Female agricultural labour and nutrition: Resolving conflicting time demands (India)

Introduction

Agricultural labour force participation among mothers has been shown to have detrimental effects on health and nutritional outcomes for both mother and child. Female agricultural labours have less time to dedicate towards managing the diet and health care of their children. Therefore, time- and labour-saving technologies, such as mechanization, that enable women to dedicate time to caring for the health of their children have the potential to improve nutritional outcomes. While reducing the economic activity and associated empowerment of women is generally undesirable, previous research has shown that working on the family farm does not improve the autonomy of women. Therefore, replacing female family labour with mechanized alternatives has the potential to be largely beneficial. However, smallholder farmers often lack sufficient collateral to access large long-term loans to invest in mechanization, while agricultural machinery often lies dormant on large farms for much of the year thus representing a wasted resource for which there is potentially significant demand for a rental market.

Study Objectives

This study aims to assess the feasibility of promoting a machinery rental market between large and smallholder farmers, by identifying potential constraints to adoption. The study will also address LANSAs cross-cutting theme of gender buy focusing on paddy transplantation which engages mainly female labour. The results generated from this study will be made accessible to academics, policy makers and practitioners through journal articles, policy briefs and blog sites. The National Agro Foundation (project implementation partner) will integrate the finding of the study into their on-going work across rural Tamil Nadu.

Partners

Institute for Financial Management and Research (Lead), Department of Agricultural & Resource Economics, the University of California-Berkeley and National Agro Foundation.