ROLE OF RURAL WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE AND THEIR TRAINING NEEDS

N. Iftikhar, T. Ali and M. Ahmad

Department of Agri. Extension, University of Agriculture Faisalabad.

ABSTRACT

Women play a vital role in crop production like sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting and post harvest operations such as threshing, winnowing, drying, grinding, husking and storage. Whereas in livestock production they lookafter animals and do primary medication. They also have to perform domestic chores of cooking, cleaning of house, washing of clothes, taking care of children and fetching of water and fuel. Although they perform all of the above mentioned tasks but due to lack of resources, information sources and technical guidance, they have to meet the challenges of the time. On the other hand, they are deprived of education, nutrition, medication and security. Due to lack of training of rural women, they are lagging behind than the international standards of crop production, livestock management and post harvesting operations resulting low yield of the crops and poor quality of the produce. To probe into the matter, the present study was designed. The Study was carried out in district Bahawalpur. This district consists of five tehsils Hasilpur, Bahawalpur, Khairpur Tamewali, Ahmadpur East and Yazman. Out of which two tehsils were selected randomly and five union councils from each tehsil were again selected on random basis. From each selected union council 2 villages were selected randomly. From each selected village 20 women, who were engaged in agricultural activities, were selected through random sampling, thus making a total of 400 respondents. The data were collected through a pre-tested interview schedule designed for this purpose. The data thus, collected were analyzed and interpreted by using appropriate statistical package to draw the conclusions and to suggest measures for improvement. The study revealed that majority of the respondents were involved in crop production activities such as cotton picking, wheat harvesting, and drying of agri. produce with rank order 1st, 2nd and 3rd.The data depict that majority of the respondents were involved in livestock raising activities like lasi making, milking, milk storage, and watering of animal on top three rank order as calculated above. Whereas, wheat storage, cotton storage and wheat cleaning stood 1st and 2nd order.

Key words: Rural Women, domestic chore, training needs, crop production, livestock production, cottage industries.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture sector is the largest one in the economy of Pakistan. It contributes 22.4% share in GDP along with livestock sector, which accounts 44.8% share in agriculture and 10.8% in total GDP. Whereas, 42% of workforce, both men and women, is directly or indirectly involved in agriculture (GOP, 2006). Women role is significant in sub sectors of crop production, livestock management, poultry production and cottage industries. Women often devote two-thirds more time to these tasks as compared to men who spent one-third of their time (ESCAP, 1997).

A rural woman's work in Pakistan is more visible in livestock sector than crop sector. They spend 5.5 hours in caring of livestock and just 50 minutes for own children (Hashmi, 1988). It is reported that in 90% families animal lookafter, grazing, fodder cutting, primary medication and marketing are domains of women work. Poor livestock keepers depend on a wide variety of livestock products and services. In some households, livestock accounts for only a small portion of the economic activities, while, in others, livestock is the only source of livelihood (The Nation, 2006).

These tasks are done by rural women in addition to their normal domestic chores of cooking, taking care of children, elderly and disabled family members; fetching water and fuel, cleaning and maintaining the house as well as some of its construction (Das, 1995). Women contribute to food production not only through processing and preparation of food but also drying of vegetables and preparation of different kinds of pickles (Baluch, 1988). Women secure food as wage earner and provide income for food purchase in subsistence families (ESCAP, 1997).

Despite their role in agriculture in developing countries, women remain limited to their access to critical resources and services. Women own not even 2% of land, while the proportion of women heads of household continues to grow. Only 10% women have access to credit and loan facility. Two-thirds of the one billion of illiterate persons in the world are women and girls. They also have very limited role in decision-making process at the household, village and national levels in most cultures. Their needs, interests and constraints are not reflected in policy-making. They also have limited access to benefits of research and innovations (FAO, 2003). Women also lack ownership of land; they had only the right to use, due to which they cannot take managerial decisions especially in case of absentee males. They also

had no security for land tenure. Only 5% extension services address to women, impart trainings mainly on the issue of household tasks for women and not on professional agriculture technology (FAO, 2002).

The working competencies of the rural women can be strengthened and upgraded by providing training, but question arises what are the areas in which they need training. Along with different factors training is one of the most important. Training refers to the "acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies as a result of the teaching of vocational or practical skills and knowledge that relates to specific useful skills" (Wikipedia, 2006). Training is extending and developing individuals capabilities for better performance in work. It involves the transfer of new knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitude to develop and maintain trainees' competencies to perform specific roles at their work place (FAO, 1993). In order to identify these training areas present study was carried to study the role of rural women in agriculture and their training needs assessment in district Bahawalpur.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

District Bahawalpur consists of five tehsils namely Hasilpur, Bahawalpur, Khairpur Tamewali, Ahmadpur East and Yazman. Out of which two tehsils were selected randomly and five union councils from each tehsil were again selected on random basis. From each selected union council, two villages were selected randomly. From each selected village 20 women, who were engaged in agricultural activities, were selected through random sampling, thus making a sample of 400 respondents. The data were collected through a pre-tested interview schedule designed for this purpose. The data thus, collected were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 15.00 to draw the conclusions were drawn and measures were suggested for improvement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most of the respondents (48.2%) were in the age group of 30-44 years, followed by 31.5 and 20.3% who belonged to age group of 45-59 and 15-29 years, respectively. The mean age of the respondents was 38.53 years with 10.24 years standard deviation (Table. 1).

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents according to their age

Age	No.	%
15-29	82	20.3
30-44	193	48.2
45-59	125	31.5
Total	400	100.0
Mean= 38.53	SD=10.24	

Majority (56.5%) of the respondents was illiterate, followed by 17.5 and 12.8% of the respondents who were primary and matriculate, respectively. While 6.5 and 6.3% were intermediate and middle, respectively. On the other hand, only 0.5% of the respondents were graduated clearly depicting the low level of education of the study area (Table. 2). This situation is quite worth consideration by the government.

Table 2. Distribution of the respondents according to their education

Educational level	No.	%
Illiterate	226	56.5
Primary	70	17.5
Middle	25	6.3
Matriculation (up to 10^{th} grade)	51	12.8
Intermediate (up to 12^{th} grade)	26	6.5
Graduation (up to 14^{th} grade)	2	0.5
Total	400	100.0
Mean=0.959	SD=1.33	

The data regarding the training needs in crop production fluctuate between (1.85 to 0.03 mean value) harvesting and post harvesting techniques, and planting method. Whereas, marketing and seedbed preparation got 2^{nd} and 6^{th} order. It is further probe out that higher the degree of labour work lower will be the rural women participation and vice versa (Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of the respondents according to their training needs in crop production

Activity	n	X	SD	Rank Order
Harvesting and post harvesting techniques	228	1.85	1.89	1^{st}
Marketing	214	1.80	1.95	2^{nd}
Pest management	37	0.94	0.29	3^{rd}
Seed selection	12	0.35	0.17	4^{th}
Crop management	12	0.35	0.17	4^{th}
Seed treatment	10	0.06	0.44	5^{th}
Seed bed preparation	9	0.02	0.14	6^{th}
Planting method	7	0.03	0.30	7^{th}

The chi-square value shows a highly significant association between age of the respondents and their training needs in crops. The gamma value shows a strong negative relationship between the variables. So our hypothesis "Lower the age of the respondents, higher will be the training needs in crop production" is accepted (Table 4).

Table 4. Association between age of the respondents and training needs in crop production.

Age Categories	Training needs in crop production			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
15-29	57	20	4	81
	70.4%	24.7%	4.9%	100.0%
30-44	187	5	1	193
	96.9%	2.6%	.5%	100.0%
45-59	122	3	1	126
	96.8%	2.4%	.8%	100.0%
Total	366	28	6	400
	91.5%	7.0%	1.5%	100.0%

$\chi^2 = 58.41$ df = 4
Significance = .000** Gamma = -.714

Table 5. Distribution of the respondents according to their sowing of crop

Crop	No.	%
Cotton	394	98.5
Wheat	394	98.5
Rice	175	43.8
S. cane	139	34.8
Fodder	129	32.3
Pulses	101	25.3

n=400

Table 5 show that 98.5% of the respondents had sown cotton and wheat. On the other hand 43.8 and 34.8% had sown sugar cane and fodder. However, only 25.3% of them had sown pulses. In the same connection of above Khan (2006) reveals that majority of the respondents (98.1%) sown the sugarcane crop, while 90.6% of the respondents grow the wheat crop. Among the rest of respondents 55.6%, 51.9%, 29.4% fall in the category of maize, fodder and cotton crops.

CONCLUSIONS: Rural women of Pakistan are facing the challenge of competency. The results of the study indicates that majority of the studied women were middle-aged and illiterate. They were involved in crop production activities from cotton picking to drying of agricultural products. But they need training in the area of crop production especially for harvesting and post harvesting activities. Furthermore, it was also observed that most (76.7%) of the respondents were married. To raise cropping intensity and to combat the food scarcity problem of the country, short training programs over crop production, livestock care and management, human health and sanitation and handicrafts making for capacity building and skill development of the desert women are needed.

REFERENCES

Baluch, M. (1988). In: Pakistan, SD dimension, people, gender and development. [On line].

Das, M.D. (1995). Improving the relevance and effectiveness of agricultural extension activities for women farmer. FAO, Rome.

ESCAP, (1997). Women in Pakistan: A country profile. United Nations, New York.

FAO, (1993). Trainer's guide: concepts, principles and methods of training. http://www.fao.org

FAO, (2002) .Women and food security. An Article from website http://www.fao.org.

FAO, (2003). People, policy and institutional framework for promoting the role of women in rural development. Rome, Italy. http://www.Fao.org

GOP, (2006). Economic Survey, Economic Advisor's Wing, Finance Division, Islamabad.

Hashmi, (1988). Women in Pakistan. Website: http:// aphy.ku.edu.pk/resources/res2001/afsheen-kamal/economical_c.htm-->

Wikipedia, (2006). Retrieved from "http: // en. wikipedia. org / wiki / Training".

Khan, S.R. (2006). A sociological study on the involvement of rural women in decision making with regard to family and farm activities. M.Sc. Thesis Rural Sociology, Uni. Of Agri. Faisalabad.

The Nation. (2006). Touching New Horizons. Daily Nation, March 3, 2006.