



## **An Exploration on Feminization of Agriculture and their Involvement in Agricultural Workforce: Perceptivity Analysis on unseen Partners**

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**ABSTRACT:** The present manuscript investigates on empowerment of farm women and their involvement in agricultural workforce, who has long been a part as unseen partners. Women are the pillar of agrarian sector in India. Feminization is the increase in the farm related activities carried out by women, but is increment in feminization of agriculture reason for women empowerment? Feminization and empowerment are not positively correlated to each other, especially in the case of paid employment. There are lots of schemes for women farmers offered by the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (DA & FW), Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare that encourage 30% expenditure on women with the help of State and other implementing agencies. But, alarmingly Gender Pay Gap in terms of gross median wage per hour of Rs. 30.3 (22.35%) was found at pan-India level. In furtherance, Agriculture women's workers as share of all workers (%) were analyzed and it was found that top 10 states where women involvement in farm related activities was least were Haryana (13.23%, ranked 1<sup>st</sup> from the bottom), Assam, Tripura, Dadar & Nagar Haveli, J&K, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Bihar (20.82%, ranked 10<sup>th</sup> from the bottom). Thus, the research suggests that after doing the perceptivity analysis men and women (particularly men) in these 10 lagging states should be sensitized in order to boost the women participation in agricultural workforce.

**Keywords:** Economic survey, Feminization, Empowerment, Perceptivity Analysis, Women Farmers.

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Researchers across the globe recognize that agriculture is gendered in developing countries. It is widely recognized that agriculture's increasing reliance on women's labour might be referred to as "feminization of agriculture". However, there are other ways to understand the term, and scholars express concern about its meaning. Feminization of agriculture, in other words, women have capacity to do household chores with farm related activities because of the multitude of activities they undertake in their traditional and gendered roles [9, 34]. Feminism in agriculture can mean many things. The increase in female share can be attributed to either a higher female rate of activity or a decrease in the participation rate of men in agriculture or self-employment or as waged agricultural workers.

Farmer suicides, declining land-holdings, food price inflation, relative increase in farm incomes, and inflation of production cost are some of the issues facing Indian farming etc [7, 8, 16, 22, 28]. As a result of these agricultural crises, rural men had to seek other livelihood opportunities, causing them to migrate to urban areas in search of jobs, leaving women to do agricultural work [2, 36]. Consequently, rural women are becoming more involved in agriculture, and this has made us curious about how women are balancing agricultural and household activities and how women enjoy the autonomy in their households and communities is affected by their participation [31]. It has been proven that feminization changes property relations, including the increase in female ownership. Further, it is manifested that feminization offers women the ability to control their own work, and to take up

leadership roles, as well as enhancing their awareness of their activities, needs, and aspirations [1, 6, 18]. Bridging the gender gap and empowering women with updated technology and knowledge is a difficult challenge, particularly in light of socioeconomic and climate change conditions [26]. Farm women faced a variety of problems, including distributing fertilizers and having inadequate capital [35].

In spite of this, we cannot say that feminization and empowerment are positively correlated to each other, especially in the case of paid employment [14]. Currently, the growing number of women employed has small and menial amounts of pay, which does not entitle them to all rights to empowerment. Despite having land in their names, women might not actually have control over that land, men decide on cropping patterns, the sale of land and the mortgage, or the purchase of equipment and instruments of production. In our society, land inequality is one of the most crucial areas of inequality for rural women due to unequal access to opportunities like credit, skills, and other inputs. This goes a long way towards greater socio-economic inequality for rural women in India. Only a small part of the wage gap can be explained by differences in characteristics and endowments. In general, the geographic variation in wages is essentially unexplained, since it is dominated by the unexplained component. Rural societies in Asia are characterized by unequal distribution of unpaid care (e.g., looking after children, the sick, and the elderly) and reproduction (e.g., cooking, cleaning, fetching water, collecting fuel) work [10, 11, 19] due to patriarchal gender norms. Unpaid work associated with household and care activities are performed by women 2.5 times more frequently than by men. The gender gap is much greater in Asia. Several Asian countries have statistics showing that women spend as much as 10 times as much time on household chores as men do (e.g., Pakistan, India and Cambodia). The prime reason why women are less likely to participate in paid work than men is reproductive and caring work.

**Need for Feminization of Agriculture Sector.** Farm livelihoods are headed by females in about 20 per cent of cases due to widowhood, desertion or male emigration.

— The majority of women-headed households cannot access extension services, farmers' assistance institutions, and other production assets like seeds, water, credits, subsidies, etc. female farm workers generally earn less than their male counterparts.

**Agencies promoting the Women Farmers.** There are lots of schemes for women farmers of the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (DA & FW), Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare [23] that encourages 30% expenditure on women with the help of State and other implementing agencies. These schemes are helpful for promoting awareness on mass media, extension programmes for extension reforms

and mechanization. A scheme "Mahila Kisan Sahaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP)" as a sub scheme of Deen Dayal Antrodya Yojana- National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) initiated from The Department of Rural Development. Main aim of this scheme is to increase the participation and productivity of farm women by providing additional support over and above the male farmers.

In India, various research done on farm women found that there is a greater involvement of women in different agricultural operations. They estimated that policy action could increase the involvement of women to as high as 70% in actual farm work. Furthermore, they find that land ownership, age and family income have a major impact on women's involvement in agriculture [5]. Women's involvement in agrarian sector is very important. Conventionally, they prepared food for her family. Women bear a heavier workload in food processing, but earn lower returns for their work due to gender discrimination. Women's multiple roles contribute to a major contribution to the efficient structure in real terms. But it is unfortunate that her position in the male dominated culture is not adequately recognized and her contribution is not properly trained. In dairy farming, the maximum role and participation of rural women is granted. The study showed that women's involvement in the treatment of pregnant animals was the highest (91.66 percent). The research also found that 90% of women were actively involved in the process of milking the animals [29]. Shukla *et al.*, (2022) [33] reviewed rural Women and ICT Use in Uganda and pointed out that community participation increased due to the intervention.

The majority of the rural population relies entirely on farming, which is considered as a career that is strongly male dominated. The 'unseen partners' in agriculture in Punjab have long been women. Their position was limited to daughters or farmwives. With changing times, however, women are getting out of traditional roles and freely taking ownership of the state's farmland. Women are now operating farms in the state that welcomed the Green Revolution during the 1960s, determining crop patterns, finding marketing avenues and setting new and creative strategies in the food technology industry. A List of awards bagged by women is an indicator of the changing agricultural situation in the state. They are no longer only known as farmers' wives or daughters and they no longer limit themselves to tiny field work. More and more women are boldly operating farm operations in Punjab today to receive rich returns. Women from rural communities are now making their presence known in different jobs and occupations with the expansion of education and knowledge, and consequently contributing to the economic wellbeing of their families. But with respect to the conventional and most popular occupation of rural Punjab citizens, i.e. Agriculture is concerned and continues to dent its position. In general, women from

farming families are not viewed as contributing to agriculture. Even if they are employees, they're never regarded as earners. In the case of housewives, this applies even more [30].

Income and household expenses and possessions show elements of income instability and provide an additional indicator of inequality [21]. Women have shown on different occasions that they can step up farm machineries but contribution is less recognized [32]. Despite of greater agricultural economics patterns role of women in farming and raising animals do not differ substantially. Though role of women in farm related activities was high but their involvement in decision making are not substantial [27]. Around 52% workers were involved in agriculture and allied sectors. Agricultural workers were rural groups such as small, marginal farmers, sharecroppers, the unemployed and the landless. They receive very less wages, wage disparities between men and women, a non-standard and nonfunctioning working day and a lack of dignity [13]. The Economic Survey 2017-18 cites a study by the OECD revealed that the share of women work participation had decreased gradually over year, from

36 per cent to 24 per cent in a decade, indicating a decrease of 33.3 percent in Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP) in 10 years [15, 24]. Female workers are also the most insecure of the workforce, as the Survey Report states, as they are employed in the least stable, informal, unskilled occupations, involved in low productivity and low-paying jobs.

As evident in the Table 1 one can observe that gender gap had been changed from 26.1 per cent to 27.8 per cent from 2001 to 2011. While, gross median wage per hour in INR for 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' occupation for men and women was Rs. 135.6 and Rs. 105.3 respectively thus denoting Gender Pay Gap of Rs. 30.3 (22.35%) [37] where, n=78 denotes the sample size for Gender Pay Gap (GPG) having 62 Males & 16 females (Table 1).

As evident from Table 2 the involvement of women in various farm-related activities varies from one region to another region. Top 5 states where women involvement in farm related activities was very least were Haryana (13.23 per cent), Assam (14 per cent), Tripura (14.05 per cent), Jammu & Kashmir (14.17 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (14.70 per cent).

**Table 1: Waged agricultural workers and gender gap in India (Comparing 2001, 2011 and 2018).**

| Sex     | 2001 (%) | Gender Gap (%) | 2011 (%) | Gender Gap (%) | 2018      | GPG (%) |
|---------|----------|----------------|----------|----------------|-----------|---------|
| Persons | 39.1     | 26.1           | 39.8     | 27.8           | n=78      | 22.35   |
| Male    | 51.7     |                | 53.3     |                | Rs. 135.6 |         |
| Female  | 25.6     |                | 25.5     |                | Rs. 105.3 |         |

Source: [3, 4, 37].

**Table 2: Top 10 states from the bottom with respect to Agriculture workers as share of total workers, 2011.**

| States               | Agriculture workers as share of all workers (%) | Men as share of agricultural workers (%) | Women as share of agricultural workers (%) | Agriculture women's workers as share of all workers (%) | Rank |
|----------------------|---|--|--|---|------|
| Haryana              | 45.0  | 70.6                                     | 29.4                                       | 13.23   | I    |
| Assam                | 49.3  | 71.6                                     | 28.4                                       | 14.00   | II   |
| Tripura              | 44.2  | 68.2                                     | 31.8                                       | 14.05   | III  |
| Dadar & Nagar Haveli | 29.2  | 51.7                                     | 48.3                                       | 14.10   | IV   |
| J&K                  | 41.5  | 65.8                                     | 34.2                                       | 14.19   | V    |
| Uttar Pradesh        | 59.3  | 75.2                                     | 24.8                                       | 14.70   | VI   |
| Gujarat              | 49.6  | 64.2                                     | 35.8                                       | 17.75   | VII  |
| Tamil Nadu           | 42.1  | 54.7                                     | 45.3                                       | 19.07   | VIII |
| Karnataka            | 49.3  | 58.5                                     | 41.5                                       | 20.45   | IX   |
| Bihar                | 73.6  | 71.7                                     | 28.3                                       | 20.82   | X    |
| <b>India</b>         | <b>54.6</b>                                     | <b>62.9</b>                              | <b>37.1</b>                                | <b>20.25</b>  |      |

It was also the part of the investigation that what was Agriculture women's workers as share of all workers (%) so it was analyzed and it was found that top 10 states where women involvement in farm related activities was least were Haryana (13.23%, ranked 1<sup>st</sup>

from the bottom), Assam, Tripura, Dadar & Nagar Haveli, J&K, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Bihar (20.82%, ranked 10<sup>th</sup> from the bottom) (Fig. 1).

## Agriculture women's workers share in Workforce (In %)

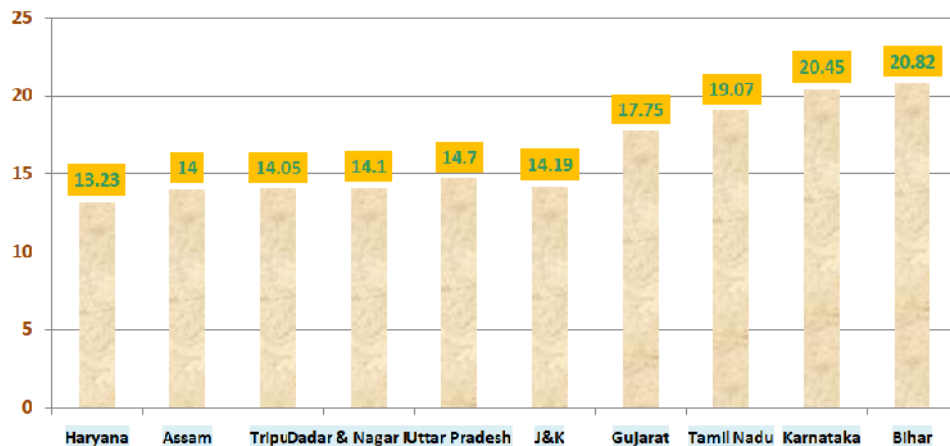


Fig. 1. Agriculture women's workers as share of all workers in % (10 ranked states from bottom).

### CONCLUSION

Migration of male workforce is the main cause of feminization. Though we cannot say it is feminization of agriculture because empowerment and feminization are not positively correlated because women's workforce is always underpaid. For the improvement of farm women's situation on agricultural activities government are now emphasis on gender budgeting and also developing new technologies for women which will be suitable for farm women. In the New India, rural women are key stakeholders in the agricultural sector. In order to improve agriculture productivity and build an empowered nation, rural farm women (unseen partners) should be acknowledged and mainstreamed by ensuring access to resources, education, health facilities, ownership rights, and skill development.

### FUTURE SCOPE

Feminization of agriculture is the need of the hour. More the women involvement in agricultural workforce better will be the GDP growth and soon India will realize it's 5 trillion dollar economy dream before 2025-26 and then they will not be known as unseen partners.

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