

What Women Want: New Roles & Challenges Facing Women with Working Lands

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Agenda

Women in agriculture & forestry

Women and working lands project

Listening Sessions

Key Themes

How are we trying to reach this "New" audience

Your Turn: What are you doing?

US Farm Ownership

Total US Farms

❖ 1997

- ❖ 2,215,876 farms
- ❖ 954,752,502 acres

❖ 2007

- ❖ 2,204,792 farms
- ❖ 922,095,840 acres

❖ Difference

- ❖ ½ of 1% fewer farms
- ❖ 3.5 % fewer acres

Women Operators

❖ 1997

- ❖ 165,102 farms
- ❖ 47,465,132 acres

❖ 2007

- ❖ 306,209 farms
- ❖ 64,264,566 acres

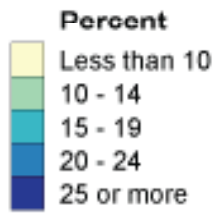
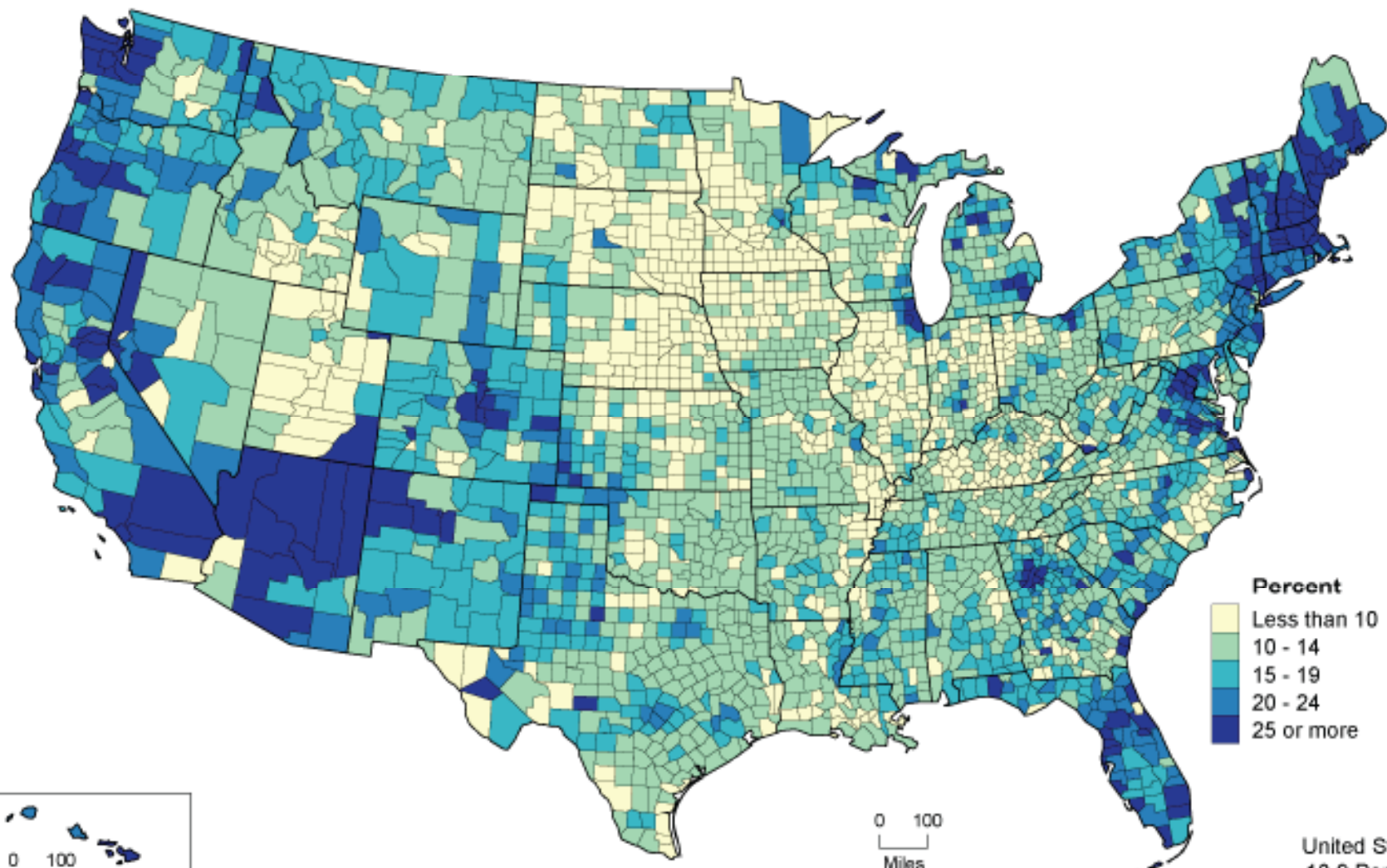
❖ Difference

- ❖ 85% more farms
- ❖ 35% more acres

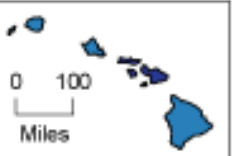
0 200
Miles



Percent of Farms with Female Principal Operator: 2007



0 100
Miles



07-M127
U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service

0 100
Miles

United States
13.9 Percent

Women Forest Landowners

National Woodland Owner Survey (Butler 2008)

- ✦ Women manage 13% of forest acreage
- ✦ Represent 16% of forest landowners
- ✦ Another 8% of forest acres managed by multiple decision makers (one male, one female)

Many women currently own, will inherit, or purchase forest land



Life Expectancy Differences

- Average life expectancy for men 75 years
- Female 80 years
- The bottom line is: women will outlive men and if the spouse doesn't know what the land management plan is then it's not going to happen.
- **Number one quote: "My husband handled all of that"**

Past experience with training

- ✓ Few female landowners/future landowners attend meetings
- ✓ Many times they do not ask questions
- ✓ Discussion is sometimes dominated by 1 or 2 male participants
- ✓ Many times way behind the curve and overwhelmed
- ✓ Easy targets, lack of knowledge and too trusting (all landowners)

Women and Working Lands

One-Year Project to conduct listening sessions with different women producer and landowners groups

Objectives:

Increase understanding of the issues faced by women who work/manage working lands

Identify strategies to better serve women and working lands

5 sessions conducted:

2 in AR; 1 in MS, OR, & MN

Focus Groups/Listening Sessions

- ✓ ARWIA Conference: March 2010. Little Rock, AR
 - ✓ 10 women producers & landowners
- ✓ Annie's Project: May 2010, Heifer Ranch, AR
 - ✓ 25 women producers & landowners
- ✓ Winston County, MS Self-Help Cooperative: April 2010;
25 African American women
- ✓ Oregon Women Owning Woodlands Network: 10
members of WoW
- ✓ Minnesota Women's Woodland Network: 10 members
- ✓ Each session lasted from one to 2 hours

Discussion Questions Used

- a. How do you see the roles of women changing with regard to owning/managing working lands?
- b. How are these roles related to family and household financial well-being?
- c. What are the most significant barriers that you face in owning and managing working lands?

Discussion Questions



- d. How do you view or perceive conservation and sustainability of natural resources?
- e. What are your educational needs and what types of settings, styles, time frames work best for you?
- f. What are the significant barriers to serving in leadership positions related to working lands?

Key Themes: Changing Roles

- ❖ More control & responsibility esp. as husband or parents age or suffer illness
- ❖ More choosing to own agricultural & forest land
- ❖ However, women are often unprepared to assume control when the husband dies
- ❖ Widows especially face challenges; eg. Bank won't approve her loan although it has approved her deceased husbands for years
- ❖ One woman said: "Men's institutional memory is not being transferred to others.."
- ❖ Another said, "Women who not in the loop are continually caught off guard resulting in awful decisions.."

Key Themes: Financial Well-Being

- ◆ Many families have a family member bringing in off-farm income which is often related to acquiring affordable health insurance for the family.
- ◆ Women are more financially independent than they were years ago.
- ◆ Knowledge and use of good financial management skills is important for the farm business and the household finances.
- ◆ Women/farm families are struggling to balance the demands of farming, off-farm work, parenting, and family time.

Key Themes: Barriers

- ◆ Men in agriculture-related business (co-op, lenders) treat women differently than men
 - ◆ “It’s a man’s world”.
- ◆ Women have to prove themselves
- ◆ Not enough time to do everything they need to do
- ◆ Financial and other management knowledge and skills
- ◆ Lack of experience especially on operating equipment
 - ◆ 80 year-old said, “That’s why I need a man”..
- ◆ Physical strength of operate equipment/machinery
 - ◆ One woman said, “That’s why God made us smarter”

Key Themes: Sustainability

- ✦ Many felt that the word has been “captured” by environmentalists and now has no meaning
- ✦ Farmers are the best care takers of the land, “green”, conservationists, stewards
- ✦ Chemicals – important to be educated about the best management practices
- ✦ Public needs to be educated about how farmers protect the land; respect of land as private property; consumer/household use of chemicals.

Key Themes: Educational Needs

- ◆ Formal and informal
- ◆ Mentoring, one-on-one, peer-to-peer
- ◆ Hands – on and on another’s land
- ◆ More attention to small scale agriculture
- ◆ Scheduled to avoid production seasons and family obligations
- ◆ Specifically for women
 - ◆ One woman stated that such an approach creates a “safe haven” and an environment in which they were not embarrassed or intimidated by not knowing as much as male counterparts.

Key Themes: Leadership Barriers

- ◆ Most leadership positions are held by men
- ◆ Women are often relegated to the “Women’s Committee
- ◆ Lack of respect (from men)
- ◆ If in a leadership role, women are often given the secretary position in male dominated groups
- ◆ Women who speak up are seen as aggressive
 - ◆ Notable quotes: “A women in charge is a _itch”; “I’m not worried because most people don’t like whomever is in the leadership role”
- ◆ Time constraints make it difficult to obligate their time to formal leadership roles

Recent Events

- ✓ 5TH ANNUAL ARWIA CONFERENCE March 6-7, 2011 <http://www.arkansaswomeninag.com/>
- ✓ Women and Woodlands Workshop, May 3rd, Russellville, AR
- ✓ Near Future: USFA/NWOA website

Women & Woodlands Conference



Next Steps

- Continue dialogue through networks, social media, workshops, publications, etc.
- Make recommendations to NIFA based upon project summary
- Incorporate changes into Educational Programs
- Establish dialogue with other colleagues

Questions??

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Arkansas Women in Agriculture
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Minnesota Women's Woodland Network
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