

## Participation of rural women in agricultural activities: A study of Marh Block of Jammu District

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**Abstract:** Women are a vital part of Indian economy. Over the years, there is a gradual realization of the key role of women in agriculture development and their vital contribution in the field of agriculture, food security, horticulture, processing, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, and other allied sectors. Women form the backbone of agriculture, in India, comprising the majority of agricultural laborers, women have been putting in labor not only in terms of physical output but also in terms of quality and efficiency. Women are critical to the well-being of farm households. A sample of 50 farm women belonging to different villages of Marh block of Jammu District were selected using purposive sampling technique with the objective of studying their daily activity schedule which included both farm and house-hold activities and problems being faced by them in doing these activities. For data collection interview schedule, field observations and case studies were framed. Data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

**Key words:** Food security; horticulture; nutrition.

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### 1. Introduction

Agriculture is the major stay of our economy. Women are active partners in farming and undertake management along with men. There are certain unit operations both in production agriculture, post-harvest management and agro processing.

The women perform the maximum farm operations thereby contributing a lot towards the upliftment of the economic and social status of their families and finally, accelerating the pace of rural development (Singh 2003). About 60 % of agricultural operations like sowing seeds, transportation of sapling, winnowing, storage of grains etc are handled exclusively by women (Aggarwal 2003). Women work is getting harder and more time consuming due to ecological degradation and changing agriculture technology and practices. Women are involved in different operations of the crop-production, collection of cow dung and composting of manure, weeding, land harvesting, sowing, transplanting, winnowing and threshing etc. They also help the men in preparing the field, hoeing, picking cotton, plucking maize cobs and millet ear heads, stripping sugar canes before crushing, carrying heavy load of fodder crops on their heads to the home, storing the food grains and looking after these to avoid any pilferage (Sharma 1981). Women's contribution in farm activities is still considered to be the 'Invisible work force' their

significant role in farm as well as household activities are not usually recognized and counted in formal activities even though they are essential productive workers engaged in farm operation either as cultivators or as agricultural laborers.

Keeping these in mind, the present study has been undertaken to study the time use pattern of rural women in farm activities and also to assess the problems being faced by them in doing these activities.

### 2. Material and Methods

**Sample description:** A sample of 50 farm women in the age group of 20 – 40 years belonging to 4 different villages of Marh Block of Jammu District were selected using purposive sampling technique.

**Data Collection:** Following tools were selected for data collection.

1. Interview schedule for assessing the basic information respondents in addition to other relevant operation.
2. Field observations to observe the farm activities of women. Photographs were also taken for this purpose.

### 3. Results and Discussion

After interviewing respondents it was found that majority (38 %) of the respondents were in the age-group of 36-40 years and 66 % of the women were illiterate (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Profile of respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	%
Age	20-25 years	9	18 %
	26-30 years	11	22 %
	31-35 years	11	22 %
	36-40 years	19	38 %
Education	Illiterate	33	66 %
	Up to primary	7	14 %
	Primary to matric	6	12 %
	Graduate	4	8 %

Most of the respondents (64 %) get up early in the morning i.e. between 5 and 6 am because they have to perform dual responsibility of work at home and outside in the agricultural field (Table 2). This is also supported by the finding of Reddy (2003) that rural women had a very busy work schedule. She started doing domestic work at an early age of 9 years.

**Table 2.** Time of getting up from Bed

Time	Number	%
4-5 a.m.	12	24 %
5-6 a.m.	32	64 %
6-7 a.m.	6	12 %

In the present study majority of the respondents are busy for 5-7 hours in the farm activities and stated that Agriculture is everything for them (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Time Spent in Farm

Time	Number	%
1-3 hrs.	8	16 %
3-5 hrs.	13	26 %
5-7 hrs.	29	58 %

Table 4 shows time spent by rural women in all the daily activities both inside the house and outside. 70 % of the respondents spent 0-1 hour in cooking, 76 % spent 0-1/2 hour in washing utensils, 54 % spent half an hour in cleaning house, 54 % respondents spent 1-2 hours in washing clothes, 68 % spent 1-2 hours in fetching water, 60 % spent 0-1 hour in collection of fuel and 52 % spent 0-2 hours in child rearing.

60 % of the respondents spent 1-2 hrs in making of cow dung cakes. Majority of the respondents spent 1-2 hours in cleaning of animal shed. 62 % respondents spent at least half an hour in milking cows. Majority of the respondents (60 %) spent 1-2 hrs in feeding the cattle while 74 % spent 1-2 hours in fodder harvesting.

**Table 4.** Time Spent in Daily Activities

Activities	In Season		
	Time Spent in hrs.	N / 50	%
Cooking	0-1 hrs.	35	70 %
Washing Utensils	0 - ½ hrs.	38	76 %
	½ - 1 hrs.	12	24 %
Cleaning House	0 - ½ hrs.	27	54 %
	½ - 1 hrs.	23	46 %
Washing Clothes	0-1 hrs.	23	46 %
	1-2 hrs.	27	54 %
Fetching Water	0-1 hrs.	16	32 %
	1-2 hrs.	34	68 %
Collection of Fuel	0-1 hrs.	30	60 %
	1-2 hrs.	20	40 %
Child Rearing	0-2 hrs.	25	52 %
	2-4 hrs.	8	16 %

In the present study, it has also been observed that 64 % of the respondents spent 1-2 hours in bathing the cattle and 72 % of the respondents spent 1-2 hours in grain storage activities. 40 % of the women spent less than 0-1 hour in personal care. 36 % of the respondents showed awareness about the new technologies because of their interest in adopting new technologies (Table 5) and they used to read newspaper and watch T.V regularly and update themselves regarding the new technologies so that it could help them in improving their cropping growth in the farms which would result in raising their capital.

**Table 5.** Awareness about latest technology

Responses	Number	%
Yes	18	36 %
No	32	64 %

### 3.1 Problems faced by farm women

Majority of the women (64 %) responded that they face problems pertaining to health viz. fatigue, backache, headache and restlessness where as others (42 %) responded that unhygienic conditions in the field also adds to their problem. 42 % respondents said that they feel shy to work with their in-laws as at times they had to veil in front of male elder members. 64 % respondents said that they are unable to manage time between farm and household activities. While 84 % replied that they have a difficulty in carrying out

major farm operations viz. crop harvesting, transplanting, rice cultivation and sowing. 46 % respondents stated that they feel satisfied at the end of the day as they have utilized their time in an appropriate way.

### 3.2 Recommendations

After finding the results, following recommendations have been made:-

1. Policy maker must realize the constraints experienced by farm women, financial aid and support needs to be provided by the Govt' to assist the women.
2. There is a need to impart training to these women in order to strengthen the knowledge about farm activities.
3. These women be assisted to develop saving and credit mechanism to become self-reliant.

4. In order to improve women's work efficiency, Govt. and Extension worker should plan an execute need based training programmers.

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