

Women in Agriculture:  
A Social Accounting of Female Workshare

by

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The study seeks to determine the role of women in agriculture through (a) measurement of the extent to which women contribute to family productivity; (b) identification of constraints to this contribution; and (c) an assessment of the impact of technology and progress in the role and status of women in agriculture.

The study utilized a primary data set gathered through interviews in the provinces of Bulacan and Batangas. The respondents included wives of farmers and women who were farm business operators. A two-stage sampling design was employed with the barangay as the first stage and the household as the secondary sampling unit. A total of 530 households were interviewed.

The findings of the research are as follows:

1. Female workshare in farming accounted for 21 percent of total farm labor input. On the average, household female contributed 17 percent of family farm labor, while hired female's share of total hired labor was found to be 36 percent. Female labor is concentrated on planting/transplanting, harvesting and post-harvest activities. These activities account for 68.5 percent of the total female contribution in farming. These are also the tasks which exhibit "peak" demand for labor. Furthermore, these are the activities which can be done in a relatively short span of time.
2. An increase in the multiple cropping index can result in an increase in female workshare. Rainfed rice-based cropping system exhibited higher household female workshare than low-land irrigated farms. Although low-land irrigated farms have greater demand for hired female labor than rainfed farms, low-land irrigated farms can have as much as 90 percent of total farm labor input coming from hired labor while rainfed farms have about one-half of total labor requirement supplied by family labor.

3. An increase in family farm income will result in a decline in household female farm labor input. The demand for hired female labor is expected to increase. This could be attributed to the income effect. With an increase in farm income and therefore availability of cash, farm households are able to hire additional laborers.
4. Changes or shifts in tenure status will not result in significant changes in female workshare for household members, hired female labor and the total female farm labor input.
5. Increase in farm size either by increase in physical area or effective crop area does not necessarily increase household female labor participation. Significant changes can be expected on hired female labor input. The bigger the crop area, the greater the demand for labor, and thus for female hired labor. This is more prominent in lowland irrigated farms.
6. During the early years of the household when there are young children to take care of, household female labor participation is lower. As the household grows older and children are able to provide additional farm hands, total household female labor participation is expected to increase. As household size increases, household female labor contribution tends to decline.
7. If mechanization is practiced in land preparation, it is the male labor that is displaced. Mechanization of threshing operations will result in displacement of considerable female labor since this is one of the areas of concentration of female activities in farming. In the overall analysis, labor displacement could be offset by increase in labor requirements for weeding and pre-harvest activities, particularly if mechanization leads to timely operations and increase in number of cropping per year.
8. There are no significant differences in wages paid to males and females for different farming operations. Wages are found to vary across location depending on the method of payment used.
9. Results show that in Batangas and Bulacan, women have generally more access to government and private technicians than their male counterpart.

Comparisons between the two provinces reveal that Bulacan farm households appear to have more contact and exposure to both private and government technicians.

10. It is generally observed from the findings that where areas of decision-making are farm production specific, it is predominantly the husband who finally gives the decision. On affairs concerning housekeeping or specific household activity commonly associated with female, it is the wife who decides. Neutral areas of concerns are children's education and discipline, while extension of financial aid to relatives tends to be the husband's domain for decision.
11. Data on time allocation for domestic activities give the impression that the household as a production unit draws no strict and rigid sex discrimination in the domestic task performance of its members. Males and females alike share in common activities or household tasks are undertaken by them interchangeably. Thus male and female workshare do not exhibit much variation and differences.
12. Relative to on-farm activities, household females seem to devote more time in non-farm activities. The need for off-farm employment could be understood in the light of the seasonality of farming operations, as well as the need to augment family income. This also indicates that there is a certain degree of variation in rural women's economic preoccupation.

The study proposes for measurement the following indicators:

a. Index of female contribution to Agricultural Productivity

1. Proportion of Female Workshare by Type of Work
2. Proportion of Female Workshare by Level of Farm Income
3. Proportion of Women Workshare Farm Size and Cropping System
4. Indicator of Female Contribution to Farm Production by Size of Household
5. Indicator of Female Contribution by Mechanization Agriculture.

b. Index of Female Time Allocation

1. Average workshare in Off-Farm Activity
2. Proportion of Time Allocated to Domestic Activities

c. Index of Participation in Household Decision-Making

1. Proportion of Women's Input to Farm Household Decision-Making by Number of times and by importance

d. Index of Women's Participation in Agricultural Training

1. Indicator of Access to Training by Proportion of Women Reached by Technicians (government and private)

Policy Implications and Recommendations:

1. The social value of giving priority to male education discriminates against women since it deprives them of skills necessary for fuller participation in social and economic activities. Women's access to educational training should therefore, be enhanced. In addition, educational programs should be geared towards the concrete needs of rural women. One prospective area would be training on the operation of home-based cottage industries utilizing local resources.
2. More female social workers should be recruited directly from the rural areas for local development work. They have built-in advantages because of their familiarity with the local conditions and practices and they can easily identify with local workers.
3. It is well-known that family consultation is widely practiced by farmers before arriving at a decision on whether to accept or reject innovation. Thus, more female extension workers should be hired and provided with training in technical agriculture to provide agricultural extension services and explain implications of technical innovation and new programs being introduced to the farmers.
4. Reducing the burden of rural women's work in the household will mean more time for economic activities as well as leisure. In agriculture, rural women's productivity could be increased by improvements in tools for cultivation, harvesting and processing operations.
5. Women's organizations and cooperative-type groups should be utilized in the rural areas to provide women access to credit facilities and income-generating activities.