Research Paper

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Knowledge Level of Rural Women Participation in Mulberry Sericulture Practices

Agriculture

KEYWORDS : Women, Mulberry sericulture, Farmers, Knowledge, Adoption

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ABSTRACT

Poonch is one of the remote districts of the Jammu and Kashmir state and situated on LOC (Line of Control). Poonch is situated between 33°25' to 34º01' north latitude and between 73°58' to 74º35' east longitude. Rural women in Poonch are actively involved in mulberry sericulture and being considered it as a subsidiary occupational venture. The women farmers are generally traditionally bound in respect of knowledge and skills being used in mulberry sericulture. From the study, it could be seen that majority of the women involved in rearing of silkworms (100%) followed by harvesting of cocoons and mounting of silkworms rearing (37.5%). The study also inferred that level of knowledge and adoptions on improved sericulture practices were poor.

INTRODUCTION

Sericulture refers to the conscious mass-scale rearing of silk producing organisms to obtain silk (Sen et al., 1994). In India, sericulture is not only a tradition but also a living culture. It is a farm based, labour intensive and commercially attractive economic activity falling under the cottage and small-scale sector (Krishna Rao and Singh, 1994; Radha et al., 2000). It particularly suits rural-based farmers, entrepreneurs and artisans, as it requires small investment, but with potential for relatively higher returns. It provides income and employment to the rural people especially farmers with small landholdings and the marginalized and weaker sections of the society. Sericulture being a cottage industry provides ample work for the women in rural areas, while their male counterparts look after agriculture. Its unique nature of work proves to be an ideal activity for women who can engage themselves in this activity in addition to their regular tasks of taking care of family. Moreover, most its operations do not require hard labour, except digging and ploughing (Sandhya Rani, 1998). Silkworm being delicate has to be handled with care. Thus, the entire process needs skill and patience, which suits women well. Sericulture continues to be a subsidiary occupation for more than 500 rural families in the district. Most of these families belong to marginalized sections of the society. In the district, mulberry silk production has been practiced traditionally by women farmers are actively associated in leaf feeding to silkworms (Fig.1), silkworm rearing (Fig.2), picking of matured silkworms (Fig.3), harvesting of cocoons (Fig.4). Various improved technologies were also developed for increasing production and productivity in many fold activities of mulberry sericulture. Continuous efforts are also being made for effective dissemination of the technologies to the farmer's field. But, there is still exist gap between real and potential production of mulberry culture. The main reason in low production is adoption of traditional practices of mulberry sericulture by most of the farmers. The women farmers are generally traditionally bound in respect of knowledge and skills being used in mulberry sericulture. Keeping above points in view, a study was carried out to study knowledge level of rural women participation in mulberry sericulture practices.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Dara, Jhullas, Degwar, Ajote villages of district Poonch. A total of 20 women silkworm rearers were identified utilizing the random sampling technique. To know the women participation in different activities, level of knowledge and adoption of sericulture practices, data were collected from the respondents through personal contact method with the help of a specially structured interview schedule. The data collected was classified and put in tabular form for analysis purpose. Simple statistical tools like numbers and percentage distribution has been used to analyze the data and results are presented in Tables 1-3.

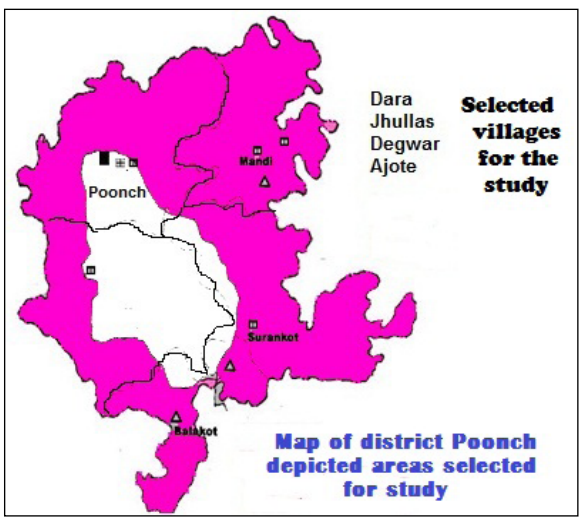

Fig.1 Feeding mulberry leaves

Fig.2 Rearing of silkworms

Fig.3 Picking of matured silkworms

Fig.4 Harvested silk cocoons

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data depicted in (Table 1), shows that majority of the women were involved in rearing of silkworms (100%) followed by harvest of cocoons and mounting of silkworms. Women are involved in all activities except those activities which involve going out from their homes like harvesting of leaves, marketing of cocoons, transportation of leaves. Non-involvement of women in these activities is may be due to going out from the home as majority of the farmers in the study area do not have their own mulberry garden they have to collect mulberry leaves from road sides; other people landholding *etc.,* which is why men normally attend these works. The works which is household in nature are generally attended by women. The women normally stay at home for different household activities. In addition to that, they are able to manage the required time for rearing of silkworms to supplement some extent to the family income. Besides, the above activities are very much suited to the physical strength of the women. Almost similar findings were also reported by (Mech and Ahmed, 2012: Mech et al., 2010) wherein they found that in mulberry sericulture, the women participation is also high in the silkworm rearing than mulberry cultivation. The men attending the heavier and skilled works like land preparation, collection of planting materials, procurement of fertilizers etc. Silkworm rearing represents a suitable domestic activity for the women folk of the middle class sericulture families, who would not be expected to work outside home (Charsely, 1976).

Present study revealed that knowledge of women farmers in all the improved technologies of mulberry sericulture had low except in late instars silkworm rearing (75%) and dusting of bed disinfectants (50%) (Table 2). The reason for the low knowledge is due to non-awareness about the improved technologies and also strong inclination towards traditional belief. From the above findings, it could be inferred that to improve the efficiency in knowledge, imparting of training-cum-awareness is highly required for the women farmers involved in mulberry culture.

The data regarding adoption level of women rearers in mulberry sericulture shown in (Table 3). From the data, it can be seen that majority of the women silkworm rearers are not adopted the improved sericulture practices in the study area. Since mulberry sericulture in the study area is subsidiary based occupation and only one or two silkworm cocoon crops are reared in a year. The reason for non-adoption of sericulture practices may be due to less return or inclination towards traditional belief they do not pay much attention in practicing improved sericulture technologies as a result the adoption level is low.

Table-1. Women silkworm rearers participation in different sericulture activities.

Particulars	Involvement (in numbers)	%age of participation
Harvesting of leaves	N	N
Transportation of leaves	N	N
Rearing of silkworms	40	100
Maintenance of hygienic conditions	10	25.0
Monitoring of silkworm diseases and its management	10	25.0
Maintenance of environmental conditions	06	15.0
Bed cleaning	16	40
Mounting of silkworms	15	37.5
Harvest of cocoons	37	92.5
Sorting of cocoons	10	25.0
Marketing of cocoons	N	N

N=Nil

Table-2. Knowledge level of women silkworm rearers in different sericulture activities.

Particulars	No. of respondents	Knowledge %
Planting of mulberry sapling	02	5.0
Pruning of mulberry plants	05	12.5
Management of mulberry plants	N	N
Disinfection of rearing house	12	30.0
Young age silkworm rearing	12	30.0
Late age silkworm rearing	30	75.0
Maintenance of environmental conditions during rearing	05	12.5
Dusting of bed disinfectants	20	50.0
Requirement of leaves	07	17.5
Management of silkworm diseases	15	37.5
Mounting of matured silkworm	12	30.0
Maintenance of environmental conditions during spinning	03	7.5
Time of harvesting of spun cocoons	10	25.0

N=Nil

Table-3. Adoption of sericulture practices by women silkworm rearers.

Particulars	No. of respondents	Adoption %
Planting of mulberry plants	05	12.5
Application of manure and fertilizers	N	N
Training and pruning of plants	N	N
Management of pests and diseases of mulberry	N	N
Construction of silkworm rearing house	02	5.0
Disinfection of rearing house	10	25.0
Method of silkworm rearing	N	N
Method of feeding	05	12.5

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Management of silkworm diseases	03	7.5
Method of mounting matured silkworms	07	17.5
Usage and requirement of mountages	N	N
Harvesting of cocoons	15	37.5

N=Nil

CONCLUSION

Sericulture is an integral part of the rural economy and providing gainful employment opportunity particularly to the small and marginal farmers. Poonch is one of the traditional districts and sericulture was one of the economic enterprises prior to independence in the district and majority of the rural masses have adopted this activity in the earlier days more particularly weaker sections of the society. Since, at that time sericulture was one of the few avocations available with masses. It is evident from the foregoing that women farmers are actively involved in mulberry culture, but their level of knowledge and adoption on improved practices are not adequate. It is derived from the study that imparting of training-cum-awareness and conducting demonstration is highly required for the women farmers involved in mulberry culture.

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