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FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURE IN THE
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

An Analysis of a Segmented Rural Labour Market

H. Weijland
R. Herweijer
J. de Groot

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**VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT
FACULTEIT DER ECONOMISCHE WETENSCHAPPEN
EN ECONOMETRIE
AMSTERDAM**

FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURE IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
An Analysis of a Segmented Rural Labour market

Hermine Weijland
Rosien Herweijer
Jan de Groot

SUMMARY

In the Dominican Republic, female participation in agriculture has been recorded as the lowest in the world, but thus far no satisfactory explanation has been forwarded for that fact. The paper first presents an analytical scheme for the detection of the factors that can explain female work patterns. It distinguishes six levels of decision making, which in combination yield some thirty explanatory variables. Then the paper proceeds to investigate the importance of these variables for the Dominican case. It is shown that the low participation record is not only due to underreporting, but can also be explained by specific cultural and economic factors at the various levels of decision making, ranking from the individual to the state, with household, enterprise, community and sector as intermediate levels.

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1. INTRODUCTION

According to a rapidly growing number of studies, female participation in farm work varies considerably between and within countries. Ester Boserup (1970) was the first who tried to explain these variations, and she mentioned a number of factors, which later were tested for their significance by Ruth Dixon (1983) in a model of labour demand and supply. Three economic factors, namely size of landholdings, market orientation of agriculture, and attraction of urban jobs, appear to correlate significantly with female participation in agriculture. In a cross-country regression the three factors together can explain the larger part of inter-country variation. For a few regions, however, the model does not seem to apply at all, and Central America is one of them. In that region women's participation in agriculture is recorded as the lowest in the world (Dixon 1983: 367).

This paper investigates the causes of the low and officially still decreasing participation recorded in the Dominican Republic. This country has a Spanish culture similar to that of the Central American countries, and correspondingly low participation statistics. Census estimates give only 10 percent for 1981, whereas, according to Dixon's model, the agrarian structure would allow a participation rate of almost 30 percent. The lower statistic might be the result of a cultural bias, but it is also possible that there are more structural forces in this area that are not included in the model. The first part of the paper provides a scheme for the detection of such additional variables, presenting the main levels of decision making involved in the allocation of female labour in rural areas. The second part describes the decision-making process at the distinct levels in the Dominican Republic, using data and qualitative information from censuses, rural surveys, and women's studies, including own research. It is shown that low participation is caused to a large degree by culturally defined norms and values, but it is argued that, in addition, a number of economic forces are operating at various levels of decision making.

2. SPHERES OF DECISION MAKING

2.1. The Framework

Women's relatively low participation in economic activities is commonly explained at the household level. All over the world the greater part of female labour power is absorbed by child care and domestic chores, which are not counted as economic activities, as they are said to belong to the sphere of reproduction and leisure (Beneria 1982: 136). The fact, however, that women's participation in economic activities differs widely among classes, sectors and regions suggests that it is also influenced by a number of factors from other spheres of decision-making that lie beyond the household level. For the purpose of this study a distinction is made between six spheres, ranging from (1) individuals to the (6) state, with (2) households, (3) enterprises, (4) social organizations, and (5) productive sectors as intermediate levels. Each sphere can be conceptualized as a distinct level of decision making, with a rationale of its own and specific independent characteristics, although it is obvious that they are connected and constitute a complex set of interactions and feed-back mechanisms. For the analysis of female participation in agriculture, they offer specific sources of information on the labour allocation process. A short description of the spheres, their specific actors, and the framework of interaction is given below.

2.2. Individuals

The main personal characteristics that are relevant for labour allocation are innate capacities, age, education, training, and personal preferences. Because of her specific capabilities and training, women are predominantly engaged in child care, nursing and housekeeping. But this does not imply that women would not have it otherwise. Educated women often prefer outside jobs to housework, and, in general, most women tend to avoid strenuous and dirty work, which would mean that they try to keep away from agriculture. In practice, however, they may not have a choice. The question whether personal preferences play a role depends on the degree of women's autonomy (Folbre 1986b). The scope for personal decisions is limited by the economic situation and by the subordination to patriarchal rules. These aspects can be analyzed better at the household and institutional levels.

2.3. Households

For the analysis of labour allocation, the main characteristics of households are size, structure and wealth. A large household requires relatively much housework,

because it has many persons to feed, cloth and clean. But, depending on the age composition, it also may have many family helpers. A large size and high dependency ratio might mean that the housewife must spend the greater part of her time on housework. Apart from the household size and structure, housework also depends on available equipment and money. In general, family wealth determines what degree of maintenance is involved and which status must be kept. Through status behaviour the household asserts its rank in society. Usually, higher status requires more domesticated and dependent behaviour of the women, but in the female headed households women have more autonomy and can make decisions about the allocation of her labour which correspond more with her personal views. The allocation of female labour may thus be circumscribed by particular norms, which are formulated as codes of conduct for the household. These codes virtually define women's control over productive resources such as the family farm and non-farm enterprises. Only the women of the poorest households are likely to trespass these norms, as their labour and earnings are too badly needed to prevent them from working in the fields (Deere and León de Leal 1982: 2). In such cases, women's participation in agriculture is commonly underreported, as the respondents prefer to mention the ideal instead of the real division of labour. Similarly, women's role in household decision-making tends to be underrated, because both husband and wife do not like to admit that women have a substantial say, neither in housework nor in farming (Dixon 1985: 23).

2.4. Enterprises

In theory, several farm and non-farm activities are competing with domestic tasks for women's labour power. In practice, however, it is difficult to distinguish between productive work and reproductive housework, as the two types of work alternate by the hour and the day, and are mixed with leisure. This makes precise identification and measurement of the distinct categories of work very complicated. Nevertheless, it can be observed that women in households with own farms and/or firms tend to show higher economic participation rates than those without such enterprises, and that women's participation in agriculture is inversely correlated with farm size (Dixon 1983:351). In small farms the dilemmas posed by competing needs for production work, housework, and personal schooling or leisure are solved differently as compared to large farms. On small farms without money to hire labour, women tend to spend a disproportional part of their time in the fields as unpaid family workers (Deere 1983: 105). Large farms, however, replace female family labour by hired male labour, and, if possible, by machines. But even large farms appear to have considerable need for female family labour, although they employ it differently, in complementary production services

such as administration, or cooking for the labourers. This allocation of female labour reflects the households' interpretation of the male control over economic resources, although such control is concealed by community norms and the derived codes for household behaviour.

2.5. Socio-cultural and economic organizations: norms, customs and institutions

The community in which women live imposes certain norms and values, which are continually emphasized by religious, social and economic institutions and organizations. Local institutions lay the basis for personal and household decisionmaking, and may even fully determine the allocation of female labour. They may prohibit female work in certain types of jobs, and limit the access to land or other production resources. They also may put a ban on outside work by forcing women to participate in voluntary services at the costs of more productive work, thus limiting the time for income earning opportunities.

Local institutions can be regarded as independent agents with distinct characteristics and dynamics. They receive stimuli from higher and lower-order spheres, and translate these into new or amended codes of conduct. On the one hand, communal norms often condone and legitimize certain privileges for men and as such operate as barriers to female participation. In most cases these privileges prohibit access to the means of production, both within and between households. Within households, it is common that only men have rights of ownership, and thus control the use of the land or the part that is irrigated, the equipment to be bought, and the ways energy can be saved. Often men have the selling right of the crops, even if women have been the main producers (Dixon 1985: 25-27). Between households, differences arise due to the sex of the head of the household. The female headed farm tends to get less attention from extension officers and is less involved in information-sharing activities, which usually are held informally among men. Therefore, women might be less innovative and less productive than male farmers (ibidem).

Although the community may grant more autonomy to the poorest women, this does not necessarily mean that they can take advantage of this ill-begotten freedom, as the local institutions might not give access to the necessary means of production and can prevail upon men not to employ any female labour. Thus, communal norms become an instrument in the hands of certain local power groups, in this case the men, who can use their common norms to act as a filter for external economic, political and cultural changes that affect their position. This is the case with state policy (notably education and health policy), sectoral change (introduction of new crops), new farm technology (mechanization),

changing household composition (nuclearization), or other developments which eventually affect the status of women. Local institutions selectively incorporate such changes in the community norms.

However, villages tend to lose their isolated characters, so that their local codes of conduct do not remain unchallenged, for in most countries towns are less restrictive in offering open employment (Dixon 1983: 357-59). As a consequence, women tend to commute or to migrate to the cities as transport facilities improve. This tendency applies for both the poor and the rich, but, while the poor are pushed by sheer necessity, the rich are rather pulled to the attractions of the city and to the status of well-paid jobs.

2.6. Sectors of Production

The agricultural sector is confronted with exogenous forces of demand and technological change, and endogenous forces of land concentration and fragmentation. These forces cause corresponding changes in the product and labour market. They affect the production structure and technology, resulting in changes in labour intensity of cultivation and in the seasonal distribution of labour demand. Labour intensity in agriculture increases with the number of operations in farm production, and with labour investment in land improvement (Boserup 1981: 33,45). Both require more and longer working days, which gives rise to labour saving innovations. Seasonality increases through mono-cropping, partial mechanization and higher yields. The changes in labour intensity and seasonality often result in a re-allocation of tasks between men and women.

As these processes are complex, it is difficult to make general statements on the net effects of agricultural change on the gender division of labour. Land concentration normally increases the use of wage labour, but specialization and mechanization often reduce the demand for unskilled (female) labour and raise the demand for skilled (male) labour. But the effects vary by crop. Seasonal labour peaks tend to increase the demand for female labour, in particular in those crops which require control intensive operations, as weeding and harvesting cannot be mechanized so easily. Therefore, the gender division of labour in agriculture depends for a considerable part on the distribution of land and related agricultural techniques and technologies. These may be brought about by foreign trade and inflows of foreign capital. The influence of the surrounding world economy is also felt through migration, which may have a considerable impact on the labour market and a rise or fall in the demand for female labour in agriculture.

As agriculture is not the only production sector employing female labour, and as

women often prefer non-farm activities over the heavier farm work, female labour can be pulled away from agriculture as the demand for labour in the other sectors increases. In many LDCs, rural industry, trade and services are claiming a substantial part of rural labour. However, non-farm work is not evenly distributed in the rural areas, as it varies with the level of income and the concentration of the population. A high income level, high population density, and a good transport system increase the opportunities for non-farm employment for the rural women, and consequently decrease the supply of female labour for agriculture (Weijland and Heinen, 1987).

2.6. The State; Emancipatory Policies.

In general, states are strongly male dominated, and many traditional policies confirm the subordinated position of women. On the other hand, emancipatory policies may play an important role.

The state can influence women's participation in agriculture at all levels of decision making, by economic, social and cultural policies. For instance, at the personal and household level, women are profoundly influenced by social security provisions, health services and by the socio-cultural content of formal education. On the enterprise and sector level, the state can enhance opportunities for women through all kinds of regulations that stipulate the inclusion of women, for instance in land reform and credit programmes. At the regional level, the state can encourage the diffusion of emancipatory principles through its influence on the local organizations and the public media. At the national level, the state can confirm or change women's economic status by its own personnel policy, and by economic policies on wages and prices. All these activities raise both the supply of and demand for female labour. But whether farm work will be chosen depends on the local circumstances, and in particular on the availability of other employment. Where the latter is lacking and women are to obtain equal access to land, training and wage work, their participation in agriculture might be raised considerably.

2.8. Summary

We have distinguished six levels of decision making and shown that each level can contribute in a number of ways to a rise or fall in women's participation in agriculture. A list of the levels and their explanatory factors is presented in Table 1. It shows that the potential supply of female labour is determined mainly at the personal level. Women's preferences and employment in the non-farm sector turn against female participation in agriculture as incomes rise and rural infrastructure improves. Poor and middle aged women show the least aversion to

farm work, but their supply of labour for agriculture depends on household claims, and earning opportunities in other sectors. The final decision is taken at the household level, where the supply of female labour is largely determined by codes of conduct derived from communal norms and values. Whether women will find employment in agriculture depends for the greater part on the farm size, access to wage work (mainly determined by labour intensity of the sector, seasonal employment), and access to own land (mainly determined by local institutions and state policy). The access to land and wage work is in the most part determined by male control of productive resources and income earning opportunities. This control is established and maintained through social mechanisms at the communal and household level.

Table 1. Factors determining Women's Participation in Agriculture through Supply of and Demand for Labour

Factors by level	Operation*	Effect on female participation*	
		supply	demand
Individuals			
innate capacities	biological fitness	positive	positive
personal preference	aversion of farm work*	negative*	
training in agriculture	higher productivity	positive	positive
education	wider access to non-farm employment	negative	
age	higher degree of autonomy*	positive*	
Households			
size of household	higher demand for housework	negative	
dependency ratio	less family helpers	negative	
relation to head	marriage*	negative*	
wealth	more maintenance, higher status	negative*	
Enterprises			
farm size	demand for (unpaid) family labour		positive
capital, equipment	mechanization, paid labour		negative*
Local Institutions			
inheritance system	male bias, no access to land*		negative*
banks, moneylenders	no lending to women*	negative*	
co-operatives	no entry for women*		negative*
Sectors			
agriculture			
commercialization	monocropping, seasonality, wage labour		varying*
mechanization	shift toward skilled male labour*		negative*
land concentration	shift towards (male) wage labour*		negative*
land fragmentation	shift towards family labour		positive
non-agriculture			
rising income	diversification of employment	negative	
population density	raises specialization	negative	
transportation	facilitates commuting	negative	
urbanization	encourages migration	negative	
State			
social security	reduces the necessity to work	negative	
education	gives access to non-farm jobs	negative	
health	improves fitness	positive	
land redistribution	increases demand for family labour		positive
credits for women	encourages women's participation in agriculture	positive	positive
foreign trade policies	encourage commercialization and mechanization		varying *

*) Operations and effects indicate economic relations, but when an asterisk is added cultural bias as prevailing in Spanish America is included

3. THE CASE OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Macho Ideology Versus Proletarian Necessity

3.1 Socio-economic Situation

The Dominican Republic and Haiti share one of the larger islands in the Caribbean sea, named Hispaniola. The Dominicans occupy the eastern part, which is better developed than the western Haitian part. According to World Bank statistics, the Dominican per capita product in 1985 was US\$ 790, against \$ 310 in Haiti. In contrast with the stagnating economy in Haiti, the Dominican economy experienced up to the mid-seventies a decade of fast growth (8.5%), which was mostly due to industrial development. During this period the Dominican industry grew with almost 15%, and in 1980 employed 16% of the labour force, against only 8% in Haiti. In the period 1965-1980, the Dominican agricultural labour force fell from 59 to 46%, while in Haiti the percentage of labour in agriculture in 1965 was still as high as 77; and declined only slightly, to 70% in 1980. In the same period, urban population in the Dominican Republic grew at a rate of 5%, against less than 4% in Haiti, so that in the DR urban population had grown to 55% of total population in 1984, against only 27% in Haiti (World Bank 1987:202-266).

Obviously, the two states have completely different economic outlooks, but also their socio-cultural backgrounds differ substantially. The Dominican Republic has a Spanish-American culture, whereas Haiti has more Caribbean characteristics. The economic as well as the cultural backgrounds influence female participation in agriculture. In the Dominican Republic, the participation rate was reported to have fallen from 16.6% in 1970 to 10.0% in 1981, whereas in Haiti, the rate was much higher, but also showed a tendency to fall. In 1970 it was still 38.3%, but in 1982 it had fallen to 30.6% (ILO 1982:58). So it would seem that women have to do less farm work in the more prosperous country.

3.2 Women's role in the Patriarchal Agrarian Society of the Dominican Republic: Facts versus Figures

In the Dominican villages, women's participation in agriculture is a delicate study object, because the prevailing patriarchal ideology does not allow women to engage in any economic activity outside the domestic premises. Or, as an interviewed village woman put it:

"Women's work is the work around the house: domestic work and the caring for the family.... The man attends to the farm work and the business".

However, her opening statement, was followed immediately by a plain contradiction:

"Men and women are nearly equal in agriculture down here...., many things are done by man and woman together...., and many women earn money in agriculture as do men". (Quehaceres 1985: 3, transl.).

So it seems that women do not perceive anything irregular when the actual situation in their village differs so much from the general norms they have learned to accept, and, when questioned by census enumerators, their answers are nicely in line with these norms and not meant to describe reality. Consequently, the successive censuses give excessively low and still diminishing participation rates of women in agriculture, in paid as well as unpaid farm work, as is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Female Participation in Agriculture in the Dominican Republic; numbers and percentages of agricultural workers, according to Agricultural and Population Censuses in 1950-1981.

	agricultural census	population census	agricultural census	population census
female workers in agriculture	1950	1970	1971	1981
total	140.315	91.736	83.210	42.189
- paid	27.175	20.546	10.790	6.847
- unpaid	113.140	71.190	72.420	35.342
female participation rates, as percentages of corresponding categories of agricultural workers				
total	20	17	12	10
- paid	18	13	6	9
- unpaid	21	18	15	10

Source: Duarte 1980:174-175; ILO Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1982:58, 1980:74-75.

Note: The agricultural census is held in the slack season, but includes persons who would be excluded according to the standards of the population census. The latter census, however, is held in the peak season. On balance, the agricultural census appears to report less female workers and lower participation rates, particularly for wage labour which is most sensitive to seasonal fluctuations.

Although the official statistics are neatly in agreement with the prevailing patriarchal norms, which require that female activities must be compatible with

domestic duties and should not lead to absence from the house, the real division of tasks in agriculture might differ substantially. This is demonstrated by a number of studies on rural women, which unanimously report that, if a broader definition of work is used, farm women participate fully in agriculture. Thus the field study 'Encuesta Nacional de Mujeres Rurales', undertaken by the 'Centro de Investigación para la Acción Feminina' (CIPAF), shows that no less than 79 percent of all rural women were still engaged in agriculture, and that the need for paid farm work was growing in stead of declining (Dottin 1985:6-8).

On the other hand, there are also studies which describe certain changes in the demand for labour that correspond with the patriarchal tendency to exclude women from paid labour. They report that the large farms, which account for most of the demand for paid labour, increasingly tend to exclude women wherever there is sufficient supply of male Dominican or Haitian labour. As the supply of the competing female labour stems from the poor small farms and the landless households, it would seem that the patriarchal norms of the dominant employers clash with the economic needs of the rural poor, who cannot stick to the patriarchal codes as extreme poverty pushes their women out of their homes towards open wage employment.

It is evident that the officially registered paid female labour in agriculture could not be concealed, and should be seen as an unavoidable manifestation of impoverishment of the landless and very poor farm families. The patriarchal codes would rather allow the women to replace the male workers on the family farm, and have the men do the paid labour outside the farm. By replacing the men as unpaid family workers, the women can conceal their active participation in agriculture and call it domestic work. So only the paid work outside the house cannot be overlooked and must be done openly. The officially recorded low levels of participation for paid and unpaid labour indicate that only a small part of the Dominican rural families are willing to expose themselves in this way. The declining trend of the statistics, however, cannot easily be explained by such patriarchal attitudes. It rather indicates that there are other forces at work that decrease labour demand or supply. This question is taken up in section 3.5, which deals with sectoral trends.

The Dominican society legitimizes its discriminatory attitude towards women by putting natural sex differences to the foreground. Thus, most farm work is judged too heavy for the weaker sex, and considered as typically masculine. Therefore, the norm is that farms should be owned and run only by men (Calderon and Inoa 1983:16). Men's work is considered superior to that of women, so that

men usually refuse to do team work with women, and farmers try to avoid hiring female workers (de la Rive Box 1983:15). Only when labour is very scarce or the work to be done of low productivity, farmers will consider to hire the cheaper women. Women are not employed permanently and certainly not deemed able to handle machines or expensive equipment (Rosado 1985:4-12; Arango 1985:14; Koning 1984:59; Van den Biezenbos and Herweijer 1983: 15). Their work is typically done only by hand, and paid at a piece rate (Rosado 1985:12). A woman's average earnings for a full-day's field job is only half a man's wage, although her task is often just as heavy (Van den Biezenbos and Herweijer 1983: 15).

So the women are not spared at work; on the contrary, they use to do the jobs men refuse to do. But they are well aware of being discriminated, arguing that they work side by side with their husbands on the home farm and perform heavy tasks, but nonetheless get little paid employment opportunities (Rosado 1985: 11-12).

The picture emerging is that of an irrational economic situation of a segmented labour market, with a large male and a small but oversupplied female compartment. Exclusion of women from the regular labour market has the effect of pushing men's wages above, and women's wages below the equilibrium rate (Booth & Sundrum 1985: 244). From the enterprise and sectoral point of view, this is economically irrational, as the larger part of the labour force must be paid an above-equilibrium price, but it suits the male workers and the male heads of households, as it supports their feeling of masculine superiority. The patriarchal codes also agree with the preferences of the upper and middle-class women, as the latter can use such codes to get exempted from heavy or dirty field work. This motive which prevents the women to press for a change in patriarchal norms in favour of their participation in farming and other work.

Given the vested interests in patriarchal relationships, there are very few institutions and organizations that express themselves against the subordination of women in economic life. The government, for one, has not given any attention to the problems that poor women have to face when they want to engage in some gainful employment. Instead, it promotes women's activities that are completely in conformity with patriarchal roles, and thereby foregoes any contact with the rural poor (Van den Biezenbos and Herweijer 1983:11). So the latter have to organize themselves without any help from the local authorities. There is an example of a farmers' organization for women, which managed to gain access to land for vegetable cropping, against the advice of the male counterparts and other authorities involved (Groverman 1982:39). But such successes are rare, as the institutional environment is effectively restricting women's economic

activities in any direction. The common farmers' organizations exclude women from collectivization (de la Rive Box 1983:18), and the state organizations do not find women eligible for land distribution in the current programme of land reform (Ibid:9-10). Such policies are particularly damaging for the poor widowed women who are entirely dependent on farm production.

Considering the above, it is obvious that little change can be expected in the patriarchal attitudes to women's participation in agriculture. Whatever changes may occur would most likely be prompted by strong economic motives. The following sections sketch the economic conflicts between the spheres of decision making that may lead to changes in the rural labour market.

3.3 Personal and Household Interests against Women's Participation in Agriculture

The Dominican woman hardly ever engages in agriculture out of her own choice. She takes up farm work because circumstances compel her to do so (de la Rive Box 1983: 13). It is mostly lack of money that makes her work on the family farm or elsewhere. If born at a farm, women have learned at a young age how to do all the farm jobs, but they have also been taught to go to the fields only when emergencies arise (Quehaceres Febr.1985:2). The patriarchal tradition which prescribes her to stay at home is generally well observed, especially by the young and newly married women. After the age of eight, girls are told to do only female tasks (Pastora Hernández 1985:5). They marry very early, and the single girls rather migrate to town than stay in the village. As a result, the rural female/male ratio is only 91 to 100 in the age group of 10-24 years, whereas it turns into 109 to 100 in the 25 - 39 years' category (Arango et al. 1985:17). The rural husband insists that his wife stays at home. If she has to work outside he resents this as a sign of impotence (Corten & Tahon 1985:56). In particular the young wives who are with child and have small children must stay at home. Thus, some 50 percent of the married women would be excluded from farmwork (Pou et al. 1983:49). Yet almost all farm women do some seasonal agrarian work, helping their husbands in the fields with harvesting, cleaning, carrying, grading and storing of the crops.

Most women are not so happy staying confined at their homes; they would welcome some activity such as shopkeeping, to enliven their existence (Goverman 1982:33). But as this has to be done in addition to their housework, married women are hardly ever willing to work regularly and full-time outside their houses. According to CIPAF surveys, the average work load of economically active women is twice as high as that of men (Pou et al, 1983:Annex). Only elder women can shift some of their housework to their daughters. Not surprisingly, most

women who do agricultural work have elder children to help them (van den Biezenbos and Herweijer 1983: 33). Several surveys lead to the conclusion that, in general, children are rather a stimulus than an obstacle to outside work (Calderon & Iona 1981:83; Pastora Hernandez 1985:13). Table 2 shows how economic participation by women increases with age.

Table 2. Economic Participation of Rural Women by age category (1980)

age	participation (percentage)
10 - 24	79.5
25 - 39	88.4
40 - 54	93.8
55 and over	82.3

Source: ENMOR 1980, taken from Arango et al. (1985:29).

The above participation rates include all economic activities, so it can rise as high as 80 percent and above, even for young girls and newly wed women. For the age group of 40 to 55, overall economic participation increases to 93.8 percent, and seems to include all healthy middle-aged women. The enumerated activities are diverse and similar to domestic tasks (Pastora Hernández 1985:8; Arango 1985:11).

For work outside the house, participation rates are quite different. As a rule, paid work outside the house is done only by widowed or abandoned elderly women. Their share in the paid female Dominican agrarian labour force has been estimated as high as 70 percent, whereas less than 20 percent of the households are reported as female headed (de la Rive Box 1983: 8; Van den Biezenbos and Herweijer 1983:23; Arango et al. 1985:36). Apparently, single middle-aged women with large family responsibilities do not care much for what the villagers say, they pick up any paid work that is offered.

According to the various surveys, all women working for wages in agriculture contribute an essential share to their households' income, although they pretend that their work is only temporal and incidental (Pastora Hernández 1985:3). As a rule, the incomes of the households with working women is higher than the incomes of comparable households without working women (Calderon and Inoa 1981:81).

Traditionally, women prefer to be paid in kind when working in food crops,

because this has the best effect on their household's welfare (de la Rive Box 1983:12). Another, already mentioned, preference is to work only part-time. When asked, working women did not consider working full-time, even if that would bring much higher earnings. The motive behind such a strong preference is not only that they have a lot of housework to do, but also that they want to show that their work is only of a supplementary nature. So if they work only part-time, the honour of the family is less jeopardized.

Thus it appears that women's inclination for agricultural work and her manifested supply of labour correspond closely with patriarchal traditions. This means that, although women are willing to do all kinds of work on their own farms, only a relatively small part is willing to do regular wage work outside the house.

The time women can spend on farm work has little relation with their housework. Usually the field work is done on top of the household chores for which they remain responsible even if they can count on some help from husbands and children (Quehaceras feb.1985:4). According to a time-budget study in the village of Maguana, housewives did 52 percent of the housework, whereas the husband's share was only 3 percent, while other family members contributed the remaining 45 percent (Pou et al. 1983:Annex). The productive work of the housewives did not show an inverse relation with the time spent on housework, but there was a positive though weak correlation between her productive work and the contribution of other family members to the housework. So the average housewife cannot count on help from her children or other relatives when working outside, but, as was mentioned before, the number of children urges her to do more productive work instead of keeping her at home (Calderon and Inoa 1981:83). This contrary behaviour could be caused by sheer necessity, for children have not only helping hands, they also have mouths to feed, bodies to cloth, and minds to educate. These urgent demands may precede the children's contribution to housework, and their mother might decide to engage in some economic activity on their behalf, before they are able to do some housework. Whichever reasoning is the correct one is not relevant for this study, as both lead to the conclusion that female labour is positively related to the number of children, and this relation gets stronger as the children grow older. (Pastora Hernández 1985:13; Van den Biezenbos and Herweijer 1983:33).

All individual and household studies conclude that the most important reason for women to work in agriculture is poverty. Only the very poor husbands seem to show some willingness to let their wives work outside, and in that case they are also more inclined to do some 'female' tasks (Amparo Arango 1985:8). Single, widowed

or abandoned women with more autonomy are more willing to do outside farm work, but none of them wants to work full-time as a common wage labourer. Consequently, given the process of rural impoverishment which has set in since the end of the seventies, it is probable that the supply of temporary seasonal female labour is increasing. It is not so certain, however, that poverty is pushing already so hard that women have begun to look for full-time employment. This would require such a drastic change in the gender division of labour, that it is doubtful whether the common Dominican husband could face this in the foreseeable future (Corten and Tanon 1985:57,64). The poorest men, however, would have hardly any choice, and if the agrarian situation does not change, the strict patriarchal norms will have to be released in an increasing part of the rural households. That this is possible has already been observed in some regions where mass proletarianization of women has occurred (Pastora Hernández 1983:3).

In sum, one should conclude that the supply of female labour is increasing, but whether this additional labour force can be absorbed by the farms depends on the development of the demand for labour which is determined at the enterprise and sector level.

3.4. Farming Rationale in Favour of Women's Participation

The only place where Dominican women can work unobtrusively in agriculture is the own farm. Using data from the agricultural census and the ENMR survey of 1985, it can be estimated that in 1981 almost 50 percent of the rural families owned a small farm of less than 5 ha. In such small farms women's work is essential, especially for harvest operations, but also for regular tasks such as the tending of small livestock. The more diversified small farms tend to have relatively more regular need for female family labour (Arango 1985:12). If the rural family has no land at all, women cannot be employed as family workers, and those who are not acquainted with farming will not be hired as labourers either. Almost 40 percent of the rural families was recorded landless. Another 10 percent of rural families owns more than 5 ha, and among them 1.1 percent owns more than 50 ha (Agricultural Census 1981; ENMR 1985). The wealthier the family, the less women are helping in agriculture, as the higher income allows the farmer to hire wage labourers to do the chores that are usually done by female family members.

Although it is customary that farms are run by men, almost 11 percent is managed by widows or single women. Female management occurs relatively more frequent in the small farms as compared to the large. The female farmers appear to be quite capable for their work; they have a good reputation with their creditors (de la

Rive Box 1983:10). Most female farmers would not be occupied with farming if their husbands were still alive. They think farming is not a proper job for women, and would leave their farms rather in the hands of a son instead of a daughter. Yet some female farmers prefer to employ female workers for certain jobs, because of their better performance (Van den Biezenbos and Herweijer 1983). According to the female workers, women are quite able to do almost all farm work (Groverman 1982:39), and the male farmers do not really disagree, as they hire female workers any time there are no men available to do the necessary jobs. It is just that male farmers prefer to hire men for the more remunerative operations, as they think women ought not to work as paid labourers, although they are very helpful as cheap, seasonal workers (Biezenbos and Herweijer). The farm rationale prescribes that female labour should be hired at least for those operations that would not be profitable if done by the more expensive male labourers. Even if they were not cheaper, they should also be chosen instead of men if they were faster or more cautious, as was observed by some farmers (Rosado 1985:4-6). In practice, however, farmers decide to employ women only because they are cheaper and more flexible. Women need not be hired by the day, like men, as women are used to work part-time, and therefore agree to be paid at a piece-rate. As long as women finish their jobs the farmer does not care whether they work shorter or slower. What does matter for him is that they accept lower piece wages than men do, and can be hired or fired at random.

Considering the above advantages of female over male labour, it is surprising that farmers do not employ women more frequently. There must be some social pressure preventing farmers to do so. Probably, they want to keep on good terms with the skilled male labourers who are indispensable for certain strenuous or specialized farm operations. Male labourers show an intolerant behaviour to potentially competing women, and not without reason, because the sectoral labour market is getting overcrowded.

3.5 Sectoral trends against Women's Participation

(1) Agriculture

Dominican agriculture, in effect, can afford to exclude women because it is flooded by male guest labour from the neighbouring state. Persistent poverty in Haiti has caused an increasing flow of migrant labour to the eastern half of the island, the Dominican Republic.

There are about 250.000 Haitians living in the country, including those born in the Dominican Republic from Haitian parents. Some 40.000 of them work in the sugar plantations where labour demand is seasonal (Murphy 1983:338). In harvest

time the State Sugar Board additionally contracts about 15.000 temporary workers from the neighbouring country. Haitian labour represents over 5 percent of the total Dominican labour force, and in rural areas the proportion is even higher.

The poorer Haitians are willing to work hard, and they and their women folk work cheaper than most Dominicans would do. The Haitians constitute the cheap reserve army for agriculture against which the Dominicans can hardly compete.

Another category of labour supply, of which it is almost certain that it has grown recently, stems from the small farms. According to the agricultural censuses of 1960 and 1981 the number of farms smaller than 5 ha grew from 224 to 325 thousand in twenty years. Although farm work has become more labour-intensive due to the introduction of double cropping and the increase of cropland at the expense of pastures, incomes on the small farms have not grown sufficiently to meet the basic needs of the farm households. Consequently, small farmers are joining the agrarian labour force as (semi) permanent, paid workers, leaving part of their own farm work to their family members.

According to surveys of USAID/SEA, in 1975/76 half of the agrarian labour force used was paid labour (SEA 1977: 6). One third of this labour was supplied by semi-proletarian small farmers, and the other two-third by Haitians and Dominican landless labourers. Almost 35 percent of all farmers was found to depend more on wage work than their own farming. These results suggest that the supply of wage labour by the Dominican small farmers is indeed increasing significantly, as is argued elsewhere (de Groot and Buitelaar 1984:90). This increase must have caused an upward shift in unpaid female participation on the marginalized farms, but most likely it also has led to a fall in the employment opportunities for the elder poor women who need wage work.

With a growing number of guest labourers and semi-proletarian farm labourers, the supply of agricultural labour must have increased, even though formal census estimates indicate a decline. This officially registered fall in the number of agricultural workers may be explained by the fact that the owners of small farms are registered only as workers on own account, and not as labourers, while Haitian workers are not registered at all, and female workers only partly. The census statistics of the labour force are somewhat misleading, but the statistics on production and labour intensity suggest that indeed labour demand has responded to the growing supply. In the 1970s, crops in which a high proportion of wage and contract labour is employed have increased faster than crops dominated by family labour (De Groot and Buitelaar 1985:49,71). Haitian labour, traditionally in sugar cane, is increasingly employed in other crops such as rice and coffee.

In the coffee harvest they compete with Dominican women for whom coffee picking is the most important paid economic activity in agriculture (Rosado 1985:3). However, the rapidly growing labour-intensive new crops (tomatoes and cotton) employ many women for the harvest. The replacement of sugar cane by fruits and vegetables as export crops, taking place on several sugar plantations, also increases the demand for female labour.

In sum, it can be concluded that all available information suggests that labour supply is growing and that demand is responding and restructuring accordingly towards crops with higher seasonal labour requirements. There is no sufficient evidence, however, to contend that the gender division of labour is changing.

(2) Other Sectors

As women prefer non-farm work to any agricultural activity, their participation in agriculture will tend to decrease when non-farm earning opportunities increase. According to the national survey of rural workers in 1980 (ENMOR 1980), women's participation in economic activities was only 21 percent. Women's participation in non-farm work was almost equal to those of men (42 percent) against only 12 percent in farming. Table 3 shows that employment opportunities outside farming are highest in services, which offers jobs to 16 percent of the economically active rural women, against 18 percent in agriculture, and 14 percent in the other sectors. According to this table the rural employment opportunities do not seem to be slight. It has to be noted, however, that only 38 percent of the women of 10 years and over were counted as economically active, which means that only 7 percent of that age category was registered as workers in agriculture, and some 10 percent in the nonfarm sectors.

Table 3. Economically Active Rural Women by Sector of Production, October 1980 (percentages)

<u>Economic Participation</u>		
Economically active	38	
Not economically active	62	
<hr/>		
Total age group > 10 years	100	
 <u>Employment of Economically Active Women (EAW)</u>		
- Agriculture	18	
- Industry	6	
- Commerce	7	
- Services	16	
- Other	1	
<hr/>		
Unemployed	subtotal	47
		53
<hr/>		
Total EAW		100

Source: ENMOR (1980) Tables 7 and 21

As employment in the non-farm sectors tends to increase for the most part in urban areas, the search for such jobs has led to disproportionate outmigration of women; 55 percent of the rural-urban migrants are females, and among them the younger category of 10 to 24 years is over-represented (Mones 1985:14). This shows again that agrarian employment is particularly important for those women who have little non-farm training and must stay with their families in the village. The others will try very hard to escape from the farm, either through permanent or circular migration, commuting, or some local non-farm job. Thus, as transportation is relatively well developed, and distances rather short to the nearest urban centres, it is quite possible for rural women to succeed in finding non-farm work if they need it badly. This escape route away from agriculture might be one of the main causes of the low female participation in agriculture in the Dominican Republic.

Summarizing the sectoral tendencies, there are a number of contradictory forces at work which influence female participation in agriculture. At the supply side there is increasing competition of male labourers, from Haiti and also from an increasing number of small farmers. At the demand side, there is an increase in

employment for female labour, particularly for the harvesting operations of newly introduced commercial crops. This demand can be met by the increasing supply of the women of the poor landless households. Demand for family labour is also rising. This is caused by the fragmentation of landownership, which increases the proportion of small farms and results in an increasing demand for female family labour on the farms.

In sum, it is plausible that the sectoral trends are favourable for female participation in agriculture as long as the earnings of the small farm households and the landless are stagnant or decreasing relative to other rural incomes. Most probably, the increase will apply mainly to the category of unpaid family labour, because of the fragmentation of farm land and the consequent proletarianization of the farmers. On the other hand, female wage employment may stagnate or even decrease, due to increasing male competition in agriculture and increasing employment opportunities for women outside agriculture.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The reasons for the low female participation in agriculture in the Dominican Republic are manifold. They are often related to a pronounced patriarchal ideology but also must be sought at various levels of economic interference. Although the recorded participation rates obviously suffer from underreporting, as the admission of women's work causes embarrassment for the male heads of the households, there are also forces that keep the real participation rate low and declining. Some of these forces are also influenced by patriarchal ideology, so that it is often difficult to separate the economic from the cultural aspects.

The bias against farm-work is most active at the household and community level, where individual preferences are molded, and girls are told that certain jobs are for men only. So the women get an aversion against farm work, their training and education supports this attitude, and when they must find a job, they will turn first to the nonfarm sector. Consequently, personal preference for farm work is minimal. From the side of the farmer in need of some work done, the preference for female labour is equally slight.

At the household level, however, more objective factors are also playing a role. Although women always have to do domestic work, there is often the need for additional income, particularly in the incomplete and poor households with many dependent children. So in the poorer strata the taboo is broken, and especially the older and widowed women look for agricultural wage work if no other jobs can be found.

Similarly, at the farm level, the poorer farmers stick less to patriarchal rules and follow the economic rationale more than the richer do. The economic size of the farm is the main determinant for female participation. While small farmers make abundant use of unpaid family labour, large farmers make less use of family labour, but hire female labour at peak seasons and for the jobs men would not do for the going pay rate. Hiring women for men's jobs would cause a lot of labour trouble for the farmers.

Local institutions reinforce the male dominance in agriculture through the tacit or outspoken refusal of men to work alongside with women. Thus the latter are excluded from the more remunerative jobs and co-operative actions, they have virtually no access to agricultural credit, and receive little agricultural information and training.

At the sectoral level, the male dominance in the labour market is reinforced by the inflow of large numbers of Haitian workers, and, since the economic situation of the small farmers has deteriorated through fragmentation and economic crisis, also by the entrance of Dominican male farm labour. Demand for labour seems to adjust somewhat to increasing supply by the introduction of more labour-intensive commercial crops, and government policies favour this development. Nevertheless, the net effect of the sectoral changes on the employment opportunities for women are probably negative for wage labour. Family labour, however, is bound to increase as the small farms hire out their male labour.

Fortunately for the rural women, new employment opportunities have been created in the nonfarm sectors. Rapid urban expansion and economic growth has led many women to migrate to the cities, while improved transport facilities encouraged commuting and circular migration. As a result, the larger part of the economically active rural women is currently engaged outside agriculture, while only the less educated, poor and isolated women are still doing farm work.

The question of relatively low female participation in agriculture in Spanish Middle America in general and the Dominican Republic in particular, can be put in the light of the above findings. Patriarchal bias, underreporting, women's aversion against farm work, and male obstruction in the labour market, all are interrelated phenomena that may apply in the entire region and cause large downward deviations from the average trend. On the other hand, the immigration of Haitian labour is a country-specific phenomenon that should exaggerate the male dominance in agriculture in the Dominican Republic, while it might weaken the male position in the neighbouring Haiti. A probably less specific but equally strong factor against female participation is the flow of women out of farming

towards the rapidly growing nonfarm sector. This also might have contributed substantially to the decline in the female share in farm work in the Dominican Republic.

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