Abstract

The rural economy in India is traditionally based on agriculture, livestock and household activities. Rice is the principal food crop of North Bihar. Farm women play an important role in rice based farming system in different forms of work to generate employment and income. They play multiple roles and make productive inputs in terms of work hours and contribute equivalent income to the family. Therefore, they have multiple employment status, ranging from unpaid family worker to paid wage work in their home or village or outside in rendering services in exchange of goods and services (ILO Report, 1975).

In North Bihar, there is large scale seasonal or long term migration of male members for outside jobs for service, business, construction work and wage labour in agriculture when the women folk become the sole architect of management of agriculture and household activities including decision making at the native place. Hence, any understanding of the process of production would remain incomplete, unless the role of women and their participation in agriculture particularly in rice based farming system is not analysed.

Keeping these points in view the present investigation was undertaken with the following specific objectives:

1. To study the socio-personal and economic characteristics of farm women.
2. To study the extent of participation of farm women in rice-based farming system.
3. To analyse the decision making pattern of farm women in rice-based farming systems.
4. To examine the economic contributions made by the farm women in farming.
5. To measure the level of adoption of rice production technology by farm women.
6. To find out the relationship between socio-personal and economic factors and participation of women in rice-based farming systems.
7. To study the constraints of rural women in their participation in rice-based farming systems.

The study was conducted in Samastipur district of North Bihar. Out of 20 blocks two rice growing blocks were selected randomly for the field investigation. Two villages from each block making a sample of 4 villages were selected randomly. A sample of 40 farm families from each of the 4 selected villages were drawn by proportionate stratified random sampling technique on the basis of land holding possessed by them. Thus the total sample consisted 160. The data were collected with the help of a well structured pre-tested interview schedule pertaining different variables selected for the study. The collected data were analysed through Karl pearson's correlation (r), multiple regression, t-test for interpretation of results.

Major Findings

1. Majority of rural farm women were of middle age group (55%), backward caste (56.87%), low educational level (38.13%), small size of holding (46.25%), medium size of family (59.37%), medium level of socio-economic status (50%) and medium level of extension contact (53.76%).

2. The independent work participation of men in all farm and allied activities was 31.28 per cent while women's independent work participation was 50.05% and joint participation was 18.67 per cent.
Men took independent decisions in a sizeable proportion (54.97%) and women say independent decisions was (18.71%) of all farm and money related decisions. Joint decisions were taken 26.86 per cent of all farm and money related decisions. This points out men dominated women in all farm and money related decisions.

The findings of percentage utilization of time of rural women indicated that 24.20 per cent of their time was utilized in farm activities, 18.70 per cent of home activities, 8.33 per cent in allied activities and remaining percentage of time was being spent in social, religious and recreational activities.

The contribution of women to family income were 51.08 per cent of the total family income as compared to 48.92 per cent of men.

Possession of Agricultural implements, decision making, adoption of rice production technology and contribution of women were found to be positively and significantly correlated with the women's participation in rice based farming activities. Whereas age, education, family size, social participation, size of holding, income and socio-economic status were negatively but significantly correlated with women's participation.

The R² value of the study was estimated to be 72.03 which indicated that over 72 per cent of the variation in the dependent variable i.e. women's participation were explained by the independent variables included in the function. F-value (13,01) which clearly demonstrate the highly significant impact of different selected independent variables over the dependent variable i.e. women's participation. Land holding, decision making, farming experience, adoption and contribution of women had positive impact on women's participation where as age, income and social participation and negative impact on women's participation.

The findings of constraints indicated that some of the most important agro-economic, socio-psychological and communicational constraints were difficulty in controlling bullock with safety specially in ploughing operation, dual role of women in farm and home activities and inability of women to have personal contact with extension agencies as they ranked first in each category.