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### Decision making pattern of rural women in different poultry management activities

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#### Abstract

The study was carried out in Jorhat district of Assam to determine the personal and socio-economic characteristics of rural women and to study the decision making pattern of rural women in different activities of poultry management. From Jorhat district, two (2) blocks were selected from which 6 (six) villages were selected for the research study. Thus total numbers of respondent were 120. Data were collected with the help of interview schedule. Statistical technique *viz.*, frequency, percentage were used for analysing the data. The studies revealed that majority of the respondents were of lower middle age group, had nuclear and small family, married and educated up to middle school. A large majority of respondent reared poultry for both commercial and household purpose. Data also revealed that independent decision was taken by the respondents in different regular activities such as feeding and watering, closing the bird in the poultry shed, collection of eggs, cleaning and maintaining of poultry shed, culling, keeping the eggs for hatching, selection of poultry bird for breeding and marketing activities such as place of selling, number of birds, chicks and eggs to be sold, purchasing of poultry and number of eggs and poultry for household use. The findings of the present study revealed majority of the respondents belonged to medium socio-economic status, participation in extension programme and contact with extension agent was low in spite of independent to joint decision making in poultry related activities by the rural women. The extension services could not reach the rural women for which they were unaware of new technologies and breeds of birds. Hence, suitable extension programmes should be planned based to perceived problems in study area to increase their efficiency in poultry farming.

**Keywords:** Decision making, rural women, poultry management

#### Introduction

The majority of the world's food producers are women. They provide 46.59 per cent of the rural agricultural labour in India (2011 census). Women carry out key stages of production, processing of crops and are the main producers of vegetables, poultry and livestock for the household. They tend to all types of livestock including poultry; process foods for household consumption and for market; manage natural resources through efficient use of water and fuel for their crop, animal activities and market their products at the local levels. The key role played by the women in agriculture and livestock including poultry was in the past largely unacknowledged in government statistics and decision-making. This situation has changed over the last two or three decades and much has been achieved in giving recognition to the importance of women in the agricultural sector. The empowerment of women engaged in farming is gathering pace in many parts of the developing world. However, these recent advances may be under threat from such factors as structural adjustment programmes and the drive to commercialise agriculture. These factors have eroded gains and threaten to create a situation where women's role reverts to being unrecognized and where gender-blind policies and programmes fail to address the needs of women farmers.

Rearing of poultry for household purpose is commonly seen among rural household in OBC and ST or SC villages. It is also seen that poultry and their products serve as a source of cash in emergencies. Participation and decision making of rural women in poultry production can be described as the involvement of women and their decision regarding different poultry farming activities for the purpose of improving their households' food security, income, social and enhancing gender equity. The research in this area is scanty. Keeping these in view, the present study was conducted to determine the personal and socio-economic characteristics of

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rural women and to study the decision making pattern of rural women in different activities of poultry management.

### Methodology

The study was conducted in some selected villages from two blocks namely Dhekargorah development block and Chipahikhola development block of Jorhat district of Assam. A total of 120 respondents were selected under Jorhat district of Assam. A multistage purposive cum simple random sampling method was followed for the present study. The data was collected on personal and socio-economic characteristics of rural women, extension contact, size of poultry possession and purpose of poultry rearing and decision making pattern. The decision making was studied in three activity areas which included regular activities, health related activities and marketing related activities. Data were collected by personal interviews using pre-tested structured schedule.

### Research Findings and Discussion

#### Personal and socio-economic characteristics of rural women

The personal and socio-economic characteristics in the present study included age, educational status, marital status, type and size of family, land holding, main occupation of the family. The data on personal and socio-economic characteristics is presented in table 1 reflected that 45.84 per cent of the respondents belonged to lower middle age group followed by upper middle age group (28.33%) and 25.83 per cent of the respondents were in younger age group. It indicated that in lower middle age group (32-46 years), the sense of responsibility of the women towards home and family increases with maturity and also improve their risk taking ability hence get motivated for taking up different income generating activities including poultry farming. Further the data showed that majority of the respondents (82.50%) were married whereas only 10 per cent were widow followed by unmarried with 7.50 per cent., which may be due to the fact that being married the financial liability on the respondent increase such as education of the children, nutrition and health care of family members etc; so they are inclined to take up poultry farming for commercial and household purpose.

The findings on occupation of the family revealed that more than one third of the respondents that is (37.50%) had farming as their main occupation as the respondents were rural based. Further the data showed that 28.33 per cent were in business

such as selling of vegetables, different bamboo products and 21.67 per cent were daily wage earner while only 12.50 per cent has service as their main occupation. 48.33 per cent of the respondents belonged to nuclear family, 41.67 per cent and 10 per cent were from joint and extended family. Though, in the prese society due to different demands of the family members but still in the study area in some community like other backward caste, the joint family system is significant. The findings also reflected the disintegration of extended family systems in our society. Similar findings were reported by Shetter *et al.* (2005) [7] and Satyanarayan and Jagadeeswary (2010), where majority of the respondents lived in nuclear type family. Nearly half of the respondents had small family, while medium and large families were reported by 40.83 per cent and 10 per cent respectively. The findings indicated that the respondents preferred small family which enables them to decide on their work schedule, living style and fulfil the needs and demands of their family members. Literacy level of the respondents reflected that 35.83 per cent had educational level up to middle school, 29.17 per cent were HSLC passed, 11.67 per cent were illiterate and equal per cent of respondent (10.00%) had up to primary school passed and higher secondary and above, while a small percentages (3.33%) of respondents can read and write only. The findings further indicated that there is lot of work to be done to improve the literacy level of the rural women in the study area.

Table 1 showed that 28.33 per cent of the respondents were general member of 2-3 organization, 29.17 per cent were general member of one organization, while 40.83 per cent of the respondents did not have membership in any organization, which indicated that the small poultry farmers are not yet organized into groups and leaving a great scope for the government organizations to make them aware about need and importance of group formation to avail the benefits of different government programmes. Further the data shows that only 1.67 per cent were executive members which again reflected that the spokes persons from the small poultry farmers is limited to make their problems heard at appropriate forums to solve their problems.

The distribution of rural women according to size of land holding shows that highest percentage of respondents (88.33%) was marginal farmers. It also shows that a small portion of respondents (11.67%) were small farmers. Since, marginal farmers are more, so it is necessary to give more importance on poultry farming for earning additional income. nt day, nuclear family is more and joint family are less in our

**Table 1:** Distribution of rural women according to personal and socio-economic characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Young (18-32 years)	31	25.83
	Lower middle (32-46 years)	55	45.84
	Upper middle (46-60 years)	34	28.33
Marital status	Unmarried	9	7.50
	Married	99	82.50
	Widow	12	10.00
Occupation of the family	Farming	45	37.50
	Daily wage earner	26	21.67
	Business	34	28.33
	Service	15	12.50
Type of family	Nuclear	58	48.33
	Joint	50	41.67
	Extended	12	10.00
Size of family	Small (Up to 4)	59	49.17
	Medium (5-8)	49	40.83
	Above 8	12	10.00
Education	Illiterate	14	11.67

	Can read and write	4	3.33
	Up to Primary	12	10.00
	Up to Middle School	43	35.83
	HSLC passed	35	29.17
	Higher secondary and above	12	10.00
Organizational Membership	No membership	49	40.83
	General member of one organization	35	29.17
	General member of more than one organization	34	28.33
	Executive member of one organization	2	1.67
Land holding	Marginal (below 7.5 bigha)	106	88.33
	Small (7.5-15 bigha)	14	11.67

### Extension Contact

The data on extension contact indicates that 47.50 per cent of respondent had contact with Block Development Office (BDO) sometimes; a large majority of the respondents did not have any contact with Village Level Extension Worker (VLEW), agriculture officer and animal husbandry officer while 18.33 per cent sometimes contacted with agriculture officer and animal husbandry officer. The main reason could be that the families being from marginal and small land holding category hence the VLEW did not visit rural families regularly. At the same time, 40.83 per cent respondent did not

have any membership in any group and 1.67 per cent was executive member of one organization. Hence, the contact with different extension personnel was found to be low. It also reveals that majority (73.34%) of the respondents sometimes contacted with credit giving agency that is bank and 60.00 percent of respondents had contacted with some other private financial agency (*Ashomi finance* and UNACCO). From the finding it is clear that majority of the respondents had more contact with bank and other private financial agency such as *Ashomi finance* and UNACCO than Other extension agents.

**Table 2:** Distribution of rural women according to extension contact N=120

Extension Contact	Regularly		Sometimes		Never	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
BDO	8	6.67	57	47.50	55	45.83
VLEW	3	2.50	7	5.83	110	91.67
Agriculture officer and Animal Husbandry officer	6	5.00	22	18.33	92	76.67
Bank	7	5.83	88	73.34	25	20.83
Private financial Agency (UNACCO, Ashomi finance)	8	6.67	72	60.00	40	33.33

### Poultry possession

The total number of poultry reared by the respondents is shown in Table 3, indicated that the majority (66.66%) of the respondents had small size poultry that is 10-25 whereas 21.67 per cent of the respondents had medium (26-40) and only 11.67 per cent respondents had large size (above 40) poultry. It may be due to lack of infrastructure. The respondent reared the poultry mainly for household and commercial purpose to small extent only hence the size was found to be small (10-25)

**Table 3:** Size of poultry possession

Size of poultry possession	Frequency	Percentage
Small (10-25 birds)	80	66.66
Medium (26-40 birds)	26	21.67
Large (above 40 birds)	14	11.67

### Purpose of poultry farming

The data with regard to purpose of poultry rearing it has been found that the respondents were rearing poultry both for household use and also commercial purpose. The presented in Table 4 revealed that high majority (79.17%) of the respondents reared poultry for both commercial and household purpose and only 20.83 per cent respondent reared poultry for household purpose, which can be related to the flock size and lack of knowledge on economic benefits of poultry farming. It is interesting to note that some of the respondents further expressed that the poultry served as a bankable product during the time of emergency.

**Table 4:** Purpose of poultry rearing

Purpose	Frequency	Percentage
Household	25	20.83
Commercial	-	-
Household and commercial	95	79.17

### Decision making pattern of rural women in different activities of poultry management

The decision making is presented under three categories i.e regular activities, health related and marketing activities. The data in Table 5 revealed that majority of the respondents took decisions independently in different regular poultry management activities such as feeding and watering (66.67%), closing the bird in the poultry shed (65.84%), collection of eggs (63.34%), cleaning and maintaining of poultry shed (63.33%), keeping the eggs for hatching (61.67%), culling (61.67%), selection of poultry bird for breeding (60.83%) and marketing activities such as place of selling (58.33%), number of chicks to be sold (53.34%), number of eggs to be sold (53.34%), number of birds to be sold (51.67%), purchasing of poultry (50.83%), number of eggs and poultry for household use (50.83%) and health activity such as purchasing of medicine (40.00%). It may be due to the fact that majority of respondents belonged to small sized nuclear family and the respondent may have more experience in different poultry farming activities and so have confidence on herself to take decision in these activities. Similar findings were reported by Shetter *et al.* (2005) [7],

where he found that the activities like care of birds, place of selling were solely decided by women alone.

The findings indicated that respondents jointly involved with other family members in making decision in activities such as construction of poultry sheds (36.67%), identification of site for poultry shed (35.00%), engagement of labour (29.17%) and treatment and caring of sick birds (29.17%), vaccination (28.33%) and marketing activities such as fixing the price of p(25.00%) and purchasing of poultry (24.17%) while decisions taken jointly with husband was 24.16 per cent in engagement of labour, 21.67 per cent in identification of site for poultry shed, 21.67 per cent in construction of poultry shed and health activities such as type and time of vaccination (19.17%), treatment and caring of sick bird (16.67%), purchasing of medicine (16.67%) and marketing activities such as fixing the price of produce (20.00%) and 18.34 per cent in number of eggs and poultry for household use. Similar

finding was reported by Shetter *et al.* (2005)<sup>[7]</sup> and Okitoi *et al.* (2007)<sup>[4]</sup> where they found that decision making regarding marketing, construction of poultry shed etc reflected plurality. Findings also showed that some respondents were not involved in making decision in health activities and some regular activities specially identification of site for poultry sheds and construction of poultry sheds compared to other activities. This may be due to lack of knowledge about those activities. Similar findings was reported by Okitoi *et al.* (2007)<sup>[4]</sup>, where he found that men and children mainly did construction of poultry sheds as women did cleaning, feeding and treatment of poultry. Women and children did most of the daily routines in rural poultry management. The involvement of other family members may be due to prevailing joint family system among the respondents and presence of elderly and experienced members in the family.

**Table 5:** Distribution of rural women according to decision making pattern in different activities of poultry management Regular activities

Sl. No.	Activities	Independent Decision	Joint decision making with		No Decision
			Husband	Family members	
1	Identification of site for poultry shed	5.00	21.67	35.00	38.33
2	Construction of poultry shed	3.33	21.67	36.67	38.33
3	Cleaning and maintaining poultry sheds	63.33	14.17	22.50	-
4	Feeding and watering	66.67	13.33	20.00	-
5	Closing the bird in the poultry shed	65.84	13.33	20.83	-
6	Collection of eggs	63.34	15.83	20.83	-
7	Keeping the eggs for hatching	61.67	15.83	20.83	1.67
8	Selection of poultry bird for breeding	60.83	15.83	21.67	1.67
9	Culling	61.67	15.83	22.50	-
10	Engagement of labour	17.50	24.16	29.17	29.17

**Table 6:** Health activities

Sl. No.	Activities	Independent Decision	Joint Decision making with		No Decision
			Husband	Family members	
1	Type and time of vaccination	14.17	19.17	28.33	38.33
2	Treatment and caring of sick birds	13.33	16.67	29.17	40.83
3	Purchasing of medicine	40.00	16.67	23.33	20.00

**Table 7:** Marketing activities

Sl. No.	Activities	Independent Decision	Joint Decision making with		No Decision
			Husband	Family members	
1	Fixing the price of produce	47.50	20.00	25.00	7.50
2	Purchasing of poultry	50.83	17.50	24.17	7.50
3	Number of birds to be sold	51.67	17.50	23.33	7.50
4	Number of chicks to be sold	53.34	15.83	23.33	7.50
5	Number of eggs to be sold	53.34	15.83	23.33	7.50
6	Number of eggs and poultry for household use	50.83	18.34	23.33	7.50
7	Place of selling	58.33	15.83	18.34	7.50

### Conclusion and Recommendation

Poultry plays an important role in providing nutrition in the form of meat and eggs to the family members but also helps to add to the family income. Over the last decade, the consumption of poultry products in developing countries has grown by 5.8 per cent per annum, faster than that of human population growth and has created a great increase in demand. Family poultry has the potential to satisfy at least part of this demand through increased productivity and reduced wastage and losses. The findings of the present study revealed majority of the respondents belonged to medium socio-economic status, participation in extension programme and contact with extension agent was low in spite of independent to joint decision making in poultry related activities by the rural women. The extension services could not reach the rural

women for which they were unaware of new technologies and breeds of birds. Hence, suitable extension programmes should be planned based to perceived problems in study area to increase their efficiency in poultry farming. The findings also revealed that the flock size varied from 10-60 which opens up a scope for transferring these backyard poultry farming to commercial poultry farming by providing information and training to the rural women. This on the other hand not only serve as a regular flow of income but also emerge as sustainable livelihood for the rural families having marginal to small land holding. From the findings it is recommended that the women need to be encouraged, motivated and educated through capacity building programmes as the findings indicated that rural women played a significant role in all poultry related activities. They need to be made aware

of the benefits of becoming a member of the organised groups so as to avail the facilities. Additionally extension and motivational work along with technical support should also be conducted in the villages to encourage rural families to aware of improved breeds of birds.

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