

# **Draft National Policy for Women in Agriculture (April – 2008)**



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**National Commission for Women  
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## Draft National Policy for Women in Agriculture

### **Preface**

In 2006, the National Commission for Women was asked by the Swaminathan Commission, which was then preparing a Draft National Policy for Farmers, to provide certain gender inputs in the Draft Policy. For this purpose, the National Commission for Women set up a sub-committee of experts(1) and with their help, prepared an extensive note(2) on the subject and sent it to Dr. Swaminathan as required. Even at that time, it had been felt that since it was part of the mandate of NCW to advise the Government on policy matters, we might further use the expertise of the sub-committee to prepare a full-fledged policy document on women in agriculture ourselves and submit the same to the Government for its consideration.

In the meantime, The National Policy on Farmers 2007 was finalized and published by the Ministry of Agriculture, GOI. On going through this document, we found that while some of the inputs provided by us had been accepted, the general nature of the policy document had left out or marginalized many of our crucial concerns regarding women farmers and agricultural workers. This is why it seemed to be a necessary exercise for us to supplement the National Policy for Farmers with a comprehensive document on the problems and needs of women in agriculture in the present time. Obviously these cannot and should not be separated from the general concerns in the agricultural sector, but gender inequities added to other social disadvantages generate certain specific problems and needs for women in the agricultural sector and these constitute the special focus of the present document produced through the joint efforts of the sub-committee.

Dr. Jayati Gupta of the Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, Delhi University, had been a member of the Committee after it was formed. Her most untimely death last year after a brief illness, was a sad loss to us. But her invaluable contributions in the form of detailed notes on joint patta have been used extensively in this draft.

*Note: (1) and (2) is given in Annexure.*

I)

**BACKGROUND**

**1. Recognising Women as Farmers and Agricultural Workers**

Women's pivotal role in agriculture has never been recognized fully. They work as female agricultural labourers, as farmers, co-farmers, family labourers and (with male out-migration, widowhood etc.) as managers of the farm and farm entrepreneurs. Women in agriculture refer not only to women agricultural labourers and farmers but also to women working in the various sub-sectors of agriculture and allied non-farm work (3). Women constitute 40% of the agricultural workforce and this percentage is rising. Today, 53% of all male workers, but 75% of all female workers and 85% of all rural female workers are in agriculture. An estimated 20% of rural households are de facto female headed due to widowhood, desertion, or male out-migration. The increased feminization of agricultural work and labour must be taken into account in any policy document.

Women work extensively in production of major grains and millets, in land preparation, seed selection and seedling production, sowing, applying manure, fertilizer and pesticide, weeding, transplanting, threshing, winnowing and harvesting. In livestock production, fish processing, collection of non-timber forest produce etc. women have a very large role. In animal husbandry, women have multiple roles, ranging from animal care, grazing, fodder collection and cleaning of animal sheds to processing of milk and livestock products. Keeping milch animals, small ruminants and backyard poultry is an important source of income for poor farm families and agricultural labourers. Women also predominate in various artisanal productions such as weaving mats and baskets etc. Landless women agricultural labourers are involved in most of the agricultural operations. Women also augment family resources through tasks such as collection of fuel, fodder, drinking water and water for family chores and domestic animals. But they still remain largely unacknowledged as farmers and agricultural workers. Acknowledgement and evaluation of women's work in agriculture must form the basis of all policies and schemes in agriculture.

*Note: (3) is given in Annexure.*

## 2. **The Agrarian Crisis and Its impact on Women**

After Independence, the main goal of the newly emergent Indian nation was to achieve economic self reliance. Agriculture and food security were considered an important corner stone for achieving this strategy since more than two thirds of the population depended primarily on this sector for its livelihood. Thus agriculture and its allied sectors were to be a main source of livelihood and a means of meeting their nutritional needs. Keeping this in mind, the primary strategy for agricultural development was based on increasing agricultural productivity through expansion of agricultural infrastructure (like procurement, irrigation etc), easy access to rural credit, subsidies for agricultural inputs and the protection of agricultural markets through the imposition of quantitative restrictions and import duties. At the same time the challenge of food security was to be met through the creation of a universal public distribution system which provided the needs of low productive areas facing regular food scarcities. The success of this strategy led to self-sufficiency in food and a strong agrarian base, although regional discrepancies in agricultural growth remained.

The impact of policy changes in the agrarian sector followed by structural adjustment has led to new challenges. According to the Approach Paper for the 11<sup>th</sup> Plan the growth rate of agriculture was about 2% during the 9<sup>th</sup> Plan and is expected to decline to 1.8% p.a. during the 10<sup>th</sup> Plan. Any statement of policy has to take into account this recent sharp decline in agriculture in our country. The National Policy on Farmers has talked of measures to counteract this, but the impact of this decline on women has additional dimensions. The increased feminization of agricultural work and labour mentioned in the earlier sub-section means concentration of women in a sector which is already experiencing severe decline. This has led to a feminization of poverty also.

The policy changes and their impact are characterized by the following features:

a) With the contraction within the agricultural sector farm employment has declined drastically. Change in the cropping pattern with the switch to commercial crops, export crops, horticulture and floriculture has reduced the demand for manual labour in which, women are engaged. This means that they are getting excluded from opportunities of livelihood in these new modes of agriculture. Further, diversion of land for non-agricultural purposes such as infrastructure development and setting up of SEZs is leading to widespread loss of livelihood which is not compensated by other employments that are generated, particularly in case of women. The dwindling of forests and erosion of access to the forests has led to loss of livelihood of women particularly from tribal, dalit, and pastoral communities, who are the main users of forests. Also, as a result of alienation from traditional natural resource assets such as land, forests, water etc. to which, women have had some access, their traditional skills in agriculture, its various sub-sectors and allied sectors have been made redundant in stead of being utilized and upgraded.

b) **The high input costs of agricultural production** resulting from the withdrawal of subsidies on fertilizers, pesticides and agricultural credit are aggravating the problem. The entry of corporate agri- business in this sector has been increasing the prices of these inputs and leading to agrarian distress and farmers suicides. It is estimated that there have been approximately 16000 suicides by farmers per annum between 1997 and 2006. Two thirds of these suicides are by male farmers and this explains the growing number of female headed households in this sector. As a result of the early withdrawal of quantitative restrictions and import duties in agricultural products, there has been an influx of agricultural imports which has affected agricultural prices and real wages negatively. Women bear the brunt of this along with men.

c) **There has been a decline in food grain production and food crisis** resulting from a growing diversification of agriculture with the aim of meeting the demands of the world market. This has meant that the acreage under food crop production has sharply come down about 8 million hectares which has been diverted to export oriented crops. The per capita availability of food has declined from 177 kg per person per year in 1991 to 153 in 2003. The daily availability of food has declined from 485 to 419 grams per day in the

same period. This has led to increasing nutritional and health problems especially for women.

d) The decline in food grains could have been offset by the buffer stocks of the universal PDS system but this did not happen as this period has been characterized by a policy shift **from Universal to Targeted PDS**. It is now well known that faulty identification of BPL families and leakages to elite households are problems which targeted PDS has not been able to overcome. This has meant a sharp decline in consumption per capita from just over 2200 calories per day in 1987-88 to around 2150 in 1999-2000. The latest NSS survey suggests further declines in calorie consumption and the widening of the gender gap in malnutrition.

e) Another trend reflecting the agrarian distress in the post reform period has been the increase in **distress migration**. Price rise and lack of employment has led to increased migration from rural to urban areas and rural to rural areas. This has increased the workload of women as they are often left behind to take care of small children and old family members. Where woman migrate along with their families they have to face the double burden of taking care of the family and working on construction sites, brick kilns etc. We even find more and more women migrating on their own in search of domestic and other work. This makes them vulnerable to trafficking and other kinds of exploitation.

f) This crisis in the rural sector has further been aggravated by the decline in occupations associated with the allied sectors particularly with the **privatisation of the commons like forests and water**. Corporate farming has been threatening the livelihood of small and marginal farmers and non-farmers in the agricultural sector and particularly of women. Aggravation of conflicts around the commons with diversion of lands for non-agricultural purposes (such as SEZ) may increase displacement and forced migration. Livelihood of women particularly from tribal, dalit, fishing and pastoral communities will be affected by this. The reduced access to natural resources also means that women have to spend more time and labour for daily domestic work such as fetching of water and collection of fuel and fodder. This is having an adverse impact not only on their health but also on whatever educational opportunities they have.

g) The entry of **Corporate Retailing into agricultural marketing** has also led to decreasing incomes for the farmers. Big retailers are squeezing out the primary producers and small retailers from the market. Since women are actively involved in small enterprises selling produce, their livelihood may be adversely impacted by this.

h) Rising agrarian distress has also led to increase of **violence against women**. It must be remembered that apart from the problems of livelihood and employment, women anyway have to endure the inequities of a patriarchal system both in the family and in the world outside. When livelihood and employment have been threatened, the discrimination and violence perpetrated on women as women also tend to increase. The dowry system, female foeticide and infanticide and crimes like witch hunting continue undiminished even in the post globalization era because of these new factors affecting women's livelihood, health and educational opportunities.

## II) OBJECTIVES

- Having recognized the crucial and pervasive role of women in the agrarian sector,
- Having taken note of declining crop productivity in the country, de-regulation of agricultural markets, import of foodgrains at high prices and displacement as a result of urbanization and industrialization, as also the adverse impact of these on women in particular,
- Having noted gender based insertions into the National Policy for farmers, 2007 and having felt the need to have a full policy for women in the agriculture sector,
- Having reviewed existing approach/policy, strategies, priorities, institutional arrangements addressing gender concerns and inequities,

The National Commission for Women has prepared this draft National Policy for Women in the agricultural sector with the objectives of:



- ensuring women's access to and control over resources, namely land including land rights, water, pasture/forest/biodiversity resources including seed, fodder, fuel and raw materials for artisan products, to address their labour and livelihood issues ,
- recognizing single women such as widowed, abandoned , separated, unmarried women in women-headed rural households as well as other women in all rural households as farmers/agricultural workers and giving them equal wages for equal work as well as equal access to all benefits that may accrue to farmers/agricultural workers ,
- safeguarding the food security of the country by ensuring minimum support prices and other incentives for primary producers and at the same time, by providing sufficient foodgrains at affordable prices for all, so that malnutrition particularly among women and children may be eliminated,
- focusing on problems faced by women working in various sub-sectors in the agriculture sector (such as gathering of forest products, livestock keeping, fisheries, rural artisan work etc.) and to prepare policy initiatives to promote and encourage such activities,
- protecting , promoting and upgrading through appropriate training programmes traditional knowledge in agriculture, livestock breeding, fisheries, growing of medicinal plants etc. possessed by women;
- developing woman-sensitive agri-practices and technology in research and extension for better convergence and dovetailing of women-oriented schemes and programmes ,
- To ensure adequate and equal availability of services like irrigation, credit, insurance, technology, extension, information, training and markets for women in agriculture sector,

- To encourage primary producers in the agricultural sector to produce and market seeds, forest products, dairy products, livestock etc.
- To ensure that displacement of women and children or any loss of women's livelihood for reasons of development does not take place without the explicit consent of concerned women as well as men, and without acceptable and viable alternative livelihood being provided for them,
- To see that all laws such as the Recognition of Forest Rights Act, 2007, the Food Safety Act and the Bio-diversity Act etc. are formulated/ amended and implemented in a way that recognizes the interests of women primary producers .

### **III) POLICY DIRECTIONS**

#### **1. Natural Resource Assets**

##### **A) Land Rights**

1. In all legal measures on land rights, especially land reforms, there shall be special focus on the rights of women and single women headed households including widows, abandoned and deserted women. This shall apply in cases of both agricultural and homestead property.
2. All efforts shall be made to remove gender discriminatory provisions from all personal laws, both with regard to homestead and agricultural property.
3. Land titles will be held and recorded as joint pattas in the names of and with the signature and consent of both the spouses. The Land Revenue Act shall be amended to include the provision of joint pattas.
4. All land records shall be updated immediately after distribution of joint pattas and women shall be provided access to information about joint title to land and family property.

5. Legal guidelines for independent access and control over joint pattas in case of dissolution of marriage shall be worked out. In case of dissolution of marriage, maintenance shall be worked out to include women's right to joint patta.
6. The process of devolution of jointly held pattas shall be done in a manner which protects the right of daughters to parental property.
7. Transfer and sale of any common agricultural or homestead land, whether owned privately or collectively, shall be done with the prior and explicit consent of both spouses.

#### **B) Displacement and Rehabilitation**

1. The government shall ensure that no agricultural land has been diverted for non-agricultural purpose, industrial or developmental project unless it has been demonstrated that such a project will serve a "public purpose". In any case of diversion, the least displacing option shall be adopted with a view to minimizing all displacement and with prior consent of affected people.
2. All land acquisition for development and commercial activities shall be undertaken in accordance with land use plans prepared by state governments. Women shall be given adequate representation and hearing in the preparation of these plans and their needs and interests shall be taken into consideration.
3. All processes of land acquisition for developmental or commercial projects shall require the explicit prior consent of affected women.
4. Gender concerns shall be prioritized and taken into account when environmental and social impact assessments are done of any land alienating projects. Women shall have equal right to compensation and rehabilitation in case of the sale or transfer or alienation of privately or collectively held land.
5. Women shall be recognized as "interested parties" and separate entities for any compensation and rehabilitation package. Care shall be taken to see that all widows, single, abandoned and separated women are also registered as separate entities.

6. The government shall ensure that the interest of all non-landed women (like labourers, pastoralists etc) and those women working in the allied sector (like livestock, forestry, fishing etc) and whose livelihood is connected to the land being diverted is protected. In case of common property resources alternative sites and rights to access will be provided to them.
7. The interests of women workers in the allied sectors shall be protected. Women shall be compensated for loss of access to common lands and non-farm livelihoods.
8. Basic social infrastructure shall be provided in all rehabilitation packages. It shall be mandatory for all rehabilitation packages to include the formation of a Mahila welfare fund to which contributions shall be made by both government and project holders.

### **C) Seeds and Biodiversity**

1. The seed and biodiversity knowledge of women shall be recognized, documented, protected and integrated into agricultural research in the public domain.
2. *In situ* conservation of seeds and plant varieties shall be encouraged and promoted through women's self help groups and seed banks.
3. Priority shall be given to women and women's groups in the locality for participatory seed production and breeding.
4. Efforts shall be made to ensure that the seed and biodiversity knowledge of women remains in the public domain and is supported by a strong intellectual property rights regime that protects their rights and prevents monopolistic trade practices.

### **D) Water**

1. The access of women farmers and agricultural workers, irrespective of caste and creed, to all sources of water, whether owned and managed by the state, local community and panchayat institutions, shall be ensured and prioritized for

- drinking, domestic and other purposes related to their work in agriculture and allied sectors.
2. To facilitate the conservation and equal distribution of all water resources, including ground water, panchayats shall promote the formation of women's groups and SHGs.
  3. Women agricultural workers from families of landless and small and marginal households shall have the first right over biomass augmented from watersheds.
  4. The allocation of water for non-domestic and non-agricultural activities (including allied activities) in rural areas shall be done with the prior and explicit consent of the local women users.

#### **E) Forest Rights**

1. The commitment of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2007 to have all forest rights jointly registered in the names of both spouses shall be honoured.
2. All committees constituted under the existing forest laws, policies, rules or guidelines shall have a mandatory minimum women's representation of at least 33 per cent.
3. Special care shall be taken to ensure that forest rights for women from scheduled tribes, scheduled castes, denotified tribes and other women from traditional forest dwelling communities are maintained.
4. Women farmers and agricultural workers shall have the right to access, own and transport minor forest produce and fuelwood.
5. Women residing in or around the forested areas shall have protection against harassment, and sexual exploitation in order to ensure the unhindered exercise of their rights to collect fuelwood and minor forest produce.

6. Knowledge and conservation practices of women forest users shall be recognized upgraded and integrated into all programmes and schemes of forest protection and conservation.

## **2. Production System**

### **A) Production of Foodgrains**

1. In the context of the current food crisis primacy shall be given to the production of foodgrains by ensuring minimum support price, continuous and affordable supply of inputs, credit at minimum interests and the expansion of procurement, extension and other agricultural services.
2. All efforts shall be made to ensure food security and self reliance by expanding the coverage of the area under food crops. This shall be done by bringing dry lands and uncultivated lands under food production.
3. Women's cooperatives shall be given priority in leasing or sale of uncultivated lands for agro-forestry or integrated and biological farming
4. Technical and financial assistance shall be provided to adequate public investments in protective and micro-irrigation; land and soil conservation practices with a view to augment and increase the production of women farmers.

### **B) Labour and Livelihood**

1. Family labour and the unpaid work of women in all farm and non-farm activities shall be recognized and accounted for in Gross Domestic Product. All policies, research and evaluation activities of the state shall take note of such domestic and non-domestic activities supporting the agricultural sector.
2. Health care, childcare, and old age pension shall be provided to all women agricultural workers. All women agricultural workers shall be recognized and registered as workers for this purpose.

3. Seasonal and migrant women agricultural workers shall be accorded an appropriate status and given the same rights as other agricultural workers. Their rights shall be recognized in all policy statements, programmes and schemes.
4. Minimum and equal wages shall be enforced in all farm and non-farm activities in agriculture and allied activities. This shall be monitored by women representatives in panchayats.
5. In the context of the current food crisis primacy shall be given to the production of foodgrains by ensuring minimum support price, continuous and affordable supply of inputs, credit at minimum interests and the expansion of procurement, extension and other agricultural services. Landless women and workers with seasonal employment shall be given priority and provided opportunities for work throughout the year.
6. NREGA shall be reviewed to ensure that women's work in public worksites is recognized and minimum wages are paid to them.
7. Schemes shall be formed by state and central governments to subsidize and promote the formation of labour cooperatives and collective farming amongst women agricultural workers, especially the landless workers and marginal farmers.
8. The formation of cooperatives, group enterprises and SHG owned enterprises shall be promoted and subsidized in processing of agricultural produce.
9. Women agricultural workers shall be encouraged to undertake collective activities in non-farm sectors such as animal husbandry, forestry, and other activities through promotional schemes and subsidies.

### **C) Inputs for Agriculture and Allied Activities**

1. *Fertilizer and manures*: Public subsidies on chemical fertilizers and HYV seeds and pesticides shall be restored and additional support shall be given to women headed households, especially in areas where farmers suicides have occurred.

Production of vermi-compost and microbial fertilizers by women farmers and agricultural workers shall be promoted through SHG groups and SGSY schemes.

2. *Seeds and Nurseries*: Certified seeds shall be provided through the Krishi Vigyan Kendras. SHGs and SGSY groups shall be used and supported for women's nurseries for preparation of plantation materials.
3. *Bio Pesticides and Integrated Pest Management System*: Local units owned and run by women's groups, particularly landless women, shall be set up for production of bio pesticides. Training, infrastructure and working capital for integrated pest management systems shall be provided by the State Governments through different schemes and block development programmes.
4. *Water and Electricity Supply for Agriculture and Allied Activities*: Regulated and equitable supply of water and electricity shall be given to all women farmers at nominal rates. Single women headed households, small and marginal farmers, and landless women workers from allied sectors shall be provided water and electricity free of cost.
5. No Agency shall be allowed to impose user charges for water and electricity at rates higher than nominal rates set by the Government.

### **3. Agricultural Marketing and Trade**

#### **A) Policy Support for Market Protection**

1. Quantitative Restrictions and import duties shall be reinstated to ensure that agricultural markets are protected for women in trade and retail of agriculture and allied products.
2. APMC Acts shall be strengthened to ensure that markets for small farmers and women agricultural workers are protected from unfair competition by monopolies and corporations in retail and procurement of produce.



3. Speculation in the trade of food commodities essential to the health and nutrition of women shall be prohibited. This will help women in accessing food markets and essential commodities at affordable prices.

#### **B) Procurement of Agricultural Produce**

1. The scope and scale of FCI procurement shall be increased in order to ensure food security and self reliance in food. Public investment shall be made to expand the infrastructure of the Food Corporation of India in Central and Eastern India.
2. Linkages of the Food Corporation of India shall be made with women's SHGs for procuring agricultural produce from local mandis and areas where FCI does not have its own depots. Financial and infrastructural support shall be provided to these groups.
3. All- women mandis shall be set up in localities so that women primary producers can directly market their produce in urban and rural areas.
4. Coarse grains, cereals, pulses, oilseeds and other essential produce necessary for the sustenance, health and nutrition of women and children shall be brought under the procurement system. A minimum support price shall be administered for them.
5. A market price stabilization fund shall be created to counter the fluctuations of the open market. Budgetary support shall be provided for this purpose.

#### **C) Procurement of Produce of Allied Sector**

1. A Price Commission shall be set up to determine and administer minimum support prices for fodder, non timber forest produce, fish, poultry and livestock products.
2. Women's cooperatives and SHGs shall be formed and promoted to carry out procurement and trade in these products. They shall be linked to LAMPS and TRIFED in the forestry sector, and for dairy products with organizations like NDDB.

#### **D) Retail Marketing and Trade**

1. Policy and legislative support shall be provided to protect women vegetable and food grain retailers from unfair competition by emerging monopolies.
2. A universal public distribution system shall be set up to ensure that all families have an access to foodgrains at affordable rates. This shall be the first step to combat the grave threat to food security being faced by all rural and urban poor.
3. Markets shall be protected and food scarcity prevented by taking adequate steps against hoarding and monopolistic practices. Future trading shall be prohibited in all essential items and agricultural produce.
4. A network of women managed fair price shops shall be established to combat hunger and expand the scope and coverage of public distribution system to all hamlets and villages.
5. Women kisan haats shall be set up for direct marketing and retail by women producers.
6. Financial and tax incentives shall be provided to women retailers so that they can compete better in the market.
7. The market for semi-processed and processed agricultural produce and artisan products shall be supported by strengthening its linkages with the stores managed by KVIC and small scale industries cooperation.
8. The skills of women retailers shall be augmented through technical and credit support in all post harvest and processing operations. Women retailers shall be provided regular market information through field level schools and IT kiosks, and training in accounting, grading, packaging and other related activities.
9. Technical assistance shall be given to upgrade the practices of women retailers so that they can provide value added products at reasonable prices.

#### 4. **Agricultural Organisation, Science and Technology**

##### A. **Debt Relief, Rural Credit and Investment**

1. Debt Relief Commissions shall be formed at the state level in order to help indebted families facing agricultural distress especially in areas where there are repeated farmer suicides.
2. Women headed households, where women have been abandoned, deserted or rendered homeless because of farmers suicides will be given special assistance to become debt free.
3. State governments shall take steps to regulate and give special subsidies to ease the debt of women farmers who have taken loans from money lenders and micro finance institutions in the informal sector.
4. All institutions and individuals providing credit to rural households shall be registered at the block level. They shall have to provide credit at an interest rate that is comparable with and not higher than that of rural public sector banks.
5. All women farmers and workers in the allied sectors shall be provided rural credit for productive activities at an interest rate of 4 per cent irrespective of the size of their landholding.
6. Easy loans and subsidies shall be provided to aid the subsistence of women farmers and agricultural workers in case of crop failure or natural disasters.
7. Access of women to rural credit shall be facilitated through simple documentation procedures where proof of residence should suffice to get a loan.
8. Diversified credit portfolios shall be developed to include consumption loans for education, health and other basic needs. This will be done on the basis of an integrated approach for overall credit requirements of the family.

9. SHGs who are willing to invest in agricultural marketing, post harvest operations and cooperative/group enterprises in allied sectors shall be given initial and working capital through soft loans.
10. A Gram Mahila Welfare Fund shall be formed in order to create common health, education and child care facilities at worker sites for women workers in agriculture and allied sectors.
11. Crop insurance schemes at nominal premium rates shall be universally implemented. Small and marginal farmers, and single women headed households shall be provided insurance free of cost if they are unable pay nominal premium.
12. In order to protect farmers from the fluctuations of world market prices in agriculture in allied sectors, a market price stabilization fund shall be created by the Central Government as a part of its planned budgetary fund.

**B. Agricultural Extension**

1. Transparent monitoring systems shall be set up to periodically review the working and impact of the agricultural extension system and government schemes on women farmers and agricultural workers.
2. A cadre of women agricultural extension workers shall be created in order to ensure that women farmers have greater access to technology and knowledge that will reduce their labour time while increasing their productivity.
3. Women's knowledge of agriculture and allied sectors shall be recognized and integrated into the agricultural extension service.
4. Women SHGs shall be linked with the agricultural extension service in order to expand its scale and scope, particularly in areas of seed production, nurseries, application and production of bio fertilizers and pesticides, veterinary services, and post harvest operations.

5. Initiatives shall be taken to promote vocational education amongst rural women so that they can be better integrated into the agricultural extension system.
6. The linkages between agricultural universities and extension services shall be strengthened with particular reference to women's concerns.

**C. Research, Science and Technology**

1. A gender audit shall be done for all existing research and development programmes in agriculture and allied sectors. Evaluation of new experiments like biofarms, integrated and organic farming shall be done in order to gauge their impact on women's labour and work.
2. Science and technology organisations shall encourage and promote grass roots innovations and the development of need based technologies which reduce the drudgery of women.
3. Women's knowledge of biodiversity in agriculture and allied sectors shall be recognised, integrated and upgraded in all research and development programmes. This will be done especially with respect to seed selection, storage, vegetable production, production of economic and medicinal plants, livestock rearing, food processing, nutrition, health, hygiene, sanitation and environmental protection.
4. The skills of women artisans shall be upgraded by undertaking programmes of creative grassroots innovations which blend modern day technologies with local knowledge and practices in production of seeds and agricultural inputs, renewable energy resources, and integrated nutrient and pest management.
5. The sustainable management and use of common property resources shall be upgraded through transfer and development of appropriate technologies. SHGs shall be linked to extension services in order to ensure appropriate technology transfer in areas of renewable energy, drinking water and the development of fuel and fodder.



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State governments shall be encouraged to adopt suitable legislation for protecting biodiversity associated knowledge.



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**Constitution of the Expert Group on Draft National Policy for Women in Agriculture.**

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**Note on 'Jai Kisan – Draft National Policy for Farmers**

1. The Expert Group met three times altogether on 7.8.06, 24.8.06 and 31.8.06. The members present at the various meetings were Vandana Shiva, Joyoti Gupta, Shakti Kak and Smita Gupta, apart from the convenor of the group, Malini Bhattacharya, other members of NCW and officers of NCW. Hema Pande sent her suggestions by e-mail. The group agreed with most of the points made regarding women farmers and farm labourers in the draft policy, but felt that some of the points need to be contextualized and elaborated with reference to a gender-specific perspective. Also it was felt that crucial areas have been left out and these needs to be included. So the group decided that in stead of giving our comments on the paragraphs on women as they appear in the draft policy, we should prepare an integrated note on issues that would cover all the points made in the draft policy and also take care of the additional points we would like to include. All the members were requested to provide some inputs on specific issues in between the meetings and these were then discussed at the subsequent meetings. The present note has been prepared on the basis of these inputs provided by members and the deliberations on these inputs.
2. **The new context of agriculture:** We felt very strongly that at the present moment, on account of changes in national and international economy and changes in international terms of trade, we are in the middle of a severe agrarian crisis. The distress in the countryside and the farmer's suicides that the draft policy refers to have to be seen in this context (2.1.3-2.1.5). Even for an understanding of the gender-aspect in the agricultural sector, this context has to be brought in. We propose that the draft policy should have a section on this. The needs of women farmers and farm workers as well as the peasantry as a whole at the present moment have to be seen in the context of the withdrawal of state intervention from the arena of food security, livelihood security and security of land rights, that is direct fallout of the above-mentioned changes. The two most vulnerable groups here are tribals and dalits with women and the girl-child bearing a disproportionate share of hunger and food shortage. With falling purchasing power malnutrition is becoming endemic in many regions. Targeting has seriously undermined the public distribution system and hence nutritional standards. Universal PDS has to be restored. We have felt that this whole issue of food security in the countryside should be addressed squarely by the draft policy. Education, health and services for women such as crèches also require adequate government investment (2.4.8.2.2) and a robust public system. Other issues impacting women like seed patents, marketing of agricultural and other produces, land alienation and dislocation about which we shall talk in the subsequent paragraphs, are all linked to the new context in agriculture in a similar manner and this is why this point should be included in the policy.



3. **Right to assets :** The draft policy only addresses land rights (2.4.8.2). Apart from land, the other two common resources in which women have had a major role to play are biodiversity and water. In addition is the issue of housing rights for women. In the new situation new patent laws, bio-piracy and privatization of seed production and conservation are jeopardizing women's seed rights. Similarly the privatization of water resources and their diversification from rural to urban sector and from agriculture to industry is leading to deprivation and back-breaking labour for women. So we would propose that the draft policy includes proposals to set up seed farms and seed banks in villages apart from state farms as proposed in the draft policy, to protect women's expertise in seed breeding and conservation, that community bio-diversity registers are maintained at the village level to document traditional knowledge a great deal of which lies with women and that conservation of water as a common resource is promoted at the village level and women are involved in its management as well.

We welcome the recommendation in the draft policy that joint *pattas* should be issued speedily (2.4.8.2.2), and at the same time propose that the draft policy identifies the factors which stand in the way of implementation of joint *pattas* and propose measures for removing these. For instance, making the joint title provision applicable to all *pattas* given earlier may be considered; women's signatures have to be made compulsory on the title; beneficiaries may be prioritized by making provision for single *pattas* for women who are deserted, widowed, divorced and single unmarried women of the household after exhaustion of joint *pattas* and where surplus land remains available for distribution; devolution of joint *pattas* may be clearly worked out so that the daughter's right to parent's property is equally protected; legal guidelines may be worked out for independent access and control over joint holding in case of dissolution of marriage .

The other issue pertaining to women's land rights is that of the vanishing of the commons as a result of privatization and taking over of land by large companies. This has led to a drastic decline in access to fodder, fuel, basic nutritional resources etc. As a matter of fact, the draft policy should mention not only the vanishing of the commons, but the massive phenomenon of land alienation in the agrarian sector. Instead of setting up rural technology parks (3.7.4.75), which would mean more acquisition of common land and acquisition of land from farmers just like handing over of lands to private mining interests, setting up of racing tracks, golf courses etc; our proposal is to preserve the commons wherever possible and to allow access to women so that these may be developed in a participatory manner to provide the women in the area with the resources mentioned above. Sometimes the government has used the concept of wasteland to acquire land for industries for example the Tatas being handed over such lands in Orissa. Environmental Impact assessment carried out by independent researchers have shown how such "wastelands were being used by hundreds of rural families for collection and cultivation of medicinal plants – a knowledge base and livelihood that has been destroyed. Perhaps there is a need to rework the concept of wasteland as developed under the colonial period in order to benefit the local needs of the farmer (3.2.5.47-48).

4. **Agricultural prices and cost of living:** While cost of food has risen drastically over the last 15 years, the prices of agricultural commodities have been falling systematically. We think that there are 3 factors behind this: a) withdrawal of government from procurement and guaranteed minimum support prices, b) removal of quantitative restrictions leading to dumping, and c) emergence of monopolies allowing agribusiness to dictate terms to farmers. The consequent distress has affected women in many different ways such as difficulty in providing the family with its minimum nutritional needs, migration among both males and females, cases of farmer suicide leading to an increase in destitute female-headed households etc. Unless the Government has an active policy for procurement of agricultural commodities and unless a policy in minimum support price is there, the agrarian crisis would be likely to continue jeopardizing livelihood of women farmers, as well as of peasants in general. Instead of a Gram Panchayat Mahila Fund (1.3.3.d), we may think of having a special Panchayat Fund for community activities involving both men and women.
5. **Displacement through land acquisition** This is a problem which specially affects women because it often tears apart family life and destroys a home environment that has been in place for generations. The increase in female migration in recent years is at least partly a result of land alienation and displacement and makes women vulnerable to crimes like trafficking and bonded labour. This is what forces women labourers to be at the mercy of contractors and to work for abysmally low wages in atrocious working conditions in an unfamiliar situation. The draft policy should address this problem and should propose measures for their protection. We suggest that wherever such displacement is taking place, women farmers should have a participatory role in the negotiations and there should be equity not just in the compensation being provided, but also in guarantees of future possibilities of livelihood from the project for which land is being acquired. Minimum wages have to be ensured for all work and gender-based wage differentials have to be removed.
6. **Credit and marketing for agri-products and agro-industries** We share the concerns voiced in the draft policy regarding access to institutional credit (3.1.27) and feel that the situation is particularly difficult for women . For one thing, women do not have title to land or homestead houses and this disqualifies them from institutional credit sources. They have a poor resource base and only traditional skills. Also, the overarching need for consumption loans by poor and needy families keeps them in total subordination to the powerful in the village. We propose that what is required is an integrated approach to the overall credit requirements of a poor family. Delinking of institutional credit from land title is essential. Again credit / bank portfolios have to provide for diversified activities and needs including consumption loans and loans against sudden calamities. There should be no collaterals for loans for women. Products made by women with local resources and traditional skills should be promoted wherever possible by providing training, credit and space for marketing for primary producers. A group-based approach to financing and appraisal of business activities may be taken. However private banks interest rates on such loans extended to groups need

- to be regulated and kept in line with the interest rates of the national banks. Apart from this, we fully support what the draft says in 2.4.8.2.1.
7. **Tribal women** In section 2.4.8.3, the draft talks of tribal farmers. The role taken by women in agricultural activities of tribal communities is crucial. They are also some of the most affected by land alienation, poverty and displacement. We agree with most of the proposals in the section generally but would suggest inclusion of a paragraph on tribal women and their traditional knowledge and skills and their share of role in preserving bio-diversity. The need to provide necessary facilities for forest-producers by way of conserving forest resources to be accessed and used by them is crucial. Community management of seed, water and land in tribal areas needs to be protected and to prevent exploitation by contractors, facilities for production and marketing have to be provided. We agree that candle-making, tomato sauce-making and making of bead necklaces can be a total wastage of time and resources, but we would like to add that this cannot be remedied simply by providing market tie-ups so long as the local resources and skills are not tapped and local market demands are not addressed. Bio-diversity of tribal areas should be protected through participatory plant-breeding and seed management (2.4.8.3.6). Ecological/organic agriculture zones where ‘quality seeds’ may be produced by tribal women themselves should be developed. Also eco-friendly products by them may be procured, given market support and exempted from taxation.
  8. **Knowledge and technology** Section 3.7.4.73 addresses this question, but it does not recognize the exceptional skills and knowledge women possess in food and agriculture. This, as well as the patriarchal bias in how ‘intellectual property’ is defined and used has to be recognized. Such traditional knowledge has often been the object of bio-piracy and needs to be protected. Systems of common intellectual heritage and rights have to be addressed for this. Where new technology is making traditional skills redundant, training has to be provided for women. It is certainly not our intention that women should be kept confined to traditional skills and expertise, or that preserving these should be seen as their responsibility only. Such restriction is also likely to make them vulnerable to exploitation by new organically-grown seed private companies. They should therefore have full access to new technologies, but the moot point is to see that they can use their traditional as well as new skills in a way that would help them to protect and improve their livelihood as well as their existing resources on their own initiative We would also like to emphasize that technology that is appropriate for a particular economy and particular communities should be prioritized.
  9. **Livestock** (3.5.9.0) Women’s crucial role as primary producers of milk and dairy products and the threat to their livelihoods through import of cheap subsidized buttermilk has to be recognized. Common land for grazing should be conserved. The cooperative model in livestock farming should be promoted.

10. **Personal laws** All personal laws should have a component of women's land rights.

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Annexure: III

**Table 1: Number of Workers by Usual Status and Annual Growth during 1983 to 2005.**

		Employment (Millions)				Annual Growth Rate (Per Cent)			
		1983	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	1983 to 1993-94	1993-94 to 2004-05	1993-94 to 1999-2000	1999-2000 to 2004-05
Rural	Male	153.9	187.8	196.7	219.0	1.91	1.41	0.78	2.17
	Female	90.6	104.7	104.0	124.0	1.39	1.55	-0.11	3.58
	<b>Total</b>	244.4	292.5	300.7	343.1	1.72	1.46	0.47	2.67
Urban	Male	47.2	64.6	77.0	90.4	3.04	3.10	2.98	3.25
	Female	12.2	17.2	19.0	24.0	3.36	3.08	1.65	4.82
	<b>Total</b>	59.4	81.8	96.0	114.4	3.10	3.10	2.70	3.57
Total	Male	201.1	252.4	273.8	309.4	2.19	1.87	1.37	2.48
	Female	102.7	121.9	123.0	148.0	1.64	1.78	0.15	3.78
	<b>Total</b>	303.8	374.3	396.7	457.5	2.01	1.84	0.98	2.89

**Note:** Economic and Political Weekly, Volume XLII No 3, dated: January 20-26, 2007, titled: Growth of Employment (1993-94 to 2004-05): Illusion of Inclusiveness? By J. Unni and G. Raveendran.

<b>Table (2) : Percentage of females of age 5 years and above usually engaged in domestic duties (principal status) and carrying out specified activities at all India level.</b>							
S.No.	Specified additional activities	<b>Rural</b>			<b>Urban</b>		
		with ss work*	without ss work**	all***	with ss work*	without ss work**	all***
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1	Maintenance of kitchen garden, etc.	18.2	14.3	15.2	6.4	3	3.2
2	Work in hh.poultry, etc.	59.5	25	32.8	24	2.8	4.1
3	Either 1 or 2	63.7	29.7	37.4	26.3	5.2	6.4
4	free collection of fish,etc.	22.6	14.4	16.3	4.5	1.1	1.3
5	Free collection of firewood,etc.	56.7	34.6	39.6	18.6	5.3	6.1
6	Either item 4 or 5	59	36.2	41.4	19.7	5.6	6.4
7	<b>Any of items ,1, 2, 4 or 5[category-(4)]</b>	<b>86.1</b>	<b>50.8</b>	<b>58.8</b>	<b>35.8</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>11.1</b>
8	Husking of paddy(own produce)	11	8.3	8.9	2.5	0.3	0.4
9	Grinding foodgrain (own produce)	9.9	6.8	7.5	1.2	0.5	0.5
10	Preparation of gur (own produce)	0.3	0.3	0.3	0	0	0
11	Preservation of meat (own produce)	0.7	0.9	0.9	0.1	0.1	0.1
12	Making basket,etc.(own produce)	2.6	2.4	2.5	0.3	0.1	0.2
13	<b>Any of items 8 to 12[category-(ii)]</b>	<b>17.4</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>1</b>
14	<b>Any of items 1,2,4,5 &amp; 8 to 12[category-(i) or (ii)]</b>	<b>86.9</b>	<b>53.5</b>	<b>61.1</b>	<b>36.1</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>11.5</b>
15	Husking of paddy (acquired)	4	5.2	5	3.1	2.6	2.7
16	Grinding foodgrain (acquired)	5.9	7.7	7.3	5.6	6.8	6.7
17	Preparation of gur(acquired)	2.2	3.8	3.4	1.9	1.6	1.6
18	Preservation of meat, etc.(acquired)	2.7	4.8	4.3	2.4	2.8	2.8
19	Making basket, etc.(acquired)	2.8	4.8	4.3	2.5	2.4	2.4
20	any of items 15 to 19	8.3	11.6	10.9	7.3	8.6	8.5

21	Any of items 1,2,4,5,8-12 & 15 to 19	87.8	57.5	64.4	40.1	17.3	18.7
22	Preparing cowdung cakes	65.9	40.1	46	26	4.7	6
23	Sewing, Tailoring, etc.	30.2	26.8	27.6	38.4	24.9	25.7
24	Free tutoring of own/others' children	5.2	7.2	6.7	13.6	12.6	12.6
25	bringing water from outside hh. Premises	54	41.7	44.5	31.5	19.3	20.1
26	Bringing water from outside village						
	a)Distance up to 1km.	1.3	0.8	0.9	-	-	-
	b)Distance 2-5km.	4	0.3	0.3	-	-	-
	c)Distance 6km & above	0	0	0	-	-	-
	d) All	1.7	1.1	1.2	-	-	-
27	<b>Any of items 1,2,4,5,8-12 &amp; 15-19 &amp; 22-26</b>	96.7	<b>80.8</b>	84.4	76.8	51.9	53.4
	<b>Percentage of women engaged in domestic duties .</b>	9	30.7	39.7	3	46.8	49.8

\* females engaged in domestic duties in principal status ( codes: 92 &93) but were workers in subsidiary status ( codes: 11 to 51).

\*\* females engaged in domestic duties in principal status ( codes 92&93) but were not workers in subsidiary status.

\*\*\*All females engaged in domestic duties in principal status irrespective of whether they were workers in subsidiary status or not.

#### Note

1. Usual Principal activity status: The activity status on which a person spent relatively longer time during the 365 days preceding the date of the survey.

2. Usual subsidiary economic activity status: A person whose usual principal status was determined on the basis of the major time criterion could have pursued some economic activity for a shorter time throughout the reference year of 365 days preceding the date of the survey or for minor period, which is not less than 30 days, during the reference year.

3. Category(i): Activities relating to agricultural production like maintenance of kitchen garden, work in household poultry, dairy, etc., including free collection of agricultural products for household consumption.

4. Category (ii): Processing of primary products produced by the households for household consumption.

5. Category (iii): Other activities for own consumption but resulting in economic benefits to the households.

**Source:** NSSO Report No.518(61/10/4); Participation of Women in Specified Activities alongwith Domestic Duties; 61st Round; July 2004- June 2005.

<b>Table (3) : Percentage of females engaged in domestic duties at States/ UT level (according to usual principal status).</b>							
S.No.	State/Uts	Rural		Urban		Rural+Urban	
		15 years and above	5 years and above	15 years and above	5 years and above	15 years and above	5 years and above
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1	Andhra Pradesh	28.0	22.7	54.3	43.7	34.9	28.2
2	Arunachal Pradesh	22.7	17.1	56.0	40.2	26.9	20.0
3	Assam	69.9	51.1	68.3	52.1	69.8	51.2
4	Bihar	76.8	54.6	73.3	51.3	76.4	54.3
5	Chattisgarh	25.2	19.8	59.6	47.2	30.9	24.0
6	Delhi	83.4	53.9	66.0	52.8	67.1	52.9
7	Goa	58.2	47.8	58.6	48.7	58.4	48.1
8	Gujarat	46.6	37.9	69.3	55.8	54.4	43.9
9	Haryana	66.8	51.5	66.6	53.3	66.7	52.0
10	Himachal Pradesh	26.4	20.9	45.0	35.7	28.0	22.1
11	Jammu & Kashmir	73.9	55.7	70.2	53.8	72.9	55.2
12	Jharkhand	54.0	41.1	63.4	49.6	55.8	42.6
13	Karnataka	32.6	26.5	60.4	48.8	41.2	33.3
14	kerala	47.8	39.8	48.6	40.9	48.0	40.1
15	Madhya Pradesh	41.8	31.4	65.6	49.9	47.7	35.8
16	Maharashtra	28.7	22.9	61.2	49.2	41.8	33.3
17	Manipur	45.5	36.3	53.5	40.9	47.4	37.4
18	Meghalaya	13.6	9.9	27.6	21.4	15.9	11.7
19	Mizoram	28.9	22.0	36.5	28.3	32.1	24.6
20	Nagaland	28.5	21.6	41.4	31.9	32.5	24.7
21	Orissa	55.2	44.1	59.3	47.2	55.7	44.5
22	Punjab	78.5	61.5	66.3	53.6	74.5	59.0
23	Rajasthan	48.1	36.4	65.6	47.9	52.4	39.2
24	Sikkim	34.6	25.6	59.0	47.0	37.5	28.0
25	Tamilnadu	29.7	24.1	53.3	44.0	38.9	31.7
26	Tripura	67.6	52.7	56.5	47.2	65.9	51.9
27	Uttaranchal	38.9	29.7	63.0	49.7	45.0	34.4
28	Uttar Pradesh	68.4	49.3	72.5	52.8	69.2	50.0
29	West Bengal	72.8	54.5	69.2	57.6	71.8	55.3
30	A & N Islands	57.6	46.7	61.3	48.1	58.9	47.2
31	Chandigarh	79.0	60.4	60.1	48.2	61.7	49.3
32	Dadra Nagar Haveli	56.5	42.8	81.4	66.7	59.5	45.5
33	Daman & Diu	67.6	53.5	51.9	44.1	60.9	49.7
34	Lakshdweep	72.7	55.6	61.4	47.9	66.6	51.5
35	Pondicherry	40.6	35.3	59.9	47.9	52.7	43.4
	<b>All India</b>	51.8	39.7	63.1	49.8	54.8	42.3

**Source:** NSSO Report No.518(61/10/4); Participation of Women in Specified Activities alongwith Domestic Duties; 61st Round; July 2004- June 2005.