

Women in Agriculture

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agwomenlead@usda.gov



United States Department of Agriculture



Women in ag,

I am so inspired by you. Over the past two months, I have had the privilege of hearing stories from many of you across the country— sharing your unique experiences in agriculture. Each of you has such an amazing story.

"Not just a farm wife," "This is my way to contribute," "Looking to serve and give back," "I want to be a part of this effort..." the stories go on and on.

People often ask what my number one piece of advice for women in agriculture is. For me, that advice is: "it's fine to look back, but don't stare."

Women have been a critical part of farm and ranch operations across the country and globe for centuries. This is nothing new. But as women in agriculture, we have a unique opportunity to be the change we want to see in our industry. We must build on the incredible legacy of stewardship, innovation, and productivity that we have in agriculture and help one another succeed.

Whether it's a farm business that feeds the world, land that you leave better than when you found it, or a relationship where you empower and support your community, industry, and neighbors – there are many ways to build and grow your contribution to agriculture. The time is now for each of us to step up to the plate and take on these challenges.

We are excited to kick off the engagement portion of the network, which you can learn more about in this newsletter. Next month we will hold our first conference call with this group. Through continued outreach, you will be able to discuss your hopes and dreams, best practices, experiences and challenges with other women in agriculture. I hope you'll come learn, grow, and share with us. I cannot wait to meet you all.

Krysta Harden

Deputy Secretary of Agriculture

Recap since launch

We've had a busy couple of months since we launched the Ag Women Lead mentoring network! On February 19th, the Deputy Secretary launched the new network to support and engage women involved in agriculture across the country (we've even gotten responses from around the world). USDA hosted a women's networking event at the Ag Outlook Forum for the launch of the new network

For March, we launched a blog series highlighting women in agriculture for Women's History Month. We received nominations for women to highlight from social media using #womeninag and e-mails from members in the network.

We had intended to include these features just for Women's History Month but due to the overwhelming response we are happy to report that the features will continue so keep your nominations coming!



Attendees networking at Agriculture Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden's informal Women's Networking Event at the 2015 Agricultural Outlook Forum "Smart Agriculture in the 21st Century"

A list of our current women in agriculture features and links are below:

Anne Alonzo <http://blogs.usda.gov/2015/03/04/in-conversation-with-womeninag-anne-alonzo/>

Minnie Lou Bradley <http://blogs.usda.gov/2015/03/11/in-conversation-with-womeninag-minnie-lou-bradley/>

Lindsey Lusher Shute <http://blogs.usda.gov/2015/03/18/in-conversation-with-womeninag-lindsey-lusher-shute/>

Dr. Jewel Hariston <http://blogs.usda.gov/2015/03/26/in-conversation-with-womeninag-dr-jewel-hariston/>

Naomi Starkman <http://blogs.usda.gov/2015/04/02/in-conversation-with-womeninag-naomi-starkman/>

Finally, our most recent blog features a group that we call **“First but Not Last”**. These women were the first female leaders of agricultural trade associations and when asked to share some of their insights to mentor those who follow in their footsteps, this is what they said:

1. **You know more than you think you do.** There is a place for everyone in agriculture and women are leading the way. Your voice adds an important perspective that is vital to discussions and decisions being made. You know more than you think and are more qualified than you know.
2. **Say yes to new and different opportunities.** It is important to know yourself and your strengths and weaknesses. It is equally, if not more important, to take risks and seize new opportunities. Your path to leadership may change over time but each experience along the way will make you a stronger person.
3. **Look to others for guidance.** At all stages of your career, it's important to have both mentors and mentees. Share what you have learned from others. There are other women out there who are also looking to advance into leadership position, not just in agriculture, but in all fields across the globe. Use that network to grow and thrive!

We celebrated Ag Day (March 18th) by hosting Marji Guyler-Alaniz's beautiful photos at USDA as a part of the Ag Day celebration. You can see Marji's work on her website at <http://www.farmher.com>.



Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Agriculture Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden and Marji Guyler-Alaniz view the FarmHer Documenting Women in Agriculture through Photography

Deputy Secretary Harden and Marji hosted a Google Hangout with Dr. Linda Young Chief Mathematical Statistician and Director of Research and Development of USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). The Google Hangout featured a conversation regarding the Census of Agriculture and how USDA can better count women in agriculture.

There is a place for everyone in agriculture and women are leading the way.

Finally, in April, Deputy Secretary Harden attended an Annie's Project graduation at the Chesapeake Community College in Maryland. USDA received an invitation to speak at the graduation through the network and we were thrilled that the Deputy Secretary was able to attend. She was so impressed with the commitment of Annie's project to helping and mentoring women in agriculture. We look forward to working with and visiting other Annie's Projects around the nation.

Mission/Vision

Women in Agriculture Mentoring Network

This Network is designed to support and engage women across all areas of agriculture and to help foster professional partnerships between women with shared backgrounds, interests, and professional goals.

The Mission of the Women in Ag Mentoring Network is to:

EMPOWER ENGAGE ENCOURAGE

Here's what YOU can do:

- Join a Networking or Mentoring Group
- Participate in the "Networking Event Challenge"

Tell us your story

Here's what YOU can expect:

- Quarterly Engagement Calls
- Newsletter Updates
- Networking Group Dialogues
- Networking Event Challenges



What's Ahead

Deputy Secretary Harden will be hitting the road with Members of Congress to hold a series of women in agriculture panel discussions throughout the country. The intention of these events is to hear from women in all segments of agriculture about barriers to advancing their careers, opportunities for growth, lessons learned, advice for new/young women interested in agriculture, resources for networking/knowledge-sharing, and to spur discussions that will help advance the role of women in agriculture.

The first event will be held on May 27 with Senator Amy Klobuchar in St. Paul, MN, followed by a joint event with Senator Heidi Heitkamp in Fargo, ND on May 28. Our hope is to plan additional USDA and Congressional events focused on women in agriculture across the country this year.

Do you have an event that you'd like to invite a USDA representative to? Please send us information about your event at agwomenlead@usda.gov.

Women *in* Agriculture



Women, Food and Agriculture Network

Meet the Women of Agriculture

“It’s amazing to watch women farmers meet each other,” says Bridget Holcomb with the Women, Food and Agriculture Network. “Often they feel they are the odd ones in their communities, and suddenly they are among 200 other women in agriculture and realize they are part of something much bigger.”

The Women, Food and Agriculture Network is a national network of over 5,000 women, proudly founded in Iowa. Through the network, women farmers get leadership training and opportunities, mentorship, on-farm experience, business training, and a supportive network. Women farmland owners can also access conservation information specifically designed for them.