



Women's Empowerment in India through Agriculture: A Qualitative Analysis

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Abstract

The empowerment of women in India's agricultural sector has emerged as a critical issue, given the persistent gender disparities and unequal access to resources, education, and opportunities. While women comprise a significant portion of the agricultural workforce, their contributions are often undervalued, and they continue to face systemic barriers that hinder their full participation in agricultural development. Despite these challenges, various initiatives by the Indian government and non-governmental organizations have been introduced to address these inequities. These initiatives focus on enhancing women's access to essential resources, including education, training, financial support, and agricultural technologies, thereby facilitating their active engagement in agricultural decision-making processes. This paper critically reviews the current status of women in agriculture, highlighting key challenges such as limited access to land, credit, and extension services. It further examines the impact of policies and programs designed to empower women, evaluating their effectiveness in promoting gender equality and economic sustainability in the sector. The paper concludes by proposing recommendations for further policy interventions that could enhance the empowerment of women in agriculture, ultimately fostering more inclusive and sustainable rural development in India.

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Introduction

Agriculture stands as the cornerstone of India's economy, engaging over 60% of the population and contributing significantly to food security, rural employment, and national development (FAO, 2020). Within this vital sector, women form the invisible backbone—working in fields, managing livestock, processing produce, and sustaining households. Yet, their roles are frequently undervalued and underrecognized. Despite women comprising a significant share of the agricultural workforce, they continue to face deep-rooted gender disparities in access to land, credit, education, technology, and decision-making spaces (Agarwal, 1994; Doss *et al.*, 2015) ^[1, 14]. Women's empowerment in agriculture has emerged as a key theme in development discourse, not only as a matter of social justice but also as a driver of improved productivity, nutrition, and household welfare. Research consistently shows that women's active involvement in agriculture is closely tied to enhanced decision-making power, economic autonomy, and improved livelihoods (Kabeer, 2000; Quisumbing *et al.*, 2001; Malapit & Quisumbing, 2015) ^[27, 28, 19]. Access to credit enables women to invest in their farms, diversify income sources, and strengthen household resilience.

Moreover, access to agricultural extension services plays a transformative role in empowering women. Studies have shown that when women receive targeted training and technical support, they are more likely to adopt innovative farming practices, increase yields, and gain greater control over their economic activities (Ramaswami & Wadhwa, 2011) ^[30]. Likewise, participation in self-help groups and Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) enhances women's access to markets, information, and collective bargaining power, while fostering solidarity and social capital (Singh *et al.*, 2014; Rao & Singh, 2016) ^[32, 31].

The intersection of agriculture and empowerment also has implications for health and nutrition. Improved access to food, higher agricultural income, and the growing feminization of the agricultural workforce are key pathways through which women's agricultural involvement enhances nutritional outcomes for families (Gillespie & Kadiyala, 2011; Kadiyala *et al.*, 2012) ^[26]. The Women's Empowerment Index (WEI), developed by UNICEF (2020) ^[21], further conceptualizes empowerment through four domains—economic resources, human and social capital, reproductive decision-making, and socio-cultural attitudes—offering a multidimensional lens to assess gender equity in agriculture.

Yet, the path to empowerment remains riddled with structural challenges. Patriarchal norms continue to limit women's land ownership, restrict mobility, and reduce their visibility in institutional frameworks (Agarwal, 2014; Rao, 2019) ^[1, 19]. Despite policies like the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), which aim to recognize women as farmers and enhance their capacities, implementation gaps and gender-blind data systems persist (Nair, 2018) ^[7].

Compounding these barriers are factors such as caste, class, and geography. Marginalized groups—particularly Dalit and tribal women—often experience layered discrimination that restricts their access to land, education, and state support systems (Desai & Dubey, 2012; Gupta, 2020) ^[12, 5]. Additionally, the growing burden of unpaid labor, exacerbated by male outmigration, has led to a situation where women shoulder increasing responsibilities without a corresponding increase in rights or recognition (Chopra & Zambelli, 2017) ^[2].

This research paper seeks to critically examine the complex relationship between agriculture and women's empowerment in India. It aims to analyze the challenges women face, assess the impact of policy and grassroots interventions, and explore strategies that can create a more inclusive and equitable agricultural system. In doing so, it contributes to the broader discourse on gender equity and sustainable rural development.

Review of Literature

Access to land remains one of the most significant indicators of empowerment in agrarian societies. However, in India, women's ownership of land continues to be disproportionately low. According to Agarwal (1994) ^[1], despite constitutional guarantees and legal reforms, only about 13% of agricultural land is owned by women. Land ownership is not just an economic asset but also a key factor in enhancing bargaining power, securing access to credit, and participating in local governance. Doss *et al.* (2015) ^[14] argue that without secure land rights, women's empowerment is fundamentally constrained, even when other forms of support are available.

Technology adoption is crucial for increasing agricultural productivity, but gendered barriers limit women's access. Studies have shown that extension services, mechanized tools, and digital platforms often target male farmers, assuming them to be the primary decision-makers (World Bank, FAO, & IFAD, 2009) ^[9]. This gender bias restricts women from adopting improved farming practices. A study by Meinzen-Dick *et al.* (2011) ^[16] highlights how gender-sensitive agricultural interventions—such as tailored training sessions and female extension agents—can significantly improve women's technological adoption and agency.

Education plays a pivotal role in enhancing women's participation in agricultural decision-making and productivity. According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO, 2019), women with higher levels of education are more likely to participate in formal agricultural employment, access information about sustainable practices, and adopt innovations. Pandey and Roy (2018) ^[9] found that women farmers who had undergone basic literacy and numeracy training were more successful in negotiating fair prices for their produce and in accessing government schemes.

While women's participation in agriculture is increasing, especially with the growing phenomenon of male outmigration, this has not necessarily translated into empowerment. Instead, it often leads to the "feminization of responsibility without power" (Chopra & Zambelli, 2017) ^[2]. Women are taking on more labor-intensive roles while still bearing the burden of unpaid domestic work. This dual burden limits their time and energy for skill-building, entrepreneurship, or political engagement—critical dimensions of empowerment.

Empowerment is not experienced uniformly among women. The intersection of gender with caste, class, and geographic location creates layered inequalities. For example, Dalit women in rural India face not only gender discrimination but also systemic caste-based exclusion in accessing land, markets, and institutional support (Desai & Dubey, 2012) ^[12]. Tribal women, especially in remote areas, often lack infrastructural access to inputs and services, limiting their agricultural potential despite their significant labor contributions (Gupta, 2020) ^[5].

Government initiatives like the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) have been pivotal in recognizing women as farmers and not merely laborers. The program emphasizes skill development, sustainable agriculture, and collectivization. However, reviews have found that implementation is often uneven and hampered by bureaucratic inefficiencies and patriarchal norms at the local level (Nair, 2018) ^[7]. Similarly, while the National Policy for Farmers (2007) recommended gender mainstreaming in agricultural policies, the absence of gender-disaggregated data remains a significant challenge in evaluating progress (Rao, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Women are the silent strength behind Indian agriculture, yet their contributions remain largely invisible and undervalued. Despite being indispensable to the sector, they face entrenched barriers: restricted access to land, credit, and technology; exclusion from decision-making spaces; and systemic gender discrimination. These challenges not only suppress their individual potential but also hinder the broader progress of agriculture. Without urgent, focused interventions, the cycle of inequality will continue to marginalize women farmers, weakening the foundation of rural development itself.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the current status of women in Indian agriculture, focusing on their participation, access to resources, and role in decision-making at both household and community levels.
2. To identify key socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers that limit women's empowerment in

- agriculture and assess the impact of targeted interventions on their livelihoods and overall well-being.
3. To recommend policy and programmatic strategies that enhance women's access to land, credit, training, and leadership opportunities—promoting inclusive growth and sustainable rural development.

Current Status of Women in Agriculture in India

Women play a central role in India's agricultural sector, contributing approximately 60–70% of the labor involved in farming and allied activities (FAO, 2020). Their work spans from seed sowing and weeding to harvesting, processing, and marketing. Despite this vital role, women remain underrepresented in agricultural policymaking and are often excluded from formal recognition as farmers (Agarwal, 2014) ^[23].

A major barrier to women's empowerment in agriculture is their limited access to productive resources. Women typically lack ownership of land, which is a key asset for agricultural productivity and access to institutional credit. Studies reveal that only about 13% of women in India own land, and even fewer have control over how it is used (Doss *et al.*, 2015) ^[14]. This lack of control inhibits their ability to invest in and benefit from farming on equal terms with men.

Another significant challenge is the restricted access to education and training. Women in rural areas often have lower literacy rates and fewer opportunities to participate in agricultural extension services, limiting their ability to adopt improved farming techniques or understand market dynamics (Meinzen-Dick *et al.*, 2011) ^[16]. This educational gap perpetuates low productivity and poor decision-making capacity among women farmers.

Furthermore, women's contributions in agriculture remain largely undervalued. Much of their labor is unpaid or underpaid and is often categorized as “assisting” male farmers rather than independent work (Quisumbing *et al.*, 2001) ^[27]. Their representation in farmer groups, cooperatives, and formal institutions is also minimal, reducing their influence in shaping agricultural policy and programs (Rao, 2019) ^[19].

Finally, socio-cultural norms and gender roles continue to restrict women's mobility, ownership rights, and participation in leadership. Patriarchal structures in many parts of rural India limit women's autonomy and reinforce their subordinate position both within households and in the agricultural economy (Chopra & Zambelli, 2017) ^[2]. These intersecting barriers collectively contribute to a cycle of poverty and exclusion for rural women.

Strategies and Policies for Empowering Women in Agriculture

In response to these challenges, several strategies have been developed by government bodies and civil society organizations to empower women in agriculture and improve their access to resources and opportunities.

The provision of education and training has emerged as a critical strategy. Agricultural extension services targeted at women and gender-sensitive training programs have shown promise in increasing women's productivity and confidence in adopting new technologies (World Bank, FAO, & IFAD, 2009) ^[9]. These initiatives aim to equip women with the technical knowledge and entrepreneurial skills necessary for successful farming and agribusiness.

Improving financial inclusion and access to credit has been

central to many empowerment efforts. Programs such as the *Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana* (MKSP) seek to recognize women as farmers and provide them with financial support, livelihood training, and access to inputs (Nair, 2018) ^[7]. Self-help groups and microfinance schemes have also proven effective in increasing women's control over economic resources and encouraging collective investment in agricultural ventures.

Initiatives that promote women's participation in decision-making are helping to enhance their agency and leadership. Increased involvement in Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), local panchayats, and community-based institutions is giving women a platform to influence agricultural and development agendas (Rao & Singh, 2016) ^[31]. These platforms also create opportunities for peer support and knowledge sharing.

There is growing recognition of the need to challenge societal norms and gender biases. Gender sensitization campaigns, legal reforms promoting joint land ownership, and efforts to elevate the visibility of women farmers are gradually shifting public perceptions (Agarwal, 2014; UNICEF, 2020) ^[23, 21]. By addressing the root causes of discrimination, these strategies aim to create a more inclusive agricultural ecosystem.

Women's Contribution to India's GDP

Women's economic empowerment in India has seen significant potential for growth, yet their contribution remains underappreciated. Currently, women contribute approximately 18% to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (World Bank, 2021). However, studies show that if gender parity in the workforce and economic opportunities were achieved, India could see a substantial economic uplift—US \$770 billion could be added to the GDP by 2025 (McKinsey Global Institute, 2018).

Women are also increasingly making their mark in India's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector, with approximately 20.37% of these businesses being women-led (Government of India, 2020). These enterprises employ around 23.3% of the labor population, with between 13.5 to 15.7 million businesses owned by women, who also provide employment to 22 to 27 million individuals (ILO, 2020). This underscores the critical role that women play not only in agricultural sectors but also in driving the broader economy forward.

Women's Empowerment in Odisha

Odisha, located in eastern India, has a predominantly agrarian economy where women contribute significantly to agricultural activities. According to government statistics, 49% of the agricultural workforce in Odisha is made up of women (Odisha Economic Survey, 2020). However, women's roles in agriculture are often restricted to subsistence farming within the household, and they face considerable barriers to accessing agricultural extension services, credit, and markets.

To address these challenges, the government of Odisha has launched several initiatives aimed at empowering women in agriculture:

1. The Mission Shakti initiative is one of Odisha's flagship programs for women's empowerment. Launched in 2001, this program aims to promote economic independence among women by providing them with access to credit, technology, and markets. Women's

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) form the backbone of this initiative, and they are equipped with financial and technical support for various agricultural activities. As of 2020, more than 70,000 SHGs are active in Odisha, facilitating the inclusion of women in agricultural value chains (Government of Odisha, 2020).

2. **Krishak Sathi Program:** The Krishak Sathi initiative provides agricultural extension services to small and marginal farmers, including women. The program has successfully increased women's participation in agricultural training and workshops, helping them to improve their skills in sustainable farming, technology adoption, and best agricultural practices (Rath & Mishra, 2019). This empowerment through knowledge has led to increased productivity and financial autonomy for women farmers in the region.
3. **Assistance for Livelihood & Income Augmentation (KALIA) Scheme:** The KALIA Scheme, launched in 2018, focuses on supporting small farmers in Odisha with financial assistance. A key feature of this program is that one-third of the beneficiaries are women. To further empower women, if both male and female family members are eligible, the payment is transferred directly to the female member's account. This policy is designed to enhance women's agency and decision-making power within agricultural households (Rath, 2020). The scheme not only provides financial aid but also boosts women's control over household resources, which is essential for their empowerment.

Facts and figures related to the Study: Women's empowerment through agriculture has been an important aspect of India's development strategy for decades. Here are some facts and figures related to the progress made in this area:

- According to the latest data available from the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, women constitute around 18% of the total cultivators in India.
- The government of India has implemented several schemes and programs to empower women in agriculture, including the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), which aims to improve the status of women farmers and enhance their participation in agriculture-related activities.
- As of 2020, around 3.63 lakh women have been trained under the MKSP, and over 26 lakh women have been provided with infrastructure and skill development opportunities.
- Women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have also significantly empowered women in agriculture. As of 2018-19, there were over 71 lakh SHGs in the country, comprising over 8 crore women.
- The National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) has been working towards enhancing the livelihoods of rural women through SHGs. As of 2020, over 60 lakh women have been mobilized under the NRLM, and around 4.5 lakh women have been provided with loans for agriculture-related activities.
- The government has also been promoting women's entrepreneurship in agriculture through initiatives like the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, which provides financial support to women entrepreneurs.
- In recent years, there has been an increasing trend of

women taking up leadership positions in agriculture-related organizations and cooperatives. For instance, the National Federation of Women Farmers' Cooperatives, which was set up in 2018, is led entirely by women.

- Women make up about 48% of India's agricultural workforce, yet they only own about 13% of the land (Sources: National Sample Survey Organisation, 2013).

Different Schemes available for women in the agriculture sector: To familiarize women with the latest techniques in agriculture and allied sectors, training is being imparted to women farmers under schemes of the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare and the Ministry of Rural Development. The guidelines of the various beneficiary-oriented schemes of the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation and Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW), provide that States and other Implementing Agencies incur at least 30% of expenditure on women farmers.

Following are different schemes focusing on the welfare of women farmers

1. National Food Security Mission

National Food Security Mission (NFSM) was launched in 2007-08 to increase the production of rice, wheat, and pulses through area expansion and productivity enhancement, restoring soil fertility and productivity, creating employment openings, and enhancing the estate-position economy. The interventions covered under NFSM include cluster demonstrations on the bettered package of practices (POP), demonstrations of the cropping system, seed distribution of high-yielding kinds, estate ministry resources conservation ministry/ tools, effective water operation tools, plant protection measures, nutrient operation/ soil ameliorants, cropping system- predicated training to the farmers, etc. NFSM continued with the target of fresh products of 25 million tonnes of food grains. Supplementary nutrition programs are imaged under the National Food Security Act for pregnant women and lactating mothers and children over the age of 14 times (Source: National Food Security Mission, 2019).

2. National Mission on Oilseed & Oil Palm

The NMOOP stands for National Mission on Oil Seeds and Oil Palm, which aims to increase the production of comestible canvases in India. India's rural terrain offers an occasion to produce nine different oil seeds similar to rapeseed, groundnut, Niger, castor, sunflower, mustard, sesame, safflower, linseed, and soybean. To streamline the production of these oil painting forms, the Central Government introduced the NMOOP scheme. The heirs can gain fiscal aid to maintain the oil painting win product. The fund distributed under the National Mission on Edible Canvases scheme is distributed between State and Central Governments. This fund released to the Department of Agriculture is participated in a rate of 75:25. The state and public situations reserve 1 from this fund to use during extremity ages, while 10 is reserved for Flexi fund (Source: National Food Security Mission, Nov 19, 2019).

3. National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture

The National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) has been formulated for enhancing agricultural productivity, especially in rainfed areas focusing on integrated farming, water use efficiency, soil health management, and

synergizing resource conservation. NMSA architecture has been designed by converging, consolidating, and subsuming all ongoing as well as newly proposed activities/programs related to sustainable agriculture with a special emphasis on soil & water conservation, water use efficiency, soil health management, and rainfed area development. The focus of NMSA will be to infuse the judicious utilization of resources of commons through a community-based approach (source: Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, GoI).

4. Sub-Mission for Seed and Planting Material

The Submission on Seeds and Planting Materials (SMSP) has aimed to increase the production of certified/Quality seeds, increase SRR, upgrade the quality of farm-saved seeds, strengthen the seed multiplication, promote new technology and methodologies in seed production, processing, testing, etc. To strengthen and modernize the infrastructure for seed production, storage, certification, and quality. (Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, GoI)

5. Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization

The Sub-Mission on Agriculture Mechanization (SMAM) was launched in 2014-2015 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Govt. of India. It aims to enhance the reach of farm mechanization to small and marginal farmers and those areas where the availability of electricity power is low. This scheme is overseen by the National Steering Committee under the chairmanship of the Secretary of Agriculture Ministry. There are also executive committees at the state and district level to handle this scheme. The SMAM is a sub-mission of the National Mission on Agricultural Extension and Technology (NMAET) (source: Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, GoI).

6. Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture

The Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for the holistic growth of the horticulture sector covering fruits, vegetables, root & tuber crops, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconuts, cashew and bamboos, etc. Under MIDH, the Government of India (GOI) contributes 60% of the total outlay for developmental programs in all the states except states in the Northeast and the Himalayas, 40% share is contributed by State Governments. In the case of the northeastern states and the Himalayan States, GOI contributes 90% (source: Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, GoI).

7. Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP)

The government has said that under the schemes implemented by the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (DA&FP) at least 30% of the expenditure allocated for agriculture schemes is being incurred for women to bring them into mainstream agriculture. This mainly includes Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana. It was started in 2011. It is a sub-component of the Deendayal Antodaya Yojana-NRLM (DAY-NRLM). It seeks to improve the present status of women in Agriculture and also enhance the opportunities available to empower them. MKSP recognizes the identity of "Mahila" as "Kisan" and strives to build the capacity of women in the domain of agro-ecologically sustainable practices. Up to 60% (90% for North-eastern States) of the funding support for such projects is provided by the government (Source: National Rural Livelihood

Mission).

Aside from the above-stated schemes, many schemes are so focused on women's empowerment. Many Skill training courses in agriculture and allied areas are also being conducted for women farmers through National Training Institutes, State Agricultural Management and Extension Training (SAMETIs), Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK), State Agriculture Universities (SAU) etc across the country. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) implemented by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship provides several short-duration skill training programs viz.

Future Prospectus of Women Empowerment in Agriculture: Women empowerment in agriculture has the potential to improve the lives of millions of women and their families worldwide. The future prospects for women's empowerment in agriculture are promising, as more and more organizations, governments, and individuals recognize the importance of gender equity in the agricultural sector.

One of the most significant prospects for women's empowerment in agriculture is the increased recognition of the crucial role that women play in food production and security. This recognition is leading to greater investment in programs that support women in agriculture, including training, access to credit, and technology.

Another prospect is the increasing participation of women in decision-making processes related to agriculture. As women's voices are heard, their contributions are being recognized, and they are being given more significant roles in shaping agricultural policies and programs.

Technology is also providing exciting prospects for women's empowerment in agriculture. For example, the development of mobile phone applications that provide women with information about weather patterns, market prices, and other critical data can help them make informed decisions about what to grow, where to sell their produce, and when to plant. The rise of sustainable agriculture is creating new opportunities for women to take on leadership roles in managing small farms, cooperatives, and other agricultural enterprises. Women are playing an increasingly significant role in promoting sustainable practices that are environmentally friendly and socially responsible. Greater investment in education and training for women in agriculture is opening new opportunities for women to take on leadership roles in the sector. By providing women with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in agriculture, we can help them break down barriers and achieve economic empowerment.

Scope for the Future

Women's empowerment through agriculture in India is a crucial step towards achieving gender equality and women's economic and social empowerment;

- 1. Education and Training:** Providing education and training to women in rural areas about modern agricultural techniques, crop management, marketing, and financial management can empower them with the necessary knowledge and skills to make their farming practices more profitable.
- 2. Access to finance:** Women farmers often face challenges in accessing finance, credit, and loans. Providing women with easy access to microfinance and other credit facilities can help them in starting or

expanding their farming activities.

3. **Land Rights:** In many parts of India, women do not have land ownership rights, which limits their ability to access financial resources. Ensuring women's land ownership and inheritance rights can help them access credit facilities, technical assistance, and other government support programs.
4. **Technology adoption:** Women farmers often lack access to modern farming tools and equipment, which can make their work more challenging. Providing women with access to modern agricultural technologies and equipment can help them increase their productivity and income.
5. **Marketing support:** Women farmers often face challenges in marketing their produce due to a lack of knowledge and access to markets. Providing marketing support through Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), cooperatives, and other market linkages can help women farmers in accessing better prices for their produce.
6. **Community Participation:** Encouraging women to participate in community-based organizations, self-help groups, and cooperatives can help in building their confidence and decision-making skills, as well as providing them with access to resources and networks.
7. **Policy and Legal Support:** Government policies and legal frameworks need to be more supportive of women's participation in agriculture. There needs to be a focus on gender-sensitive policies that promote women's access to resources, services, and markets.

By implementing these suggestions, women can become more empowered in the agricultural sector, leading to their economic and social development, and ultimately towards achieving gender equality.

Outcomes and Findings

This study emphasizes the significant role that women play in India's agricultural sector and explores the immense potential for empowering them through targeted interventions. The findings reveal that women's empowerment in agriculture can contribute not only to improved household well-being but also to community development. By increasing women's participation in agricultural decision-making and providing them with the necessary resources, there is a strong potential to enhance productivity and reduce poverty at the household level (Kabeer, 2000; Quisumbing *et al.*, 2001) ^[27, 29].

The study's assessment of the status and challenges faced by women in agriculture underscores several critical barriers that must be addressed. Socio-cultural norms, economic limitations, and institutional discrimination continue to restrict women's full participation and hinder their access to essential resources like land, credit, and technology (Agarwal, 2014; Singh *et al.*, 2014) ^[23, 32]. The findings suggest that investing in women farmers, through improved access to credit, agricultural extension services, and training programs, can lead to significant increases in both agricultural productivity and income generation (Ramaswami & Wadhwa, 2011; Malapit & Quisumbing, 2015) ^[30, 28].

In particular, the study emphasizes the importance of a multi-pronged approach that includes not only economic interventions, such as credit facilities and technology access, but also social and cultural reforms aimed at challenging

patriarchal structures and promoting gender equality within rural communities (Chopra & Zambelli, 2017) ^[2]. Women's leadership in agriculture must be promoted through institutional reforms that ensure greater representation in decision-making bodies and policy dialogues at both local and national levels (Rao & Singh, 2016) ^[31].

Furthermore, empowering women in agriculture holds the promise of addressing critical issues such as food security, sustainable farming practices, and household resilience. By equipping women with the tools, resources, and autonomy they need, India can foster a more inclusive and sustainable agricultural system that supports the long-term development goals of the nation (FAO, 2020; Gillespie & Kadiyala, 2011). This paper concludes by calling for policy reforms that prioritize women's economic and social empowerment as an essential driver of national economic growth and poverty alleviation.

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