SUGGESTIONS

In the light of the findings of the empirical study conducted in the Ariyalur District in the drought-prone region, the researcher would suggest the following measures for effective and productive participation of women in agricultural development.

1. The literacy level of women farmers in the backward region is appallingly low. Hence, there is a need for vigorously conducting non-formal educational programmes, aiming increasingly at imparting 'technical literacy' (techniracy) to women farmers, enabling them to master the rudiments of agricultural sciences (including home science, arithmetic, farm management and easy understanding of the application of new agricultural technologies not only for raising agricultural productivity but also for profitable management of dairying enterprise and house-hold activities).

2. As it is inconvenient for women farmers, owing to their shouldering of onerous domestic responsibilities, to attend technology transfer and training programmes held at institutions far away from rural areas, it is, therefore, suggested that extension training programmes be organised for farm women in rural areas, especially in the after-noons when they are
free from their household activities. More and more women farmers should be covered under the 'Lab to Land' extension programme. 'Training and Visit' (T and V) programme should be effectively implemented so that women farmers will be familiarised with new farm technologies at their door-steps and at their farms with direct, face-to-face interaction with agricultural extension experts.

3. Women participation in agriculture should be recognised and the extension programmes should be planned and executed based on their needs. In order to help extension service to reach farm women, it is suggested that women should be employed as Village Extension Workers (VEW) so that rural women can be easily contacted. Deliberate attempts should be made to select 'women contact farmers' by the V.E.Ws. Even where the contact farmers have already been identified, the groups can be reorganised and women farmers should be included. Further, there is a need to recruit more women in the extension service staff positions since this would provide greater possibilities for reaching women farmers. Also women extension agents can be more sensitive to the social-family concerns interacting with women's daily farming activities.
4. The existing channels of communication in the development programmes do not have necessary provision to reach farm women. There is a need to strengthen them.

5. Recognising the specific agricultural tasks that women farmers perform, it is recommended that appropriate technology, aiming at increasing productivity and personal efficiency of farm women in performing various agricultural operations and lightening their work-load in attending to house-hold activities and allied enterprises should be given due attention. Further, efforts should be made to modify the technology/machinery/equipment, which are already available for use, to make them more convenient to be operated by farm women. Besides, by providing live-stock management, and animal health care technologies, farm women can be helped to profitably pursue dairying as a subsidiary occupation to supplement their farm income and become economically self-reliant.

6. Decentralising improved seed production programme at village or block level and involving farm women, after providing them training in seed technology, will not only increase their employment potentiality, but also solve the problem of non-availability of quality seeds at the grass-root level.
7. Farm women must be trained in the up-to-date techniques of post-harvest management, especially prevention of post-harvest losses.

8. For relieving women from house-hold drudgeries, it is of utmost importance that the house-hold work related to child care should be entrusted to private or semi-government organisations. Day care or creche facilities should be made available to all farm women whose children need this type of care. Balwadi and Anganwadi components of Integrated Child Development Scheme should further be expanded and strengthened so as to provide this facility to farm women in conformity with their requirements at different agricultural seasons.

9. Efforts should be made to encourage domestic role sharing between husbands and wives, especially among house-holds where women are involved in the provider role as well. This will afford women enough time to participate in educational activities organised by development agencies.

10. The constraints which affect the productivity of the women farmers should be identified and appropriate institutional supportive measures should be suggested to overcome these constraints. These measures may be in terms of separate training programmes for them, preferential membership in rural co-operatives, access to technology, credit and
marketing and imparting new skills through a combination of training and practical demonstration coupled with hand on experience in the fields.

11. A holistic strategy, which details different developmental programmes such as DWOCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas), TRYSEM (Training of Rural Youth Self-Employment), ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme), NLM (National Literacy Mission), PASMA (Programme of Assistance To Small And Marginal Farmers) etc., with the programmes of 'KrishiVignan Kendras or Farmers' Training Centres, should be devised, with adequate institutional support of extension services, to educate, train, support and promote women farmers to play a productive role in the process of accelerating the pace of agricultural and rural development in drought-prone regions.