

## Original Article

## A Review On Gender Differences In Access To And Control Over Agricultural Resources In Farmer Families

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## ABSTRACT

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Agriculture, for decades, had been associated with the production of basic food crops. Agriculture is the backbone of a country's economic system. Agricultural planning and development are crucial to human survival, but they usually proceed without any consideration of the importance of gender issues at the production level. Although women have long been prime movers in agriculture, their contribution to the world's food supply has been largely ignored, and consequently their stake in development has been undermined. Control, access and ownership of assets and resources required for agriculture are a critical component for well-being of households and country. A crucial first step toward understanding the gender dimensions of asset and resource ownership and control is acquiring detailed gender-disaggregated information. Though many agricultural development programmes are taking care to reduce gender inequalities and provide equal opportunities to both men and women the gaps are not being reduced completely. Therefore still more interventions are to be taken up by some government and NGO's to reduce the differences between gender in agriculture.

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DOI:[10.9780/23218045/1202013/49](https://doi.org/10.9780/23218045/1202013/49)**Keywords:***gender differences, agriculture, access, control, resources.***1. Introduction**

Agriculture and farming were synonymous so long as farming was not commercialized. But as the process of economic development accelerated, many more other occupations allied to farming came to be recognized as a part of agriculture. Thus, agriculture may be defined as the production, processing, marketing and distribution of crops and livestock products. According to Webster's Dictionary, agriculture is "the science, art, or practice of cultivating the soil, producing crops, and raising livestock and in varying degrees the preparation and marketing of the resulting products". Agriculture plays a crucial role in the life of a country's economy. Agriculture not only provides food and raw materials but also employment opportunities to a very large proportion of population.

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood mainly for the people living in rural areas. In a country like India, majority of the population live in rural areas. Proper resources are required to earn their livelihood. Resource is something that can be used for support or help, it can be an economic or productive factor required to accomplish an activity, or as means to achieve a desired outcome. Resources are multi-dimensional, and thus have multi-dimensional benefits. Being able to access, control, and own productive resources such as land, labour, finance, and social capital enable people to create stable and productive lives. However, men and women have different access to and control over assets and resources.

Many agricultural development programs have been conducted from the past days to reduce the gap of gender differences. Yet relatively little is known about how affect men's and women's access to and control over these types of assets and resources. For example, certain programs may provide resources to the household head (usually a man) thus the program may contribute to an overall widening of the gap between men's and women's assets. Other projects may



exclusively target women and this may lead to an increase in women's control of assets relative to men. On the other hand, exclusive targeting to women may lead to men taking women's assets as they increase in value. In other instances men may effectively control women's assets even while women are the nominal owners. Therefore proper measures have to be taken to reduce the gender inequalities and provide equal opportunities to both men and women.

Women's equal access to and control over resources is critical for the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women and for equitable and sustainable economic growth and development. Gender equality in the distribution of resources has positive multiplier effects for a range of key development goals, including poverty reduction and the welfare of children. Women in many parts of the world continue to face discrimination in access to land, housing, property and other productive resources and have limited access to technologies and services that could alleviate their work burdens.

Both men and women farmers play an important role in agriculture throughout the world. Unequal access to resources limits women's capacity to ensure agricultural productivity, security of livelihoods and food security and is increasingly linked to poverty, migration, urbanization and increased risk of violence. Population growths, climate change, the spread of markets and urbanization have created new opportunities and new challenges in women's access to land, housing and other productive resources. Attention to the resource challenges women face in agriculture is essential for addressing the food and energy crises and climate change in both the short and long term.

Gender inequality exists in the access to valuable resources such as land, credit and agricultural inputs, technology, extension, training and services that would enhance their production capacity. Agricultural goals are largely achieved by human activities and management practices, and large numbers of people depend on it for sustainable livelihoods. However, gender analyses have made clear that men and women often manage, use and control natural and agricultural resources differently. Moreover, agricultural systems, and the roles, rights and responsibilities of men and women who farm, differ according to geographic and cultural context. By understanding these differences, and the gendered power relations behind them, agricultural programmes and policies achieve greater equity and efficiency.

## 2. Review Of literature

Dossand Morris (2000) explored on how does gender affected the adoption of agricultural innovations? Evidence from Ghana suggested that gender-linked differences in the adoption of modern maize varieties and chemical fertilizer resulted from gender-linked differences in access to complementary inputs. This finding had important policy implications, because it suggested that ensuring more widespread and equitable adoption of improved technologies may not require changes in the research system, but rather introduction of measures that ensure better access for women to complementary inputs, especially land, labour, and extension services.

Quisumbing (2003) had done a synthesis of earlier research on household decisions, gender, and development conducted in Bangladesh. The results represented that the distribution of power and resources within the household, however, almost always favoured men. The inequality in resource distribution between men and women had both economic and social consequences, though the specific consequences differed across countries and cultures. In agriculture, a redistribution of resources in favour of women increases yields or leaves them unchanged, meaning that equity gains can be achieved without sacrificing productivity. Improvements in women's status, social networks and increases in the resources that women control raise allocations toward education, poverty reduction, mitigate the impact of adverse shocks, improve child health and nutrition and improved incomes for families as a whole.

Lu (2007) studied on Gender differentiation among farmers in the agricultural Sector regarding resources of production Benguet, Philippines. The results showed that income generated from the farm was mostly handled by the wife or mother followed by the husband or father. Meanwhile, husbands were more likely to have access to credit and were often a member of cooperatives. Access to credit involves dealing with bank loans and other sources of agricultural funding. In general, the males frequently possessed the resources of production. But in holding and managing the family income, females were more involved since. This again is in contrast with studies done where males hold the income (Wood and Eagly, 2002).

Adeola and Ayoade (2009) directed a study on the effects of gender differences on access to technologies Ibadan/Ibarapa Agricultural Zone of Oyo State, Nigeria. The study revealed that larger proportion of male farmers had access to the identified technologies namely; improved seeds, pests and diseases control in crop, use of pesticides and fertilizers and female farmers were found to have more access to technologies of controlling of pests and diseases in

livestock, improved livestock housing unit and cassava processing. Education, marital status and land acquisition indicated significant relationships with male farmers' level of access to technologies while, the female level of access to technologies had significant relationships with age, education, and land acquisition and extension services. The study suggested intensification of extension efforts to reach out to female farmers to ensure their access to new technologies and achieve food security goals.

Hill and Vigneri (2009) studied on the impact of gender constraints on the production and marketing of cash crops in Ghana. Through a combination of review and analysis, this study stressed the point that women were equal and originally productive as men, when they farm with the same resources and sell their crops in the same way. However, the evaluation and analysis showed that women rarely had similar access to assets and markets as men and this had a significant impact on production and marketing of cash crops. These gender inequalities in resources resulted in different levels of participation, methods of production and modes of marketing cash crops, and hence consequences for women's possible outcome in the cultivation of these high value crops were seen.

A World Survey (2009) was conducted by the department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. It explored on the role of women in development (women's control over economic resources and access to financial resources, including microfinance). The results showed that significant developmental improvements have to be made in ensuring women's equitable access to sensitive and control over economic and financial resources and also the need for an appropriate gender response which facilitates both achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women and enhances economic growth, poverty eradication and the well-being of families and communities.

Dadzie and Dasmani (2010) explored on the gender differences and farm level efficiency in Ghana. The results showed that male and female farm entrepreneurs had low level of education and more male farm entrepreneurs than their female counterparts had access to both credit facilities and extension services as aid to food crop production. The amount of both capital and labour inputs used in production by the male-managed farms were found to be relatively higher and consequently, male-managed farms achieved greater value of production than the female-managed farms. Both male-managed and female-managed farms were found to operate at low level of technical efficiencies. Therefore closing the gaps in educational attainment and relieving exogenous constraints in access to markets and resources, introduction of government youth in agriculture programme and encouragement of young males and females to go into food crops production, encouragement of financial services providers to offer loan/credit assistance to farmers were some of the recommendations given.

Lal and Khurana (2011) examined the gender issues: the role of women in agriculture sector of India. Long standing obstacles faced by rural women in terms of limited access to productive resources (land, credit, inputs, transport, extension services, storage and technical assistance) prevented women from adopting new technologies. This paper found that agriculture created many jobs for women in agriculture sector. Jobs that bring many household resources under women control lead to greater earnings in the family. Although, women were more than ever finally employed, differences in wages earned by women and men persisted in all countries. Women also had less access to productive resources especially in developing countries. Due to these reasons and women's lower education level forced the women have a greater tendency to remain in subsistence agriculture. The impact of liberalization and globalization on women was important not only because they represent almost half of the total population, but also because they faced constraints, which make them less beneficial from the liberalization. Once different impacts are ascertained well designed policy responses may aid women in taking advantage of greater openness to agriculture.

Boakye et al. (2013) examined the gender, resource use and technical efficiency among rice farmers in the Ashanti Region, Ghana. The results of this study showed that majority of rice farmers were not technically efficient, given the technology they use and there was a potential to increase their efficiency levels by improving the observed factors that determined their efficiency. The study further showed that the major variables affecting technical efficiency were expenditure on labour, fertilizer and rice seed used for rice production. This implied that any policy made to improve access to fertilizer and improved seed will go a long way to improve the technical efficiency levels of farmers in the area. Therefore the need for extension officers to strengthen educational activities so that the farmers will adopt existing improved varieties since about seventy percent of the sampled farmers still use local varieties with little yield. The survey results also revealed that women and men farmers were found to be different in certain characteristics such as size of land under cultivation, input use levels (including fertilizer), level of education, and access to credit. Women showed a lower resource endowment and lower level of education

Croppenstedt et al. (2013) in their working paper on gender and agriculture: inefficiencies,

segregation and low productivity traps examined the evidence on productivity differences and access to resources in Ethiopia. They said that women were less active in commercial farming and were largely excluded from contract farming; they were often provided the majority of wage labour in the non-traditional export sector. These gender gaps did not appear to fall systematically with growth but appeared to rise with GDP per capita and with greater access to resources and inputs. Active policies that supported women's access and participation were essential if these gaps were to be closed and then gains in terms of greater productivity of land and overall production were expected to be large.

The review of literature on this particular topic displayed that there were eminent gender differences seen in the case of access, availability and control of resources. Women had less access to resources like credit, technology and other agricultural inputs. Men were on the upper hand in controlling the resources and gaining access. As the level of women's education, level of access in inputs, technologies and resources is present, women have been disadvantaged when compared to men. Due to lack of education and employment opportunities, women were employed more in contract farming and therefore the wages earned by them are also less when compared to women. Earlier researches have shown that increasing women empowerment and opportunities will help all the countries in development. There is a link seen between the development and opportunity. So introducing policies favouring women's empowerment, equal resource endowment loan/credit assistance will provide an opportunity for women to develop access to resources and reduce the gender inequality which helps a country to prosper and achieve food security goals.

### 3. Outcomes

Findings from the review done are as follows:

Though India is an agricultural dependent country and lot of gender differences are seen, not much of research is done in this area.

It was seen that women were disadvantaged all over the world.

Women are involved in agriculture as equal to the men, but the work done by women in agriculture is not recognised.

Men had improved access to resources throughout the world hindering women's development.

Some of the issues contributing to these gender differences were lack of educational and employment opportunities for women, male dominated societies, traditional beliefs and rules, misconceptions about women's power and ability, lack of access to credit and other financial help etc.

Due to this the empowerment status of women is lower than men.

All these above reasons give us evidence that women are disadvantaged in all the areas and have lesser access and control over assets and resources.

Therefore proper policies are to be framed by countries which help in increasing women's opportunities and enhance their development.

No research had led an insight into the problems faced by men in agriculture. Even this is also important because men are not empowered and advantaged in some remote or undeveloped places due to lack of technical, financial or other facilities required for developing the agriculture. So identifying such areas is important and helping the male farmers reach their requirements is important.

### 4. Conclusion

Gender is a key variable for understanding the differential impacts of policy reform and developmental programs of a country. Gender inequality remains pervasive and is a barrier to growth and poverty reduction. Gender disparities tend to be greater in low income countries, communities and households. Of course it is essential to consider other social faultiness that cut across and complicate gender-based differences. Social variables such as race, ethnicity, caste or age may be powerful additional predictors of vulnerability than gender alone. These differences are mostly seen in the agricultural sector. The role of women is not fully recognising though there is increased empowerment and contribution of women in agriculture. By considering all these factors, proper measures have to be taken to empower women as they are mostly disadvantaged group as seen and concluded from the above literature gathered.

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