



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### ROLE OF FARM WOMEN IN LIVESTOCK RELATED DECISION MAKING

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#### ABSTRACT

The association between women and livestock production needs productive exploitation, especially while aiming at rural development through livestock development, lack of empirical evidence on the magnitude of the female participation in decision making and the extent and nature of their association in livestock farming operations, however, limit our efforts in exploiting this linkage. This study has been planned to fill this gap, arising out of the dearth of documented evidence on female participation in decision making related to livestock farming. This study found that the areas of decision relating to livestock production in which farm women played a role were purchase of animals, purchase of feed, construction of animal house, equipment purchase, veterinary care, sale of milk, sale of other outputs, capital borrowing for livestock and fodder cultivation. Their participation in decision making relating to livestock keeping either solely or jointly varied between 5 per cent to 87.8 per cent in different areas. The female participation was maximum in the areas of sale of milk (87.8 per cent) and veterinary care (80.8 per cent) and minimum in capital borrowing decisions for livestock (5.9 per cent) and fodder cultivation (5.0 per cent).

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## INTRODUCTION

Keeping and caring animals is considered as an extension of domestic activities in Indian social system, and most of the animal husbandry activities like bringing fodder from field, chaffing the fodder, preparing feed for animals, offering water to animals, protection of animals from ticks and lice, cleaning of animals and sheds, preparation of dung cakes, milking, ghee-making and marketing of produce are performed and decided upon by women. Sabri (1998) stated that it is only the male who mostly had the final say in taking farm decisions, with the women having just to accept. Bhunavaneshwari and Kannan (1999) reported that 50 per cent of total decisions relating to care of animals were taken jointly by both men and women. Chauhan (1999) reported that participation of women was found to be higher in decision making for activities which were to be performed nearer to their living places and required involvement of family members. Singh *et al.* (1999) reported that the extent of participation of farm women in decision making with respect to different activities varied between 0 to 80 per cent. In farm activities such as sale and purchase of land, machinery and implements, purchase of fertilizers and weedicides, insecticides, and availing loan advances, women's

decision on the whole was less than 30 per cent and in activities such as sale and purchase of milch animals, the women's participation in decision making was higher at 50 to 80 per cent. Though the association between women and livestock production needs productive exploitation (Lo, 2007), especially while aiming at rural development through livestock development, lack of empirical evidence on the magnitude of the female participation in decision making and the extent and nature of their association in livestock farming operations, however, limit our efforts in exploiting this linkage (Niamir, 1994). This study has been planned to fill this gap, arising out of the dearth of documented evidence on female participation in decision making related to livestock farming. Thus to throw light on the real picture of decision-making pattern of farm women and to suggest possible measures to enhance their participation, the present study was taken up with following objective.

To study the role of farm women in livestock related decision-making process

## METHODOLOGY

Cuddalore District of Tamil Nadu was randomly selected for the present study. Multistage random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The chosen district comprised 13 blocks of which, two blocks, viz., Virudhachalam and Panruti were randomly selected.

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In the next stage, two villages from each selected block were chosen randomly. In total, 120 farmers were chosen again randomly from the selected four villages, 30 from each village, and it was ensured that the sample represented all the land holding class categories. The study was taken up during the months of April and May 2010 and the data collected from the sample units related to the year 2009-10. Relevant data were collected from the chosen respondents through personal interview using a pre-tested interview schedule. Cross checks were made to minimise the errors due to recall bias and also to ensure reliability of the information provided by the respondents. The results were presented in tabular form using averages and percentages. The association of various socio-economic factors and female participation in decision making was tested by Chi-square test of independence.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The areas of decision relating to livestock production in which farm women played roles are presented in Table 1. Their participation in decision making relating to livestock keeping either solely or jointly varied between 5 per cent to 87.8 per cent in different areas.

construction of farm building was taken by females. It could be noted that females belonging to small farmer category had no role in the above areas. The females belonging to large farmer category played a larger role in the decisions relating to these areas than their counterparts in other categories. In both the above areas, 23.3 per cent of the decisions taken by large farmers were jointly taken. Females of landless marginal, small and large farmer categories respectively participated in 96.7, 69.2, 88.0 and 96.1 per cent of decisions taken regarding sale of milk. There was also a significant association between landholding and female participation in the decisions regarding purchase of animals and purchase of feed. Around 23.3, 26.7, 30.0 and 60.0 per cent of decisions regarding purchase of animals had female participation in landless, marginal, small and large categories respectively (either independently or jointly with males). Increase in land holding appeared to increase the female participation in the decisions regarding animal purchase. Around 13.3, 10.0, 10.0 and 33.3 per cent of decisions regarding purchase of feed had female participation in the landless, marginal, small and large categories, respectively (either independently or jointly with males). There was an increased participation women in joint decisions relating to feed purchase as landholding size increased.

**Table 1. Role of Farm Women in Livestock related decision making process (number of females participated)**

Areas	Landless			Marginal			Small			Large			Total		
	F	J	T*	F	J	T*	F	J	T*	F	J	T*	F	J	T*
Purchase of Animals*	3 (10.0)	4 (13.3)	30 (100)	1 (3.3)	7 (23.4)	30 (100)	3 (10.0)	7 (23.3)	30 (100)	5 (16.3)	14 (46.7)	30 (100)	10 (8.3)	32 (26.7)	120 (100)
Purchase of Feed*	1 (3.3)	3 (10.0)	30 (100)	1 (3.3)	2 (6.7)	30 (100)	1 (3.3)	2 (6.7)	30 (100)	1 (3.3)	9 (30.0)	30 (100)	4 (3.3)	16 (13.7)	120 (100)
Construction of Animal House**	0 (0)	3 (10.0)	30 (100)	1 (3.3)	1 (3.3)	30 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	30 (100)	1 (3.3)	7 (23.3)	30 (100)	2 (1.7)	11 (9.1)	120 (100)
Equipment**	0 (0)	3 (10.0)	30 (100)	1 (3.3)	1 (3.3)	30 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	30 (100)	1 (3.3)	7 (23.3)	30 (100)	2 (1.7)	11 (9.1)	120 (100)
Veterinary Care	17 (56.6)	5 (16.7)	30 (100)	15 (50.0)	7 (23.4)	30 (100)	13 (43.3)	11 (36.6)	30 (100)	22 (73.3)	5 (16.7)	30 (100)	69 (57.5)	28 (23.3)	120 (100)
Sale of Milk**	21 (70.0)	8 (26.7)	29 (100)	13 (50.0)	3 (11.5)	26 (100)	14 (56.0)	8 (32.0)	25 (100)	22 (84.6)	5 (19.2)	26 (100)	70 (65.4)	24 (22.4)	107 (100)
Sale of Other Products	9 (30.0)	2 (6.7)	30 (100)	6 (20.0)	2 (6.7)	30 (100)	6 (20.7)	1 (3.5)	29 (100)	11 (37.9)	2 (6.9)	29 (100)	32 (27.11)	7 (6.0)	118 (100)
Capital Borrowing for Livestock	1 (3.3)	1 (3.3)	30 (100)	2 (6.7)	1 (3.3)	30 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	30 (100)	1 (3.3)	1 (3.3)	30 (100)	4 (3.3)	3 (2.6)	120 (100)
Fodder Cultivation	1 (3.3)	1 (3.3)	30 (100)	1 (3.3)	1 (3.3)	30 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	30 (100)	1 (3.3)	1 (3.3)	30 (100)	3 (2.5)	3 (2.5)	120 (100)

Figures in the parenthesis indicates percentage to total.

\* Significant at 5 per cent probability level

\*\* Significant at 1 per cent probability level

F – Female, J – Joint, T – Total.

† Total includes male participation also

The female participation was maximum in the areas of sale of milk (87.8 per cent) and veterinary care (80.8 per cent) and minimum in capital borrowing decisions for livestock (5.9 per cent) and fodder cultivation (5.0 per cent). The results relating to the association between the female participation in the decision making in livestock production and their socio-economic factors are presented and discussed in what follows. Chi-square test revealed that in construction of animal house, equipment purchase and sale of milk, there was highly significant association between landholding and female participation in decision making. Females belonging to landless, marginal and large farmer categories took part (both independently and jointly with males) 10.0, 6.6 and 26.6 per cent respectively in decisions relating to construction of animal house and equipment purchase. Kishor *et al.* (1999) reported that in Uttarpradesh, 9.52 per cent of decisions regarding

There was no significant association between landholding and female participation in decisions relating to other areas.

## Conclusion

The farm women were found to be playing a significant role in the decisions making process regarding purchase of animals, purchase of feed, construction of animal house, equipment, purchase, veterinary care, sale of milk and other outputs, capital borrowing for livestock and fodder cultivation. The female participation was maximum in decisions related to sale of milk (87.8 per cent) and veterinary care (80.8 per cent) and minimum in capital borrowing decisions for livestock (5.9 per cent) and fodder cultivation (5 per cent). Chi-square test revealed that there was a significant association between female participation in livestock related decision making and socio-

economic factors like landholding, female literacy, male literacy, and annual income of the household. Chi-square test also revealed that there was no significant association between female participation in decision-making and age of women head and likewise with type of family.

### Policy suggestions

The results emanating from the study produce well-documented evidence that farm women have a close association with livestock farming in the state. These results tend to suggest a more active role for this segment of the rural society so as to achieve rural development through combining women and livestock development. In the light of these results the following policy suggestions are made to fully and productively exploit the women- livestock linkage.

- With women being identified of playing a significant role in livestock keeping and in making decision relating to livestock production and marketing, concerted efforts are to be made so as to enable the farm women a better access to the fruits of livestock development and extension services.
- Channels of information, credit, inputs and access to markets have to be aimed at women as they played a very important role in livestock keeping and decisions related to livestock productions.
- The existing extension setup working to promote livestock production in the rural areas has a typical social obstacle not being able to contact the farm women to extent transfer of technology. This difficulty poses problems for the extension wing to approach those who actually undertake and decide livestock production activities. This warrants positioning appropriate female front line extension officers to interact and offer first hand information to the farm women.
- Bringing the services available to rear the animals physically closer to women.
- In spite of the fact that there is a close and more productive association between farm women and livestock, women participation in training programmes have not been satisfactory primarily due to the socio-economic impediments existing. Hence, efforts are the need of the hour to make appropriate measures to train the farm women in scientific management practices.
- Promoting intensive livestock rearing in rural areas may encourage female to participate more in livestock keeping as this practice did not require farm women to take animals for grazing far away from home.
- Encouraging the formation of rural women livestock farmer's co-operative society may increase female participation in livestock rearing.
- It is suggested that educational facilities to females may be provided on priority basis in order to broaden their outward horizon which will ultimately enhance their participation in decision making.

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