

PARTICIPATION OF FARM FAMILY WOMEN IN THE AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS AND DECISION MAKING IN VEGETABLE CULTIVATION

Participation is the voluntary involvement of people in any enterprise. According to Mishra (1994), the term participation has three connotations i.e., co-operating, taking part in something, the mere presence or even the silent presence of an individual or representative of an organization at different levels. In addition to their household duties, farm family women perform a number of agricultural operations as well as decision making in some crops grown in their homesteads. But the part they played usually goes unaccounted as they always remain as invisible workers in spite of their pivotal role and remain silently behind all efforts of men. According to Swaminathan (1985), some historians believed that it was women who first domesticated crop plants and thereby initiated the art and science of farming. In this context, a study was conducted to assess the nature and extent of participation of farm family women in the agricultural operations and decision making in vegetable cultivation.

The study was undertaken in three panchayats of Trichur District. One hundred and fifty female heads of the family were selected as the respondents for the study. A well structured pre-tested interview schedule was used to collect information from these respondents. The nature of participation with respect to the agricultural operations of vegetable cultivation was measured quantitatively on a four point scale with scores of 0, 1, 2 and 3 respectively for no participation, supervision only, jointly carrying out and carrying out solely. The extent of participation was measured on a three point continuum with scores of 2, 1 and 0 for participation to a greater extent, to some extent and no participation, respectively. Similarly, the nature of participation in decision making in vegetable cultivation was measured on a four point scale with scores of

0, 1, 2 and 3 for not at all, presence only, jointly carrying out and carrying out solely, respectively. To know the extent of participation in decision making, a three point scale with scores of 2, 1 and 0 for always, sometimes and never, respectively was used.

It is seen from Table 1 that majority of the respondents 'solely' participated in the operations sowing / planting (53.3%) and harvesting (54.7%) of vegetables. Nearly half (48.7%) of the respondents participated in supervisory capacity in plant protection measures. With regard to their extent of participation, more than half (58.7%) of the respondents participated to a 'greater extent' in harvesting. Similarly, to some extent they participated in the activities of plant protection measures (58%) and marketing (57.3%). The farm family women were found actively engaged in these activities during their leisure times. The quantum of the work required was also less here. In the case of other operations like irrigation, plant protection etc which are normally carried out in the morning hours when the women would be engaged busily in household work, their participation was minimum. Moreover, plant protection involves some amount of risk and hence usually performed by male members of the family.

The results presented in Table 2 revealed that nearly half of the respondents 'jointly' participated in taking decisions regarding the type of weeding to be adopted (46.7%), manures / fertilizers application (42.7%) and irrigation management (41.3%). Considering their extent of participation, majority participated 'sometimes' in deciding the type of weeding to be adopted (52%) and marketing (50%). Farmers are often seeking the advice of their wives in most of the decisions regarding the vegetable cultivation. Farm

Table 1. Nature and extent of participation of farm family women in agricultural operations (n '= 150)

Sl. No. ;	Operations	Nature of participation								Extent of participation							
		Solely		Jointly		Supervi- i sion only i		Not at all		Greater extent		Some extent		No parti- cipation			
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	Cleaning the field	69	46.0	27	18.0	38	25.3	16	10.7	68	45.3	42	28.0	40	26.7		
2	Seed bed operation	54	36.0	47	31.3	25	16.7	24	16.0	38	25.3	62	41.3	50	33.3		
3	Sowing / planting	83	55.3	29	19.3	20	13.3	18	12.0	62	41.3	58	38.7	30	20.0		
4	Organic manure application	48	32.0	52	34.7	32	21.3	18	12.0	47	31.3	63	42.0	40	26.7		
5	Fertilizer application	29	19.3	47	31.3	34	22.7	40	26.7	16	10.7	64	42.7	70	46.7		
6	Weeding	62	41.3	28	18.7	40	26.7	20	13.3	52	34.7	57	38.0	41	27.3		
7	Intercultural operations	28	18.7	64	42.7	25	16.7	33	22.0	14	9.3	67	44.7	69	46.0		
8	Plant protection measures	14	9.3	38	25.3	73	48.7	25	16.7	4	2.7	87	58.0	59	39.3		
9	Harvesting	82	54.7	40	26.7	18	12.0	10	6.7	88	58.7	42	28.0	20	13.3		
10	Marketing	30	20.0	42	28.0	38	25.3	40	26.7	14	9.3	86	57.3	50	33.3		

F - Frequency

Table 2. Nature and extent of participation of farm family women decision making (n = 150)

Sl. No. i	Decision making areas	Nature of participation								Extent of participation							
		Solely		Jointly		Presence only		Not at all		Always		Some times		Never			
		P	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	Deciding the crop / variety to be grown	42	28.0	58	38.7	30	20.0	20	13.3	52	34.7	68	45.3	30	20.0		
2	Decision regarding the type of weeding to be adopted	40	26.7	70	46.7	20	13.3	20	13.3	20	13.3	78	52.0	52	34.7		
3	Deciding manure / fertilizer application	28	18.7	64	42.7	28	18.7	30	20.0	40	26.7	60	40.0	50	33.3		
4	Deciding the irrigation management	40	26.7	62	41.3	28	18.7	20	13.3	35	23.3	48	32.0	67	44.7		
5	Deciding with respect to intercultural operation	47	31.3	40	26.7	32	21.3	31	20.7	28	18.7	62	41.3	60	40.0		
6	Deciding the type of implements to be used	14	9.3	40	26.7	36	24.0	60	40.0	10	6.7	60	40.0	80	53.3		
7	Deciding the plant protection measures	12	8.0	50	33.3	40	26.7	48	32.0	20	13.3	40	26.7	90	60.0		
8	Deciding the time of harvest	43	28.7	27	18.0	40	26.7	40	26.7	18	12.0	62	41.3	70	46.7		
9	Decision with respect to storage of the produce	40	26.7	32	21.3	28	18.7	50	33.3	25	16.7	45	30.0	80	53.3		
10	Deciding the marketing	4	2.7	42	28.0	34	22.7	70	46.7	15	10.0	75	50.0	60	40.0		

women usually perceive those areas linked with management of household and family as important and those linked with farming and farm management as less important.

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College of Horticulture
Vellanikkara 680 654, Trichur

**R. Sureshkumar, N. P. Kumari Sushama
C. Bhaskaran**

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