



Mains Practice Question

Q. What do you understand by feminisation of agriculture? Discuss the reasons and probable solutions to this. (250 words)

17 Apr, 2019 GS Paper 3 Economy

Approach

- Briefly explain feminisation of agriculture.
- Write reasons and problems associated with feminisation of agriculture.
- Give solution to address the problems.
- Give an optimistic conclusion for empowering women in agricultural sector .

Answer

Feminisation of agriculture refers to the increasing number of women in multiple roles as labourers, cultivators, farmers and entrepreneurs in agricultural sector.

Reasons and problems of feminisation of agriculture

- According to the Economic Survey 2017-18, migration of men from rural to urban areas is one of the important reasons for the 'feminisation' of agriculture sector.
- According to agricultural census 2011, there has been a 24 per cent increase in the number of female agricultural labourers between 2001 and 2011, from 49.5 million to 61.6 million. Women in rural areas, who do not own land, usually engage in agricultural labour activities.
- **Mechanisation of agriculture** has resulted in confinement of women to traditional roles such as winnowing, harvesting, sowing seeds and rearing livestock, which are low paying. This clubbed with the burden of household chores, and a lower wage rate than men, contribute to further economic disparity.
- An **increased work burden** with lower compensation is a key factor responsible for women's marginalisation in agricultural sector.
- Women farmers have **hardly any representation in society** and are nowhere visible in farmers' organisations or in occasional protests. They are the invisible workers without which the agricultural economy is hard to grow.
- The biggest challenge is the powerlessness of women in terms of claiming **ownership of the land** they have been cultivating. In Agricultural Census 2015, almost 86% of women farmers are devoid of property right in land perhaps on account of the patriarchal set up in our society. Further lack of ownership of land does not allow women farmers to approach banks for institutional loans as banks usually consider land as collateral.

Solutions

- Research shows that women with access to secure land, formal credit and access to market have greater propensity in making investments in improving agricultural productivity and food security

and nutrition.

- Therefore, provision of credit without collateral under the micro-finance initiative of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development should be encouraged. Better access to credit, technology, and provision of entrepreneurship abilities will boost women's confidence and help them gain recognition as farmers.
- As more women are getting into farming, they should be given property rights in land. Once women farmers are listed as primary earners and owners of land assets, their activities will expand to acquiring loans, deciding the crops to be grown using appropriate technology which will elevate their place as real and visible farmers.
- A declining size of land holdings act as a deterrent due to lower net returns earned. The possibility of collective farming can be encouraged to make women self-reliant.
- Training and skills imparted to women as has been done by some self-help groups and cooperative-based dairy activities (Saras in Rajasthan and Amul in Gujarat), can be explored further through farmer producer organisations.
- It is important to have gender-friendly tools and machinery for various farm operations. Most farm machinery is difficult for women to operate. Manufacturers should be incentivised to come up with better solutions.
 - Farm machinery banks and custom hiring centres promoted by many State governments can be leveraged to provide subsidised rental services to women farmers.
- Krishi Vigyan Kendras in every district can be assigned an additional task to educate and train women farmers about innovative technology along with extension services.
- Government flagship schemes such as the National Food Security Mission, Sub-mission on Seed and Planting Material and the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana must include women-centric strategies and dedicated expenditure.

When compared to men, women generally have less access to resources and modern inputs (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides) to make farming more productive. According to Food and Agriculture Organisation, equalising access to productive resources for female and male farmers could increase agricultural output in developing countries by as much as 2.5% to 4% which can help in countering agrarian crises that India is currently facing.

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