

Need for Agricultural Extension Services for Rural Women in Tehsil Faisalabad–Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture occupies a linchpin position in the country's economy. The growth of production in agriculture largely depends on the transfer of technology to the farming community. Agricultural extension is one of the driving forces that are responsible for the growth of agricultural productivity by transferring latest and improved technologies to the farmers and ultimately strengthens the national economy. Although women have prominent role in agriculture but in our country the agricultural extension services for them are almost non-existent, while on the other hand high emphasis is given to the education and training of men especially in public sector extension. Rural women face problems like lack of access to latest agricultural information and less interaction with field staff of various extension agencies. Keeping in view the above facts, the present study was designed to assess the need for agricultural extension services for rural women in tehsil Faisalabad. For this purpose out of 58 rural union councils, five was selected at random through simple random sampling technique. From each selected union council one village was selected randomly and from each selected village, 25 farm families were selected at random. From each selected farm family, one woman who was actively involved in farming was selected, thereby, making a total number of 125 respondents. The data were collected with the help of a pre-tested and validated interview schedule. The data, thus collected, were analyzed and interpreted for reporting results and drawing conclusions. It was concluded that a large majority of the rural women showed a great interest in gaining agricultural information related to crops, livestock and poultry production.

Key Words: Extension services; Rural women; Faisalabad

INTRODUCTION

The economy of Pakistan is largely dependent on agriculture, which directly supports three quarter of the population and satisfies the hunger of 148.72 million people, with its present contribution to GDP at 23.3%. Not only that 42.1% of country's workforce is employed in agriculture but also 67.03% of the population living in rural areas is directly or indirectly linked with agriculture for their livelihood (Government of Pakistan, 2004).

In rural areas of Pakistan, men mostly use their family labour including women for production of crops and caring of livestock. Like other parts of the world, rural women in Pakistan are among millions of landless male labourers and small farmers who are fighting back rural poverty and toil hard to meet basic needs of food, clothing and shelter through their reliance on crop production. These women play a major role in agricultural production, livestock raising and cottage industries and remain busy from dawn to dusk in supplying food to men in fields, fetching water, collecting fuel wood, and managing livestock. Women share almost all the small and large farm operations. While working shoulder to shoulder with men, they really supplement their efforts in the cultivation of crops right from the preparation of soil to the post-harvest operations except ploughing, spraying, spadework and irrigation. They

are equally efficient in seed bed preparation, tilling, sowing, fertilizer application, fodder cutting, weeding, interculturing, transplanting husking, threshing, drying, storing cereals and fodder (including making mud bins for storage), selling produce and harvesting of all the crops, fruits and vegetables (Shah & Khan, 2004). Women often devote more time to these tasks than men do. They carry out these tasks in addition to their normal domestic chores of work. Surveys have revealed that a woman works 12 to 15h a day on various economic activities and household chores (ESCAP, 1997). On an average, women in a farm family remain extremely busy during the two farming seasons in sowing and harvesting.

In Pakistan agricultural extension services are responsible to enhance the process of agricultural development to meet the food needs of rapidly growing population. The aim of agricultural extension are to provide farmers (of both sexes) with information that enables them to make good decision in farming, to transfer appropriate technologies from research and other sources and ultimately to eliminate poverty and hunger by improving their production and food security (Subedi & Garforth, 1996). Accordingly government has launched different developmental programmes at national level, e.g. Village Agricultural and Industrial Development Programme (Village-AID), Basic Democracies System (BDS),

Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Training and Visit System (T & V) and Devolution Plan for the uplift of local people's economic status through pooling all the national resources (World Bank, 2003).

But the extension services in Pakistan have benefited men more than rural women. V-AID system was the only one in which, there was some involvement of women. Although women have prominent role in agriculture, they do not receive adequate agricultural advice; have a very little access to modern technology that could benefit them in their activities. In recent years, there has been an increasing recognition of the need to integrate women into mainstream development efforts. The economic rationale behind this approach is that the full use of productive potential of human resources (male & female) cannot be realized if women, who make substantial contribution to food output, do not have adequate access to resources, productivity enhancing inputs and agricultural extension services. Keeping in view the important role being played by rural women in agriculture, the present study was designed to assess the need for agricultural extension services for them in tehsil Faisalabad.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in tehsil Faisalabad. Out of total 58 rural union councils, five were selected through simple random sampling technique. From each selected union council, one village was selected randomly and from each selected village, 25 farm families were selected at random. From each selected farm family, one woman who was actively engaged in farming was selected, thereby, making a sample of 125 respondents. The data were collected with the help of a pre-tested interview schedule. The data thus collected were analyzed by using SPSS for reporting results and drawing conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table I depicts that rural women were very in favour of agricultural extension services for them as 36.0% of the respondents were strongly agree, followed by 32.0% who were agree and 16.0% were agree to some extent. On the other hand, with the statement that rural women essentially need agricultural extension services, only 14.0 and 1.6% respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively. So we can say that majority of the respondents was in

favour of the agricultural extension services for rural women. In this connection Sailaja and Reddy (2003) reported that for consistent growth of agricultural production and stabilization of income in agriculture, it was necessary to involve women in increased adoption of improved farm practices. This could be attained through effective training and extension programmes specially designed and based on technological felt needs of farm women to enhance productivity.

The results presented in Table II indicate that respondents were more interested in gaining high assistance related to storage activities as it was ranked 1st, followed by plant protection and sowing who were ranked as 2nd and 3rd with weighed scores of 318 and 313, respectively. Transplanting, intercultural operations, drying and picking of cotton were ranked as 4th, 6th, 7th and 10.5th order with weighed scores of 200, 190, 173 and 33, respectively. Medium assistance was needed in these areas by the respondents to overcome the problems faced by them. Other activities like harvesting, manure and fertilizer application, winnowing, threshing, husking and land preparation/tilling were ranked as 5th, 8th, 9th, 10.5th, 11th and 12th with weighed scores of 198, 125, 63, 33, 27 and 17, respectively. Therefore, in these areas respondents needed relatively low assistance from extension organizations. These results also get support from Mudakuti and Miller (2002), Onemolease (2002), and Sailaja and Reddy (2003).

The data presented in Table III indicate that caring of diseased animals was at the top with weighed score of 511 that indicated that respondents needed technical advice to care their diseased animals. Veterinary extension staff must focus their attention to educate rural women in this regard. Similarly feeding, calf rearing and making feed concentrate were considered important areas where respondents also needed technical advice as their mean values (461, 401 & 358) lie between 1st and 2nd priority categories. Therefore, a high assistance was needed in caring of diseased animals, feeding, calf rearing and making feed concentrate. Proper use of manure, watering of animals and milking was prioritized between 2nd and 3rd priority categories and hence the respondents needed medium assistance from extension organizations. They were ranked 5th, 6th and 7th, with weighed scores of 228, 191, 141, respectively. Proper use of manure was perceived to be important, as it is a cheap and natural source of increasing the soil fertility. Milking practice was not done properly, either it was done with the help of injection or with thumbs that may cause injury to

Table I. Distribution of respondents according to their perceptions about the need for agricultural extension services

Statement	Response											
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Some what agree		Agree		Strongly agree		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Agricultural extension services are essentially needed by rural women	2	1.6	18	14.4	20	16.0	40	32.0	45	36.0	125	100.0

Table II. Ranking of respondents' priorities about different agricultural tasks related to crops in which assistance was required from any extension organization.

Areas in which assistance was needed	Rank order	Mean	S.D	Weighed score
Storage	1	1.97	0.940	355
Plant protection	2	1.82	1.042	318
Sowing	3	1.71	0.874	313
Transplanting	4	2.36	1.128	200
Harvesting	5	3.21	1.170	198
Intercultural operations	6	2.67	1.024	190
Drying	7	2.96	1.101	173
Manure and fertilizer application	8	3.09	1.087	125
Winnowing	9	3.75	1.175	63
Picking of cotton	10.5	2.70	1.418	33
Threshing	10.5	3.00	1.183	33
Husking	11	3.30	1.160	27
Land preparation/ tilling	12	3.88	0.991	17

Table III. Ranking of respondents' priorities about different agricultural tasks related to livestock in which assistance was required from any extension organization.

Areas in which assistance was needed	Rank order	Mean	S.D	Weighed score
Caring of diseased animals	1	1.09	0.485	511
Feeding	2	1.34	0.625	461
Calf rearing	3	1.59	0.830	401
Making feed concentrate	4	1.58	0.804	358
Proper use of manure	5	2.49	0.937	228
Watering of animals	6	2.53	1.245	191
Milking	7	2.80	1.231	141
Cleaning animals' sheds	8	3.71	0.935	112
Making animals' sheds	9	3.59	0.894	99
Fodder cutting	10	3.44	0.847	69
Breeding	11	3.33	1.506	16
Milk processing	12	3.00	1.414	15
Fodder chopping	13	4.43	0.787	11

Table IV. Ranking of respondents' priorities about different agricultural tasks related to poultry in which assistance was required from any extension organization.

Areas in which assistance was needed	Rank order	Mean	S.D	Weighed score
Caring of diseased birds	1	1.12	0.445	327
Feeding	2	1.20	0.518	283
Brooding	3	1.84	0.602	154
Management of poultry boxes	4	3.70	0.767	50
Hatching	5	2.58	1.564	41
Making poultry boxes	6	3.58	0.996	29
Watering	7	2.63	1.408	27
Egg collection and storage	8	4.00	0.853	24

odor. So there was need to educate rural women to do milking practice properly. Milk processing, cleaning animals' sheds, making animals' sheds, fodder cutting, breeding and fodder chopping fell under 3rd and in between 3rd and 4th priority categories and hence relatively less

assistance was required by the respondents from the extension agencies.

Data given in Table IV indicate that caring of diseased birds was the area where respondents wanted to get more information from any extension organization. It was important because most of the respondents told that their birds did not survive due to many unknown diseases, so they prioritized it between 1st and 2nd categories. It was at the top with weighed score of 327. Similarly, feeding and brooding were also considered important areas and were ranked 2nd and 3rd. Therefore; in these areas high assistance was needed from extension agencies to train and to educate rural women. Further hatching and watering were the areas where medium assistance was required from extension agencies because respondents prioritized its between 2nd and 3rd categories. They were ranked as 5th and 7th with weighed scores of 41 and 27, respectively. The rest of the areas that lied under 4th and between 3rd and 4th priority categories were management of poultry boxes, making poultry boxes, and egg collection and storage and hence relatively low assistance was needed in these areas.

CONCLUSIONS

It was concluded that majority of rural women was in favour of agricultural extension services for them. With regard to crop production, high assistance was needed in the areas like storage, plant protection and sowing. Transplanting, intercultural operations, drying and picking of cotton were the areas where medium assistance was required by the respondents, while harvesting, manure/fertilizer application, winnowing, threshing, husking and land preparation/tilling were the areas where respondents needed relatively low assistance. In livestock sector, rural women needed high assistance in caring of diseased animals, feeding, calf rearing and making feed concentrate as compared to proper use of manure, watering of animals and milking where medium assistance was needed by the respondents. Milk processing, cleaning animals' sheds, making animals' sheds, fodder cutting, breeding and fodder chopping were the areas in which relatively less assistance was required from the extension agencies. In poultry production caring of diseased birds, feeding and brooding were the most important areas in which rural women needed high assistance, hatching and watering were the areas where medium assistance was needed, while management of poultry boxes, making poultry boxes and egg collection/storage were the areas where relatively low assistance was needed from extension organizations for better poultry production.

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