

ROLE OF FARM WOMEN IN MIXED FARMING

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Abstract: A study was conducted in Kollam and Kannur districts of Kerala to understand the role of farm women in mixed farming. Farm women often performed roles like kitchen gardening, post harvest operation and management and care of animals. Women agricultural labourers often performed field oriented task. They always participated in taking decisions in areas like seed selection, storage of pnxice, choice of crops, care and management of animals and number of animals to be maintained.

Key words: Decision making, farm women, mixed farming

INTRODUCTION

The small sized holding and meagre income obtained from the crop enterprise alone may not be sufficient to support a family. Hence, majority of the farmers take up dairying as an additional enterprise which provides extra income and gainful employment to the family members throughout the year. In majority of the holding, men folk are being employed in more remunerative vocation. Under **this circumstance** the women folk is rather compelled to shoulder the entire **responsibility** of managing the farm. This study aims at **understanding** the role and contribution of women in increasing productivity of mixed fanning systems which is in vogue in Kerala.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted during 1980-90 in Kollam and Kannur districts of Kerala having the **highest** rural women population. From each district two taluks and from each taluk two villages were selected at random. Four categories of farm women *viz.*, large, small, marginal and women agricultural labourers were selected based on the size of holding. From each category, eight farm women were selected from each village at random. Thus the total sample for the study was 256. Mixed farming productivity was computed taking into account five major crops *viz.*, paddy, coconut, pepper, tapioca and banana and dairy. Productivity was computed using three dimensions *viz.*, cropping intensity, crop yield and economic **performance** in the case of crops and milk yield and economic performance in the case of dairy. Contribution of

farm women towards productivity was measured in terms of their **role** performance and extent of participation in decision making.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comparison of farm women with respect of mixed farming productivity

Large and small farm women differ significantly with marginal farm women and

Table 1. Comparison of farm women in mixed farming productivity (n=256)

Categories of Farm women	Mean productivity score	CD (0.05)
Large farm women	200.35	-
Small farm women	200.39	10.056**
Marginal farm women	158.54	-
Women agricultural labourers	150.05	-

** Significant at 0.01 level

women agricultural labourers with respect to productivity (Table 1). As the farm size increased the productivity did not increase substantially but the profitability increased. In large farms even though the productivity of individual crop enterprise was low, the cumulative profit from the total enterprise was high. This finding was supported by Rao (1955) and Rani (1971).

Roles performed by large, small and marginal farm women in mixed farming

The data presented in Table 2, show that large, small and marginal farm women often

Table 2. Role performed by large, small and marginal farm women in mixed farming

Role	Role performance index					
	Large farm women*		Small farm women*		Marginal farm women*	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
<i>A. Agriculture</i>						
1 Kitchen gardening	2.59	1	2.73	3	2.32	5
2 Drying	2.50	5	2.81	1	2.53	1
3 Cleaning the produce	2.53	4	2.70	4	2.53	1
4 Storing the produce	2.57	2	2.57	5	2.48	3
5 Preparation of vegetable and fruit products	2.54	3	2.78	2	2.42	4
6 Preservation of vegetables and fruits	2.45	6	2.53	6	2.31	6
<i>B. Animal Husbandry</i>						
1 Preparation of milk and milk products	2.78	1	2.46	1	2.70	1
2 Feeding animals	2.45	3	2.45	2	2.60	2
3 Maintenance of cattle shed	2.43	4	2.42	3	2.60	2
4 Selling of livestock produce	2.48	2	2.40	4	2.45	4

x n=64

Table 3. Roles performed by women agricultural labourers (n = 64)

Roles	Role performance	
	Mean index	Rank
<i>A. Agriculture</i>		
1 Weeding	2.95	1
2 Assisting in cleaning farm residues	2.95	1
3 Carry inputs to the field	2.93	3
4 Manures and fertilizer application	2.92	4
5 Transplanting/sowing	2.89	5
6 Harvesting	2.81	6
<i>fi. Animal Husbandry</i>		
1 Collecting fodder	2.54	1
2 Maintenance of cattle shed	2.46	2
3 Taking animals for grazing	2.23	3
4 Management and care of poultry birds	2.15	4
5 Management of milch animals	2.00	5

performed roles like kitchen gardening, post-harvest operations like storing, cleaning and drying the produce, preparation and preservation of fruits and vegetables, preparation of milk and milk products, feeding animals,

maintenance of cattle-shed and selling of livestock produce. As farm size increased, work participation of farm women decreased in farm sector and increased in dairy sector. Most of the post harvest operations are done within the homestead itself and that may be the reason for their high participation in post harvest activities and processing. Kitchen gardening remains to be the portfolio of women as it is done in the backyard of the house.

Roles performed by women agricultural labourers in mixed farming

Women agricultural labourers often performed roles in the field like weeding, assisting in cleaning farm residues, carrying inputs to the field, collecting fodder, maintenance of cattle shed etc (Table 3). The reason for their participation in field oriented task may be that the land holding may not be sufficient to take remunerative crops. In earlier days these agricultural labourers were engaged in large numbers to perform post-harvest operations by large and small farmers. Now this trend has changed because of Agricultural Labour Act and Agricultural Labour Movement. As per this Act the agricultural labourers, will have more reasonable working hours and more remunerations. This has prompted the land

Table 4. Extent of participation of farm women in decision making

Areas of decision making	Decision making index							
	Large farm women*		Small farm women*		Marginal farm women*		Women agrl. labourers*	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
1 Choice of crops	1.45	4	1.35	4	1.34	4	0.51	4
2 Seed selection/use	1.78	2	1.56	1	1.60	1	0.50	5
3 Care and management of animals	1.83	1	1.45	3	1.48	2	0.57	1
4 Types of weeding to be adopted	0.79	14	0.70	14	0.68	14	0.53	3
5 Quantity of food grains to be disposed	1.25	7	1.17	7	0.98	8	0.29	14
6 Quantity of food grains to be stored	1.31	6	1.20	7	1.03	6	0.39	8.
7 No. of animals to be maintained	1.45	4	1.28	5	1.14	5	0.45	6
8 Time of disposal of produce	1.17	9	1.02	9	1.00	7	0.31	11
9 No. of labourers to be taken for field operation	1.06	10	0.98	12	0.92	10	0.34	10
10 Storage of produce	1.69	3	1.54	2	1.48	2	0.35	9
11 Type of labourers	1.06	10	0.98	12	0.84	12	0.45	6
12 Type of feed to be given to animals	1.22	8	1.23	6	0.92	10	0.31	11
13 Appointment of family labourer	0.98	12	1.02	9	0.95	9	0.54	2
14 Expenditure of additional farm income	0.98	12	1.02	9	0.81	13	0.31	11

* n=64

owning farmers to reduce the number of agricultural labourers.

Role of farming women in decision making in mixed farming

Results depicted in Table 4, reveal that large, small and marginal farm women always participated in taking decisions in areas like care and management of animals, seed selection/use, storage of produce, choice of crops and number of animals to be maintained. In the case of women agricultural labourers, the mean value was very low since majority of them did not take part in taking decisions in the areas identified. Livestock rearing and management related activities are predominantly rural women's responsibility. Major decisions regarding these activities are being taken by male members of the family only after consultation with their wives.

In most of the agricultural communities women have an important role in agricultural

decision making. As indicated by Pradhan (1983), in agriculture, usually there are two types of decisions; labour allocation and agricultural production. Women are actively involved in taking decisions in agricultural production aspects particularly those concerning use of their own or unproved seed and seed selection practices.

Relationship of role participation and participation in decision making with mixed farming productivity

Correlation coefficients were worked out pooling all the four categories of farm women together to find out the relationship of role participation and extent of participation in decision making with mixed farming productivity. The results reveal that participation of farm women in decision making was found to have positive and significant relationship with mixed farming productivity at one per cent level of significance (0.2887) and negatively

related with role performance (-0.1627). In most of the agricultural communities women have an important role in agricultural decision making. They are actively involved in taking decision in agricultural production aspects like

choice of crops, seed selection etc and livestock rearing and management related activities.

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