



WOMEN IN AGRI-ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Srinjal Samridhi

PG scholar, Department of Agribusiness Management, CSAUA&T

Corresponding Author Mail ID: srinjal596@gmail.com

Introduction

Agriculture sector offers significant opportunities for employment, fostering sustainable development, and empowering women. An agripreneur is an entrepreneur who applies innovative ideas and sound business strategies to agriculture. They go beyond traditional farming to achieve better output, increased profitability, and sustainable growth. In India women are heavily engaged in agriculture, making up 80% of all economically active women. They are actively involved in several types of agricultural practices to support their family. Despite their extensive involvement in agricultural work, women own a remarkably small percentage of land, with only 13.9% holding land in their names. Women farmers are the foundation of subsistence agriculture, yet they lack the recognition they deserve.

According to a National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) report, while about 46% of the agricultural workforce is female, only 13% of rural women are engaged in entrepreneurship. Their contributions, needs and rights are consistently overlooked. Empowering rural women is crucial for achieving sustainable growth in the agricultural sector.

Government needs to provide comprehensive support to the women Agri-entrepreneurs through training, financial and technical assistance, schemes and skill development. By fostering value addition, strengthening market linkages through FPOs, and creating an enabling policy environment, the government can empower women in agriculture, transforming them into successful entrepreneurs which is important for sustainable rural growth and food security. In order to promote the ecosystem for encouraging women agripreneurship, institutional policies must be

designed immediately, for India to flourish and develop.

As of February 2022, the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare had supported 173 women entrepreneurs under its "Innovation and Agri-Entrepreneurship Development" program. Government offers collateral-free or subsidized loans through schemes like Mudra Yojana, Stand-Up India scheme, Mahila Udyam Nidhi scheme, Annapurna scheme, Udyogini schemes, and TREAD schemes. The National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad, has implemented the "Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres Scheme" to encourage women's agripreneurship.

To empower women agripreneurs, the government focuses on skill development through diverse training programs. These initiatives are delivered by various institutions like the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), the ICAR-Central Institute for Women in Agriculture (CIWA), and the extensive network of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVKs). Specialized Entrepreneurship Development Programs (EDPs) are tailored to impart business and market knowledge, while the innovative Namo Drone Didi Initiative specifically trains women from Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in operating agricultural drones, thereby introducing advanced technology into their farming practices.

Women's potential in Agripreneurship

Women entrepreneurs, particularly women agripreneurs, are currently the group of entrepreneurs with the fastest rate of growth in the world. Women agripreneurs exhibit robust willpower, proficiency, a propensity for risk-taking, and a strong work ethic, characterized by resilience and a commitment to success. Campaigns like Startup India and Standup India have been boosting women's spirits and

motivation to have a positive impact on their families, communities, and country.

Women's involvement in agribusiness is vital for economic advancement at the individual and community level, this helps to break from the cycle of poverty and leads to rural development. women possess valuable insight about traditional farming practices which helps preserve indigenous crop varieties and traditional cultivation techniques, this in turn is vital for maintaining agrobiodiversity and enabling agriculture to adapt to environmental changes.

Challenges faced by women in Agri entrepreneurship

In the agricultural sector, women are not given the same opportunities and are perceived as less capable than men. Their contributions and efforts go unnoticed. There are numerous obstacles that women agripreneurs encounter when establishing and operating Agri-enterprises, including the dual responsibility of home and enterprise, the absence of family support, the absence of information sources, the lack of awareness and training, the competition from established corporate players, the lack of market awareness and knowledge in packaging, branding, and accounting.

Conclusion

India's evolving landscape, shaped by rapid technological advancement, modernization, Industrialization, urbanization and widespread education, has significantly expanded employment opportunities for women. Indian women are increasingly striving for economic independence, marking a profound societal transformation.