (Srivastava et al 2016). Hence, a study was conducted to delineate and analyse major constraints faced by the farm women in Kerala and Manipur in achieving livelihood security.

METHODOLOGY

A multi-stage random sampling method was adopted for the selection of respondents. For that, one district from each state viz Thiruvananthapuram from Kerala and Ukhrul from Manipur were purposively selected. From each district, block having maximum number of farm women was selected and from each block three Panchayats with maximum number of farm women were selected. From each Panchayat, 15 farm women were selected randomly, thereby, making a total of 90 respondents. Garrett's ranking was used to rank the constraints faced by the farm women. The ranks assigned by members were converted into scores by using Garette's ranking technique as under:

$$\text{Per cent position} = 100 (\text{Rij} - 0.50) / \text{Nj}$$

where Rij = Rank given for the i^{th} factor by j^{th} individual, Nj = Number of problems ranked by j^{th} individual

Further, per cent positions obtained were converted into scores as per Garrett's ranking technique. The scores of the respondents were added and mean values were calculated.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Major constraint perceived by the farm women in Kerala, in achieving livelihood security, was insufficient funds which included non-availability of farming capital, lack of agricultural capital, inadequate agricultural funding base, unfinanceable new farms, limited availability of farm loans and insufficient financial resources (Table 1). Non-availability of good quality seed ranked second as the price of HYV seeds was quite high. The constraint, inadequate land for cultivation ranked third. Inadequate training, inadequate marketing facilities and crop loss due to wild animals ranked at 4th, 5th and 6th positions respectively. Non-availability of fertilizers, insufficient irrigation facilities and lack of farm machineries ranked at 7th, 8th and 9th positions respectively.

The data given in Table 2 show that the major constraint perceived by the farm women in Manipur in achieving livelihood security was inadequate government support. Inadequate marketing facilities and insufficient irrigation facilities ranked as 2nd and 3rd constraints respectively. Insufficient funds, which included lack of agricultural capital, limited availability of farm loans and insufficient financial resources, ranked at 4th position. Smooth transportation (5th rank) of agricultural produce required logistic connectivity, support and facilities to ensure that the farmers timely delivered their harvest in the market. Cold storage for fresh perishable produce, needed transportation immediately. Inadequate extension services (6th rank) lead to wide adoption gap among farming community to achieve increase in production through optimum resource utilization. Non-availability of inputs (7th rank) including fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides at the right time was one of the constraints faced by the farm women. Inadequate storage facilities (8th rank) lead to large amount of food loss. There was a major concern on adopting improved method of cultivation and new technology, intensifying need to seek for alternative ways to improve crop production (9th rank).

Patra et al (2018) reported that access to land, water, credit, other agricultural inputs, technology, new practices, extension services and education were the major constraints faced by rural women. Yusuf et al

Table 1. Constraints faced by farm women in Kerala

Constraint	Garett's score	Rank
Insufficient funds	64.1	1
Non-availability of good quality seed	61.24	2
Inadequate land for cultivation	52.9	3
Insufficient training on farming	51.7	4
Inadequate marketing facilities	51.2	5
Crop loss due to wild animals attack	47.2	6
Non-availability of fertilizers	46.5	7
Insufficient irrigation facilities	39.9	8
Lack of farm machineries	38.08	9

Table 2. Constraints faced by farm women in Manipur

Constraint	Garett's score	Rank
Inadequate government support	65.49	1
Insufficient marketing facilities	54.13	2
Insufficient irrigation facilities	53.8	3
Insufficient funds	51.07	4
Inadequate transportation facilities	49.33	5
Inadequate extension services	47.9	6
Non-availability of inputs in time	47.4	7
Inadequate storage facilities	41.27	8
Inadequate improved methods of cultivation and crop management	40.9	9

(2011), in a study in Nigeria, reported that 96 per cent women claimed that their productive potential was not maximized while 83.64 per cent encountered several socio-economic constraints among which were financial and socially-embedded constraints with 33.18 and 87.27 per cent responses respectively. Malek and Sisodia (2019), in a study in Rajasthan, found that farm women experienced some constraints at major level which were dual responsibility of work at farm and home work followed by non-availability of suitable farm implements and machinery for women and lack of physical abilities to carry out some agricultural works. The constraints on moderate level were difficulties in some agricultural work, followed by social barriers, lack of interest to participate in agricultural work, lack of female extension workers for imparting training to women, lack of experience about agricultural works and lack of extension contact. The constraints which were less experienced by farm women were lack of specific skill for agricultural works followed by lack of knowledge about latest agricultural technology, lack of landholding power and lower consideration in decisions related to farming.

Odoemelum et al (2014) examined constraints affecting women agricultural productivity in Abia state. It was revealed that the laws of inheritance and increase in population led to the subdivision and fragmentation of existing farm land in such a manner that the farm size affected production. On factors influencing their productivity, land was the major factor (27%) followed by inadequate extension and credit facilities (21%). Kumari et al (2016), in a study conducted in Samastipur district of Bihar, indicated that playing dual role of a housewife and working women was perceived as a very important problem by 90 per cent of the selected respondents. Male dominance (82%) and lack of decision making power by women were also the major constraints that hindered the growth of women as farmer. Illiteracy (55%) and lack of knowledge and skill (49%) were the other factors that hindered their growth as agricultural workers. Since women are considered as secondary workers in the area of agriculture, hence, they were not found to be actively involved in the dissemination of knowledge about new technology given by extension workers. As a result they were found to remain confined in their

traditional package of practices. Lack of credit was the main financial constraint for 76 per cent of women farmers. Poonam and Vats (2008) observed that the major constraints that farm women faced were dual role played by women at farm and home, male dominance, lack of credit facilities, lack of decision-making power, poor contacts with extension agents, lack of knowledge and skill and their illiteracy also hindered their progress. Haile (2016) reported that in Dendi district, Ethiopia, marital status, age of farmers, access to market, access to credit and contacts with agricultural extension agents increased women's participation to agricultural extension service.

CONCLUSION

It can be summarised that the major constraints faced by the farm women in Kerela in achieving livelihood security were insufficient funds, unavailability of good quality seed and inadequate land for cultivation. The major constraints perceived by the farm women in Manipur were inadequate government support, inadequate marketing facilities and insufficient irrigation facilities. The results obtained through this study can be utilized by the policy makers and different stakeholders for the preparation of efficient, practical and feasible action plan for the development of farm women in these states. This study will definitely throw a light for strengthening the livelihood security of farm women as well as the farming community as a whole.

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