

Women rice farmers to be trained in the Philippines

The women are from Assam, Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Bengal.

Eight women farmers have been selected to visit the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines to learn about new rice farming techniques, as part of an initiative by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), a Science Ministry body, to raise the profile of women farmers.

“Women farmers are an extremely significant contributor to the agricultural economy and yet aren’t adequately recognised,” said Dr. Shailja Gupta, a senior official in the DBT.

The eight women farmers were whittled down from a set of 35 farmers who were selected for a workshop at the IRRI’s centre in Bhubaneshwar. At the forthcoming workshop in the Philippines from 6-10 August, 2018, the women are expected to be exposed to “advanced farming experiences and technological advancements.” The women who will make it to the Philippines span five States: Uttarakhand, Assam, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal.

During the workshop in India, the women were taught about crop planning, stages of rice cultivation, pest and weed management, use of crop calendar, land selection, crop monitoring, post-harvest management and seed management. According to the Census 2011, 55% of women workers were agricultural labourers and 24% were cultivators. However, only 12.8% of the operational holdings were owned by women, and 25% this land belonged to the “marginal and small holdings categories.”

The Economic Survey 2017-18 recommended a number of steps to acknowledge the “feminisation” of Indian agriculture. These include: earmarking at least 30% of the budget allocation for women beneficiaries in all ongoing schemes/programmes and development activities, initiating women-centric activities and focussing on women self-help groups to connect them to micro-credit through capacity-building activities.

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