

WOMEN IN AGRIBUSINESS

(Emerging Entrepreneurs Driving Rural Growth)

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood in rural India, and women have always played an important role in it. For many years, their contribution remained unpaid and unrecognized, even though they were involved in almost every farming activity. Today, this situation is changing as rural women are moving beyond farm labour and becoming agribusiness entrepreneurs in areas such as dairy, poultry, fisheries, food processing, and agri-input services. This paper highlights how women agripreneurs are contributing to rural economic growth by creating employment, increasing household income, and strengthening agricultural value chains. It also presents official data to show the growing participation of women in agriculture and entrepreneurship. At the same time, women agripreneurs face challenges related to access to resources, markets, infrastructure, and social barriers. The paper discusses key strategies to support women-led agribusiness, including better institutional support, digital access, skill development, and public-private partnerships. Overall, empowering women in agribusiness is essential for sustainable rural development and inclusive economic growth.

Keywords: *Livelihood, entrepreneurs, skill infrastructure and empowering*

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood in rural areas of countries like India, and women play a very important role in it. For a long time, women worked in farming activities such as sowing, weeding, harvesting, processing, and taking care of livestock, but their contribution was often ignored and treated as part of household work rather than real economic work. Today, this situation is changing. Rural women are moving beyond farm labour and becoming agribusiness entrepreneurs by running small businesses in dairy, poultry, fisheries, food processing, and Agri-input services. Many women are also joining Self-Help Groups, cooperatives, and Farmer-Producer Organizations, which help them get better access to credit,

markets, and support. This shift shows how women are becoming recognized contributors to the rural economy, improving family income, food security, and overall rural development.

Women Agripreneurs Driving Economic Growth

Women agripreneurs play a key role in driving rural economic growth by creating employment, increasing incomes, and strengthening agricultural value chains. Women-led agribusinesses provide job opportunities in areas such as food processing, dairy, poultry, fisheries, and handicrafts, helping reduce seasonal unemployment and rural migration. These enterprises also improve household income stability, encourage savings, and support better financial planning, with earnings

often reinvested in education, healthcare, and assets. Additionally, women contribute significantly to post-harvest management, value addition, and local marketing, which reduces wastage, improves product quality, and strengthens rural value chains.

Key Sectors of Women-Led Agribusiness

Women entrepreneurs are actively involved in several agribusiness sectors that support rural income and employment. Dairy and livestock farming is one of the most successful areas, as it provides regular income, fits well with household work, and is supported by cooperatives and Self-Help

Groups. For example, women members of Amul Dairy Cooperatives in Gujarat have improved household income through milk production and collective marketing. Women also engage in food processing and value addition, such as pickle making, spice grinding, and fruit processing. Fisheries and poultry have also emerged as profitable ventures with low investment. Under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), many women in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have successfully managed fishponds and poultry units, earning stable annual incomes.

	Key Data / Statistics	Source
Rural women engaged in agriculture & allied activities	Nearly 80% of rural women ¹	Ministry of Agriculture / Development studies
Women-owned enterprises in agriculture	2.76 million enterprises	Sixth Economic Census, MOSPI
Women mobilized under SHGs (NRLM)	Over 8 crore women across India	Ministry of Rural Development

Challenges

1. *Limited Access to Resources*

Most women do not have land ownership in their name, which limits access to institutional credit and government schemes. The lack of collateral further makes it difficult for women to obtain bank loans, forcing many to rely on informal sources of finance with higher risks. As a result, women depend on informal sources of finance, restricting business expansion.

2. *Market and Infrastructure Constraints*

Women agripreneurs often face poor storage, processing, and transportation facilities, especially in remote rural areas. Limited access to market information, price trends, and digital platforms reduces their

bargaining power. As a result, many women depend on intermediaries to sell their products, which lowers profit margins and increases vulnerability to exploitation.

3. *Social and Cultural Barriers:*

Gender bias in household and community decision-making restricts women’s control over income and enterprise decisions. Additionally, women face time constraints due to the dual burden of managing household responsibilities and enterprise activities. Restricted mobility in rural areas further limits access to markets, training, and networks. Addressing these challenges through policy support, financial inclusion, infrastructure development, and social awareness is essential for ensuring sustainable growth of women-led

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/rural-women-day>

agribusinesses.² Strengthening women agribusiness entrepreneurship requires targeted and coordinated strategies. Promoting women-led Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) can enhance collective strength, improve bargaining power, and ensure better access to markets and inputs. Expanding digital platforms and e-marketing opportunities enable women agribusinesses to access wider markets, real-time price information, and direct

consumers. Capacity-building programs focused on financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and business management are essential to improve decision-making and enterprise sustainability. Additionally, stronger public-private partnerships can provide access to technology, investment, training, and market linkages, creating an enabling ecosystem for the long-term growth of women-led agribusiness enterprises.

CONCLUSION & FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Women in agribusiness have emerged as important contributors to rural economic growth and inclusive development. Their shift from unpaid agricultural labour to entrepreneurship has improved household incomes, generated rural employment, strengthened agricultural value chains, and promoted sustainable farming practices. Participation in sectors such as dairy, fisheries, food processing, and organic agriculture, supported by Self-Help Groups, Farmer Producer Organizations, and government initiatives, has enhanced women's economic independence and social status. Despite this progress, women agribusinesses continue to face challenges

related to limited access to resources, markets, technology, and decision-making power. For the future, focused efforts are needed to strengthen women-led agribusiness. Improving women's land and asset ownership will enhance access to credit and institutional support. Expanding digital access and agri-technology adoption can connect women directly to markets and information. Capacity-building programs in entrepreneurship, financial management, and marketing should be strengthened, along with the promotion of women-led FPOs. Strong public-private partnerships will further support innovation, investment, and sustainable growth of women agribusinesses in rural economies.

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