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INEQUALITY IN AGRICULTURE**

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ORGANIC FARMING TO BRING DOWN GENDER INEQUALITY IN AGRICULTURE

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INTRODUCTION

To promote organic farming, a number of initiatives were taken by the Government of India since 10th plan (2002-07). Organic agriculture has principles of fairness and enforcement of social justice laws minimize the discrimination in agricultural production under organic systems. Organic and sustainable farming to

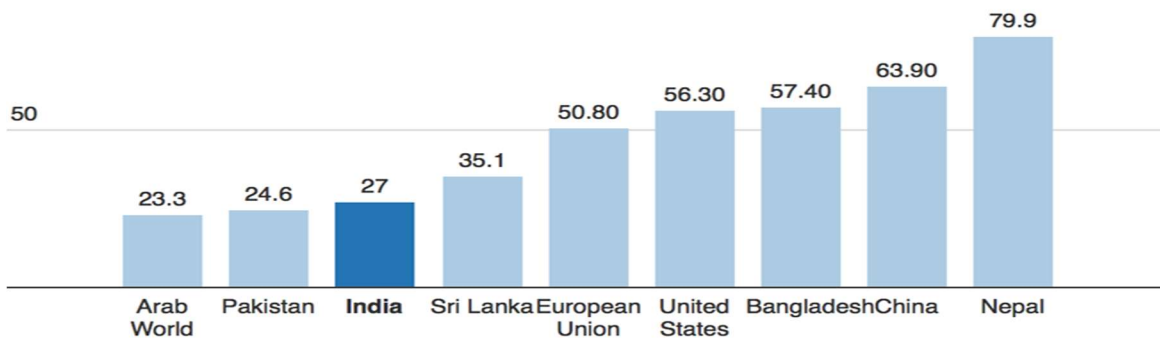
create new structures that actively work towards achieving gender equality and protecting the use of indigenous knowledge.

THE CONCEPT OF ORGANIC FARMING AND GENDER

Organic farming is a system of agriculture that uses natural and biodegradable inputs while deliberately avoiding the use of synthetic fertilizers. Gender has been defined by IFAD as “the socio-economic and evolving roles and functions of men and women as they relate to and complement each other within a specific socio-cultural and economic context”.

Organic agriculture empowers women. Conventional agriculture marginalizes women. For example: A study during 2006-2007, in Uttarakhand, which has embraced organic agriculture by declaring itself as first organic state in India. It was found that land and livestock ownership was mostly with men, whereas income was jointly managed by both men and women followed by women members alone in most of the households. The Uttarakhand Organic Commodity Board (UOCB) has imparting gender sensitization training to women’s to make their participation more proactive and visible and their formal involvement was

Global Female Labour Force Participation (%)



Source: World Bank



being encouraged through appropriate policy interventions.

THE GLOBAL GENDER GAP REPORT 2017

India slipped 21 places on the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) Global Gender Gap index to 108. The Reasons behind this are less participation of women in the economy and low wages. In rural India, the slide has been much worse as women’s contribution to agricultural work is largely invisible and the sector has not generated employment for women formally.

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

The ancient African proverb goes “without women we all go hungry”. Women are generally invisible workers as far as agricultural activities in developing countries like India are concerned. One of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the member states of the United Nations adopted in 2000 is to promote gender equality and empower women.

OBJECTIVES

- a. To document the persisting gender inequalities in agriculture.
- b. To understand the reason behind existing gender inequalities in agriculture.
- c. To understand the role of women in Organic farming.
- d. To analyse organic farming as a way to reduce gender inequality in agriculture.

METHODOLOGY

As this is a review of studies and not a research work, different previous work and publications are reviewed from secondary sources.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Gender inequalities in agriculture

Clement and Myles (1994) Men and women, both were involved in organic agriculture activities, but the final decisions in most of the cases rested with men only. This scenario commonly exists in case of conventional farms as well. An alternative orientation to organic farming has the potential to alter gender relations in agriculture, both by creating a labour process context in which women can more readily participate in farm production and management. Padel (2001) also pointed out that the empirical evidence on gender issues in agriculture was scarce, and the role of women in the decision-making in particular has not been studied in detail. IFOAM (2007) although women work as long as men do, there is a real and apparent gender bias with only a few policies oriented to correct the situation. Alkire et al, Akter et al (2013&2014) women have an unmanageable workload, they lack access to credit or have no decision making power over credit, and are poorly represented in agricultural and non-agricultural groups and organizations. Fletschner and Kenney (2014) Women lack access to and control over resources such as land and capital as well as agricultural inputs and technology such like improved crop varieties, training, information and marketing services. Sexsmith (2017) There are five dimensions to gender inequality in agriculture: land rights, productive resources, unpaid work, employment and decision making.

B. Reason behind existing gender inequalities in agriculture

- The patriarchal mindsets at play in India.



- women juggling with work and family responsibilities,
- sexism at the workplace,
- unequal wage,
- unsafe work environments,
- Lack of crèche.

C. Role of women in Organic farming:

IFOAM (2006) Many women around the world are taking a leading role in the development of organic agriculture. Duram (2006), in her study on organic farmers in the US, reported that organic farmers are more likely to be female when compared to conventional farmers. Hall and Mogyorody (2007). found that female farmers on organic vegetable farms and mixed livestock/cash crop farms were more likely to be involved in farm production than women on field crop farms, where, mechanization and capital intensive production is much higher.

D. Organic farming as a way to reduce gender inequality in agriculture:

Organic agriculture may have positive effects on the income of women, who make up a large sharing of smallholding farmers, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia (ESCAP 2003) Organic agriculture supports gender equality because it makes the women’s contribution more visible, offer economic opportunities, supports health, encourages biodiversity and traditional knowledge, and ensures equitable work standards (IFOAM 2007). Farnworth and Hutchings (2009) has recommended that studies be conducted in the South about how farm women are challenging and contesting gendered spaces in farming, and in so doing working to redefine not only their gender identities, but also the meaning of sustainable farming itself. Madeley (2002) Organic agriculture’s ability to empower women has

further beneficial impacts on food security. It has been shown that when women have responsibility over resources, such as land and other productive resources including livestock, they have greater capacity to optimize their use, increasing food production and enhancing the nutritional health of their families.

THE PRESENT SCENARIO

Encouraged by the favourable policy environment at the level of Central government of India, the state governments, especially states with mountain regions are particularly active to devise policies to promote organic farming, as is evident from the fact that three states namely Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Mizoram have already declared themselves as organic states. Nevertheless, the revolutionary potential of sustainable approaches to farming to reshape our food systems, and the way humans interact with those systems, will not be realized unless there is a concerted effort by committed sustainable farmers and consumers to work towards gender equality.

ORGANIC FARMING BRINGS GENDER EQUALITY AS:

- At the production scale, practicing organic agriculture results in more diversified crops grown and different livestock species raised in a farm.
- The diversity calls for women to play a more diverse role in the household economy and to perform tasks of more responsibility (for example taking care of nursing fields, seed beds or marketing of agricultural products).
- The added responsibility enhances their self-esteem and decision making power
- Promoting their empowerment within their family and community.



- Moreover, because organic agriculture requires specific knowledge and specialized skills, women are exposed to more educational and skills development opportunities like on-farm and off-farm trainings.

ORGANIC FARMING BRINGING DOWN GENDER INEQUALITY BY

- Organic farming ensures that women, who have in most cultures a central role in caring for the diet of the household, can have access to healthier, diversified and nutritious food.
- Providing sustainable agricultural practices that avoid the use of chemical inputs, such as pesticides, which negatively impact on women farmers' health.
- Promoting knowledge-intensive practices, through technical information and training, which empowers women to act autonomously and independently.

CONSTRAINTS IT'S STILL FACE:

A qualitative field study with interviews in Odisha (India) was conducted. Results show that, although organic farming has positive impacts on women, such as improvements in health and food security, there are significant draw-backs due to factors such as the additional workload. Women are also widely excluded from business decisions in organic farming, as the investigated organic initiative works within traditional gender patterns. Although female farmer groups exist, women are neither included on the cooperative level nor in agricultural training on organic methods, which leads to the reinforcement of deeply embedded gender inequality.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Technical training,
2. Financial inclusion,
3. Working beyond traditional social structures,
4. Include women in higher administrative levels.

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