



## A Study on Women Participation in Agri Business in Select Horticulture Markets

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### ABSTRACT

*Rapid survey studies on role of women in horticulture business hub in Vijayawada revealed that their role was limited to little less than one third in various rural and urban fruit markets. Sale proceeds obtained were found to from principal source of income to the family in women belonging to age group of 36-45 years. None of the women vendors involved in horticulture business have possessed literacy levels higher than primary education. Marketing of Tribal produce like Custard Apple and major commodity like Mango seemed to be gender dependent. Women are usually refrained from agricultural marketing and trading due to household social confinements and market locations. The study also revealed that agribusiness operations could not be complete without involvement of women. Women's role in agribusiness can be enhanced by closing the gender gap between men and women. It is not surprising that vital contribution of women in agribusiness is often unrecognized and unfairly rewarded*

**KEYWORDS :** Horticulture, commodity variant, gender dependence, gender gap, agribusiness operations

### INTRODUCTION

Attention to gender in agriculture is not new, but in the past it has often been limited to a few specialized programs targeting women or mainstreaming efforts that embed attention to gender within programs (FAO, 2011). Women play significant and crucial role in agricultural development, livestock production, horticulture, and floriculture post-harvest operation, agro-social forestry and fisheries etc. as a manager, decision maker and skilled farm worker. Women in agricultural families perform many farm related activities both within and outside the household in most parts of the country (Daman, 1997; Satyavathiet. *al.*, 2012). Women are usually blocked from the business side of farming and rarely engaged in marketing or trading and it is not surprising that their vital contribution is often unrecognized and unfairly rewarded (Nicolas, 2014). Ashby *et. al.* (2008) reported that any business interested in quality should take an interest in women. An attempt has been made in this study to study the role performed by women engaged in fruit marketing in rural and urban areas.

### METHODOLOGY

The present study was carried out in five selected fruit markets viz., (i) Vijayawada Urban, (ii) Vijayawada rural, (iii) Patamata, (iv) Rytu Bazar and (v) Governorpet which are engaged in selling various fruit commodities. Selection of these markets was based on the assumption that their agricultural marketing system provides equal opportunity to both men and women vendors in retail selling of various fruit commodities. The study was confined to retail marketing aspects as regards men and women hawkers, their representative participation, age group and literacy levels. A representative sample of 140 fruit vendors were selected for exploration study following survey methods of Flink (1983) and Alreck and Settle (1985). The sample contained 97 male vendors as against 43 female hawkers in different markets located in Vijayawada rural and urban areas. Data obtained in the present study was presented in the form of percentages for particular response.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Women activity in horticulture markets encompassing Vijayawada Urban and rural areas was limited to one third of the total fruit sellers. Women who are involved in fruit marketing were recorded to be 30.71% as against male members whose strength was recorded to be 69.29% in all the markets that were surveyed in the present study (Table 1). Highest involvement of women (39.99%) was recorded in Governorpet fruit market followed by Rytu Bazar (33.33%), Vijayawada Rural (31.58%) and Vijayawada Urban (31.11%) while Patamata fruit market recorded lowest number of women vendors to the extent of 16.67%. The study recorded that in some markets such as Vijayawada Urban and Rural, women and men were engaged in two activities viz., (i) retail selling of different fruit varieties and (ii) ripening process

before delivering to retailers. Women involvement in fruit markets was mostly confined to commodity trading in comparison to fruit ripening activity. Out of 43 women who were surveyed in the present study, 33 (76.74%) were engaged in commodity selling as against 10 (23.26%). Similar and comparable trend was observed among male members who were involved in retail selling of fruits were almost three times (74.22%) higher than those who were engaged in fruit ripening process (25.78%) establishing a factor of 3.3 women vendors for every woman involved in ripening process. Similarly, a ratio of 2.9 was recorded for male members in fruit markets for fruit marketing and ripening activities in different fruit markets.

Although, women participate actively in various agricultural operations, their role in decision making and agribusiness operations were found to be limited (Satyavathiet. *al.*, 2012) while Kasi (2013) found that women are equally involved in business operations in sericulture. Similarly, Burman (2001) has reported dominant role of women in aquaculture activities in Bangladesh and emphasized that there is great potential for marketing operations with the involvement of women in aquaculture activities. Women in Latin America were found to have higher levels of incorporation into rural non-farm jobs such as gathering and processing of foods, migrating to cities for marketing and sending remittances to home (Katz, 2003). Tekale (2012) could record that involvement of women in sale of farm produce was 27% in Maharashtra.

In the present, study role of women in horticulture produce marketing was limited to 30.71% indicating their nominal role. Reasons for such low presence of women in horticulture business operations could be attributed to (i) sale of fruits is a daylong business which hampers their household activities; (ii) women are not interested in attending to the business in the markets located far from their habitation, (iii) agribusiness is subjected to wastage and spoilage and (iv) women traders usually favour tranquil and serene markets. Accordingly, Portz (1997) posited that due to the multiple roles women play in the rural household (including caretakers of children and the elderly), they do not show inclination towards agribusiness operations while Jamalia (2009) reporting the role of women in agriculture in Pakistan stated that in spite of their heavy involvement in household activities, women could contribute in agricultural activities heavily. Newman (2002) found in a comparative study that market labour opportunities in cut flower business for women have no effect on women's total time in labor but increase men's time in unpaid labor. The increase in men's time in unpaid work reflects women's increased bargaining power in the home. Guirguissou (2013) suggested that gender myths and stereotypes still determine the involvement of women in organizational functions and the male motive involving women in management and financial operations continues to remain question-

able issue. Accati (1984) emphasized that involvement of women in horticulture could lead to innovations in developing countries.

Age was considered as a social functionary in the present study which revealed that more than half of women accounting to 58.14% were in the age group of 26-35 followed by 25.58% of women whose age ranged between 36 and 45. It is surprising to note that women whose age group was ranging from 15-25 were not present in any of the fruit markets that were surveyed in the present study. Khan *et. al.* (2012) also found that age group of 32% of women involved in agribusiness activities in Pakistan has ranged between 31 and 40 years. Nearly, one sixth of women (16.28%) belonged to age group of 45 years and above (Table 2). Women falling within the age group of 36-45 years have the responsibility of extending helping hand to their husbands whereas women who were within the age group of 26-35 years have taken up the vocation to augment family income. Senior women who were in the age group of above 45 were present in the market for past 20-25 years and were depending exclusively on retail business of fruits. It is interesting to record from the present study that women who were in the productive age group of 26-45 years have preferred to take up fruit business as a vocation and found it an alternative source to augment family income. Although, it is alarming that younger women have not preferred to take up fruit marketing as an occupation but it is worth to note that they were enrolled for higher education in different streams. They may venture into retail business after marriage depending on the warranting of situation. Present study also recorded those women involvement in fruit marketing could not be more than one third in any of the fruit. Highest number of women hawkers (14) computing to 32.56% was recorded in Vijayawada urban market against lowest number of women dealers (3) accounting to 6.98% in Patamata fruit market.

Literacy and educational attainment are powerful indicators of social and economic development among the rural populations in India. Present study revealed that 79.07% of women vendors in fruit markets were not having any formal education as against 20.93% whose literacy level was up to primary education (Table 3). However, this feature was not common among younger generations who were pursuing higher education in different streams but, it is not certain that whether they adopt agribusiness as a vocation or not in future. Such

lowest rates of literacy were observed by Maharatna (2005) among tribal populations in some coastal states in India which was resulting in gender inequality. Earlier, Bhandari and Smith (1997) have emphasized that daily activities and income generating activities of rural women revealed that education fails to touch upon the essential aspects of rural life. Upadhyay (2010) has remarked that lower educational levels of rural women in India are hindering the women from achieving empowerment and taking up of financial operations as observed in the present study. Women should educate themselves in order to improve employment opportunities in floriculture (Quresh, 2005). Although agriculture was found to create many jobs for women but for their lower education level which compel them to remain in subsistence agriculture (Lal and Khurana, 2011).

It was also observed that fruit business in different markets has no gender difference since; women were involved in sales of almost all types of fruits similar to male members. Female and male vendors were involved equally in sales of fruits like Mango, Pomegranate, Grapes, Apple, Pineapple and Guava. There seemed to be gender specification with regard to sales of Banana and Custard apple which were exclusively sold by male and female hawkers respectively. Although, gender specificity to commodity sales cannot be attributed, similar higher role performance of women was reported in floriculture crops like Marigold and Rose (Mankaret. *al.*, 2013).

As women are blocked from the business side of farming and rarely encouraged in marketing operations, it is not surprising that their vital contribution is often unrecognised and poorly rewarded. Indispensably, any business interested in quality cannot undermine the role of women in achieving the set goals and targets. However, closing gap between gender and exposing the farm women to financial operations, extension trainings and social initiatives can improve participation of women in agribusiness operations at par with their role in other farming practices.

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**Table.1. Distribution of female and male hawkers in different retail fruit markets in Vijayawada**

Fruit Market	Traders				Ripening				Total	Women Frequency (%)
	Female (No)	Frequency (%)	Male (No)	Frequency (%)	Female (No)	Frequency (%)	Male (No)	Frequency (%)		
Vijayawada Urban	8	5.71	16	11.43	6	4.29	15	10.72	45	31.11
Vijayawada Rural	8	5.71	16	11.43	4	2.85	10	7.14	38	31.58
Patamata	3	2.15	15	10.71	--	--	--	--	18	16.67
Rytu Bazar	8	5.71	16	11.43	--	--	--	--	24	33.33
Governorpet	6	4.29	9	6.43	--	--	--	--	15	39.99
Total	33	23.57	72	51.43	10	7.14	25	17.86	140	30.71

**Table 2. Age group of Women fruit vendors in different retail Fruit Markets in Vijayawada**

Fish Market	Age Group								Total	Frequency (%)
	15-25	Frequency (%)	26-35	Frequency (%)	36-45	Frequency (%)	45 and above	Frequency (%)		
Vijayawada Urban	--		8	18.60	4	9.30	2	4.65	14	32.56
Vijayawada Rural	--		6	13.95	4	9.30	2	4.65	12	27.91
Patamata	--		3	6.98	--	--	--	--	3	6.98
Rytu Bazar	--		4	9.30	2	4.65	2	4.65	8	18.60
Governorpet	--		4	9.30	1	2.33	1	2.33	6	13.95
Total	--		25	58.14	11	25.58	7	16.28	43	100.00

**Table 3. Literacy level of women traders in different rural and urban fruit markets in Vijayawada**

Fruit Market	Level of Education								Total	Frequency (%)
	Illiterate	Frequency (%)	Primary	Frequency (%)	Secondary	Frequency (%)	Senior Secondary and above	Frequency (%)		
Vijayawada Urban	10	23.26	4	9.30	--		--		14	32.56
Vijayawada Rural	10	23.26	2	4.65	--		--		12	27.91
Patamata	3	6.97	--	--	--		--		3	6.98
Rytu Bazar	6	13.95	2	4.65	--		--		8	18.60
Governorpet	5	11.63	1	2.33	--		--		6	13.95
Total	34	79.07	9	20.93					43	100.00

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