

# Woman's Role in Agriculture: In India



**Shubhangini Saxena**  
Research Scholar,  
Deptt. of Law,  
BPS Mahila University,  
Khanpur, Haryana

## Abstract

Agriculture is the vertical backbone of the country. Major part of the country's population earns its livelihood from agriculture. Our country has a wide and very old setting of agriculture of about 10 thousand years. At present in terms of agriculture production the country holds second position across the world. The agricultural production in India encompasses field crops, fruit crop, plantation crop, livestock, forestry, fishery etc. So overall it is a huge industry which recruits or engages 52 % of overall manpower of India. The rural population of our country is mostly dependent on agricultural activity. In developing countries like India, agriculture continues to absorb and employ 2/3rd of the female work force but fails to give them recognition of employed labour. The female labour force in developing nations still faces the oppressive status of being majorly responsible for family and household maintenance. In addition to that their contribution of being an agriculture labour is suppressed under the status of family labour who work in farm in addition to her regular household chores. These problems of the rural women are further accentuated by the tribulations of illiteracy, underdevelopment, unemployment and poverty. Despite of the major productive women labor force in agriculture their needs and problems are somewhat ignored by the rural development initiatives. The multitasking potentiality of female labour bought significant propositions for agricultural productivity, rural production, economic vitality, household food security, family health, family economic security and welfare. Women constituted 38% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries. It is also estimated that 45.3% of the agricultural labour force consists of women. But a large number of women have remained as "invisible workers".

**Keywords:** Women, India, Agricultural Production, Female labour, Women Farmer, Employment, Differences, Women Education, Gender Equality.

## Introduction

***"Although women do the majority of work in agriculture at the global level, elder men, for the most part, still own the land, control woman's labor, and make agricultural decisions in patriarchal social systems."*** [Carolyn Sachs]

Agriculture can be an important engine of growth and poverty reduction. But the sector is under performing in many countries in part because women, who are often a crucial resource in agriculture and the rural economy, face constraints that reduce their productivity.

In India, in over all farm production, woman's average contribution is estimated at 55% to 66%. In the Indian Himalayas a pair of bullocks works 1064 hours, a man 1212 hours and a woman 3485 hours in a year on a once hectare farm, a figure that illustrates woman's significant contribution to agricultural production. The major role of women in farming & non-farming activities especially in post harvest operations, homestead gardening, livestock and poultry rearing, selling labour etc. The primary need of women working or seeking employment in various agricultural and non-agricultural activities is to meet the family needs and to enhance the family income.<sup>1</sup>

## Aim of the Study

1. To recognize the importance and participation of female labour which is yet invisible and has been considered as the daily routine work of the women.
2. To point out the inequality of wages between male and female labour.
3. To point out the schemes for the welfare of women.

Women provide one half of the labour in rice cultivation in India. In the plantation sector women are the crucial labourers. Depending on the region and crops, woman's contributions vary but they provide pivotal labour from planting to harvesting and post- harvest operations...In rural India, agriculture and allied industrial sectors employ as much as 89.5% of the total female labour.

Given women and men's different roles and access to resources, it is essential that agricultural projects take gender differences into account. Too often, gender is equated with women, but gender is about women and men. Gender refers to the different roles, resources, rights, opportunities and responsibilities of women and men in a society. Decades of research and experience have shown that these differences between women and men are profound in the developing world. Furthermore, women and men face differing constraints and opportunities-especially in terms of their needs for, and access to, services and programs. Because of historic and cultural barriers, without a focus on gender, woman's needs are most often left out.

Women make important contributions to the agricultural and rural economies of all regions of the world. However, the exact contribution both in terms of magnitude and of its nature is often difficult to assess and shows a high degree of variation across countries and regions. This paper presents an overview of the evidence on the roles of women in agriculture and in rural labour markets. It also looks at demographic trends in rural areas with regard to the gender composition of rural populations.

The international development community has recognized that agriculture is an engine of growth and poverty reduction in countries where it is the main occupation of the poor. Women make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies in all developing countries. Their roles vary considerably between and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world, where economic and social forces are transforming the agricultural sector. Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities typically include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes. Many of these activities are not defined as "economically active employment" in national accounts but they are essential to the well being of rural households. This paper contributes to the gender debate in agriculture by assessing the empirical evidence in three areas that has received much attention in the literature: But the agricultural sector in many developing countries is under performing, in part because women, who represent a crucial resource in agriculture and the rural economy through their roles as farmers, labourers and entrepreneurs, almost everywhere face more severe constraints than men in access to productive resources. Efforts by national governments and the international community to achieve their goals for agricultural development, economic growth and food security will be strengthened and accelerated if they build on the contributions that women make and take steps to alleviate these constraints.

The association of women in agriculture is an age-old practice. Since then there has been concern expressed regarding the gap between women's actual economic participation and public perception of it. Women constitute about half of the world's population, their labour contributes to 60 percent of the hours

worked, contributing up to 30 percent of official hours. Yet women receive only 10 per cent of the world's income and own less than one per cent of the world's property.<sup>2</sup>

Swaminathan, the famous agricultural scientist describes that it was woman who first domesticated crop plants and thereby initiated the art and science of farming. While men went out hunting in search of food, women started gathering seeds from the native flora and began cultivating those of interest from the point of view of food, feed, fodder, fibre and fuel. Women have played and continue to play a key role in the conservation of basic life support systems such as land, water, flora and fauna. They have protected the health of the soil through organic recycling and promoted crop security through the maintenance of varietal diversity and genetic resistance. Women are regarded as the backbone of the rural panorama. About 75 percent of the Indian female populations are from rural families, who belonged to the small and marginal farmers and landless agricultural labourers.<sup>3</sup>

That women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields including in the main crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post harvest operations, agro/ social forestry, fisheries, etc. The nature and extent of women's involvement in agriculture, no doubt, varies greatly from region to region. Even within a region, their involvement varies widely among different ecological sub-zones, farming systems, castes, classes and stages in the family cycle. But regardless of these variations, there is hardly any activity in agricultural production, except ploughing in which women are not actively involved. Studies on women in agriculture conducted in India and other developing and under developed countries all point to the conclusion that women contribute far more to agricultural production than has generally been acknowledged. Recognition of their crucial role in agriculture should not obscure the fact that farm women continue to be concerned with their primary functions as wives, mothers and homemakers.

Despite their importance to agricultural production, women face severe handicaps. They are in fact, the largest group of landless labourers with little real security in case of break-up of the family owing to death or divorce; inheritance laws and customs discriminate against them land reform and settlement programmes usually give sole title and hence the security needed for obtaining production credits to the husband. Agricultural development programmes are usually planned by men and aimed at men. Mechanization, for example alleviates the burden of tasks that are traditionally men's responsibility, leaving women's burdens unrelieved or even increased.

Women play an important role in all dimensions of agricultural production-in certain regions, woman's time input equals men's, while in other regions traditions restrict their work to the household where they are involved in crop processing and are in charge of household maintenance. In most cases, woman's efforts are non-monetized although they make large labour contributions to a range of marketed products such as dried fruits, fuel wood, dairy products and handicrafts.

Based on 2012 data, India is home to the fourth largest agricultural sector in the world. India has an estimated 180 million hectares of farmland with 140 million of which are planted and continuously cultivated. Yet India's agricultural profile is shadowed by the controversial impacts of Green Revolution policies that were adopted in the 1960s and 70s with pressure from the United States Agency for International Development and the World Bank.

Woman's participation rate in the agricultural sectors is about 47% in tea plantations, 46.84% in cotton cultivation, 45.43% growing oil seeds and 39.13% in vegetable production.<sup>4</sup> While these crops require labor-intensive work, the work is considered quite unskilled. Women also heavily participate in ancillary agricultural activities. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, Indian women represented a share of 21% and 24% of all fishers and fish farmers, respectively.

Indian agriculture, with its low requirement of skills, and work which can be more easily combined with work at home, is an easy source of work for women, though women are confined to low end jobs like sowing, transplanting, weeding and harvesting. Many women also work as unpaid family labour. While gender wage disparity in all these activities is about the same, with women earning only 70 percent of men's wages, the gap between wages for ploughing earned by males and weeding wages earned by females is Rs. 21.47.

Despite their dominance of the labor force women in India still face extreme disadvantage in terms of pay, land rights, and representation in local farmers organizations. Furthermore their lack of empowerment often results in negative externalities such as lower educational attainment for their children and poor familial health.

The Green Revolution brought a modern approach to agriculture by incorporating irrigation systems, genetically modified seed variations, insecticide and pesticide usage, and numerous land reforms. It had an explosive impact, providing unprecedented agricultural productivity in India and turned the country from a food importer to an exporter. Yet the Green Revolution also caused agricultural prices to drop, which damaged India's small farmers.

India's agricultural sector today still faces issues of efficiency due lack of mechanization with poorer conditions of farmers, as well as small farm sizes. In India traditional agriculture is still dominant as many farmers depend on livestock in crop production, for manure as fertilizers, and the use animal powered ploughs. According to 2011 statistics, the average farm in India is about 1.5 acres, minuscule when compared the average of 50 hectares in France and or 178 hectares in United States and 273 hectares in Canada.<sup>5</sup>

The small farmer tradition of India can be drawn back to the first farm reforms of independent India. Known as the Laws of Divided Inheritance, the reforms were meant to limit the conglomeration of land, by mandating redistribution as land was divided among male inheritors from the prior generation. The perpetuation of these laws not only limits farm size but also bars women from ownership or inheritance. Furthermore, as small farmers face the increasing

competition with larger farm operations an increasing number of men migrate to city centers for higher wages and employment. Women are in turn left to support the family structure and support small farm lifestyle. In 2011, the agricultural sector workforce in the subcontinent was 75% women.<sup>6</sup>

In India, there are distinct male and female roles in the rural economy. Women and girls engage in a number of agro-oriented activities ranging from seedbed preparation, weeding, horticulture and fruit cultivation to a series of post-harvest crop processing activities like cleaning and drying vegetables, fruits and nuts for domestic use and for market. A disproportionate number of those dependent on land are women: 58% of all male workers and 78% of all female workers, and 86% of all rural female workers are in agriculture. Female-headed households range from 20% to 35% of rural households (widows, deserted women as well as women who manage farming when their men migrate). Although the time devoted by both women and men in agricultural activities may, in several communities and agricultural situations, be taken to be almost equal, women are dominant within the domestic tasks. Rural Indian women are extensively involved in agricultural activities, but the nature and extent of their involvement differs with variations in agro-production systems.

The level of lower skill and education level is highlighted by the fact that 52-75 per cent of women engaged in agriculture are illiterate. This also implies that they are less able to shift easily to other higher skilled jobs, for example, in the services sector. This makes them dependent on agriculture and on its stable growth for survival.

There are community-based differences regarding woman's participation in agriculture, therefore location, cropping patterns, ethnic affiliation and economic and educational background also have implications for the specific division of labour within a given family unit. Usually, woman's representation is greater in allied agriculture than in grain production, and poor households require the greater involvement of women in income-generating activities than financially stable ones.

The role of women in agricultural production is largely determined by the life-cycle of the household, location of household fields and other tasks that women undertake during the agricultural year. Their traditional role as primary seed-keepers and seed-processors is well known in our society. They have conventionally been both experts and producers of food from seed to kitchen, and as globalization shifts agriculture into capital-intensive mode, women bear the disproportionate costs of both displacement and health hazards. They carry the heavier work burden in food production and, because of gender discrimination, get lower returns for their work. However, when addressed in a woman-centric manner, the potential for increased productivity, restoration of ecological balance, for high positive social impacts like increased status, self-confidence and food security for communities, all increase much more tangibly than working in a gender-neutral manner. It has been reported that output could be increased by as much as 10-20% if inputs were

reallocated from plots controlled by men to those controlled by women. Women also put land to more sustainable use. The arguments for land fragmentation do not hold much ground given the outweighing advantages of land ownership vesting with women.

#### **Various roles of Women**

1. Agriculture: Sowing, transplanting, weeding, irrigation, fertilizer application, plant protection, harvesting, winnowing, storing etc.
2. Domestic: Cooking, child rearing, water collection, fuel wood gathering, household maintenance etc.
3. Allied Activities: Cattle management, fodder collection, milking etc. Mainly rural women are engaged in agricultural activities in three different ways depending on the socioeconomic status of their family and regional factors. They are work as:
  1. Paid Labourers
  2. Cultivator doing labour on their own land and
  3. Managers of certain aspects of agricultural production by way of labour supervision and the participation in post harvest operations.

The mode of female participation in agricultural production varies with the land-owning status of the farm household. Woman's roles range from managers to landless labourers. In all farm production, the average contribution of women is estimated at 50% to 60% of total labour, much higher in certain regions. Girls are preferred in cottonseed production because their wages are lower than those of adults. Moreover, they work longer hours and more intensively, and are generally easier to administer. Gathering of fuel wood is the exclusive responsibility of women and girls. In general, male activities such as land preparation, planting, sowing, and fertilizer application are one-time jobs, usually accomplished within a stipulated time. Female activities, however, such as weeding, are recurrent daily activities, lasting from the time the seed is planted until it is harvested.

Women constitute approximately 70% of the agricultural labour force, and perform more than 70% of farm labour in less industrialized Asia. In India, women constitute approximately 50% of agricultural and livestock workers. A general pattern in India and throughout Asia is that the poorer the area, the higher the contribution of women, largely as subsistence farmers who work small pieces of land of less than 0.2 hectares. While the rate of feminization of agricultural labour differs across regions, it reflects common circumstances-increased employment of women on a casual basis in small unregulated workplaces-and common causes for distress migration of men for better paid work in agriculture and non-agriculture sectors. These factors are often combined with the relegation of less profitable crop production to women.

Woman's role in agricultural operations, animal husbandry and other economically productive activities is very significant. They contribute about 60-70 percent of the labour required for these activities thus playing a pivotal role in sustaining economy. The decision making process is an important segment of every household because it makes implementation of a plan or programme quite easy. In rural areas of the country, both husband and wife are jointly responsible for making decisions on matters like family obligations,

specific housing charges and purchase of household articles. However, women's suggestions are not given due consideration in the decisions pertaining to agricultural sector and important family matters. It is because the majority of women are illiterate, have little time to know about the latest techniques of farming and restricted mobility due to several cultural taboos.

Generally, women have less access to information about technology by virtue of their inferior educational status and relative isolation from public life. Thus, there is a hesitation to come out and interact. At times, even the suggestions of knowledgeable rural women are ignored or are not taken seriously because men consider it disgraceful to accept the decision of women. This is because traditionally men have been major lawmakers of society. Many policies and decisions neglect women and undermine their abilities and roles.

#### **Special Initiatives for Women**

1. National Commission for Women In January 1992, the Government set-up this statutory body with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary etc.
2. Reservation for Women in Local Self-Government The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 by Parliament ensure one third of the total seats for women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas.
3. The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000 AD) The plan of action is to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for the girl child.
4. National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001 The Department of Women & Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development has prepared a National Policy for the Empowerment of Women in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

#### **Integrated Rural Development Programmes (IRDP)**

IRDP is a beneficiary oriented programme with the objective of assisting the families below the income level of Rs. 11,000/- per year and 30% benefits are allocated for women. Under the programme, income generating assets are being provided to the beneficiaries with a package of assistance consisting of subsidy from the District Rural Development Agencies besides term loan from the bank.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Training for Rural Youth Self-Employment (TRYSEM)**

The programme is to train rural youth in the age group of 18 to 35 years for the provision of self/wage employment. Under this programme the youth are imparted training in more than 25 trades and 40 percent of funds allocated under this scheme is meant for women. The expenditure to implement this programme is shared equally by the Central and State Governments. Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas.

**(DWCRA)**

The DWCRA Scheme, as a sub-scheme of IRDP was introduced in 1983-84. The programme is meant for the development of women and children in rural areas by providing a revolving fund of Rs. 25,000/- to a group of 10-15 women belonging to poverty group for undertaking economic activities and ancillary services like nutrition, health, child care, family welfare, immunisation, literacy, adult education facilities which are covered for the beneficiary family.<sup>8</sup>

The DWCRA scheme is implemented by the District Rural Development Agencies (DRDA) through Mandal Praja Parishads. For implementation of the scheme a women Project Officer was appointed.<sup>9</sup> The objectives of this programme are:

1. To strengthen the economic base for rural women by providing them credit and subsidies.
2. To train them in productive skills and group dynamics.
3. To provide support and help to the Rural Women for enhancing their productive skills and capabilities.
4. To enable rural women to improve their economic capacity.
5. To orient the development functionaries to respond positively the needs and constraints of poor women.<sup>10</sup>

**Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY)**

The Mahila Samridhi Yojana is a centrally sponsored scheme, which was launched on 2-10-1993. Through MSY, every rural woman aged 18 and above can open an MSY account of money she can save. The government would contribute an incentive money of 25% of her savings. For an amount upto Rs. 300/- kept in the account for a lock in period of one year, that is, the deposits have to remain in account for a period of 12 months and the maximum participation of government is limited to Rs. 75/- per year. The department of Women and Child Development under the ministry of Human Resource Development gets the scheme implemented through the network of 1.32 lakh post offices of the Department of Posts functioning in the rural areas.<sup>11</sup> An important aspect of the programme is that of involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at all levels. NGOs will hold awareness generation camps in villages through which they would mobilize women to take up savings as a conscious choice.

**Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY)**

Indira Mahila Yojana is another women development programme initiated by the Government, which was launched in August 1995 in more than 200 blocks of the country. The main objective of this programme is to give a forward thrust to the women education, awareness income-generation capacities and the empowerment of women. The platforms for the forward thrust are to be the selfhelp groups at the gross-root level. Under this scheme women are to be constituted into Mahila Block Societies (MBS) at the Anganwadi level. At the grass-root level under every Anganwadi there should be women's self-help groups. The Mahila Groups will be encouraged to take up some thrift activity also. The fund so collected over a period can be revolved amongst the members for financial support to the expansion of their income

# Remarking

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generation activities or also for starting of a new activity. The groups can also avail credit facilities from State and National level lending institutions like Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), Social board, etc. the government of India affords a group with financial support to a tune of 312 Rs. 5,000/-. Thus, the IMY is a strategy to co-ordinate and integrate components of all sectoral programmes taken up by women.<sup>12</sup>

**Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)**

The Rashtriya Mahila Kosh was established by the Department of Women and Child Development, under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, for the purpose of delivery of credit through women's development corporations / non - governmental organisations and self-help groups to 2 lakh poor women from both rural and urban areas whose family income does not exceed Rs. 11,000/- per annum in rural areas and Rs. 11,800/- per annum in urban areas. The interest charged is 12% per annum to the ultimate borrower women and 8% to the NGOs and the corporations. The woman development corporation has been sanctioned a loan of Rs. 20 lakh from RMK to lend through self-help group Mahila Mandals for covering 1000 women.<sup>13</sup>

**Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)**

The Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) was launched in April 1999 after restructuring the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and allied programmes. It is the only Self Employment Programme currently being implemented for the rural poor. The objective of the SGSY is to bring the assisted swarozgaris above the poverty line by providing them income generating assets through bank credit and government subsidy. The scheme is being implemented on cost sharing basis of 75:25 between the Centre and States. Upto December 2007, 27.37 lakh self-help groups (SHGs) have been formed and 93.21 lakh swarozgaris have been assisted with a total outlay of Rs. 19,340.32 crore.<sup>14</sup>

In concise planned development has been considered to be the most effective way of solving the numerous problems come in the way of eradicating poverty, reducing imbalances and preventing discriminations among vast number of poor people living in rural areas, especially of rural poor women folk. In this process various policies and programmes intended for empowerment of women have been implemented for which special budget allocations are made in Five Year Plans. Besides, various schemes are being implemented to uplift socio-economic status of rural poor women and paving a path for their empowerment. Thus the government has been making sincere efforts to empower women in socio-economic and politico-cultural aspects, so that a welfare state and a prosperous nation can be built.

World Trade Organization (WTO) has provided a powerful forum for developed countries to erode the economic sovereignty of the Third World Countries including ours. Our market has been forced open for goods and services of the multinationals particularly holders of the monopoly rights in intellectual property services. Trade liberalization is ruining the small and cottage industries and endangering the livelihood of the vast masses engaged in eking out existence in the self-employed sector of our economy. The media and large industries

are facing stiff import competition and the brunt is being borne by the workers facing not only deprivation of their hard earned rights and entitlements, but also retrenchment and lay-offs.

The present phase of globalization in India since 1991 has been going on in other parts of the world much longer. It is being overseen by Multinational Institutions like IMF, and World Bank. Because these institutions represent the interest of International Finance Capital, they have prescribed to all developing economics a uniform package of policies, which are not based on the specifications of these economics. Their view is clear, if an economy is facing problem it is because its structure is not suitable to the one required by the dominant world economic interest. Thus, the prescription is that the structure of the economy has to be adjusted to that required for its incorporation into the world markets. This is what the WTG is forcing on all economics and that is what the World Bank prescribes as Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) the interests of the local population of the countries undertaking SAP or implementing the WTG provisions do not matter. Today, a large majority of Indian do not know what the New Economic Policies' launched in 1991 are or what does WTG stand for. They do not know that it is setting the agenda for the way they will live and work for the next fifty years or more. They do not know that WTO is changing the rules in the direction that are weighted against them. It is not just the common people who find things difficult to understand, even well educated people find hard to comprehend our legislator and policy makers are also confused. Parliamentarian failed to understand the issue. Whenever any discussion took place, these had been piecemeal.

### **FAO's advocacy for Gender Equality**

"FAO advocates gender equality and promotes the economic and social empowerment of rural women. By actively focusing attention on the discrimination rural women face daily, FAO supports government efforts to ensure that their policies and programmes promote and support women as equal contributors to agriculture and rural development." [Food and Agriculture Organisation]

The EU India FTA is expected to lead to a loss in terms of India's trade balance and while EU's market share in India's agricultural trade will increase, India's market share will not change (CEPII-CERM 2007). ECORYS et al (2009) also predict a worsening of trade balance and a long run decline in employment. India will also have to lower its barriers considerably more than the EU and reducing applied tariffs (as opposed to bound tariffs) means a loss of actual protection and flexibilities in protection options. It is evident that the products in which EU has an advantage (especially in higher value added ones) are the products in which India currently has high barriers. Removal of tariffs after the FTA will give unfettered access to these product markets. As our study pointed out many of these are gender sensitive products. Therefore, India's trade with EU after the FTA is expected to have a significant impact on women farmers in agriculture and also on women workers in agro processing.

In addition, EU's substantial domestic subsidies and high NTBS in the form of sanitary and phyto sanitary standards and other technical barriers pose more problems for smaller and women farmers. The WTO and TRIPS, Agreement on agriculture and the Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary agreement have already affected woman's livelihoods in India. The FTA moves further in this direction. Liberalization of investment can further skew access to critical resources like land and natural resources, in addition to replacing women from labour intensive process through increased mechanization. Strong IPRs also intrinsically work against women by increasing control over knowledge and technology to which they already have unequal access. It also limits their ability to freely use traditional plants and cultivation methods and help sustain their families. The EU-India FTA provides stronger provisions in all these areas and is likely to further in-equalize woman's access to livelihood, food and basic resources.

### **Conclusion**

It is necessary to provide support to those woman's organizations and farmers who promote new conceptual and development programs and who contribute to the implementation of new ideas by women with a view to diversifying income-generating activities and the provision of other services in rural areas. It is extremely important to recognize the role that rural women play and the contribution that they make in networks and cooperatives, giving them greater political and financial support and involving them in the training and conducting of development programs that enhance woman's role in agricultural production. Networks operating in rural areas, especially rural woman's organizations, are partners to be involved in the conception of development programs. These organizations must be aware of the local reality. To put it another way, even though global partnerships will always be necessary and useful, such organizations should work towards the empowerment of rural women since actions are always local.

Women are more vulnerable because they have lower skills and a significant adversity in access to productive resources. Therefore either they are easily displaced or in many cases, underpaid. Shifts necessitated by trade liberalization, are costly to women as because of lack of resources and skills, as well as family duties, they find it difficult to shift both between locations (rural to urban) as well as between sectors (agriculture to services). In the light of the above discussion, India needs to seriously consider its options in liberalizing agricultural trade. Protecting livelihoods and food security of large sections of the poor and vulnerable sections like women, needs a well thought out and long term strategy. In a country where rural poverty is already very high,<sup>1</sup> rural-urban inequality is rising, and there is relative agricultural stagnation, any trade policy must be developed in conformity with a strong and pre-planned development policy. In the field of agriculture, the policy efforts still remain sporadic and investments remain inadequate, resulting in inadequate preparedness for such an ambitious FTA with EU.

Women participation in agriculture will be acknowledged when women farmer will actively

participate to build and improve their knowledge and gain access to new and necessary information to make use of most of them in their farming activities. By linking the knowledge and information flow amongst women socio-economic progress can be achieved.<sup>15</sup>

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