



## Empower Women in Making Key Decisions

**Rabia Sultan**

Owner, KGF Farms, Pakistan



**Rabia Sultan** has developed an extensive educational portfolio and career spanning 20 years. Beginning her journey in 1993, she progressed to serve as member on many committees within the public and private sector. Throughout her professional life, Rabia has gained experience in water management, cotton crop production, and cultivation of mango. Her passion for cotton led her to develop a Bt cotton variety in 2007 at her farm. In 2017, she was awarded first prize by the Government of Punjab for the highest cotton production of 2,440 kg per acre. Her experiences in the public sector led to her being nominated for the Fatima Jinnah Award in 2006. Rabia Sultan is a multifaceted personality who embodies the commitment of a lifelong learner.

### Tell us about your professional journey.

My farm is located at Thatta Gurmani, District Muzaffargarh, Punjab, Pakistan. The total farm area is 400 acres of which 30 acres are under cotton cultivation. Previously cotton was sown on 150 acres. I supervise and manage the farm. I have about 50 people looking after my whole farm. Men work as permanent labour and women as seasonal labour.

### What is your main role on the farm?

Being the owner of my farm, I make all the decisions. My role is management of the farm and planning all of the farming activities covering all the crop production cycles and marketing of the production.

### Tell us about your professional accomplishments.

- Developing a Bt cotton variety on my farm
- Getting the highest yield per acre in the whole of the province
- Getting recognition as the best farmer is my biggest achievement
- Advocacy for cotton farmers

### If the clock is rewound is there something you would do better for the sector?

- Strengthen research and extension to farmers
- Create women farmer resource centres where they can have access to new technology, ideas, training, networking and international good agricultural practices.

### Do you have any role models who inspired you?

My father and grandfather who both were passionate cotton farmers. They inspired me a lot.

### What did you dream of becoming when you were younger?

As a child I always enjoyed going to the farms with my father in his Land Rover. Now, when I look back, that was the beginning of my interest in farming as I saw heaps of cotton packed in gunny bags. The fields looked like white snow — a treat to the eye. Picking cotton as a child brought joy and happiness. My passion for growing cotton began then.

**What do you think are the key gender-specific obstacles in cotton farms? How can we overcome them?**

The most critical gender-specific obstacles are lack of access to land; markets; inputs; financing; agricultural training and education; suitable working conditions; gender parity; equality; transport; and problems with timely availability of inputs. Having inclusive policies for women farmers, ensuring better economic opportunities and creating policies for greater economic power for women can help in reducing the gender-specific obstacles.

**What is the one thing that you think can make a major change?**

Agricultural training and education.

**Did you face discrimination in the sector for being a woman?**

I did not face any discrimination.

**As a woman what extra do you have to do to ensure work-home balance?**

Home is the first responsibility of a woman and she can be the best home maker. Balancing responsibilities of home and work is only possible if the family members cooperate and understand the equation. I have been lucky in this regard that my spouse completely understands my work and is very supportive of it.

**What can the ICAC do to support women in the cotton industry?**

Interaction between women farmers is very important and learning from each other

always adds value to the learning experience. ICAC can provide the platform and enabling environment to do so. Making women farmers more visible and rewarding them for their work and accomplishments will be very encouraging. Empower women on making key decisions regarding cotton crop management by building their capacity through training programmes.



Photograph: Lorena Ruiz, ICAC