CHAPTER VII
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION
CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the mainstay of Indian Economy as over 70 per cent of our people depend on agriculture and allied occupations for their livelihood. Women form the critical core input of the development of any Economy. They contribute 2/3 of the World’s work hours, produce 50 per cent of World’s food supplies, account for 60 per cent of the work force and contribute upto 30 per cent of the official labour force and in 1/3 of the households, 50 per cent of the total earnings are contributed by women. Women play a significant and crucial role in increasing agricultural production by participating in different production and management activities as crop production, livestock production, post-harvest operations, in addition to their traditional responsibility as home makers.

Women shoulder more and more of the burden of providing food in many parts of the World as they plant, plough, harvest, gather fuelwood, fetch water, cook, breastfeed and sell food stuff. The Census figures pointed out that
of the 50 per cent female population 77 per cent belonged to rural women. Of these, 81.23 per cent were engaged in agriculture and agro based industries and regardless of geographic location, they are the major contributors to the labour force in agricultural sector. Female participation in agriculture varies with agricultural season, crop, type of operation, size of holding and type of technology used.

The percentage of labourers employed as main workers is higher among men than among women. In the case of marginal workers, this proportion is larger among women than among men. The majority of the main workers (66.8 per cent) are employed in agricultural and allied industrial sectors. The proportion of women employed in this sector is 80.7 per cent, compared to 62.7 per cent for men. In rural areas 89.5 per cent of the total females employed are engaged in the agricultural and allied industrial sector. In urban areas manufacturing, processing, servicing and repair, when it is in the household, absorbs larger proportions of the total female employment compared to men. The reverse is true when it is other than household work. Industries which employ more women than men are Bidi and match manufacturing, cotton textiles, cotton spinning, cashewnut processing, tobacco stemming and redrying, canning, preserving and fish processing (CSO, 1995).
The present study throws light on the contribution of women in agriculture very specially the role and participation of women in paddy cultivation, various farm operations they undertake, their role in household decision-making, problems they face, suggestions and policy measures.

Field investigation was carried out from September 2011 to March 2012 for the agricultural year 2011-2012 which was a normal year in terms of agriculture.

The primary data required for the study were collected from the selected sample agricultural labourers and farmers through personal interview method. Stratified multistage random sampling technique was adopted for the study with Thoothukudi district as the universe, taluks and blocks as the strata, the village as the primary unit of sampling and the agricultural women labourers as the ultimate unit. Total of 4 blocks and 20 villages each 5 from 4 blocks were selected as the study area. From these 20 villages 300 agricultural women labourers were selected by adopting proportionate random sampling method and 225 farmers were chosen in a random manner as the sample respondents. The respondents were chosen on the basis of participation in farm activities, intensity of crop and acreage.
The general objective of the study was to assess the participation of women in agriculture. The specific objectives were:

1. To study the socio-economic conditions of agricultural women labourers and pattern of distribution of income and expenditure.
2. To analyse the pattern of agricultural women labourers participation in agricultural production viz paddy cultivation.
3. To study the sex and wage discrimination through job segmentation in agriculture.
4. To analyse the supply responsiveness and women labour absorption in paddy cultivation.
5. To study the constraints faced by agricultural women labourers in the study area and
6. To suggest measures for improving the economic conditions of farm women and strengthen agriculture sector.

**Hypotheses**

1. There is no difference in male and female participation in paddy cultivation.
2. Annual income of the farm households is independent of their agricultural income.
3. The annual income of the farm households does not depend on the age of the female labourers.

4. Size of the family does not influence the annual income of the farm households.

7.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In chapter IV, socio-economic conditions of sample agriculture women labourers were discussed.

It is inferred from the analysis that majority of sample agricultural women labourers belong to age group of more than 35 years. More than 65 percent out of 300, had I to V standard level of education and 24 percent were illiterate in the study area. Majority of sample Agricultural women belong to backward class followed by scheduled caste. Out of 300 respondents, 68 percent of them were Hindus followed by Christians.

Regarding familial characteristics, out of 300 respondents, nearly 87 percent had a family size ranged from 3 – 5 persons. About 88 percent were married and namely 91 percent had a nuclear family in the study area nearly
40 per cent had a annual family income ranged from Rs.30000 to 40000 followed by Rs.40000 and above.

Majority of the respondents (41 per cent) had yearly agricultural income ranged from Rs.15,000 to Rs.20,000. followed by Rs.20000 to 25000 (38.66 per cent).

In order to examine the relationship between annual family income and agricultural income of the respondents, chi-square test was employed. The results revealed that there is no significant relationship between annual family income and agricultural income of the respondents.

Further, chi-square test revealed that there is no relationship between age, family size and annual agricultural income of the respondents.

Regarding the annual family expenditure out of 300 respondents, majority of them 43.67 per cent had an annual family expenditure ranged from Rs.30000 to Rs.40000. it is followed by Rs.20000 to 30000.

Lorenz curve shows that more fluctuation was observed in expenditure than income. Out of 300 respondents, 86 percent of them had no savings. Only above 5 per cent had monthly savings of Rs.100 to 200. Only 14 per cent had
no debt and majority of them (24 per cent) had above Rs.10000. Financial support to family is the main reason for participating in farm activities. Main sources of borrowers are land owners, friends and money lenders. Majority of the respondents (59.33 per cent) had 10 – 20 years of experience. About 60 per cent of the respondents had faced health problems.

In chapter V, the extent of female participation in paddy cultivation; operation wise activities of females and males were assessed, employment pattern of females and indifferent farm sizes were examined. Various farm activities were divided into pre-harvest and post-harvest operations. The pre-harvest operations were ploughing, sowing, transplanting, weeding, manuring, spraying etc. The post-harvest operations were harvesting, threshing, winnowing, cleaning and drying. The farmers were divided into small, medium and large groups and all the various activities undertaken by females in these groups of farms were assessed. The study revealed that in all the three farm sizes 2/3 of the farm activities were undertaken by females and 1/3 by males. The major farm operations undertaken by females were transplanting, weeding and harvesting. Males undertook operations like ploughing, spraying and manuring. The other activities were done both by males and females. The labour requirement for large farmers amounted to 79 mandays for males and
196 mandays for females. In the case of medium farmers the labour requirement was 70 mandays for males and 196 mandays for females. The labour requirements for small farmers were 63 mandays for males and 204 mandays for females. With regard to payment males got double the amount of the females. The average payment for males was Rs.350 per day and for females it was only Rs.175 per day in the study area.

To calculate the cost of production and output, a detailed study was undertaken. The farmers were divided into three groups, large, medium and small. To assess the cost of production for cultivating one acre of paddy both fixed and variable costs were taken into account. The variable cost included: human labour, seed expenses, electricity, fertilizers, manure, pesticides, interest on working capital etc. The fixed cost included the rental value of land and interest on working capital depreciation etc. Labour cost, cost on fertilizers and rental value of land constituted the major share of the cost of production. For cultivating one acre of paddy in large farms, the cost was Rs.19357.50 and for Medium Rs.14150.00 and for Small farms Rs.10250.00 respectively.

To find out the impact of modern technology on farm activities ownership and usage of modern equipments of large, medium and small
farmers were assessed. The machines included power tillers, power threshers, harvesters and weeders. Among the large farmers 18.67 per cent had power fillers, 21.33 per cent had tractors, 6.67 per cent had power Thresher, 6.67 per cent had power fillers and 8 per cent had tractors. Among the small farmers 2.67 per cent had tractor alone. Considering the ownership of this machinery as a whole only 8.44 per cent had power tillers, 10.67 per cent had tractors, six per cent had power threshers, four per cent had harvesters and only one per cent had weeder, besides assessing the ownership of the machinery the usage of hired machinery was also conducted. It was found that only 24.89 per cent of the sample respondents used power tillers, 24 per cent used tractors, 13.33 per cent used power threshers, 12.44 per cent used harvesters. So it can be inferred that the usage of modern machinery and implements were limited in the sample farms and the machinery had only increased employment of females and there was no displacement. So it can be concluded that technological development had a positive impact on female labour absorption in the sample farms.

To find out the constraints/problems faced by sample respondents, the problems were classified under 4 heads: general/personal, social-psychological, financial and employment constraints. There were 7 minor
constraints under every major constraint. These constraints were assessed using the weighted average and it was ranked using Garrett ranking technique.

The major personal/general constraints were excessive work in the family and in the field, excessive tension and challenges and poor decision making power. The major social–psychological constraints were conflict due to dual responsibility and lack of time for personal needs. Other employment constraints were irregularity in the nature of work and lack of alternative employment opportunity. The major financial constraints were low wages and debt problems. So it is inferred that the serious constraints faced by sample respondents were personal/general and financial constraints.

From the study it was also clear that the need for training in farm activities and lack of skills and technical know how ranked 3rd and 4th in the employment constraint. The respondents were of the opinion that even though government has introduced various schemes for uplifting the rural farm women these facilities had not yet reached them. In areas where they conduct certain programmes male members were the target groups. So the female labourers expressed their greater need for training and development of skills in operating modern machinery.
The null hypothesis that male and female activities in paddy cultivation are equal was tested by calculating the average mandays of male and female participation in different activities using Z-test.

For transplanting and harvesting activities the $|Z|$ value is greater than 2.58 and falls in the acceptance region. For threshing and winnowing activities the $|Z|$ value is lesser than 2.58 therefore it falls in the acceptance region. Since the calculated Z-value is greater than table Z value the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence it can be inferred that women carry out major share of farm activities in paddy cultivation. So the alternative hypothesis that women contribute major share of farm activity is accepted.

To test the null hypothesis that Annual income of the respondents was independent of their agricultural income chi square test was made use of. The Calculated value was 12.5297 and Table value was 31.410. As the calculated value was greater than the table value at 5 per cent level of significance the null hypothesis was accepted. So it was clear that there was no significant relationship between annual income and agricultural income of the respondents and therefore the alternative hypothesis that Annual income is independent of the Agricultural income was accepted.
To find out the relationship between the income of the respondents and their age, Chi-square test was made use of. The calculated value was 5.0765 and the table value was 12.592. Since the calculated value was above the table value at 5 per cent level of significance the null hypothesis that income of the respondents was independent of their age was accepted. So the alternative hypothesis that Annual income was independent of the age of respondents was accepted.

To find out the relationship between annual income and family size Chi-square test was made use of. The calculated value was 1.4621 and the table value was 9.488. Since the calculated value was higher than the table value at 5 per cent level of significance the null hypothesis that Annual income is independent of family size was rejected. So the alternative hypothesis that Annual income is dependent on family size was accepted.

From the data it is clear that the socio-economic conditions of sample farmers were not satisfactory and needs special attention from policy makers. They faced many constraints like financial, employment, personal and social-psychological displacement. The unemployment of women workers in unorganized sector calls for diversification of economic activities for the
families to atleast maintain their existing life styles if not improve their living standards. This in turn requires development inputs such as education, technical training and job securities. Agrarian reforms should include atleast joint ownership of land if not actual ownership of land for women. Such a step would stimulate a chain of changes of relationships, attitudes and perceptions at all levels in the community. Access to training and technological information for agricultural activity has to be provided to the women to improve their skills, level of decision-making and effective participation.

7.3 CONCLUSION

Agriculture has been the most primary and vital sector of India. This popular sector has been making significant contribution to the accelerated pace of the economy which experienced transformations under the reforms and adopted the several phases of greater revolution. The agricultural women labourers are mostly unorganized, unskilled, generally non-migratory in character, having no legal protection and having hard contact with land owners. It is understood from the study that the improve the working conditions of agricultural women labourers was necessary in the study area. Their hours of work should be statutorily fixed and strictly enforced. In case of work beyond
the stipulated hours, overtime payments should be made. Further, to improve the socio-economic environment in which agricultural women labourers work. State can provide amenities of rural life like health centres, maternity wards, youth clubs sport facilities, etc. Special programmes for vocational and technical training of agricultural women labourers can also be arranged.

7.4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Given the diversity of the agro-ecological system and the resulting wide varieties of farming systems, it is important that state level efforts in gender planning are supported by gender/sex segregated data pertinent to local situation.

- The current efforts on creating agricultural data and gender information in farming systems across the country should be co-ordinated and the available information should feed into the planning process.

- Planning at the local Panchayat level should be gender-sensitive and should have gender/sex-segregated information to support for local development efforts.
Agricultural education institutions and training centers should develop regular curricula to integrate a gender approach in all technical areas of agricultural sector.

Existing policies related to targeting women and gender-equity should be widely communicated to all involved in development work including women clientele.

Review of the land right policies and implementation of land distribution for gender equity and women’s land rights.

Farmer’s right initiative should explicitly address concerns of women farmers.

Providing better infrastructure facilities especially water, electricity and transport to improve their working conditions and standard of living.

Setting up of agri clinics, agri business centers to help farmers to improve their skills and efficiency.

National mission for farmers’ well being.

Providing legal literacy programme to increase their bargaining power and decision making leading them to empowerment.

Timely provision of financial assistance to farmers in agricultural season and in the event of loss or crop failure.
Providing alternative employment opportunities for women, as agriculture is very much affected by vagaries of nature.

Programme Focus

- Develop programmes to train Panchayat leaders in gender-integrative participatory approaches and local planning.
- Develop programmes for rural women to build leadership skills for managing agriculture community-based development activities.
- Develop economic and political literacy programmes for rural women to utilize development inputs effectively.
- Support agriculture extension in-service training programmes and other relevant agricultural curricular activities to support gender-sensitive extension agents.
- Put in place appropriate institutional mechanisms for information exchange and cooperation between the agencies that focus on women’s affair and agriculture-related technical activities.
- Support women-managed rural production and marketing ventures in horticulture, floriculture and post-harvest processing in commodities.
Provide technology training and input support to women to take advantage of emerging high-value agri-business sector including biotechnology and forest products.

It is a pressing concern for planners to help farm women to overcome their problems. This needs the special attention of Agricultural officers and Policy makers. As our famous agricultural scientist DR.M.S SWAMINATHAN says “OUR FUTURE DEPENDS ON AGRICULTURE. (Sunday Express, June 27th 2004) He also added, to achieve this we need to have a system of administration that is highly professional. Farmers need three things: Water, Credit and assured Market. We have to address these issues with the help of farmers.

To improve the conditions of farm women first they must be made economically viable and literate. There is a crying need for government schemes that should take farm women as target group for their training programme to make them efficient and effective.

Promotion of self help groups, helps to make the farm women economically independent and socially sound Greater emphasis on promoting participatory gender sensitive approaches in the design and
implementation of programmes will address women’s strategic and practical needs. These could include the mobilization of women farmers to more effectively accessible-credit, extension, technology and training programmes, advocacy within line agencies to reduce/remove gender biases from operations and programmes, and the promotion of farm enterprises and activities which traditionally favour women’s involvement and empowerment.

In short, the Indian male should rise above his chauvinistic attitude and he willing to recognize this designed role of the deserving women. If this thesis has done a little to enlighten men on the great need to broaden their perspective and welcome with open arms the role of women as equal partners in their lives, the main objective of this work has been amply fulfilled. Men should realise the golden truth that by helping women they help themselves. Let gender bias be thrown into the dustbin of history.