

Women Participation in Agriculture in Vavuniya District of Sri Lanka

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Women play a critical role in agriculture all over the world. Although in addition to their daily routine activities, their participation in agriculture improves their living standard, women's contribution to agriculture is often unrecognized. An attempt was made to assess the women's contribution towards agriculture. The objectives of this study were to identify the factors that contribute to women participation in agriculture, the constraints faced by the women in participating in agricultural activities and to evaluate the women's role in decision making in agricultural activities. Vavuniya district was purposively selected for this study since rural and urban households are involved in agricultural activities in this district. 30 households involved in agriculture in each urban and rural were randomly selected and the data were collected using a constructed questionnaire. Minitab 15 and MS excel were used for data analysis. The level of women participation in agricultural activities was found using chi-square test, and the factors contributing for women participation in agricultural activities were identified using multiple regression analysis in urban and rural areas separately ($\alpha=0.05$). The results revealed that 90% of the rural women respondents participated in agricultural activities whereas it was only 50% in the urban area which is a significant difference ($p=0.001$). The mean values of women's participation in agricultural activities in urban and rural areas were 77 hours and 836 hours per annum respectively. The multiple regression model for women's participation in the urban area found that the participation of women negatively correlated with status of employment, age and education level ($p=0.000$). In the rural area, age and educational level were negatively influencing on women participation in agricultural activities ($p=0.000$). R-square values of fitted regression models were 72 % and 91% in urban and rural areas respectively 72% and 91% variation in respective women participation were explained by these models. The obstacles for women's participation in agricultural activities were reported as lack of knowledge and training in agriculture, family burden, cultural and social barriers and physical constraints. 60% of women from rural areas and 90% of women from urban areas were involved in decision making especially in the selection of crops and varieties for planting and livestock rearing. Enhancing the knowledge and skills of women in the field of agriculture would contribute to the increase of income from agriculture at household level, district level and finally at national level.

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