

Addressing gender disparity

What is the issue?

\n\n

Despite the significant participation of women in agriculture and allied activities, gender disparity manifests in various ways.

\n\n

How far is women's participation?

\n\n

\n

- Women comprise around 30% of the total cultivators and 40% of agricultural labour (2011 Census).

\n

- In as many as 23 of the 29 states, women's share in the total workforce in agriculture, forestry and fisheries is over 50%.

\n

- In states such as Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, this share exceeds 70 per cent.

\n

- Women are seen to be engaged in all kinds of jobs ranging from crop sowing to irrigation, fertiliser application, weed removal and crop harvesting.

\n

- They are also actively engaged in allied activities including livestock rearing, fodder collection, beekeeping, mushroom cultivation, poultry, etc.

\n

- Typically, their contribution to agriculture is more in hilly regions where agriculture relies heavily on females, than in the plains.

\n

- Gender disparity is less in states such as Nagaland, Manipur and Himachal Pradesh.

\n

- On the other hand, states such as Punjab, Haryana, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha have relatively high gender work participation disparity.

\n

\n\n

What are the concerns?

\n\n

\n

- Despite this significant participation, women are grossly discriminated against in several respects.
- They are invariably paid less than the male workers; in most cases nearly 60 per cent of what men are paid.
- They lack ownership of property, the land being rarely in their names.
- Consequently, they have little access to cheaper credit and other agriculture-related sops, which are usually linked to land ownership.
- They have little say in decision-making. They are not often the members of cooperative societies.
- A relatively larger proportion of non-property-owning females face psychological and physical abuse, than those who own land or other property.

\n

\n\n

What are the initiatives in this regard?

\n\n

\n

- **Information** - Bhubaneswar-based Central Institute of Women in Agriculture (CIWA) has developed a “General Knowledge System Portal”.
- The portal offers to provide all the information on gender-friendly technologies, statistics, publications and official schemes related to farm women.
- This could be swiftly operationalised to function as a single-window knowledge source on gender-related matters for policymakers, researchers, extension workers, etc.
- **Training** - The country’s 680 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (agricultural science centres) are training women in various income-generating pursuits.
- The centres promoted different women-oriented technologies in their working fields.

\n

- Women are trained in typical agri-rural fields as well as in rural handicrafts, tailoring and stitching, etc

\n

- **Measures** - The agriculture ministry has recently taken many gender-sensitive, positive steps to promote the welfare of farm women.

\n

- It has begun to encourage leasing of agricultural and domestic land in joint names.

\n

- Kisan Credit Cards are being issued to women to enable them to access cheap bank credit.

\n

- Women are being motivated to form self-help groups to deal with microfinance.

\n

- Most importantly, 30 per cent of funds are being set apart for women under the various schemes run by the ministry.

\n

- These efforts could be more targeted, directly or indirectly, at economic empowerment of women, ensuring gender parity.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: Business Standard

\n

