

Valedictory Function: Global Conference on Women in Agriculture
A brief on Conference outcomes
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Hon'ble President of India Smt. Pratibha Devi Singh Patil, Hon'ble Shri Sharad Pawar, Minister of Agriculture and Food Processing Industries, Mrs. Pawar, Dr. Charan Das Mahant, Minister of State for Agriculture and Food Processing Industries, Dr. S. Ayyappan, Dr. K.D. Kokate, Dr. Krishna Srinath, distinguished guests, delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI), a core organizer with ICAR, it is my privilege to welcome Her Excellency to the valedictory function of the Global Conference on Women in Agriculture (GCWA). Your very presence amidst us is a reflection of your immense love for the farming community in general and women farmers in particular. Under your dynamic leadership, we are witnessing several Govt. initiatives for empowering women in India.

We are also happy to have with us Hon'ble Shri Sharad Pawar under whose dynamic leadership, the growth of Indian agriculture has progressed fast and the food grain production this year is expected to touch 250 million tonnes.

It is in this context that India needs urgently the household nutrition security for which contribution of women farmers cannot be undermined. Recent FAO reports clearly reveal that given equal access to resources, women could increase yield by 20-30 per cent.

India currently has the maximum number of malnourished children below 5 years of age which is higher than whole of Sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, we need to upscale growth in Agriculture through empowerment of women and by main streaming them in agriculture. The conference has deliberated at length the major theme of empowering women for inclusive growth in agriculture and addressed specific issues concerning reforms, institutional changes for capacity building and partnerships, assessing their empowerment, innovations for reducing drudgery, linking them to markets, their role in household food and nutrition security, access to assets, resources and knowledge and impact of climate change related risks and uncertainties. The conference have deliberated at length and come out with some key elements. These are:

- i. The issue is currently of household food and nutrition security.
- ii. All women in Agriculture are not farmers.
- iii. Investment in women has much greater benefits in terms of social and economic development.
- iv. The women can empower themselves by forming Self Help Groups (SHGs) and having access to resources, policy support and linking themselves to market for needed socio-economic benefits.
- v. The women need support in terms of gender oriented research, capacity building through vocational training for required entrepreneurship and knowledge using modern communication tools.

Accordingly, a five points action plan was proposed during the conference which centers around following:

- We need to provide information and evidence through disaggregated data and convincing evidence on specific needs of farm women.
- There is urgency for developing collective action and leadership at various levels so as to ensure enabling environment for improved, efficient and higher productivity.
- Establishing rights to land ownership, equal pay/wages, access to credit, technology, knowledge, ICT, markets, services, etc. would enable inclusive growth and development in rural India.
- There is need to have effective mechanism of coordination and convergence between institutions at the national, regional and global levels. For this, we require an appropriate institutional mechanism.

At the end, the conference decided to have a way forward and in the context of continuity, it was decided that the Global Conference on Women in Agriculture will be organized once in three years and facilitated by different regional fora. For this, Forum for Agriculture Research in Africa (FARA) has offered to host GCWA 2 in 2015 and an International Steering Committee will be accordingly established.

The ICAR has also taken an initiative to provide facilitation role to the GCWA secretariat. Another decision taken towards the way forward is to formally launch and expand the gender in Agriculture partnership (GAP) as a global partnership program embracing all actors involved in the initiative and this will then be presented in the forthcoming meeting of Global Conference on Agriculture Research for Development (GCARD 2) to be held in Uruguay in late October 2012.

The delegates in the conference have also decided to have a framework for action in place with clearly defined strategy for its implementation so that desired impact could be measured and quantified.

Your Excellency, the Indian National Agriculture Research System had been quite fortunate to receive policy support at the highest level and your very presence today is the reflection of this fact. The recent initiative “Mission Purna Shakti” launched by National Mission for Empowerment of Women, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Govt. of India has six focus areas but it does not include agriculture. We do hope that with your kind support, Mission Purna Shakti will also include agriculture in its mandate since without basic food, nutrition and environment, there cannot be any empowerment of women. Hence, the outcome of GCWA to be a landmark and launching of GAP in your kind presence will go a long way in addressing specific needs of farm women in India and elsewhere through more than 600 delegates participating from 50 countries in this conference. With this, I once again convey my personal appreciation for all your support to Indian agriculture.

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