



## Empowering Women in Agriculture: Challenges and Opportunities

**E. Shirin Hima Bindu<sup>1</sup>,  
Dileep Kumar Gupta<sup>2</sup>,  
Jitendra Rajak<sup>3\*</sup>, Rita  
Fredericks<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Assistant professor, College of  
Community Science, PJTAU

<sup>2</sup>Teaching Assistant, Deptt. of  
Agricultural Extension, Institute  
of Agricultural Sciences,  
Bundelkhand University, Jhansi  
(U.P.) - 284128

<sup>3</sup>Ph.D. Research Scholar  
(Vegetable Science), ICAR -  
Indian Agricultural Research  
Institute, New Delhi,  
Madhumaas Hostel, PUSA  
Campus, New Delhi, Pin code –  
110012

<sup>4</sup>CEO, Precision Grow ( A Unit  
of Tech Visit IT Pvt Ltd)



Open Access

\*Corresponding Author  
**Jitendra Rajak\***

### Article History

Received: 02.07.2025

Revised: 06.07.2025

Accepted: 11.07.2025

This article is published under the  
terms of the [Creative Commons  
Attribution License 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

### INTRODUCTION

Agriculture underlies much of many economies, especially in developing nations, where a large percentage of the population is involved in agricultural work. Women have a central and pluralistic role in agriculture as producers, farm workers, entrepreneurs, seed keepers, and social change agents. Though their efforts are crucial, they tend to be poorly valued, not paid, and not seen in formal statistics. Empowering women in agriculture not only represents a step towards gender equality but also a significant strategy for enhancing food security, poverty reduction, and inclusive and sustainable rural development.

### The Role of Women in Agriculture

Women make up roughly 43% of the global agricultural workforce, and even higher percentages in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Women in India play a significant role in virtually every aspect of agricultural activity, such as sowing, transplanting, weeding, irrigation, harvesting, and post-harvest operations such as drying, grading, and packaging. They are also intensively engaged in rearing livestock, kitchen gardening, and value addition by agro-processing. Furthermore, women are custodians of indigenous knowledge systems such as traditional seed types, organic pest management practices, and medicinal plant utilization. But though they are heavily engaged, most of their work goes unrecognized, is informal and unpaid.

### Challenges Women in Agriculture Confront

#### 1. Inadequate Ownership of Land

Even though women make a huge contribution towards farm production, hardly any of them own land in their name. Access to institutional credit, insurance, subsidies, and other government schemes is usually based on land ownership, and not having titles of land keeps women lagging behind. Traditional cultural practices and laws of inheritance in most nations further curtail the rights of women to own or inherit land.

## **2. Limited Access to Resources**

Female farmers experience unequal access to agricultural inputs like better seeds, fertilizers, machinery, irrigation services, and information services. Most agricultural extension systems are dominated by men and do not reach women, who are either not invited to participate in training sessions or cannot go because of time and mobility limitations.

## **3. Financial Exclusion**

The majority of women lack the collateral needed, for example, land or property, to access loans from formal financial institutions. They therefore rely on informal sources of credit that can be associated with very high-interest charges and exploitative procedures. This exclusion from finance restricts them from investing in improved technologies or diversifying into better-value farming activities.

## **4. Low Representation in Decision-Making**

Women are underrepresented in organizational decision-making frameworks like farmer producer organizations (FPOs), water user associations, cooperative societies, and agricultural policy forums. Their absence diminishes their voice in making core decisions on production, marketing, pricing, and resource allocation, again relegating their contribution to the sector to the periphery.

## **5. Burden of Heavy Workload and Time Poverty**

Agricultural activities are usually combined with domestic work by women, including cooking, childcare, water fetching, and collection of fuel. The dual burden translates into long working days, physical fatigue, and little time for rest, learning, or self-improvement. Time poverty also curtails their inclusion in skill upgradation programs and leadership in local society.

## **6. Socio-Cultural Barriers**

Traditional gender roles, social norms, and patriarchal culture restrict the freedom, mobility, and involvement of women in training, leadership, and market access. In most regions, women are not supported or allowed to move independently to markets or training institutions, participate in public gatherings, or raise voices

concerning community matters. Gender-based violence and harassment also serve as disincentives to women's full inclusion in the agricultural value chain.

## **Chances for Empowerment**

### **1. Land and Inheritance Rights**

Providing women with legal ownership rights to land for cultivation, leasing, and inheritance is the building block of their empowerment. Secure land tenure allows women to take autonomous decisions on farming, get access to institutional credit, and invest in long-term soil health improvement, diversity of crops, and irrigation facilities. Legal literacy campaigns and easy property registration procedures can bridge the governance-population divide of legislation and ownership.

### **2. Credit and Agricultural Input Access**

Better access to low-cost and timely credit is necessary to increase women's contribution to agriculture. Gender-neutral financial products, microfinance programs, and facilitation through Self-Help Groups (SHGs) can enable women to buy seeds, fertilizers, minor tools, and insurance. Connecting women farmers with public distribution systems and agri-clinics can provide them with quality inputs at subsidized costs.

### **3. Capacity Building and Inclusive Extension Services**

Women-specific training programs, specially designed for their needs and timetables, can greatly enhance their technical skills and farm efficiency. Increasing the number of female extension workers and conducting training sessions in local community centers or homes can address mobility and social norm barriers. These courses can address topics like crop diversification, pest control, organic cultivation, post-harvest handling, and entrepreneurship.

### **4. Adoption of Technology and Digital Tools**

Technology can be an effective leveler by providing women farmers access to crucial agricultural knowledge. Mobile apps, voice advisories, radio, and ICT platforms can provide weather forecasts, market prices, pest warnings, and expert advice to them on their phones. Access to affordable smart phones and the

internet, as well as digital literacy, can improve their decision-making and help them cut down on middlemen.

### **5. Support for Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)**

It can strengthen women's collective bargaining power for input purchases, market access, and value addition through encouraging them to establish and lead Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs). Women-led FPOs can offer a secure forum for knowledge sharing, advocacy, and engagement in the formal agriculture economy. Incentives and technical assistance from the government for women-focused FPOs can render them more viable and effective.

### **6. Policy Support and Gender Mainstreaming**

Effective policies need to move beyond tokenism and proactively incorporate gender concerns in all aspects of agricultural development. Government programs like PM-KISAN, farm mechanization schemes, and capacity-building programs should ensure that women farmers get a reasonable share of benefits. Policies can be made more responsive to women's needs through gender budgeting, inclusive monitoring, and specifically designed awareness campaigns.

### **7. Promoting Agro-Entrepreneurship**

Encouraging women-led agro-based businesses like food processing, mushroom farming, vermicomposting, floriculture, and organic farming can really raise their income and social status. Training in entrepreneurship, provision of start-up capital, and marketing linkages can motivate women to transition from subsistence agriculture to value-added and remunerative activities.

### **Successful Case Studies**

The Self-Employed Women's Association of India is a pioneering case of empowering the grassroots. SEWA has made thousands of rural and disadvantaged women self-reliant through skill development training, cooperative formation, and access to markets. SEWA-associated women are involved in activities such as handicrafts, agro-processing, and micro-

enterprises, which help them earn a sustainable livelihood and achieve economic independence.

Another effective initiative is the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), which was initiated under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM). MKSP focuses on empowering women farmers by encouraging sustainable agriculture practices and robust institutional platforms. The program facilitates activities such as organic farming, kitchen gardening, livestock keeping, and natural resource management in addition to technical assistance and capacity building. It assists women in bringing to light their role as cultivators, as opposed to being perceived simply as farm laborers.

These case studies illustrate how focused interventions, when supported by policy and community action, can result in changes of substance in the lives of women in agriculture.

## **CONCLUSION**

Empowering women in agriculture is not only a moral obligation it is a strategic imperative for attaining food security, eliminating poverty, and ensuring sustainable rural development. Women's role in agriculture needs to be recognized, appreciated, and addressed through enabling policies, access to resources, and institutional channels.

By redressing centuries of gender inequality in ownership of land, access to resources, finances, and decision-making, we can unleash the potential of women farmers. Empowering them with knowledge, equipment, and opportunity will not only increase agricultural productivity but also lead to climate resilience and rural prosperity.

As we proceed towards inclusive growth, it is vital that we identify women not only as beneficiaries but as essential stakeholders and leaders in the process of agricultural transformation. Investing in women in agriculture is, in fact, an investment in a more equitable, food-secure, and sustainable tomorrow.

**REFERENCES**

- Anderson, C. L., Reynolds, T. W., Biscaye, P., Patwardhan, V., & Schmidt, C. (2021). Economic benefits of empowering women in agriculture: Assumptions and evidence. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 57(2), 193-208.
- Arintyas, A. P. R. D. A. (2024). Women, agriculture, and villages: A community of empowerment study to achieve wellbeing and sustainable development. *Journal of Agrosociology and Sustainability*, 2(1), 1-16.
- Gupta, S., Wei, M., Tzempelikos, N., & Shin, M. M. (2024). Women empowerment: challenges and opportunities for sustainable development goals. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 27(4), 608-630.
- Patel, A. (2012). Empowering women in agriculture. *Yojana*, 56, 19-22.
- Patra, M., Samal, P., & Panda, A. K. (2018). Constraints and opportunities for women in agriculture in India. *Journal of Pharmacognosy and Phytochemistry*, 7(5), 2092-2096.