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# International Year of the Woman Farmer 2026 — India's GCWAS Conference

24 March 2026

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CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator •

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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## International Year of the Woman Farmer 2026 — India's GCWAS Conference

*The United Nations designated 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF 2026), and India hosted the Global Conference on Women in Agri-Food Systems (GCWAS-2026) in New Delhi, spotlighting women's invisible yet indispensable role in agriculture and food security.*

### WOMEN IN INDIAN AGRICULTURE — THE INVISIBLE BACKBONE

Despite contributing the majority of agricultural labour, women farmers in India remain largely invisible in statistics, policy, and land records.

### Key Statistics

PARAMETER	VALUE
Rural women in agriculture	80% of economically active rural women
Women as agricultural labourers	33% of total
Women as self-employed farmers	48%
Women's share of operational holdings	13.87% (Agriculture Census 2015-16)
PM-KISAN benefits reaching women	25% (Rs 1.01 lakh crore total disbursed)
Women trained in agro-ecology (2022-25)	2.58 crore
Women-led FPOs	1,175 (with 100% women shareholders)

### The Feminisation of Agriculture

As men migrate to cities for non-farm work, women increasingly manage farms independently. This “feminisation of agriculture” is most pronounced in:

- **Hill states:** Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Northeast India
- **Tribal areas:** Where women traditionally have greater economic roles
- **Drought-prone regions:** Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha — where male out-migration is highest

Yet most agricultural extension services, credit facilities, and training programmes continue to target male farmers.

## GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR WOMEN FARMERS

### Namo Drone Didi

- **Launched:** 2024
- **Target:** 15,000 drones distributed to women Self-Help Groups (SHGs)
- **Subsidy:** 80% of drone cost
- **Purpose:** Precision agriculture — crop spraying, monitoring, nutrient management
- **Women trained:** As drone pilots and service providers, generating Rs 1 lakh/year additional income

### Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP)

- **Under:** DAY-NRLM (Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana — National Rural Livelihoods Mission)
- **Focus:** Sustainable agriculture training, organic farming, livestock management
- **Beneficiaries:** Women farmers in SHGs across 15 states

### Krishi Sakhi Programme

- **Target:** 70,000 women para-extension workers by 2026
- **Role:** Bridge the last-mile gap between government agricultural schemes and women farmers
- **Training:** 56-day course covering soil health, organic farming, crop diversification

### Other Key Schemes

SCHEME	BENEFIT
PM-KISAN	Rs 6,000/year to farmer families (25% women beneficiaries)
Agriculture Infrastructure Fund	3% interest subvention for agri-infrastructure
SHG-Bank Linkage	World's largest microfinance programme
National Food Security Mission	Includes women-targeted components
Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana	Crop insurance (women farmer enrolment increasing)

## CHALLENGES FACING WOMEN FARMERS

### 1. Land Ownership Crisis

- Only **13.87%** of operational holdings are in women's names (Agriculture Census 2015-16)
- Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 granted equal coparcenary rights to daughters — but implementation remains poor
- Without land titles, women cannot access institutional credit, crop insurance, or government subsidies

### 2. Credit Access Gap

- Most women borrow from informal sources (money-lenders, SHGs) at higher interest rates
- Only **9.6% of agricultural credit** goes to women farmers (RBI data)
- Banks require land collateral — which most women lack

### 3. Drudgery and Health

- Women perform physically demanding tasks (transplanting, weeding, harvesting) with traditional tools
- Exposure to pesticides without protective equipment
- Musculoskeletal disorders are highly prevalent among women agricultural workers

### 4. Climate Vulnerability

- Women have fewer resources to adapt to climate change

- Drought and flood impacts fall disproportionately on women who manage household food security
- Migration of male family members during climate events increases women’s workload

## GCWAS-2026 — KEY OUTCOMES

The Global Conference on Women in Agri-Food Systems held in New Delhi called for:

- 1 **Gender-disaggregated agricultural data** — making women’s contribution measurable
- 2 **Land rights reform** — implementing existing laws on women’s land ownership
- 3 **Digital agriculture access** — women-friendly agri-tech platforms
- 4 **Climate-resilient agriculture** — targeted adaptation programmes for women
- 5 **Credit without collateral** — expanding SHG-Bank Linkage and Joint Liability Group models

## GLOBAL CONTEXT

COUNTRY	WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE
India	80% of rural women
Sub-Saharan Africa	60% of agricultural workforce
Southeast Asia	50%+
Latin America	20%
OECD countries	<10%

The **FAO** estimates that if women had equal access to productive resources as men, they could increase farm yields by **20-30%**, reducing global hunger by **12-17%**.

**UPSC RELEVANCE**

IYWF 2026, MKSP, Namo Drone Didi, Agriculture Census data, ICAR-CIWA

**MAINS GS-I:**

Feminisation of agriculture, gender and social stratification

**MAINS GS-II:**

Women empowerment schemes, land rights

**MAINS GS-III:**

Agricultural productivity, food security, climate-resilient farming

## ★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

### INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE WOMAN FARMER 2026:

Declared by: UN General Assembly

India event: GCWAS-2026, New Delhi

Aligned SDGs: SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) + SDG 5 (Gender Equality)

### WOMEN IN INDIAN AGRICULTURE:

80% of economically active rural women in agriculture

13.87% operational holdings in women's names (Census 2015-16)

9.6% of agricultural credit to women farmers

PM-KISAN: 25% women beneficiaries

### KEY SCHEMES:

Namo Drone Didi: 15,000 drones, 80% subsidy, women SHGs

MKSP: Under DAY-NRLM, sustainable agriculture for women

Krishi Sakhi: 70,000 women para-extension workers

SHG-Bank Linkage: World's largest microfinance programme

### KEY INSTITUTIONS:

ICAR-CIWA: Central Institute for Women in Agriculture, Bhubaneswar

FPO: Farmer Producer Organisation (min. 300 members, 100 for hilly/tribal)

DAY-NRLM: Under Ministry of Rural Development

NABARD: National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (SHG refinance)

### OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005: Equal coparcenary rights to daughters

FAO estimate: Equal access could increase women's farm yields by 20-30%

India's women SHGs: 90 lakh SHGs with 10 crore+ women members

Lakhpati Didi: Target — 3 crore women in SHGs earning Rs 1 lakh+/year

Sources: [PIB](#), [Insights on India](#), [FAO](#)

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

## Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

 [linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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