CHAPTER – VI

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND

CONCLUSION

The fact that women play a significant and vital role in agricultural development and allied fields, is long taken for granted but also long ignored. Women's invisibility in agricultural production is world wide. Studies conducted on women's role in agriculture in the developing countries have indicated that women contribute far more to agricultural production than has generally been recognised or acknowledged.

Women's contribution to agriculture is approximately estimated to be around 50 per cent. They contribute as cultivators and are engaged in a number of farm operations with men either independently or jointly. The participation of women varies from carrying out actual farm operations in the field to supervision, management and decision-making in different agricultural operations. In many places, the contribution of women farmers towards agriculture is more than that of men. They are responsible for the entire management of livestock, starting from cutting, collecting, carrying and chaffing of fodder.
The participation of women in agricultural operations varies from region to region, crop to crop, operation to operation depending on agro-climatic variations. More explicitly, it varies greatly between high participation and low participation, and between arid and semi-arid regions. Even within a region, there are marked variations in women's participation in agriculture and other allied areas. Factors which account for the variations may be diversity of crops, cropping seasons, irrigation facilities, land ownerships, work-load in the household, socio-economic status etc.

Investigations conducted in some selected States in India showed that women play a significant role not only in agricultural development and allied fields including crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post-harvest operations, etc, but also in non-farm operations and house-hold activities. The fact is that women's contributions in these sectors have either been largely ignored or inadequately acknowledged. Very few empirical studies have been made to examine the actual participation of farm women in agriculture and allied fields and more specifically in backward regions.

India is a vast country marked by different regions with diverse agro-climatic conditions. Hence the vital importance of conducting region-specific studies to gain clearer and deeper insights into the extent of
women's participation in agriculture and allied enterprises, and shifts in policy measures to be made to help them play a productive role as effective partners, along with men in the process of accelerating the pace of agricultural and rural development. The present humble attempt to make a micro-level study in Ariyalur District of the drought-prone Rayalaseema region, it is hoped, will throw light on the dynamics of women's participation in agricultural development and allied enterprises.

Agriculture is the main-stay of the people. Of the total work-force in the district, 85.53 per cent are engaged in farm sector either as cultivators or as agricultural labourers. Groundwater is the major source of irrigation. Educationally advancing slowly, the district is industrially backward owing to lack of underutilised natural resources. The development of infra-structure is not to the desired extent as to meet the requirements of the people. Social infra-structure, in terms of increase in the number of educational institutions and health centres and economic infrastructure in terms of increase in industrialisation has yet to register a satisfactory trend. Significantly, the female population has been playing an important role in the development of agriculture in the district.
The present micro-level study is conducted in drought-prone Ariyalur District, keeping in view the objectives, viz., (i) to study the socio-economic profile of the sample women farmers vis-a-vis sample men farmers participating in agriculture, dairying and allied activities; (ii) to assess the contribution of sample women farmers towards agricultural production and family income; (iii) to examine the extent of women's participation in decision-making process in regard to agricultural operations, house-hold and allied activities; and (iv) to suggest, in the light of empirical study, strategies for effective participation of women in agricultural development in this drought-prone region.

In order to draw the sample selection of women farmers in the district, the blocks in the district have been classified into: (i) high participation; (ii) medium participation and (iii) low participation blocks. From high participation blocks, Ariyalur Blocks in the western region of the district, with 40 per cent women farmers to total farmers, was selected. Thirumanur Block in the eastern region was selected with nearly 29 per cent of women farmers to total farmers and Jayankondam Block in the Central region was selected with nearly 19.9 per cent of women farmers to total farmers. The total sample of women farmers drawn from the six sample villages of the there sample blocks comes to 212. In order to study the differential
performance of women farmers vis-a-vis men farmers, a five per cent sample of men farmers from respective sample villages comprising a total of 65, were selected to act as 'control group. The total sample drawn comprises 277 sample farmers; of which 212 comprise sample women farmers and 65 sample men farmers.

Of the 212 sample women farmers, nearly 70.7 per cent of them were found in the category of 'other castes', followed by 15.50 per cent in the category of 'backward caste', 8.01 per cent in the category of 'Scheduled Tribe' and only 5.66 per cent in the category of 'Scheduled Caste'. And in the case of the sample men farmers, we found a similar trend in the case of 'other caste' category to which 43.07 per cent of them belong. Besides, the men farmers in the category of 'backward castes' constitute 15.38 per cent, which is, more or less, equal to the case of women farmers of the 'backward caste.' However, the percentage of men farmers, i.e., 16.92 per cent, in the category of 'Scheduled Caste' is higher when compared to that of women farmers in the same caste category. On the other hand, the percentage of men farmers in the category of 'Scheduled Tribe' was less i.e., 4.61 per cent as compared to that of women farmers of the same caste category. Evidently, the percentage of sample respondents in the category of 'other castes' seems to be high.
Majority of the sample respondents were found in the age group of 20-40 years (i.e., 63 per cent in the case of the sample women farmers and nearly 40 per cent in the case of sample men farmers). Further, it was found that the highest percentages of sample respondents had 'normal size families' i.e., with 5 members each 57.54 per cent among the sample women farmers and 69.23 per cent among the sample men farmers. Evidently, the 'small family' norm seems to be slowly getting favoured by the rural workforce. Besides, 93 per cent of the sample respondents had 'nuclear' families.

A high percentage of sample men farmers owned pucca houses as compared to the sample women farmers; whereas a high percentage sample women farmers owned 'mixed type' of houses.

The level of literacy plays an important role in the decision making and active participation of persons in any enterprise. As compared to 50.76 per cent of the sample men farmers, 66.03 per cent of the sample women farmers were found to be illiterates. Obviously, the level of literacy of the sample women farmers needs to be raised through vigorously implemented non-formal educational programme.
Marginal and small farmers constituted 43.38 per cent among the sample women farmers as compared to 49.22 per cent among the sample men farmers. On the whole, the percentage of farmers in all size groups, with an exception of 'large farm' size group was found to be high among the sample men farmers as compared to that of the sample women farmers. Besides the percentage of irrigated land owned by the sample men farmers of the 'small farm' category was high (i.e., 28.07) as compared to the highest percentage of irrigated land i.e., 24.06 per cent owned by the sample women farmers of the 'lower medium' farm category. However, the percentage of irrigated land owned by both the sample women and men farmers of the size group of 'marginal farm' was, more or less, the same i.e., 14 per cent. Further, we found that the percentage of unirrigated land owned by the sample men farmers of 'small farm' category was high i.e., 25.39, as compared to 22.27 per cent unirrigated land owned by the sample women farmers found in the size group of 'lower medium' farm.

We found that the hours of participation by the sample women farmers decreased as their sizes of land holding increased and it is statistically significant at 1 per cent level and therefore the hypothesis that "there is not much of significant difference between the size of land holding and women's participation in agricultural activities" is invalidated as the
women's participation in agriculture is inversely related to their farm-sizes. On the contrary, it was found that the hours of family labour contributed by the spouses of the sample women farmers increased as the sizes of land holdings increased and it was statistically significant at 1 per cent level. Furthermore, there was not much of significant difference among the caste groups to which the sample women farmers belonged and the hours of participation put in by them in farm activities. On the other hand, the hours of labour put in by the spouses of the women farmers and the caste categories to which they belong was statistically significant. The hypothesis that 'there is not much of significant difference between women's participation in agriculture and the caste category to which they belong' is validated. The relation between the hours of women's participation in agriculture and the types of families to which they belonged was statistically significant. It was found that the relation between the women's participation in agriculture and their educational level was statistically significant, and further there was no statistically significant difference in the hours of labour contributed by the spouses of the sample women farmers and their educational profile. Furthermore, the relation between the hours of participation in farm activities by the sample women farmers and their
spouses and their sizes of income was statistically significant at 1 per cent level.

The relation between the sizes of land holdings and the hours of participation by the sample men farmers and their spouses was statistically significant at 1 per cent level of probability. And, the relation between the castes and hours of participation by men farmers and their spouses was statistically not significant.

Further, the relation between the types of families and hours of participation by sample men farmers and their spouses was not statistically significant. And, the relation between the educational levels and hours of participation by the sample men farmers and their spouses was not statistically significant. But, the relation between the sizes of income and hours of participation by sample men farmers and their spouses was statistically significant at 1 per cent and 5 per cent level of probability respectively. Furthermore, it was found that, as compared to sample men farmers, the percentage of sample women farmers with house-hold assets valued in the range of Rs.30,000 to 1,20,000, was high. And the total value and the average value of house-hold assets of sample women farmers were high as compared to that of sample men farmers.
As compared to 67.69 per cent of sample men farmers, 64.15 per cent of the sample women farmers were owning agricultural assets valued upto Rs.60,000. Obviously, the percentage of sample men farmers was found to be high, except in the size group of 'large farm' as compared to the percentage of women farmers. And, the average value of agricultural assets of sample women farmers was found to be less (i.e. Rs.68,940) as compared to that of sample men farmers (i.e., Rs.71,555).

Further, it is evident that 28.77 per cent of the sample women farmers earned income less than Rs. 1000, followed by 27.83 per cent and 25 per cent were found in the income ranges of Rs. 1001 to 2000 and Rs.2001-3000 respectively. On the contrary, in the case of sample men farmers, 47.69 per cent of them had income in the range of Rs. 1001-2000, followed by 26.15 per cent with income of below Rs. 1000. Next in order, 16.92 per cent had income in the range of Rs.2001 and 3000. On the whole, it appears that the percentages of sample women farmers found in different ranges of income were high as compared to the sample men farmers with an exception of high percentage of them in the income range of Rs. 1001 and Rs. 2000.
Besides, we found that the per farm family average income from dairying was high among the sample women farmers i.e. (Rs. 2338) as compared to that of sample men farmers (i.e., Rs. 1766).

Nearly 64 per cent of the sample respondents had farm income which was less than Rs. 40,000. However, the percentage of sample men farmers with gross farm income in the range of Rs. 40,001 to 80,000 and 80,001 to Rs. 1,20,000 was slightly higher as compared to that of sample women farmers of the same gross farm income range.

And it is evident that per farm family average gross farm income of sample women farmers of the three sample blocks was high (i.e., Rs. 41,177) as compared to that of sample men farmers (i.e., Rs. 38,396).

Further, it is found that 43.87 per cent of sample women farmers had non-farm income in the range of Rs. 2001 and Rs.4000, next in order, 26.89 per cent earned non-farm income which was less than Rs.2000. As compared to women farmers, the sample men farmers, constituting 41.54 per cent, had non-farm income which was in the range of less than Rs. 2000 to Rs.2001 and Rs.4000. On the whole, the percentage of sample women farmers who earned non-farm income was high as compared to that of sample men farmers.
The per farm family average non-farm income earned by the sample women farmers was high (i.e. Rs. 3616) as compared to that of sample men farmers (i.e., Rs. 3236). And when we examined the sample blocks-wise data, we found that the per farm family average non-farm income earned by the sample women farmers was high as compared to that of sample men farmers with an exception of Jayankondam Block, where the average non-farm income earned by the sample men farmers was high as compared to that of sample women farmers. On the whole, it appears that the sample women farmers seem to have made an effective use of available opportunities to supplement their farm income by earning higher non-farm income as compared to that of sample men farmers.

We found that nearly 61 per cent of both sample women and men farmers had gross family income lesser than Rs. 40,000; and next in order, 22 per cent of both sample women and men farmers had gross family income in the range of Rs. 40,000 and Rs. 80,000.

Further, we noticed that the total average gross family income of sample women farmers of the three sample blocks was high i.e. Rs. 44,793 as compared to Rs. 41,633 in the case of sample men farmers. When we examined the average gross family income of sample men farmers, we found
that it was high in respect of farmers of all size groups in Jayankondam Block, followed by Thirumanur and Ariyalur Blocks respectively.

The sample respondents, both women and men farmers, (constituting 92 per cent) were found to have, more or less, net family income less than Rs. 40,000. On the whole, it was found that there was not much of significant difference among sample women and men farmers in respect of net family income which was less than Rs. 40,000 and in the range of Rs. 40,001 and Rs. 80,000.

Of the three sample blocks, the average net family income, among the sample women farmers, was found to be high (i.e. Rs. 60,173 in Jayankondam followed by Thirumanur (Rs. 39,204.91) and Ariyalur blocks (Rs. 25,224). On the whole, there was not much significant difference in the average net family incomes of sample farmers of all size groups except in the size group of 'large farm' sample men farmers.

Besides, it was revealed that, as compared to 55.38 per cent of sample men farmers, 52.36 per cent of sample women farmers were found to have incurred annual family expenditure of less than Rs. 20,000. Further, it was found that 28.30 per cent of sample women farmers, as compared 24.62 per cent of sample men farmers, incurred annual family expenditure in the range
of Rs. 20,001 and Rs. 40,000. Moreover, 10.77 per cent of the sample men farmers, as compared to 8.02 of women farmers, incurred an expenditure in the range of Rs. 40,001 and Rs. 60,000. Again, it was sample men farmers, constituting 9.23 per cent, who incurred an annual family expenditure of Rs. 60,000/- and above as compared to 7.08 per cent of sample women farmers. However, the percentage of 'large' farm women farmers who incurred an annual expenditure above Rs. 20,001 and in the range of Rs. 60,000 and above was more as compared that of sample men farmers.

The per farm family total annual expenditure incurred by the sample women farmers was high as compared to that of sample men farmers. And when we examined the sample block-wise data, we found that the per farm family annual expenditure incurred by the sample women farmers was high (i.e. Rs. 39,741) in Jayankondam Block followed by Vedurakuppam (Rs. 28,289) and Ariyalur (Rs. 18,377) blocks.

The participation of sample women farmers of the three sample blocks like (i) Ariyalur with highest participation of women farmers; (ii) Thirumanur with medium participation and (iii) Jayankondam with low participation in the agricultural operations of the three principal crops, viz, paddy, ground-nut and sugarcane was studied. Besides, their contribution
towards agricultural production and family income, dairying and house-hold activities were studied and their performance was compared with that of sample men farmers. Further, sample women farmer's participation in decision-making process was examined vis-a-vis the participation of sample men farmers and their spouses. The composition of total human labour (both family and hired labour) utilised for paddy production per cultivated hectare by the sample women farmers (and their spouses) had been examined in the three sample blocks.

In respect of women's participation in agriculture in Ariyalur Block, it was observed that the total hours of family labour contributed by the sample women farmers to various agricultural operations were high as compared to that of their spouses. Further, it was found that except in 'ploughing', sample women farmers were engaged in all other agricultural operations. And in respect of hired labour, it was found that except in the size group of "lower medium", 'upper medium' and 'large' farms, the total hours of labour put in by the hired female labour was high as compared to that of the hired male labour.

In Thirumanur Block, there was not much of significant difference in the hours of family labour contributed by the sample women farmers to
various agricultural operations for paddy cultivation as compared to their spouses in different size groups of farms. However, unlike in Ariyalur Block, the percentage of total hours of family labour contributed by the sample women farmers in the size group of 'marginal farm' was less. And in respect of hired labour, it was found that the total hours of labour put in by the female labour hired by the sample women farmers in different size groups of farms, was high as compared to labour contributed by the hired male labour.

In Jayankondam Block, though the total hours of family labour put in by the sample women farmers in farm operations for paddy cultivation were relatively high as compared to the family labour contributed by their spouses, there was, on the whole, not much of significant difference in the total hours of family labour contributed by the sample women farmers and their spouses in different size groups of farms. And in respect of hired labour, the percentage of total hours of female labour hired, by the sample women farmers, was high in all size groups of farms except in the size group of 'marginal farm'.

When a comparison was made of the participation of the sample men farmers, in various agricultural operations for paddy cultivation in the three
sample blocks vis-a-vis the sample women farmers, it was found that in Ariyalur Blocks in the sample men-headed house-holds, the total hours of family labour contributed by the spouses of men farmers seem to be relatively high (i.e, 4908 hours) as compared to the family labour contributed by the men farmers (i.e. 4208 hours). However, on closer examination, it was evident that the difference of the percentages in the family labour contributed by the sample men farmers and their spouses in different size groups of farms, was not highly significant except in the size groups of 'small' and 'large' farms. And in respect of hired labour, it was apparent that the hours of labour contributed by the female labour and the spouses of the sample men-headed agricultural house-holds in various agricultural operations was comparatively high in Ariyalur Block.

In Thirumanur Block, the hours of labour contributed by the spouses seem to be high (i.e. 3124 hours) as compared to 2472 hours of labour contributed by the sample men farmers. However, it was found that the difference of percentages in the labour contributed by the sample men farmers and their spouses, was not highly significant in different size groups of farms except in the size groups of 'lower medium' and 'large' farms. On the whole, it is apparent that the hours of labour put in by the hired female labour and the family labour contributed by the spouses of the sample men-
headed agricultural house-holds to various agricultural operations was comparatively high in Thirumanur Block.

In Jayankondam Block, it was found that the total hours of family labour contributed by the sample men farmers was less i.e. 3992 hours as compared to the 4896 total hours of family labour contributed by the spouses of the sample men farmers. As in the case of Ariyalur and Jayankondam blocks, the hours of labour contributed by the spouses of the sample men-headed agricultural house-holds and the hired female labour to various ground-nut operations was high in Jayankondam Block.

In respect of the participation of the sample women farmers in ground-nut production in the three sample blocks, it was found that in Ariyalur Block, the total hours of family labour put in by the sample women farmers in various farm operations was high as compared to their spouses, whose contribution to family labour was high, especially in the size groups of 'upper medium' and 'large' farms. And in the case of hired labour, the total hours of labour put in by the hired female labour was high except in the size groups of 'large' and the 'upper medium' farms. In Thirumanur Block, the total hours of family labour contributed by the sample women farmers were high (i.e., 11,622 hours) as compared to that of their spouses (i.e., 1864
hours). And in respect of hired labour, it was found that the total hours of labour put in by the male labour, except in the size group of 'upper medium' farm, was high as compared to that of the hired female labour.

In Jayankondam Block, it was found that the percentage of total hours of family labour contributed by the sample women farmers, as compared to the family labour contributed by their spouses, was high, specially in the size groups of 'marginal' and 'small' farms. And in respect of hired labour, the total hours of labour put in by the hired female labour was high, except in the size groups of 'small' and 'lower medium' farms, as compared to that of the hired male labour.

In regard to participation of the sample men farmers in ground-nut production, it was found that in Ariyalur Block, the total hours of family labour contributed by the sample men farmers was less (i.e., 680 hours) as compared to 4884 hours of family labour contributed by the spouses of men farmers. And in respect of hired labour, the total hours of labour contributed by the hired female labour was high as compared to that of the hired male labour. On the whole, it is evident that the hours of labour (both family and hired) contributed by the women was high as compared to that of men (with family and hired labour).
In Thirumanur Block, it was found that the total hours of family labour contributed by of sample men farmers was less i.e., 416 hours as compared to 3684 hours of family labour put in by the spouses of the men farmers. Further, it was found that total hours of the labour put in by the hired female labour was high (i.e., 1122 hours) as compared to that of the hired male labour (i.e., 872 hours). Evidently, the share of women in the total labour (both family and hired) was high as compared to that of men farmers and the hired male labour.

In Jayankondam Block, it was found that the total hours of family labour contributed by the sample men farmers was less i.e., 672 hours as compared to 4982 hours of family labour contributed by the spouses of the sample men farmers. And in respect of total hours of hired labour, it was high in the case of the hired female labour as compared to that of the hired male labour. On the whole, it is apparent that the hours of human labour (both family and hired) contributed by the women (both the spouses of the men farmers and hired female labour) was high as compared to the human labour contributed by men (both the sample men farmers and hired male labour).
In respect of participation of sample women farmers in sugarcane production, it was found that in Thirumanur Block, the total hours and family labour contributed by the sample women farmers were less (i.e. 966 hours) as compared to that of their spouses (i.e. 2660 hours). Further, it was noticed that there was not much of significant difference in the hours of family labour contributed both by the sample women farmers and their spouses except in the size group of 'large' farms. Besides, it was found that the total number of hours of labour put in by the hired male labour was high as compared to that of the hired female labour. On the whole, it is apparent that in respect of sugar-cane cultivation, the number of hours of human labour (both family and hired) contributed by the spouses of women farmers was more as compared to that of the sample women farmers and the hired female labour.

In Jayankondam Block, the contribution of family labour by the sample women farmers, was less (i.e., 618 hours) as compared to the family labour contributed by the spouses of women farmers (i.e., 2504 hours). Further, it was found that the total hours of labour put in by the hired male labour was higher as compared to that of hired female labour. On the whole, the total hours of human labour (both family and hired) contributed by both the spouses of the sample women farmers and the hired male labour was
higher as compared to that of the sample women farmers and the hired female labour.

And in regard to participation of the sample men farmers (and their spouses), in sugar-cane production in Thirumanur Block, it was found that the total hours of family labour (i.e. 536 hours) contributed by the sample men farmers was higher as compared to the total hours of family labour (i.e., 222 hours) contributed by the spouses of men farmers. Further, it was found that the sugar-cane was not produced by the sample men farmers in the size groups of 'marginal' and 'upper medium' farms. And the total hours of labour put in by the hired male labour were high as compared to the hours of labour contributed by the hired female labour.

In Jayankondam Block, it was observed that the total hours of family labour contributed by the sample men farmers was higher (i.e. 928 hours) as compared to that of their spouses (i.e. 372 hours). And in respect of hired labour, the total hours of labour put in by the hired female labour was higher as compared to that of hired male labour. Evidently, the percentage of hours of labour contributed by the hired female labour seems to be higher as compared to that of hired male labour, though the number of hours of family labour contributed by the sample men farmers was higher than that of their
spouses in farm operations for the sugar-cane producing in Jayankondam Block.

In so far as the contribution of the sample farmers towards agricultural output is concerned, the difference between the sample women farmers and men farmers was not statistically found to be of high significance. On the contrary, the participation of women farmers in various agricultural operations, dairying and house-hold activities far exceeded the participation of the sample men farmers.

In respect of number of hours sample women and men farmers participated in dairying activity in the three sample blocks, it was found that, in Ariyalur Block, the average hours of work the wives were engaged in, among the sample women farmers, was high (i.e. 1.58 to 1.69 hours) as compared to 1.39 average hours of work the wives of the sample men farmers. Besides, the participation of husbands, among the sample men farmers, in attending to dairying activities, was totally nil.

In Thirumanur Block, the time devoted by the wives, among the sample women farmers, was more as compared to that of the wives of the sample men farmers. The entire burden of attending to dairying activities was borne by women in Thirumanur Block. And in Jayankondam Block, the
male members in the category of men-headed agricultural house-holds did not participate in dairying activities and the total burden was borne by women.