



## ROLE OF RURAL WOMEN IN AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY: A CASE STUDY IN FAISALABAD DISTRICT

*Saddia Rashid, Izhar Ahmed Khan\*, Babar Shahbaz\*\*, Muhammad Luqman\*\*\* and Ayesha Chaudhry\*\*\*\**

### ABSTRACT

A study was conducted in the Department of Rural Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan during the year 2013. The objective was to explore multiple role of rural women in agricultural and livestock related activities and contribution towards household food security in Faisalabad district. Multistage random sampling technique was adopted for the selection of respondents. At first stage one tehsil (Faisalabad) was selected out of total 6 tehsils. At 2<sup>nd</sup> stage two union councils were selected from the selected tehsil and at 3<sup>rd</sup> stage six villages were selected from each of selected union council. From each of selected village 10 rural females were selected and interviewed. The total sample size of study was 120 respondents. The findings showed that simple majority (30.8%) of the respondents was illiterate. Rural women of the study area were involved in variety of crop production related activities but their involvement rate was the highest in fodder cutting where more than 80 percent of respondents were involved. Among different livestock production related activities their involvement rate was highest in dung collection and watering as well as bathing of animals as reported by more than 35 percent of the respondents. It was also concluded that slightly more than half of the respondents (51.7%) were involved in preserving food. Low agricultural productivity, lack of storage facilities and low purchasing power were perceived as the major causes of food insecurity in the study area as reported by more than half (50.0%) of the respondents.

**KEYWORDS:** Rural women; status; agriculture; activities; household; food supply; Pakistan

Household food security (HFS) as a concept refers to the capability when the people or households have sufficient resources either to produce their food or buy in order to meet the dietary needs of their family members for healthy and active life. Such access is likely to be vulnerable in economic crises. The linkage of women role and food security is very well known now. Rural women play a very important role as food producer, processors, traders, and income earner but in Pakistan their low social and economic status limit their access to education, skill training, land ownership, decision making and financial services.

Hunger is a fact of human society for many decades. Food crisis is hurting the millions of people all over the world especially in Africa, South Asia and parts of Latin America (2). Food security may be defined as "Availability at all

times of adequate world food supplies of basic food stuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption an offset fluctuation in production and prices" (12); while according to another study (1) access of all people at all times to enough food for healthy and active lifestyle is refers to food security.

At household level food security is condition when all individuals in a household have a year round access to adequate quantity and diversity of safe and healthy food to lead a healthy and active life. In the farming communities, role of women in subsistence production ensures the survival of millions of people around the globe. Women's activities and strategies to support the means of food security are diverse and complex from cleaning of seeds and cultivating fields, livestock raring to home gardening etc. But their contribution

\*Department of Rural Sociology,  
\*\*Institute of Agri. Extension  
and Rural Development,  
University of Agriculture,  
Faisalabad, \*\*\*Department  
of Agri. Extension and Rural  
Development, University College  
of Agriculture, University of  
Sargodha, \*\*\*\*Department of  
Sociology, Government College  
University, Faisalabad, Pakistan.  
**Article received on:**  
24/03/2015  
**Accepted for publication:**  
22/06/2016

is not recognized by conventional agricultural scientists and policy makers. Women produce 50 percent of food of worldwide while it is 80-90 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa, 60 percent in Asia and 40 percent in Latin America. On average their work days are 50 percent longer (7).

The recent evidences at global level indicate that women in the rural areas are more active in agriculture and live stock activities as compared to males to protect the household food needs. The feminization of agriculture is referred for women's active participation in agriculture giving the women the same access to physical and human resources as men, there will be the boom in agriculture productivity. In Pakistan a huge proportion (68%) of population living in rural areas relay on agriculture for their livelihood. Livestock and crop sector share near about 28 and 24 percent in rural family income respectively. In rural area of Pakistan economic access to food is threatened by individual differences in landholding skills education attainment, decreasing size of landholding due to over population and economy failure to generate new jobs in agriculture sector (5).

Keeping in view the role and importance of rural women in household's food security the present study was conducted in Faisalabad district to assess the contribution of rural women in agricultural and livestock activities and household food insecurity.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted at Faisalabad Pakistan during the year 2013. The universe of the present study was district Faisalabad. Non-experimental survey research design was used and survey was cross-sectional in nature. Probability sampling design was adopted using multistage simple random sampling procedure. District Faisalabad comprises six tehsils. Out of these one tehsil was selected randomly. At the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of sampling two union councils were randomly selected from the already selected tehsil. From each of selected union councils, six villages were selected randomly and from each of selected

village 10 rural females were finally selected as the respondents. Thus, total sample size of the study was 120 respondents.

Structured interview schedule was used as the research instrument in this study. The validity of the instrument was checked through a panel of experts of University of Agriculture, Faisalabad. And the reliability of instrument was checked through Cronbach's Alpha. The collected data were coded in Microsoft excel and analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Keeping in view the nature and objectives of study, descriptive statistics was used.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data (Table 1) depict that 30.8 percent of the respondents were illiterate, 18.3 percent were primary pass only 10 percent possessed middle class level education and 23.3 percent were matriculated, 17.5 percent were FA or above level of education. According to the report of Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey 2012-13, overall literacy rate in rural areas of district Faisalabad is 64.0 percent (72.0% for male 56.0% for female). So the present results varied slightly from these figures quoted by Government of Pakistan (3). Education is considered the most important single policy mechanism to reduce poverty and increase agriculture productivity. Women's education also leads to low fecundity and child mortality as well as improved health condition. Women health and nutrition demonstrates most widely intergenerational payoffs in investing women human capital particularly education as reported earlier (2).

**Table 1. Distribution of the respondents according to their education**

Education	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	37	30.8
Primary	22	18.3
Middle	12	10.0
Matric	28	23.3
FA & above	21	17.5
Total	120	100.0

### Crop production related activities performed by rural female

Table 2 presents the women participation in agriculture activities for household food security. The results indicate that little more than one fifth (23.3%) of the respondents participated in sowing operation and same proportion of respondent contributed in seed preparation. About one fifth of the respondents (20%) performed wheat sowing, 22.5 percent of the respondents always participated in vegetable sowing. Cutting of fodder was the major activity carried out by the women. Other activities included picking of cotton, striping of sugarcane, storing food, cleaning of grains, etc. This showed that rural females in study area are involved in variety of agricultural activities. These findings are supported by Sadaf (9) who reported the involvement of rural women in different agricultural and livestock related activities. She further narrated that contribution made by women in agriculture is always under-appreciated by the national and international society/forums.

### Livestock production related activities performed by rural female

Livestock is a major component of rural livelihood system in Punjab. Most of the rural families keep livestock animal to meet their household needs. The results (Table 3) revealed that 27.5 percent of the respondents always performed fodder transportation, 34.2 percent participated in feeding activity; while 36.7, 7.5, 34.2, 6.7, 34.2, 36.7 and 35.0 percent participate in watering, grazing, milking, milk processing, cleaning cattle shed, bathing, and dung collection activities respectively. The findings of present study are in line with those of Javed *et al.* (6). They concluded that participation of rural women is not restricted to crop related activities. Besides crop production, women are actively involved in a number of livestock production related activities. Similarly, Shehbaz *et al.* (10) argued that females play a very important role in livestock production activities, however; they have very least access to livestock as well as agricultural extension services.

**Table 2. Distribution of the respondents according to their participation in agricultural activities**

Crop related activities	Always		Sometimes		Never	
	Freq.	Percentage	Freq.	Percentage	Freq.	Percentage
Sowing operation	28	23.3	2	1.7	90	75.0
Preparation of seeds	28	23.3	2	1.7	90	75.0
Wheat sowing	24	20.0	2	1.7	94	78.3
Sugarcane sowing	21	17.5	10	8.3	89	74.2
Vegetable sowing	27	22.5	6	5.0	87	72.5
Vegetable picking	25	20.8	7	5.8	88	73.3
Vegetable packing	2	1.7	7	5.8	111	92.5
Vegetable marketing	2	1.7	9	7.5	109	90.8
Cutting of wheat	20	16.7	6	5.0	94	78.3
Binding of sheaves	25	20.8	11	9.2	84	70.0
Threshing of wheat	23	19.2	7	5.8	90	75.0
Cleaning of grains	21	17.5	11	9.2	88	73.3
Cotton picking	16	13.3	13	10.8	91	75.8
Sugarcane striping	16	13.3	9	7.5	95	79.2
Storing	12	10.0	13	10.8	95	79.2
Cutting of fodder in field	99	82.5	8	6.7	13	10.8

### Food preservation

Food preservation is an essential component of food security. In order to achieve the targets of food security, food preservation play a key role (11). The data (Table 4) depict that little more than half of respondents (51.7%) preserved food and 48.3 percent never perform that activity. Biological

absorption of food in the body is highly affected by preparation of food and health condition of a individual which depends upon sanitation, clean drinking water and knowledge about food storage, basic nutrition and processing. Further, preference of food is very important factor in food security that dependent on social and religious norms.

**Table 3. Distribution of the respondents according to their contribution in livestock management activities**

Livestock management activities	Always		Sometimes		Never	
	Freq.	Percentage	Freq.	Percentage	Freq.	Percentage
Fodder transportation	33	27.5	6	5.0	81	67.5
Feeding	41	34.2	13	10.8	66	55.0
Watering	44	36.7	14	11.7	62	51.7
Grazing	9	7.5	8	6.7	103	85.8
Milking	41	34.2	19	15.8	60	50.0
Milking processing	8	6.7	14	11.7	98	81.7
Cleaning cattle shed	41	34.2	11	9.2	68	56.7
Bathing	44	36.7	17	14.2	59	49.2
Dung collection	42	35.0	15	12.5	63	52.5

**Table 4. Distribution of the respondents according to the preserve food**

Preserve food	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	62	51.7
No	58	48.3
Total	120	100.0

Respondents were asked to give their opinion regarding causes of food insecurity. According to results huge majority (71.7%) of the respondents thought that food smuggling is cause of food insecurity; while 65.0 percent considered that inadequate supply of eatable food is a major cause of food crises (Table 5). Likewise 58.3, 53.3 and 45.0 percent perceived that that low agriculture production, low purchasing power and

lack of storage facilities are other causes of food insecurity. In Chatterjee (4) also argued that low purchasing power or lack of sufficient economic resources was the major reason for poor availability and access to nutritious food around the globe. Similarly Saad (8) also reported that poor access to economic resources by majority of rural poor lead to food insecurity in these areas.

**Table 5. Distribution of the respondents according to their opinion about the causes of food insecurity**

Causes	Too little		Little		To much	
	Freq.	Percentage	Freq.	Percentage	Freq.	Percentage
Smuggling of food	29	24.2	5	4.2	86	71.7
Inadequate supply of food	13	10.8	29	24.2	78	65.0
Low agriculture productivity	22	18.3	28	23.3	70	58.3
Low purchasing power	16	13.3	44	36.7	64	53.3
Lack of storage facilities	32	26.7	34	28.3	54	45.0

## CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded that majority of respondents (women) were illiterate. Respondent have large families and low income level. Respondents were heavily engaged with agricultural related activities especially sowing operations, cutting and threshing of wheat, cutting of fodder, cotton picking, sugarcane stripping, etc. Likewise majority

of the females was involved in different livestock related activities such as feeding, watering, milking, grazing, dung cake preparation, etc. Most of the respondents were involved in preservation of household food. Smuggling, inadequate supply, low agricultural productivity, low purchasing power and lack of storage facilities were reported as some of major causes of food insecurity.

**REFERENCE**

1. Anon. 2003. Food Security in Rural Pakistan, World Food Program (WFP) Pakistan, Islamabad.
2. Anon. 2010. International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) Policy Brief, 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2010, USA.
3. Anon. 2013. Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) 2012-13 Provincial/District. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad.
4. Chatterjee, B.1998.Trade Liberalization and food security; Briefing Paper No. 6 Consumer Unity and Trust Society, Jaipur, India.
5. Avila, V. 2011. The future of food security lies in the hands of women farmers. International Policy Center for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), Brasil.
6. Javed, A., S. Sadaf, and M. Luqman. 2006. Rural women’s participation in crop and livestock production activities in Faisalabad – Pakistan. *J. Agric. Soc. Sci.* 2(3):150-154.
7. Ramachandran, N. 2006. Women and Food Security in South Asia: Current Issues and Emerging Concerns. United Nation University, World Institute for Development and Economic Research. [www.globalfoodsec.net/static/text](http://www.globalfoodsec.net/static/text) (accessed on May, 2012).
8. Saad, M. 2004. Food Security for the Food-Insecure: New challenges and Renewed Commitments. Center for Development Studies, University College Dublin, Ireland December 2004.
9. Sadaf, S. 2005. Need for Agricultural Extension Services for Rural Women. M.Sc. (Hons.) thesis, Department of Agri. Extension, Division of Education and Extension, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan.
10. Shahbaz, B., T. Ali, I. A. Khan and M. Ahmad. 2010. An analysis of the problems faced by farmers in the mountains of Northwest Pakistan: Challenges for agri. extension. *Pak. J. Agri. Sci.*, 47(4), 415-418.
11. Pinstrup, A. 2009. Food security: definition and measurement. *Food Security* 1:5-7.
12. Thomson, A.M. and M. Metz. 1997. Implication for economic policy for food security. Training Material for Agriculture Planning 40.Agriculture policy Support Service Policy Assessment Division, Food and Agriculture Organization, Rome, Italy.

**CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS**

<b>Saddia Rashid</b>	<b>Planned and conducted research</b>
<b>Izhar Ahmed Khan</b>	<b>Reviewed the article and data collection tool as Supervisor</b>
<b>Babar Shahbaz</b>	<b>Reviewed the article and data collection tool as Co-supervisor/member</b>
<b>Muhammad Luqman</b>	<b>Field data collection and analysis</b>
<b>Ayesha Chaudhry</b>	<b>Prepared draft paper and critically reviewed the manuscript</b>