



ISSN Print: 2664-844X
 ISSN Online: 2664-8458
 NAAS Rating (2026): 4.97
 IJAFS 2026; 8(10): 1156-1160
www.agriculturaljournals.com
 Received: 02-08-2026
 Accepted: 16-09-2026
 Published: 23-10-2026

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Extent of participation of tribal women in farm decision making in Nanded district of Maharashtra

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DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.33545/2664844X.2026.v8.i10o.2136>

ABSTRACT

The present investigation was carried out to explore the Profile of Tribal Women and Extent of Participation of Tribal Women in Farm Decision Making in Nanded district of Maharashtra. The study was conducted in Kinwat and Hadgaon talukas, with six villages selected from each, totalling twelve villages, and 120 respondents selected through random sampling. Data were collected using a pre-tested structured interview schedule and analysed using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation, with participation recorded on a three-point continuum of complete, partial and no decision.

The findings revealed near-complete participation of tribal women in decisions regarding gap filling (100.00%), removal of stubbles (99.16%) and weeding (98.33%), while participation was markedly limited in technical decisions such as selection of micronutrients (0.83%) and selection of pesticide for pest control (2.50%). Complete participation was high across all irrigation-related decisions (78.33%-80.00%) and harvesting/post-harvest decisions (66.66%-98.33%), while participation in credit-related policy decisions such as taking and repaying crop loans was low (4.16% each). Overall, (69.17%) of respondents exhibited a medium level of participation in farm decision making, followed by (15.83%) with a low level and (15.00%) with a high level.

Keywords: Tribal women, Extent of participation, Farm decision making, Nanded district

1. Introduction

Decision-making is an important component of farm management, as it determines the selection, planning and implementation of various agricultural activities. Rogers (1962) [1] defined decision-making as "the process by which an individual evaluates the meaning of the consequences of alternative lines of conduct and ultimately adopts one of them." In rural households, farm decision-making is generally influenced by the availability of resources, family responsibilities, knowledge, experience, access to information and the roles performed by different family members.

Women constitute an integral part of the agricultural workforce and contribute substantially to a wide range of farm and allied activities. Their involvement extends from crop production and livestock management to post-harvest operations, processing and marketing. However, participation in physical farm activities does not necessarily ensure an equivalent role in decision-making. In many farm households, women may actively perform agricultural operations while having limited involvement in decisions concerning the selection of crops and varieties, purchase and use of inputs, allocation of labour, use of farm income, marketing and other important aspects of farm management.

The role of women becomes particularly important in tribal communities, where agriculture and allied activities are closely associated with household livelihood and food security. Tribal women often contribute significantly to farm operations and household economic activities. At the same time, their participation in farm decision-making may be shaped by traditional practices, social norms, access to resources, family relationships, economic conditions and access to agricultural information. Thus, understanding their role requires consideration not only of their physical involvement in agriculture but also of their participation in the decisions governing farm activities.

The extent of women's participation in farm decision-making may vary across different agricultural activities and types of decisions. A woman may participate jointly with other family members in some decisions, while taking an independent role in certain activities and having little or no involvement in others. Therefore, activity-wise assessment of participation is necessary to obtain a realistic picture of the decision-making role of tribal women in farm households.

Nanded district of Maharashtra has a substantial tribal population, particularly in its tribal-dominated areas, where agriculture remains an important source of livelihood. Despite the significant contribution of tribal women to agricultural activities, empirical information regarding the extent of their participation in farm de

cision-making is comparatively important for understanding their actual role in farm management. Such information can help identify the areas in which women's involvement in decision-making is strong as well as those requiring greater attention through agricultural extension and development interventions.

The present study was undertaken to assess the extent of participation of tribal women in farm decision-making in Nanded district of Maharashtra. The study specifically focuses on the participation of tribal women in various farm-related decisions and provides an activity-wise understanding of their role in farm decision-making.

2. Objectives

1. To study the profile of tribal women.
2. To study the extent of participation of tribal women in farm decision making.

3. Materials and methods

An ex-post-facto research design was adopted. The study was conducted in Nanded district of the Marathwada region of Maharashtra. Two talukas, Kinwat and Hadgaon, were purposively selected on the

basis of their tribal population, and six villages were purposively selected from each taluka, making a total of twelve villages. From each selected village, ten tribal women were randomly selected, giving a total sample of 120 respondents ($10 \times 12 = 120$).

Extent of participation in farm decision making was the dependent variable of the study, measured with the help of a structured schedule developed to cover twelve major areas of farm activity: land preparation, sowing practices, nutrient management, intercultural operations, irrigation, crop protection, harvesting and post-harvest practices, marketing, policy decisions, animal and poultry husbandry, management of forest resources, and value addition. For each specific decision item, respondents recorded their response on a three-point continuum: complete participation, partial participation and no participation, scored 2, 1 and 0 respectively. On the basis of the total score, respondents were classified into low, medium and high categories of overall participation using the mean and standard deviation.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Profile of tribal women

Table 1. Distribution of profile of tribal women ($N = 120$)

Sr. No.	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age		
1.	Young (Up to 27 years)	28	23.33
2.	Middle (28 to 53 years)	66	55.00
3.	Old (54 years and above)	26	21.67
2	Education		
1.	Illiterate	38	31.67
2.	Can read only	0	0.00
3.	Can read and write	0	0.00
4.	Primary School	30	25.00
5.	Middle	31	25.83
6.	High School	18	15.00
7.	Graduate	3	2.50
3	Family type		
1.	Nuclear family	54	45.00
2.	Joint family	66	55.00
4	Family size		
1.	Small (Up to 3)	20	16.67
2.	Medium (4 to 6)	77	64.17
3.	Large (7 and above)	23	19.17
5	Farming experience		
1.	Low (Up to 8 years)	21	17.50
2.	Medium (9 to 36 years)	72	60.00
3.	High (37 years and above)	27	22.50
6	Land holding		
1.	Marginal landholding (Up to 1.0 ha)	45	37.50
2.	Small landholding (1.1 to 2.0 ha)	56	46.67
3.	Semi-medium landholding (2.1 to 4.0 ha)	15	12.50
4.	Medium landholding (4.1 to 10.0 ha)	4	3.33
5.	Large landholding (10.1 ha and above)	0	0.00
7	Occupation		
1.	Farming + Labour	41	34.17
2.	Farming + Caste occupation	0	0.00
3.	Farming + Business	3	2.50
4.	Farming	72	60.00
5.	Farming + Service	4	3.33

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Sr. No.	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
8	Annual income		
1.	Low (Up to ₹40,000)	26	21.67
2.	Medium (₹40,001 to ₹65,000)	81	67.50
3.	High (Above ₹65,000)	13	10.83
9	Social participation		
1.	Low (Up to 0.18)	82	68.33
2.	Medium (0.19 to 1.78)	0	0.00
3.	High (1.79 and above)	38	31.67
10	Extension contact		
1.	Low (Up to 1)	0	0.00
2.	Medium (1.1 to 5)	99	82.50
3.	High (5.1 and above)	21	17.50
11	Source of information		
1.	Low (Up to 2)	14	11.67
2.	Medium (3 to 5)	53	44.17
3.	High (6 and above)	53	44.17
12	Mass media exposure		
1.	Low (Up to 1)	15	12.50
2.	Medium (2 to 3)	63	52.50
3.	High (4 and above)	42	35.00
13	Family support		
1.	Low (Up to 8)	29	24.17
2.	Medium (9 to 19)	57	47.50
3.	High (20 and above)	34	28.33

It was observed from Table 1 that a majority of the respondents (55.00%) fell into the middle age group, were illiterate (31.67%), belonged to joint families (55.00%) of medium size (64.17%), had medium farming experience (60.00%) and small landholdings (46.67%), were engaged mainly in farming (60.00%), had medium annual income (67.50%), low social participation (68.33%), medium

extension contact (82.50%), medium-to-high source of information (44.17% each), medium mass media exposure (52.50%), and medium family support (47.50%).

4.2 Activity-wise participation of tribal women in farm decision making

Table 2. Participation of tribal women in decision making about land preparation ($N = 120$)

Sr. No.	Agricultural activities	Complete participation		Partial participation		No participation	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
A	Land preparation						
1	Ploughing	100	83.33	20	16.66	0	0.00
2	Removal of stubbles	119	99.16	1	0.83	0	0.00
3	Land levelling	25	20.83	81	67.50	14	11.66
4	Land use decision	65	54.16	55	45.83	0	0.00
B	Sowing practices						
1	Which crops should be grown	118	98.33	2	1.66	0	0.00
2	Where to buy seeds	30	25.00	61	50.83	29	24.16
3	Selection of varieties	7	5.83	40	33.33	73	60.83
4	Sowing method	76	63.33	43	35.83	1	0.83
5	When to sow	104	86.66	16	13.33	0	0.00
6	Fruit crop cultivation decision	39	32.50	79	65.83	2	1.66
C	Nutrient management						
1	Application of FYM	78	65.00	40	33.33	2	1.66
2	Selection of chemical fertilizer & application	31	25.83	31	25.83	58	48.33
3	Selection of micronutrients	1	0.83	17	14.16	102	85.00
4	Dose of micronutrients	3	2.50	18	15.00	99	82.50
D	Intercultural operations						
1	Gap filling	120	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
2	Weeding	118	98.33	2	1.66	0	0.00
3	Hoeing	38	31.66	69	57.50	13	10.83

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Sr. No.	Agricultural activities	Complete participation		Partial participation		No participation	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
4	Fertilizer management	64	53.33	56	46.66	0	0.00
E	Irrigation						
1	Irrigation method	96	80.00	24	20.00	0	0.00
2	Frequency & interval of irrigation	94	78.33	26	21.66	0	0.00
3	Irrigation at critical stage	94	78.33	24	20.00	2	1.66
F	Crop protection						
1	Selection of fungicide for seed treatment	4	3.33	17	14.16	99	82.50
2	Selection of pesticide for pest control	3	2.50	19	15.83	98	81.66
3	Application of pesticide	15	12.50	67	55.83	38	31.66
4	Selection of fungicide for disease control	3	2.50	20	16.66	97	80.83
5	Application of fungicide	17	14.16	67	55.83	36	30.00
6	Protection from stray/wild animals	94	78.33	24	20.00	2	1.66
G	Harvesting and post-harvest practices						
1	When to harvest	118	98.33	2	1.66	0	0.00
2	How to harvest	89	74.16	29	24.16	2	1.66
3	Harvested crop collection decision	100	83.33	20	16.67	0	0.00
4	Threshing	118	98.33	2	1.66	0	0.00
5	Sieving	118	98.33	2	1.66	0	0.00
6	Harvesting method of fruit crops	80	66.66	37	30.83	3	2.50
7	Storage for seed purpose	99	82.50	21	17.50	0	0.00
8	Grading of produce	115	95.83	5	4.16	0	0.00
9	Quantity & method of produce storage	81	67.50	39	32.50	0	0.00
H	Marketing						
1	Quantity of grains & fruits to be sold	66	55.00	53	44.16	1	0.83
2	At what price to sell	20	16.66	56	46.66	44	36.66
I	Policy decision						
1	Purchase of farm implements	22	18.33	73	60.83	25	20.83
2	Finance for farming operation	37	30.83	72	60.00	11	9.16
3	Saving	47	39.16	66	55.00	7	5.83
4	Hiring of labour	111	92.50	9	7.50	0	0.00
5	Assigning tasks to family members	99	82.50	21	17.50	0	0.00
6	Payment of wages	77	64.17	42	35.00	1	0.83
7	Taking crop loan	5	4.16	67	55.83	48	40.00
8	Payment of crop loan	5	4.16	67	55.83	48	40.00
J	Animal and poultry farming						
1	Animal/poultry/goat/sheep/dairy/fish farming decisions	85	70.83	23	19.16	12	10.00
2	Feeding, healthcare and management of livestock	67	55.83	39	32.50	14	11.66
3	Marketing decision of livestock	76	63.33	30	25.00	14	11.66
K	Management of forest resources						
1	Firewood collection – how much and when	110	90.66	9	7.50	1	0.83
2	Honey collection and sale	9	7.50	31	25.83	80	66.66
3	Forest medicine collection and use	13	10.83	19	15.83	88	73.33
L	Value addition						
1	Processing of agricultural products	34	28.33	70	58.33	16	13.33
2	Determining cost for value addition	32	26.66	72	60.00	16	13.33
3	Selling value-added products in market	32	26.66	72	60.00	16	13.33

F: Frequency, %: Percentage

The table 2 presents the activity-wise extent of participation of tribal women in farm decision-making. Overall, tribal women showed high complete participation in routine farm operations, particularly gap filling (100%), removal of stubbles (99.16%), selection of crops to be grown (98.33%), weeding (98.33%), harvesting time (98.33%), threshing (98.33%), sieving (98.33%) and grading of produce (95.83%). Complete participation was also high in hiring labour (92.50%) and firewood collection decisions (90.66%). In contrast, their participation was relatively low in technical and financial deci-

sions, such as selection of micronutrients (85.00% no participation), dose of micronutrients (82.50%), selection of fungicides for seed treatment (82.50%), selection of pesticides (81.66%), selection of fungicides for disease control (80.83%), taking and repayment of crop loans (40.00% no participation each), and deciding the selling price (36.66% no participation). Partial participation predominated in decisions related to purchase of farm implements (60.83%), farm finance (60.00%), value addition (58.33–60.00%), and several marketing and technical decisions. Thus, the findings indicate that tribal women

were more actively involved in day-to-day and labour-intensive farm decisions, whereas their involvement was comparatively limited in technical input selection, credit, pricing and value-addition decisions.

4.3 Overall extent of participation of tribal women in farm decision making

Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to their overall extent of participation in farm decision making ($N=120$)

Sr. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low	19	15.83
2	Medium	83	69.17
3	High	18	15.00
	Total	120	100.00

Table 3 shows that the majority of the respondents (69.17%) exhibited a medium level of overall participation in farm decision making, followed by (15.83%) with a low level and (15.00%) with a high level. This indicates that tribal women were actively involved in several farm-related decisions, particularly those pertaining to routine, physically executed operations, but their involvement did not extend equally to all major agricultural decisions, especially those of a technical, financial or strategic nature. Similar findings were reported by Sharma *et al.* (2016) [2], Vaghasiya (2018) [3], Walke (2018) [4], Shaikh (2019) [5], Vavilala *et al.* (2021) [6] and Das (2023) [7].

5. Conclusion

The research revealed that tribal women in Nanded district exercised near-complete participation in decision-making autonomy over routine, labour-intensive farm operations, but their participation was substantially constrained in technical decisions concerning agro-chemical selection, credit and loans, and specialised produce such as honey and forest medicine. Overall, (69.17%) of the respondents exhibited a

medium level of participation in farm decision making, (15.83%) a low level, and (15.00%) a high level. The findings indicate considerable scope to strengthen tribal women's participation in technically demanding and financially consequential farm decisions through targeted, skill-based extension interventions, particularly in the areas of plant protection, input selection, credit access and produce marketing.

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How to cite this article: Pawara VH, Deshmukh PR, Kadam RP, Lad AS, Chavan RV. Extent of participation of tribal women in farm decision making in Nanded district of Maharashtra. *International Journal of Agriculture and Food Science.* 2026;8(10):1156-1160. doi: <https://www.doi.org/10.33545/2664844X.2026.v8.i10o.2136>