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Agricultural based enterprise skills for women farmers: Suitable extension strategies

Amtul Waris

Directorate of Rice Research, India

The empowerment of women in agriculture is fundamental to reduce poverty, hunger and malnutrition as they play an important role in agriculture not only as agricultural labourers, co-farmers and family labourers but as managers of the farm and farm entrepreneurs. It is essential therefore to recognize that women farmers have the potential and the solution to bring their families out of poverty; and thus women farmers should be at the forefront of agriculture. Women agricultural workers constitute a large majority (27.82%) of the work force in Andhra Pradesh. Rice is the major food crop and staple food of the state and women are solely involved in the most critical operations of transplanting, weeding and harvesting of rice. There is a vast potential to develop women farmers as entrepreneurs and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises have been recognized as a crucial way to promote women's economic empowerment. The promotion of women's entrepreneurship through the formation of women's cooperatives in the niche area of organic paddy farming can be an effective means of helping to alleviate rural poverty. The specific areas under which women farmers can be provided technical knowledge and skills for taking up rice-based entrepreneurship are organic rice farming, quality seed rice production, mat type nursery production, vermi-compost units, custom hiring of implements, skilled labour force, value added rice products and agri-tourism. Suitable Extension services are therefore required for diffusing technology and good practices to reach female farmers. In order to transform women farmers' into entrepreneurs, it is important to provide them with access to technology, credit, product and market information and training in management skills and enterprise development.

Biography

Amtul Waris, Ph.D. Extension Education and Fulbright Scholar, is working as a Principal Scientist in the Directorate of Rice Research, Hyderabad with focus on gender mainstreaming and capacity building of development personnel.

amtul.waris@gmail.com