

MARCH

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Maharashtra lags behind in the economic growth of the 4 major states, while Tamil Nadu advances

- Among the four largest economies in India, Maharashtra has recorded the lowest economic growth over the past four years.
- At the same time, the state continues to remain in the top position in terms of total economic value (GSDP).
- For the 2024-25 fiscal year, Maharashtra's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) is estimated at Rs.42,67,771 crore.
- However, in terms of growth rate, the state has fallen behind Karnataka, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu.

Karnataka in First Place

- Karnataka stands in the top position with a growth of approximately 65%.

Gujarat in Second Place

- Gujarat, which is strong in the industrial and manufacturing sectors, has recorded 48% growth, securing the second position.

Third Place for Tamil Nadu

- In terms of overall economic size, Tamil Nadu has emerged as a close competitor, following Maharashtra.

UN 'International Year of the Woman Farmer' - 2026 Women in Agriculture: A Moment for Recognition

The Uncounted Women

- Not only in Tamil Nadu but across the world, women are largely the backbone of agriculture.

- They ensure food security both at home and in the nation.
- However, their contributions are not formally recognized.
- They are not paid fair wages for their labor, and land ownership remains largely nominal.
- Furthermore, access to credit facilities, technology, and market opportunities is obtained only after great struggle.
- For generations, women have been tilling the land without even being officially recognized as farmers.

If Given Equal Opportunity...

- Women do not farm solely for the sake of yield; they cultivate for nutrition and a sustainable future.
- Their choices what to plant, what to save, and how to feed the family are driven by a deep, evolved intelligence gained through centuries of experience, paired with a strong sense of environmental responsibility.
- Numerous studies consistently highlight a clear fact:
 - when women are granted equal access to land, resources, knowledge, and markets as men, production increases significantly.
 - Women farmers are already working hard on the land; if provided with quality seeds, proper tools, training, and credit, the results of their labor would be fully realized.
- Research conducted in several countries shows that farm productivity can increase by 20–30% under these conditions.
- This is growth achieved by maximizing existing land rather than by exploiting new areas.
- Furthermore, it directly reduces household hunger.
- Beyond production, the income women earn in agriculture is primarily converted into food for the household.

TUTICORIN
99445 11344

TIRUNELVELI
98942 41422

RAMANATHAPURAM
75503 52916

MADURAI
98431 10566

CHENNAI
97555 52003

COVAI
90433 10773

TENKASI
98840 51717

- In terms of gender-based income comparisons, the hunger of a family decreases significantly through the woman's earnings.
- Income earned by women farmers is invested in family welfare, nutrition, healthcare, and children's education.
- These investments generate intergenerational prosperity that no short-term government subsidy can replace.

Climate Change and Women

- When approached from the perspective of climate change, the role of women farmers becomes even more critical.
- To implement sustainable, organic agriculture, women farmers naturally employ methods such as polyculture (diverse cropping), local seed saving, and low-input agricultural techniques.
- These practices are not relics of the past; they are blueprints for the future.
- Many economic systems worldwide that are seeking resilience are now welcoming and adopting these practices.
- Modern agriculture often assesses productivity solely by the benchmark of "yield per acre." In doing so, fundamental values such as the long-term sustainability of soil health, the nutritional quality of food, the protection of biodiversity, and social ethics are overlooked.
- Due to this narrow perspective, the produce grown by women farmers may not appear in export lists or official economic reports.
- However, they silently yet firmly register their impact on the family's daily dinner plates, in the health of children, and in the food security of the society at large.

The Hidden Politics

- Food is available at a low price in our country only because women's labor is undervalued.
- This affordability is not natural. In reality, if women farmers received market value for all their labor, the true cost of food security would be exposed.

Now, a question arises:

- Who will bear this additional cost? The consumer, the government, or market systems? Currently, none of them do.
- Instead, the entire burden is placed on the shoulders of the marginalized woman farmer, compressed into low wages.
- Investing in women farmers is one of the most beneficial investments a society can make.
- It simultaneously strengthens food security, rural livelihoods, environmental sustainability, and social equality.
- In India, 70% of the population lives in rural areas, and 60% of them rely on agriculture as their primary occupation.
- Women make up 50% of this workforce, and their contribution is significant.
- Is it not an injustice that such a massive productive force is ignored?

Recognition and Change

- The question to be asked here is not whether we can recognize women farmers, but rather how much longer we will continue to fail to do so.
- The 'International Year of the Woman Farmer - 2026' is not just an act of recognition; it is a long-awaited economic transformation.
- It is a concerted effort to restore the dignity and value of women's labor in agriculture.