



Women seaweed growers of India- Exploring the intersection of farm and household dynamics at play

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Indian seaweed farming has witnessed almost three decades of steady growth and development, with the women farmers playing the archetypal roles in the work as well as domestic fronts in this family enterprise which they have nurtured over the years. Seaweed aquaculture is the emerging “mantra” to promote coastal livelihoods, meet the country’s self-sufficiency in carrageenan requirements and to promote its novel uses as biofuels and bio stimulants. As main actors of this small scale enterprise situated in Ramanathapuram district, Tamil Nadu, on the south east coast of India, we explore how women prepare themselves to override the trade-offs in climate change, paucity for good quality seeding material, negotiate the uncertainties in supply and price and look forward for more profitable avenues in value addition. On the domestic front, we investigate the finer nuances of gender stereotypes in the backdrop of a normative patriarchal society and the struggles of women in fulfilling the dual roles of a spouse as well as income provider within prescriptive chattels of the community structure. We study the predictor variables which best characterize the difference between men and women sea weed growers, using discriminant function analysis. Decision making ability, possession of smart phone, family size, educational status and status as head of the family were the main predictor variables which were delineated as successful in explaining the gender divide.