
EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CANADIAN AGRICULTURE BY UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE OF FARM WOMEN

Environmental Scan



FARM MANAGEMENT CANADA
GESTION AGRICOLE DU CANADA



CENTRICENGINE

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Introduction to this Document

This scan highlights the findings of academic literature, news sources, grey literature, academic and non-academic websites, and social media sites that discuss various aspects of women involved in and contributing to farming in Canada. The sections covered in the scan include the current participation of women in “on-farm” activities as measured by Census and other sources, the challenges in describing the “work” of farming and the contributions of and barriers faced by women undertaking this work. These insights will be used to inform gaps in knowledge that can be addressed through further research.

The Purpose of the Research Project

The purpose of this research project is to create foundational facts regarding the current experience, contributions, aspirations, barriers faced by, and potential for women who farm and contribute to the success of farming in Canada.

Our project objectives are to:

1. Identify the range and proportion of specific roles and activities undertaken by farm women;
2. Develop an understanding of their motivations, goals, aspirations and barriers faced by farm women; and
3. Provide insight into the importance of women as economic drivers for Canada's agricultural industry through their contributions to farming.

The research will cover:

- Decision-Making, Leadership
- Financial and Business Acumen
- Entrepreneurship
- Operational Management
- Industry Involvement
- Goals, Motivations and Aspirations
- Challenges and Barriers
- Opportunities for Growth

It is our hope that such research will help influence socio-economic analysis, developmental programming, support from industry and government, policy decisions, and general perceptions to expand opportunities for Canadian agriculture by supporting farm women.



Executive Summary

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.

This project seeks to provide a valid, quantified assessment of the experience of farm women including their roles, responsibilities, motivations, aspirations, and contribution to the Canada's farming sector. Ultimately, the project will include the creation of a national Steering Committee comprised of farm women, qualitative research and analysis through focus groups and in-depth interviews and quantitative research including the design, fielding and analysis of a national survey to supply the necessary data.

Based on these needs, this environmental scan focuses on answering four specific questions:

1. What data exists today that describes the “work” of women on farms in Canada? This information may provide a baseline for assessing changes in the situation as well as provide insight into methodological approaches and their accompanying strengths and weaknesses.
2. How might we describe the “work” itself – what schemas exist for articulating the specific activities that comprise the management and operation of a farming operation?
3. What data exists that accurately captures the current and desired contributions of women to the success of farm operations in Canada?
4. What are the range and extent of barriers to women in undertaking these activities and being recognized for these contributions?

Although women have been contributing to the success of farming in Canada since time immemorial, their role is often undocumented, unacknowledged, and unquantified. Wiebe (1995) states that “women’s role as legitimate farmers is unrecognized. Their position remains invisible due to a problem collecting accurate data for how their work is described, counted, and valued. As a result, their work remains uncoun- ted, discounted, and undervalued.”

***“Women’s role as
legitimate
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unrecognized.”***

Not much has changed in 25 years. Although there is much talk about inclusivity and advancing women in agriculture generally, this review has found that there has not been any focus on documenting the contribution of farm women or women contributing to the success of farming in Canada.

Statistical data points to only a marginal increase in the participation of women in farming, McKenzie (2021) notes, “While these numbers have been and are currently lauded within the industry as an advancement of women in agriculture, there is much less recognition or analysis of the nearly 26% of women who first identified themselves as farm operators when given an opportunity in 1991. The needle movement in 30 years is almost indiscernible.”

Articles in farm publications, social media postings and the growing membership in organizations for women in agriculture points to an increase in women’s involvement in both the operational and managerial aspects of farming. And data from agricultural colleges and universities report growing numbers of female students. The lack of a body of work on the topic of the experience of farm women is both a challenge and an opportunity: a challenge in that little guidance is offered

around establishing a framework to study the experience of farm women, and an opportunity to fulfill a significant knowledge gap for Canadian agriculture.

Women on the Farm – A Statistical Overview

According to Statistics Canada's Census of Agriculture, 25.7 per cent of farm operators were women in 1991. In 20 years, this number rose to just 27.4 per cent, and in 2016 increased to 28.7 per cent, or 77,970 women out of 271,935 farm operators.

"Farm operator" refers to "those persons responsible for the management decisions in operating an agricultural operation. These can be owners, tenants or hired managers of the agricultural operation, including those responsible for management decisions pertinent to particular aspects of the farm—planting, harvesting, raising animals, marketing and sales, and making capital purchases and other financial decisions." (Dictionary, Census of Population, 2016).

Beginning in 1991, up to three operators could be listed per operation within the Census of Agriculture. From 2011 to 2016, the proportion of farm operations with only male operators decreased from 61.4 per cent to 60.1 per cent, while the proportion of agricultural operations with only female operators increased from 5.6 per cent to 7.2 per cent. This is a shift from 1991 when 64.7 per cent of operations had only male operators and 3.9 per cent of operations had only female operators. In 2016, 32.7 per cent of agricultural operations had at least one male and one female operator, up from 31.4 per cent in 1991.

The greatest percentage of female only farm operations are over 70 years of age (10.9 per cent). Although farm operators under 35 years of age is still dominated by male operators, the number of agricultural operations with only female operators

under the age of 35 is growing at a faster rate than those with only male operators under the age of 35. The number of operations with only male operators under the age of 35 increased by 24.4 per cent from 2011 to 2016, while the number of operations with only female operators under the age of 35 rose by 113.3% over the same period of time.

Farms operated exclusively by male or female operators also differ in the type of commodities produced. Potato farms have the highest proportion of male-only operators (72.2%), followed by beef cattle and feedlots (59.6 per cent) and dairy and milk production (54.9 per cent). Horse and other equine farms had the highest proportion of female-only operators (19.1 per cent), followed by fruit and vegetable (16.1 per cent), and goat farms (15.1 per cent). The farm type with the highest proportion of agricultural operations with at least one male and one female operator was goat farming (50.5%).



A Pennsylvania State University study of female farm operators in the US (2021) found that female operators are more likely to run smaller operations, often focusing on specialty production practices, agritourism, or direct to consumer business models.

Commenting on rural Alberta, the “Success for Women in Agri-Food Needs Assessment Report” (AFC, 2016) notes there is a lack of data available to give a complete understanding of operating value-added businesses, food processing or niche market businesses led by women or with women in management roles. This lack of available data is applicable across Canada.

Describing the “Work” of Farming

What do women on the farm do? A key objective of this project is to describe the roles and activities of women on the farm. Primary agricultural production is a complex activity. While the definition of “farming” is relatively simple (Merriam-Webster defines it as “to engage in raising crops or animals”), the range of actual activities involved is broad in terms of the array of commodities produced and the fact that production of each commodity involves a series of discrete steps as part of the planning, production, marketing and sales. Management and decision-making can be equally difficult to understand. Complex farm operations often have equally complex decision-making structures, oftentimes emergent and un-documented. Less than 25 per cent of Canada’s farms have a written business plan and even fewer reference the plan for decision-making (Dollars and Sense Study Update, 2020).

The Canadian Farm Family at Work: Exploring Gender And Generation (Martz, Brueckner, 2003) provides a snapshot of women’s activities both on the farm and within the household, comparing 1982 to 2002. Generally, there is an increase in



farm tasks (including farm management) by women and a decrease in some types of household tasks.

The activity categories listed include a range of operational and management tasks, but do not encompass the full range of activities which may be present on today's farms. ¹⁰ The very nature of the farm business entity is evolving. "The traditional portrayal of farms as self-contained, family-operated businesses does not accurately characterize these entities" (Improving Data Collection and Measurement of Complex Farms, 2019).

Nonetheless, their work provides a useful baseline and suggests a potential categorization of activities (see inset).

Farm tasks performed regularly by farm women

	1982	2002
Ploughing, Cultivating, Planting	9%	18%
Application of fertilizers or pesticides	4%	8%
Performance of field work without machinery	8%	16%
Drive trucks	28%	54%
Harvest without machinery	7%	9%
Harvest with machinery	21%	36%
Care of farm animals	27%	56%
Milking chores	18%	15%
Farm errands	16%	85%

Farm management tasks performed regularly by women

	1982	2002
Maintain farm books and records	64%	81%
Supervise farm work of other family members	18%	60%
Supervise the work of hired help	4%	26%
Deal with sales people regarding farm purchases	15%	41%
Deal with buyers regarding farm products	8%	19%
Deal with consumers regarding farm products	9%	27%

Farm household tasks performed regularly by women

	1982	2002
Cook, clean for the family	99%	99%
Cook, clean for hired help	21%	19%
Care of garden for family consumption	92%	65%
Care of animals for family consumption	32%	48%
Canning and freezing for family consumption	93%	69%
Care for children	75%	75%
Care for aged or chronically ill family members	4%	43%

“In family farms, there have often been cultural gender and generational biases that have led to misrepresenting the reality of who is contributing to the farm operation.”

This raises the question of whether a single person can be designated as the farm owner, manager or primary decision-maker, especially in larger, more complex farm businesses.

Persons can have more or less equal ownership, management and decision-making authority and rights. “In family farms, there have often been cultural gender

and generational biases that have led to misrepresenting the reality of who is contributing to the farm operation, and in this regard, data could very much be influenced by who responds to a survey in any given year” (USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2021).

The contributions of women often become clouded by focusing solely on farm ownership, who is responsible for making decisions related to the farm, and time spent working on the farm. In 2016, just over half (51.7 per cent) of farms were sole proprietorships. Partnerships accounted for 22.9 per cent of farms, and 22.5 per cent of farms were family corporations. In 2016, 32.7 per cent of agricultural operations had at least one male and one female operator, up from 31.4 per cent in 1991. However, the majority of farm partnerships do not have a written agreement, thereby often leaving women out of legal ownership status (Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub, 2020).

The data from the 2011 Census of Agriculture reported that female farm operators were more likely to work part-time on the farm than male operators. About 60 per cent of women farm operators, compared to 40 per cent male operators, reported

working less than 30 hours per week on the farm. However, women increasingly take on off-farm work to reinvest their earnings into the farm (CAHRC, 2016).

The Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council (CAHRC) has identified and classified the work performed for primary production through its National Agricultural Occupational Framework. Categories include labourer, worker, supervisor, manager, specialized and owner/operator. However, a single, consistent schema that recognizes the complex relationships between ownership, management, decision-making, and operations and accounts for all of the activities that contribute to the success of agricultural operations and can be applied across the vast range of farming situations does not exist.

A significant factor in the underrepresentation of women in agricultural data may also be attributed to the types of farm labour that are considered “farming” and those that are not. Many tasks performed by women, such as providing meals, moving machinery, or driving for parts, are not necessarily recognized as farm work (Fletcher, 2020).

Where women are part-owners of operations, they often take on management roles - managing the finances and on-farm staff, record-keeping and tackling the day-to-day administrative tasks that ensure her male counterpart can focus on activities traditionally identified as farming. Women also traditionally look after family caregiving responsibilities (Shumsky and Nelson, 2018).



“Women are much less likely to identify themselves as “farmers,” even when their contributions to the operation are critical to its success.”

This disparity can be seen in the way women choose to identify themselves. Beach (2013) and Brasier et al. (2014) both found that women are much less likely to identify themselves as “farmers,” even when their contributions to the operation are critical to its

success. A 2021 University of Guelph study titled “What Impacts Perceived Stress among Canadian Farmers?” further explores the topic of identity, where farm women described experiencing stress in having their identity as a “farmer” challenged, with several study participants describing instances when someone (e.g., agronomist, salesperson) would come to the farm and immediately dismiss them by asking for “the farmer”. This stress associated with identifying as a “farmer” extended to trying to join industry groups or meetings and feeling dismissed or undervalued by agricultural community members.

Studies from Quebec provide a more in-depth look into the roles, contributions, and recognition of women on the farm.

According to the results of the “Women and Rurality” consultation, 33 per cent of women who work with their spouse on the farm, full or part time, receive no remuneration. It is considered normal for them to “lend a hand” in the business without financial compensation (GRIDEQ, 2016). It is also not uncommon for women to engage in a paperless farm ownership and business relationships based on mutual trust between spouses, leaving them financially vulnerable in the case of divorce or death (Agricultrices du Quebec). In 2008, the Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Quebec estimated that 18,850 women participated directly or indirectly in the farming activities without having a title deed. In addition, 32 percent of women working off-farm contributed their salary

towards the farm operation. And, for equal work, they received 79 per cent of the compensation compared to their male counterparts.

Invisible work is divided into four categories:

- 1. Household chores**
- 2. Family care**
- 3. Collaboration in the farm business**
- 4. Volunteering**

The term “invisible work” has been coined to capture the contributions women make to the farm operation that tend to go unnoticed (GRIDEQ, 2016). It is estimated that these contributions are worth more than \$108 million to Quebec’s farm operations.

It was found that women spend on average 8.4 hours per week on unpaid and unrecognized tasks related to the farm business (care to animals, sale and processing some products). And interestingly, financial and administrative tasks, often managed by women, were distinguished separately from managing the farm or farm business management activities (by both men and women).

The “third shift” is another term that has been coined to describe the phenomenon where women engage in off-farm employment, farm labour, and as homemakers (Elliot et al., 2018). Findings from a 1997 poll of farm women in the United States found that farm women spent an average of 21 hours per week working off the farm, 22 hours per week working on the farm, and 35 hours per week engaged in household and family duties (Taylor, 1997). However, there is no national comparable data available for Canada.

Barriers to Women

Issues around gender equality and the advancement of women in agriculture are not new. A 2016 study conducted by the Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council titled *Supporting the Advancement of Women in Agriculture* found that 41 per cent of women and 12 per cent of men agreed that there are barriers preventing women from advancing in agriculture. The top three barriers for women in agriculture were identified as: balancing career and family, operating with an “old boys’ club” and lack of female role models. All three of these barriers have been witnessed or experienced by 97% of women who participated in the study.

“The top three barriers for women in agriculture were identified as: balancing career and family, operating with an “old boys’ club” and lack of female role models.”

More recently, a 2018 study conducted by Corteva Agriscience across seventeen countries titled *Global Women in Agriculture* found that 61 per cent of Canadian women agreed with the statement: “gender discrimination is an issue in the agriculture industry.”

Research regarding barriers to increasing participation and enhancing authority is often included in broader studies of women in agriculture or as entrepreneurs.

Diane McKenzie (2021) provided a deeper exploration of the roots of this discrimination in her master’s thesis: *A History of Rural Women and The Intergenerational Transfer of The Family Farm*: “The lack of recognition women and girls receive as farmer and potential landowners is grounded in and reinforced by patriarchal patterns that continue to override meaningful change.” McKenzie further points out that: “Women and girls have been sidelined in recorded

agricultural history and what they experienced largely left unrecorded; their participation in family farm ownership often relegated to an odd one-off folktale. This neglect has influenced emergent gender roles and deemed appropriate behaviors expressed in ‘values, customs, law, and social roles’ (Lerner, 1986). The idea that men do ‘this’ and women do ‘that’, still evident in contemporary agriculture, is part of the cultural construct and explanatory system as related to and expressed in leading metaphors where women and girls are often excluded from both creation of and the materialization of (Lerner, 1986).”

The *Success for Women in Agri-Food Needs Assessment Report* (2016) identified 6 broad categories of barriers:

- Finance and Business Skills
- Other Commitments
- Networking and Access to Information
- Mentorship
- Rural Living
- Cultural and Social

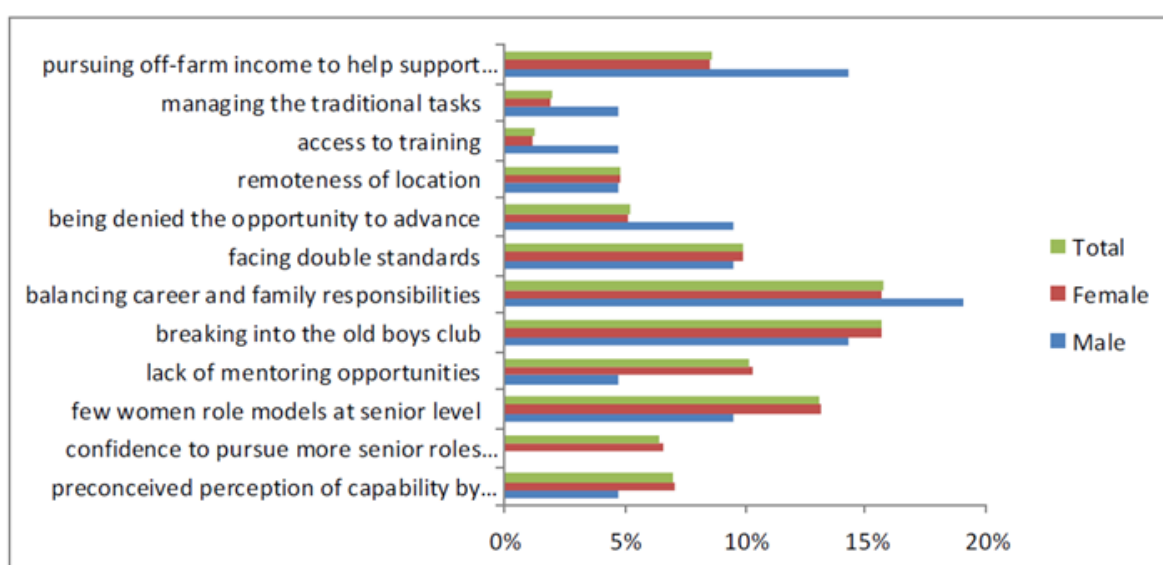
Finance and Business Skills includes access to capital, feeling ill-equipped to demonstrate what lenders require, lack of knowledge of where to look for sources of financing, feeling that they won’t be taken seriously, lack of confidence in their business acumen, and dependence on co-signers.

Other Commitments includes a broad array of factors including off-farm jobs, childcare, extended family care, domestic responsibilities, volunteering and the complexities of managing some or all of the above.

Networking and Access to Information includes the lack of ability or a central resource to network, too much information to sift through, unfamiliar acronyms and terms, policies and regulations, and poor broadband infrastructure.

Mentorship refers to lack of female representation in leadership roles - both in agribusiness and in organizations, as well as the lack opportunity to identify and interact with women in similar roles.

CAHRC's 2016 data shows the most prevalent barriers for women advancing in agriculture ranked by female and male respondents:



Note to reader:

CAHRC has provided the full text for the barriers listed in the chart above:

"Pursuing off-farm income to help support the family"

"Confidence to pursue more senior roles and career development"

"Preconceived perception of capability by co-workers/senior management"

While these studies focused on women in agriculture in general, they included input from farm women. And recent articles in agricultural press, social media, blogs and podcasts voicing the first-hand experience of Canadian farm women further support these claims. However, there is little data available focused solely on the experience of farm women and the barriers they face.

In Quebec's 2016 study, 77% of women and 46% of men reported women are not well-represented in decision-making positions on the farm. Their reasoning, separated by the opinions of women and men, are listed below.

The main barriers to women's involvement in decision-making for the farm operation (in order of importance):

	According to Women	According to Men
1	Financial situation	Family responsibilities
2	Time available	Time required
3	Family responsibilities	Lack of interest
4	Feeling a lack of competence (65%)	Feeling a lack of competence (18%)

In addition to the barriers noted above, anecdotal descriptions of barriers appearing in contemporary media including agricultural press, social media, blogs and podcasts describe additional barriers including:

Imperceptible or Invisible Barriers: Many barriers can go undetected when embedded within society as social norms. For example, women may be overlooked for a promotion or taking on greater responsibility because it is assumed she will eventually have children and her responsibilities will be divided.

Cultural Barriers: Restricting women and girls to traditional support roles adds to their invisibility and consequently makes it difficult for them to gain recognition of their contributions by families and society. For example, if the practice of patrilineal farm succession persists, girls will continue to be given less valuable on-farm tasks which "progressively and ultimately contribute to her being pushed further away and out of the business," says the 2018 report *La relève agricole féminine au Québec: Remuer ciel et terre*.

Misogyny: A study conducted by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (2020) found that 67 per cent of female farm operators indicated they have been disrespected because of their gender compared to just 2 per cent of their male counterparts.

Physical Barriers: Women possess different physiologies and may experience difficulty obtaining adequate clothing including personal protective equipment, tools and operating machinery and equipment designed with male operators in mind (McCoy and Carruth, 2002).

Gender has been identified as a contributing factor in farm safety issues. The risks for occupational safety have identified gender differences in the nature of farm injuries, but no underlying rationale as to why. One theory is the lack of adaptation of conditions for various farm activities has led to more or different injuries for women. And women may be susceptible to different types of injury because farm equipment including protective equipment has traditionally been designed for men. Anecdotal evidence suggests women may be more susceptible to farm injury because they are pulled into helping with farm tasks for which they do not have adequate training – for example, when a farm hand is sick. However, the absence of data as to the roles and nature of the work women do, has prevented further investigation.

It is important to understand that not all women feel that they experience gender specific barriers – either because they did not exist or because they were not recognized as such. Broughton (2016) notes that “while barriers were identified throughout the data collection, of the 92 individuals that responded to the questions of whether they have ever experienced barriers themselves, 63 per cent said no and 37 per cent said yes. Interviews suggested that those women who began working in agri-food in a supportive and encouraging environment with equal opportunity given by their parents early on at home as children, were easily accepted and respected as they became more involved in the business, taking on management positions and/or ownership.” In the 2016 CAHRC study, 83 per cent of women reported that barriers do not exist for women in agriculture. This response was most prevalent among women 15 to 24 years of age and over 40 years of age, which could indicate barriers are most felt by women when they enter into the age of child-rearing (25-39 years of age). This conclusion is supported by focus groups and interviews as part of the CAHRC study.

“Those women who began working in agri-food in a supportive and encouraging environment with equal opportunity... were easily accepted and respected as they became more involved in the business.”

Understanding the nature and scope of barriers to farm women depends on understanding their individual goals and motivations. This environmental scan has identified a range of potential barriers to increased participation and/or authority within a farming situation, but we also must consider that the opposite can occur – that the farm (and the expectation or need to participate in farm activities) can be a barrier to the goals and aspirations of women.

The Opportunity

There are two ways in which we can view the topic of “opportunity” – from a socio-economic point of view and from an individual point of view:

1. the opportunity for Canadian society and the economy to benefit from the participation of skilled, motivated individuals, and
2. the opportunity for individuals to pursue their goals and gain fulfilment.

RBC’s “Farmer 4.0” report places the socio-economic opportunity in context:

“... by 2025, one in four Canadian farmers will be aged 65 or older, and over the next decade 37% of the agricultural workforce will be set to retire. Moreover, Canadian youth are not looking to replace them, with 600 fewer young people entering the sector every year. Just look at any population map to see the challenge...”

“...To seize on those opportunities, Canada needs to transform the way we produce food, and market it globally. If we don’t, the sector will likely grow by only 1.8% annually on its current path of declining productivity, raising output to around \$40 billion in 2030 from \$32 billion today. But if we accelerate the adoption of innovative technologies and embrace an ambitious skills agenda...Canada’s agricultural productivity can get back in line with the recent 10-year average of 3%. The payoff: another \$11 billion of output, bringing agricultural GDP to \$51 billion in 2030.”

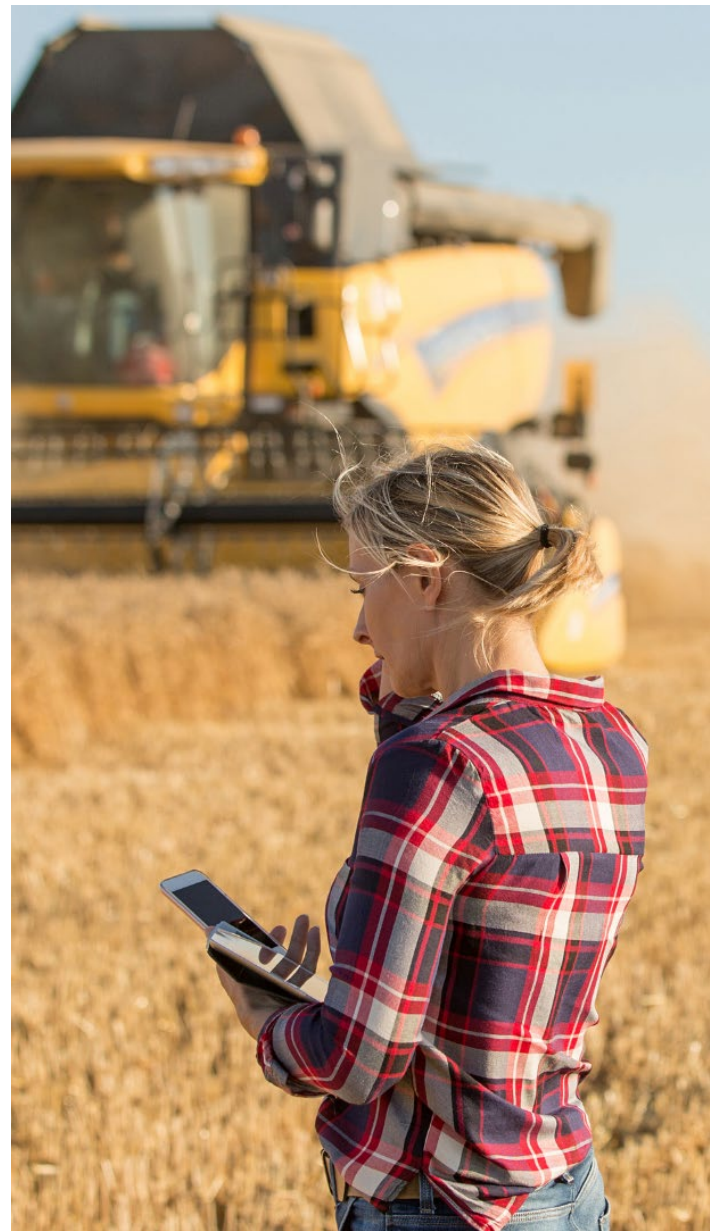
The Farmer 4.0 will be:

- Innovative: Tests new approaches and works with new partners
- Highly Skilled: Embraces lifelong learning, with a focus on communications, digital and global skills
- Data-Driven: Relies on data as much as experience to make decisions
- Diverse: Seeks a wide range of employees, partners and suppliers to solve complex problems

The capability and capacity of women to contribute to this opportunity was clearly described by Broughton in *Success for Women in Agri-Food* (2016): “We have seen that there is an increasing trend that women are the key enablers to farm diversification and increased financial sustainability of the operation.

Women today play significant roles in Community Sustainable Agriculture, horticulture, direct farm marketing, niche market development, and value added and processing as partners or leaders of the operations. But programs, services, and policy structures available today do not sufficiently address the needs of women farmers who want to diversify and participate in regional food systems. Programs designed to enhance smallholder productivity must go beyond a focus on technical agricultural issues to address the underlying gender-related norms, priorities and constraints that may prevent women farmers from reaching their full potential.”

“Programs, services, and policy structures available today do not sufficiently address the needs of women farmers.”



Underrepresentation of women entrepreneurs in agriculture, agri-food, and related industries is a missed opportunity. Women provide new insights and innovative practices that increase economic and social value for farms, agri-food industries, and society in general. (Fletcher, 2020). From an economic standpoint, according to the Women's Entrepreneurial Knowledge Hub (WEKH), women entrepreneurs contributed \$148 billion to the Canadian economy in 2011. Closing the gender gap could add an additional \$150 billion by 2026. While this analysis is not specific to farming, Farm Management Canada's 2020 environmental analysis accompanying its *Healthy Minds, Healthy Farms* report establishes a clear relationship between farming and entrepreneurship. It stands to reason that WEKH's calculations can be extrapolated to primary production.

The *Healthy Minds, Healthy Farms* report reveals another hard truth – female farm operators report higher levels of stress (82 per cent) than their male counterparts (72 per cent). And while the highest sources of stress were the same for women and men: unpredictability of the agricultural sector, financial pressures, and workload pressures, women reported significantly greater stress caused by family conflict and farm transition. Women reported feeling a greater sense of responsibility for maintaining family and farm team harmony and ensuring the future of the farm. The study also showed a direct correlation between adopting farm business management practices like business planning and achieving greater confidence in decision-making and peace of mind.

While data shows that women's contributions to the farm are often undervalued and underappreciated, a 2020 study conducted by Farm Management Canada (*Dollars and Sense Study Update*) exploring the drivers and barriers to adopting farm business management practices reveals that women are more likely than their male counterparts to adopt farm business management practices. These practices include business planning, communicating with key stakeholders, using supply chain relationships to add value, human resource management, farm transition

planning, use of business advisors and upgrading management skills. A previous 2015 study (*Dollars and Sense*) shows that the adoption of farm business management practices is linked to farm profitability.

Women were also more likely to apply for funding to support business development initiatives for the farm. When women were asked about barriers to adopting farm business practices, the most cited barrier was getting their spouses' support.

Similarly, while not specific to farm women, CAHRC reports that more women are participating in leadership development programs like the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP) (61.5 per cent females compared with 38.5 per cent males) and 4-H (60 per cent female compared with 40 per cent males). Agricultural business managers and owners with a university degree are also more likely to be female (65 per cent are female compared with 46 per cent males).

While not specific to farm operations, Broughton notes that “Businesses, whether start-ups or scale-ups, have a much stronger chance of success when the entrepreneur’s skill sets are strong (both business management and technical), networks have been established to learn from one another and share experiences or capture opportunities working together, as well as when access to the appropriate resources are available when needed” (2016). These resources include access to training and financial supports designed specifically for women, access to childcare especially tailored to the unconventional demands of farming along with child-friendly spaces at agricultural meetings and conferences. Men can also play a more supportive role in childcare and fulfilling domestic obligations.

A 2005 report called *Silencing Women in Canada: The Effects of the Erosion of Support Programs for Farm Women* (Gerrard et al.) provides a brief history of farm women support programs in Canada. Federal support programs for women in agriculture began in 1981 with the Farm Women’s Bureau (FWB) to implement the Government

of Canada's Status of Women policies as they applied to agriculture. In 1985, the FWB launched the Farm Women's Information Initiative (FWII), to provide information on agricultural policies, programs and legislation to farm women including a toll-free number for farm women facing challenges, however it is not clear whether this program ever operated. A few years later, the Canadian Farm Women's Network was formed. The CFWN formed an education committee that declared themselves a separate entity in 1987 - the Canadian Farm Women's Education Council (CFWEC) - to increase training, promote leadership and reduce barriers for farm women. Provincial farm women's organizations sent representatives to the CFWEC to identify challenges and opportunities for change. In 1989, the FWB introduced the Farm Women's Advancement Program (FWAP) to provide up to \$150,000 per year in grants to farm women organizations towards legal and economic equality and promote participation in agricultural policy. A mailing list of the leaders of farm women's groups was compiled by the Communications Branch at Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada in 1991 to ensure women's participation on agricultural discussions. And in 1996 the National Coalition for Rural Childcare was created to set up childcare centres in rural Canada. In 1995, the FWB suffered serious cutbacks in government funding including the removal of core funding. Shortly thereafter, FWB and its affiliated programs ended.

A number of provincial farm women organizations including the Fédération des agricultrices du Québec, Ontario Farm Women, and the Saskatchewan Women's Agriculture Network continued on, however by 2000 Ontario and Saskatchewan's organizations closed.

Currently, there are a number of initiatives underway dedicated to supporting women in agriculture in Canada.

There are provincial groups including the Maritime Ag Women's Network, Agricultrices du Québec, Ontario's Ag Women's Network, Manitoba Women in

Agriculture and Food, Sask Women in Ag, Alberta Women in Ag and BC Women in Ag. There are also local groups serving rural communities and the Federated Women's Institutes who serve rural communities. These groups get together to host discussions and learning events to support personal and professional development. Recently, representatives the provincial agricultural women's groups have been invited to share policy recommendations to government.

The current Minister of Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, the honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau is Canada's first female Minister of Agriculture and has been hosting roundtable discussions with women in agriculture to identify changes to agricultural policy and programming to better support women. Currently, efforts are underway to secure funding and launch a National Women in Agriculture organization.

There are also industry events dedicated to supporting women in agriculture such as the Advancing Women in Agriculture Conference hosted in Alberta and Ontario, the Atlantic Farm Women's Conference, Manitoba Farm Women's Conference, Saskatchewan's CONNECT Conference, FCC's Women's Summit and Women Entrepreneurs Summit and events hosted by local women in agriculture organizations. Grain Farmers of Ontario also hosts an annual Grain Women's Symposium.

Efforts are also underway to create dedicated mentorship and skills development programs including the Egg Farmers of Canada Women in Egg Farming program and Agri-Food Management Excellence Inc. is launching the Empowering Lasting Leadership Excellence (ELLE) program for women in agriculture and agri-food. In 2021, MNP launched a peer group designed exclusively for women in agriculture. The Women in Leadership Foundation also provides mentorship programming for women, although not specific to agriculture.

While it seems there is no government funding within the agricultural sector dedicated specifically to initiatives that support women in agriculture, there are typically provisions within funding programs that encourage applicants to create programs and services that serve under-represented groups in agriculture, which include women. And there are also government bodies including Women and Gender Equality Canada and Status of Women Canada and organizations including the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub that have funded initiatives for women in agriculture.

There are also programs available that women can apply to directly to support their professional and personal development goals. FCC's Women Entrepreneur Loan provides financing to women entrepreneurs in agriculture, agribusiness and agri-food to start or grow their business. The program includes a one-time loan processing fee waiver for up to \$1,000 for women to invest in skill development that suits their business needs.

And, there are a number of awards and initiatives dedicated to recognizing women in agriculture including FCC's Rosemary Davis Award, the Federated Women's Institute of Ontario's Women of Excellence in Agriculture Award, BMO's Celebrating Women in Agriculture program and the Influential Women in Canadian Agriculture program.

However, there is very little dedicated specifically to supporting the unique needs of farm women.

In 2006, Roppel, Desmarais and Martz published a study documenting critical issues that farm women believe need to be integrated into Canadian agricultural policy to achieve gender equality and policy recommendations that will enhance the inclusion of farm women's concerns and their participation in developing Canadian agricultural policy.

Specifically, the research addressed three questions:

- What changes in their daily lives have farm women experienced as a result of current Canadian agricultural policies? What are the policy implications arising from rural women's lived experiences? What policy recommendations are required to address farm women's concerns in these areas?
- Does Canada's Agricultural Policy Framework equally reflect the unique needs of men and women? If not, what is missing? What would a gender-sensitive agricultural policy look like?
- What would be required to ensure that future Canadian agricultural policies are gender inclusive?

In 2006, no information on the participation of women, and specifically farm women in the development of Canada's agricultural policy was available. And farm women's input was not specifically sought out in the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) consultation process.

"Despite 25 years of research showing that farming relies on the work of both women and men, and the significant role of women in farm financial management and raising the next generation of farmers, Canadian farm women continue to be marginalized in policy development and political debates around agriculture."

The study concludes with a number of recommendations, three of which are included below:

1. Require that all input to agricultural policy development processes, whether from farm or women's organizations or agribusiness, identify and address gender issues and impacts.
2. Implement a grass-roots agricultural policy development process that starts with farmer needs, and identifies and addresses the concerns and needs of farm women.

3. Require all farm organizations and businesses providing input to agricultural policy development processes to develop and implement strategies to achieve gender equality and equity in organizational structure and in policy content.

Conclusions

The purpose of this review was to gather information pertaining to the experience of farm women and identify knowledge gaps to help guide further research into understanding the contributions, motivations, aspirations and barriers faced by farm women. The review identified gaps in information that are beyond the scope of this project but are included to inform for future work in this field.

The following gaps were identified for further exploration:

1. Limited Canadian research relating to farm women

Data pertaining to the experience, contributions, motivations, aspirations and barriers faced by farm women is limited to regional and primarily anecdotal information.

There is no data pertaining to the managerial or operational roles, responsibilities, recognition of authority or decision-making power of women involved in the farm.

Data pertaining to female enrollment in educational institutions, programs of study, career aspirations and achievements is limited.

Data available from the Census of Agriculture pertaining to female operators is limited to the number of female operators, the age of female operators and their

involvement in various production sectors. There is no breakdown of female operator responses.

2. No overarching schema or framework available for documenting the contributions of farm women

There is no overarching schema or framework available for documenting the roles, activities, and responsibilities required by farm operations and the relationship between these undertakings. Data available from the Census of Agriculture does not offer insight into farm ownership structures, specific roles, activities or responsibilities on the farm.

There is no overarching mechanism to define, measure or quantify the contributions of women towards the farm operation.

3. Unclear and distorted definitions

There is no clear definition or set of definitions to guide terminology relating to female farmers and the extent that women contribute to the farm. In French, there are separate words for female and male farmers – *agricultrice* in the case of females and *agriculteur* in the case of males. However, it is unclear how they are defined.

The English term “farmer” is a gender-neutral term, and images and descriptions of farm work, typically take on a male connotation. This, coupled with the tasks and activities typically associated with “farming” has caused some women to hesitate to use or be challenged when identifying as a farmer. The Census of Agriculture also suffers from forms of biased measurement that will need to be addressed.

4. Limited understanding of barriers

There is a range of literature that describes barriers faced by women in agriculture, but little information exists to define barriers in the context of women on the farm or to relate those barriers to other contextual information that will make it possible to address the barriers themselves. Further, imperceptible barriers may exist that have yet to be identified due to cultural and societal norms that have placed invisible barriers on farm women.

5. The use and effectiveness of current support programs and resources

Very little data exists on the current support programs and resources available to farm women and the use and effectiveness of these resources.

A clearer definition and effective documentation of women's presence in, contributions to and barriers within the farming sector is required to fully realize the opportunities for Canadian agriculture.

Next Steps

The knowledge gaps summarized in this environmental scan help inform the next steps of the project. The next phases of this project will include the following activities to help continue to shape the research scope and methodology:

Phase 1 - 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 2 - Qualitative Research

The second phase is qualitative research to both understand women's experiences and inform a quantitative research 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 qualitative research will also help gain a deeper understanding of the motivations, aspirations and barriers faced by women. The goal of any qualitative research is 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 quantitative research to provide statistically valid metrics covering a range of demographic variances including regions, commodity types, sizes of farm operation, age and roles in farm operations. In addition to crosstabulation, the analysis will employ clustering and other investigative techniques (where applicable) to produce a richer profile of farm women.

Phase 4 - Analysis 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 to help create a path forward to meet the unique needs of farm women.

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