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Women Farmers in South Odisha: Empowerment through Agricultural Interventions¹

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Introduction

Women contribute significantly to agricultural sector in India forming 80% of its workforce owning only 13% of the land according a report by Oxfam (Business Line 2013). Women work for 3,300 hours in one crop season whereas men work for 1,860 hours and yet the image of the farmer is that of a man (ibid). Despite women's active role in agriculture as labour, they are deprived of access to productive resources and institutional support. They are not recognised as farmers and are at best referred to as helpers of male farmers. Time use studies have indicated the time spent by women in various agricultural activities in India. Transplantation, weeding and harvesting of crops (mostly grains) in which women are mostly involved consumes maximum time in the entire agricultural operation. A private bill was introduced by Dr. M.S. Swaminathan in 2012 in the Rajya Sabha to recognise women as farmers in rural areas. However, there has been no action so far on the bill in taking it forward. Without property rights, tribal women are unable to take advantage of credit and other institutional support such as agriculture extension. The

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