

## ROLE OF FARM WOMEN IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS OF A FARMING COMMUNITY

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**Abstract:** A study was undertaken among the farm women of Nadar community in Neyyattinkara taluk of Trivandrum district to analyse the role played by them in decision making related to their farm and home. The study revealed that more than 50 per cent of the respondents perceived six areas viz., decisions regarding purchase and sale of land, storage and marketing of produce, care and management of animals, family budget and children's education as very important, whereas decisions regarding plant protection and implements to be used were perceived as not important. Among the 14 areas studied, joint decision was made in purchase and sale of land, care and management of animals and children's education. Independent decisions were made in storage and marketing of produce. Majority of the respondents participated in implementing the decisions, in storage and marketing of produce and care and management of animals.

### INTRODUCTION

The rural women play an important role in agricultural production in India. It has been indicated that in many enterprises, such as crop production, dairying, poultry, etc. women play a dominant role. However, the role of farm women in decision making related to agriculture in Kerala has not been studied by researchers in agricultural extension and as such, can be considered as an unexplored area. A study was conducted in Trivandrum district of Kerala during 1985 among the farm women of a farming community (Nadars) to find out the role perception and role performance of farm women in decision making process and to identify the areas of decision making by farm women related to their socio-economic life. The study also attempted to analyse the extent of participation of farm women in implementing the decisions related to the socio-economic life of Nadar community.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted using systematic random sampling procedure. The two criteria used for selection of the block and the panchayat were (1) the

selected block/panchayat should have high Nadar population, (2) the selected block/panchayat should have more area under paddy. Accordingly Parassala panchayat was purposively selected. Since sample of respondents that could be obtained from one ward was not enough for the study, two wards were purposively selected such that they also fulfilled the criteria. The sample size was fixed as 120 respondents, 60 from Nediyaamkonam ward and 60 from Parasuvakkal ward.

Twelve areas related to agriculture and two areas of non-agricultural nature were identified as the areas of decision making for the study. Role perception was measured by administering the selected 14 decision making areas to the respondents and obtaining their responses regarding the same on a three point continuum viz., very important, important and not important. Role performance was measured as either joint performance by husband and wife or as the independent performance without consultation with husband. In the case of role performance joint/single response to the 14 areas were obtained on a three point continuum as always, sometimes and never.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

More than 50 per cent of the respondents perceived six areas of decision making as 'very important' (Table 1). They were decisions with respect to purchase and sale of land, decisions regarding the storage of produce, decisions with respect to the marketing of produce, decisions regarding care and management of animals, deciding family budget and decisions regarding children's education.

Two decision making areas perceived as 'not important' by about a more than 50 per cent of the respondents were decisions relating to plant protection measures and decisions regarding the type of implements to be used.

It has been brought out that farm women perceived two areas of decision making, viz., family budget and children's education, as very important. This could be explained using Coughenour's (1976) theory of instrumental activity, which narrates that the most important decisions which an individual makes, relate to future commitments and that planned commitments are crucial to future profits. It could be argued that the farm women might have perceived only those roles in which their mothers and grand mothers were involved, as important.

The distribution of respondents based on their role performance presented in Table 2 indicated that more than 50 per cent of the respondents "always" made joint decisions (husband and wife) in the following areas, viz., decisions with respect to purchase and sale of land, decisions regarding care

and management of animals and decisions regarding children's education. At the same time, it was observed that number of respondents making independent decisions in the different areas was negligible.

However, more than one third women made independent decisions regarding storage of produce and also marketing of produce.

Nand and Kumar (1980) had also indicated that most important area in which farm women were found to influence the decision was purchase and sale of land.

More than 90 per cent of the respondents participated in implementing the decisions taken in three areas, viz., storage of produce, marketing of produce and care and management of animals (Table 3). More than 80 per cent of the respondents were found not participating in implementing the decisions in the following areas, viz., selecting the crop and variety to be grown in the field, deciding the type of weeding to be adopted, deciding the type of manures, deciding the plant protection measures, deciding the time of harvest and decisions regarding type of implements to be used. Badiger (1979) obtained similar results. She had indicated that farm women participated independently more in home aspects and joint decisions were more common in farm aspects.

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Table 3. Extent of participation of farm women in implementing the decisions (n = 120)

Sl. No.	Decision making area	Extent					
		Always		Sometimes		Never	
		F	P	F	P	F	P
1.	Selecting the crop and variety to be grown in the field	3	2.50	10	8.33	107	89.17
2.	Deciding the type of weeding to be adopted	6	5.00	9	7.50	105	87.50
3.	Deciding the type of manures/fertilizers to be applied	2	1.67	13	10.83	105	87.50
4.	Deciding the plant protection measures	1	0.83	4	3.33	115	95.83
5.	Deciding the time of harvest	-	-	10	8.33	110	91.63
6.	Decisions regarding the type of implements to be used	1	0.83	3	2.50	116	96.67
7.	Deciding the family budget	53	44.17	63	52.50	4	33.33
8.	Decisions regarding the storage of produce	115	95.83	5	4.17	-	-
9.	Decisions with respect to marketing of produce	115	95.83	5	4.17	-	-
10.	Decisions regarding care and management of animals	110	91.67	10	8.33	-	-

F = frequency

P - percentage

Table 2. Role performance of the farm women in decision making (n = 120)

Decision making area*	Joint						Single					
	Always		Sometimes		Never		Always		Sometimes		Never	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
1	11	9.16	62	51.67	44	36.67	-	-	3	2.50	-	-
2	9	7.50	53	44.17	55	45.83	-	-	2	1.67	1	0.83
3	8	6.67	33	27.50	76	63.33	-	-	2	1.67	1	0.83
4	4	3.33	20	16.67	93	77.50	-	-	1	0.83	2	1.67
5	5	4.17	42	35.00	69	57.50	-	-	3	2.50	1	0.83
6	9	7.50	75	62.50	32	26.66	-	-	3	2.50	1	0.83
7	15	12.50	55	45.83	45	37.50	1	0.83	3	2.50	1	0.83
8	5	4.17	16	13.33	95	79.16	-	-	2	1.67	2	1.67
9	78	65.00	34	28.33	1	0.83	5	4.18	1	0.83	1	0.83
10	50	41.67	15	12.50	1	0.83	52	43.34	1	0.83	1	0.83
11	50	41.67	17	14.17	2	1.67	49	40.83	2	1.67	-	99.99
12	60	50.00	19	15.83	2	1.67	36	30.00	3	2.50	-	-
13	55	45.84	56	46.67	1	0.83	6	5.00	1	0.83	1	0.83
14	62	51.66	48	40.00	3	2.50	5	4.17	2	1.67	-	-

\*For decision making area, See Table 1

F = frequency

P = percentage

Table 1. Role perception of farm women in decision making (n = 120)

Sl. No.	Decision making area	Very important		Important		Not important	
		F	P	F	P	F	P
1	Selecting the crop & variety to be grown in the field	27	22.51	62	51.66	31	25.83
2	Deciding the type of manures and fertilizers to be applied in the field	22	18.33	53	44.16	45	37.50
3	Deciding the type of weeding to be adopted	22	18.33	58	48.33	40	33.33
4	Deciding the plant protection measures	23	19.17	37	30.83	60	50.00
5	Deciding the time of harvest	19	15.83	54	45.00	47	39.17
6	Deciding the wages	43	35.83	45	37.50	32	26.67
7	Deciding the number of hired labourers to be employed	32	26.67	55	45.83	33	27.50
8	Decisions regarding type of implements to be used	28	23.33	29	24.17	63	52.50
9	Decisions with respect to purchase and sale of land	80	66.70	35	29.17	5	4.16
10	Decisions regarding the storage of produce	93	77.50	25	20.83	2	1.67
11	Decisions with respect to marketing of produce	89	74.17	31	25.83	-	-
12	Decisions regarding care and management of animals	91	77.84	28	23.33	1	0.83
13	Deciding family budget	78	65.00	40	33.33	2	1.67
14	Decisions regarding children's education	82	68.33	37	30.83	1	0.83

F = frequency

P = percentage

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