

Women's Ability to Access Agricultural Information

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ABSTRACT

Women are essential to agriculture, making major contributions to rural economics, livestock management, and food production. Nevertheless, in spite of their efforts, they encounter significant obstacles when trying to obtain agricultural data, which restricts their economic prospects and production. In addition to examining important issues including gender bias in extension services, restricted access to technology, land ownership restrictions, and sociocultural restraints, this article also addresses the crucial role that agricultural knowledge plays in empowering women farmers. Targeted solutions, like gender-inclusive agricultural training, increasing digital and mobile-based advising services, enhancing women's access to financial resources, and fusing agricultural education with domestic duties, are required to close this knowledge gap. Successful programs that have improved women's access to agricultural information are illustrated by case studies from Bangladesh, Kenya, and India.

INTRODUCTION

"In order to awaken the people, it is the woman who have to be awakened. Once she is on move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves".

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

Women's ability to access agricultural information is crucial for enhancing productivity, food security, and economic empowerment.

However, they often face barriers such as limited access to technology, lower literacy rates, and sociocultural constraints (Ragasa *et al.*, 2019). Studies show that when women receive agricultural training and extension services, their productivity can increase significantly (Doss, 2018). Digital platforms, community-based extension models, and gender-sensitive policies have been effective in bridging the information gap (FAO, 2020).

WHY WOMEN NEED TO KNOW ABOUT AGRICULTURE?

Having access to trustworthy agricultural information is essential for any farmer to make well-informed decisions. Because they frequently operate with less space, less money, and fewer economic prospects, it is even more important for women.

Women farmers who obtain timely and precise agricultural information are able to:

- **Increase crop yields:** by the use of superior seed types, soil conservation strategies, and enhanced farming practices.
- **Improve Livestock Management:** Productivity is increased by knowledge of livestock nutrition, disease prevention, and breeding practices.
- **Increase Income and Financial Stability:** Women who are knowledgeable about government programs, trade networks, and market prices are better able to negotiate better prices and minimize losses after harvest.
- **Adopt Climate-Smart Farming Practices:** Climate change resilience is increased by having access to weather forecasts and drought-tolerant crop varieties.
- **Enhance Nutrition and Food Security:** Knowledgeable female farmers are able to

grow a variety of nutrient-dense crops, which will increase the food security of households. Notwithstanding these benefits, women still encounter a number of obstacles when trying to obtain agricultural information, which restricts their capacity to compete in the industry and realize their full potential.

OBSTACLES WOMEN FACE IN OBTAINING AGRICULTURAL DATA

1. Agricultural Extension Services' Gender Bias

Knowledge transfer from research institutes to farmers is greatly aided by agricultural extension programs. These services, however, are frequently created in a way that benefits male farmers. Among the main concerns are:

- **Male-Dominated Advisory Networks:** Due to social and cultural constraints, women find it challenging to participate in these networks, as most agricultural extension officers in many areas are men.
- **Exclusion from Training Programs:** Training sessions are frequently conducted at times or places that do not take into account women's domestic duties.
- **Absence of Gender-Specific Guidance:** Women, who frequently practice small-scale farming and subsistence agriculture, receive little assistance from advisory programs that emphasize large-scale farming or cash crops.

2. Limited Digital Information and Technology Access

Through digital advisory services, radio shows, and smartphone apps, technology has emerged as a crucial instrument for disseminating agricultural knowledge. But many women deal with:

- **Limited Mobile Phone Ownership:** Men are more likely than women to own mobile phones in many rural locations, which limits their access to SMS-based information and agricultural apps.
- **Low Digital Literacy:** Women may not have the technical know-how to utilize phones or the internet efficiently, even if they have access to them.
- **Unreliable Internet and Electricity:** The efficacy of digital solutions is restricted in rural regions by inadequate infrastructure.

3. Financial Restraints and Land Ownership

- **Absence of Land Rights:** Since many female farmers do not own land, it is challenging for them to be eligible for agricultural loans or take part in government programs that demand land ownership.
- **Limited Credit Access:** Women find it difficult to purchase farming supplies like premium seeds, fertilizer, and irrigation systems when they lack the necessary funds.
- **Reliance on Men to Make Decisions:** The inability of female farmers to make independent financial decisions in some households restricts their capacity to adopt innovative farming practices.

4. Cultural norms and time constraints

- **Household and Childcare Responsibilities:** Women frequently balance a number of responsibilities, which leaves little time for farming meetings or training sessions.

- **Social Restrictions on Mobility:** Women may encounter obstacles in certain cultures while trying to attend market visits or agricultural training.
- **Male-Dominated Decision-Making:** Women's opinions are frequently left out of policy talks and farming cooperatives.

HOW TO MAKE AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION MORE ACCESSIBLE TO WOMEN

1. Agricultural Extension Services That Are Gender-Inclusive

- **Employ More Female Extension Officers:** Women may participate in training programs more frequently if they feel more at ease dealing with female advisors.
- **Create Training Programs with a Women's Focus:** Sessions ought to be planned at times that work for women farmers and in places that they can get to.
- **Promote Community-Based Learning:** By forming farmer groups led by women, they may exchange best practices, insights, and experiences.

2. Growing Mobile-Based and Digital Solutions

- **Expand Women's Access to Cell Phones:** Governments and non-governmental organizations can fund programs that give rural women access to inexpensive or subsidized cell phones.
- **Develop User-Friendly Digital Platforms:** SMS services and agricultural apps should be made in simple, understandable formats and in local languages.

- **Take Advantage of Community Radio Programs:** A lot of rural women get their information from the radio. Radio programs that focus on women's agriculture can be expanded with great success.

3. Strengthening Women's Land and Financial Rights

- **Promote Women's Land Ownership Rights:** Lawmakers should put laws into place that guarantee women's lawful land ownership and inheritance.
- **Make Agricultural Loans and loan Accessible:** Banks should provide loan programs that are inclusive of women and do not demand land ownership as security.
- **Implement Women-Focused Subsidies:** Special provisions can incentivize female farmers to make investments in contemporary farming methods.

4. Combining Household Roles with Agricultural Information

- **Family-Based Training Programs:** Teaching men and women together can encourage gender equality and cooperative decision-making in agriculture.
- **Provide Childcare Support at Training Centres:** More women can attend farmer training activities if childcare is available.
- **Acknowledge Women's Traditional expertise:** Many women possess important indigenous farming expertise that ought to be included into contemporary methods.

EXAMPLES: EFFECTIVE EFFORTS TO EMPOWER FEMALE FARMERS

Case Study 1: Indian Digital Solutions the Digital Green initiative in India educates women farmers through video-based training programs. These movies have assisted thousands of female farmers in adopting improved farming practices by showcasing local women as educators.

Case Study 2: Kenyan Women's Farmer Organizations The establishment of women-led agricultural cooperatives in Kenya has been facilitated by the Self-Help Africa initiative. These organizations increase women's income and decision-making power by improving their access to markets, financing, and training.

Case Study 3: Bangladeshi Mobile Advisory Services Rural women are able to access mobile-based advising services through the Agri service Bangladesh project. The initiative makes sure that even illiterate women may access farming knowledge by providing voice messages in regional dialects.

CONCLUSION:

The future of agriculture depends on making sure that every farmer, regardless of gender, has access to the information they need to succeed. Conclusion Women are the backbone of the agricultural sector, but they are still disproportionately excluded from agricultural knowledge and decision-making processes. We may unleash the full potential of women farmers by investing in gender-inclusive training, digital solutions, financial empowerment, and policy reforms. Equitable access to agricultural information is not just a matter of gender equality; it is also crucial for food security, rural development, and economic growth.

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