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PROBLEMS OF WOMEN FARMERS IN AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

The role of women in agricultural production is largely determined by the lifecycle 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. Women play an important role in all dimensions of agricultural production – in certain regions, today's women 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. The current study was carried out to find the Problems of women farmers in Agricultural activities-reference to H.D.Kote taluk of Mysore region.

Keywords: Health Issue, Agriculture, Women farmers, pesticides

INTRODUCTION

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, and 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 per cent of all male workers and 78 per cent of all female workers, and 86 per cent of all rural female workers are in agriculture. Female-headed households range from 20 per cent to 35 per cent 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. There are community–based differences regarding women'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, women'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.

Farming needs promotion to increase women's productive role in agriculture, decrease health hazards from chemicals, and avoid a drain on scarce family income to pay for unnecessary agricultural inputs. There is a wage disparity based on gender which must be addressed. One solution is for minimum support prices to be fixed for the plantation sector (such as tea,

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coffee, rubber, areca nut and cardamom) in which a large number of women are directly and actively involved. Empowering women farmers with landholding rights and joint bank accounts with their husbands would go a long way towards achieving gender equity in Indian agriculture. Therefore, effective land rights for women – not just in law, but in practice – seem to be the crux of the matter. This is not just for the welfare, equality and empowerment of women but also for efficiency in land use. There is empirical evidence to suggest that women can give increased.

The world has witnessed great changes in agriculture particularly in the last 40 years. Today in many parts of the world, agriculture is becoming increasingly mechanized with wide use of fertilizers and pesticides. Change in agricultural work practices, while improving agricultural production, may bring with it a risk of adverse health effects. Agricultural work today is best considered as a spectrum of activities in which, from the health standpoint, four aspects are of particular importance: **1. activity, 2. scale, 3. technology and 4. Workforce**

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kumar, A. (2011) analyzed that rural poverty and agriculture growth in India and several efforts and inventions by the Govt. departments, National and International Agencies and Civil societies continuous to persist in India. The study has brought out the importance of agriculture productivity, farm wages and rural literacy.

Sharma, J.L. (2011), analyzed that Public Investment in Agriculture Sector of Punjab, to meet the more diverse and difficult challenges in agriculture, adequate financial support is required, but it is much below that required level. Therefore, Govt. has to create a favourable policy and development support environment for private sector to fill the investment gap in agriculture sector

Singh, S. (2011), found that Institutional and Policy Aspects of Punjab Agriculture: A Smallholder Perspective concluded that the policy either ignores smallholders or pays lip service to their concerns. Smallholders are not organised and farmers unions have not represented their interests separately though everything is said to be in the name of small farmers.

Thesa (2005) reported that the plight of farm women in a developing rural country. These can be summarized as heavy burden of work, poor nutrition, and low social status compared to their male counterparts, poor returns for their labour, and inequitable distribution of resources between men of lack of leisure time.

Chauhan (2006) reported that favourable mass media exposure had shown valuable impact in improving level of scientific orientation, credit, innovation properness, and attitude towards modern agriculture, overall modernization and knowledge as well as adoption of modern practices of agriculture of the farmers.

Loureiro (2009) said that agriculture is one of the most hazardous productive sectors around the world. Most previous studies have focused on health issues of farmers in developing countries, while little attention has been paid to farmer's health conditions on agricultural productivity in Norway.

Employing stochastic frontier regression techniques, we conclude that differences in farmers' health help to explain the variance in agricultural production efficiency.

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OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the socio – economic conditions of women farmers in agricultural activities.
2. To evaluate the problems of women in Agricultural activities in the study area.
3. To discover solutions to the difficulties faced by women farmers in the H.D.Kote taluk.

METHODOLOGY

H.D.Kote taluk of Mysore region was chosen as locale of the study because this taluk has more women farmers and they were engaged in agricultural activities. The Present study was carried out by descriptive type of survey method.110 women respondents were selected for study purpose. respondents were selected according to dependent and independent variables namely age, education, family income, size of land holding etc.The source of data collected from respondents through questionnaire basis and survey reports respectively. Simple percentage, Average, weighted mean, Rank calculation methods were used to analyse the data

WEIGHTED MEAN

It is average which is calculated on the basis and coding. If X1, X2, X3, Xn,

are the codes and W1 + W2 + W3 …… Wn are their respective weights, then:

$$\text{Weighted mean} = \frac{W1X1 + W2X2 + W3X3 + \ldots WnXn}{W1 + W2 + W3 \ldots\ldots Wn} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} W1X1}{W1}$$

Rank

Ranks were calculated from the value obtained from the weighted mean scores. So, ranks were given on the basis of the highest to the lowest frequency/mean score.

Profile of the study area

Heggadadevanakote or H.D.Kote is a town and a taluk headquarters in Mysore district in the Indian state of Karnataka. Kakana kote forest lies in Heggadadevana kote taluk. H.D Kote city is divided into 13 wards for which elections are held every 5 years.

As of 2011, has population of 14,313 of which 7,184 are males while 7,129 are females as per report released by Census India 2011. Population of Children with age of 0-6 is 1662 which is 11.61 % of total population of Heggadadevankote (TP). In Heggadadevankote Town Panchayat, Female Sex Ratio is of 992 against state average of 973. Moreover Child Sex Ratio in Heggadadevankote is around 962 compared to Karnataka state average of 948. Literacy rate of Heggadadevankote city is 79.53 % higher than state average of 75.36 %. In Heggadadevankote, Male literacy is around 85.09 % while female literacy rate is 73.95 %.

Agriculture in Study area: H D Kote has four reservoirs: the Kabini, Nugu, Hebbal and Taraka reservoirs. Ironically, however, agriculture in this taluk is rain-fed mainly because the government has failed to harness the capacity of the reservoirs. Barring the Kabini reservoir,

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the other reservoirs are always dry. As a result, farmers who could otherwise raise three crops are able to hardly raise one and are perennially in debt. This is one of the main reasons for the economic backwardness of the taluk and distress migration to cities is common.

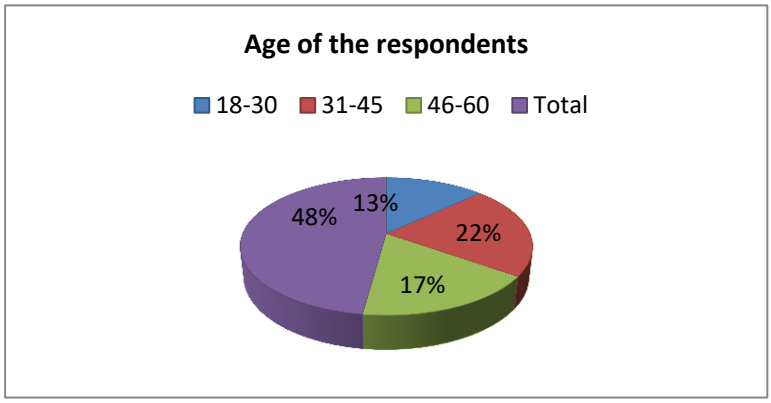
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1. Socio economic conditions women farmers

Table no -1 Age of the respondents

Age group	Respondents	percentage
18-30	30	27.28
31-45	50	45.45
46-60	40	36.37
Total	**110**	**100**

Chart no 1



Above Table-1 and chart - 1 shows that distribution of respondents according to age group, 27.28 per cent of respondents were belonged to 18-30 years age group, whereas, 50 of respondents belonged to 31-45 years age group, 36.37 per cent of respondents were belonging to between the age group of 46-60 years. The highest percentage is seen for the age group was belonging 31-45 years busy in farm activities.

Table no -2 Educational qualifications

Qualification	Respondents	percentage
Illiterate	10	9.09
Primary	15	13.63
Secondary	20	18.18
High school	30	27.28
Intermediate	25	22.73
Graduate and above	10	9.09
Total	**110**	**100**

Table -2 represents the distribution of respondents according to educational qualification. It was found that 27.28 per cent of respondents were educated up to High School, while 22.73 per cent were educated up to intermediate. 18.18 per cent were educated up to secondary level and 9.09 per cent respondents were educated up to graduate and above level, followed by 13.63 per cent respondents educated up to primary level. Only 9.09 per cent respondents were found illiterate.

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Table no – 3 Family annual income

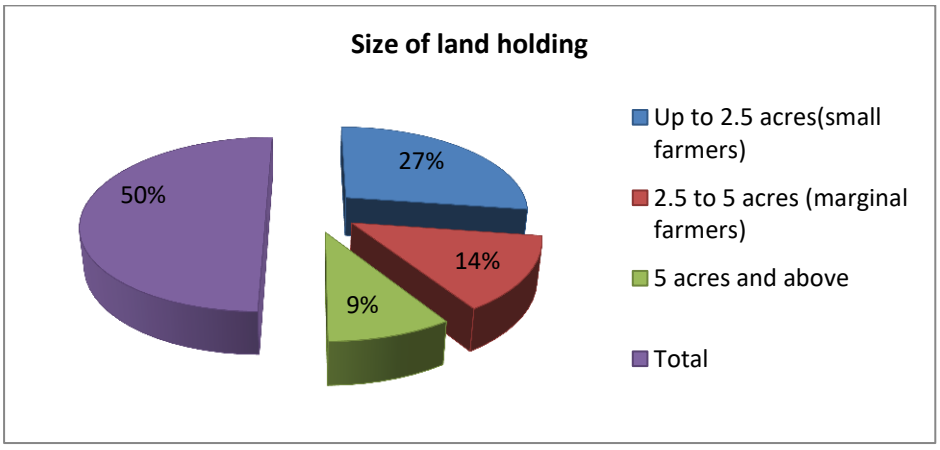
Income level	Respondents	percentage
Below 35,000	15	13.63
35000-150000	45	40.90
150000-300000	30	27.28
300000-500000	20	18.19
Total	**110**	**100**

Table 3 depicts that 13.63 per cent of respondents belonged to those families whose annual income was below 35000 and 40.90 per cent of respondents have income 35000 to 1.5 lakh whereas, 27.28 per cent of respondents family have annual income between 1.5 lakh to 3 lakh and only 18.19 per cent of respondents family annual income was 3 lakh to 5lakh respectively.

Table no – 4 Size of land holding

Size	Respondents	percentage
Up to 2.5 acres(small farmers)	60	54.54
2.5 to 5 acres (marginal farmers)	30	27.27
5 acres and above	20	18.19
Total	110	100

Chart - 2



Above Table -4 and chart -2 represents the distribution of respondents according to their size of land holdings. It was found that 54.54 per cent of respondents were holding land up to 2.5 acre (small), while 27.27 percent respondents were holding land to 2.5 to 5 acres (marginal), 18.19 percent of respondents were holding land 5 acres and above (large).

2. To evaluate the problems of women in Agricultural activities in the study area

i. Distribution of respondents according to Agri-chemicals causes Health hazard

Table no -04

Sl no	Agricultural chemicals	Yes	Percentage	No	percentage	Mean score	Rank
1	Fertilizers	70	63.63	40	36.36	1.58	III
2	Pesticides	90	81.81	20	18.18	1.73	II
3	Insecticides	82	74.54	28	25.45	1.74	I

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Table no 4 reveals that 63.363 percent of respondents have causes of health hazards is fertilizers with mean score 1.58 rank III respectively followed by 74.54 percent of women were found health hazards by insecticides with mean score 1.74 rank I. Further 81.81 percent of women were found health hazards is pesticides with mean score 1.73 hold rank II.

ii. Distribution of respondents according to Symptoms

Table no -05

Sl no	Agricultural chemicals	Yes	No	Mean score	Rank
1	Allergy	80 (72.72%)	30	1.72	III
2	Asthama	40(36.36 %)	70	1.37	IV
3	Skin Irritation	90 (81.81 %)	20	1.81	II
4	Headache	100(90.90 %)	10	1.90	I

Table 5 shows that, allergic, headache and breathing asthma are very common disease in farm women in form activities. 72.72 percent of farm women admitted that they felt skin allergy with mean score 1.72, it placed III rank. Headaches are also common problem by chemicals percent of respondents admitted with mean score 1.90 placed ranks I. 36.36 percent of farm women suffered from asthama with mean score of 1.37 and this problem was placed IV. Likewise skin irritation are 81.81 percent, these problems were placed II rank having a mean score value 1.81 respectively

iii. Distribution of respondents according to causes of health problems of women farmers

Table no -06

Sl no	Cause	Always	Sometimes	Never	Mean score	Rank
1	Lack of education	70(63.63%)	30	10	2.63	II
2	malnutrition	65 (59.09%)	40	5	2.60	III
3	Poor economic conditions	80 (72.72%)	20	10	2.72	I
4	Lack of information on health hazards	60 (54.5%)	30	20	2.54	IV

Table 6 reveals that 54.5 percent respondents agreed that lack of information about various health hazards affects them adversely and they placed. IV rank with mean score 2.54. 59.09 percent women said malnutrition also a big reason for such problems with mean score 2.60, it was ranked III. Lack of education also a factor for creating many health problems as 63.6 percent respondents accepted that with mean score 2.63. It was ranked II. 73.7 percent women accepted that poor economic condition may also lead to health problems and they placed it I rank with mean score 2.72.

MAJOR SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY

The study suggested that the measure problems of women farmers working in agricultural land as physical, chemical, biological, environmental and occupational. The basis of the problems is either lack of knowledge, lack of awareness, lack of extension education or support, lack of Govt. support etc.

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- Government should put more focus on prevention oriented approach for women. Should conduct several programs like women health surveillance time to time to access their problems , and have to maintain record keeping of problems , injuries, diseases of farm women so that it can plan accordingly for their betterment.
- Workers should wear long boots so that they can be safe from insects and other pests, snakes etc while working in rainy season and in between herbs, shrubs and watery farm.
- They should know about sustainable agriculture, insect-pest management, organic agriculture and environment protection measures.
- Knowledge about bigger or smaller farm machineries such as tractors, truck, harvester, thresher, other cutting and piercing implements.
- Knowledge about various chemical and their usage like insecticides, pesticides, fertilizers, hormones and others.
- They need to be educated about pest management, integrated pest management, sustainable agriculture etc.
- They need to be educated about chemical use, and their effects/side-effects.

CONCLUSION

Agriculture is one of the most hazardous occupations worldwide. In several countries the fatal accident rate in agriculture is double the average for all other industries. The intensive use of machinery and of pesticides and other agrochemicals has raised the risks. Machinery such as tractors and harvesters has the highest frequency and fatality rates of injury. Exposure to pesticides and other agrochemicals constitutes a major occupational risk which may result in poisoning and death and, in certain cases, work-related cancer and reproductive impairments. Agricultural women workers may live in extremely primitive conditions. The majorities of the rural population in developing countries have an inadequate diet and are exposed to both general and occupational diseases. The high prevalence of epidemic and endemic diseases in most rural areas further aggravates rural workers' poor health and misery. Many diseases and health impairments arise from poor sanitation, inadequate housing, malnutrition and a wide variety of parasitic and bacterial infections affecting the entire rural population. Socio-economic, cultural and environmental factors influence the health and living conditions of women farmers.

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