

## Women's Roles in Agriculture: Further study in the upper basin of the Seyhan River

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### 1. Introduction

In Turkey, women have played important roles in agriculture, not only in numbers to be engaged but also extensive participation in all aspects of agricultural production. For example, 75.6% of female working population is hired in the agricultural sector in the year of 2000, whereas proportion of men working in agriculture is 32.9%<sup>1</sup>. Such disparities between women and men are found in employment status as well as percentages of those employed in agriculture. While 90.1% of women in agriculture work as unpaid family labor in 2000, that of men is 36.2%. Furthermore, 58.4% of men in agriculture manage farms whereas that of women is 7.3%<sup>2</sup>.

It is one of the reasons why very few women manage farms that women do not own farms because of patriarchal structure in Turkish society.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, it can be said that women's lack of access to properties such as land, irrigated water, credit, and new technology has made them inferior status to men. And so it seems to be necessary to clarify women's contributions in agriculture not only from the view of equality between women and men but also sustainable and rural development<sup>4</sup>

In order to see women's roles in agriculture, it seems to be necessary to verify how rural women

contribute to agricultural production and how peasants' responses to climate changes in the future would change gender relations in agriculture. On the contrary, gender divisions of labor which has related with socio-cultural aspects of Turkish rural societies could be one of the most affective determinants of future production in agriculture in the Seyhan basin in the face of climate change.

### 2. District of Tufanbeyli

In Tufanbeyli districts on the upper basin of the Seyhan river, 19.3% of cultivated land is irrigated and 80.7% is rain fed in 1997. And area of cultivated land in irrigation has increased by 41.6% from 1435ha in 1981 to 2457ha in 1997 in this district whereas rate of increase of cultivated land in irrigation Adana as a whole is 17.2%<sup>5</sup>. Such rapid increase in irrigated land in Tufanbeyli must have changed some aspects of agricultural production. For example, potato cultivation has increased rapidly in Tufanbeyli. Cultivated area of potato in the Tufanbeyli district has increased from 8.5ha in 1997<sup>6</sup> to about 400ha in 2004<sup>7</sup>.

Furthermore, while women work as agricultural seasonal workers on fields of potato, sugar beat, chickpea, and bean in Tufanbeyli, it can be thought that increase in potato cultivation of which land needs to be irrigated have affected women's role in agricultural production.

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<sup>1</sup> The author calculated from *2000 Census of Population: Social and Economic Characteristics of Population*, pp.198-199.

<sup>2</sup> The author calculated from *2000 Census of Population: Social and Economic Characteristics of Population*, pp.196-197.

<sup>3</sup> Ecevit 1994, p.98.

<sup>4</sup> *Gender Mainstreaming in Agriculture and Rural Development*, p.11.

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<sup>5</sup> *1997 Köy Enverteri: 01 Adana*, pp.28-29.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.40.

<sup>7</sup> This number was obtained from interview with a head person of branch of the Tufanbeyli district of Ministry of Agriculture in 2004.

### 3. Women's roles in agriculture

According to a farmer (Y.D.) in Y village of the Tufanbeyli district with whom the author made interview in September 2004, he hired about 20 female seasonal workers for harvesting potatoes of 8ha fields, while he hired male workers for controlling water of irrigation. In Y village, women worked for 12 million TL/day as seasonal agricultural workers, whereas men were hired for 15 million TL/day in 2004. Even if male workers are hired for harvesting potatoes, there are disparities of wages as well as clear distinctions between women's labor and men's labor as women dig out and collect potatoes and men put them into bags and close mouths of bags.

As Y.D. explained to me regarding the difference of wages between women and men, making remarks, "men's duties are much heavier than those of women," villagers in Turkey generally regard women's duties less important than men's especially in agricultural production<sup>8</sup>.

Meanwhile, at some villages women gain extra income to weave carpets and carpet weaving is regarded as the third most important income resource at eight out of thirty villages in Tufanbeyli in 1997<sup>9</sup>.

### 4. Further study hereafter

Women's roles in agriculture are diversified, which are affected by what degree women in farmers' families engage in agriculture and family subsistence or whether farmers continue to keep their livestock or not as it are women that take care of their livestock daily. And especially for cash crop cultivations, women's labor as agricultural seasonal worker is indispensable in Adana as a whole.

Therefore, through investigating women's labor in agriculture and importance of women's income for family budgets, farmers' response against changes of crop patterns due to future climate change would be delineated more clearly. For further study, through making fieldwork in

Tufanbeyli where it can be more vulnerable than the lower Seyhan basin because rain-fed farming is more prevalent than irrigated farming it would be possible to analyze if women's enrolment in agriculture and water use make farms more vulnerable to climate change or not. Additionally, focusing on women's capabilities, it will be polemical how gender relations in rural areas like villages in Tufanbeyli would be transformed by changing cropping patterns due to climate change.

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### Statistics

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<sup>8</sup> See Hoshiyama 2002.

<sup>9</sup> 1997 Köy Envanteri: 01 Adana, pp.86-87.