

CHAPTER VII

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This chapter summarizes the major findings of all the earlier chapters and extracts the policy implications thereof. The first part of the chapter gives a brief but comprehensive background of the study. The second part summarizes the principal findings of the study. The last part looks into overall conclusion and policy implications of the study.

7.1 Summary

Agriculture is regarded as the largest sector of economic activities in India. More than half of the population of the country depends on agriculture directly or indirectly for their livelihood. Women workers in agriculture often called ‘farm women’ are the backbone of agricultural workforce. As large as 81 percent of the total female workforce in India are rural female workers. Out of the total rural female workers, 28.8 percent are cultivators and 48.5 percent are agricultural labourers contributing a major proportion of the farm production as well as household income. Farm women perform almost all the activities in agriculture like seeding, uprooting seedlings/ transplanting, fertilizer application, irrigation, weeding, plant protection, thinning, harvesting, threshing, processing, selling farm products, storage etc. There is hardly any activity that women are not involved in agriculture except ploughing. They are also engaged in allied activities like animal rearing, poultry farming, fodder collection, milking etc. and in some skilled jobs like embroidery, knitting and weaving along with their domestic chores.

Statement of the Problem

Agriculture being a labour intensive activity, the availability of workers in Assam for sustaining agricultural production is crucial. The economy of Assam is predominantly agrarian and women's participation in agriculture sector is significant. According to census 2011, about 49 percent of the total women workers in Assam are engaged in agriculture as cultivators and agricultural labourers. Majority of women works in the family farms as unpaid family labour and a smaller percentage of them as agricultural labour. They have a long tradition of doing various agricultural and livestock management activities along with their household duties.

The present study has analysed participation of women in agriculture and their contribution to family income. It has also identified various problems that influence their participation in agriculture and examined their autonomy in agricultural decision making.

Objectives

The present work has been carried out with the following objectives.

- 1) To study the socio-economic background of women workers in agriculture in the study area of Assam.
- 2) To study the nature and extent of participation of women workers in agriculture and allied activities in the study area.
- 3) To assess the contribution of women workers to the family income from agriculture and allied activities in the study area.
- 4) To examine the decision making capacity of women workers in agricultural activities.
- 5) To identify the problems faced by women workers in agriculture.

Research Questions

On the basis of the objectives mentioned above, the study seeks answers to the following research questions:

- 1) Do women workers of all farm size contribute from agricultural income towards their family income?
- 2) Does the participation of women in agriculture empower them to take decisions regarding agricultural activities?

Methodology

The study has been conducted in Morigaon district` of Assam. Three blocks of the district namely Mayong, Bhurbandha and Dolongghat where percentage of women workers are higher compared to other blocks have been selected purposively for the study. From each block, 3 villages have been selected at random. 30 farm households from each sample village and further 30 farm women, one from each household, have been purposively selected on the basis that the women of those households are involved in agriculture activities. Thus the total sample consists of 270 farm women workers as sample respondents.

To fulfill the objectives and to answer the research questions of the study, both qualitative and quantitative approaches have been used. Qualitative analysis is based on in-depth personal interview and quantitative analysis is based on data obtained through structured interview schedule and various statistical tools like SPSS (Statistical Package of Social Sciences) 20.0 version, Microsoft Office Excel have been used to draw the result. Field survey to provide the primary data was carried out during agricultural year July 2014- June 2015.

To study the socio-economic background of women workers, socio-economic indicators are investigated. To analyse the participation of women workers in agriculture, their involvement in different agricultural and allied activities has been investigated. Total hours spent by them on these activities have been collected and converted into mandays assuming one manday consists of 8 hours of work a day. To assess the contribution of farm women workers to the family income, their average annual mandays in agriculture are multiplied with the prevailing agricultural wage rate in the study area. To identify the problems faced by women workers in agriculture, Henry Garrett ranking method has been adopted. Qualitative analysis has also been done that based on personal interview with the respondents. To examine women's participation and capacity or power in agricultural decision making, a decision making index has been constructed covering 18 types of agricultural activities. The decision making empowerment level is calculated on the basis of arithmetic mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (σ) of the total decision making index scores.

7.2 Summary of Principal Findings

7.2.1. Findings from Secondary Data

An overview of the study-area has been presented on the basis of secondary data. Morigaon is a rural district of Assam covering only 2.02 per cent of the total area of the state. The district is located in the Central Brahmaputra valley of Assam. The total geographical area of the district is 1551 sq.km. consisting of 98.36 percent rural and only 1.64 percent urban area. It has one Head Quarter sub-division, five Revenue Circles, seven Development Blocks, 85 Gaon Panchayats and 632 villages. According to Census 2011, out of the total population of Morigaon, the rural and urban population respectively constitute 92.34 percent and 7.66 percent. Regarding the distribution of total

workforce, rural workers constitute as large as 92.9 percent against only 7.1 percent urban workers. Rural female workers account as high as 95.57 percent of the total female workers of the district.

Agro-economic features of Morigaon reveals that the economy of it is rural agrarian with low rate of urbanization. Agriculture is the predominant economic activity and paddy is the dominant crop followed by rape and mustard, black gram, winter vegetables, wheat and jute. The total cropped area and net area sown are 127811 hectares and 92011 hectares respectively and cropping intensity is 138.90 percent. In the district, the preponderance of small and marginal type of land holding is increasing due to fragmentation and nuclearization of farm families which affects the land use pattern. Agricultural labour market shows that in all the seven blocks, percentage of male workers is much higher than female workers as rural main workers. But as rural marginal workers, women outnumbered men in all the blocks. Out of 239563 rural main workers, 84.49 percent is male and only 15.51 percent is female whereas out of 86641 rural marginal workers, 59.86 percent is female against 40.14 percent of male workers. This indicates that female workers in the district mainly occupy their status as rural marginal workers.

Regarding power and connectivity, the district is lagging behind. Out of 598 total inhabited villages only 484 are electrified leaving more than 100 villages without electricity. The total road length is 1150 km out of which 909 km is rural road and only 86 km is major district road and 142 km state highway. The district has only one civil hospital, 23 primary health centres (PHCs), 2 community health centres and 123 sub centres. Regarding higher education, it has 36 higher secondary schools, 16 junior colleges, 6 degree colleges and one college of B. Ed. (Bachelor of Education). Thus

social infrastructure in terms of increase in the number of health centres and educational institutions is yet to register a satisfactory trend.

The district is educationally and industrially advancing slowly due to lack of proper infrastructure. It has been suffering from various deficiencies related to almost all the areas of socio-economic progress. Proper assessment of the deficits is needed for assuring smooth growth process in the district.

7.2.2. Findings from Primary Data

7.2.2.i Profile of Women Workers

The socio-economic conditions of the respondents have an influence on their attitude, behavior and activities. Keeping this in mind, socio-economic background of sample women like age, education, caste, family type, family income, land holdings etc. have been investigated which provide an insight into their pattern of labour use in agriculture. The findings of the chapter are summarized below.

- Findings show that majority of the respondents (57.04 %) belong to the middle age group (31- 50 years), followed by 26.30 percent and 16.66 percent of the respondents are in young (up to 30 years) and old age (above 50 years) categories respectively. It is found that aged women are less energetic than the other age groups and they prefer to remain at home to look after the household and their grand-sons or daughters. The data indicates that major portion of the sample women belong to the active working age category fulfilling the objective of the study.
- Educational status of the respondents was not satisfactory. Majority (29.26 %) of the respondents is educated up to middle school, 14.07 percent are illiterate,

15.19 percent are functionally literate, 22.96 percent are up to primary level and 13.33 percent are up to high school. Only 14 respondents (5.19 %) are matriculate and 4 of them completed higher secondary level education. It is found that nobody possessed any graduate, post-graduate or technical education degree in the study area. Thus, education status of respondents is confined only to the lower level of education.

- 87.41 percent of respondents are married while only 11.85 percent are widows and 0.74 percent is separated. Among the respondents there are no divorced or unmarried women. The finding is that maximum of the sample women are married playing the dual role of home maker and worker.
- The average size of the family is 6.12 which indicates high dependency ratio. The highest number of respondents is found to have a family size of 5-7 members which constitute 44.81 percent. 27.04 percent of respondents are from normal family size (up to 4 members) and 28.15 percent are from large family (above 7 members) size.
- 35.93 percent of respondents have joint family system while 64.07 percent are under nuclear family system. As reported by the respondents, the percentage of nuclear family has been increasing and joint family system has been losing its importance mainly due to the fragmentation of family land holdings among its members.
- Among the respondents, 45.93 percent are schedule tribe (ST), 17.41 percent are schedule caste (SC), 24.07 percent are other backward classes (OBC) and only 12.59 percent belongs to the general caste category. Analysis reveals more

involvement of tribal women in farming activities in the study area and majority of them belong to Mayong block.

- More than half (58.15%) of the family heads are farmers whereas 14.81 percent are agricultural labourers, 14.07 percent have subsidiary occupations like small shop, sericulture, bamboo/ cane works etc. besides agriculture and 12.96 percent are job holders in private, semi-government and government establishments along with cultivation. This shows that agriculture is still a major sector of employment and more than 70 percent of respondents as cultivators and agricultural labourers entirely depend on agriculture.
- The data on family income reveals that most of the respondents are financially not well off. 37.78 percent of respondents have monthly family income less than Rs.5000.00 and 28.15 percent in the range of Rs. 5000.00-Rs.10000.00. Only 9.63 percent of respondents have monthly income in between Rs 15000.00-Rs.20000.00 and 9.26 percent above Rs.20, 000.00.
- Being economically poor, largest portion i.e. 53.70 percent of the respondents live in katcha house and 5.55 percent reside in the houses provided under the scheme of Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY). Only 15.56 percent and 25.19 percent of the respondents live in pucca and semi-pucca houses respectively.
- 50.74 percent of sample women work as family labour followed by 14.81 percent as agricultural labour, 30.37 percent as both family and agricultural workers and only 4.07 percent as family worker along with doing job mainly as teachers in primary schools, Asha Kormi, Anganbadi workers and Mid-Day meal cooks in the primary schools. Thus, employment pattern of majority of the respondents is family farm labour in agriculture.

- The average size of operational land holdings is 1.36 hectares and the areas operated by small and medium farm categories are very low as compared to large farm category. 14.81 percent of respondents belong to landless category, 38.89 percent belong to small, 30 percent from medium and only 16.30 percent from large farm categories.
- During the survey, it is found that 57.04 per cent of the farm women are indebted while the remaining 42.96 percent have not availed credit from any source during that period. Out of the total indebted respondents, majority (52.60%) avail credit from friends and relatives followed by money lenders (27.27%), SHGs (24.03%), landlords (7.79%) and banks (5.19%). Farm women generally approach informal credit sources such as village moneylenders, landlords and friends or relatives. It is to note that only few women, mainly from medium and large farm households have availed loan from institutional sources along with other sources.
- Main purpose of availing credit by the respondents is to meet their household consumption and to perform ritual functions. 41.56 percent have availed loan for household consumption and 25.32 percent availed for ritual functions. 14.94 percent of respondents have received loan for maintaining the cost of agriculture or to cover loss in agriculture. A small number of women from medium and large farms (7.14%) has accepted loan to purchase agricultural materials and machinery, farm land etc. who wanted to contribute their men-folk investing in agriculture.
- More than half of the respondents (52.96%) have no social participation followed by 33.70 percent and only 13.33 percent of respondents' participation in one

organization and in two organizations respectively and no one was in the position of office holder of any organization and member of more than two organizations.

- Only 20 percent of sample women are having farming experience less than 10 years, 45.93 percent between 10 to 20 years and others had more than 20 years. It indicates that most of the farm women practiced agriculture as their source of livelihood from a long time.
- The average number of livestock possessed by per sample household is 5.2. The average number is highest in poultry birds (2.09 for fowls and 1.40 for ducks) and lowest in case of bullock (0.09). Respondents mainly involve in poultry farming and rearing of cows and goats.

7.2.2.ii Women Workers in Agriculture

Part-A: Participation of Women in Agriculture

Participation of women workers in agriculture and allied activities includes their participation in crop cultivation and livestock management activities. To analyse their participation, a total of 10 activities in cultivation and 9 activities in livestock management have been identified. Sample women were asked about the hours they spent in these activities and then converted them into mandays. They participate in seasonal and specific agricultural operations. But the activities related to livestock management are not seasonal and carried on for the whole season. Sample households possess either livestock or poultry. The livestock management activities are performed by the women for the whole year as a part of their daily works in the study area.

- On average, a sample woman devotes annually a total of 184.37 mandays in agriculture consisting of 82.62 mandays in cultivation and 101.75 mandays in livestock management activities.
- In case of mandays devoted by different farm sizes in crop cultivation activities, on average, a woman devotes 94.13 mandays in landless households followed by 74.56 mandays in small, 88.90 mandays in medium and 79.85 mandays in large farm households.
- In case of mandays devoted by women of different farm sizes in livestock management activities, on average, a woman devotes 87.69 mandays in landless, 102.89 mandays in small, and 107.33 mandays in medium and 101.54 mandays in large farm households.
- Per farm annual average mandays spent in agriculture is 374.51. Out of this, 181.68 mandays are engaged in cultivation and 192.83 mandays in livestock management.
- Out of total 181.68 mandays in cultivation, 82.62 mandays are contributed by women and 99.06 mandays by men. Similarly, in case of livestock management, out of 192.83 mandays, 101.75 mandays are contributed by women and 91.08 mandays by men.
- No women workers are engaged in activities like harrowing, ploughing, and plant-protection in the study area. Women have not participated in these activities not only due to higher physical labour and technical knowledge involved in these activities but also due to social taboos against women's participation in such

activities. Except these activities, they are found to be engaged in all other activities with variation in mandays.

- Women's participation varies from activity to activity.
- Participation of women workers in livestock management is more than that of men in all the sample farm households.
- Participation of women increases with the increase in the farm sizes except for large farm category. This is mainly because these households depend more on hired labour for farm activities as compared to other farm categories.
- A clear segregation in agricultural activities by sex is observed. Though women share a large burden of agricultural activities, they are assigned with inferior role.
- Activities requiring use of machines and skill, new inputs and market related activities are operated and controlled by men. Women are mostly engaged in labourious and monotonous works. On the contrary, the burden of domestic activities which are regarded unproductive work, almost wholly on the women workers of the farm households.
- During the field survey, respondents reported that on average, women spend 6 to 8 hours daily on household chores whereas a man spends only 1 to 2 hours in such activities. If mandays engaged in domestic works are included in the total labour use of the family members, women's share will be higher than men in the farm households.

Thus women bear the double burden of household and productive works, though their contributions as worker are often neglected and unrecognized.

Part-B: Income of Women from Agriculture

The women workers performing farm activities in the study area are referred to as unskilled labour and they are generally assigned with tedious farm works such as transplanting, weeding, harvesting, winnowing, fodder collection, milking etc. though working hours for all types of labour are similar which is 8 hours per day. The daily agricultural wage rate for women workers in the study area was Rs. 150.00 including mid-day meal whereas for men, it ranges between Rs. 250.00 and Rs.300.00. The average annual working days of women on the basis of mandays are multiplied by Rs. 150.00 to find out the contribution of sample women to the family income from agriculture.

- Average annual income of women workers of sample farm households derived from agriculture becomes Rs. 27655.50. Income derives from cultivation is Rs.12393.00 and from livestock management is Rs.15262.50.
- In case of contribution of women workers to the family income from agriculture by different farm size categories, landless households contribute Rs. 27273.00 followed by contribution made by small, medium and large farm households are Rs. 26617.50, Rs. 29434.50 and Rs. 27208.50 respectively.
- The contribution of women to family income is highest in medium farm households followed by landless, large and small farm households.
- Among the farm sizes, income of women from cultivation is the highest for landless category (Rs.14119.50) and income from livestock management is highest for medium farm category (Rs.16099.50). Due to meager size of holding

and poor economic condition, landless women prefer to work on another person's farm as a source of their livelihood.

- Women workers of sample households as a whole have contributed annually a total of 49780.66 mandays in agriculture as against 51338.13 mandays by men.
- The percentage share contributed by sample women annually in terms of mandays towards agriculture and allied activities is 49.23 percent and men's contribution is 50.77 percent.
- There is discrimination of wage rate between men and women. Men's wage is almost double to women's wage rate. If the wage rate for women and men would be equal, women's contribution to the family income would be much higher than the present contribution.
- It is also observed that the sample women of high income group devote more time in household chores and hence they contribute less to the family income.

From this study it has been found that farm women play a key role in the maintenance of family budget. They devote time and efforts in attending farm activities and caring for the livestock in addition to the household responsibilities.

Answer to the First Research Question

The foregoing analysis has resulted that women workers of all farm size groups have contributed significantly to their family income in contrast to the popular belief that women workers help only marginally in agricultural activities. **Thus the findings prove the first research question.**

7.2.2.iii Problems in Agriculture

A total of 15 problems faced by farm women in agriculture have been identified from pilot survey and after identifying the problems, Garret ranking technique has been done to rank the problems faced by women in agriculture. Respondents are interviewed personally to share their experiences regarding their problems as worker in agriculture.

- Among the problems, women's reproductive and child care practices has got the uppermost rank. This is because of gendered social norms that view unpaid care work as a female prerogative and they have to spend an important part of their day on meeting the expectations of their unpaid care work and reproductive roles. This shows that higher the time spend on unproductive care work, lesser is the time for productive work on agriculture.
- Dual responsibility of women at home and farm occupies the second position. Gender stereotypes regarding women's roles both at work and at home constrain their work opportunities and perpetuate the socio-economic model of a male breadwinner.
- Health problem ranks third with most of respondents reporting health problems of illness, injuries and disorders related to muscular stress in the neck, shoulder, arms and hands. Maximum pain is reported due to adoption of unnatural posture during transplanting, weeding and harvesting. During harvesting, severe pain in shoulder and lower back has been reported by the women.
- According to respondents, poor economic condition accompanied by discrimination in male and female earnings, work under unfavorable condition

for long hours develop their health problems and malnutrition which affect their work performance negatively. Poor economic condition is ranked fourth.

- The other major problems faced by the women are social customs and traditional belief, secondary status in decision making, low level of women's literacy, lack of technical know-how, lack of access to credit, and lack of access to land and other productive resources which ranked as 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th problems respectively.
- Lack of family support, non- recognition of women's contribution, natural environment, lack of mobility and male out migration are ranked 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th and 15th respectively.
- Many respondents are of the opinion that traditions and social norms prevent women from inheriting and having control over land and other productive resources. This triggers the problem of accessing credit facilities offered to those only who have the ownership rights of land.

7.2.2.iv Women Workers in Decision Making

Women's decision making capacity in agriculture is measured by constructing a decision making index covering 18 types of agricultural activities. Respondents are asked to indicate the extent of their participation in decision making in the selected items which are measured on four point scale as no participation, only consulted, opinion considered and actively involved in the final decision. The corresponding scores assigned for each response were 0, 1, 2 and 3 respectively. On the basis of scores obtained, women's empowerment through their participation in agricultural decision making has been examined. Following are the major findings.

- Decision making index (DMI) scores of women on 18 selected items ranged from 230-620 against the possible range of 0-810. The higher the index score, greater is the indication of empowerment of respondents. Women's power to take decision regarding storage of farm produce is ranked 1st which scored highest (620). Buying or selling of poultry birds/eggs, uprooting and transplanting of seedling, intercultural operations and harvesting of crops are ranked 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th respectively.
- Respondents are less empowered in decision making areas like proper time and method of sowing, purchase or sale of land, buying or selling of animals/animal produce, means of irrigation, sale of farm produce, use of fertilizers and insecticides/pesticides, treatment of livestock and preparation of land which occupy ranks 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th respectively.
- Women's power to take decision is relatively high in non-skilled areas of agricultural activities like storage of farm produce, uprooting and transplanting, harvesting of crops, decision regarding poultry care etc. than the skilled and economic areas like use of fertilizer or insecticides and pesticides, application of irrigation, sale or purchase of land, sale of farm produce, sale or purchase of animals etc. as they are male or husband dominated areas, reported by the respondents.
- Poor educational level, multi-dimensional role of women, lack of knowledge on improved technology, male dominance, traditional belief system/ cultural norms, farm women's age, poor access to farm information, lack of women's self-confidence, lack of women focused on agricultural extension activities and

shortage of agricultural extension services are the major constraints which limit women's decision making power in agriculture.

- Age of women, education level, status of women in the family, family income and farming experience of women show a positive relationship while caste, family size and farm size in agriculture show a negative relationship with their decision making power.
- Out of 270 respondents, 61 respondents had low level, 153 had medium level and the remaining 56 respondents have high level of decision making empowerment calculated on the basis of mean and standard deviation of their DMI scores.

Answer to the Second Research Question

The study results that despite their important role in agricultural sector, sample women play a secondary role in decision making related to agricultural matters. During personal interview, it is reported that only in purely domestic matters like decoration of house, purchase of domestic goods, preparation of food, caring and management of poultry etc. women are given freedom to take their own decision. But in matters related to occupation, production and money related matters they enjoy limited freedom. Thus, the findings of the present study result that the work participation of women in agriculture does not lead to their empowerment in agricultural decision making and **hence answers the second research question.**

7.3. Conclusion

Women's participation in agricultural activities is quite widespread and they devote a considerable time in these activities. Women in the study area are actively involved in agricultural activities. The study reveals that their participation is higher in

livestock management activities in comparison to men in terms of man days. In cultivation, their participation is also found to be significant in activities like transplantation, harvesting, weeding and winnowing.

The findings of the study prove that farm women workers play a key role in the maintenance of family budget. They devote a good time and effort in attending farm activities and caring for the livestock in addition to the household responsibilities. Illiteracy or low literacy level, poverty, feminine stereotypes and secondary status, ignorance, traditional social attitude -all these pose as obstacles in their work performance. The patriarchic forms of decision making still continue in the study area. Despite their important role in agricultural sector, their participation in agricultural decision-making is very poor. The present study concludes that in the study area, majority of farm women workers are married and playing a significant role in agriculture and support their men-folk in agricultural operations. They contribute significantly to the family income participating in agriculture and also reducing labour cost in agricultural operations.

7.4. Policy Implications

Based on the findings of the study, following policy implications are drawn for effective and productive participation of farm women in agricultural development and increasing their decision making capacity.

- It has been found from the present study that illiteracy and low level educational status of farm women restrict them to adopt and accept technology in cultivation and livestock management. Women often hesitate and feel reluctant to participate in public interaction and play an insignificant role in decision making due to their low literacy level which also results in lack of skill in conducting farming

activities. The problem of non-recognition of farm women as a decision maker in agricultural activities is faced more by less educated women. Therefore, the vital importance is to arrange non-formal educational programmes for farm women who have lost the opportunity or crossed the age of formal education. There is the need for education covering basic education and vocational education for skill development aiming increasingly at imparting technical literacy.

- Farm women workers are extensively involved in agriculture to help their male counterparts reducing the labour cost of production and contributing to their family income. In spite of their valuable contribution, their participation in agricultural decision making process has found to be very poor. Most of farm women do not have any role in decision making regarding purchase/sale of land and application of technology in farming. Again they enjoy limited freedom in case of production and money related matters like marketing of agricultural inputs and produce which is directly related to farm income. Thus there is a need of special programmes that empower and recognize women especially through education, finance and information. Technical empowerment of farm women should be ensured through infrastructure for dissemination of improved technology giving use and benefits of them in a package of know-how and supporting aids. Integrated awareness creation strategy should also be designed and facilitated by stakeholders to minimize the social, cultural and economic barriers that affecting farm women's decision making.
- It is also found that women workers receive lower wages compared to male workers for equivalent work. To bring about an improvement in the status of farm women workers, step should be taken to raise their wages to improve their

economic condition. To achieve this, the government should enforce the fixation of minimum wages for different works separately depending upon the importance of work and equal wages for similar work for men and women should be maintained. Government policy for eight hours of works should be fixed including the lunch and rest break.

- The study finds that absence of ownership of land triggers the problem of accessing credit facilities offered to those only who have the ownership rights of land. Due to absence of patta or title of land they lack independent decision on various aspects of agricultural development. Therefore government should take steps to implement right to parental property to be owned by the members of the family irrespective of gender. Public legal awareness campaign and advocacy through different mass media are necessary for implementation of the parental property right specially land right.
- Negative stereotype images of rural working women should be changed with the help of mass media. Both the central and the state governments should provide sufficient and additional employment opportunities in agricultural and non-agricultural sector in the field of vegetable and fruits processing, horticulture and medicinal plants growing, poultry farming, rope and coir making from jute and especially in the area of handloom and weaving.
- Demonstration and training camps for dissemination of new farm technology should be held on regular intervals for women in all the villages especially in the afternoon when they get free from their household chores. Strength and physical structure of women should be considered in developing farm technology by the agricultural engineers. Easy and light to handle technology

should be developed for women workers so that their drudgery be reduced. Female agricultural agents and extension officers should be appointed with a special focus on farm women so they can be easily contacted.

- The government, community of scientists and policy makers responsible for designing agricultural development policies and programmes of the future must begin with viewing rural farm women, their roles, their lives, their problems and their experiences which have generally been overlooked. Efforts should be made to help the farm women to be a part of mainstream development. Being an important segment of agricultural labour market, their contribution should be visible and recognized.

7.5 Scope for Further Research

- Studies can be undertaken in future on the impact of farm mechanization on women workers in agriculture.
- Studies may be undertaken to investigate government funding and programmes and their implementation to mainstream women in the process on agricultural development.
- Studies on gender issues particularly in agriculture and rural social set-up can be undertaken to identify the gaps as well as challenges to gender equality along with possible areas for improvement.