

# **Women Entrepreneurs in Agri & Allied sectors**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

According to a report by National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), in India, about 46.0% of the agricultural workforce is female, but only 13.0% of rural women are engaged in entrepreneurship. While there is no specific data available on the percentage of women entrepreneurs related to agriculture in India, it is estimated that a significant number of women entrepreneurs in rural areas are involved in agriculture-related businesses such as farming, food processing, and handicrafts. The Indian government has also launched various schemes and programs to encourage and support women's entrepreneurship in agriculture.

Women leaders in farming are becoming increasingly common as more women take on leadership roles in agriculture.

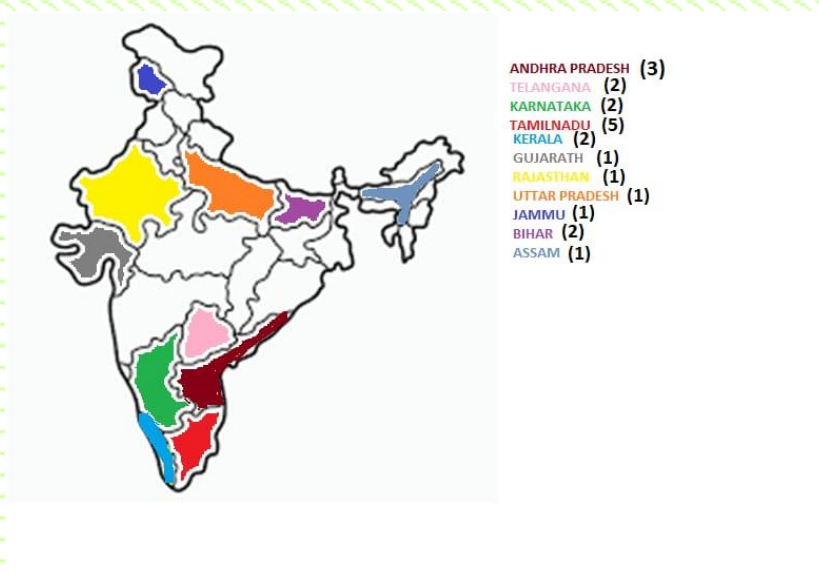
Women have always played a crucial role in farming, but have often been overlooked or underestimated. However, with the growing recognition of the importance of women's contributions to agriculture, more and more women are taking on leadership roles in the industry. These women are leading the way in sustainable farming practices, advocating for gender equity and empowering other women farmers. With their leadership, women in farming are making significant contributions to the global economy. Agriculture sector employs 80.0 per cent of all economically active women; they comprise 33.0 per cent of the agricultural labour force and 48.0 per cent of self-employed farmers. In India, 85.0 per cent of rural women are engaged in agriculture, yet only about 13.0 per cent own land.



## Methodology

The study was carried out as a 'desktop' type of study. Hence, the study was conducted online, and primary data was collected with the support and facilitation of KVKs and DRDA officers from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu. Thereafter, a total of 290 respondents were contacted using keywords. After careful screening and removing the duplication, 71 women were considered to be contacted via telephone. The prospective respondents were contacted by telephone. After the telephonic interview, only 7 women were finalized for documentation purpose. Secondary data was collected from the websites of KVK, DRDA, NABARD, NRLM, ICRISAT, USDA, FAO, thebetterindia.com, YOURSTORY, In this process, 250 literatures and articles were studied relating to women farmers and entrepreneurs in agriculture and allied sectors. After removing duplication, 180 articles were screened out. Of these, 70 literatures were selected on the basis of their titles and abstracts. 11 articles were finally selected based on the title and objective of the study. Also, 3 stories added by secondary articles have seen and added additional data by the primary telephone interview method.

Therefore, the scope of the study was pan-India. The distribution of the respondents through primary and secondary sources is represented by 11 States: Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Jammu, Assam, and Uttar Pradesh.





On analysis of the profile of the women farmers and entrepreneurs, it was found that majority of them were high school educated (53.0%), followed by illiterates (37.0%) and post-graduates (10.0%). As entrepreneurs, they had studied till matriculation, but they are not well trained in managerial and other skills required to run an enterprise. Initially they faced many problems due to this and took significant time to overcome them.

Among the women farmers and entrepreneurs, only 47.0% had been trained; remaining had directly started their enterprise, out of their own interest (53.0%). The trained women entrepreneurs received training from KVKs (Krishi Vigyan Kendra), ATMA (Agricultural Technology Management Agency), and JARDS (Jubilant Agriculture Rural Development Society) on technologies such as mushroom farming, sericulture, beekeeping, and value addition before starting their agripreneurship .

Leadership is not just the quality of standing as a leader to a group; it can also be serving as an inspiration, motivation, and role model to many people. Although majority (68.0%) of them were not leaders, they stood up and inspired many people in and around their villages.

### **Women-Led FPOs Driving Engine???**

Two women-led FPOs were selected for documentation of their success stories. One is Veerapandy Kalanjai Jeevidam Producer Company Limited, and its CEO is B Sivarani. This FPO is linked with 48 panchayats, 141 villages, 227 FIGs, and 2555 women farmers. This FPO was founded on 9th February, 2017 and has five female directors.

Another is Be'nishan Producer Organization located in Telangana State, covering 56 (46 FPCs and 10 cooperative FPOs) from 28 districts, 404 mandalas, and 3072 villages, covering 6967 FPGs and 1.09 lakh members (small and marginal farmers who are also





SHG members). Incorporated on 20th August, 2019, it has nine women nominee directors and a male director-cum CEO. This clearly indicates that still many women-led FPOs are being driven by male; women-led FPOs should have a female CEO functioning at the apex.



**In women's agribusiness start-ups**, two women agri start-ups were selected regarding the study: one is Preethi from Theni, Tamil Nadu, who started value-added products with grapes and bananas like grape squash, banana and grape mix, banana flour, etc., in 2019 and received the Best Entrepreneur Award from CENDECT KVK. Another one is Mrs. Gargi Chauhan from Dwara village, Uttar Pradesh, who started growing mushrooms and making value-added products like mushroom pickles and mushroom powder, and also learnt about pottery, candles, diya, and organic colours.

As per the study, there are 10 entrepreneurs were selected, including **Rekha Kumari** from Bihar, who sells mushrooms and value-added products with mushrooms like mushroom pickle, mushroom powder, samosas, and biscuits; **Joshimon** from Kerala is selling value-added products with jackfruit and tapioca; **Kanika** sells vermicompost, earthworms, and vermiwash; **Saroja Patil** sells value-added products with millets; **Nirmala**, from Kadapa, Andhra Pradesh, sells value-added products with millets, ragi malt, and organic turmeric; **Navalben**- Gujarat sells milk; **Suman Sharma** is selling value-added products with soybeans. **Sushma Rani** sells value-added products with fruits and vegetables; **Indira** Barnyard millet flour; **Anita Devi** sells mushrooms.



### **What enabling factors strengthen or Promote Women's Agripreneurship**

- Recognition of women as farmers.
- Government's support to women agripreneurs through pro-women schemes.



- Incentives to women entrepreneurs for entry into MSME sector
- Encouraging women to participate in national & international level trades/ fairs/ exhibitions.
- Special provision for women entrepreneurs in export.
- Easy credit facility and access.
- Easy access to Mandis & Markets.
- Family support & encouragement.

### **Key Highlights of Women Entrepreneurship from the Study Report...**



- One woman farmer had access to mechanical equipment and was using the machinery.
- One women farmer adopted a new commercial crop, dragon fruit, which gave her good returns.
- One women entrepreneur runs a rice mill completely on solar power under the Prime Minister's one district, one crop project."
- A Tamil woman farmer was recognized as an icon of "Women in farming and was awarded the prestigious "Padma Shri Award" from the Central Government for her remarkable contribution to organic farming.
- A Gujarati women crossed Rs. 1 crore annual turnover through dairy and was listed as one of the top-rated dairy and animal husbandry producers by M/s Amul Corporation, Anand.
- Due to the commendable efforts of a Uttarakhand woman farmer, the whole village was recognized and branded as "Mushroom village" by the State Agriculture department, that increased the income of all women members of that Self-Help Groups in that village.

### **Women Entrepreneurs fail due to.....**

- Unequal land rights to women
- Limited access to the productive resources
- No access to mechanised agriculture tasks
- Limited decision making capability
- Less education or illiteracy
- Less access to money and time due to the agricultural labor and household work



## **Women Agripreneurship in Future: Some facts**

- Programs targeting women entrepreneurship must address their Time and Finance issues
- Creating access to e-platform for women to sell their produce, to overcome the mobility constraints and other socio-cultural factors.
- Capacity building of women with the stakeholders in market value chain to get competitive price for their produce, as well as purchase of the inputs to negotiate successfully.
- Leadership and managerial skill training programs for women entrepreneurs.
- Increased women's participation in economic activities can be a national priority.
- The efforts of women entrepreneurs to develop women need to be substantiated and strengthened which are still not widely supported and accepted.
- Priority to women in accessing credit on soft terms from banks and other financial institutions for setting up their businesses, buying properties and building houses.
- Provision of alternative and better employment opportunities through policies and programs to the eligible agricultural women laborers in rural areas.

## **CONCLUSION**

In India, the business scenario is changing day by day due to the development of technology, modernization, industrialization, urbanization, spread of education, and development programs initiated by the government. In such conditions, employment opportunities increased drastically for women. In India, the past image of restricted and homebound women is slowly changing. The Indian women, even after facing many challenges, is now trying to become economically independent. The government has come forward with many facilities, concessions, and incentives exclusively for women entrepreneurs. General measures can be adopted to encourage and develop women entrepreneurship. Even illiterate women have the potential and the determination to set up, uphold, and supervise their own enterprises in a very systematic manner. Rural women are not aware and literate enough to handle all the legal and other formalities involved in taking out loans and establishing an industrial unit. They also lack confidence in their ability to run an entrepreneurial business. They need capacity building and training in functional areas such as finance, literacy skills, marketing, production, and managerial skills. The only urgent need is to create a favorable atmosphere to increase self-employment for women and all other developments in the country. Thus, there are bright prospects for rural women entrepreneurship in India.

**“Women have full freedom to work and prosper. From the moment they go out of their homes, they are human beings: business woman has the same weightage as a business man.”**







Complete report on ‘Documentation of Women leaders as Farmers/ Entrepreneurs, Women-led Agri start-ups and FPOs’ is available at [www.manage.gov.in](http://www.manage.gov.in)

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