

## General Studies – 1; Topic: Role of women

### Role of Women in Indian Agriculture

#### 1) Introduction

- In order to awaken the people, it is the woman who has to be awakened. Once she is on move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves - Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru
- The women is the backbone of agricultural workforce and are a vital part of Indian economy.
- When women are empowered and can claim their rights and access to land, leadership, opportunities and choices, economies grow, food security is enhanced and prospects are improved for current and future generations
- Woman plays a vital role, because agriculture is largely a household enterprise.
- Key role of women include their contribution in the field of agriculture, food security, horticulture, dairy, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, and other allied sectors.

#### 2) Women in Agriculture

- Swaminathan, the famous agricultural scientist describes that it was woman who first domesticated crop plants and thereby initiated the art and science of farming.
- Maintaining the ancillary branches in this sector, like animal husbandry, fisheries and vegetable cultivation, depends almost solely on women.
- On an average woman spends nearly 3300 hours in the field in a crop season as against 1860 hours by a man.
- 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.
- According to the agriculture census of 2010-11, only 12.69 percent of rural women have operational land ownership.
- Farm women felt the impact on their children's education to a large extent, as they were able to provide them with better educational facilities as well as chances to get an education outside the village.

#### 3) Concerns / Challenges

- The 2011 census figures list only 32.8 per cent women formally as primary workers in the agricultural sector, in contrast to 81.1 per cent men.
- But the undeniable fact remains that women work harder and longer than male farmers.
- Men get more than their share of visibility on TV, in governmental publicity material and within the banking sectors but millions of women farmers have no spokesperson from their ranks.
- Women are usually not listed as primary earners and owners of land assets within their families.
- So getting loans, participating in mandi panchayats, assessing and deciding the crop patterns, and bargaining for MSPs (minimum support prices), loans and subsidies, remain male activities.
- Over the last decade, as farming became less and less profitable and small and marginal farmers began migrating to cities, rural jobs for full-time women daily-wage labourers in the agricultural sector have shrunk alarmingly.
- Gender wage gap is highest in agricultural sector.
- In the wake of the severe water crisis several women agricultural labourers have to shift professions and they find it difficult to adapt themselves to any other work apart from farming.

## 4) Way Forward

- **Skill empowerment**
  - a. Training in the area of Field operations, Conservation of biodiversity and Organic farming etc.
- **Technology development for women**
  - a. Designing of tools for various field operations
  - b. Providing Veterinary knowledge
- **Creation of self help groups**
  - a. For financial support
  - b. For generation of employment
- **Projection of contribution of women by collecting and analysing data**
  - a. Projection of successful women in agriculture
  - b. Representation of their contribution in economic terms
- **Providing Financial Powers**
  - a. Giving representation in land holdings
  - b. Accessibility to Bank loans
- Changes in legal, financial, and educational systems must be undertaken in order to enhance women's social and economic contributions
- Provide support to those women's organizations and farmers who promote new conceptual and development programs and who contribute to the implementation of new ideas
- Diversifying income-generating activities and the provision of other services in rural areas.
- Participation in policies that benefit rural women can ensure truthful answers being given to this vulnerable group.
- Governments have a key role to play in supporting the access to land, water and seeds to rural women who are involved in small-scale agriculture.
- The farmer has traditionally never wanted anything from a government except a fair support price
- The training of rural women is very important, especially with the adoption of modern agricultural techniques that are tailored to local conditions, with a view to achieving economic development without degrading the environment.

## 5) Measures Taken by the Government for Upliftment of Women in Agriculture Sector

- The Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare implements various programmes of farmers including women in agriculture sector.
- As per directives for the Women Component Plan, the State Governments have been asked to ensure flow of funds to the tune of 30% for the benefit of women farmers.
- **Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP)**
  - a. Empower women in agriculture by making systematic investments to enhance their participation and productivity
  - b. Create and sustain agriculture based livelihoods of rural women.
- **National Food Security Mission (NFSM)**
  - a. Providing cropping system based training to women farmers to create awareness on improved technology for increasing production and productivity of crops.
- **National Horticulture Mission**
  - a. Women are organized into Self Help Groups and farm inputs and technological & extension supports are provided to make women self-reliant.
- ICAR- Central Institute for Women in Agriculture (ICAR-CIWA) has been in the forefront undertaking research on issues affecting women in agriculture.