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## ROLE OF WOMEN IN LAND MANAGEMENT DECISION MAKING IN VIDARBHA REGION OF MAHARASHTRA

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Women constitute at least one-third of the country's economically active population, particularly in the unorganized sector and specifically in the agrarian sector. Low literacy levels, skill-based and knowledge grounded technologies along with patriarchal social control restrain women's access to resources which might enable them to equip themselves to meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities provided by the new economic policy.

In our society, both husband and wife participate in different land management activities. Their role are generally complementary, not only in physical participation in land and farm related activities, but also in the decision making process concerning such activities. In some of these activities, women take sole or joint decisions. Joint decisions were made in purchase and sale of land and management of animals whereas independent decisions were made in storage and marketing of produce (Seema and Prasad, 1991). The role of women in decision-making process in land management in Maharashtra has not been explored by many researchers. Thus considering the importance of women in decision making process in land management, the present study was conducted in Surabardi watershed of Nagpur district (Vidarbha region) of Maharashtra during the year 2001-02.

### **Methodology**

For the purpose of study, multistage random sampling technique was used to select 103 farms belonging to 4 distinct size groups viz. Marginal (upto 1 hectare), small (1 to 2 hectares), semi-medium (2 to 4 hectares) and medium

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(above 4 hectares) comprising 14 marginal, 26 small, 31 semi-medium and 32 medium farms. The data were collected by survey method from all the respondents who were personally interviewed with the help of pre-tested structured schedule. The participation of farm women in decision making was worked out based on the number of women who have taken part in particular aspects of decision under the major heads of organizational, production and marketing decisions. It may often be noted that all women respondents did not take part in decision making. Women took some decisions in the farm solely or independently while some other decisions were taken jointly with their male counterparts. In the case of those respondents who did not take part in decision-making, their male counter-parts were the major decision makers.

## **Results and Discussion**

The last few decades have seen a transformation of the agricultural sector, with increasing number of women joining the agricultural workforce. Land management, which includes crop production, animal rearing and other farm activities; attracts a large number of women to participate in decision making process for proper land use planning. Land management decisions can be categorized under three main heads, viz. organizational decision, production decision and marketing decision.

In the Nagpur district of Maharashtra land management in agricultural sector becomes an important issue in view of the increasing population pressure on land. Land management does not include allocation of land to various farm activities, but also the efficient distribution of labour, capital and marketing of produce. Cotton and soybean are the main crops. Farmers also rear different livestock and poultry birds beside allied activities. Women participate in different activities and operations such as seeding, transplanting, weeding, thinning, harvesting, processing, selling farm products, winnowing, storage, etc. (Gogoi and Bhowmick, 2002). Several of these operations are exclusively carried out by women. In most of the areas husband generally consult their wives in taking decision on different activities. Women also actively involves in decision making on diverse production activities either

solely or jointly with their husbands. Participation of Maharashtra women is quite prominent in the land management and agricultural related activities. This is reflected in the decision making processes as revealed in the following paragraphs.

### **Organisational decision in land management**

Organisational decision included decisions like purchasing and sale of land, leasing in and leasing out of land, purchase of sale of animals, farm credit for farm operations, purchase of farm machineries and construction of farm buildings. It could be seen from the study (Table-1)\* that purchasing and sale of land was the major organizational decision where women participation in independent decision making was recorded to the extent of 22.33 per cent, while the participation of women in decision making was the least (11.65 per cent) in construction of farm buildings. Women seemed to have little interest in construction work, which might have discouraged them in decision making in this regard. In other organizational aspect, viz. leasing in and leasing out of land, arrangement and payment of labour, farm credit and purchase and sale of farm machinery, participation of women were of the order of 19.42, 20.39, 14.56, 19.42 and 14.56 per cent, respectively. The highest (28.16) percentage of joint decision was recorded in the case of purchase and sale of farm machinery and leasing in and leasing out of land and least (22.33) percentage regarding farm credit.

Inter-group analysis of organizational decision revealed that as high as 25.00 per cent decision on leasing in and leasing out of land was taken by women independently in medium group of farms (Table-5)\*. On the other hand, only 7.14 per cent of women in marginal size group of farms have taken independent decisions regarding purchase and sale of farm machinery and construction of farm buildings. Joint decision was found to be the highest 34.37 per cent in deciding leasing in and leasing out of land in medium size group of farms (Table-5)\*; whereas only 7.14 per cent women took part in joint decision making regarding leasing in and leasing out of land in marginal farms (Table-2)\*.

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\* All the tables are given at the end of the discussion

### **Production decision in land management**

Decision making under the sub-head production decision were allocation of area under different activities, selection of crop activities and varieties, manures and fertilizers to be used, use of plant protection measures, time of transplanting, time of interculture, time of harvesting, means of irrigation, animal care and feeds and fodder for animals etc.

Among different decisions, decision on time of interculture was decided by 42.72 per cent females independently. But in case of use of plant protection measures and means of irrigation, only 13.59 per cent female were found to have taken independent decision. Only 22.33, 25.24, 25.24, 22.33, 37.86 and 16.50 per cent females were found to have taken independent decision on allocation of area under different crops, selection of crop activities and varieties, manures and fertilizers to be used, time of transplanting, time of harvesting, animal care and feeds and fodder for animal, respectively. Joint decision of both husband and wife were found to be as high as 33.98 per cent in allocating the area under different activities to as low as 21.35 per cent in deciding means of irrigation.

The study on production decision among various groups showed that the highest (54.84 per cent) decision on time of interculture was taken by women independently in semi-medium group of farms (Table-4), whereas only 28.57 per cent women took independent decision on time of interculture in marginal group of farms (Table-2). Again as high as 35.48 per cent women took part in joint decisions on allocation of area under different activities in semi-medium size group of farms (Table-4) and as low as 7.14 per cent in time of transplanting time of harvesting and means of irrigation in marginal farms (Table-2).

### **Marketing decision**

In this study, marketing decision included decisions like marketing of farm produce, quality required for family consumption, storage of farm produce, grading and marketing of livestock produce.

In the case of marketing decisions, the highest i.e., 48.54 per cent females

were found to have taken independent decision on quantity required for family consumption and the lowest i.e., 12.62 per cent on grading. Marketing of farm produce, storage of farm produce and marketing of livestock produce were decided independently by 20.39 per cent, 31.07 per cent and 16.50 per cent females, respectively. In the case of joint decision as high as 27.19 per cent of joint decisions were recorded in marketing of livestock produce and as low as 21.36 per cent in determining the grading of farm produce.

Inter-group analysis of marketing decision revealed that independent decision taken by women was recorded to be the highest i.e., 64.52 per cent in deciding the quantity required for family consumption in semi-medium group of farms (Table-4) and the lowest i.e., 7.14 per cent on grading and marketing of livestock produce, respectively, in marginal sized farms (Table-2). Joint decision of both husband and wife was the highest (38.46 per cent) in quantity required for family consumption in small farms (Table-3) and the lowest (7.14 per cent) in storage of farm produce in marginal group of farms (Table-2).

## **Conclusion**

The results of the analysis indicate the important role of women in the decision making processes in the areas like purchase and sale of land, selection of crop activities and varieties, manures and fertilizers to be used, time of interculture, time of harvesting, animal care, quantity required for family consumption and storage of farm produce. Women also played important role in joint decision making processes. It is revealed from the findings that women were consulted by their husbands or men folk in determining the leasing in and leasing out of land, purchase and sale of farm machinery, allocation of area under different activities, selection of manures and fertilizers to be used, time of transplanting, time of interculture and marketing of livestock produce. It was noticed that the role of women in decision making was not prominent in areas like construction of farm buildings, use of plant protection measures, determining means of irrigation and grading of farm produce for marketing. Thus the findings of the present study revealed that women played an important role in land and farm management decisions.

Though in some areas male members was the dominant decision makers, still a major percentage of women folk were consulted in many areas before taking final decisions. Therefore, the study highlighted the important role of women in decision making processes of land management activities in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra.

## **References**

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**Table-1: Land Management Decision for all Farms**

Sl. No.	Decision making area	Total no. of sample	Extent of participation		
			Solely by male	Solely by female	Joint decisions
<b>1.</b>	<b>Organisational decisions</b>				
	i) Purchasing and sale of land	103 (100.00)	54 (52.43)	23 (22.33)	26 (25.24)
	ii) Leasing in and leasing out of land	103 (100.00)	54 (52.43)	20 (19.42)	29 (28.15)
	iii) Purchase and sale of animals	103 (100.00)	55 (53.40)	21 (20.39)	27 (26.21)
	iv) Arrangement and payment of labour	103 (100.00)	61 (59.22)	15 (14.56)	27 (26.21)
	v) Farm credit	103 (100.00)	60 (58.25)	20 (19.42)	23 (22.33)
	vi) Purchase and sale of farm machinery	103 (100.00)	59 (57.28)	15 (14.56)	29 (28.15)
	vii) Construction of farm building	103 (100.00)	65 (63.11)	12 (11.65)	26 (25.24)
<b>2.</b>	<b>Production decisions</b>				
	i) Allocation of area under different activities	103 (100.00)	45 (43.69)	23 (22.33)	35 (33.98)
	ii) Selection of crop activities and varieties	103 (100.00)	52 (50.48)	26 (25.24)	25 (24.27)
	iii) Manures and fertilizers to be used	103 (100.00)	48 (46.60)	26 (25.24)	29 (28.16)
	iv) Use of plant protection measures	103 (100.00)	63 (61.16)	14 (13.59)	26 (25.24)
	v) Time of transplanting	103 (100.00)	51 (49.51)	23 (22.33)	29 (28.15)
	vi) Time of interculture	103	29 (28.15)	44 (42.72)	30 (29.13)
	vii) Time of harvesting	103	41 (39.80)	39 (37.86)	23 (22.33)
	viii) Means of irrigation	103	67 (65.05)	14 (13.59)	22 (21.35)
	ix) Animal care	103	51 (49.51)	25 (24.27)	27 (26.21)
	x) Feeds and fodder for animals	103	61 (59.22)	17 (16.50)	25 (24.27)
<b>3.</b>	<b>Marketing decisions</b>				
	i) Marketing of farm produce	103	57 (55.34)	21 (20.39)	25 (24.27)
	ii) Quantity required for family consumption	103	30 (29.13)	50 (48.54)	23 (22.33)
	iii) Storage of farm produce	103	48 (46.60)	32 (31.07)	23 (22.33)
	iv) Grading	103	68 (66.02)	13 (12.62)	22 (21.36)
	v) Marketing of livestock produce	103	58 (56.31)	17 (16.50)	28 (27.19)

(Figures within parentheses indicate percentages to total respondents)

**Table-2: Land Management Decision for Marginal Farms**

Sl. No.	Decision making area	Total no. of sample	Extent of participation		
			Solely by male	Solely by female	Joint decisions
<b>1.</b>	<b>Organisational decisions</b>				
	i) Purchasing and sale of land	14 (100.00)	10 (71.43)	1 (7.14)	3 (21.43)
	ii) Leasing in and leasing out of land	14 (100.00)	11 (78.57)	2 (14.29)	1 (7.14)
	iii) Purchase and sale of animals	14 (100.00)	7 (50.00)	3 (21.43)	4 (28.57)
	iv) Arrangement and payment of labour	14 (100.00)	9 (64.28)	2 (14.29)	3 (21.43)
	v) Farm credit	14 (100.00)	10 (71.42)	2 (14.29)	2 (14.29)
	vi) Purchase and sale of farm machinery	14 (100.00)	10 (71.42)	1 (7.14)	3 (21.43)
	vii) Construction of farm building	14 (100.00)	11 (78.57)	1 (7.14)	2 (14.29)
<b>2.</b>	<b>Production decisions</b>				
	i) Allocation of area under different activities	14 (100.00)	9 (64.29)	1 (7.14)	4 (28.57)
	ii) Selection of crop activities and varieties	14 (100.00)	8 (57.14)	2 (14.29)	4 (28.57)
	iii) Manures and fertilizers to be used	14 (100.00)	10 (71.42)	1 (7.14)	3 (21.43)
	iv) Use of plant protection measures	14 (100.00)	9 (64.29)	2 (14.29)	3 (21.43)
	v) Time of transplanting	14 (100.00)	10 (71.42)	3 (21.43)	1 (7.14)
	vi) Time of interculture	14 (100.00)	8 (57.14)	4 (28.57)	2 (14.29)
	vii) Time of harvesting	14 (100.00)	10 (71.42)	3 (21.43)	1 (7.14)
	viii) Means of irrigation	14 (100.00)	12 (85.71)	1 (7.14)	1 (7.14)
	ix) Animal care	14 (100.00)	9 (64.28)	3 (21.43)	2 (14.29)
	x) Feeds and fodder for animals	14 (100.00)	9 (64.28)	2 (14.29)	3 (21.43)
<b>3.</b>	<b>Marketing decisions</b>				
	i) Marketing of farm produce	14 (100.00)	8 (57.14)	2 (14.29)	4 (28.57)
	ii) Quantity required for family consumption	14 (100.00)	7 (50.00)	5 (35.71)	2 (14.29)
	iii) Storage of farm produce	14 (100.00)	10 (71.42)	3 (21.43)	1 (7.14)
	iv) Grading	14 (100.00)	11 (78.57)	1 (7.14)	2 (14.29)
	v) Marketing of livestock produce	14 (100.00)	10 (71.43)	1 (7.14)	3 (21.43)

(Figures within parentheses indicate percentages to total respondents)

**Table-3: Farm Management Decision for Small Farms**

Sl. No.	Decision making area	Total no. of sample	Extent of participation		
			Solely by male	Solely by female	Joint decisions
<b>1.</b>	<b>Organisational decisions</b>				
	i) Purchasing and sale of land	26 (100.00)	15 (57.69)	4 (15.38)	7 (26.93)
	ii) Leasing in and leasing out of land	26 (100.00)	14 (53.85)	3 (11.54)	9 (34.61)
	iii) Purchase and sale of animals	26 (100.00)	11 (42.31)	7 (26.93)	8 (30.76)
	iv) Arrangement and payment of labour	26 (100.00)	15 (57.69)	4 (15.38)	7 (26.93)
	v) Farm credit	26 (100.00)	17 (65.38)	3 (11.54)	6 (23.08)
	vi) Purchase and sale of farm machinery	26 (100.00)	16 (61.54)	2 (7.69)	8 (30.77)
	vii) Construction of farm building	26 (100.00)	16 (61.54)	3 (11.54)	7 (26.93)
<b>2.</b>	<b>Production decisions</b>				
	i) Allocation of area under different activities	26 (100.00)	12 (46.15)	5 (19.23)	9 (34.62)
	ii) Selection of crop activities and varieties	26 (100.00)	16 (61.54)	6 (23.08)	4 (15.38)
	iii) Manures and fertilizers to be used	26 (100.00)	15 (57.69)	3 (11.54)	8 (30.77)
	iv) Use of plant protection measures	26 (100.00)	17 (65.38)	2 (7.69)	7 (26.93)
	v) Time of transplanting	26 (100.00)	12 (46.15)	5 (19.23)	9 (34.62)
	vi) Time of interculture	26 (100.00)	9 (34.62)	8 (30.76)	9 (34.62)
	vii) Time of harvesting	26 (100.00)	11 (42.31)	11 (42.31)	4 (15.38)
	viii) Means of irrigation	26 (100.00)	19 (73.08)	2 (7.69)	5 (19.23)
	ix) Animal care	26 (100.00)	10 (38.46)	7 (26.92)	9 (34.62)
	x) Feeds and fodder for animals	26 (100.00)	17 (65.38)	3 (11.54)	6 (23.08)
<b>3.</b>	<b>Marketing decisions</b>				
	i) Marketing of farm produce	26 (100.00)	18 (69.23)	3 (11.54)	5 (19.23)
	ii) Quantity required for family consumption	26 (100.00)	4 (15.38)	12 (46.15)	10 (38.46)
	iii) Storage of farm produce	26 (100.00)	15 (57.69)	4 (15.38)	7 (26.93)
	iv) Grading	26 (100.00)	19 (73.08)	2 (7.69)	5 (19.23)
	v) Marketing of livestock produce	26 (100.00)	14 (53.85)	4 (15.38)	8 (30.76)

(Figures within parentheses indicate percentages to total respondents)

**Table-4: Land Management Decision for Semi-medium Farms**

Sl. No.	Decision making area	Total no. of sample	Extent of participation		
			Solely by male	Solely by female	Joint decisions
<b>1.</b>	<b>Organisational decisions</b>				
	i) Purchasing and sale of land	31 (100.00)	14 (45.16)	8 (25.81)	9 (29.03)
	ii) Leasing in and leasing out of land	31 (100.00)	16 (51.61)	7 (22.58)	8 (25.81)
	iii) Purchase and sale of animals	31 (100.00)	16 (51.61)	6 (19.35)	9 (29.03)
	iv) Arrangement and payment of labour	31 (100.00)	18 (58.06)	5 (16.13)	8 (25.81)
	v) Farm credit	31 (100.00)	16 (51.61)	6 (19.35)	9 (29.03)
	vi) Purchase and sale of farm machinery	31 (100.00)	18 (58.06)	5 (16.13)	8 (25.81)
	vii) Construction of farm building	31 (100.00)	18 (58.06)	3 (9.68)	10 (32.26)
<b>2.</b>	<b>Production decisions</b>				
	i) Allocation of area under different activities	31 (100.00)	12 (38.71)	8 (25.81)	11 (35.48)
	ii) Selection of crop activities and varieties	31 (100.00)	14 (45.16)	7 (22.58)	10 (32.26)
	iii) Manures and fertilizers to be used	31 (100.00)	8 (25.81)	15 (48.39)	8 (25.81)
	iv) Use of plant protection measures	31 (100.00)	20 (64.52)	4 (12.90)	7 (22.58)
	v) Time of transplanting	31 (100.00)	13 (41.93)	10 (32.26)	8 (25.81)
	vi) Time of interculture	31 (100.00)	3 (9.68)	17 (54.84)	11 (35.48)
	vii) Time of harvesting	31 (100.00)	9 (29.03)	13 (41.93)	9 (29.03)
	viii) Means of irrigation	31 (100.00)	20 (64.52)	4 (12.90)	7 (22.58)
	ix) Animal care	31 (100.00)	15 (48.39)	7 (22.58)	9 (29.03)
	x) Feeds and fodder for animals	31 (100.00)	17 (54.84)	6 (19.35)	8 (25.81)
<b>3.</b>	<b>Marketing decisions</b>				
	i) Marketing of farm produce	31 (100.00)	14 (45.16)	8 (25.81)	9 (29.03)
	ii) Quantity required for family consumption	31 (100.00)	5 (16.13)	20 (64.52)	6 (19.35)
	iii) Storage of farm produce	31 (100.00)	14 (45.16)	10 (32.26)	7 (22.58)
	iv) Grading	31 (100.00)	21 (67.74)	4 (12.90)	6 (19.35)
	v) Marketing of livestock produce	31 (100.00)	15 (48.39)	7 (22.58)	9 (29.03)

(Figures within parentheses indicate percentages to total respondents)

**Table-5: Land Management Decision for Medium Farms**

Sl. No.	Decision making area	Total no. of sample	Extent of participation		
			Solely by male	Solely by female	Joint decisions
<b>1.</b>	<b>Organisational decisions</b>				
	i) Purchasing and sale of land	32 (100.00)	15 (46.88)	10 (31.25)	7 (21.87)
	ii) Leasing in and leasing out of land	32 (100.00)	13 (40.63)	8 (25.00)	11 (34.37)
	iii) Purchase and sale of animals	32 (100.00)	21 (65.63)	5 (15.62)	6 (18.75)
	iv) Arrangement and payment of labour	32 (100.00)	19 (59.37)	4 (12.50)	9 (28.13)
	v) Farm credit	32 (100.00)	17 (53.12)	9 (28.12)	6 (28.12)
	vi) Purchase and sale of farm machinery	32 (100.00)	15 (46.87)	7 (21.87)	10 (31.25)
	vii) Construction of farm building	32 (100.00)	20 (62.50)	5 (15.62)	7 (21.88)
<b>2.</b>	<b>Production decisions</b>				
	i) Allocation of area under different activities	32 (100.00)	12 (37.50)	9 (28.12)	11 (34.38)
	ii) Selection of crop activities and varieties	32 (100.00)	14 (45.16)	11 (34.38)	7 (21.88)
	iii) Manures and fertilizers to be used	32 (100.00)	15 (46.86)	7 (21.88)	10 (31.25)
	iv) Use of plant protection measures	32 (100.00)	17 (53.12)	6 (18.75)	9 (28.13)
	v) Time of transplanting	32 (100.00)	16 (50.00)	5 (15.62)	11 (34.38)
	vi) Time of interculture	32 (100.00)	9 (28.12)	15 (46.87)	8 (25.00)
	vii) Time of harvesting	32 (100.00)	11 (34.38)	12 (37.50)	9 (28.13)
	viii) Means of irrigation	32 (100.00)	16 (50.00)	7 (21.88)	9 (28.13)
	ix) Animal care	32 (100.00)	17 (53.13)	8 (25.00)	7 (21.88)
	x) Feeds and fodder for animals	32 (100.00)	18 (56.25)	6 (18.75)	8 (25.00)
<b>3.</b>	<b>Marketing decisions</b>				
	i) Marketing of farm produce	32 (100.00)	17 (53.12)	8 (25.00)	7 (21.88)
	ii) Quantity required for family consumption	32 (100.00)	10 (31.25)	17 (53.12)	5 (15.62)
	iii) Storage of farm produce	32 (100.00)	9 (28.12)	15 (46.87)	8 (25.00)
	iv) Grading	32 (100.00)	17 (53.12)	6 (18.75)	9 (28.13)
	v) Marketing of livestock produce	32 (100.00)	19 (59.37)	5 (15.62)	8 (25.00)

(Figures within parentheses indicate percentages to total respondents)