Marginalisation of Women Farmers

What is the issue?

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- Despite making a considerable share as agricultural workers and in rural workforce, women are not officially recognised as farmers.
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- Women are either labelled as “agricultural labourers” or as “cultivators”.
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What is the reality?

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- Women constitute close to 65% of all agricultural workers and 74% of the rural workforce which suggest that **Indian agricultural landscape is fast being feminised.**
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- However, the government does not recognise as farmers those who do not have a claim to land under their name in official records.
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- As many as 87% of **women** working in land **do not own their land.**
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- One of the reasons is that **land** being a **state subject** is not governed by the constitution under a uniform law.
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- It is rather governed by personal religious laws, which tend to discriminate against women when it comes to land inheritance.
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- Moreover, the cultural aspect of the deep-rooted biases that hinder women’s ownership of land in patriarchal societies adds to the exclusion.
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What is the need for recognising women farmers?

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- As various studies suggest, women have a greater tendency to use their income for the needs of their households.
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- This can transform into improvement of the household food security and nutrition, better nourishment and health indicators in children as also their education.
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- The chance of propertied women being physically abused is reduced from 49% to 7% due to an increase in the wife’s bargaining power.
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- Financial independence of women can go a long way in making them socially empowered contributing to a gender equal society.
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What lies before the government?

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- Nearly 35% of India’s agricultural land is cultivated by tenant farmers, who tend to be landless, poor and marginal.
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- Working toward ascertaining security of tenure for tenant farmers is a necessary first step before securing women’s land ownership rights.
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- This will ensure for female farmers the incentive, the security, as well as the opportunity to invest in the land they harvest and remove the fear of losing their land ownership.
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- Recent release of NITI Aayog's Model Agricultural Land Leasing Act, seeks to legalise and liberalise land leasing, protecting the interests of both the landlord and the tenant.
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- The Model Act could enable the real cultivators of land to be recognised as farmers and entitle them to obtain inputs provided by the state.
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- Recognising women farmers is critical in realising food security and women’s rights which are part of the Sustainable Development Goals.
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Source: The Indian Express

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