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## OUR MISSION

WFAN's mission is to link and empower women to build food systems and communities that are healthy, just, sustainable, and that promote environmental integrity.

# BEIJING, CHINA 1995

## 4th World Conference on Women



Denise O' Brien

## WFAN FORMED IN 1997

Women in  
sustainable  
agriculture wanted  
a network



4,000 on our mailing list  
Listserv  
Online forum  
Newsletter, e-bulletins  
Conferences & meetings



# WHO ARE WOMEN IN FARMING TODAY?

- 30.2% of the farm operators counted were women – that's more than 1 million!
- Up 19% from 2002, compared to 7% increase in farmers overall.
- Principal operators of 14% of US farms. That's up 30% to 306,209.

2007 USDA CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

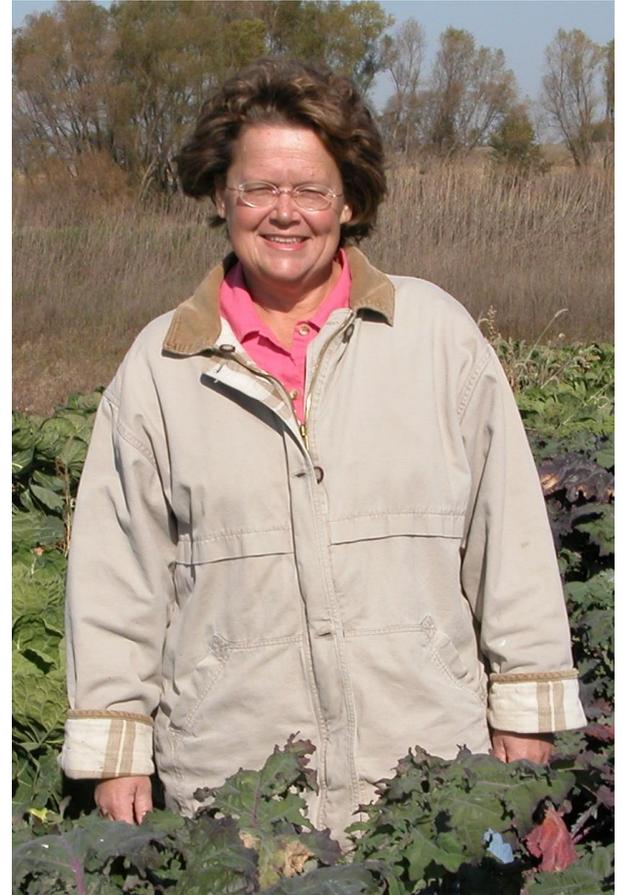


Preliminary 2012 census figures show drop in both male and female POs; women still 14%

# WHO ARE WOMEN IN FARMING TODAY?

- Diversified farms
- Smaller farms than men
- More likely to own all their farmland
- Average sales \$36,440 compared to \$150,671

\*2007 USDA CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE



# WHO ARE WOMEN IN FARMING TODAY?

- Mostly white, 40s and 50s
- Highest number in NE and SW
- More women than men raise:  
vegetables, fruit & nuts,  
horticulture (flowers & herbs),  
“other” crops, poultry, sheep and  
goats, and other livestock
  
- 2007 USDA CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE



# NEW FARMERS = WOMEN FARMERS

- Women are fastest-growing segment of new farmers; many come from non-farm backgrounds



# WHAT DO THESE BEGINNERS NEED?



Same things as all beginning farmers:

- Access to land
- Access to capital
- Access to affordable health care

**PLUS.....**

# WHAT DO THESE BEGINNERS NEED?



- Technical support
- Social support
- **Women-only learning opportunities**

# WHY A NETWORK JUST FOR WOMEN?



We are often  
**isolated:**

- Geographically
- Socially
- Culturally

**Women succeed  
in community.**

# WHAT WOMEN TELL US

Very important to belong to an organization just for women (83%)

Education on healthy food and farming (46%) and networking with other women (25%)

**Training the next generation of women in sustainable agriculture (65% very Important)**



# BARRIERS FOR WOMEN BEGINNERS

1. Lack of access to capital (40% very serious)
2. Lack of support from federal and state agencies
3. Lack of affordable health insurance (now...?)
- 4. Lack of training in technical skills**

**NYFC 2011 survey showed on-farm training was rated most crucial by beginners**





HARVESTING  
OUR POTENTIAL

# HARVESTING OUR POTENTIAL



- For aspiring and beginning women farmers
- On and off-farm mentorships in IA and NE
- Business planning
- Structured networking
- **Mentor training**



HARVESTING  
OUR POTENTIAL

# HARVESTING OUR POTENTIAL



- Liability issues
- State employment law
- Farm-based education basics
- Learning styles
- Conflict resolution
- Written teaching plan tied to farm calendar



HARVESTING  
OUR POTENTIAL

# HARVESTING OUR POTENTIAL



- Funded by BFRDP grant 2012 - 2015
- Partners - CFRA, ISU
- Modest goals
- Includes female veterans



HARVESTING  
OUR POTENTIAL

## WHAT MENTEES SAY

Dispelling the mystery of farm life has been awfully rewarding. I can begin to grasp what it would take now to have a farm.

**I wish every female student who is interested in sustainable agriculture could participate in a program of this nature.**

My internship this summer has greatly reassured me that a career in sustainable agriculture is what I was meant to do.

**I wish I had known not to scythe too close to the electric fence.**





HARVESTING  
OUR POTENTIAL

## WHAT MENTORS SAY

**Women role-modeling to women that this kind of work, farming, is important work and hard work, is a very important part of the internship program.**

I enjoyed Sonia's inquisitiveness. She asked many good questions and did a good job of thinking things through.

**I have a chance to use my experience and skills to transfer on to the next generation.**

Maria brings amazing positive energy when she is on the farm, and makes the best fried egg sandwich.



# WOMEN CARING FOR THE LAND

- For women non-operator farmland owners
- Women-only discussion meetings about conservation and land management topics
- 50-66% take action within a year
- **Willing to consider BF startups**



WOMEN  
CARING FOR THE  
LAND



# PLATE TO POLITICS

- Growing women leaders in the healthy food and farming movement through leadership training (webinars, workshops)
- **Agriculture is policy-driven**
- Women are 51% of the population but only 17% of Congress
- More women leaders from the farmhouse to the White House!



PLATE <sup>to</sup>  
POLITICS



# JOIN US!

[www.WFAN.org](http://www.WFAN.org) (sign up  
for emails - it's free!)

[www.womencaringfortheland.org](http://www.womencaringfortheland.org)

[www.platetopolitics.org](http://www.platetopolitics.org)

[Info@wfan.org](mailto:Info@wfan.org)

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# QUESTIONS? CONTACT ME

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