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Agripreneurship – A Tool to Empower Rural Women

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author MK designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors SKM and KK managed the analyses of the study and literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Background: The growth and development of any country depends upon how well its resources, be it physical, financial or human, are put to use. Amongst these resources, the most vital is the human resources. Women constitute nearly one half of the world's population having enormous potential but being underutilised or unutilised for the economic development of the nation.

Objectives: The study aims to explore different enterprises for women in the food sector as well as examine the obstacles faced by the women for setting up their own business in India. The study also makes a framework strategies for rapid growth of women entrepreneurship in the food sector.

Materials and Methods: This paper is descriptive. Secondary data has been collected from various books, journals, thesis, websites, reports, research papers and our experiences as an extension worker.

Results and Recommendations: Women play a crucial role in the agriculture production because agriculture merely not only involves the production of food grains but also it's processing preservation and packaging. Therefore, more attention needs to be paid for the development of women entrepreneurship in food processing, preserving and packaging of the products. Skill development training for starting different enterprises should be imparted. Rural women should be

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targeted as a raw material can be readily available and generated at nearby places. Promoting and rewarding programmes serves women entrepreneurs should be enhanced.

Conclusion: There is great need to explore more women who are enthusiastic and have skills, strong willpower, need and potential to start, operate, manage and bear the risk of starting up an enterprise and to do something productive. Moreover, the development of entrepreneurship in women is essential for sustaining a competitive atmosphere in the context of globalisation of the economy.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship; empowerment; agripreneurship; women entrepreneurs.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, there is a gradual realisation of the key role of women in agricultural development and their vital contribution in the field of agriculture, food security, horticulture, processing, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, and other allied sectors. India is the third largest producer of food grains after China and USA and second largest producer of fruits and vegetables in the world after China, India could take the first place, but unfortunately, due to poor post-harvest facilities, wastage of food grains, fruits and vegetables which amount to 30 - 40 % India is located at the second place after China. Women play a crucial role in the agriculture production because agriculture merely not only involves the production of food grains but also its processing preservation and packaging. Therefore, more attention needs to be paid for the development of women entrepreneurship in food processing, preserving and packaging of the products. Food processing brings a wider range of benefits to enterprising rural women as it includes the potential for adding value to basic agricultural produce and dairy which will eventually improve the small-scale women producers and entrepreneur's income-earning ability, allowing improved use and control of local resources and helping to create employment for rural women. It will further contribute to make rural women economically and socio-psychologically empowered. This paper will explore possibly different enterprises for rural women in food sector, hurdles that they faced and strategies for rapid growth of women entrepreneurs.

Women comprise half of the world's total population having enormous potentials and their contribution to economy has become obvious as they are the pivot around whom the family, the society and whole humanity moves. However, it's really unfortunate that the realistic and potential role of women in the society has remained disregarded and unchanged from centuries. India is known as a patriarchal society, where women

are dependent on their male members of the family whether a husband, a father or a brother [1]. Whenever the topic for discussion comes up regarding the status of women in India, immediately it fabricates a picture of inequality, discrimination, illiteracy, weaker sex, dependency and exploitation.

According to Hindustan Times [2], the enrolment of female in government schools is higher than male in Delhi while, it is vice versa in case of private schools. The enrollment of male is higher in private schools than female because "better education translates to education in private schools". The indifference to the education of girls in India is a reflection of the broader attitude that girls will grow up to be homemakers and boys will have to earn a living. This attitude deprives not just women from having successful careers but also the country from having talented professionals in every field. Talent (people), business, socio-political environment and the government will play key roles in entrepreneurship development of any nation [3].

In a report conducted by World Bank's India Development, had shown serious news for the country's policymakers. The report said that India has one of the world's lowest female participation in the workforce, ranking 120th among 131 countries for which data was available [4]. But despite talking about all these issues, it is important to emphasise that the status of women can only be improved through economic independence, therefore the development of women entrepreneurship is a need of the hour to increase the participation of women in income generating activities. Women don't work to support their families but also to create their identity in the male dominated society and be independent. Therefore, Agripreneurship will help to make rural women economically and socio-psychologically empowered. Keeping this view in mind, this paper was prepared with the following objectives:

1.1 Objectives

1. To explore different enterprises for women in the food sector
2. To examine the obstacles faced by the women for setting up their own business in India.
3. To frame the strategies for rapid growth of women entrepreneurship in the food sector.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper is descriptive. Secondary data has been collected from various books, journals, thesis, websites, reports, research papers and our experiences as an extension worker.

3. WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship can be described as a creative and innovative response to the environment [5]. Such a response can take place in any field of social endeavour-business, industry, agriculture, education, social work and the like. Doing new things or doing things that are already known in a new way is, therefore, a simple definition of entrepreneurship [6].

A woman entrepreneur is one who starts a business and manages it independently and tactfully, takes all the risks, faces the challenges boldly with an iron will to succeed.

Women entrepreneurship is an economic activity of those women who think of a business enterprise, initiate it, organise and combine the factors of production, operate the enterprise, undertake risks and handle economic uncertainty involved in running a business enterprise. The Government of India has defined women entrepreneur as "An enterprise owned and controlled by women having a minimum financial interest of 51 % of the employment generated in the enterprise of women". Entrepreneurial skills and knowledge among women can only be developed through training and education [7].

Content analysis of the studies focusing on entrepreneurial behaviour has defined a set of common characteristics such as an intense drive, willingness to undertake a high degree of risk, enjoying performing difficult tasks, creativity and innovation, ability to get things done and focus on creating values [8].

4. FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR STARTING AN ENTERPRISE

It is very important to understand the factors that contribute to starting up of women entrepreneurs [9]. There are mainly three factors responsible for starting up of women entrepreneurs as discussed below:

- **Chance** entrepreneurs are those who start a business without any clear goals or plans. Their businesses probably evolved from hobbies to economic enterprises over time.
- **Forced** entrepreneurs are those who were compelled by circumstances to start a business (e.g., death of a spouse, the family facing financial difficulties), their primary motivation, hence, tend to be financial.
- **Created** entrepreneurs are those who are "located, motivated, encouraged and developed through, for instance, entrepreneurship development programs.

Emphasis is laid on the created entrepreneurship by Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) and other government or non- government organisations as the created enterprises are permanent ones.

5. CATEGORIES OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN PRACTICE IN INDIA

1. **Upper Crust:** Established in big cities, having higher level technical and professional qualification, focus on non-traditional items and having a sound financial position like 'Ekta Kapoor' maker of Balaji films.
2. **Mid-range entrepreneurs:** Established in cities and towns, having sufficient education, both traditional and non-traditional items, undertaking women services – confectionery & bakery, kinder garden, creches, health clinics and beauty parlours etc. like Rijuta Jian, owner of sweet temptations, the famous bakery & confectionery, Civil lines, Ludhiana.
3. **Grassroots entrepreneurs:** It includes the illiterate women, financially weak, who are involved in family business such as agricultural, horticulture, animal husbandry, dairy, fisheries, agroforestry etc. like Smt. Mamta Thakur from Bathinda, Punjab. She was financially weak, but willingly she was very strong. She is matric and was a

housewife earlier. She received training from KVK, Bathinda and started working in various fields and now she is the bread winner of her family. She is earning more than 340 USD per month by selling homemade food based products.

6. STATUS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN INDIA

The emergence of entrepreneurs in a society depends to a great extent on the economic, social, religious, cultural and psychological factors prevailing in the society. In the advanced countries of the world, there is a huge phenomenal increase in the number of self-employed women. Women are no longer confined to the hearth and home. The entrepreneurial capacity of women has made a mark in many areas, and women have entered the industrial segment, too. It is time to foster and harness the entrepreneurship of women in a big way [10]. According to the facts revealed by the Sixth Economic Census by the National Sample Survey Organisation, only 14 % of business establishments in the country are being run by female entrepreneurs. This means, out of the 58.5 million functional businesses, only 8.05 million of them have a female as a boss. The data collected by the survey also revealed that most of these women run companies small-scale and about 79 % of them are self-financed. So, it can be concluded from these figures that the status of women entrepreneurship in India is very low [11].

For the upliftment of women various vocational training courses have been conducted by different government, non- government and other welfare organisations, such as Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), State Agricultural Universities (SAU), *Krishi Vigyan Kendras*, Home Science institutions and social welfare societies. These vocational training courses help rural women to sustain themselves through self-employment and to make them self-reliant economically. But, there is still a tremendous need to identify and address problems that women face in setting up an enterprise especially in small-scale sector.

7. AGRIPRENEURSHIP

It is defined as generally sustainable, community-oriented, directly marketed agriculture. Sustainable agriculture denotes a holistic,

system-oriented approach to farming that focuses on the interrelations of the social, economic and environmental process [12]. Simply stated, agriprenurship means entrepreneurship in the broad field of agriculture.

There are many areas and sub-areas in agriculture. Within each area, enormous number of commodities is available. Based on the needs, agro-climatic conditions and available resources, agripreneurs can adopt some commodities and flourish on it. There is so much scope to improve production and productivity through value addition in agriculture. It is, therefore, essential to train the jobless with special emphasis on women residing in rural areas, in agri-business management. It is also important to provide finance and required equipments to the rural women to start their own enterprise in agriculture [13].

8. SCOPE OF RURAL WOMEN IN AGRIPRENEURSHIP

Agriculture is the lifeblood of the economy in most developing countries, and food processing accelerates agricultural production and promotes sustainable agricultural intensification [14]. Therefore, more attention needs to be paid for the development of rural women entrepreneurship in food processing, preserving and packaging of the products. Food is often grown in huge quantity that cannot be consumed at a time and needs to be processed to store it for a prolonged period. Attention should be given to value addition and export of the processed food in order to enhance its shelf life, to make food available whole year and for the availability of more variety. Satpathy B [15] reported that women's activities in manufacturing and food processing remain underestimated because most of their activities are undertaken as secondary activities generally hidden behind subsistence agriculture. Through food processing and preservation, the income of the women entrepreneurs can be improved which will gradually improve the earning potential capacity of women. Food processing brings a wider range of benefits to enterprising women in developing countries which include the potential for adding value to basic agricultural produce and dairy which will eventually improve the small-scale women producers and entrepreneur's income-earning ability, allowing improved use and control of local resources and helping to create employment for rural women. Women entrepreneurship in food sector can be started as following:

Agricultural Sectors	Products
Value addition in cereals & pulses	Dalia, Wheat Flour, Maida, Waddiyan, Papad, Vermicelli etc.
Value addition to milk	Milk Products, Skimmed Milk, Milk Powder, Ice Creams, Butter, Ghee, Cheese, Khoa, Skim Powder, Sweets, Flavoured Milk, Dahi, Lassi, Kulfi, Kheer, Peda and Pudding etc.
Value addition in vegetables and fruits	Pickles, Jam, Jellies, Murabba, fruit Cheese, Juices, Squashes, Fruit Juice Beverages, Chutney, Sauces, Candies and Dried Fruits & Vegetables etc.
Bee Keeping	Pollens, wax and Honey
Mushroom cultivation & processing	Pickle Making, Fresh & Dried Mushrooms
Commercial bakery	Cakes, Cookies, Biscuits, Ready to eat foods, Snacks, Namkeen etc.
Tiffin service	Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

9. EMERGING BENEFITS OF RURAL WOMEN AGRIPRENEURSHIP

Sharma K. [16] contend that if entrepreneurship is developed in the area of the food sector in agriculture, the following benefits will emerge:

- It will help in reducing migration to cities.
- This will help in shifting the economic power to rural areas, which will help in enhancing and improving the economic status of the rural women and community as a whole.
- Increase in rural income will pave the way for real development of the rural areas.
- Agripreneurship can help in achieving a balanced growth and development, which will be eco-friendly.
- Transportation costs, as well as post harvesting losses of perishable commodities, can be reduced if agripreneurship are created in rural areas.
- Agripreneurship in rural areas will improve their infrastructure and will have a boosting effect on other aspects like transportation, roads, availability of products and economy etc.
- Also, enhance the employment opportunities for those rural women who are bounded to four walls at home and are not allowed to go out of their home for work.
- Employment opportunities in agripreneurship will be able to utilise the energies of rural youth and thereby lessen the social evils and mischief in the villages.
- It will help in raising the livelihood of the women
- Improvement in the economic status of the women will eventually help in increasing

the women empowerment and improving the status of the women in the society.

- The unexploited and underexploited natural resources of the locality would be productively utilised and generate revenue out of that [17].
- Organised and unorganised women resources could be channelised by identifying appropriate business venture so as to empower them.

10. OBSTACLES IN THE PATH OF WOMEN AGRIPRENEURS IN INDIA [18]

The women of today have proved themselves in almost every area. Women are engineers, doctors, lawyers, scientists, designers, pilots, police officers, politicians, teachers and what not. But still, the journey to this revolution has not been easy. In real life, establishing an enterprise is not that easy as it seems. Women are still lagging behind entrepreneurship, and lots have to be done in this field also. Obstacles faced by women are:

- **Dual Role to Play at Workplace & Home:** Women carry the dual burden of responsibilities i.e. managing a home and profession. Due to the dual responsibility, women are unable to organise their work effectively as she has a lack of time, attentiveness and overburdened personal obligation. The necessary infrastructure to support the women in organising their work like dependable childcare, creches, help from a spouse, instruments to make housework easier, is still not in place [1].
- **Lack of Finance:** Access to finance is one of the most common challenges that entrepreneurs face, and this is especially

true for women who lack property in their name and the need for their husband's countersignature on many documents. Moreover, in India parental property is mostly is handed over to male child. It is another reason because of which women find it difficult to raise capital for starting their own business [19].

- **Non-cooperation from the family:** Sometimes the family may make the women feel guilty of neglecting household duties in her pursuit of business obligations. Cultural traditions may hold back a woman from venturing into her own business.
- **Unavailability of required equipments:** Majority of the small entrepreneurs don't have the capacity to buy the costly equipment to start up their units.
- **Lack of proper knowledge:** Knowledge of alternative source of raw materials availability and high negotiation skills are the basic requirement to run a business. Getting the raw materials from different sources with discount prices is the factor that determines the profit margin. Lack of knowledge of the availability of the raw materials and low-level negotiation and bargaining skills are the factors, which affect women entrepreneur's business adventures.
- **Lack of management skills:** Women entrepreneurs have low-level management skills. They have to depend on office staffs and intermediaries, to get things done, especially, the marketing and sales side of business [19].
- **Lack of storage & warehousing facilities:** Small scale entrepreneurs lack storage and warehousing facilities which leads to spoilage of the products.
- **Low level risk taking the attitude:** Low-level risk taking attitude is another factor affecting women folk decision to get into the business. Low-level education provides low-level self-confidence and self-reliance to the women folk to engage in business. Investing money, maintaining the operations and ploughing back money for surplus generation requires high risk taking attitude, courage and confidence [19].
- **Lack of marketing:** There is no marketing of the locally produced products as people won't trust the quality of the product. Further people preferred the products that are readily available in every shop of the market.

- **Complicated procedure of availing loan from banks:** The financial institutions are doubtful about the entrepreneurial abilities of women. The bankers put unrealistic and unreasonable securities to get a loan to women entrepreneurs.
- **Weak linkages between the women entrepreneur and government agencies:** The government of India in its annuals often announces special growth and provision to assist self-employment in women. But it has not worked out effectively and very few women entrepreneurs are able to avail them. Despite the efforts the problem still exists as most of the women entrepreneurs in the region have neither approach nor awareness about these policies due to low education level. Women engage in this venue are unhappy with support system due to harassment from the officials and high corruption. There is a strong need to establish linkages between the women entrepreneur and government agencies.

11. STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE AND IMPROVE THE STATUS OF RURALWOMEN AGRIPRENEURS IN INDIA [20]

- Families should be sensitised about the importance of women entrepreneurship.
- Skill development trainings for starting different enterprises should be imparted. Although ICAR and SAU's are doing a commendable job in providing training there is a lack of follow up and marketing linkages.
- Procedure for getting loans for starting enterprises by the government and non-government agencies should be simple.
- More funds to the projects for the development of women entrepreneurs should be provided to the research institutes like CIPHET.
- Provision of costly equipment on rent basis by the KVKs and other government & Non-government institutions.
- Formation and follow up of SHGs. It is a very good concept given by Mohamed Yunus, a social entrepreneur, banker, economist, and civil society leader of Bangladesh but studies had found that there is lack of cohesiveness in the SHG's of Punjab that's why this concept failed particularly in Punjab.

- Ensured marketing of the product. (Like supply of the product to hostels, hospitals, hotels and canteens.)
- While framing training, KVK should plan full package of training, processing, packaging and marketing of the products. Guidance for obtaining the FPO mark for prepared products, to maintain the good quality of the product should also be included in the course content of the training.
- Rural women should be targeted as raw material can be easily available and generated at nearby places
- Common production & marketing centres should be set up. Some of the KVK's have provided a common outlet for sale of the products of their entrepreneurs like KVK Samrala and KVK Fatehgarh Sahib.
- Agencies like NABARD and ATMA should provide more training and funds for women entrepreneurs.
- Promoting and rewarding programmes that serve women entrepreneurs should be enhanced.
- Ensuring synergies between the women related ministry, economic ministry and welfare & social development ministry in the government.

12. CONCLUSION

We have very few examples of successful women entrepreneurs. But this is the situation of only one state i.e. Punjab. With proper guidance, finances, trainings and skill development a large number of women can be motivated to earn their own living by establishing an enterprise. There is great need to explore more women like Smt. Mamta Thakur who are enthusiastic and have skills, strong willpower, need and potential to start, operate, manage and bear risk of starting up an enterprise and to do something productive. Learning skill & applying it to earn a living & start an enterprise in agriculture is important to enhance the income of not only women but the framers too, to make agriculture more profitable. Moreover, the development of entrepreneurship in women is essential for sustaining a competitive atmosphere in the context of globalisation of economy.

We always viewed that a smart woman can pick up a job any day, but if she becomes an entrepreneur she can provide a livelihood to at least 10 more women...!!

(Unknown)

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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