



Women in Ag Priorities Survey

Survey overview March 2024

In November 2023, Senator Kunesh invited four women working in agriculture and the Extension Women in Ag Network (WAGN)* to come to the state Capital and tell her their stories. These stories showed that women working in different areas of agriculture have many shared experiences, both challenges and successes, in common. Senator Kunesh wanted to learn more and bring these stories to the Legislature.

Extension WAGN launched a survey that was shared from February to March 2024. The intent of the survey was to identify the priority challenges or barriers that women in agriculture face on a daily basis, as well as, highlight ways women have overcome these barriers.

Survey results

The survey was completed by 67 individuals. The results are summarized in the following sections of this report.

Where do women in agriculture work?

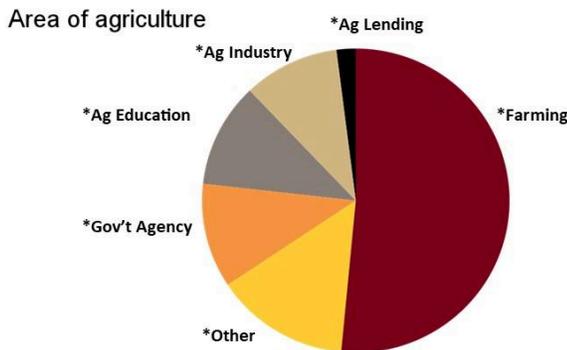


Fig. 1: The pie chart illustrates the area of agriculture in which women work. Survey respondents were able to select multiple options. Results: 51% farming; 14% other; 11% government agency; 11% agriculture education; 10% agriculture industry; 2% agricultural lending.

Fifty-one percent (51%) of survey respondents identified as working in farming. Respondents were able to describe the type of farming, which included: ranching or raising livestock (cattle, goats, sheep); organic farming; fruit production; growing hay; grain production; cut flowers; vegetable production; growing herbs; poultry and egg production; and dairy production.

Other areas of agriculture reported included: fishing; value-added food processing and production; meat processing; food hub; advocacy; nonprofit; mental health support.

Barriers or challenges faced daily

Daily barriers

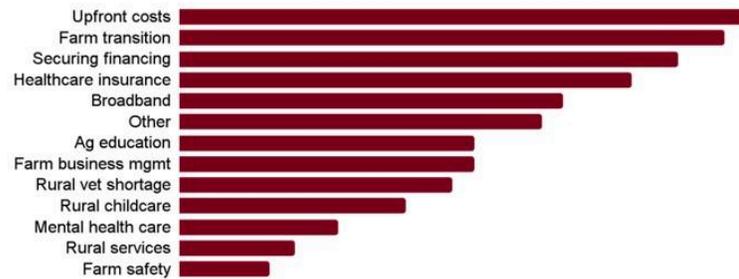


Fig. 2: The bar chart depicts the barriers survey respondents identified as priorities. Survey respondents were able to select up to 3 responses.

The barriers or challenges that survey respondents identified can be grouped into 4 categories: farm management; financial; rural life; wellbeing.

Farm management

For this survey, farm management includes the topics of: barriers of farm transition, farm business management (eg. market opportunities for diversified crop rotations; infrastructure for value-added processing) and agricultural education opportunities.

Twenty-seven percent (27%) of survey respondents reported facing these types of barriers daily.

Financial

The financial barriers specifically identified in this survey include land access (both own or rent), upfront costs of farming, and securing financing. Twenty-five percent (25%) of survey respondents reported facing financial related barriers.

Rural life

Those who live or work in rural areas identified broadband access, the shortage of rural veterinary services, lack of rural childcare options, and lack of access to rural health and dental care services as barriers. Twenty-three percent (23%) of survey respondents reported being impacted by these barriers daily.

Wellbeing

Individuals and families face barriers to their wellbeing, such as access to affordable healthcare insurance, access to mental health care, and farm safety. Sixteen percent (16%) of survey respondents identified these as challenges to leading thriving lives.

The remaining 9% of barriers were identified as “other”.

Solutions

Survey respondents were asked, “of the barriers they identified, were there any that they have successfully overcome”. Numerous stories were shared that highlighted the resilience and ingenuity of those working in agriculture. The following are a few examples:

- Participating in the Local Emergency Assistance Farmer Fund (LEAFF) program to gain market access.
- Finding and using land access and financing resources through both nonprofit and government agencies.
- Volunteering at their town’s volunteer emergency medical services.
- Finding and using farm transition planning services.
- Learning more about livestock health and how to perform care when there is not a veterinarian available.

Unfortunately, some solutions have caused individuals to compromise or change their goals. For example, one survey respondent shared that after searching for land to purchase for 6 years, when they were finally able to purchase land, they had to change their business plan to vegetable production instead of raising cattle. This was because of the amount of land they were able to purchase.

Several survey respondents shared that they meet child care needs by relying heavily on family members. However, this can take valuable time away from time spent on the farm or ranch.

Lastly, one survey respondent shared that she had to find an off farm job in order to get affordable healthcare insurance for her family, but now she has limited time to work on the farm.

Defining success

Finally, survey respondents were asked how they define success on their farm or household.

The majority of respondents included financial stability in their definition of success. However, having work-life balance, making a positive impact on the environment, experiencing growth, and positively impacting their communities were also themes repeated in responses.

“Success is being happy with the work and life you lead while still being able to provide the necessities for your family and yourself.”

“On the farm, success is a lot of things: everyone safely completing work for the day; harvesting an above-average yield; receiving at least breakeven prices for our crop. At home, it’s having dedicated time each day to interact with my child, while serving as a strong female role model in agriculture and business.”

“I define success if at the end of a day, month or year, we have the financial ability, the mental capacity and the family support to keep going. The goal is to pass the farm onto the next generation in better shape than when I got it. If at the end of the year I have been able to turn a profit, make some improvements and everyone is still a cohesive multi-generational family unit. That is a success.”

***WAGN is the Extension Women in Ag Network. For more information visit:**

<https://z.umn.edu/WAGN>