

Training Needs of Rural Women in Eri Culture in Assam Province

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Abstract-Rural women in Assam are actively involved in eri culture and being considered it as a subsidiary occupational venture. The women farmers are generally traditionally bound in respect of knowledge and skills being used in eri culture. Hence, imparting training of women on improved practices of eri culture is exist as a gap to be filled. Training is an effective tool for improving ability of the women to do their vocation more efficiently. A good understanding of needs of the farmers is fundamental to make the training programme successful and hence, an assessment of the needs of the farmers was made in the year 2008 for designing the relevant means of training to meet them. The study has also focused on level of knowledge and skills of the women farmers in different activities of eri culture. From the study, it could be observed that majority of the women involved in spinning of eri silk (92.7%) followed by silkworm egg production and silkworm rearing (86.0%), marketing of produces (74.0%) and disinfection of rearing house and rearing appliances (45.3%). Involvement of women in host plant cultivation and management was found very less (4.0%). The study also inferred that level of knowledge and skills of the women farmers was considerably low and the training need was more prominent almost in all the improved practices. The women desired to have practical training at the Research Institute for a period of one or two weeks with the facilities like free boarding, stipend, transportation, exposure visit and teaching through audio-visual aids using local language.

Keyword- 'Eri culture, women farmer, knowledge, skill and training'needs.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sericulture is an integral part of the rural economy and providing gainful employment opportunity particularly to the small and marginal farmers. Assam is one of the traditional states where commercial exploitation of all four type of sericulture viz. eri, muga, mulberry and tassar is enduring since time immemorial. In sericulture, eri culture is mostly popular among the rural women folk and being considered as a subsidiary occupational venture of the family. Eri silkworm is reared in indoor condition and hence, women can play a significant role during rearing and post-rearing activities as it is well synchronized with the other household activities of the women. The women farmers are actively associated in leaf harvesting, silkworm rearing, harvesting of cocoons, spinning of spun yarn and also marketing of produces. In the recent past, both the central and local governments have made several efforts for growth and development of the eri industry in the state.

Various improved technologies were also developed for increasing production and productivity in eri culture. Continuous efforts are also being made for effective dissemination of the technologies to the farmer's field. But, there is still exist gap between real and potential production of eri culture. The main reason attributed to low production is non-adoption of improved practices of eri culture by most of the farmers. The women farmers are generally traditionally bound in respect of knowledge and skills being used in eri culture. Hence, imparting training of women on improved practices of eri culture is exist as a gap to be filled. A good understanding of needs of the farmers is fundamental to make the training programme successful and hence, it is require to be assessed the needs of the farmers for designing the relevant means of training to meet them. Keeping view of the above, a study was conducted to asses the training needs of women eri farmers during 2008 in Assam. The study has also focused on level of knowledge and skills of the women farmers in different activities of eri culture.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in five eri growing districts namely, Jorhat, Golaghat, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh and Udalguri in Assam purposively selected for ensuring the accuracy. A total of 150 women eri farmers were identified utilizing the random sampling technique. To know the participation in different activities, level of knowledge, skills, importance of training needs on recommended technologies and various aspects of training needs of eri farmers, data were collected from the respondents through personal contact method with the help of a specially structured interview schedule. Simple frequency counts were utilized to distribute the farmers in different activities and various aspects of training needs of the respondents. To determine the level of knowledge, skills and training needs of the respondents scoring method adopted by Farinde and Ajayi (2005) was followed. Each of the activities was rated on five-point scale and the weighted mean score of the respondents were calculated. The scores 3.0 points and above rated as high and score less than 3.0 points rated as low.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1) *Distribution of women in different activities of eri culture :*

Data presented in the Table – 1, show that the women performed all the activities of eri culture . Majority of the women were involved in spinning of eri silk (92.7%) followed by silkworm egg production and silkworm rearing

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(86.0%). Involvement of women in disinfection of rearing house and rearing appliances was 45.3% while in marketing of eri pupae and cocoon involvement was 74.0%. Similar finding was also reported by Sen *et al* (1994) that in Assam 60% tribal women attend all the activities of eri silkworm rearing such as leaf plucking, feeding of worms, bed cleaning, collection of dry leaves for spinning and lastly harvesting. They also reported that participation of tribal women in the marketing of eri cocoons was more than tribal men. Above activities are very much suited to the physical strength of the women and need not to be adhered continuously. In major agricultural crops also women generally contribute more in the light agriculture operations. The reasons behind this may be the less physical strength of women than men (Chaudhury *et al*. 2007). However, very less involvement of women in host plant cultivation and management was recorded (4.0%). The activities such as land preparation, pit digging, erection of fencing, transplantation of seedlings, application of fertilizers, plant protection against pest and diseases are hard and need skills. That is why, men normally attend these works as they have more physical strength and skills than women counterpart.

2) Knowledge and skills of the women eri farmers

Present study revealed that mean scores for knowledge of women farmers in all the improved technologies of eri culture had low except in late instars silkworm rearing Data presented in the Table -2 indicates that mean score of knowledge was 2.21 in host plant cultivation and management, 1.91 for disinfection of rearing house and rearing appliances, 1.54 for production of disease free silkworm's egg, 2.86 for early instars eri silkworm rearing, 2.72 for silkworms pest and disease management and 1.50 for spinning of eri silk through motorized spinning device. The mean scores in knowledge of women farmers for late instars silkworm rearing was recorded to be 3.26 which was categorized as high. Similarly, mean scores for skills of women farmers for all the improved technologies of eri culture had found low. Mean score of skills was 2.64 in host plant cultivation and management followed by 2.40 in late instars eri silkworm rearing and 2.10 for early instars eri silkworm rearing. Mean scores of skills were recorded very low in disinfection of rearing house and rearing appliances (1.18), production of disease free silkworm's egg (1.04), silkworms pest and disease management (1.90) and spinning of eri silk through motorized spinning device (0.94). The reasons for the low mean score in knowledge and skills is due to non awareness about the improved technologies and also strong inclination towards traditional belief. From the above observation, it could be inferred that to improve the efficiency in knowledge and skills, imparting of training is highly required for the women farmers involved in eri culture.

3) Training need of the women eri farmers

Data presented in the Table-2 indicates that weighted means score for training needs of the respondents were exceptionally high in all the improved technologies (3.57 –

4.68). The women involved in eri culture are very much aware about the gainful employment opportunity of eri culture. Besides, eri pupae produces from the eri culture is an important by-product and are considered as huge demanding food item in Assam. It is possible that women farmers may have desired for actively participate in eri culture for enhancing income generations through implementation of the improved technologies. As such, the women expressed tremendous needs of training for up-gradation of their knowledge and skills on all the improved technologies. Study on training need of muga farmers conducted by Mech, *et al* (2007) also reported that the traditional muga farmers expressed immense training needs on improved technologies in almost all the activities from soil to silk.

4) Various aspects of training needs of women farmers

It is evident from the Table -3 that most of the women farmers expressed almost same attitude on different aspects of training needs. Data in respect of 'nature of training' indicated that majority of the women (87.3%) expressed the need of practical utility training instead of basic training (12.7%). There is no doubt that practical utility training would definitely add to their knowledge and skills that can be used in the field efficiently. As regard to the 'place of training', 54.0% respondents preferred to have training at the research institute directly. On the other hand, 17.3% respondents desired to have training at their door step while 28.7% respondents wanted to have training at the nearest Research Extension Centre or Departmental farm. It is possible that various household activities and sometimes attending of children care, some of the women may have bounded to choose the nearest place for training. In case of 'duration of training' 68.0% respondents suggested for arranging two weeks training programme against the one week training period suggested by 24.7% respondents. On the other hand, very few (7.3%) respondents suggested for month long training period. Season is one of the important aspects of training specially for all kind of farmers. Eri culture is being used as subsidiary occupation and doing mostly during leisure period of the farmers. Most of the time, small and marginal farmers are remain busy with the major seasonal agricultural operations. Opportunely, the crop seasons of eri culture falls in the leisure period of the farmers when major agricultural operations are not done. That is why, majority of the respondents (72.0%) expressed the crop season as the ideal season for training. Pre crop season was chosen by 18.7% farmers and post crop season was chosen by 9.3% farmers only. An effective training programme is largely depend on facilities of training provides to the trainees. The present study shown that all the respondents stated notably for the facilities of free boarding, stipend during training, provide transportation, arrange field visit and audio-visual aids, etc. The above facilities make the farmers convenient for imparting training comfortably and effectively. 'Language' is considered as a key aspect of the farmer's training programme. Educational status of the farmers is generally low and sometime frequency of illiterate farmers also high. These farmers obviously not understand other language. Therefore,

all the respondents suggested only local language as the communicating medium between trainers and trainees. No farmers preferred Hindi or English as teaching medium during training.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is evident from the foregoing that women farmers are actively participated in eri culture, but their level of knowledge and skills on improved practices are not adequate. It is derived from the study that training needs of the women farmers on improved practices of eri culture is more prominent. The study also inferred that the women farmers of eri culture mostly desired practical training at the Research Institute for a period of one or two weeks providing facilities like free boarding, stipend, transportation, exposure visit and teaching through audio-visual aids using local language. Proper implication of all suggested area is an urgent need for sustainable rural development through empowerment of the rural women.

V. REFERENCES

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Table 1: Distribution of women in different activities of eri culture

***** (N=150)

| Sl. No. | Activities | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------|--|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Host plant cultivation and management | 6 | 4.0 |
| 2 | Silkworm's egg production | 129 | 86.0 |
| 3 | Disinfection of rearing house and rearing appliances | 68 | 45.3 |
| 4 | Rearing of silkworm and cocoon harvest | 129 | 86.0 |
| 5 | Spinning of eri silk | 139 | 92.7 |
| 6 | Marketing of eri pupae and cocoon | 114 | 74.0 |

Table 2 : Mean scores on knowledge, skill and training need of the respondents in different activities of eri culture

| Different activities of eri culture | Knowledge | | Skills | | Training needs | |
|--|---------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|
| | Weighted mean score | Level | Weighted mean score | Level | Weighted mean score | Level |
| Host plant cultivation and management | 2.21 | L | 2.64 | L | 3.57 | H |
| Disinfection of rearing house and rearing appliances | 1.91 | L | 1.18 | L | 4.68 | H |
| Silkworm's egg production | 1.54 | L | 1.04 | L | 4.36 | H |
| Early instars silkworm rearing | 2.86 | L | 2.10 | L | 4.25 | H |
| Late instars silkworm rearing | 3.26 | H | 2.40 | L | 3.94 | H |
| Silkworm's pest and disease management | 2.72 | L | 1.90 | L | 4.31 | H |
| Spinning of eri silk | 1.50 | L | 0.94 | L | 4.66 | H |

H= High and L= Low

Table 3 : Various aspects of training needs of women farmers in eri culture

***** (N=150)

| Aspect of training | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| 1. Nature of Training | | |
| a) Basic training | 19 | 12.7 |
| b) Practical utility training | 131 | 87.3 |
| 2. Place of training | | |
| a) At the village level | 26 | 17.3 |
| b) At the nearest Research Extension Centre/ Departmental farm | 43 | 28.7 |
| c) At the Research Institute | 81 | 54.0 |
| 3. Duration of training | | |
| a) One week | 37 | 24.7 |
| b) Two weeks | 102 | 68.0 |
| c) One month | 11 | 7.3 |
| 4. Season of training | | |
| a) Pre crop season | 28 | 18.7 |
| b) Crop season | 108 | 72.0 |
| c) Post crop season | 14 | 9.3 |
| 5. Facilities of training | | |
| a) Free boarding | 150 | 100.0 |
| b) Provide stipend | 150 | 100.0 |
| c) Provide transportation | 150 | 100.0 |
| d) Exposure visit | 150 | 100.0 |
| e) Teaching through audio visual aids | 150 | 100.0 |
| 6. Trainer's language | | |
| a) Local language | 150 | 100.0 |
| b) Hindi | - | - |
| c) English | - | - |