

Agriculture and Food Security in India

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Food Security

- Physical, economic and social access to adequate, nutritious and culturally appropriate food necessary to lead an active and healthy life with dignity”

Dimensions:

availability

access

absorption

This presentation will deal with

Availability of food in the context of Women and agriculture

Access of the poor to food

Agriculture in India

Agriculture in India

- Low long term growth: This is a lagging sector in the Indian economy: 9th Plan: 2.00 %, 10th Plan: 1.8 %, the recent good performance has been due to good rainfall – a setback likely if this is a drought year
- Fluctuating and unstable – risk and uncertainty – poverty and high vulnerability

Challenge: How to raise agricultural growth to reduce poverty, to promote sustainable development

Food security is related to distribution also

- Low purchasing power of the poor at the bottom
- 55-60 % population still in agriculture- contributing 25-30 % of GDP
- Highest incidence of poverty on AL / MF
- Distress and food insecurity

Women in Agriculture: Feminization of Agriculture

- 71 % of total women workers (51 % of men workers) and 85 % of rural women workers are in agriculture and allied activities
- 40 % of total agricultural workers in India are women – as farmers, so-farmers, unpaid family workers, hired labour
- 20 % of rural HH are female-headed
- Women's role is in all activities from land preparation to harvesting and post harvesting
- Women are also predominant in animal husbandry & dairying, fisheries, forestry etc,

Women in agriculture: ill equipped

- **Less than 5 % cultivated land is owned by women**
- **Women have poor access to credit**
- **Women have low access to new technology, training, extension**
- **Women have not much say in decision making**
- **SF / MF found it difficult to access opportunities of growth**
- **Women are burdened by unpaid SNA & non-SNA work**

In short, though women play a key role in agriculture, they are not equipped / allowed to play any significant role in its management

Women should be at the Centre of Agriculture

- Eleventh Plan has recognized the central role of agriculture for faster and inclusive growth in India
- This can be achieved only through strengthening women's role: Growth in agricultural productivity increasingly depends on the ability of women to function as farmers
- Need to recognize women as farmers in their own right through (1) land rights, (2) technology, training, (3) credit, (4) marketing and (5) other infrastructure support
- Reduce the burden of unpaid work – SNA and non-SNA

Future Growth in Agriculture

- The future of growth in agriculture lies in
 - Growth of crop production
 - Diversification of agriculture
- Crop production:
 - Green revolution areas
 - Areas with good potential of irrigation
 - Rain-fed areas – dry farming areas
- Diversification in agriculture
 - Animal husbandry & dairying
 - Forestry
 - Fishery

Without women's active participation the above cannot be achieved

Empowering Women in Agriculture: Land Rights

Improving land ownership of women

- Women's inheritance **right to land** (legal)
- Land ownership through redistribution schemes (state transfers)
- Women helped to purchase land (market)

Other Land Issues

- Land to corporate agriculture: for agribusiness and exports
- Land going out of cultivation to non-agricultural uses: Infrastructure projects, Special Economic Zones, Urban projects

Right to Other Assets

- Women's right to other HH Assets: well, implements & machinery, new assets acquired; bank accounts & Farmers credit cards
- Women's right to common assets: check dams, watershed etc;
- Access to infrastructure: power, go-downs, warehousing

Engendering Agricultural policies

- Access to technologies and training institutes, and R&D for women's needs
- Women friendly implements
- Training programmes for women
- Reducing drudgery of women's work: stoves, fodder, drinking water etc
- Agricultural extension: cafeteria approach, communication systems, staffing etc
- Monitoring & evaluation

Not through Scattered Schemes

- Scheme based approach has many disadvantages: (1) scattered approach, (2) not enough budget, (3) overlapping (4) leaves gaps, (5) multiple departments involved without much coordination
- A farming system - macro approach addresses the growth directly and adequately

Diversification in Agriculture

- Forestry: NTFP is a major area for women
– women are mere collectors of NTFP
- Animal husbandry & dairying
- Fishery and aquaculture
- Horticulture
- Energy security for women

In Short

- Recognizing women as producers / farmers and empowering them as a part of the growth strategy in agriculture is a major shift needed
- It involves reorientation of all major areas of agricultural policy

Agriculture under globalization

Concerns for food security

- Low public investment in agriculture
- Low private investment in agriculture
- Focus on irrigated agriculture – credit, R & D, extension, training etc – neglect of dry land farming
- Focus on growth of export crops: corporate farming and agri business
- Environmental issues in agriculture and sustainability – organic agriculture and indigenous crops & bio-diversity

Contd...

- Neglect of **coarse grains**
- Reduction in land under cultivation: absence of land use policy
- Diversion of Farm Land for Non-agricultural Purposes, Displacement and Rehabilitation Policy:
- Trade liberalization and loss of livelihoods
- Common property resources

In short, agricultural policy does not address the issues of poverty and food security adequately

Agriculture under the Crisis and Lessons

- Kerala is more globalised in agriculture than any other state in India
- Spices
- Fishery
- Plantation: coffee, tea, rubber and coconuts
- Cashew nuts: increase in the prices of raw cashews
- Credit crunch

Question: Should we look at local markets and food production?

A Major Area of Concern: Low Nutrition Levels

Nutritional status

- It has not kept pace with economic growth
- The recent study of the World Bank has also admitted that health status in India has not improved much under the reforms
- **High income states have not done well**

Factors:

- Food (severe deficiency) and environmental factors (moderate deficiency)
- Poverty at the bottom and Mothers – vicious circle of mother-child-mother
- Needed nutritional programmes and increase in purchasing power

Major Food Schemes for Poor

Right to life – right to food

- ICDS: for pregnant mothers, infants And children up to 6 years
- Maternity support
- Mid-day Meal for primary schools -
- AAY: for most vulnerable groups
- PDS: universal
- NREGA
- Pensions & stipends: Single women, the aged, disabled,
- Community kitchens: HIV-AIDS and TB patients
- National family benefit scheme

Right to Food

- PIL by PUCL in 2001 in the Supreme Court
- SC declared that prevention of hunger is the primary responsibility of the governments
- Converted the food schemes into legal entitlements
- SC established its own machinery to track hunger government's schemes across India – commissioners, advisors, assistants and nodal officers
- Accountability put on selected Ministries in Central & State governments
- NREGA

Right to Food Campaign: RTF Act

- Started with the PIL
- Strong monitoring & evaluation, and work on accountability
- RTF Act is the latest demand
 - Universalization of RTF
 - Women HH head for food related matters
 - No cash transfers to replace food transfer
 - NREGA for 150 days