

Participation of rural women in rice-based agroecosystems

S.S. Bargali, Department of Forestry, College of Agriculture, IGKV, Raipur 492006, Chhattisgarh, India; K. Pandey, Lalji Singh, and S. K. Shrivastava, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (IGKV), Durg 491001, Chhattisgarh, India
E-mail: surendrakiran@rediffmail.com

Chhattisgarh State is known as a rice bowl where rice culture is predominantly rainfed and approximately 85% of the rice crop in this region is direct-seeded. Most of the area is under a single cropping system. Durg District is in the Chhattisgarh plain zone where rice is cultivated on 0.375 million hectares mostly under rainfed conditions (Bargali et al 2006), with average productivity (1.73 tons/ha). Rural women contribute much of the labor for rice production and other agricultural activities. More than 50% of the farm work is done by women in India (Chandurkar 2001). Women's empowerment in the last few years has become a matter of much discussion in social, scientific, and nonscientific fields. A study was conducted to find out the participation of rural women in rice-based agroecosystems in different villages.

A sample of 100 women farmers was selected randomly from five villages (i.e., 20 from each village) in three blocks of Durg during a participatory rural appraisal survey conducted from 1998 to 2005. After random selection, women farmers were categorized on the basis of their landholding. Thus, 30 large (>4 ha), 41 medium (2–4 ha), and 29 small farm women (1–2 ha) were included in this study. After the selection of the farm women, a semistructured interview was conducted and data were recorded on their participation in different cultural practices of paddy cultivation. Some observations such as seedling transplanting, harvesting, and threshing and storage of grains and straw were also made.

Figure 1 shows that the women farmers have vast ranges of participation in different types of work. Minimum participation occurred in fertilizer management (2–10%) but participation was maximum in transplanting of paddy seedlings (89–93%). During the observations, it was noted that transplanting efficiency (number of seedlings transplanted in a unit area at one time) and harvesting efficiency (a unit area harvested by farm women/farmers at one time) of women workers was 26% and 14%, respectively, higher than that of men workers. The maximum work participation was followed by harvesting of the crop (70–89%), storage of grains (70–83%), threshing (37–42%), transportation of

the harvested crop (29–38%), nursery preparation (10–20%), irrigation of crops (10–15%), land preparation (10–15%), and seed selection for sowing operations (5–15%).

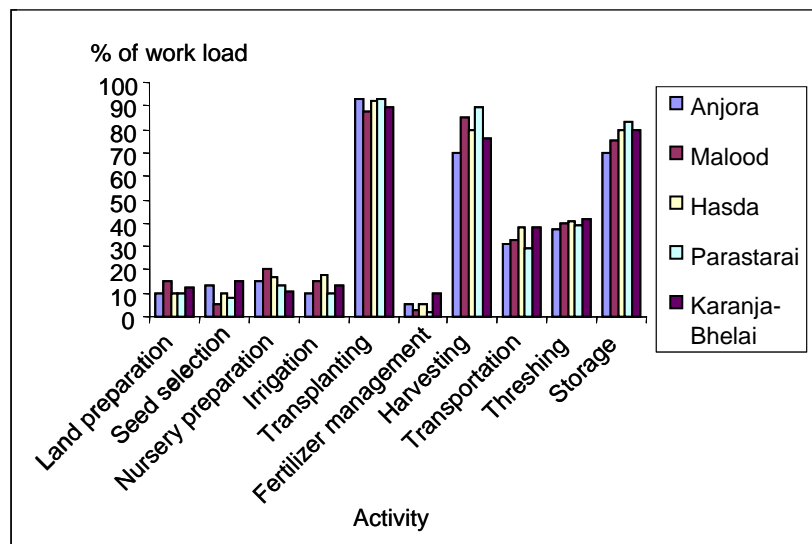


Fig. 1. Participation of rural women in different activities of rice cultivation in different villages.

The contribution of women farmers needs to be strengthened in key farm activities such as fertilizer management, seed selection, irrigation, and nursery management. Land preparation practices require hard work such as bullock-drawn plowing and tractor-drawn plowing, and women are not adequately skilled in this type of work. During semistructured interviews, women wanted to obtain technical knowledge about seed selection, fertilizer management and application, irrigation schedule for a crop, nursery preparation practices, and safe storage of their produce according to existing situations to become experts in these different practices as well as for their economic uplift. So, there is a need to prepare action plans for providing the skills that could enhance the working efficiency and economic conditions of rural women.

References

- Bargali SS, Singh SP, Shrivastava SK, Kolhe SS. 2007. Forestry plantations on rice bunds: farmers' perception and technology adoption. *Int. Rice Res. Notes* 32(2):40-41.
 Chandurkar PS. 2001. Training and education on IPM. *IPM Mitr.* 11:91-97.

Acknowledgment

We are grateful to ICAR for the financial support to conduct this study.