

# **INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES**

## **XV National Conference on Women's Studies**

### **Subtheme:6**

#### **Women Farmers: Labour, Livelihoods & Resource Rights**

The term “farmer” tends to evoke the image of a male farmer while women farmers remain largely invisible as far as the State and society are concerned. Within this broad frame of lack of identity and rights for women farmers in general, the situation of more marginalized Dalit and Adivasi women requires much more attention and action. Women's labour force participation decline in the face of continuing agrarian distress, large scale land alienation and depleting investments in rural sector in general, and social sector in particular, adds to the deprivation and vulnerability of women farmers.

The National Policy for Farmers defined a Farmer as ‘a person actively engaged in the economic and/or livelihood activity of growing crops and producing other primary agricultural commodities and will include all agricultural operational holders, cultivators, agricultural labourers, sharecroppers, tenants, poultry and livestock rearers, fishers, beekeepers, gardeners, pastoralists, non-corporate planters and planting labourers as well as persons engaged in various farming related occupations such as sericulture, vermiculture and agro-forestry. The term will also include Tribals engaged in shifting cultivation and in the collection, use and sale of minor and non-timber forest produce’. Such a definition should have conferred recognition to, and support for women cultivators and agricultural workers, including those who declare themselves to be ‘principally engaged in housework’, but also engage in various activities for obtaining food for the household: working on kitchen gardens, maintaining household animal resources, collection of food and food processing activities. Even such so-called household work is therefore farming, and women involved in such activities should be counted as farmers, over and above the overtly self-employed workers or casual labour in agriculture.

However, this policy definition of farmers, has not been actualized in practice and women farmers continue to be invisible, neglected and discriminated against. Within the broad and systemic and persistent gender discrimination, recent trends of first “feminization” and then “masculinization” of agriculture have only deepened gender gaps and manifested newer forms of violence against women. Expansion of commercial, corporate-driven farming has led to women getting sidelined from decision-making related to agriculture. In this intensive-agriculture, market-driven paradigm, it is the men who are connected to both input and output markets, and therefore have greater say. Further, despite the greater weight of agriculture in the female workforce in comparison to the male workforce, women’s share of operational land holdings is a less than 13% and in terms of operational area, it is even less.

Agricultural research systems, training and extension systems, marketing systems, risk insurance systems, credit and other support systems all systematically ignore women. Land, water and other natural resources are increasingly becoming alienable commodities for the benefit of profiteering corporations. Land rights for women needs to be located within this broader context of privatization and corporations of natural resources.

In the XV IAWS National Conference on Women Studies, this subtheme seeks to gather evidence on the situation and conditions of women farmers, and to build a bridge between movements for rights of women farmers and feminist academicians. For the sub-theme, we invite papers under the following broad areas:-

1. Enumeration - Census definition, informal workers or self employed
2. Recognition or lack of recognition of Women Farmers in Policies, programs and it’s impact thereon.
3. Land Rights of Women farmers: Private, Public and Markets
4. Impact of privatization, statisation of commons on livelihoods/ food security of women farmers
5. Evidence on access or Impact of agriculture/ land/ labour/ financial social protection policies on women farmers
6. Commons to include forests, seas/ rivers/ ponds, wastelands/ pasture lands/ web- internet/

7. Impact of use of ICT's, digitization of data on women farmers.
8. Recognition, support of women's knowledge, practice of Sustainable/ ecological agriculture
9. Role or scope of women farmers participation in Public provisioning to address Malnutrition and food security

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