



POLICY BRIEF # 1

CENTER FOR GENDER IN AGRICULTURE,
NUTRITIONAL SECURITY
AND URBAN AGRICULTURE



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EVIDENCE BASED GENDER INEQUALITY IN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS IN INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

Seven years have passed since the Sustainable Development Goals were established by the UN in 2015, yet India has made little progress toward attaining gender equality and stands to rank 135th in the Global Gender Gap report 2022. India contributes one-fourth of the world's agricultural output and has a nearly equal gender distribution, but there is still a sizable gender gap in the country when it comes to decision-making, access to credit, wage gaps, farm activities, marketing, extension services, food consumption, and food production and productivity. Women's increased contribution in agriculture and allied sectors, is slowly being recognized in the recent years, but at a very low scale. Empowering and mainstreaming rural women workers in agriculture can cause a structural shift in favor of economic expansion. Gender equality is not just an option rather it is the need of the hour. If we can ensure women-oriented reform measures, access to resources, technology, education, health facilities, ownership rights, and skill development, it will undoubtedly improve agricultural productivity, contribute to the empowerment of the nation, provide India with nutritional and food security, and lessen poverty and hunger. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure that the invisible workforce in agriculture is visible.

**"There can't be Zero Hunger
without Gender Equality"**





IDENTIFYING THE GENDER GAPS IN INDIA'S AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD SYSTEMS

The study literatures were compiled using a systematic review methodology from more than 23 databases. In-depth analysis was done on data from publications with study periods beginning in 2015 till July 2022. Studies were grouped according to sub-themes, study area and research methodology to identify the gaps that already existed at various levels. Only 26 studies could be identified based on the gender inequality in decision making, farm activities, marketing, credit access, extension services, wage gap in agriculture, food production & productivity and gender inequality in food consumption conducted in India.

It was found that there are only a few studies available on the chosen areas in India, which is evidence of the lack of adequate studies on these areas and efforts to address these inequalities. It was strange to see that there was no study on impact of women on farm productivity since more than a decade and the other themes had only a handful number of researches done in since 2015. Until and unless robust evidence is gathered in support of the diverse gender challenges, the gender gap cannot be closed.

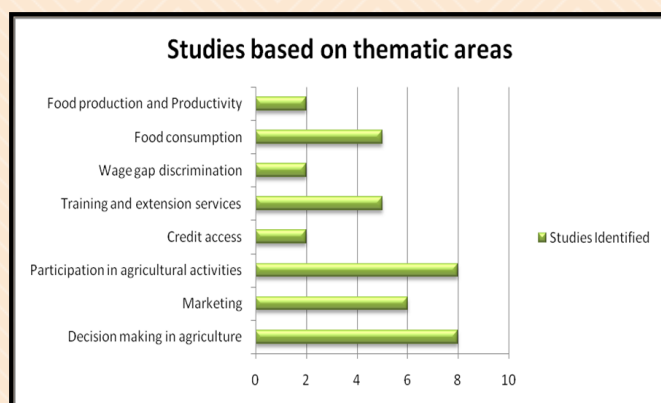


Figure -1: Studies based on the thematic areas

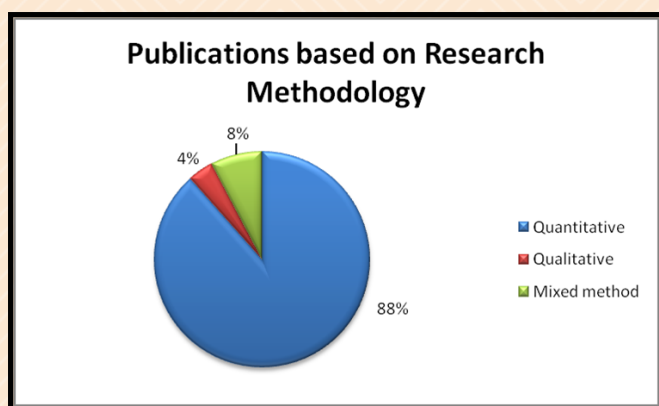
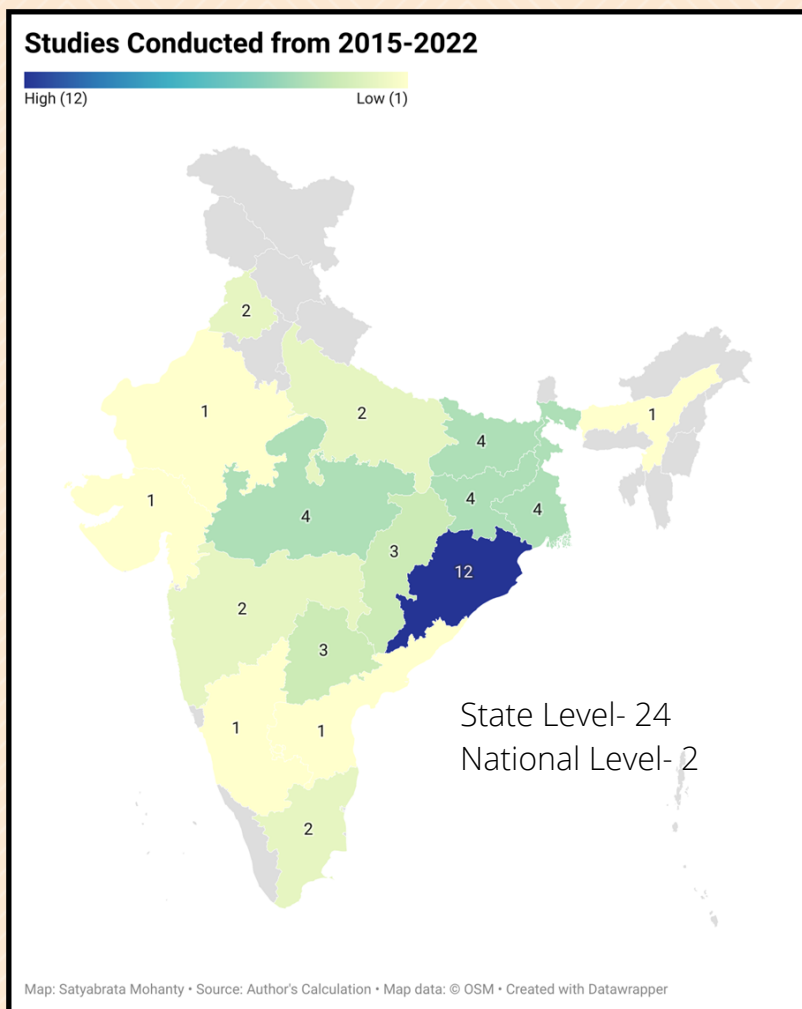


Figure -2: Studies based on Research methodology

The data in the figure suggests that majority of the studies followed quantitative method (88%) then mixed method (8%) and finally qualitative research methodology (4%). But considering the subject of the topic i.e. gender, there is a need for more mixed method and qualitative methodology so as to provide a detailed, contextualized insights of qualitative data and the generalizable, externally valid insights of quantitative data through a deeper understanding of complexity and especially that of human behavior.



Majority (46%) of the research were conducted in Odisha. One of the major reasons being the location of ICAR- Central Institute of Women in Agriculture, who is mostly focused to work for women in agriculture. But since it's a subject of national interest and gender dimensions vary widely across States, regions and cultures, there is a need to have many more such studies across the country. This shall provide sufficient data to understand the gender gap at national level. The number of researches conducted in almost 7 years of time is very low (26 on the selected sub-themes). If more research isn't done to pinpoint gender-related issues nationwide, the gender gap will continue to increase. To advance the country, it is important to recognize and address the strong legacies of gender segregation at every level and in every field.

Figure -3: Research conducted on the study areas

Thus for policy and practise, it is essential to comprehend the barriers faced by women farmers and the factors that contribute to gender disparities in Indian agriculture and food systems.

**The Gender Gap does not Hurt only Women,
It Hurts Everyone.**



PRIORITIZING POLICY IN LIGHT OF THE SETTING

The action plan framework presented in Table 1 was developed based on the author's research will help in accountability and transparency and is fundamental for meeting the gender specific objectives.


Realise	Prioritize	Integrate	Strengthen	Promote
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various Gendered needs in the Agricultural Diaspora. Role of all concerned stakeholders in closing the gender gap. <p>* Stakeholders: Govt. authority, Private organisations, NGOs, Researchers, Policy makers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immediate, short term and long term gendered needs. Research for gender friendly innovations. Research on existing gender gaps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time to time gender specific interventions All concerned stakeholders for addressing multilevel gender issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish metrics to track progress in closing the gender gap (e.g.- WEAL, WDDS) Situation based revision of policies & reforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For wider application of the successful interventions/ reforms/policies 

Table-1 Action plan for closing the Gender Gap

Approaches for addressing gender gaps

- Provide women with technical & leadership training and encourage them to participate in decision-making process within the organisation so that they get the opportunity to exercise their leadership skill.
- Encourage farm women's participation in online marketplaces such as e-NAM and e-Mahila Hat to improve access to marketing opportunities for direct sale of their goods and services.
- Examine gender roles and restrictions in food distribution and sales, and implement initiatives to remove obstacles for women to enter.
- Encourage women farmers to take up skill & mechanised activities in agriculture and allied sectors to address their drudgery and save time for leisure and self care.



- Paradigm shift in gender roles at household level through sensitization of family.
- Examine minimum wage and equal pay legislation, to ensure its execution at ground level.
- Documentation of good gender sensitive agricultural practices to serve as a tool for upscaling at a larger scale.
- Ensure registration and certification of farm women at the gram panchayat level, so as to provide them farmer status.
- Capacity building of anganwadi workers, health workers, ASHA workers to educate rural people the importance of dietary diversity and nutritious food and equal food sharing practice at family level .
- Strengthen SHGs by encouraging its engagement in more economic activities rather than just internal borrowing and lending.

Empowering and mainstreaming rural women workers in agriculture can cause a structural shift in favour of economic expansion. If we ensure women-oriented reforms, then it will certainly improve agriculture productivity and stepping towards a hunger free nation through nutritional & food security. There is a need to address women's issues in agriculture from a gender perspective in order to overcome the constraints and become the torch-bearers for India's next dawn of agriculture. So, its high time to ensure the visibility of the invisible workforce in agriculture.

**Gender Equality is not an Option,
It's the Need of the Hour.**



Complete report on 'Evidence based Gender Inequality in Agriculture and Food Systems in India' is available at www.manage.gov.in

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in the document are not necessarily those of MANAGE or officials with whom the authors interacted but are of the authors' own based on the study.



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