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Role of Farm Women in Sustainable Livelihood Pattern in Context of Information Needs

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This study is to analyze information sources and information needs of women farmers of Banka and Bhagalpur district of Bihar. The research was undertaken for assessment of information needed for young farm women of age group of 18-35 years with respect to kharif paddy cultivation. Useful Information is the pivotal for successful kharif paddy cultivation. In the study area young farm women contribute immensely in kharif paddy cultivation. Information helps in creating awareness about technologies and mobilize people to use them. It also helps in training people, organizing community and ultimately resulting in the development of the whole nation. Result of the study illustrated that farm women need more information about selling of product, pest control, nursery raising and disease management. The study also revealed that the most preferred source of information was personal localite i.e. Husband, Friend, Relatives and Neighbors and agri-input dealers.

Keywords: Information; kharif; pest control; personal localite.

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1. INTRODUCTION

It has been seen that women have been active participants in every stage of agricultural production. They play a key role in agricultural production and form a large proportion of agricultural work force globally in every period of history. But society has recognized farming as a male occupation and women's contributions to agricultural production system have been ignored. In India, 86 per cent of rural women workers are in agricultural work compared with 74 per cent of rural male worker, and this gender gap is increasing. Women's economic contribution to farm and households have been historically undervalued, that rarely portrays women as significant contributors to the farm income. Farm women never represented as producers or decision makers, they always represented as spouses or farm helpers [1]. It has been observed that family labour can be differentiated by gender such that the work of men is accorded greater value while the work of women is less or ignored [2]. The world women's reports, 1985 indicated that paid women workers in agriculture faced many problems such as lack of economic resources under their command, lack of information sources and lack of pertinent facts or knowledge about agriculture. They also revealed that other problems faced by women were lack of support from extension agencies, lack of command in implementation, low educational status and low mobility [3].

Through this study information sources and information needs of young farm women (18-35) age group with respect to kharif paddy cultivation was assessed. Apart from land, labour and capital, information is an essential input in present day agriculture. Information is the knowledge that was unknown to the receiver prior to its receipt. Thus assessment of information need is an essential pre-requisite for successful farming. Research on information needs and information seeking concurs that information is tailored individuals job and to their tasks within those jobs [4,5]. It was also noted that sources of information had strategic effect on adoption of farm technology; socio-economic factors were interrelated and family size and family types had more impact on others socio-personal variables/factors outcome. The farm technologies adoption in agriculture and allied sectors were predictive by socio-personal variables, but more contribution expected to be from gross annual income and sources of information [6].

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted an exploratory research design, which involves qualitative and quantitative data. This design was suitable for this study since it soughts to provide insights and understanding of the factors influencing the adoption of agricultural technology among farmers in Banka and Bhagalpur districts of Bihar. The simple random sampling was used to select 160 small holder farmers so that each and every one in the target population has an equal chance of inclusion. From each selected district 80 farmers were selected hence total 160 farmers were selected randomly from both districts. This study adopted Questionnaires and interviews schedules to collect primary data. Data was analyzed by use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Quantitative data was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics presented in frequency tables, and measures of central tendency. Ranking was done based on total score. Qualitative data from the in-depth interviews and focused group discussion was also analyzed and presented according to study objectives.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Socio-economic Profile of Farm Women

Table 1 indicates that majority (80.62 per cent) of farm women belong to marginal size of land holding followed by small land holding small farmers (12.50 per cent). Majority of farm women possesses very low annual income of below Rs 25000, only 6.87 per cent of respondents have annual income of more than one lakh rupees only. The Table 1 also illustrated that majority (60.62 per cent) of respondents belong to family having up to four members in family. Most (30.62 per cent) of the farm women were illiterate followed by primary level (29.37 per cent) of education. As far as media exposure is concerned, most (54.37 per cent) of the respondents depends on television followed by mobile phones (29.37 per cent).

3.2 Information Needs Related to Kharif Paddy Cultivation as Perceived by the Farm Women

Leckie [7] reported that the occupational information often was not passed on to female farmers, most of the female farmers in this study came to farming with inadequate knowledge of

farming practice. Table 2 clearly indicates that majority of farm women were keen to know about selling of their product which rank first followed by pest control and weed control. Women farmers were also interested to know about seed varieties, nursery preparation and fertilizer doses. Table 2 indicates that respondents were very less interested to know about puddling, this may because generally, women farmers do not involve in puddling practices.

Table. 1 Socio-economic profile (n=160)

Sl No	Categories	Frequency	Per cent
1.	**Farm size**		
	Marginal	129	80.62
	Small	20	12.50
	Large	11	06.87
2.	**Family income**		
	Below Rs. 25000	109	68.12
	Rs. 25000-Rs. 50000	21	13.12
	Rs. 50000-Rs. 100000	19	11.87
	More than Rs 100000	11	06.87
3.	**Type of family**		
	Upto 4 members	97	60.62
	More than 4 members	63	39.37
4.	**Education**		
	Illiterate	49	30.62
	Primary level	47	29.37
	Middle school	29	18.12
	High school	28	17.50
	Graduation and above	07	04.37
5.	**Media exposure**		
	Radio	26	16.25
	Television	87	54.37
	Mobile phones	47	29.37

Table. 2 Information needs related to kharif paddy cultivation (n=160)

Sl No	Information Need regarding kharif paddy cultivation	Most(3)	Moderate(2)	Somewhat(1)	Score	Rank
1	Selling of product	131	19	10	441	**I**
2	Pest control	123	21	16	427	**II**
3	Nursery raising	98	41	21	397	**V**
4	Disease management	111	29	20	393	**VI**
5	Seed variety	113	31	16	417	**IV**
6	Transportation	87	42	31	376	**VIII**
7	Threshing	79	52	29	370	**XI**
8	Storage	88	37	35	373	**IX**
9	Pre harvest desiccation	75	61	24	371	**X**
10	Winnowing	68	41	51	337	**XIX**
11	Fertilizing Management	99	39	22	397	**V**
12	Transplanting	77	42	41	356	**XII**
13	Seed treatment	61	42	53	320	**XVI**
14	Land preparation	59	57	44	335	**XV**
15	Water management	88	43	29	379	**VII**
16	Harvesting	63	59	38	345	**XIII**
17	Puddling	54	49	57	317	**XVII**
18	Weed control	119	23	18	421	**III**

Table 3. Distribution of respondents as per their preferred Infromation sources (n=160)

Sl No	Information sources	Most(3)	Moderate(2)	Somewhat(1)	Score	Rank
1.	Husband	127	19	14	433	**I**
2	Input supplier	121	18	21	420	**II**
3	Friend	79	70	11	388	**VI**
4	SHGs	77	42	41	356	**VI**
5	Relatives	81	33	46	355	**VIII**
6	Neighbors	101	32	27	394	**III**
7	Radio	61	40	59	322	**IX**
8	Experienced farmers	53	35	72	301	**XII**
9	Village leader	49	36	75	284	**XIII**
10	TV	43	37	80	283	**XIV**
11	Agriculture coordinator	52	39	69	303	**XI**
12	Contact farmer	71	19	70	321	**X**
13	Farmers organization	85	40	35	370	**VII**
14	KVK	98	36	26	392	**V**
15	Newspaper	29	43	88	261	**XVI**
16	Farm literature	32	39	89	263	**XV**
17	University scientist	108	17	35	393	**IV**
18	NGO	105	22	33	392	**V**

3.3 Preferred Information Sources for Seeking Information

Table 3 indicates that most of the farm women were dependent on their husband for agricultural information which rank first followed by input suppliers. Neighbors, university scientist, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), Non Government Organisations(NGOs) and Self Help Groups(SHGs) were also important source of agricultural information. Table 3 also illustrates that, News paper and farm literature are not playing significant role in providing agricultural information to farm women.

Sadaf et al. [8] also found in their study that male head /husband, neighbors and fellow farmers were perceived to be the better existing information sources by the respondents as compared to others. They further noticed in their study that rural women were not benefited from television and radio in spite of delivery of different agricultural programmes by these sources of information.

4. CONCLUSION

Present study illustrated that young farm women in agriculture are eager to get information regarding various operations of kharif paddy cultivation. The study shows that the farm women wanted to know more about selling of product, pest control and weed control. The study also found that young farm women preferred localite sources for information such as their husband, input dealers and so on etc. The study will make it easier to understand the flow of farm information that farm women use. The result of this study will also help to bridge the information gap regarding farm technologies. The finding of study also play a major role in guiding policy makers and development planners who are concerned about gender issues while designing agricultural projects within the region and elsewhere in the country.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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