ABSTRACT

Growth of Indian agriculture needs to be matched with 'feminization of agriculture' for an overall development of rural economy. This implies that empowerment of women with technological information and skill for handling agricultural activities is more desired to be achieved than from the present state-of-the-art.

Achieving growth with equity demands concurrent attention to social, economic, ecological and gender dimensions. The studies carried out in the field of agriculture indicate that inspite of the key role of women in crop-husbandry, animal husbandry, fisheries, forestry and post-harvest technology, both in the past and now, those in charge of formulating packages of technologies, services and public policies for rural areas have often tend to neglect the productive role of women. Consequently the development of technologies specifically tailored to women-specific occupations and involvement of women in technology development and transfer have received inadequate attention from both scientific and administrative departments of government.

Extension services are commonly directed towards men. In recognizing the importance of farmwomen in agricultural development, a massive project called Tamil Nadu Women in Agriculture (TANWA) was launched by the Tamil Nadu government during the period 1986-2003. The TANWA had taken a crucial initiative to impart training of farmwomen on farming and equip them to choose and adopt relevant modern technologies. It is also expected that trained farm women would disseminate the acquired knowledge and skills to non-trained fellow farm women in their villages. The programme was financially aided by Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA).

■ The present exercise is an attempt to study the performance of TANWA under different farming systems, in order to diagnose the problem and suggest policy implications. This made to identify three categories of farming systems, viz., Dry, Wet and Hill, in three selected districts of Tamil Nadu namely Coimbatore, Erode and Nilgiris respectively.

The objectives of the study are 1. To analyse the district wise progress of TANWA programme in Tamil Nadu 2. To study the socio-economic characteristics of women participants and non-participants. 3. To assess the awareness, knowledge and adoption level of critical technologies among the participants and non-participants of TANWA 4. To identify the association between the socio-economic characteristics and extent of awareness, knowledge and adoption. 5. To evaluate the perceived socio-economic impact of training programme on farm women. 6. To identify the constraints faced by the trainees and suggest suitable measures to overcome them.

The study is a descriptive one based on secondary and primary data. The investigation has adopted multi stage sampling technique for the selection of TANWA participants and non-participants under three types of farming. Two pre

tested interview schedules were designed, and administered one for the participants and another for the non-participants.

Suitable scales were used for assessment of awareness, knowledge and adoption level of farm women in respect of eleven critical technologies. The analysis employs various statistical tools like percentages, arithmetic mean, cumulative frequency, t-test, ANOVA, simple correlation and multiple regression.

The overall awareness, knowledge and adoption level of respondents under three categories of farming reveals that the participants are in an encouraging trend. The results of the linear multiple regression analysis reveals that three independent variables, viz., extension agency contact, mass media exposure and innovativeness are the prominent factors which influence the three dependent variables namely awareness, knowledge and adoption level, among both participants and non-participants in all the three farming systems.

The result of the t-test reveals that there exists significant difference between participants and non-participants with regard to awareness, knowledge and adoption under three types of farming, This is attributed to the effective participation of women in TANWA activities like skill based training, special training programmes, demonstrations, field visits, regular attendance in group meetings and follow-up activities.

The result of ANOVA reveals that among the participants there is no significant difference under three farming system with regard to awareness knowledge and adoption. Among the non-participants there is significant difference between the three types of farming system in respect of knowledge level and there is no significant difference in awareness and adoption level.

The impact of TANWA programme has been analyzed under all the three systems of farming. A comparative picture of pre and post training period brings out the fact that the participation of women in joint decision making has significantly improved in the case of selection of crop and variety, seed treatment, pest management and post harvest operations. The personal, social and economic impacts have been on the positive side. The spread effect of TANWA was more prominent in the case of wet farming system.

The constraints faced by the farmers were (i) less follow-up programmes (ii) Poor co-ordination among different development departments, (iii) lack of guidance for marketing.

It is suggested that, to sustain the impact, the TANWA groups which have already been technologically empowered with proper training can be brought under the groove of Self Help Groups and could serve/stand as models to be emulated.