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## Agro resilience and women entrepreneurs: Challenges and prospects

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### Abstract

This research paper aims to assess the role and prospects of women entrepreneurs in the agriculture sector. Women's contribution to the agriculture sector is undeniable. The study explores how various factors have influenced women's access to resources, market opportunities, income generation, and overall livelihood improvement. Women's participation in agriculture and entrepreneurship has gained significant attention due to its potential to foster economic growth, alleviate poverty, and promote gender equality. The ultimate goal of this research paper is promoting gender equality, women empowerment and sustainable development in rural India.”

This research study examines the level of women involvement, the difficulties they encounter, and the chances available to strengthen their role in this industry. The findings of this study are significant because they establish a connection between women's micro entrepreneurs' aspirations to start their own businesses. This study aims to understand the complex interactions between women, business, and agriculture by looking at successful case studies, policy frameworks, and empirical data. It explores the current trends and patterns among female agricultural entrepreneurs, shedding light on the unique challenges they face.

**Keywords:** Agriculture, entrepreneurs, empowerment, opportunities and challenges

### Introduction

The agricultural sector in India has historically played a crucial role in the country's economy, ensuring sustenance and livelihoods for millions. The agriculture sector offers numerous opportunities for creating jobs, fostering sustainable growth, and empowering men and women. Agriculture is a crucial industry to supply food, fibre, and other necessities. Agripreneurs is a designation referring to entrepreneurial individuals within the field of agriculture. Agripreneurship serves as a reminder that even the most modest-scale farmers function as business individuals. Women always play a significant role in farming. They are the backbone of agriculture, contributing significantly to the management of livestock, fisheries, forestry, and crop production. Indian women actively participate in various types of agricultural activities to generate income for the family. They are heavily involved in agriculture, which is the foundation of India's rural economy. However, women farmers and business owners confront a variety of obstacles, such as restricted access to tools, information, and market possibilities, which frequently perpetuates gender inequities. Technology and digitalization breakthroughs in recent years have created new possibilities for addressing these issues and advancing the economic empowerment of women in agriculture. In order to achieve sustainable development goals, it is imperative to address these issues and empower women in agriculture. The primary objective of this research was to gain insights into the obstacles and difficulties encountered by female entrepreneurs and to propose potential remedies.

Entrepreneurship is the process of developing, innovating, and putting into practice new ideas that result in new goods or services for untapped markets and upend established norms, a state of balance (Schumpeter, 1934) <sup>[1]</sup>. In this regard, Entrepreneurs must possess the ability to recognize opportunities that others have overlooked. Because of this, the corporation faces challenges from the highly competitive character of today's corporate environment. Women entrepreneurs in India are not falling behind, and they too overcame hardships and obstacles to become what they are today.

There are numerous female corporate executives, business owners, and other outstanding women who overcame obstacles to advance and succeed (Parnami & Bisawa, 2015)<sup>[2]</sup>. A female entrepreneur is an individual who initiates and independently manages a business, demonstrating skill, assuming all associated risks, and fearlessly addressing challenges with unwavering determination to achieve success. Women who run their own businesses frequently exhibit special traits including resiliency, adaptability, and excellent interpersonal skills.

As a result, it is essential to direct increased attention towards the advancement of women's entrepreneurship within the context of feminizing agriculture, food processing, preservation, and product packaging. It is imperative to engage women farmers in development initiatives and equitably compensate them for their contributions to attain sustainable development.

### Objectives

#### The following research aims of the current study are

- To examine the current status of women's participation in entrepreneurship within the agriculture sector, including the types of businesses and they are involved in and their roles within these enterprises.
- To identify the challenges and barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in adopting and integrating technology in their agricultural businesses.
- To investigate the impact of women's entrepreneurship on agricultural production, rural development, and economic empowerment, both on a personal and community levels.
- To examine the influence of cultural and social norms on women's participation in agriculture-based entrepreneurship, and to identify ways to challenge or mitigate these constraints.

### Methodology

The researcher in the current study exclusively employed secondary data sources, specifically drawing from published research papers accessible through various online and offline journals, as well as reference books. Additionally, select magazines were consulted and incorporated into the current study's framework. Applied descriptive analysis to explore the interconnection between agriculture, entrepreneurship, the empowerment of women.

### Review of Literature

Nayyar, Pooja *et al.* (2007)<sup>[3]</sup> To address women's entrepreneurship challenges, a comprehensive study was undertaken, involving a sample of one hundred women entrepreneurs from various zones in Himachal Pradesh. The primary objectives of this study were to identify and analyse the financial, marketing, and production constraints encountered by women entrepreneurs in the business. The study identified issues such as unfavourable unit locations, intense competition from larger and well-established businesses, inadequate transportation facilities, a lack of opportunities for rest and sleep, and difficulties in sourcing raw materials.

Goyal. M. Jaiparkash, (2011)<sup>[4]</sup> In the article titled "Women Entrepreneurship in India problems and prospects" the author delved into several key aspects. Firstly, they explored the factors that motivate women to embark on entrepreneurial journeys. Secondly, they examined the impact of government support on women's

entrepreneurship. Lastly, the article critically analysed the obstacles that women entrepreneurs face. These studies underscore the growing recognition of the role played by women entrepreneurs in driving economic development. Consequently, there is a concerted effort to promote and nurture women's entrepreneurship. It is imperative that women entrepreneurs are equipped with the necessary entrepreneurial skills and traits to effectively navigate the evolving business landscape and meet emerging challenges. Waghmare (2012)<sup>[5]</sup> In the book 'Women Entrepreneurship', the author conducted a comprehensive examination of the opportunities and obstacles encountered by female entrepreneurs situated in Sangli, Maharashtra, India. The study systematically categorized the challenges faced by female entrepreneurs into various domains, encompassing individual concerns, social factors, promotional challenges, human resource constraints, administrative hurdles, infrastructural limitations, occupational mobility constraints, and government support-related issues. The study's findings underscored a prevalent financial struggle among a significant proportion of women entrepreneurs in the Sangli region of Maharashtra, with approximately 75.3 percent of them grappling with financial difficulties attributed to multiple underlying factors.

Kumbhar Vijay, (2013)<sup>[6]</sup> In his research paper titled "Some critical issues of women entrepreneurship in rural India," the author conducted a comprehensive study addressing the critical issues experienced by women engaged in entrepreneurship within rural India. These challenges encompass a lack of clear life goals, the struggle to balance family responsibilities, financial constraints, limited property ownership rights, and a host of other obstacles confronting women entrepreneurs in the Indian rural context. The study's findings underscored the pressing need for ongoing efforts aimed at inspiring, supporting, and motivating women entrepreneurs. Additionally, the author recommended the implementation of widespread awareness campaigns to educate and empower women in this regard.

According to Jain and Nehru (2017)<sup>[7]</sup> People's confidence in women's competence in handling business-related responsibilities remains in question, leading to challenges for women entrepreneurs who often encounter limited support and guidance in pursuing their entrepreneurial aspirations effectively. A significant finding revealed that approximately 60% of women in the Rayalaseema region lacked literacy and access to proper education. This educational deficit among women entrepreneurs hinders their ability to keep abreast of technological advancements and developmental initiatives. Moreover, they may remain unaware of innovative approaches to wealth generation and the resources and support available through government agencies. These combined factors can adversely impact the overall performance and execution of women-led businesses.

Tripathi, K. A., & Singh, S. (2018)<sup>[8]</sup> In his research paper titled "Difficulties and Prospects of Women Entrepreneurship" he conducted an investigation aimed at uncovering the distinct challenges encountered by female entrepreneurs, which differ from those faced by their male counterparts. The study was designed to explore the unique obstacles that women encounter while managing businesses, as well as their specific needs in terms of management skills and training.

Dr. K. Krishna Kumar and K. Radha (2021)<sup>[9]</sup> Women entrepreneurs have emerged as crucial drivers of growth and

the rising stars of developing economies, contributing significantly to prosperity and security. Their contributions are highly esteemed and manifold. Women entrepreneurs often tap into the potential of rural areas, leveraging their skills and determination to meet both family and economic needs. Overcoming numerous challenges, these women not only establish themselves as successful entrepreneurs but also shine in both their communities and households. This research aims to explore the diverse challenges faced by rural women entrepreneurs and identify strategies to overcome these obstacles in their business endeavours.

### Role of Women Entrepreneurs in Agriculture Sector

- **Farm Management and Operation:** Farm management and operation is a top priority for female business owners. They take part in horticulture, raising animals, and cultivating crops. Their activities help boost agricultural output and the availability of food. Women harness their creativity and adept problem-solving skills to pioneer novel products, methods, and business models.
- **Innovative Farming Practices:** Women readily adopt emerging technologies like farm mechanization, precision agriculture, and digital market platforms. Women frequently contribute novel and environmentally friendly farming methods to the agricultural industry. They might concentrate on environmentally friendly farming practices, crop diversification, or the application of eco-friendly technologies that can increase productivity while reducing environmental effect.
- **Agribusiness Development:** Women company owners work in a range of agribusiness activities, including food processing, value addition, and marketing. They increase the value of agricultural products and open up new markets, increasing revenue and jobs in rural communities. They have the capability to create and oversee sustainable agribusiness enterprises, including food processing facilities, cooperative initiatives, and eco-tourism project, all of which serve to broaden the income streams available to rural communities.
- **Entrepreneurship and Rural Development:** Women agripreneurs contribute to rural development and invigorate local economies. Women-owned farm businesses play a pivotal role in driving economic growth within rural communities. They lessen urban emigration by creating jobs, making infrastructural investments, and fostering the overall growth of rural communities.
- **Empowerment and Gender Equality:** Women in agriculture who own businesses empower not only other women in their communities but also themselves. They disrupt conventional gender norms through their financial self-sufficiency and leadership roles, actively advocating for gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- **Food Security and Nutrition:** Women's participation in agriculture boosts agricultural productivity, which contributes to ensuring food security. Women entrepreneurs assume a pivotal role in upholding food security through their active involvement in various aspects of agriculture, including farming, crop cultivation, livestock management, and fisheries. They frequently place a high priority on wholesome foods

and a variety of farming techniques, which helps to improve local nutrition.

- **Income Generation:** Women who own their own businesses make money for themselves as well as their family, improving the welfare of the home and its financial security. Through the establishment of small-scale processing facilities, rural agribusinesses, or eco-tourism projects, women agripreneurs establish income-generating opportunities, reinvigorate local markets, and mitigate rural-to-urban migration.
- **Employment Generation:** Enterprises led by women create job prospects, especially for fellow women and rural youth. Through the establishment of small-scale processing units, rural agribusiness ventures, or eco-tourism initiatives, women actively contribute to soil preservation, efficient water resource management, and the conservation of biodiversity.

### Agriculture Entrepreneurship Opportunities

The agricultural sector holds immense potential for employment opportunities, serving as a key pillar to sustain a growing population, incorporating technological advancements to augment production levels and increase farmers' income can facilitate the transition from conventional farming practices to more commercially viable crop production, resulting in substantial economic benefits and fostering the adoption of agricultural entrepreneurship. By offering technical support and skill development, we can further enhance the quality and quantity of agricultural produce.

- **Agri-Tech Solutions:** Agritech solutions cover a wide spectrum of technologies and innovations intended to improve and advance the field of agriculture. These solutions cover a wide spectrum of technologies and innovations intended to improve and advance the field of agriculture. These solutions harness digital tools, data analytics, automation, and precision methods to refine farming practices, boost productivity, and sustainability
- **Agri-Processing and Value Addition:** This opportunity entails enhancing the worth of raw agricultural commodities by engaging in processes that include processing, packaging and converting them into more valuable items, such as packaged foods or specialty products.
- **Organic Farming:** This area of focus centres on cultivating crops and raising livestock without the use of synthetic pesticides, herbicides, or genetically modified organisms (GMOs) to meet the increasing consumer demand for organic agricultural products.
- **Livestock Farming:** This sector encompasses the rearing of animals such as cattle, poultry, or goats for the production of meat, dairy, and various other products. Entrepreneurial prospects arise in areas like efficient animal husbandry, health management, and the creation of value-added products.
- **Agri-Education and Training:** This opportunity opens doors to providing training, workshops, and educational resources to aspiring farmers and agricultural professionals, with the aim of promoting improved agricultural practices.
- **Supply Chain and Logistics:** Entrepreneurship within this domain concentrates on streamlining the flow of agricultural products from the farm to the market, encompassing aspects such as warehousing,

transportation, and the development of efficient distribution solutions.

- **Agri-Marketing and Branding:** This involves the creation and promotion of brands for agricultural products and the development of marketing strategies to establish connections between producers and consumers, as well as to distinguish products within the market.
- **Biotechnology and Seed Production:** This field encompasses activities related to researching, developing, and producing genetically modified seeds, biotech crops, and pioneering plant breeding methods.
- **Urban Agriculture:** This offers prospects for cultivating crops and raising small livestock within urban environment, aiming to meet local food demands and advance sustainable, community-based agriculture.
- **Agri-Waste Management:** This field concentrates on the recycling of agricultural waste, including crop residues and manure, to create valuable products like bioenergy or compost, thereby playing a role in enhancing environmental sustainability.
- **Agri-Exports:** This opportunity entails the identification of international markets and export prospects for agricultural products, thereby assisting farmers in extending their reach to a global customer base.
- **Agri-Financing and Insurance:** This sector provides specialized financial services tailored to meet the unique needs of farmers, including offerings such as microloans, crop insurance, and tools for managing financial risks, all aimed at mitigating uncertainties in agriculture.
- **Rural Agribusiness Development:** This area of focus revolves around the establishment of agribusinesses in rural areas with the aim of generating employment opportunities, catalysing local economies, and contributing to holistic rural development.

### Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs in Agriculture Sector

The Indian agricultural landscape has encountered numerous challenges in both agricultural entrepreneurship and development.

- **Limited Access to Land:** Due to their lack of land paperwork and records, women business owners have difficulty obtaining bank loans and other financial resources. In several nations, women face challenges in obtaining land and property, which restricts their capacity to participate in lucrative agricultural endeavours. Furthermore, prevailing cultural norms and traditions tend to prioritize men, leading to an unequal distribution of land and property rights. Consequently, this curtails women's opportunities to engage in profitable agricultural and agribusiness activities.
- **Limited Access to Finance:** Due to biased lending policies and a lack of collateral, women frequently have trouble obtaining loans and credit for agricultural purposes. Women possess lower credit scores and fewer assets, which can pose challenges when seeking loans from financial institutions. They frequently face challenges in accessing financial resources, constraining their capacity to make investments in their farms and embrace sustainable farming practices.
- **Technological Barriers:** Women may have less access to and knowledge with contemporary agricultural

technologies and equipment, making it more difficult for them to effectively compete in an industry that is becoming more and more dependent on technology.

- **Education and Training:** Women's ability to embrace innovative and sustainable farming practices may be hampered by unequal access to education and training opportunities. Insufficient training hinders their production capabilities and profitability. Numerous women residing in rural areas encounter obstacles to obtaining quality education, primarily stemming from cultural, social and economic constraints.
- **Market Access:** Accessing markets can be challenging for women involved in agriculture, mainly due to factors like limited mobility, information gaps, and gender-based discrimination. Women business owners could have trouble getting to markets and selling their goods for reasonable prices. It is challenging to build fruitful connections with buyers and distributors because they frequently experience discrimination or are excluded from value chains.
- **Time Constraints:** Women often bear the responsibility for household and childcare duties, which can diminish the time and energy available for them to invest in their agricultural enterprises. It can be very difficult to manage these obligations. Being a female entrepreneur in India presents unique challenges when compared to their male counterparts, largely due to cultural norms associating women with domestic responsibilities. In addition to operating their businesses, female entrepreneurs often must balance their family responsibilities.
- **Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination:** Discrimination and harassment can make situations inhospitable for female entrepreneurs, both at work and in rural communities. Women who work in agriculture may have severe physical and psychological effects as a result of gender-based abuse.
- **Cultural and Social Norms:** Women may be deterred from assuming leadership positions in agriculture and may have less autonomy and decision-making power within farming operations due to deeply ingrained gender roles and cultural norms.

### Conclusion

The study has highlighted the critical role that women play both as food producers and as emerging entrepreneurs. Sustainable development and food security depend on empowering women in agriculture, advancing gender parity, and expanding women's leadership and creativity in the field. This study has looked at a variety of facets of women's involvement in agriculture, including both conventional farming practices and cutting-edge agribusiness operations. They require capacity development and training in practical domains, including finance, literacy, marketing, production and managerial competencies. This study's major finding is that women in agriculture suffer a variety of difficulties, including restricted access to resources, gender-based prejudice, and unequal access to markets. Nevertheless, despite these challenges, women in agriculture have shown incredible resilience, creativity, and determination. The primary imperative is to establish a conducive environment that fosters greater self-employment opportunities for women.

### Suggestions

- Consistently make efforts to inspire, support, motivate and foster cooperation among women entrepreneurs.
- There is a need to address issues such as gender-specific challenges that hinder their entrepreneurial success.
- There is a need to provide access to modern agricultural technologies, machinery, and equipment to increase their productivity.
- There is a need to teach women about conservation efforts, organic farming, and other sustainable farming methods.
- There is a need to provide education and training in agricultural practices, financial management, and entrepreneurship.
- There is a need to analyze how stereotypes, gender roles, and cultural norms affect women's entrepreneurship in agriculture.
- There is a need to examine women's contributions to income generation, employment creation, food security, and sustainable farming practices.
- Policymakers should devise inclusive skill development programs specifically tailored to meet the distinct requirements of women entrepreneurs in the field of agriculture.

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