



Women in Sustainable Agriculture

More than one-quarter of U.S. farmers and ranchers are women, according to the USDA 2002 census of agriculture. That's almost 850,000 female farmers – 27.2 percent of America's total farmers.

Women have always been involved in agriculture. That's not news. The surprise is that between 1997 and 2002, the number of women who are principal operators of U.S. farms increased by

13.4 percent. As this change is recognized, universities and co-op extension services are starting to offer programs for women farmers. Researchers are learning that these producers are interested in conservation and in strengthening the local community as well as their own farm's economy.

This issue of ATTRAnews highlights the leadership roles that women are playing in sustainable agriculture in the United States.



Denise O'Brien: Networker Extraordinaire

A passionate advocate for family farms and sustainable agriculture, Denise O'Brien has been farming organically in Iowa for 30 years with her husband. Propelled into state and national politics by the farm crisis of the 1980s, she served as president of the National Family Farm Coalition from 1993 to 1995. Her interest in farm issues led her to travel with delegations to Europe, Latin America, and Asia. In 1997 Denise addressed the General Assembly of the United Nations on behalf of farmers.

Seeing only a few women speaking out about agriculture, Denise and others founded the Women's Farming and Agriculture Network (WFAN) in 1994. The organization works to connect and inspire American women who are building all aspects of a sustainable food system.

In Iowa, women own 47 percent of the farm land. One of WFAN's projects is Women, Land and Legacy, which is assessing the needs of female farm owners in the state. The

network's surveys show that women prefer to receive information through one-on-one contact or in small groups.

In 2004, the Iowa Farmers Union recognized Denise's work by giving her their Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2005 she received the Practical Farmers of Iowa Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award. Now Denise is currently running for Iowa Secretary of Agriculture. She is campaigning across the state, listening to what farmers want, hoping to represent them all.

Women's Food and Agriculture Network 59624 Chicago Road, Atlantic, IA 50022; www.wfan.org.

Women in Agriculture: It's All About Networks

One of the most helpful developments for women working in agriculture today is the advent of women's agricultural networks. These groups aim to increase the number of women who own and operate profitable farms and farm-related businesses. The networks sponsor meetings, workshops, and tours focused on education. Members help each other overcome obstacles by sharing experiences. They offer mentors and resources for new farmers and others who need help.

Kristin Reynolds is a research assistant at the University of California Small Farm Center and one of the writers of *Outstanding in Their Fields: California's Women Farmers* (see page 2). As a graduate student in International Agriculture Development at UC Davis, Kristin helped organize Students for Sustainable Agriculture, which has become an important force in U.S. sustainable agri-

culture education. "A spirit of cooperation exists within the women's farming community," she says. "Farming networks all over the country are creating a community of knowledge exchange. Networks are a source of moral support for people who may be outside mainstream agriculture. These networks exemplify the spirit of cooperation we need as we search for those elusive models of sustainability."

The first national Women in Sustainable Agriculture Conference, "A Celebration of Hope and Opportunity," took place last fall, hosted by the Vermont Women's Agricultural Network. More than 400 people from across the U.S. attended, including a few dozen men. The speakers were women, the food was organic, and the atmosphere was energized as participants spent two days learning and sharing information about their communities, farms, and projects.

Resources for Some State Women's Agricultural Networks

Vermont Women's Agricultural Network
617 Comstock Road, Suite 5
Berlin, VT 05602
802-223-2389
www.uvm.edu/wagn

Maine Women's Agricultural Network
University of Maine Co-op Extension
24 Main Street
Lisbon Falls, Maine 04252
207-353-5550 or 1-800-287-1458
www.umaine.edu/umext/wagn

Pennsylvania Women's Agricultural Network
Pennsylvania State University
302 Armsby Building
University Park, PA 16802
<http://wagn.cas.psu.edu>

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www.attra.ncat.org

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Recent and Upcoming Women in Agriculture Conferences (partial list)



Annie's Project meeting in North Platte, Nebraska.

The goal of **Annie's Project** is to empower women to build local networks and to manage information to make critical decisions. The project offers programs through co-op extension in Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Minnesota, and North Dakota.

www.extension.iastate.edu/Annie

The **2006 National Extension Women in Agriculture Education Conference** April 6 and 7 in St. Louis, Missouri:

Learn about assisting women farmers to effectively manage financial, production, marketing, legal, and human resource risks. Contact Susan Olson, 302-831-6540; sbolson@udel.edu
www.agrisk.umn.edu/wia

The second annual **Arkansas Women in Agriculture Conference** was held in early March in Hot Springs, AR.

Contact Darci Hewett, 479-575-2279; arwi@uark.edu
www.uark.edu/ua/arwia/arwomeninag

The fifth annual regional **Women in Agriculture Conference** met in February in Dover, Delaware. Contact Laurie Wolinski, 302-831-2538;

lgw@udel.edu • <http://ag.udel.edu/extension/kent/womeninag.htm>

The **Midwest Women in Agriculture Conference** met in mid-March in Middlebury and Nashville, Indiana. 574-372-234; www.ces.purdue.edu/wia

The second annual **Women in Denim Conference** met in January in Storm Lake, Iowa. Contact Rhonda Christensen, ISU Extension, 712-732-5056; rchrisc@iastate.edu
www.womenindenim.com

The second annual **Overall Women Conference** was held in February in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. 800-262-0015; www.ucs.iastate.edu/mnet/overallwomen/home.html

Women Managing the Farm was held in February in Wichita, Kansas.

www.k-state.edu/farmksu/wmfconf.htm

The **Kentucky Women in Agriculture Conference** met in November in Owensboro, Kentucky. 859-257-7775; www.kywomeninag.com

The fourth annual **Women in Blue Jeans Conference** met in January in South Dakota. 866-273-2676; diana@mit.midco.net

Several **Heart of the Farm** conferences were held in Wisconsin over this past winter. Contact Jenny Vanderlin, 608-263-7795; hof@uwex.edu
www.uwex.edu/ces/heartofthefarm

Resources for Women in Sustainable Agriculture

Women on U.S. Farms Research Initiative

<http://agwomen.aers.psu.edu>

These vivid maps and reports make it easier to interpret the ways that American women are involved in farming.

Women and Sustainable Agriculture: Interviews with 14 Agents of Change

By Anna Anderson, 2004, McFarland Publishers

Farmers, researchers, and farm advocates – all the women in this book have dedicated their lives to improving the American food system.

Herstory: Women in Organic Agriculture

Summer 2002 CCOF Newsletter of California's certified organic farmers

www.ccof.org/archives.php

Changing the Way America Farms: Knowledge and Community in the Sustainable Agriculture Movement

By Neva Hassanein, 1999, University of Nebraska Press

Focusing on Wisconsin, this book explores the function and importance of social networks in the sustainable agriculture movement.

MaryJanes Farm

100 Wild Iris Lane, Moscow, ID 83843

888-750-6004; www.maryjanesfarm.org

Talk about enterprising: here's a stylish magazine that combines home, garden, and farm tips with a catalog of organic farm products.

Women in Winegrowing Calendar

811 Jefferson Street, Napa, CA 94559

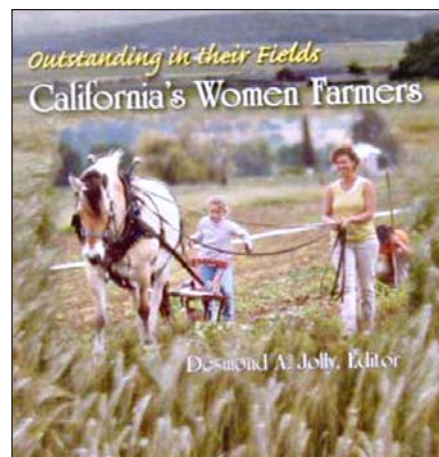
707-944-8311, www.napagrowers.org

The Napa Valley Grapegrowers have created a calendar that features 21 community and sustainable farming leaders.

Outstanding in their Fields: California's Women Farmers

Editor: Desmond Jolly. Staff writers: Jamie Anderson, Isabella Kenfield, Susan McCue, Kristin Reynolds, and Michelle Young. University of California Small Farm Center, 2005. 530-752-8136
www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/women.html;

To highlight women in agriculture, this useful new book presents the stories of 17 small-scale farmers and ranchers and their families. Some of the women raise alpacas, goats, Jacob sheep, or bees. Others grow vegetables, fruit, wine grapes, olives, or blueberries. These creative, persistent women have found a wide range of markets – from nearby stores and community supported agriculture projects (CSAs) to New York City specialty shops. Explaining practical details about how they started out and how they add value to their products, the farmers offer thoughtful advice to others who may be considering similar ventures.



Jennifer Greene, who runs a grain CSA described at right, is pictured on the cover of *Outstanding in their Fields*.

Jennifer Greene: CSA Pioneer

By Rex Dufour
NCAT Agriculture Specialist

Jennifer Greene's Windborne Farm is in the Scott Valley, in remote northern California. She has done something unique, which is to market grains, beans, and edible seeds through her 90-member community supported agriculture (CSA), mostly to customers in the San Francisco Bay Area.

CSAs are also known as subscription farming. Subscribers buy a "share" of the farm's food (which is delivered weekly or monthly), but also share in the farmer's risk, providing the farmer a salary no matter how much or how little the farm produces. From a farmer's point of view, a CSA provides an assured market, and the customers pay in advance, which helps farmers avoid borrowing money for operating capital. Most CSAs deliver some combination of fruits or vegetables on a weekly schedule for several months of the year. Grains and beans have a much longer shelf life than fruits or vegetables,

so Jennifer can make year-round, once-a-month deliveries.

Jennifer adds value by processing her grains into many kinds of flour or hot cereal mix. Over the course of a year, her deliveries also include several different types of garbanzo beans, lentils, and other types of dry beans. Jennifer farms using biodynamic principals—she has a couple of draft horses for some of the work, many goats for milk and cheese, along with chickens for eggs, and the usual complement of cats and dogs.

Jennifer complements her farm income by having week-long workshops for kids on topics such as blacksmithing, spinning and weaving, and bread and cake making. She is interested in providing information to others interested in small grain CSAs. To receive her monthly mailing about her farm, contact Jennifer at windborne3csa@yahoo.com. (At this time, Jennifer is accepting new customers but only in the Davis, California area.)

Janie Burns: Problem Solver

Janie Burns raises organic vegetables, lamb, pastured poultry, and eggs on her Meadowlark Farm in Nampa, Idaho. She has been a vendor at Boise farmers' markets since 1989, and in years past has sold flowers, vegetables, and lamb through her farm CSA and to Boise restaurants. She also serves on the board of Rural Roots, Inc., a nonprofit food and farming organization that works to bring food grown by local small-scale farmers into nearby communities.



As one of the few Idahoans who raise pastured poultry, Janie understood the huge problem presented by the region's lack of poultry processing facilities. Ranchers who raised poultry were finding it difficult to process the birds for consumers. Last year she took the leap and built a chicken processing facility. Janie is now the co-owner of HomeGrown Poultry LLC in New Plymouth, Idaho.

"We decided we would modify a 47-foot refrigerated trailer van to hold all the equipment and do all the work," she said. "It served us well last year as the temporary unit. We'll use it this year until we move into a new facility that will meet state approval for retail sales. It is strictly poultry, although there is no reason it couldn't be used for rabbits. The unit cost about \$25,000 exclusive of the equipment, which we already owned. Much of that was for the plumbing, electrical, and walk-in refrigeration unit. One of my very wonderful employees is a retired gentleman who can fix anything. He did the design and the work." Thanks to Janie's ingenuity, Idahoans have more opportunity to buy locally raised and processed poultry.

Contact HomeGrown Poultry, 208-278-3471.

White House Releases FY07 Agriculture Budget

The President's agricultural spending proposal for fiscal year 2007 was released recently. The Sustainable Agriculture Coalition has provided the following information on proposed funding for several key sustainable agriculture programs.

The omnibus agriculture bill was issued the second largest cut within government by the White House. Only the Department of Health and Human Services is proposed a larger cut. The agricultural appropriations bill would decline \$1.3 billion (or 7 percent) to \$17.2 billion, should the President's budget be passed unchanged.

The following is a synopsis of the proposed budget affecting sustainable agriculture programs.

All figures are in millions.

Sustainable Agriculture Program	President's '07 Proposed	Final '06 Funding	President's '06 Proposed
SARE	\$ 9.1	\$12.4	\$ 9.2
SARE Professional Development	\$ 3.8	\$ 4.1	\$ 3.8
ATTRA	\$ 0.0	\$ 2.5	\$ 0.0
Rural Business Enterprise Grants	\$ 0.0	\$40.0	\$ 0.0
Value-Added Producer Grants	\$20.3	\$20.5	\$15.5
Renewable Energy Sec. 9006	\$10.2	\$23.0	\$10.0
Outreach/ Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers/ Ranchers (SDA)	\$ 6.9	\$ 6.0	\$ 5.9

Nancy Creamer: Agroecology Innovator

The last decade has witnessed an increasing interest in sustainable agriculture at U.S. colleges. North Carolina State University has been in the forefront of this movement. Nancy Creamer, PhD, is director of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS), a 2,000-acre farm near Goldsboro. The research farm is a joint project of NCSU, NC A&T University, the NC Department of Agriculture, the NC Farm Stewardship Association, and other organizations, farmers, and citizens.

Some of the Center's projects compare conventional best management practices with an integrated crop/animal system and an organic system. The center maintains and studies a pasture-based dairy and a beef cow/calf pasture system. It also conducts studies on agroforestry, wildlife enhancement, organic grain, and transitioning to organic production. This May they will dedicate a new alternative swine production facility. All the research projects include extension and teaching, so the center hosts hundreds of visitors and schoolchildren every year.

Raised on a farm, Nancy has worked in sustainable agriculture here and abroad for the past 20 years. Her own research looks at long-term organic vegetable crop management and cover crop suppression of weeds. She and her colleagues at NCSU have crafted CEFS into a practical model for farmers and ranchers who want to reduce inputs or transition to organic production. www.cefs.ncsu.edu



© www.cals.ncsu.edu/hort

New and Updated ATTRA Publications

- ◆ Specialty Cut Flower Production (IP025)
- ◆ Biodiesel: The Sustainability Dimensions (IP281)
- ◆ Symphylans: Soil Pest Management Options (IP283)
- ◆ Aves de Corral Sostenibles: Resumen de Producción (SP014)
(Sustainable Poultry Production in Spanish)

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Voices of American Farm Women

Cynthia Vagnetti documents America's farmers in the tradition of Dorothea Lange and the 1930s Farm Security Administration. Her photos and movies concentrate on farmers and ranchers whose practices promote environmental responsibility, economic stability, and community well-being. Vagnetti has made a series of videos about some of these women. *Voices of Iowa Farm Women* and *Voices of Minnesota Farm Women* are completed and she is working on Wisconsin and Michigan. Call 800-473-3872 or email cynthia.vagnetti@pressroom.com.

Photo Exhibit Schedule

- Mar. 25 - April 30
Grinnell College, IA
- May 15 - June 20,
Mid South Community College;
West Memphis, AR
- June 5, 2006 - Aug. 16
Boone County Fair Board
Harrisburg, MO
- Sep. 1 - Oct. 5, Sedalia Chamber of
Commerce; Sedalia, MO
- Dec. 15, 2006 - Jan. 19, 2007
Barrington Historical Museum, IL