

Farm sector sees 'feminisation', says Survey

Bigger role: There is empirical evidence that women play a decisive part in ensuring food security, the Survey said.

With a rise seen in migration of men from rural to urban areas, there is 'feminisation' of agriculture sector, as the number of women in multiple roles such as cultivators, entrepreneurs and labourers is increasing, according to the Economic Survey 2017-18 released on Monday. The Survey also stressed the need for an 'inclusive transformative agricultural policy', aimed at gender-specific interventions.

"With growing rural to urban migration by men, there is 'feminisation' of agriculture sector, with increasing number of women in multiple roles as cultivators, entrepreneurs, and labourers," it said, pointing out that worldwide, there was empirical evidence that women had a decisive role in ensuring food security and preserving local agro-biodiversity. "Rural women are responsible for the integrated management and use of diverse natural resources to meet the daily household needs. This requires that women farmers should have enhanced access to resources like land, water, credit, technology and training which warrants critical analysis in the context of India," it added. The Survey observed that crucial role of women in agricultural development and allied fields was a fact long taken for granted.

Women's contribution

"For sustainable development of agriculture and rural economy, the contribution of women to agriculture and food production cannot be ignored," the Survey said.

Notably, as per Census 2011, out of total female main workers, 55% were agricultural labourers and 24% cultivators.

However, only 12.8% of the operational holdings were owned by women, which reflected the gender disparity in ownership of landholdings in agriculture. The Survey added that with women predominant at all levels — production, pre-harvest, post-harvest processing, packaging, marketing — of the agricultural value chain it is imperative to adopt gender specific interventions.

"An 'inclusive transformative agricultural policy' should aim at gender-specific interventions to raise productivity of small farm holdings, integrate women as active agents in rural transformation, and engage men and women in extension services with gender expertise," the Survey said.

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