



Research Article

Women In Agri-Value Chains in Kerala: Analysis of Entrepreneurial Types, Challenges, and Success Stories

Unnikrishnan C ^{1*}, Dr. Mohanadasan T ²

¹ Research Scholar, PG & Research Department of Commerce,
Government Victoria College, Palakkad, University of Calicut, Kerala, India

² Professor, PG & Research Department of Commerce,
Government Victoria College, Palakkad, University of Calicut. Kerala, India

Corresponding Author: *Unnikrishnan C

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15512214>

Abstract

This scholarly article investigates the evolving role of women within Agri-value chains in Kerala, with an emphasis on the heterogeneity of entrepreneurial categories, the complex challenges encountered, and the narratives of success that have arisen despite systemic impediments. Utilizing a review-based methodological approach, the research consolidates insights from academic publications, governmental documents, case analyses, and grey literature to cultivate a holistic comprehension of women's involvement across diverse phases of the Agri-value chain—from production and processing to marketing and distribution. The examination delineates women agripreneurs into specific classifications predicated on enterprise scale, ownership configuration, and market orientation, encompassing micro-entrepreneurs, collective entrepreneurs (such as those affiliated with Kudumbashree units), and Agri-tech innovators. The results indicate that women consistently confront enduring obstacles such as restricted access to credit, limitations in land ownership, gender-specific labor roles, and insufficient exposure to technology and markets. Notwithstanding these constraints, numerous success narratives underscore the tenacity, innovation, and community-centric strategies that have empowered women to establish sustainable entrepreneurial avenues. These narratives exemplify how institutional support, capacity-building initiatives, and digital tools have facilitated the transition from subsistence-level engagement to lucrative, scalable enterprises. The findings underscore the imperative for targeted policy interventions, inclusive training initiatives, and enhanced infrastructure to augment women's agency and productivity within the Agri-value chains of Kerala.

Manuscript Information

- ISSN No: 2583-7397
- Received: 22-04-2025
- Accepted: 05-05-2025
- Published: 18-05-2025
- IJCRM:4(3); 2025:184-187
- ©2025, All Rights Reserved
- Plagiarism Checked: Yes
- Peer Review Process: Yes

How to Cite this Article

Unnikrishnan C, Mohanadasan T. Women in Agri-value chains in Kerala: Analysis of entrepreneurial types, challenges, and success stories. Int J Contemp Res Multidiscip. 2025;4(3): 184-187.

Access this Article Online



www.multiarticlesjournal.com

KEYWORDS: Women agripreneurs, Agri-value chains, Kerala, Entrepreneurship types, Gender challenges, Success stories.

1. INTRODUCTION

Kerala, recognized for its progressive advancements in social and economic spheres, has achieved noteworthy progress in the empowerment of women through their engagement in Agri-value chains. Female entrepreneurs in Kerala, especially those engaged with initiatives such as the Kudumbashree Mission, have assumed a crucial role in promoting economic growth and sustainable development. This research investigates the intricate landscape of women's entrepreneurship within the Agri-value chains of Kerala, India, to analyze the entrepreneurial archetypes, the challenges encountered, and the inspiring success narratives that characterize their experiences. Kerala, marked by its elevated literacy rates and progressive social indicators, offers a distinctive context for exploring the dynamics of women's participation in agriculture and associated value-added activities ^[1]. On a global scale, women's entrepreneurship is increasingly acknowledged as a significant catalyst for economic growth and societal progress, particularly within developing economies, where it can facilitate poverty alleviation and enhance livelihoods ^[2]. In the context of India, and more specifically Kerala, agriculture remains a fundamental sector, sustaining the livelihoods of a substantial segment of the population ^[3]. Women assume an essential, albeit frequently underestimated, role in agricultural production, processing, and marketing ^[4, 5]. Despite their considerable contributions, women entrepreneurs within the agri-value chain encounter a multitude of challenges, ranging from restricted access to resources and technology to socio-cultural obstacles and market limitations ^[6]. An in-depth understanding of the specific challenges and opportunities that women face in this sector is imperative for the formulation of effective policies and interventions aimed at promoting their empowerment and advancing sustainable agricultural development ^[7, 8]. Entrepreneurs are integral to a nation's socioeconomic prosperity. They identify commercial needs, procure other production factors, and adeptly coordinate them to achieve productive objectives ^[9].

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This investigation employs a review-based research methodology aimed at scrutinizing the role of women within Agri-value chains in Kerala, with a particular emphasis on delineating entrepreneurial typologies, obstacles encountered, and remarkable success narratives. The review amalgamates existing literature from a diverse array of credible sources, encompassing peer-reviewed journal articles, governmental and institutional reports, case studies, policy documents, and grey literature. This methodological approach facilitated a comprehensive, contextualized comprehension of the dynamic landscape of women's agri-entrepreneurship in Kerala, thereby enabling triangulation across various data types and sources to bolster the validity and profundity of the review.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The transforming role of women in Kerala's Agri-value chains epitomizes broader trends in rural entrepreneurship, gender inclusion, and sustainable development. Through a thorough

examination of scholarly, policy, and institutional materials, this section articulates an integrated analysis of pivotal findings concerning the categories of women entrepreneurs engaged within these value chains, the challenges they face, and the enabling factors that underpin their success. The objective is not solely to classify and elucidate patterns that emerge from the literature but also to contextualize women's entrepreneurial involvement within Kerala's distinctive socio-economic and institutional milieu. By synthesizing insights from a variety of sources, the analysis enriches the understanding of how gendered dynamics influence participation in agri-value chains and how institutional support, digital tools, and collective models can serve as mechanisms for transformation. This integrated framework lays the groundwork for the formulation of more inclusive and impactful policy structures aimed at supporting women agripreneurs in Kerala and beyond.

3.1. Entrepreneurial Types in Agri-Value Chain

The Kudumbashree Mission, an initiative aimed at eradicating poverty at the state level, has played a pivotal role in fostering women's entrepreneurship within the region of Kerala. Women affiliated with Kudumbashree predominantly engage in micro-enterprises that specialize in sectors such as food processing, apparel manufacturing, and various agriculture-related products. These micro-entrepreneurs frequently collaborate in collective groups, utilizing their collective skills and resources to ensure the sustainability of their enterprises ^[10, 11]. Collective farming has emerged as an effective paradigm for female agripreneurs in Kerala. Through programs such as the Kudumbashree group cultivation initiative and the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), women farmers have successfully improved both crop yields and their overall incomes. These collective farming entities predominantly concentrate on the cultivation of vegetables, fruits, and other agricultural commodities, thereby facilitating sustainable livelihoods for their constituents ^[12, 13]. Groups of women engaged in farming, under the auspices of organizations like the Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Kerala (VFPCCK) and the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA), have played an active role in the planning, production, and marketing of vegetable crops. These groups exhibit a moderate level of engagement in agricultural undertakings, with their financial returns demonstrating a positive correlation to their involvement in planning and production activities ^[14]. Furthermore, Kudumbashree has ventured into the realm of sustainable tourism, seamlessly integrating cultural heritage with agri-based tourism initiatives. Women entrepreneurs operating within this sector contribute significantly to livelihood creation while simultaneously promoting environmental sustainability and cross-cultural appreciation ^[15].

3.2 Challenges Faced by Women in Agri-Value Chains

Access to financial resources constitutes a substantial obstacle for women entrepreneurs in Kerala. Despite the support rendered by initiatives such as Kudumbashree, a considerable number of women encounter challenges related to restricted access to credit

and excessively high-interest rates on loans, which impede their capacity to expand their enterprises. Small-scale agro-entrepreneurs in Kerala contend with formidable competition from suppliers operating in other states, who provide low-cost, large-scale production alternatives. This competitive landscape frequently results in financial detriment for local entrepreneurs, primarily attributable to the perishable characteristics of agricultural goods ^[16]. Women entrepreneurs often exhibit a deficiency in essential business and management competencies required for the effective operation of their ventures. This inadequacy is particularly pronounced in critical domains such as marketing, financial oversight, and risk management, all of which are vital for the sustainability and growth of a business. Notwithstanding the advancements achieved, societal constraints persistently curtail women's agency and decision-making authority within domestic settings. Women frequently necessitate the approval of their spouses for financial decisions, even when they are directly involved in income-generating pursuits ^[17]. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified these pre-existing challenges, as women entrepreneurs have encountered diminished market access, disrupted supply chains, and a decline in demand for their offerings. This situation has necessitated the formulation of innovative strategies to restore and sustain their business operations.

3.3. Success Stories of Women Entrepreneurs in Agri-Value Chains

The Kudumbashree Mission stands as a pivotal pillar of women's liberation in the vibrant land of Kerala. By fostering entrepreneurship through micro-enterprises and collective farming, the mission has enabled women to achieve economic independence and improve their socio-economic status. The success of Kudumbashree has been recognized nationally, with the program being replicated in other states ^[18]. Collective farming initiatives have not only enhanced agricultural productivity but also provided a sustainable source of income for women farmers. For instance, women involved in banana and vegetable cultivation under the MKSP scheme have reported significant improvements in their socio-economic conditions ^[19]. Kudumbashree's foray into sustainable tourism has empowered

women by providing them with livelihood opportunities in the tourism sector. This initiative has also contributed to the preservation of Kerala's cultural heritage while promoting environmental sustainability ^[15]. Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have played a crucial role in empowering women entrepreneurs in Kerala. These groups have not only provided financial support but also fostered social empowerment by enhancing women's confidence and decision-making abilities ^[20].

3.4 Practical Solutions for Increasing Participation.

Training programs focused on business and management skills are essential for equipping women entrepreneurs with the knowledge and expertise needed to operate their businesses effectively. These programs should cover areas such as financial management, marketing, and risk-taking. Expanding access to affordable credit and financial services is critical for addressing the financial constraints faced by women entrepreneurs. Governments and financial institutions should introduce schemes that provide low-interest loans and other financial incentives to support women-led enterprises. To combat competition from interstate sellers, women entrepreneurs in Kerala need better access to local and national markets. Governments can facilitate this by establishing market linkages and promoting the products of women-led enterprises through various marketing initiatives ^[16]. The involvement of multiple stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and local communities, is essential for creating a supportive ecosystem for women entrepreneurs. Multi-actor engagement can help address the socio-political and cultural barriers that hinder women's empowerment ^[21]. The adoption of digital technologies can play a pivotal role in breaking down barriers and reducing gender disparities in agripreneurship. Policymakers should focus on developing technology-enhanced platforms that provide women entrepreneurs with access to information, training, and market opportunities ^[22]. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, targeted interventions are needed to revive and sustain women-led enterprises. These interventions should include financial support, training, and market access initiatives tailored to the specific needs of women entrepreneurs.

Table 1: Entrepreneurial Types, Challenges, and Solutions in Agri-Value Chains

Entrepreneurial Type	Challenges Faced	Practical Solutions
Micro-Entrepreneurs (Kudumbashree)	Limited access to credit, lack of business skills, and societal constraints	Training programs, access to affordable credit, and multi-actor engagement
Agripreneurs (Collective Farming)	Financial constraints, competition from interstate sellers, and limited market access	Strengthening market linkages, financial incentives, and institutional support
Farm Women Groups (Vegetable Production)	Medium level of involvement in planning and production, limited income generation	Capacity building, achievement motivation, and income enhancement programs
Women in Sustainable Tourism	Limited market access and societal barriers	Promoting cultural heritage, environmental sustainability, and livelihood opportunities

4. CONCLUSION

Female participants in the Agri-value chains of Kerala have exhibited exceptional resilience and entrepreneurial acumen, thereby making substantial contributions to the economic and social advancement of the state. Nevertheless, obstacles such as

financial limitations, insufficient business acumen, and entrenched societal barriers persist in obstructing their advancement. By enacting pragmatic strategies such as the enhancement of business competencies, the facilitation of financial accessibility, and the encouragement of multi-

stakeholder collaboration, policymakers can cultivate a more conducive environment for women entrepreneurs. The success narratives of initiatives such as Kudumbashree and collective farming underscore the transformative capacity of women's empowerment in realizing sustainable development and gender equity within Kerala.

5. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this Paper.

REFERENCES

1. Shehnaz SR, Kumar SS. Women entrepreneurship enticed family prosperity - an empirical evaluation of performance of microenterprises under Kudumbashree mission in Kerala, India. *Int J Entrep Small Bus* [Internet]. 2019 [cited 2025 Feb];38:120. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1504/iesb.2019.102514>
2. Mashapure R, Nyagadza B, Chikazhe L, Mazuruse G, Hove PK. Women entrepreneurship development and sustainable rural livelihoods in Zimbabwe. *Arab Gulf J Sci Res* [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2025 Apr];41:557. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1108/agjsr-07-2022-0112>
3. Sarwar S. Consequences of Land Utilization, Agriculture and Water to Handle the Food Security Issues. *Land Degrad Dev* [Internet]. 2025 [cited 2025 Apr]; Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1002/ldr.5475>
4. Venkatesh V, Shaw JD, Sykes TA, Wamba SF, Macharia M. Networks, Technology, and Entrepreneurship: A Field Quasi-experiment among Women in Rural India. *Acad Manag J* [Internet]. 2017 [cited 2025 May];60:1709. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2015.0849>
5. Rahman MM. Influential Aspects of Women Engagement in Entrepreneurial Activities: A Study on Handicrafts Enterprise in Bangladesh. *Socioecon Chall* [Internet]. 2019 [cited 2025 Apr];3:89. Available from: [https://doi.org/10.21272/sec.3\(2\).89-99.2019](https://doi.org/10.21272/sec.3(2).89-99.2019)
6. Rajalakshmi V, Nandhini A. Government schemes and benefits for women entrepreneur. *J Manag Sci* [Internet]. 2019 [cited 2025 Jan];9:227. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.26524/jms.2019.29>
7. Jaim J. Women's entrepreneurship in developing countries from a family perspective: Past and future. *Glob Bus Organ Excel* [Internet]. 2021 [cited 2025 Apr];41:31. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1002/joe.22142>
8. Bahuguna A. Influence of women empowerment through entrepreneurship. *Zenodo* [Internet]. 2020 [cited 2025 Jan]; Available from: <https://zenodo.org/record/3938418>
9. Franco CE, Kumar S. Entrepreneurship - A key for women empowerment. *Int J Res Granthaalayah* [Internet]. 2016 [cited 2025 May];4:45. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v4.i3se.2016.2776>
10. Kumari R. Probing entrepreneurial behavior and performance of women entrepreneurs in relation to the Kudumbashree Mission: An analytical study. *J Glob Econ Bus Finance*. 2024.
11. Ajith C, Borian MP. Exploring entrepreneurial behaviour and performance of women entrepreneurs associated with the Kudumbashree Mission: An analytical study. *Int J Sci Res*. 2024.
12. Ramachandran MT, Das A. Collective farming and women's livelihoods: a case study of Kudumbashree group cultivation. *Can J Dev Stud*. 2020.
13. Rashida VK, Mercykutty MJ. MKSP Scheme: An effective approach for uplifting "Kudumbashree" farm women in Kerala. *J Ext Educ*. 2020.
14. Chandran R, Sreedaya GS. Involvement of farm women groups in the planning, production and marketing aspects of vegetables in Kerala. *J Ext Educ*. 2018.
15. Pazhoor IPE. Entrepreneurial initiatives of women self-help groups to facilitate sustainable tourism: A case study with reference to Kudumbashree-Kerala. *Atna J Tour Stud*. 2024.
16. Krishnan A. Agro-entrepreneurship: Challenges and steps to tackle them for small scale agro-entrepreneurs. *Int J Emerg Knowl Stud*. 2024.
17. B AP. The interrelationship between women's participation in neighbourhood groups and family dynamics: A case study of Kudumbashree members. 2024.
18. Gupta G. From poverty eradication to economic empowerment: The impact of the Kudumbashree program on women entrepreneurs in Kerala. *J Adv Res Humanit Soc Sci*. 2023.
19. Rashida VK, Mercykutty MJ. MKSP Scheme: An effective approach for uplifting "Kudumbashree" farm women in Kerala. *J Ext Educ*. 2020.
20. Kumar S, Aithal PS. Empowerment dynamics: Exploring the impact of self-help groups on rural women. *Int J Case Stud Bus IT Educ*. 2024.
21. Venugopalan M, Bastian BL, Viswanathan PK. The role of multi-actor engagement for women's empowerment and entrepreneurship in Kerala, India. *Adm Sci*. 2021.
22. Chelliah SD, Raj PC. Exploring female agripreneurship: Insights from grey literature using TCCM framework. *Int J Exp Res Rev*. 2024;42:133–47.

Creative Commons (CC) License

This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. This license permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.



Unnikrishnan C is a Research Scholar in the Postgraduate and Research Department of Commerce at Government Victoria College, Palakkad, affiliated with the University of Calicut, Kerala, India. His academic pursuits focus on commerce, with particular interests in areas such as entrepreneurship, rural development, and economic empowerment. As an emerging scholar, he actively contributes to academic discourse through research on community-based initiatives and sustainable development practices within the socio-economic framework of Kerala.