

Understanding the Experience of Farm Women

A Proposed Research Project

Much has been said about the role of women on the farm, but little has been measured. The roles and participation of women in farming is changing. While the Census of Agriculture reports that about 1/3 of farms have a woman as a primary decision maker (either as sole proprietor or in a partnership), there is ample anecdotal evidence to suggest that women are positioned to influence decision-making in ways that go far beyond Census measurement. Furthermore, as the majority of graduates from Canadian post-secondary agricultural programs are female, women are leading in expertise development, suggesting that the number of females involved in farming will not only continue to rise, but their roles will strengthen.

CentricEngine Inc. in partnership with Farm Management Canada, is undertaking an important and timely research project that will serve as a benchmark, a guide and a view into the future and opportunities of a critical, underrepresented segment of Canada's farming population: farm women. Our goal is to gain a better understanding so that we can create a path forward to meet the unique current and future needs of this target group.

Elements of the Research

The goal of the research is to replace stereotypes and anecdotal information with an accurate and actionable picture of farm women. The results will provide a comprehensive baseline of understanding of the roles, status, barriers and potential of women in farming with a focus on "on-the-farm" managerial and operational activities.

The research will cover:

- Participation/leadership in decision-making
- Participation/leadership in specific farm management tasks
- Participation/leadership in specific operational tasks
- The current experience of farm women
 - Perceived level of recognition by internal and external stakeholders
 - Perceived barriers and constraints to further participation/leadership
- Goals for the operation
- Personal goals of farm women
- Advisors and influencer relationships

Approach to the Research

Steering Committee

The research team will establish a **steering committee** of industry experts with experience in researching, supporting, and participating as farm women who will guide, inform and review research findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Phase 1 – Literature Review

The first phase will involve a **literature review** of current research related to the experiences, needs and opportunities for farm women to identify gaps in knowledge and understanding to focus research areas.

Phase 2 - Qualitative

The second phase is a **qualitative research phase** to both understand women's experiences and provide the information to specify a quantitative research questionnaire and approach. In particular, the qualitative research will provide the information necessary to formulate an effective and relevant scale to measure the current and potential contribution of farm women with respect to decision-making, management and operations. The goal of any qualitative research should be to understand the range of opinions and behaviours. Hence, this activity will utilize a range of modalities including in-depth interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic approaches (in both official languages).

Phase 3 - Quantitative Research

The third phase is a **quantitative research phase** to provide statistically valid metrics. We envision a sample of over 1200 women, covering a range of regions, commodity types and sizes of farm operation. Results will be tabulated by region, farm type, role and other demographics. Not all women share the same roles, and goals. In addition to crosstabulation, the analysis will employ clustering and other investigative techniques (where applicable) to produce a richer profile of women farmers.

Phase 4 - Implications and Reporting

Utilizing the findings of the quantitative research and referring to the topics and issues raised during qualitative research, a detailed report will be prepared, highlighting issues and opportunities.

Scope of the Project

We propose a large-scale study of 1200 valid respondents providing a definitive baseline understanding of women on the farm. A valid respondent is a woman who is active in the farm operations and/or management. We are proposing a stratified sample approach with minimum sample requirements by:

Province/region - British Columbia, Prairies, Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic

Farm size (gross farm revenue) – <\$250k, \$250-\$1,000k, \$1-5m, \$>5m

Principle commodity – field crops, beef, dairy, swine, other animal, specialty crop



Key Components of the Methodology

Project start-up and orientation

- Finalize steering committee membership
- Complete the literature review
- Finalize timelines and dependencies for the project

Qualitative research

- Finalize the sample.
- Create, review and approve recruiting scripts and interview guides
- Recruiting and logistics planning
- Undertake field work
- Report development & presentation

Quantitative (survey) research

Our proposed methodology for the quantitative research involves both a targeted and non-targeted component. Quantitative planning includes:

- Screener for recruiting, the survey questionnaire in English, translation into French and a final sample framework and secure approvals for all
- Acquisition of the database and data manipulation for recruiting purposes.
- Public relations to enhance the non-statistical sample
- Survey preparation, programming and pre-test
- Fieldwork & monitoring (note: this includes encouraging participation in the non-targeted component of the field work)
- Tabular analysis plan

Analysis and reporting

- Data review & cleaning
- Data tabulation
- Report generation including commentary and implications
- Reporting

Project Timing

Qualitative research phase will commence in spring of 2021 with final results published in spring of 2022.

Project Resourcing

The study as proposed is a consequential effort. Based on anticipated scope, the total cost is \$192,000.

In order to undertake the proposed research project, public and private sector support is required. The research will examine women's role and involvement in:

- strategy and planning
- managing people
- livestock management
- technology
- policy and regulatory compliance
- farm finances
- farm transition
- crop management
- equipment and machinery
- marketing management

Each of these topics represent an opportunity for sponsorship. Alternatively, interested parties may wish to provide general sponsorship towards the project. Depending on the level of support, project sponsors will be recognized on the final report and all promotional materials concerning the project and will have the opportunity to provide feedback on draft reports, receiving project findings before public release. More information regarding opportunities to support this research is available on request.

About the Study Proponents

Farm Management Canada

An umbrella for farm business management, Farm Management Canada is the only national organization dedicated exclusively to the development and delivery of leading-edge resources, information and tools to support farm business success. With over 25 years' experience, Farm Management Canada is a champion for farm business management excellence across Canada.

CentricEngine Inc.

We believe that farmers deserve to be understood! Our goal is to provide new and more powerful ways to understand farmers and their relationship to the farms they operate and the farming techniques they utilize. We are deeply interested in the decision-making process undertaken by farmers with differing motivations and circumstances. Our products and services are intended to assist a wide variety of clients including a range of established input manufacturers, technology startups and policy makers.

To discuss further or to find out how your organization can participate contact:

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