

Export Oriented Agriculture and Women Engagement: (A Study of Osmanabad District in Maharashtra, India)

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Received: 17 Feb 2021 | Revised accepted: 11 Apr 2021 | Published online: 13 Apr 2021

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ABSTRACT

The Present paper aimed to study the involvement of women workers in different stages of export-oriented agriculture. The study conducted in Osmanabad district of Maharashtra, which is emerged from last few years as exported agriculture produces fruits, flowers and vegetables. The study collected 45 respondents from women workers. This Paper discusses the women workers socio-economic conditions and their involvement at different levels in export-oriented agriculture. The study proposes a Women Skill Development Centre (WSDC) for enhancing women's skills to meet the requirement of export-oriented agriculture in Osmanabad District.

Key words: Export oriented agriculture, Socio-economic condition, Women workers, Women skill development centre

India is a developing country and agriculture is considered as its backbone with 58 percent of the population in the countryside dependent on agriculture. It is the primary source of income for the rural people, especially for women. Indian women make an essential contribution to the agricultural sector. The economy of a particular part / region / country is always governed by many characteristics including culture, history, geography, laws, rules, regulations and many other factors and incorporating those in development of the region and every stakeholder associated with it. Women play an essential role in every sector of the economy and in defining the economic status of the family by supporting economic activities [1]. They secured the soil through natural cultivating likewise advanced product biodiversity through the conservation of hereditary protection and varietal decent variety [2]. It is extremely protected to state that Indian agriculture could not and would not have made without the women agriculturists and their continued engagement and agenda of making the maximum out of it. They contribute to the sector very promptly as and when required. Their parts are utterly indispensable in the advancement procedure of agriculture. They work as- farmers, unpaid workers on the family farm, co-farmers and paid workers. In Marathwada and across the country, women work from selection and preservation of seed to planning, applying, compost and pesticides, sowing, weeding, seedling creation, transplanting products, sifting and gathering. Farmers and especially women, contribute the most (of the farm labour) as they go through the geographical risks and hazards [3]. Despite the fact that agriculture in the Osmanabad district suffers many issues like natural calamities, unavailability of resources,

knowledge, transport mechanism and possible market linkage, the agriculture in this district has gone up the mile and has proven a real kingmaker in the country. Women have played a crucial role in this apart, and they have been a backbone of export farming and business. Still, many women face socio, economic, role-specific issues. Though they have climbed up the ladder of improved labouring practices in the state still, they are somewhere below expectations.

A gender that is socially constructed relations between men and women is an organising element of existing farming systems worldwide and a determining factor of ongoing agricultural restructuring. Current trends in agricultural market liberalisation and the reorganisation of farm work, as well as the rise of environmental and sustainability concerns, are redefining the links between gender and development [4]. The proportion of women in agricultural production and post-harvest activities ranges almost 70 percent and their involvement is increasing in many developing countries, particularly with the development of export-oriented farming, which is associated with a growing demand for female labour, including migrant workers [5]. The increased demand for women in the field of agriculture and export-oriented farming has invited too many bottlenecks and troubles in terms of their role, status, responsibilities. The evolving issues have pushed women at the new dilemma, and this research tries to analyse and address the issues of these women [6]. It has also questioned the traditional forms of agriculture and is hence challenging the women with fewer skills, aged wage labourers and farmers and sick workers as well. Again, this is region belongs to the farmer suicide belt of the globe.

So, the above study concluded that the women are critical torchbearers of the farming activities and they are not recognized and valued for their work. In certain agriculture practices women's role is very important in general, export-oriented farming activities in particular. Hence a study is conducted to know women involvement in export-oriented agriculture activities with following activities. The present

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research paper aimed at understanding Socio-Economic Status of women workers engaged in export- Oriented farming vis-a-vis traditional farming and analyse women’s engagement in export-oriented agriculture in the study area.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research paper used a quantitative research method. The study was conducted in Osmanabad district of Maharashtra. The District has eight blocks out of which, two blocks were selected for the study on the basis of predominance of export-oriented agriculture activities. For this study women who are engaged in export-oriented farming and women engaged in traditional farming were selected. The study used purposive sampling for selecting the sample. The criteria for selecting sample was women who are working in export oriented farming. Viz. grapes, flower and vegetables and the women who are working in the same sector. The study used primary and secondary data. Primary data collected through Well-designed interview schedule. A Total of 45 respondents were selected for the study. Out of which 30 from export-oriented farming, 15 from traditional farming. Secondary data collected from sources like the Department of Agriculture, Women and Family Welfare department’s statutory bodies, government organisations. Simple averages and percentages used for analysing data.

Concepts used in the study

Traditional Farming: Traditional Agriculture can be

defined as a primitive style of farming that involves the intensive use of indigenous knowledge, traditional tools, natural resources, organic fertilizer and cultural beliefs of the farmers.

Export oriented farming: Export farming can be defined as the crop which has marked value and generally cultivated for the market purpose with use of modern mechanisms and techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is to understand the role of the women workers engaged in export-oriented agriculture. The primary data which was collected as a part of the research is analysed accordingly in order to answer the research question and fulfil the objectives of the research study. Since this research follows both the qualitative and quantitative approach, the necessary processes have been adopted to interpret the data. The tables and comparative graphs are used to present the data.

Socio-economic conditions of the workers

Sample profile: The respondents of the survey were mostly from different backgrounds of farming. The intention of information collected from them was to extract authentic and accurate data to avoid any standard error in data collection. The following figure is the pictorial presentation of the same:



Fig 1 Sample respondents (Based on Farming Work)

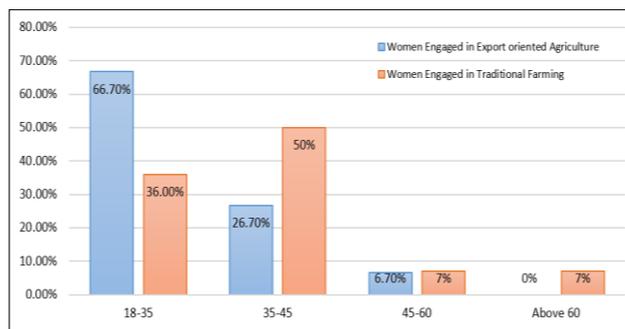


Fig 2 Sample distribution by age

The sample size of the study is 45, out of which 30 (66.67 percent) from women who are working in export-oriented agriculture produce, 15 (33.33 percent) respondents from women who are engaged in traditional farming [7].

The (Fig 2), explains age wise distribution of sample respondents, out of 30 sample respondents’ women engaged in export-oriented farming, 66.70 percent from 18-35 age group,

26.67 percent from 35-45 age group, 6.70 per cent from 45-60 age group. Whereas women engaged in traditional farming, out of 15 sample respondents, 36 percent of women from 18-35 age group, 50 percent from 35-45 age group, 7 percent from 45-60 age group and 7 per cent from above 60 age. It is observed in the above figure most of the younger women (18-35) are keen to be part of the export-oriented farming part.

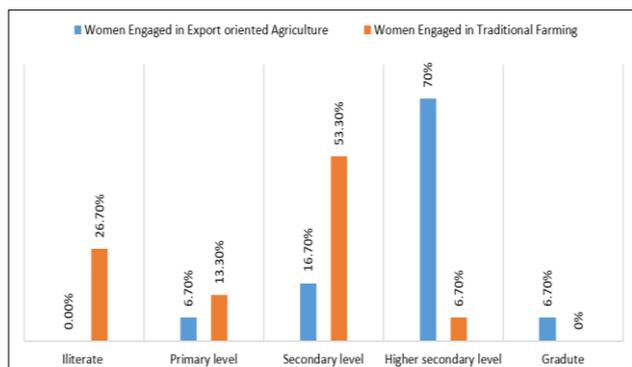


Fig 3 Sample distribution by education qualification

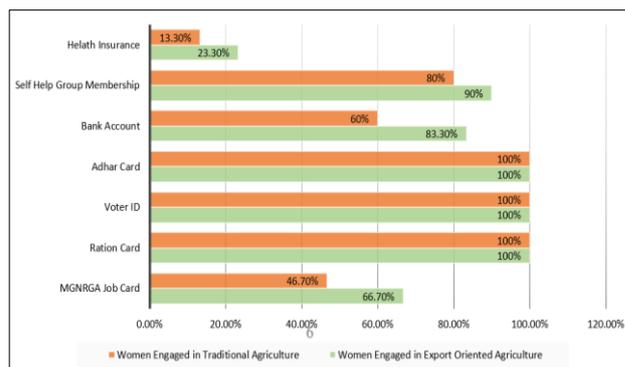


Fig 4 Sample distribution by identity documents for social security schemes

Data depicted in (Fig 3) shows the comparative analysis of women educational qualification. In the category of export-oriented agriculture, 70 per cent women completed higher secondary education, 16.7 percent completed secondary education, 6.7 percent completed primary education and 6.7 percent completed graduation. Those women working in the traditional farming category, 26.7 percent are illiterate, 6.7 per cent women completed the primary education, 16.7 percent completed secondary education and 6.7 per cent women completed higher secondary education [8].

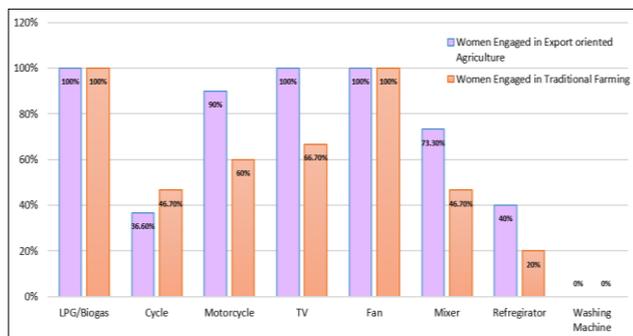


Fig 5 Sample distribution by asset ownership

Data in (Fig 5) clarifies the household asset ownership of women workers. In the category of women engaged in export-oriented agriculture, 100 percent women Workers have LPG connection, TV and Fan in their house. 90 percent women have motorcycles, 36.6 percent women have cycles at their house, 73.35 per cent women have mixers and 40 per cent women have refrigerators. Whereas women engaged in traditional farming, 100 percent women has LPG connection and fan in house, 66.70 percent women has TV, 60 percent women has motorcycle, 46.7 percent women has cycle at their house, 46.7 percent women has mixer and 20 percent women has refrigerators [10].

The (Fig 6) shows that in the category of export-oriented farming, 33.30 per cent women have farmland, and 66.70 percent doesn't have land. In the category of traditional farming, only 26.70 per cent women have farmland and 73.30 per cent are landless [11].

Women workers and their roles and responsibilities at household level

Women's roles are different in every field. At the

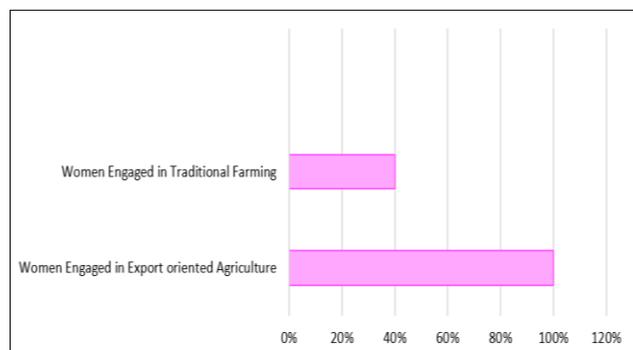


Fig 7 Women's involvement in decision making at household level

Women workers in export-oriented farming

In the farm, rural women perform numerous labour-intensive jobs such as weeding, hoeing, grass cutting, picking, cotton stick collections, separation of seeds from fiber. Women are also expected to collect wood from the field for

The (Fig 4) shows the all-women have essential identity documents viz. Adhar card, Voter ID card and ration card. In the category of export-oriented farming, 90 Percent women have Self-help group Membership and 83.3 Per cent women have bank accounts. In both the categories only a few women have health insurance under Pradhan Mantri Jiwan Bima Yojana. Very few women have MGNREGA job cards. In the category of women workers engaged in traditional farming, 60 Percent women have bank accounts and 80 Percent women have SHG Membership [9].

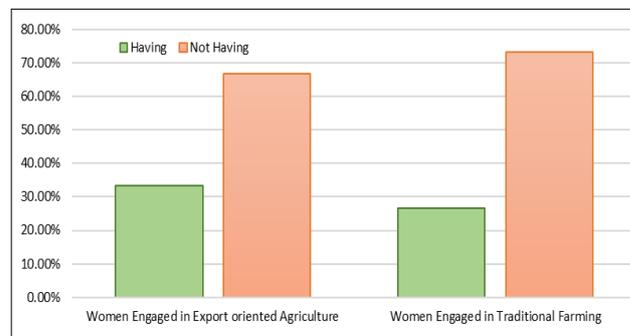


Fig 6 Sample distribution by farm land

household level, women play a role as homemaker/bread earner, mother, wife, daughter in law. In the house, women play a role as decision-maker of the house. Women are handling all the responsibilities properly to help the family and to enhance or improve the socio-economic condition and standard of living while working in the agriculture field. Also, women perform many other roles outside the home viz. buying the vegetables, grocery material for house, and participation in the self-help groups. Due to working in export-oriented agriculture what kind of status is developed within the women is also analysed. Also, how the trend is changed from working in regular farming to export-oriented agriculture studied and analysed. Detailed analysis of role and status at the household level are as follows:

Data in (Fig 7) shows, those women who are engaged in export-oriented agriculture have more decision making involved in the house as compared to those women who work in traditional farming. In export-oriented agriculture, women get more wages as compared to traditional farming, so they are economically becoming self-empowered and helping the household [12].

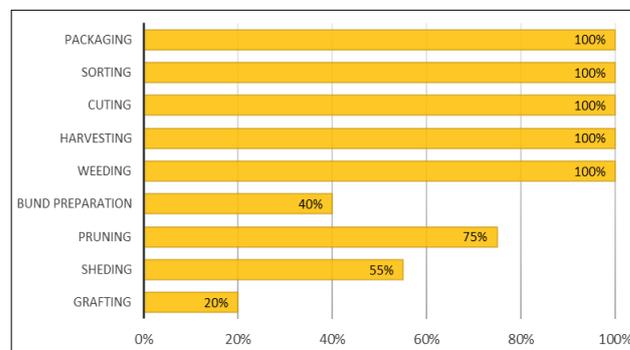


Fig 8 Women involvement in grapes farming at different stages

cooking. This kind of activity is done by women in their daily life. In export-oriented farming, women are a significant component; women play a significant and intensive role while cultivating the export-oriented crop. Grapes, Gerbera Flowers and vegetables (tomato and lady figure) are the first

agriculture products which are exported from here, and women are the backbone of these farming. Women play various kinds of roles in each crop production. They are giving a significant contribution to the growth and sustainability of export-oriented agriculture. In each crop how women are involved in various activities are given in the following figure, the detailed information about that is as follows. The (Fig 8), elucidates major activities of grape farming are performed by women and their percentage of

involvement in farming is more. Women are fully (100 percent) involved in wedding, harvesting, sorting and packaging. In other activities also women are involved in some per cent, like in grafting women’s engagement is 20 percent, in shedding 55 per cent, in pruning 75 per cent and in bund preparation it is 40 percent. From these overall figures, we can see women’s role in grapes farming is prominent and important. Women contribute a large amount of workforce to the farming of the grapes [13].

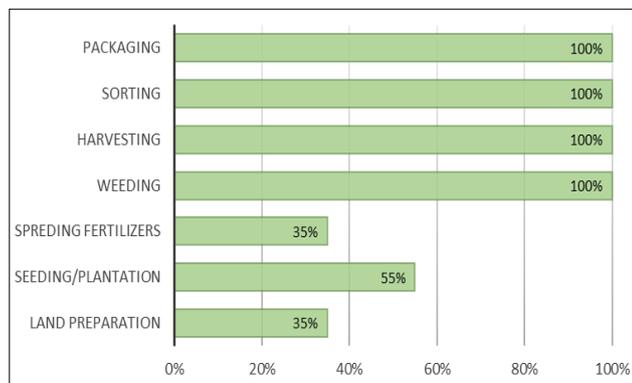


Fig 9 Women involvement in gerbera (Flower) farming at different stages

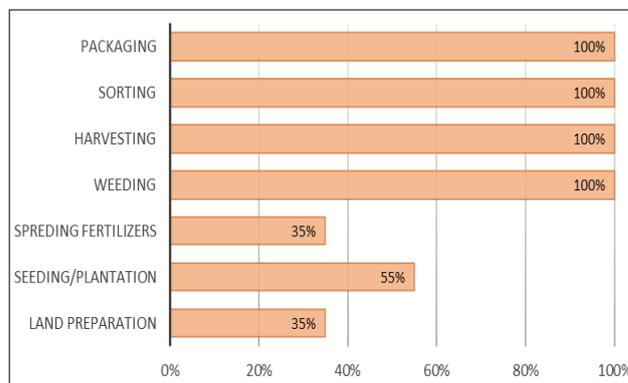


Fig 10 Women involvement in vegetables farming (Tomato and Lady Finger) at different stages

Data depicted in (Fig 9), explicates the major activities of gerbera farming is performed by women and their percentage of involvement in farming is more. Women are fully (100 percent) involved in wedding, harvesting, Sorting and Packaging. In other Activities also women are involved in some per cent, like in spreading fertilizers women’s engagement is 30 percent, in plantation 40 per cent, in 45 per cent in land preparation. From these overall figures, we can see women’s role in gerbera farming is prominent and important [14].

The (Fig 10), define significant tomato activities, and lady finger farming performed by women, and their percentage of involvement in farming is more. Women are entirely (100 percent) involved in weeding, harvesting, sorting and packaging. In other activities also women are involved in some per cent, like in spreading fertilisers women’s engagement is 35 per cent, in plantation 55 per cent, in 35 per cent in land preparation. From this overall figure, we can see women’s role in gerbera farming is prominent and essential [15].

Table 1 Work profile of the farming activities

Sample category	Activities	Mechanised / manual	Season / months	Working hours	Wage paid
Women engaged in export farming	Grafting, Shedding, Pruning, Bund Preparation	Both	April-June Sep-Dec	6 Hours per/day	250-300 Per day
Women engaged in traditional farming	Weeding, Harvesting Cutting, Sorting, Packaging	Manual	Round the year	6 Hours per/day	150-200 Per day

In the (Table 1), it is quite evident that those women who are engaged in export farming get 250 fixed wage rates for the agriculture activities, and those working in the traditional farming get fewer wages and also, they have to perform all kinds of unskilled works in the farm. In the farm, those women engaged in the export farming got drinking water, hand gloves and farm equipment’s facilities at the workplace, but women engaged in the traditional crop did not receive these kinds of facilities at the workplace [16].

The study sought to understand the role of the women workers engaged in export-oriented farming. The various variables regarding their role and status were studied and the following conclusions regarding their status, role and nature of engagement in the farm has been drawn. Due to working in export-oriented farming women are getting more income and they are contributing this income to their household economy. Also, women are becoming economically more empowered while working in export-oriented farming [17].

Improving social and economic status: In the export farming Women are getting sufficient amounts of the wages and they are utilizing the income in the household, also saving them money in the self-help groups and banks. Also, women are actively participating in the self-help group activities which are helping them to shape their social status [18].

Involvement in decision making: Due to working in export-oriented farming, women are becoming self-empowered and they are involved in the various decision-making processes at the household level. It's a big opportunity for them to take part in the decision-making process.

Engaged in skilled work at farm level: In the farm, women are engaged in the skilled work, they are prominently working in the harvesting and packaging part of the export-oriented crop. Due to this special task at farm level, they are getting various facilities on the farm like, hand gloves,

Packaging Machinery and farm equipment which help them to reduce the workload.

Maximum wage rate: Women workers get 250-300 per day wages based on the working pattern. Due to this, they are getting sufficient income. At the workplace, they are getting various facilities for proper and effective working, viz. Drinking water, hand gloves, farm equipment [19].

Asset ownership: Women workers engaged in export-oriented agriculture have good asset ownership and they are trying to improve their living condition due to economic growth. Also, women are using assets like mixer-grinders and refrigerators to decrease the burden of household work. But women engaged in traditional farming have very less asset ownership due to poor condition and insufficient income.

Educational status: Women workers engaged in export-

oriented agriculture have completed basic education. Only a few women workers engaged in traditional farming have completed basic education [20].

CONCLUSIONS

Women are considered more skillful who can work in different activities in a more skillful manner. In the study area there is no training facility Centre to enhance women capabilities who are engaged in export-oriented agriculture. The study found that it is very essential to enhance the skills of women. Hence the study proposes a skill development Centre, which will work for enhancement of women's skill. Women Skill Development Centre (WSDC) will work on identifying the women who wants to work in export-oriented agriculture, the Centre also will work on need assessment of women for identifying the interest, mapping of skills and helping them to get employment.

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