

# The State of Gender Equity in U.S. Agriculture



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## “Agriculture needs women.

In the early days of agriculture in the U.S., it was women doing the work, whether it was enslaved women or not. Women have traditionally been agriculturalists, but we've lost that. We need to re-embrace that history and do more to protect the integrity of our rural communities. Women who farm are concerned with the concrete aspects of farming, not the superficial. We need to ask women directly more questions about what they need, what would make their lives easier as a producer.”

— EBONIE ALEXANDER, BLACK FAMILY LAND TRUST, INC.

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# Introduction

A growing body of evidence demonstrates that farming is among the most gender-unequal occupations in the U.S. To create a more equitable, thriving, and resilient farm industry, we must reckon with the reality of unequal economic outcomes and access to resources for women agricultural producers.

Over the next 20 years, one-third of America's farmland and rangeland will likely change hands as current landowners age and sell.<sup>43</sup> Agricultural land is most at risk of being converted to non-agricultural use when sold.<sup>22, 43</sup> Especially amid this generational shift, continued inequality along gender and race hampers the U.S. agricultural system's ability to keep land in agriculture, address climate change, ensure food security, and support rural livelihoods.<sup>21</sup>

American Farmland Trust's Women for the Land (WFL) initiative has worked across the U.S. in collaboration with a diverse set of partners to connect women in agriculture with each other and with the resources they need to enable their success. Through peer-to-peer educational programming, WFL has reached more than 3,000 women farmers, ranchers, landowners, and aspiring farmers in 24 states and Tribal territories and impacted thousands of acres of land and counting. This work has also afforded AFT a vantage point to observe the ongoing structural and social challenges that women in agriculture and their operations face. To shift these structures and social norms, it is important to understand what the evidence shows about how generalizable these challenges are for a diversity of women in U.S. agriculture and what the potential mechanisms are for improving conditions and outcomes for women-led farms.

This report is a synthesis of research on the status of gender equity in U.S. agriculture conducted by the WFL team between 2021–2023. Our report presents the evidence we have compiled and provides recommendations based on this evidence for how agricultural practitioners and advocates can help women in U.S. agriculture reach their full potential in the industry and on the land.

EMMIE SPERANDEO

\* For the purposes of this report, the word "women" can be understood in a gender inclusive way to include cis-gendered women, transfeminine women, and femme-presenting non-binary people who are marginalized by misogyny or impacted by women-related issues. That said, the national data on gender in U.S. agriculture, as collected in USDA surveys such as the Census of Agriculture, the Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) and others, largely capture cis-gendered women and provide sparse insight into the presence of queer and gender non-conforming people in agriculture. This report aimed to compile the best available information on gender equity broadly in U.S. agriculture from both these quantitative sources as well as from peer-reviewed literature and semi-structured interviews. More granular data collection and research are needed on queer and gender non-conforming people in agriculture to get a more robust picture of how the outcomes discussed throughout this report, and the potential interventions that might support them, may differ from those that apply to cis-gendered women.

# Methods

To conduct this analysis, we relied on a comprehensive literature review, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and analysis of data obtained directly by our team from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Our literature review included an analysis of 67 peer-reviewed and grey literature papers published from 1987 to 2023. Search terms to find the papers were related to the presence of women in agriculture, access to agricultural resources based on demographic groups, barriers facing women in agriculture, issues surrounding land access by demographic groups, gendered social dynamics in rural communities, childcare access in rural and agricultural communities, and other related terms. Semi-structured interviews used to inform this analysis were conducted by our team with 19\* women researchers, practitioners, and advocates with expertise on women, gender, and equity in agriculture.\*\* The interviews were conducted between 2021 and 2022, mainly over Zoom, and were recorded and transcribed, though some were answered over email or via phone call. The WFL team synthesized the interview data into themes in 2022 and 2023. In addition to these specific interviewees, input from our program collaborators in the Hoopa Valley Tribal Community in northern California, Black farmer network in the Southeast, and a needs assessment with Asian and Latin American immigrant women in agriculture in California also contributed to the insights in this report.<sup>16</sup>  
<sup>34, 63, 71</sup> Throughout the report, we have used direct quotes to illustrate key points being made on various themes. In some cases, we have attributed these quotes directly to the individual who said them, while others have been shared anonymously.



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\* The following are institutions and entities that the interviewees represent: Soil Sisters/Renewing the Countryside; Portland State University; Women, Food and Ag Network (WFAN); MI Tech University; Food and Ag Network Founder, organic farmer, founder of WEFAN; Glynwood and Pleides Network; NRCS-CA; Pennsylvania State University; Marshfield Clinic Research institute, National Farm Medicine Center; Ohio State University; Women in Ranching Network; University of Vermont Extension-Women in Agriculture Network; University of Connecticut; Black Family Land Trust, Inc; Iowa Farmers Union; Practical Farmers of Iowa; University of Idaho.

\*\* The authors of this report acknowledge that there are blind spots and gaps in what we were able to capture in this round of research, however we believe that this report adds value to the field by providing a more comprehensive analysis of both empirical and qualitative evidence on women in U.S Agriculture than has been previously presented.



# Presence of Women in Agriculture

## National Data on Women in Agriculture

The U.S. Census of Agriculture (COA) is one of the most important sources of information about U.S. farmers, ranchers, and agricultural operations. It is conducted every five years to collect a variety of information about farm characteristics, including limited demographic information about farmers and farm families. It is intended to be a complete count of U.S. farms and ranches, defined as operations on which at least \$1,000 of agricultural products were produced and sold during the Census of Agriculture year.<sup>54</sup> Changes to the census survey questions in 1978 allowed the first collection of information to track the gender of farm operators.<sup>41</sup> Other significant changes to the census collection tool occurred in 2002, 2012, and 2017, which have provided richer, more complete information about the demographics of

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farm operators and families while also creating confusion on how best to interpret changes over time, particularly regarding how gender is counted across survey years.<sup>41</sup>

Research indicates that women are much less likely to identify themselves as farmers, even when they are doing critical work on a farm.<sup>41</sup> For example, the socialization of gendered farm roles is so strong that even today, when women live on farms, do farm work, and make decisions about the farm, they often still see themselves as the farmer's wife, not as a farmer themselves.<sup>29</sup> Changes to the 2017 Census survey were intended to correct this by allowing the reporting of a fourth operator and multiple principal operators on a farm. While this change likely helped provide a better representation of the demographic composition of U.S. farms and ranches, it severely limited the ability to trace trends in the number of women operators and principal operators in the U.S. over time using data from previous censuses.<sup>41</sup>

The 2017 Census of Agriculture found that more than half, 56%, of all farms had at least one female producer involved in the operation,<sup>38</sup> but that just 29 percent of all principal operators (people primarily responsible for the day-to-day operation of the farm) were women.<sup>67</sup> In contrast, the 2019 Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) found that just 14 percent of principal operators were women.<sup>67</sup> Comparing these two national estimates, it is difficult to know which is a more accurate reflection of the presence of women in key farm operation roles, but both suggest that women remain underrepresented as lead decision-makers on U.S. farms. Many media stories reporting the results of the 2017 COA only compared the 29% found by the 2017 COA to the 14% found in the 2012 COA without contextualizing the changes in the survey tool. The number of women reported in the 2017 Census certainly increased because of changes in how the census questionnaire was written. The number of women in farming may have also increased, but it is impossible to be sure due to the changes in the survey methodology.<sup>41</sup> Without accounting for the changes in the 2017 Census and understanding how these surveys distinguish between different farm roles, it is possible to significantly overestimate women's representation and success in agriculture.<sup>41</sup>

Coupling the data from the COA and ARMS with other sources, however, does indicate evidence of women's growing presence in agriculture, at least in certain roles. For example, surveys conducted by the National Young Farmer Coalition show that women represent an outsized share of the beginning farmer population, with more than 60% of respondents to their 2017 survey being women.<sup>1</sup> This is validated by USDA 2017 Census of Agriculture data, which found that 41% of beginning producers are women.<sup>38</sup> With women and girls also outpacing men and boys in agricultural programs at Land Grant Universities and in 4-H programs across the country since 2009, there is reason to believe that women are expected to be an increasing presence on U.S. farms and ranches and in broader careers in agricultural industries.<sup>10, 49, 55</sup>

## Women with Intersectional Identities in Agriculture

### *Black, Indigenous, and other Women of Color*

National data offer insight into the intersectional racial and ethnic identities of women in agriculture that provide nuance to this story. An analysis of 2017 COA data showed that, across the U.S., compared to men primary producers, women primary producers represent greater racial and ethnic diversity.<sup>42</sup> Importantly, this analysis also indicated that Black, Indigenous, and other Women of Color (BIWoC) account for about 5% of all women farmers and around 6% of women principal operators, meaning they play the sole or main decision-making role in their operation.<sup>42</sup> Coupled with the finding that women of color were less likely than white women farmers to have a spouse on-farm (23% versus 34%), these findings indicate that women of color are less often



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farming with a spouse than white women, and suggest that white, heterosexual women farmers may be more likely to rely on a male heterosexual farmer to access land and capital even when they are most responsible for the farm.<sup>40, 42</sup>

“There are some important limits to Census of Ag data, including: It does not include non-operating landowners, nor farmworkers; it can be difficult to look intersectionally across race and gender and other variables; it is hard to do fine-grained spatial analysis, including of types of farmland; the COA has a binary view of gender which means we have no data on trans women; and there have been changes in definitions over time and that affects who is counted as a female farmer.”

— ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

A key observation from that 2017 analysis is that while women, based on the general US population, are underrepresented as farmers and ranchers, Black women are severely underrepresented.<sup>42</sup> In contrast, Indigenous women are slightly overrepresented in this population. These results reflect historical and contemporary demographic factors related to forced and voluntary migration and land dispossession within the U.S.<sup>25, 42</sup> For example, the oppressive histories of slavery, sharecropping, and discriminatory lending practices contribute to a modern American agricultural landscape where black farmers are underrepresented, while The Dawes Act forced Indigenous people to become farmers and ranchers and accept the individual portioning of reservation land to sell off the huge swaths of treaty land to white farmers.<sup>12, 15, 21, 42, 52, 69</sup> This, coupled with the fact that many Tribal Nations are not structured around patriarchal beliefs, means that land is more likely to stay or end up in women’s hands, but it does not mean that these women are faring better in terms of their profits.<sup>42, 65, 68</sup>



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“I’m not sure that the data are actually collecting the number of African American farmers that are coming back to agriculture. 5 years ago, were you a farmer, 3 years ago . . . . If no, what industry were you in before? That would be helpful to understand.”

— BLACK FARMER NETWORK LEADER & POLICY ADVOCATE

### *Queer\* Women in Agriculture*

Changes to the 2012 COA allowed for first-time insight into the marital status of two farmers on the same farm.<sup>41</sup> This question was repeated in the 2017 Census, which—combined with the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2015—made it possible to determine (albeit in a limited way) insight into the population of queer farmers in the U.S., by identifying “women married to women” and “men married to men” operators associated with the same farm.<sup>41</sup> Using these data, researchers have looked specifically at farms led by same-sex married couples, where only two producers are listed on the census. This analysis found that at least 1.2% of two-producer farms and ranches in the U.S. are run by queer farmers and that this group is also more likely than heterosexual farmers to be Hispanic or non-white.<sup>41</sup> Women married to women were compared in this analysis to men married to men and appear to be doubly impacted by their

\* Queer is a complex and contested term in academic and scholarly circles but is generally used as an umbrella term to denote sexual identity that rejects heteronormativity. It can also be a descriptive identity used by people whose gender expression falls outside of normative prescriptions of binary feminine and masculine qualities. In this report, our use of the term queer can be understood to encompass both of these umbrella term meanings.

gender and sexuality, with their gender having a more significant impact than their sexuality when it comes to farm-related outcomes.<sup>41</sup> For example, women married to women were much more likely than men married to men to farm in urban areas, suggesting they may experience greater discrimination and/or discomfort farming in rural areas.<sup>41</sup> Women married to women were also more likely than men married to men to have characteristics that are associated with both alternative agricultural approaches and a lack of access to farming resources and support.<sup>41</sup> These findings, though limited in their explanation of the status of queer farmers in the U.S., do indicate that queer farmers exist in significant numbers and that they differ from straight farmers in statistically significant ways that warrant further investigation.<sup>29 41</sup>

*Women in Hired Farm Labor*

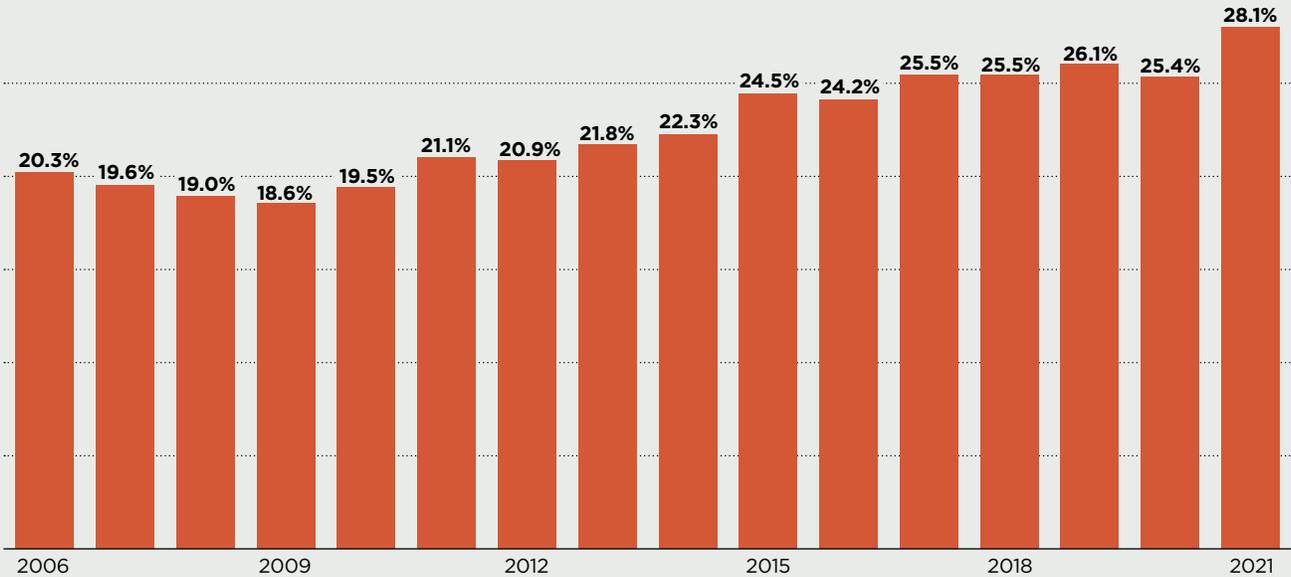
Women are also a growing share of the hired labor workforce, as shown in Figure 1, consistent with a trend toward mechanization in farm labor occupations.<sup>56</sup> Though some of the issues faced by women farm laborers are covered more in the following sections of this report, our inquiry for this report did not heavily focus on this important niche population within agriculture. For more details on the issues facing women in agricultural labor in the U.S. and the solutions being sought for these challenges, please refer to our collaborative partners at organizations led by women farm laborers such as Justice for Migrant Women, Líderes Campesinas, and others.



SHAWN LINEHAN

**Figure 1. Women farmworkers on the rise**

Share of U.S. farm laborers/graders/sorters who are women, 2006–2021



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, annual American Community Survey.



GABRIELLE ROESCH MCNALLY



ASHLEY BRUCKER

## Key Takeaways on the Presence of Women in Agriculture

- Women of all races remain underrepresented as lead decision-makers on U.S. farms. Black women are the most severely underrepresented as farmers and ranchers in the U.S., compared to their presence in the general U.S. population.
- There are limitations to the gender data generated by the U.S. Census of Agriculture, especially for drawing conclusions about women's presence in agriculture over time. Statistics comparing women's presence in U.S. agriculture from one Census of Agriculture to the next must be interpreted carefully.
- Data from a wide variety of sources indicates, however, that women's presence in agriculture, at least in certain roles, is expected to increase in U.S. agriculture. Survey tools provide limited insight on gender non-binary and queer farmers. Queer farmers who identify as women (as defined as women married to women in the U.S. Census of Agriculture) experience greater challenges associated with their gender than their sexuality when it comes to farm outcomes.

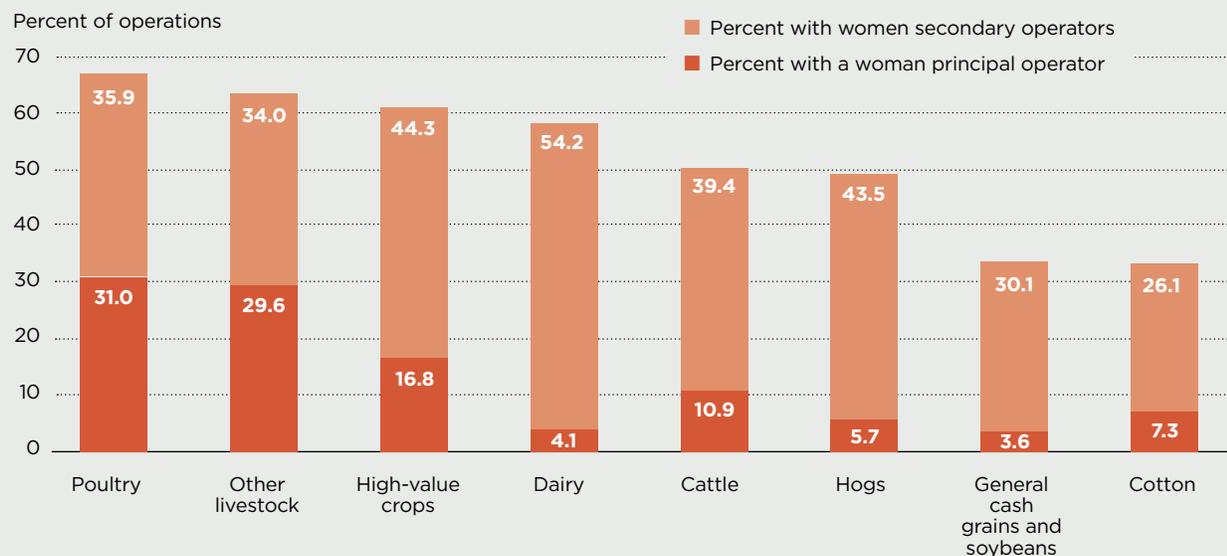
# What Women Are Producing

Women are involved in all types of U.S. farms and ranches. However, women tend not to be in primary leadership roles on larger-scale commodity-oriented farms and ranches. As illustrated in Figure 2, women-led operations (noted as principal operators) tend to be producing poultry, equines, small livestock, bees, and specialty crops and are less represented in leading commodity-oriented operations such as in dairy, cattle, pork, and row crops.<sup>67</sup>



**Figure 2: Women producers by type of operation**

In 2019, women were well-represented in operations specializing in poultry and other livestock (excluding hogs and cattle) and high-value crops such as fruit, vegetables, and nursery/greenhouse crops



Notes: **High-value crops** include fruits, vegetables, and nursery/greenhouse crops. **Other livestock** include horses, bees, sheep, lambs and goats. The **principal operator** is the person primarily responsible for the day-to-day operation of the farm. **Secondary operators** are involved in making decisions for the operation but are not the principal operators.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service and USDA, National Agricultural Statistics, 2019 Agricultural Resource Management Survey.

Interviews elucidated the nuanced effects and influences of what women are choosing to produce, emphasizing ongoing gendered stereotypes playing a potential role in these trends:

“Crops that women tend to choose might not be the most profitable. I think people do it subconsciously. . . Many of our small acreage landowners don’t have a lot of crop diversity, they’re doing row crops and that’s hard to make money on small acreage. Some of the larger things, like hops, are very labor intensive, so it’s harder for women to grow those crops, even though they are in demand. People don’t want to see women riding tractors. It’s that little lady syndrome . . . Equines are more profitable for women, and I think we all know that women taking care of horses is more socially acceptable.”

—BLACK FARMER NETWORK LEADER & POLICY ADVOCATE

“Indirect or implicit discrimination associated with gender, race, and ethnicity shows up as marginalized groups being more likely to choose farming models or practices that are more unconventional. When we categorize specialty crops as a separate group and provide fewer safety nets for those in policy, we further marginalize those in that production system.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER



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## Key Takeaways on What Women are Producing

- Women tend to be lead decision-makers on agricultural operations that are producing things like fruits, vegetables, poultry, horses, and nursery crops, which tend to be more on the fringes of agricultural production and may be less supported by government incentives and insurance programs geared toward commodity production.

# Assets Women Bring

Women in agriculture bring richly diverse perspectives and skills to the field. While it is difficult to generalize attributes to all women, a growing body of research indicates strengths that women entrepreneurs and land stewards tend to contribute to their roles in agriculture.

An analysis of the 2017 Census of Agriculture data showed that, across the U.S., compared to men primary producers, women primary producers represent greater racial and ethnic diversity.<sup>42</sup> Women stand out as drivers of local economies since women tend to be more successful in running smaller, more diversified operations that sell directly to consumers, compared to running larger, more commercial operations.<sup>49</sup> Farms and ranches like these keep dollars circulating in local economies and tend to support regional job growth.<sup>32</sup> Women-led businesses across many industries laid off fewer workers during the 2008 financial crisis.<sup>33, 49</sup> Through our grassroots work with women farmers across the U.S. during the COVID-19 pandemic, we also found that women farmers were leading when it came to meeting the food security needs of their communities. Ongoing research is looking into these trends, how widespread they may have been, and what their economic consequences may have been on farms and communities.



SHAWN LINEHAN

Women also account for a greater portion of sustainable and organic farm operators than industrial farm operators.<sup>29, 48, 53</sup> This pattern may exist because sustainable agriculture generally uses smaller plots, less machinery, and therefore less initial capital investment than industrial agriculture, making sustainable agriculture more accessible to women who have been discriminated against in accessing land, machinery, and capital.<sup>29, 40</sup> In comparison to men, women within sustainable agriculture sometimes hold different values—namely, quality of family life and spirituality—and definitions of quality of life derived from their gender-based roles and responsibilities in the home, community, and on the farm.<sup>9, 29, 35</sup> Recent scholarship on women sustainable farmers suggests that gendered divisions in sustainable agriculture persist, but as literature also suggests, women are also changing these relations by prioritizing their social, economic, and environmental values, claiming the identity of farmer, creatively finding ways to access land, labor, and capital; renegotiating their agricultural roles; and networking with other women farmers.<sup>29, 48</sup>



CATLIN JOSEPH

“Women of color, Latina and Hmong farmers in Central Coast and Central Valley, are not farming in isolation. When I think about women farmers, I think of farming families and communities.”

—CALIFORNIA-BASED AGRICULTURAL SERVICE PROVIDER

This body of research is consistent with many of the observations we heard from leaders of women in agriculture networks across the U.S. during interviews. One comment particularly summarized a sentiment heard widely across the interview participants. It highlighted how these assets that women bring to the field can also serve as a double-edged sword for their operations:

“Women that we work with over and over again articulate a commitment to natural resources, growing nutritious food for community, that’s all a strength. But it also plays into the decisions they make. In a situation where we are externalizing the environmental and social costs of our food system, these women are internalizing those and picking up the tab. That translates into women creating smaller business, they delay mechanization, hiring labor because they can’t pay a living wage. Economically it ends up being a disadvantage for them.”

—WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

## Key Takeaways on the Assets Women Bring

- Though it is not possible to generalize values and characteristics to all women in agriculture, there is a growing body of evidence that suggests women-led farms currently operating in the U.S. tend to prioritize community-scale impacts on food security, environmental sustainability, and local economies.



# Challenges for Women in Agriculture

As highlighted above, limited tools and metrics are available to analyze the extent to which progress toward greater gender equity has been achieved. However, it is clear from a bird's eye view that strides have been made in recent years. Yet, women in agriculture are still facing many challenges, as evident by the disparities we see in the data surrounding their farms' economic outcomes, individuals' mental health, and farmers' access to agricultural services. This section outlines some of the different outcomes that women in agriculture are experiencing and characterizes the barriers and obstacles that contribute to developing these disparate outcomes for women compared to men.

## Disparities Among Women

### *Hazards in the Field*

Women in the hired labor workforce on U.S. farms especially face hardships on the job, including gender-based violence including physical and sexual violence.<sup>51</sup> In 2017, 398,906 of the 2.4 million hired workers on U.S. farms were migrant workers, many of whom are undocumented.<sup>56</sup> Among hired laborers, most women are of childbearing age (in 2001–2002, the average age was 33, and half were younger than 31).<sup>28</sup> Pregnant farmworkers and their fetuses are at increased risk of negative health outcomes due to exposure to chemical and physical hazards in their work settings.<sup>28</sup>

Women continue to play a primary role in caring for children in families, including among families in agriculture and agricultural labor.<sup>4, 5, 14, 44</sup> In the United States, about thirty-three children are seriously injured in agricultural-related incidents every day, and one child dies on a farm about every three days.<sup>5</sup> Despite this, farm service providers and farm organizations rarely integrate topics of how to safely and economically raise children on farms, nor do they subvert the expectation of traditional familial caretaking roles to encourage the use of off-farm childcare.<sup>5</sup> Research indicates at least four possible factors perpetuating this lack of focus on addressing the needs of farm parents when it comes to the safety of children and the wellbeing of farm women. These include: 1) the undervaluation of women's reproductive and care work over men's farm output and production work in the overall farm operation; 2) a tendency among agricultural service providers to silo family care and farm output work as separate topics in agricultural education programming; 3) a prevailing social notion among agricultural service providers that there is virtue in raising children on a farm under traditional gendered divisions of labor; and 4) a mismatch between the educational role of agricultural service providers and the structural needs of farm families that are not being prioritized and addressed with agricultural advocacy organizations.<sup>5</sup> While the research connecting the unique experience of women in agriculture with farm safety is still growing, a complex picture is emerging in the literature that suggests a need for more women in agricultural leadership, especially in agricultural advocacy organizations, to help foster an agenda to address the structural childcare needs of farm families with young children to keep children safe and farm parents sane.<sup>5</sup>



BOB NICHOLS/USDA



I did a study of farm parents on how they were managing parenting duties. 70% of respondents were women. You could feel the pain in some of the comments, among women who were just managing so much. In the short term, maybe there's that additional resilience among women farmers, but how sustainable is that? Under what conditions are we expecting people to persevere through? There's a case for us to stop and say "this is hard." We're expecting too much of people. There's been an increase in suicide, despair. We need to face that and be real about it."<sup>9</sup>

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

### *Smaller Farm Size*

Women are more likely to lead small and medium-sized farms with lower farm sales.<sup>21</sup> Among female owner-operators, the average farm size is about half that of their male counterparts.<sup>21</sup> This has implications for the types of government programs, which often have a per acre incentive rate and may or may not be economically feasible for their operations, among other challenges related to economies of scale and access to markets. Research suggests that women are more likely to engage in less subsidized forms of agriculture on smaller farms that require

less mechanization.<sup>29, 67</sup> These patterns may be because commodity crops typically require more mechanization, along with land and capital, and women have been historically excluded from spaces where farmers learn mechanical skills and machine operation, contributing to the coding of tractors and machinery as masculine realms.<sup>6, 29</sup> In addition, women have long experienced discrimination in land access and capital acquisition, especially through inheritance contributing to women-operated farms' smaller on average size than those operated by men.<sup>2, 7, 20, 29, 40</sup> These dynamics are exacerbated for women of color.<sup>29</sup>

### *Access to Knowledge and Skills*

Women represent an outsized share of the beginning farmer population, with more than 60% of respondents to the National Young Farmers Coalition 2017 survey being women<sup>1</sup>. For beginning farmers situated in communities without intentional support, the tendency for women to be socially excluded from key networks and mentorship opportunities can hinder their success. Literature dating back to the 1980s documented women's experiences of exclusion from men-dominated farmer groups, and since then, studies on the importance of women-led and organized peer-to-peer groups have shown how women have resisted this exclusion and forged networks to enable their success in agriculture, particularly in implementing conservation practices.<sup>7, 17, 29, 47, 66</sup>

For many immigrant women, the lack of agricultural resources available in languages other than English is a critical barrier to their awareness of, much less access to technical and financial assistance.



Even if you have a strong sense of self around your role in ag, there are still structures preventing her from diving into all the aspects of agriculture that are needed—tools, equipment, etc. Apprenticeships help. But without those, it is very hard for women to get that hands-on experience they need.”

—WOMEN IN RANCHING NETWORK LEADER

### *Unique Land Access Challenges*

Access to secure land tenure is a key economic challenge for all farmers, and it is well-documented in the literature that women farmers have particular challenges acquiring farmland that are associated with unequal gender relations<sup>1, 21, 29, 49</sup>. Exclusion from networks, difficulty accessing credit, and the tendency of the retiring generation to choose male heirs are among the challenges.<sup>29, 49</sup> As the farming population in the U.S. is rapidly aging, there is still a tendency in many farming communities to pass down farmland ownership and decision-making to male heirs over female heirs.<sup>13, 47</sup>

Historically, married white women gained the right to own land as states passed Married Women's Property Acts from the 1830s through the 1870s<sup>2, 29</sup>). However, these laws did little to change women's actual experiences; the laws' true intent was to keep a wife's land free from creditors when her farming husband went into debt and, therefore maintain his middle-class lifestyle.<sup>2, 29</sup> Twentieth-century legal changes such as women's suffrage and the 1969 gender-neutral Uniform Probate Code have not eliminated gender inequities in access and inheritance. Women are still less likely to have sufficient capital to purchase land, and they are not groomed for farmland inheritance in the same way as men.<sup>2, 29</sup> Our interviews highlighted that, due to gender stereotypes, it



GABRIELLE ROESCH McNALLY

can be difficult for women to get a leg up in farmland succession and land lease negotiations in a competitive environment, even when they do have a seat at the table to attempt to be considered for succession.

Women farm operators typically access land through one of three routes.<sup>29, 40</sup> First, they marry into land; that is, they gain access to their husband's (often family) land.<sup>29, 40</sup> Second, they draw on their husband's income from a non-farming career to purchase their own land.<sup>29, 40</sup> Or thirdly, they acquire their own land later in life after saving enough money, through inheritance, or through a divorce settlement.<sup>29, 40</sup> Those who do not have a partner, family, or other source of capital are at a disadvantage.<sup>29</sup>



REBECCA DROBIS

Even among those who do get access to land, research shows women are more likely to lead small and medium-sized farms, which has economic implications, as discussed above.<sup>21</sup> Issues of land and capital access also serve as foundational barriers to accessing government programs, especially those supporting some conservation practices. Access to affordable farmland to own or lease provides an important foundation for economic security in agriculture, and without it, advancing conservation and soil health practices on farmland can be extremely difficult.

“People who have land for lease are used to working with male operators. I don't know a single woman who has her own lease—usually it's with the husband too. From a young or beginning farmer perspective, if you grew up in these communities and you are a male, you are more likely to get a lease than a woman trying to do that on their own. You don't see examples of women of any age going after leases on their own. The dominant culture in ag assumes that it is the male responsibility to be at the helm of the ag operation. To me, it is a success when I see both the man and woman on the lease agreement—even that is progress. There are a small handful of examples of women who are really taking the lead, but I think even they are both on the lease. Anytime you're doing anything against the grain of the culture, it's harder. If you don't see others you relate to doing it, it can be extra hard to pursue those things. So folks need a community around them supporting it.”

—WOMEN IN RANCHING NETWORK LEADER

“Yes, the risk aversion piece [affects this]. Confidence in oneself as an operator goes into the seeking of land to own. It's sort of a psycho-social issue. The average female operator would want to be more secure financially before seeking land to own. There are also network factors—if women are excluded from networks that you hear about opportunities to rent or own more land. If you're not able to rent land for a while, you're less likely to be there for the opportunity to buy.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

“I've seen that the women who own land are taken less seriously by program officers. They are treated like they own the land now, but a real farmer is going to own it later, so the program officers don't invest in those relationships. So they're not being the same time, resources, etc. in the same way.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER AND WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

## Tighter Economic Margins

A recent analysis on the issue of net farm income estimated that farms principally operated by men are making 151% more profit than those operated principally by women.<sup>18</sup> Put another way; this means that for every \$1.00 in profit a women-run farm makes, a farm run by a man makes about \$2.50 when farm landholdings, machinery, and other assets are included.<sup>18</sup> In terms of farm income, researchers have found a great deal of variation across gender and racial lines, but generally speaking, women of color, particularly Black women, are earning less income as compared to white women.<sup>42</sup>

Women-led farms are more likely to face challenges in reaching economies of scale and becoming economically secure. As discussed above, women are more likely to lead operations that produce poultry, small livestock, fruits, vegetables, and nursery plants.<sup>29, 67</sup> Historically, many of these products have received less structural support from federal farm programs in the form of direct payments, crop insurance, conservation programs, marketing support, research investment, and more, especially when those operations are smaller scale.<sup>29, 36, 37, 61</sup> Recent studies investigating this dynamic find that “female farmers have lower farm profitability than their male counterparts because their operations use far less capital (land, machinery, and labor), they have less farming experience, and they engage in the production of commodities that are less profitable.”<sup>18</sup> Our own qualitative interviews revealed a theme that a combination of risk aversion, land tenure barriers, internalized sexism, and biased culture within agricultural institutions) seem to be contributing to these continued economic disparities.<sup>64</sup>



ASHLEY BRUCKER

“I’ve heard people saying ‘I don’t feel good hiring people at this wage.’ There’s a sense of social justice. Because they can’t live according to their values, they can’t grow to reach the economy of scale they need to be resilient to climate risks, market risks, even their own bodily injury.”

—WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

“No matter the data source, women’s farms tend to be smaller and less profitable. I think it has to do with the ethic women bring to ag about food security and community. A lot of our local food systems are being subsidized and driven by women. What does food security mean in this country and who’s picking up the tab?”

—WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

“In our operation, I know we can’t afford to pay for the help we need to scale up what’s possible on our land. That’s very normal across ranches. Across ag communities, people are being replaced with equipment. You might be able to afford a young person who doesn’t know much, but you put extra time into training them and that’s not something we have a number against. I’m also aware that we wouldn’t be able to pay a fair wage for someone with the experience and skill level we need. So we end up not hiring for those roles and making it work with neighbor help or interns.”

—WOMEN IN RANCHING NETWORK LEADER

## Fewer Government Program Contracts

Many farmers rely on U.S. agricultural subsidies or government programs to manage the economic challenges of farming. However, women are less likely than men to benefit from them, and women of color are receiving even less support from such programs than white women.<sup>29, 42</sup> The Farm Bill includes many programs that aim to support a range of crops and scales of production, but due to the way most are designed, they effectively support commodity crops, large farms, and industrial agriculture more heavily than fruits and vegetables, small farms, and organic agriculture.<sup>3, 26, 29</sup> As discussed in the sections above, women are more likely to run and engage in smaller farms, fruit and vegetable production, and other forms of agriculture that fall outside the realm of what these programs are best designed to support, and thus tend to receive less financial and technical support from many federal agricultural programs.<sup>29</sup> Using data obtained by our team directly from USDA, this section looks specifically at how much women seem to benefit from some of USDA's most popular conservation and farm viability programs.

### CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to farmers for voluntarily implementing practices that preserve natural resources, such as water, soil, and energy, while promoting soil health and combating climate change. The agency's two most popular and widely applicable conservation programs are the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). These programs are promoted and supported via locally based NRCS field staff in nearly every county across the United States, in partnership with local non-governmental organizations such as Resource Conservation Districts, also known as Soil and Water Conservation Districts, which are sometimes themselves bolstered by state and local level government resources, as well.

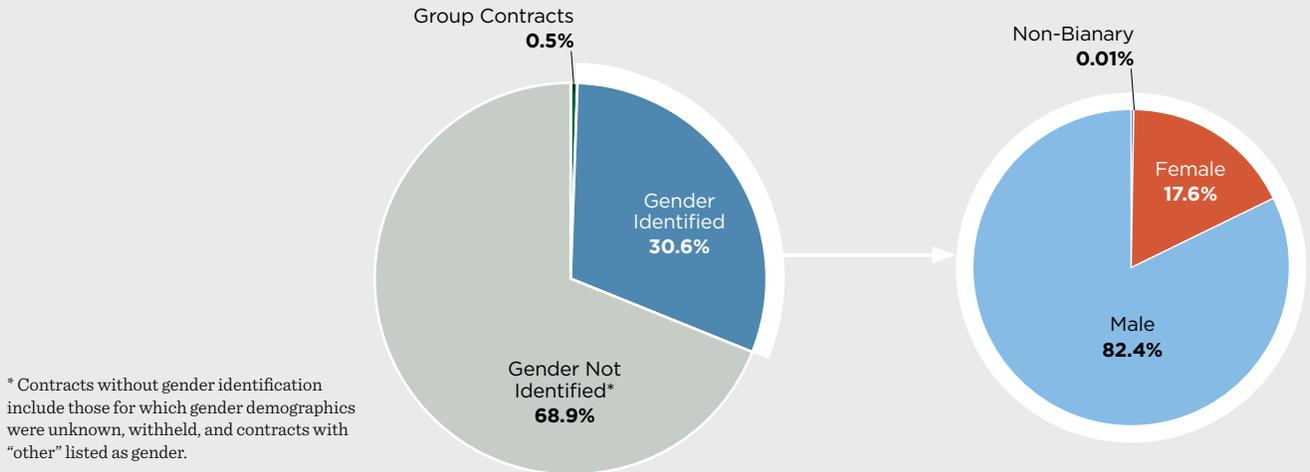
Given that demographic information, including gender, is voluntarily reported by EQIP and CSP participants, data on the gender distribution of resources for these programs are limited.\* As shown in Figure 3, of the EQIP and CSP contracts awarded between 2015 and 2022, less than one-third (about 30 percent) of contracts had gender demographic information identified. Of the total for which gender data are available, nationally between 2015 and 2022, NRCS awarded just over 17 percent of EQIP contracts to women, and just over 10 percent of CSP contracts to women, as shown in Figures 3 and 4, respectively.<sup>61</sup> Among the women awarded, about 82 percent of EQIP and CSP contracts went to white women, as shown in Figures 5 and 7, respectively.<sup>60</sup> Looking at the trends over time in Figures 9 and 10, there does appear to have been a slight year-to-year increase in the proportion of total EQIP contracts going to women between 2015 and 2022, and a similar, though nominal, trend is apparent for CSP.



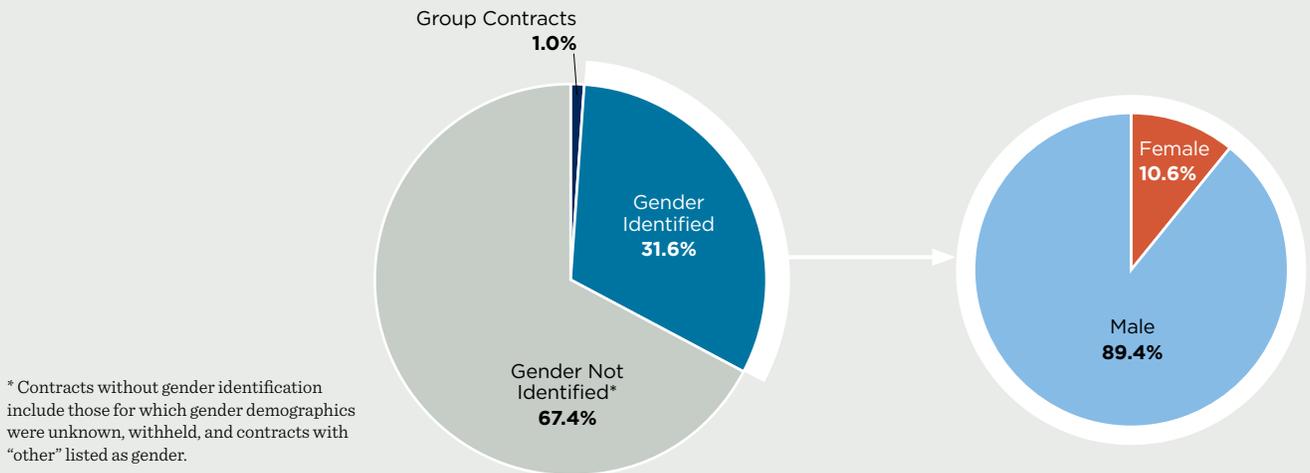
USDA

\* As confirmed by a NRCS Financial Assistance Program Division Policy Staffer, the agency does not require self-identification of gender, race, or ethnicity at the point of applying to EQIP or CSP, therefore actual participation rates cannot be verified. Note that the majority of contracts for the time period of 2015–2022 do not have associated demographic data. These figures are based on data released by the USDA Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Business Center under the Freedom of Information Act. Counts include all applications that became contracts. “Group contracts” refer to NRCS contracts with more than one producer and may include producers of different genders, races, or ethnicities.

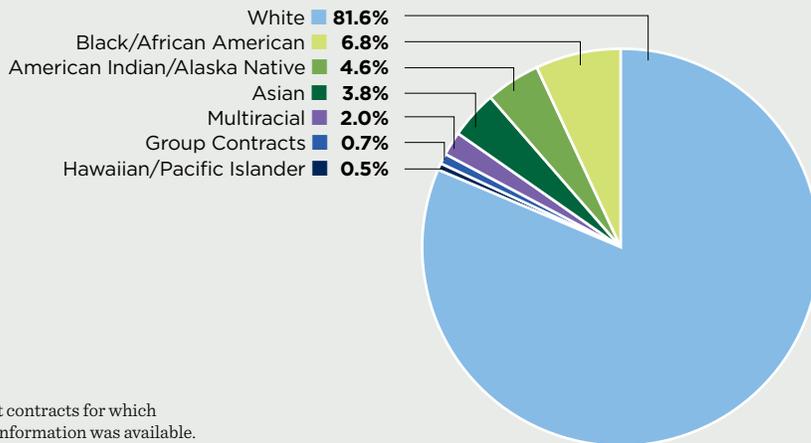
**Figure 3. EQIP Contracts by Gender, 2015–2022**



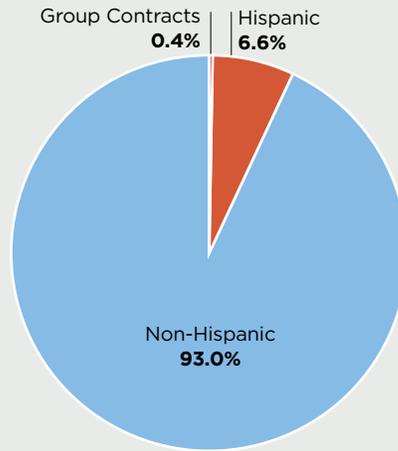
**Figure 4. CSP Contracts by Gender, 2015–2022**



**Figure 5. EQIP Contracts Awarded to Women by Race, 2015–2022**

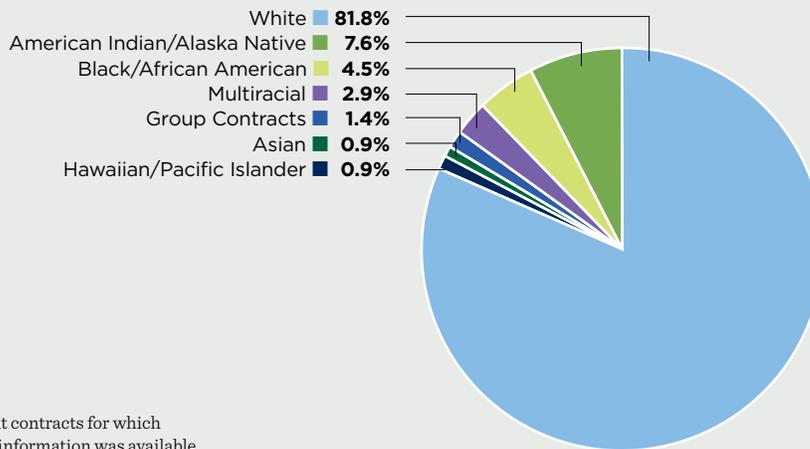


**Figure 6. EQIP Contracts Awarded to Women by Ethnicity, 2015-2022**



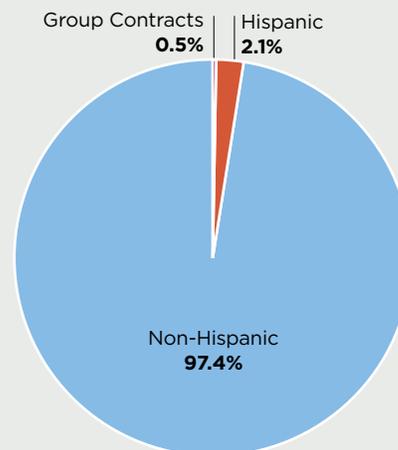
Data represent contracts for which demographic information was available.

**Figure 7. CSP Contracts Awarded to Women by Race, 2015-2022**



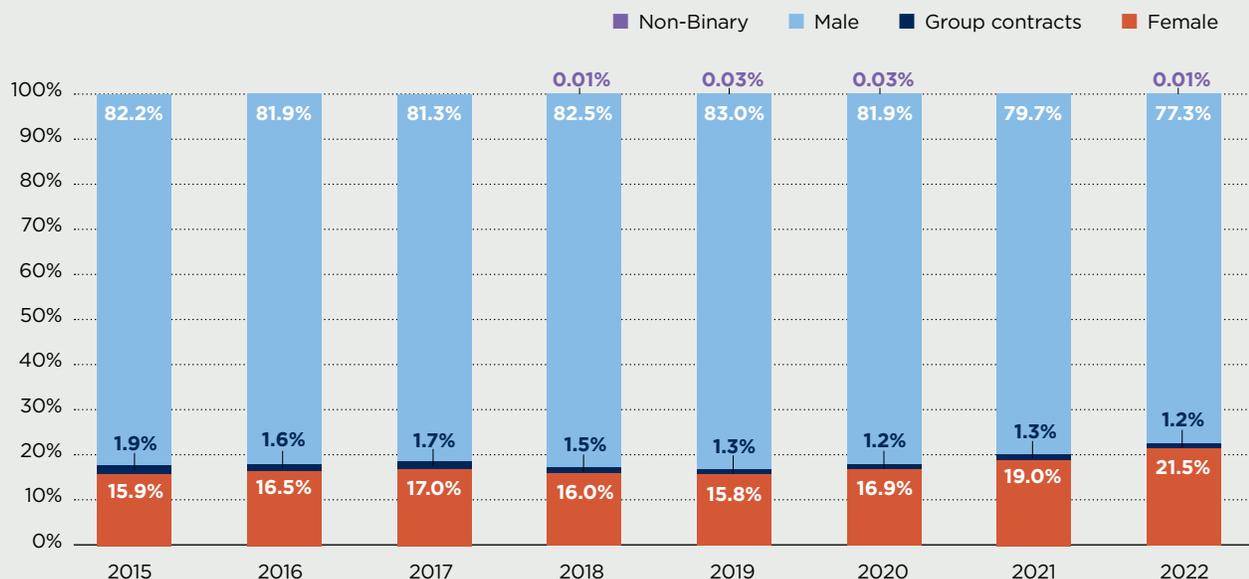
Data represent contracts for which demographic information was available.

**Figure 8. CSP Contracts Awarded to Women by Ethnicity, 2015-2022**



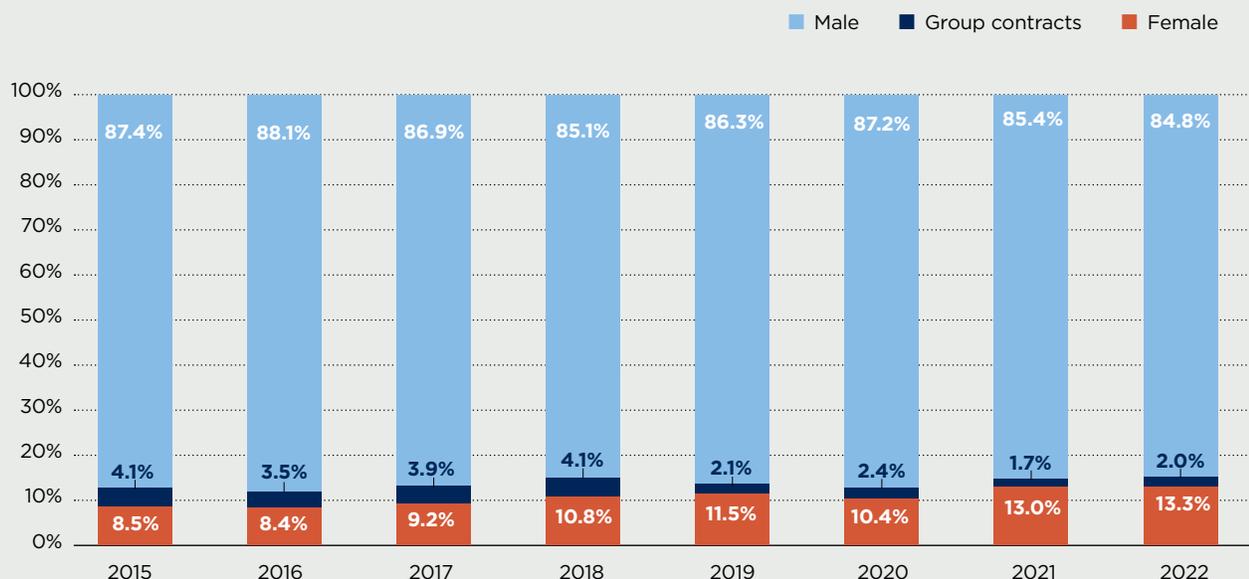
Data represent contracts for which demographic information was available.

**Figure 9. EQIP Contracts by Gender, 2015–2022**



Data represent contracts for which demographic information was available.

**Figure 10. CSP Contracts by Gender, 2015–2022**



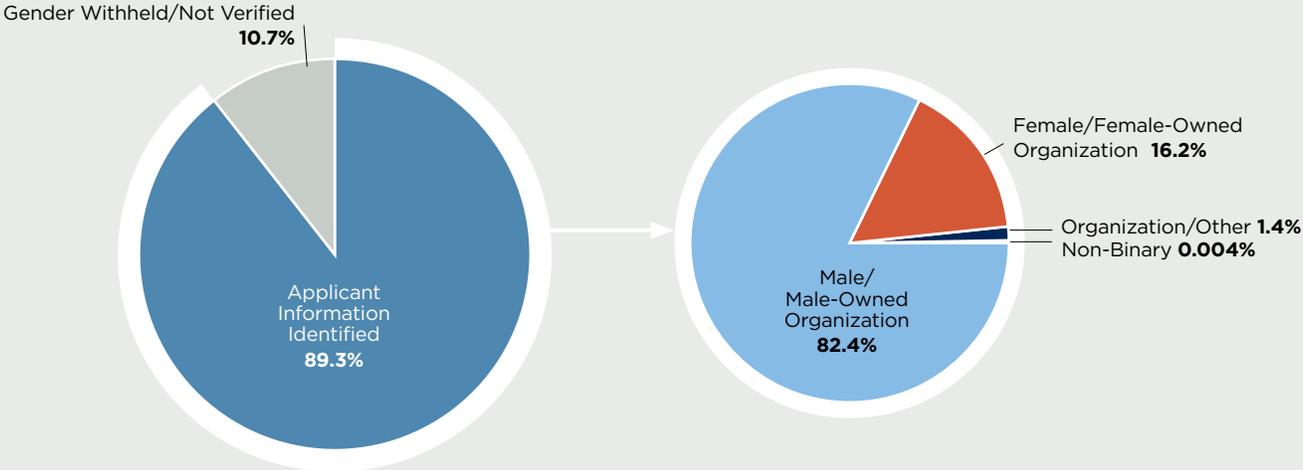
Data represent contracts for which demographic information was available.

**FARM FINANCING**

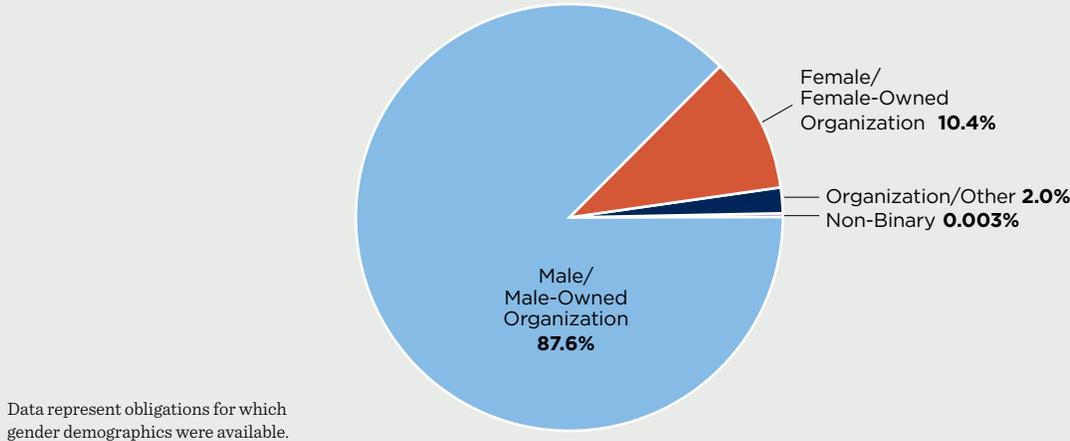
USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides farmers with access to capital to start, expand, or maintain their farming operations. FSA’s farm loan programs are among the most critical of these that support farmers with operating loans, farm ownership loans, microloans, emergency loans, and more. These can take the form of either Direct Loans, which go directly from FSA to farmers, or Guaranteed Loans, which are loans made to a farmer by a USDA-approved traditional lender with the backing of FSA.

FSA collects demographic data more consistently than NRCS, with just under 11 percent of the total Direct and 1 percent of Guaranteed Loans lacking gender information, as shown in Figures 11 and 13, respectively.<sup>59</sup> As such, the data we obtained for FSA are even more likely to accurately reflect the gender disparities in how resources are flowing from FSA than from NRCS. As shown in Figure 11, between 2015 and 2022, about 82 percent of FSA Direct Loans went to men or male-owned organizations, while just over 16 percent went to women or women-owned organizations. In terms of dollars obligated, shown in Figure 12, this amounts to over 87 percent of all direct loans to men and about 10 percent to women, suggesting that women also get smaller loans than men.<sup>59</sup>

**Figure 11. FSA Direct Loans by Gender, 2015–2022**



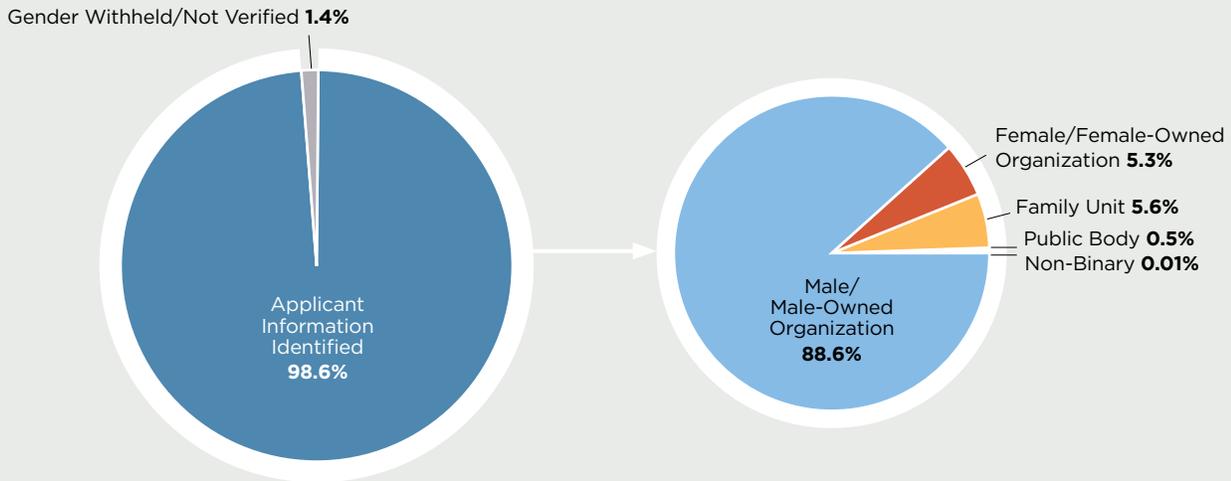
**Figure 12. FSA Direct Loans by Gender in terms of Dollars Obligated, 2015–2022**



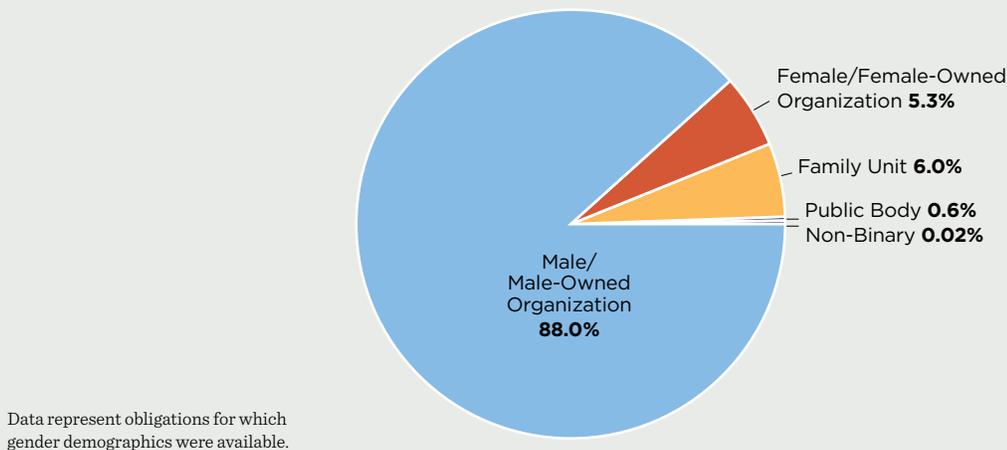
\* These data were released by the USDA Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Business Center under the Freedom of Information Act. Due to FPAC reporting requirements, information on FSA loan obligations could only be provided for all applicant groups. (For direct loans, applicant groups include: “Female/Female-Owned Organization,” “Male/Male-Owned Organization,” “Not Verified,” and “Organization/Other.” In the case of guaranteed loans, these include “Family Unit,” “Female/Female-Owned Organization,” “Male/Male-Owned Organization,” “Public Body,” “Not Provided/Prefer Not to Share,” and “Not Verified.”) This means that data on loan obligations by race and ethnicity could not be disaggregated by gender. As loan recipients may choose to indicate “other” or leave demographic information blank on reporting forms, data on female recipients exclusively could not be provided, due to the risk that this data would exclude female participants who had indicated “other” or left the gender field blank. This would therefore be considered incorrect data, which FPAC cannot provide.

Figure 13 shows that, in that same period, nearly 89 percent of FSA's Guaranteed Loans went to men, while only about 5 percent went to women or women-owned organizations. This represents about 88 percent and 5 percent also of the dollar value of those loans for men and women, respectively, illustrated in Figure 14.<sup>59</sup>

**Figure 13. FSA Guaranteed Loans by Gender, 2015–2022**



**Figure 14. FSA Guaranteed Loans by Gender in terms of Dollars Obligated, 2015–2022**



While these data do not provide a complete picture of the demographic breakdown of government agricultural program resource distribution, they provide a snapshot of the existing disparities among some of the most critical resources USDA provides. This report analyzed data on a subset of USDA's most popular and widely applicable programs within NRCS and FSA, and it is possible that women and underserved farmers are accessing some federal and state-based farm programs that are more tailored to their operations (such as the Organic Cost Share program, for example) at higher rates. However, from the demographic data that USDA tracks, it appears that women (and particularly women of color) remain underrepresented as beneficiaries of USDA's most critical conservation and farm viability financial resources.

“I have never worked with FSA—my county folks rarely suggest programming that I may qualify for or offer additional support. I must call in people like Grace Summers [grassroots organizer] to assist me when I go in because they do not believe that I have researched the information, or they tell me I am not qualified. I would much rather not speak to FSA, however, my taxes pay for their salary. They should treat me and others like me better.”

—BLACK WOMAN LEARNING CIRCLE PARTICIPANT IN THE SOUTHEAST

“With most of the women I work with new to agriculture, accessing USDA programs can be a real barrier, particularly for BIPOC women. I’ve been involved with several USDA-funded outreach initiatives to work on this but progress has been slow and clunky at best. It’s one thing to find these women and explain the program possibilities, but then they need to still navigate their local USDA office, which is most likely still catering toward larger scale, male-led traditional agriculture that much easier fits their programs.”

—WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

## Key Takeaways on Disparities Among Women

- Women-led farms are not experiencing equal outcomes as farms run by men. Women are struggling economically to a greater extent, are having unique challenges accessing secure land tenure and enough land, and are receiving less government support through financial and technical assistance. They also are more at risk of experiencing violence and discrimination. A few notable points on these issues include:
  - Most women farmworkers are of childbearing age and face violence and exposure in the fields, which puts them and their fetuses at increased risk of negative health outcomes. Children are also at risk of farm-related injury on farms where women are managing childcare and farm duties simultaneously, making rural childcare access challenges especially important for women and children in agriculture.
  - Women tend to run farms that are about half the size and make 151% less farm income than those run by men.
  - Though USDA does not collect demographic information for all their program contracts, data that USDA does have suggests that women (and particularly women of color) remain underrepresented as beneficiaries of USDA’s most critical conservation and farm viability financial resources.
- Women are also not accessing information and key networks that they need to be successful in agriculture, as well as men in U.S. agriculture are.



USDA/NRCS/BROOKE DECUBELLIS

## Barriers Associated with Gender

Above, we presented the different farm/operation-level outcomes that are systematic along gender lines in U.S. Agriculture. This section focuses on the circumstances and conditions that affect or contribute to the creation of those differing outcomes. These core barriers for women-led farms are a combination of *internalized sexism* and *institutionalized sexism*, with more specific dynamics occurring within each of these phenomena. Distinguishing these influencing factors from the disparate outcomes themselves can help advocates and practitioners identify and target the conditions on the ground that still need to shift to reduce the disparities and create more equal outcomes for all people in U.S. agriculture.

“The barriers for women seem to be in two categories: the feasibility and structure of the programs, but then there’s also the personal stuff, like the ability and willingness to speak up when it’s risky, and the time it takes to build relationships with trusted advisors.”

—NRCS STAFF MEMBER

### *Internalized Sexism*

Literature across the fields of education, social science, and psychology has examined the complex phenomena of internalized oppression, which can include internalized sexism. Many definitions and synonymous terms have been offered to describe this phenomenon, but internalized oppression can be broadly described as both 1) the process by which a member of an oppressed or stigmatized group internalizes into her or his core identity and self-concept all or part of the negative stereotypes and expectations held by the culture at larger regarding that group and 2) the psychological state of individuals within a subjugated group that has incorporated, accepted, or acquiesced to the norms and expectations of the dominant culture for the group with which they identify.<sup>70</sup> The individual experience of this phenomenon is unique to each person due to the layered identities individuals hold, including their race, gender, religion, class, etc. However, our interviews and literature underscored that there appear to be patterns among women in U.S. agriculture that suggest that forms of internalized sexism, particularly risk aversion and undervaluation, may be factors influencing the disparate outcomes of women farmers.

#### RISK AVERSION

There is a lively empirical debate about whether women tend to take fewer risks as entrepreneurs.<sup>8, 11</sup> Research is sparse on whether and to what degree this may be true of women running agricultural businesses. However, our stakeholder interviews consistently noted observations of women farmers tending to be less inclined to take on debt, seek assistance, or even innovate beyond accepted social norms due to fear. Robust literature across industries shows that women do tend to initiate negotiations less than men because of the social backlash they receive, which also has economic consequences in terms of prices farmers can get for inputs and products they sell, as well as for the terms of agreements such as land leases.



GABRIELLE FOESCH McNALLY

“Women aren’t allowed to fail. If they took the risk and failed, it would be attributed to her inability as a farmer.”

—BLACK FARMER NETWORK LEADER & POLICY ADVOCATE

“There is a perception that female operators are more risk averse, and that has real implications. Taking on debt is a primary way farms expand... The question is whether that is coming from women seeing themselves as less credit worthy, or if the bias is coming from the lenders who see women as riskier borrowers.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

“Women make less money than men throughout our society and women are coming to farming with fewer financial resources. That dynamic being there at the start also contributes to their risk aversion and the way they are received when they try to get loans and other support.”

—WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

“We know that women do not, on average, negotiate as much. So when it comes to rental agreements, marketing, selling, it could be that women are at a disadvantage in those situations. Would be interesting to see if women fare better when it is a written contract that the women can review, for example. These have big implications for farm income and economics.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

#### UNDERVALUATION

During interviews, we heard variations on the theme of women farmers consciously or unconsciously undervaluing the validity of their farming operation and filtering themselves out of categories that would put them in the way of opportunities for technical and financial assistance. It is important to note the connection between this dynamic and the underlying cultural norms that signal to women that they and/or their ideas or operations are less legitimate than those run by men. This dynamic is echoed by women non-operating landowners who have shared in our programs for years that they often feel like they do not know enough to push their tenant farmers to adopt certain agricultural practices they desire for fear that they will be lectured to or that their requests will be invalidated.

“Especially for women who are older, that lack of confidence about moving forward in that situation where they might face that risk... during COVID the majority who approached us wanted to farm part time, as an asset that would pay its own way. That also feeds into the mentality that they are not a ‘real farm’ that should seek the support of credit, loans, equipment and things that would make the operation more efficient and successful. This also feeds into not charging market rates for their products.”

—WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

“General self-promotion and level of confidence is also an issue. How you present yourself online, for example. What you charge. These could very well differ by gender.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

## Institutionalized Sexism

Institutionalized sexism includes policies, practices, and norms that perpetuate inequality by restricting opportunities for women.<sup>30</sup> Several specific examples of this dynamic are present in U.S. agriculture and serve as significant barriers to women farmers and ranchers in realizing equal outcomes. These core themes, as described below, include: 1) Overt and structural discrimination, 2) Implicit Discrimination and Exclusion from Networks, 3) Demands on Time and Labor/Unpaid Labor, 4) Healthcare, and 5) Equipment, tools, and training.

### OVERT & STRUCTURAL DISCRIMINATION

Interviews reinforced what literature and lawsuits have documented around the ways women in agriculture tend to be taken advantage of in inputs contracts or price negotiations or might be systematically excluded from opportunities based on their gender and other layers of their identity. Racial and ethnic discrimination are also notable among women in agriculture.

For starters, gender-based discrimination has been a documented factor in women farmers' disparate access to farm capital.<sup>29</sup> In 2001, women farmers filed a lawsuit against the USDA, alleging discrimination by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in the agricultural loan process.<sup>29, 29</sup> The plaintiffs in that case maintained that they had been denied "equal and fair access to farm loans and loan servicing, and of consideration of their administrative complaints" because of their gender.<sup>29, 31</sup> Among other issues, it was argued that loan officers "did not 'read' women and racial minorities as farmers."<sup>27, 29</sup> Other allegations included unfairly denying loans, giving smaller loans than needed, or giving them late.<sup>2, 29</sup> Over a similar timeline to *Love v. Vilsack*, Hispanic farmers in *Garcia v. Vilsack* also alleged discrimination by the USDA.<sup>29</sup> Feder and Cowan, 2013). Although both cases failed to win class certification, the 2008 Farm Bill ordered the resolution of all claims against the USDA by socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, allocating \$1.33 billion for women and Hispanic farmers, rolled out as the "Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers Claims Resolution Process" in 2012.<sup>29, 62, 29</sup> As of 2019, only 3,200 of the 54,000 submitted claims were approved, totaling \$207 million in awards, leaving many who were impacted without compensation.<sup>29, 62</sup> In recognition of this and other lawsuits claiming and settling issues of discrimination by USDA, a new program was established by the Inflation Reduction Act which allocated \$2.2 billion toward financial assistance for farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA's farm lending programs prior to January 1, 2021.<sup>58</sup> USDA's own language about the program recognizes it as "one step in the long march towards justice and an inclusive, equitable USDA", demonstrating that gender-based discrimination was and may remain present in USDA, along with several other forms of bias and discrimination.<sup>58</sup>



USDA/PRESTON KERES

“I think FSA and NRCS offices are not taking women seriously. I'm hoping that's changing with all the all the things that are happening with AFT, WFAN, Women Land and Legacy and others. The training that's gone on within the NRCS has maybe changed that culture to some extent for white women. But for people of color, I'm thinking maybe not.”

—FARMER AND WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

Women of color are a diverse group, and it is difficult to generalize the challenges that underlie their disparate access to government programs. However, our interviews revealed a combination of language access, internet access, and lack of trust of government entities due to past and ongoing discrimination in some places as being among the barriers that BIPOC women producers experience when trying to access government programs in particular.

“Getting started with USDA is often a slow and bureaucratic process. There is also a distrust in governmental bodies. For example, farmer immigration status is a barrier to accessing these resources.”

—CALIFORNIA-BASED AGRICULTURAL SERVICE PROVIDER

“Programs like CDFA’s [state-level conservation programs] were not designed to include small farmers, farmers of color, and underserved farmers so when NRCS and regional offices get calls to sign farmers in their networks up for these programs it’s frustrating. Many people have called for the structure of these programs to change because ultimately the process and offerings of these programs are not relevant or accessible. These agencies say the door is open but that is not the reality for underserved and oppressed farmers.”

—CALIFORNIA-BASED AGRICULTURAL SERVICE PROVIDER

“Certainly, insecure land tenure is a barrier, for example in qualifying for CREP and some of the environmental programs. Some of the loan requirements don’t work for the kinds of farms women tend to own/manage.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

Though efforts have been made to create more women-centered educational spaces in U.S. agriculture to help spread awareness of government programs available to them, women continue to be underserved by agricultural education providers, due to gender stereotypes, notions about what constitutes an “authentic” farmer, assertions of gender neutrality in programming, and incorrect assumptions regarding what types of education are useful to women farmers.<sup>4</sup> Programs focused on reaching underserved women in agriculture such as AFT’s Women for the Land, Women Food and Agriculture Network, Wisconsin Women in Conservation, Soil Sisters, Black Family Land Trust, Inc., and more, have been shown to be effective at increasing women’s awareness of and motivation to access government programs such as those offered through NRCS and FSA.<sup>39, 45, 46</sup> However, our interviews underscored that the strides made by these programs to help women farmers and ranchers access these government programs are hindered by structural issues and the design of the government programs themselves.



CAITLIN JOSEPH

“In conversations we’ve had, there are a lot of opportunities for conservation trainings and Latina farmers are ready to address the necessary changes, but the challenges are really high level at lack of access to consistent land and capital. The counties have NRCS offices and conservation resources available but people are most concerned with and inhibited by lack of land and capital.”

—CALIFORNIA-BASED AGRICULTURAL SERVICE PROVIDER

“Other organizations creating spaces for relationship building, collective vision building, and opportunities for resource sharing is really useful for conservationists in successfully doing their work. Conservation work is ultimately inhibited by these larger factors around land tenure and access to capital.”

—CALIFORNIA-BASED AGRICULTURAL SERVICE PROVIDER

“When we categorize specialty crops as a separate group and provide fewer safety nets for those in policy, we further marginalize those in that production system... The COVID relief funding allocations have been a great example of this challenge. So many marginalized producers are not eligible for most USDA programs so they don’t even seek the programs because they don’t think they will be eligible.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER



CATLIN JOSEPH

“Women face a threat of not conforming to social norms and disrupting the status quo—so even going into the NRCS office might be seen as stepping out of line in some way and will be reported back to the tenant [in the case of a women non-operating landowner]. The people in the office could be the tenant’s wife or whatever and word is going to get out, so they can face social repercussions.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER AND WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

Gender-based bias is not exclusive to the USDA and, unfortunately is present in and perpetuated by even some of the more progressive spaces in U.S. agriculture. For example, evidence of the assumption of male dominance in the sustainable agriculture movement is present in the peer-reviewed literature that helped establish this influential movement, which continues today in new and evolving iterations among those calling for increased regenerative agriculture, conservation agriculture, and agroecology.<sup>29</sup> One scholar in the 1990s argued that “the [sustainable agriculture] movement’s goals, visions, and activities are gender-specific, dominated by men’s participation and contributions,” and since others have recognized that women’s contributions to this movement have been minimally and slowly recognized.<sup>29, 35</sup> Such mental models are examples of *individual sexism*, which is the manifestation of institutional and cultural sexism in individual biases and prejudicial attitudes that denigrate women and view them as inferior to men in society. This evolution of institutional sexism informs behavior and influences interactions women have within the halls of government agencies, as well as in agricultural supply stores, and academic spaces related to agriculture. This is what likely undergirds and reinforces continued discrimination of women in agriculture across various social contexts and institutions of varied political dimensions.

“There was a Dow Dupont survey looking at female farmers worldwide. 52% in the U.S. said discrimination was their biggest issue. That leads to barriers in access.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

“People may tend to lowball or highball you in supply contracts or pricing from consumers. That’s true for race too. I would send my husband because he would get a better price. If you are queer or single, you don’t have that option.”

—FARMER AND ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

“I think the thing that’s the same [as decades past] is that when women go to the mechanic or the feed store, it’s still the male face on the farmer people have in mind. People still ask... did your husband send you? Or should I talk to your husband?”

—FARMER AND WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

#### IMPLICIT DISCRIMINATION & EXCLUSION FROM NETWORKS

Discrimination or exclusion can occur in more subtle, but equally impactful, ways. Our interviews particularly illustrated how this plays out in U.S. agriculture through anecdotes and examples from their direct experience and observations. Among the themes of these observations were that women are aware, even if subconsciously, that there are or may be covert judgments or doubts about their abilities as a farmer or rancher, and that this awareness can impact the pressures they feel in social situations where such judgments might be present. Coupling women’s felt sense that they need to prove themselves as capable land stewards with the social pressure to conform to gender norms or navigate complex racial stereotypes can make participating in agricultural networks very discouraging and emotionally eroding for marginalized farmers. This leads many women, especially women of color, to feel excluded from social networks and opportunities that might otherwise afford them critical support. It also puts them in a lose-lose situation socially, choosing between 1) conforming to gender expectations (i.e., behaving demure and overtly feminine) and thus reinforcing doubts about her capabilities or 2) asserting her capabilities and exhibiting more masculine qualities and facing backlash or social punishment for stepping out of the gender frame. Some elements of these are also illustrated in the quotes below.



ASHLEY BRUCKER

“There’s a rancher whose husband died, and she took over the operation. I’ve heard others in her ranching community basically indicating that they think she doesn’t really know what she’s doing. There is covert judgment about her capability as a rancher. I know another rancher who has two brothers and a father working together, and she’s the hardest working woman I’ve seen, but she doesn’t get a lot of respect from her family about it. She seems like she’s got something to prove, she’s constantly working and has to be more hardcore.”

—CONSERVATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE STAFF MEMBER

“I also know a woman farmer that gets aggressive really fast if she gets the sense that anyone is short-changing her. That has rubbed people the wrong way, and then that backfires. That plays into the over-emotional stereotypes. Maybe she’s a little bit paranoid about being taken advantage of and then she got labeled as the crazy irrational, hormonal person. People remember that stuff and it’s easier for people ascribe that to other women farmers.”

—CONSERVATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE STAFF MEMBER

“I think one of the challenges they face is a loss of femininity. Women didn’t want to get stereotyped as unfeminine. Women are worried about being perceived as unfeminine or having their intelligence questioned. The condescension happens all the time, even when people think they are being helpful.”

—RANCHER AND WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

“Don’t know that any of these barriers are unique to women because queer and BIPOC farmers are facing similar informal sanctions in their community as women in general. Heteropatriarchy is imposed in all of those situations. So it’s not unique to women, but all these folks are being excluded on the basis of who they are not.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

The literature reinforces that, in many agricultural communities, key knowledge is transferred, and resources are shared in informal networks, person to person, and women often do not have equal access to or participation in these spaces.<sup>2, 7, 27, 29, 40, 47</sup> As long as gender stereotypes keep women from infiltrating these networks and building relationships across differences, those who are in the gender minority in a community will be more likely to miss out on key opportunities or knowledge that impact whether they can reach equal outcomes.

#### DEMANDS ON TIME AND LABOR/UNPAID LABOR

Childcare has been a persistent issue in farm families for over forty years, ranging in focus from a lack of adequate childcare facilities to the difficulty of balancing work and farm family responsibilities.<sup>19, 50</sup> Childcare and eldercare still mostly fall on women in many U.S. households, and agricultural communities are no exception.<sup>5, 24, 44</sup> Though not unique to women in agriculture, the caretaking and operational demands on women farmers and ranchers’ time and labor set nearly impossible expectations that contribute to economic difficulties for agricultural operations, rural families, and communities in unique ways. Off-farm childcare is scarce and expensive, and schedules are often mismatched for farmers if it exists.<sup>24</sup> Women are almost twice as likely to report that childcare is an important factor in farm decisions, with 43.9% of women reporting the importance of childcare in decision-making, compared to only 23.9% of men.<sup>23</sup> Balancing farm and family is significantly more likely to be a factor in farm decision-making for women farmers (87.0%) compared to men (71.2%).<sup>24</sup> Although not statistically significant, women are more likely than men to report problems with all aspects of childcare (affordability, availability, quality, and philosophy).<sup>24</sup> Most women with childcare problems operate small and medium-scale farms and are significantly more likely than their



REBECCA DROBIS

male counterparts to engage in direct sales.<sup>24</sup> Particularly among these small and medium-sized farms, low and fluctuating returns may make it difficult for farm families to afford off-farm care.<sup>44</sup>

These factors have unique impacts on farmers and farmland. For example, research has shown that access to childcare is a big factor in how the next generation of farm families decides where to farm and access land, and first-generation farmers and beginning farmers are more likely to report problems associated with childcare.<sup>24, 49</sup> Driving to a daycare center may take longer for rural families in more isolated locales or smaller towns.<sup>44</sup> Discrepancies in childcare availability, affordability, and government support also exist between rural and urban areas.<sup>44</sup> Studies have consistently found that family care is an attractive option for rural families. However, farmers who start businesses in locations without relatives nearby may not easily access family care.<sup>44</sup>

“The issues of availability and affordability are amplified in rural areas. We see more family-based childcare, rather than center-based. Some are certified, some are not. Among farmers, we know that parents and grandparents play a big role in childcare, but we can’t tell if it is by choice or by necessity.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

“Women are carrying the triple burden. . . . When women realize that they can’t do it all, that means women drop in and out of ag.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

These challenges can prevent some women from taking on greater farm leadership and have notable implications for mental health and farm viability. For beginner farmers in particular, the influence of children intersects with their business cycle in such a way that can put pressure on the business to expand while also managing with less labor or the additional costs of hired labor.<sup>24</sup> Qualitative studies suggest problems such as stress, isolation, despair, and divorce can result for women in farm families due to gendered divisions of labor around child and elder care.<sup>44</sup> Indirectly, women’s care burden also creates barriers to applying for grants and loans, as it can be difficult to prioritize paperwork when young children or elders take priority attention.<sup>44</sup>



USDA/FPAC/PRESTON KERES

“We often see 1.7 employees on a ranch, with the woman representing the .7—she’s giving probably ¾ of her time to the operation, but not on the books as an employee.”

—RANCHER AND WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

“On the one hand, farm women are not different from working moms in the way that having a child does a number on your body, etc. What’s different is that agriculture is one of the most dangerous work sites, and children get injured the most on farms. From the perspective of farm safety, farm women are different because they have to juggle many duties. That doesn’t take away from other dangerous occupations. But if you have livestock, they don’t take a vacation. Crops—a storm could take away your production. The biophysical processes of the farm create vulnerabilities that other occupations don’t.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

“The biggest hindrance to childcare is the sheer distance to community in a rural setting. Whether it’s a babysitter or daycare. Unless you have a multigenerational family operation or have a babysitter friend, you often don’t have another option. So, you see a lot of kids working with their parent, often the woman. When I was doing huge all day long cattle drives, I got some high schoolers to come. The closest town to me is 35 miles. So even with affordable daycare, the likelihood that I’m going to drive them there and back in one day is low. I’ve seen folks hire college age women in the summer to help out. But I have a hard time bringing women here to take care of the kids because it reinforces the gender dynamics we’re trying to combat.”

—RANCHER AND WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

“In terms of applicants for grants, it’s a really low number... I think because women’s workload is so high already that is a deterrent... If men are just freer and have less of the childcare, food, and house responsibilities they have more headspace.”

—FARMER AND WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

“Agriculture may have additional challenges regarding childcare because self-employed farmers/business owners do not have parental leave and paid days off to care for children. Women who are farmworkers face even more barriers. Migrant farmworker mothers face many, many challenges, such as being able to feed and house their children, provide them a stable life (with having to move often), etc.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER



REBECCA DROBIS

## HEALTHCARE

Access to health insurance and health care has also been shown to affect the viability of farms and farm families.<sup>23,24</sup> While this is not unique to women, emerging research shows that healthcare and childcare needs often pull women in different directions regarding a woman’s ability to commit to work on the farm vs off-farm.<sup>23,24</sup> Women producers are less likely to consider farming as their primary occupation, which may interact with the demand for employer-sponsored healthcare.<sup>21</sup>

“Lower income earner is the one who takes on the childcare duties. That has a different dynamic in farming because the women are more likely to have the off-farm job to get the healthcare benefit through work.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

“The healthcare and childcare pieces pull [women] in different directions. Childcare pulls them home, but healthcare need pulls them off farm for the insurance or the income. With the pandemic, there does seem to be a scope of at home but non-farm jobs, but there are still implications about working multiple jobs.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

“With my son and daughter-in-law, they are keeping their income low enough for Medicare coverage. So, they are not making enough to pay for childcare. It’s a tradeoff between out-of-pocket childcare or healthcare coverage or vice versa. That has implications for the ability of the farms to advance economically.”

—WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

“A lot of times on these ranches, the woman is going to town so they all have health insurance. She’s breaking even on her salary because the salary is going to childcare and gas, but they get health insurance.”

—RANCHER AND WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

### EQUIPMENT, TOOLS, AND TRAINING

Farm equipment is rarely designed with women’s bodies in mind, and women frequently mention this as a challenge in their day-to-day independence on their farms, as interviews highlighted. Training to use farm equipment is also an issue, with gender stereotypes and social exclusion being a part of what prevents women from learning these skills. Interviews noted this as a pattern across the country, and there was a consistent call for expanding the diversity of farmers and ranchers producing instructional videos on YouTube and other platforms that farmers reference for learning discrete skills such as equipment use.

“Also learning about how to use and operate heavy equipment, how to use power tools, chainsaws, welding, some of those tertiary farm skills that I would say more men have been raised to know how to do. I think women still want to improve those skills. Whether or not guys know what they’re doing. They were given access to tools earlier.”

—FARMER AND WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

“I don’t think it’s insurmountable, but it is a physical job. Being conscious of right sizing stuff for women’s operations is necessary. . . I mean, the height of a jackhammer [for example]. I can’t use a jackhammer, I’ve got to give it a bear hug to pull it out. A lot of power tools and equipment are made to be operated by people that are bigger and stronger. I’ve got to hire somebody for cheap for those tasks.”

—FARMER AND WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER



REBECCA DROBIS

## Key Takeaways on Barriers Associated with Gender

- Both personal and structural issues contribute to women's unequal outcomes in U.S. agriculture.
- On an individual level, women farmers may struggle to take risks, negotiate for what they need, and see opportunities for assistance and leadership as things they want to and can pursue.
- On a structural level, agricultural institutions are hindering women's equal access to financial, family support, educational resources, and effective equipment.
  - Overt and structural discrimination within agricultural institutions such as USDA created and continues to create distrust and discouragement to participate in USDA programs among women and farmers of color.
  - Implicit discrimination and exclusion from farmer networks play out at the community level and often impact how much women and marginalized farmers get exposure to resource opportunities such as land, incentive programs, key information, and more.
  - Qualitative studies suggest problems such as stress, isolation, despair, and divorce can result for women in farm families due to gendered divisions of labor around child and elder care, which continue to place a higher demand on women than men. The inaccessibility of rural childcare, thus, is a particular challenge for women-led farms, and women farm laborers. Women are almost twice as likely to report that childcare is an important factor in farm decisions compared to men.
  - The need for employer-sponsored healthcare necessitates that many women maintain off-farm jobs, potentially reducing how much leadership they have over their farms.
  - Equipment, tools, and agricultural training are designed with men as the default user. If more farm equipment was designed for women's bodies, women might be able to be less dependent on hired labor or male partners for some farm-related tasks.



REBECCA DROBIS

# Recommendations

## What can be done to work toward gender equity?

Agricultural service providers from government and non-governmental organizations, academic extension programs, and state departments of agriculture provide critical services to farmers, ranchers, landowners, and the next generation of aspiring farmers entering the field. Shifts in the approaches of these individual practitioners and their institutions can make an enormous impact on closing the gender disparities highlighted in this report. From small tweaks in programmatic approaches to structural changes that policy advocates can push for within these institutions, this section provides recommended actions that practitioners and advocates can take to help reduce gender disparities in U.S. agriculture.



**1 Provide women with effective encouragement to seek support** from agricultural networks and agencies. Depending on the practitioner's role, this could entail one-on-one relational support or could mean shifts in an institution's marketing and communications approaches. Women may need additional assurance that these services and networks are fundamentally for them no matter what scale they are operating at. At an institutional level, this could entail hiring social and behavioral science consultants to review program applications, websites, and outreach materials for ways the agency can integrate best practices from social science research about equitable approaches and behavioral nudges that can help women and marginalized producers to best utilize existing resources on offer. These experts may help agencies determine if there are systematic yet subtle ways that their language and materials may signal to women and marginalized producers that these opportunities are not meant for them.



“Women might be less likely to go for opportunities they might mistakenly see themselves as less ‘qualified for’. This could apply to grant opportunities for farms. From behavioral economics, we know that nudges are really impactful. Has USDA investigated whether they can nudge underserved people via those mechanisms? Are there ways that women and others are seeing something as not for them?”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

**2 Diversify staff across institutions.** Work to fill staffing gaps in organizational offices with people who better reflect the communities that historically have the least access to agricultural services. When this is a challenge, consult and partner with trusted messengers and community-based groups that can help educate the team on approaches that will reach women and marginalized producers more effectively.



**3 Train and equip staff to provide culturally and gender-appropriate services** to facilitate access to programs and resources. For example, most agricultural agencies and institutions can do a better job expanding the languages in which their services and publications are offered. Globally, women tend to be key agriculturalists in their home countries, so immigrant and diaspora communities in the U.S. often include many women with agricultural knowledge and skills that, with adequate resources provided, are poised to be successful contributors to a climate-smart agricultural future. Developing gender-appropriate services can also mean considering the barriers mentioned in this report when designing programming for women and ensuring that these are accounted for in the approach to new program designs, outreach language, and educational approaches.



“I think it's important that we're doing outreach specifically to women. But I think that should be done beyond the functionality of the programs and through just general outreach and relationships we form, how we show up in the community. Even just being aware of the risk aversion and other factors that are unique to women or at play is a helpful way to improve our outreach approach.”

—AGRICULTURE AGENCY STAFF MEMBER

**4 Sit “second chair”** with women who seek services. If you have encouraged a woman farmer or landowner to seek support from a USDA program, for example, send a member of your team or another farmer who has navigated the process before to be their ally in the process, helping them navigate the system, and providing encouragement and reminders throughout. Especially when visiting USDA offices, these allies can help producers remember to ask for a Receipt for Service and report any discrepancies or issues in that process to the appropriate channels.



**5 Recommend women for leadership** roles. Many instrumental bodies from the local to the state and federal levels could use more equal gender representation in their leadership. Practitioners already involved in local policy councils, agricultural boards, or government agency advisory bodies, can use their positions to ensure that women and marginalized people in agriculture are aware of opportunities to serve in decision-making and advisory capacities. Those in leadership and decision-making positions can also encourage these bodies to provide compensation or accommodations to enable women to serve in these leadership roles. Such accommodations might include childcare, wage replacement for time spent on committees, or travel reimbursement to support the participation of historically marginalized individuals in an equitable way.



**6 Advocate for policies to ensure gender parity is represented** on federal, state, county, or local boards and advisory committees.



**7 Strengthen and expand peer-to-peer farmer education models**, especially among women in agriculture. Many traditional educational spaces in agriculture are male-dominated, and this can impose subtle or overt power dynamics that inhibit the benefits of these opportunities for women and marginalized individuals thus, it is critical that creating culturally appropriate peer groups can help alleviate these challenges and provide deeper, more supportive and effective learning environments. Practitioners can use resources and research from initiatives such as [AFT’s Women for the Land, Women Food and Agriculture Network](#), and more to develop effective peer-to-peer learning opportunities if those are not yet offered. This could also be accomplished by governmental action through the establishment of a state or federal program to fund cooperative agreements between government agencies and grassroots networks of farmers with established connections to farmers in marginalized communities.



“I see value in women getting together so they know they aren’t alone in feeling that they may get judged for being too outspoken. I think that is probably equally as important to people as the real discrepancies we see in the data. Those are more tangible and we can measure clearly and say we fixed. But the fluffier stuff is just as much of a hinderance and thus just as impactful. It gives them more confidence and self-assuredness. To feel less alone and organize and support each other as women.”

—AGRICULTURE AGENCY STAFF MEMBER

**8 Focus on land and capital access first**, and conservation can follow. Secure land tenure and financial viability of agricultural operations are foundational to any operation. These factors are especially important for women-led operations to advance conservation, as women may be more averse to or unable to take risks to invest in conservation if they lack a financial or social safety net to fall back on. Women also tend to be operating on smaller and newer operations that may still be getting their markets, margins, and land tenure established, so focusing on these factors first may help pull the most emergent segment of women in agriculture into conservation, as well.



**9 Aggregate and distribute information on community-based resources,** such as childcare and equipment-sharing opportunities. Extension and farm nonprofit organizations can publicize already existing, easily accessible, and user-friendly childcare resources on county or state-wide online listservs, and co-sponsor in-person parent networking nights to facilitate information exchanges around formal and informal care options that will especially benefit women in agriculture.



**10 Track demographics** of those accessing and seeking agricultural services and improve the ways demographics are being tracked currently. If demographic information such as gender, race, ethnicity, veteran status, and first language are not yet being tracked in organizational data and evaluation, consider adding methods for doing so through event evaluation processes, annual surveys, program metrics collection, or other means. These are important metrics to understand how equitably resources are flowing and can be an important model for other practitioners and organizations in the field to keep improving these methods. Within existing data collection systems such as the U.S. Census of Agriculture and other surveys conducted by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, there is a need for more participation in surveys, particularly from women and BIPOC producers; more transparency and disaggregation by race, gender, ethnicity, and other factors; more nuanced categories for race, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation on surveys; and improved public accessibility of data collected. These improvements are key to understanding which publicly funded agricultural resources are reaching the most in U.S. and state-based farm programs and tracking progress toward more equitable outcomes.



“Yes, we have a huge desire to access the disaggregated data from the Census of Ag by race and ethnicity. All I could do is lump together all non-white people because of disclosure issues. We know that Black farmers and Asian farmers are not facing the same issues and not farming in the same spaces, places, networks are so different.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

**11 Create case studies** of what's working well. As practitioners successfully organize events with women farmers or notice improvements in women's engagement with agricultural services, sharing stories and examples of what is working well and why can model innovative and effective strategies for governmental agencies and others, and motivate them to follow suit.



**12 Bolster tailored support for small and mid-sized farms,** which women and marginalized producers tend to lead most. This could include reforming existing programs across USDA and state departments of agriculture to the needs of small and mid-sized, with a particular focus on crop insurance, disaster relief, and safety net improvements for small-scale and specialty crop growers, especially those on rented lands. For example, establishing an Office of Small Farms via the upcoming Farm Bill would increase support for low-acreage or low-income farms.



“Anything that supports more small scale and diversified farms we know benefits women because we know that's where women are increasingly taking part in ag.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER AND WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LEADER

**13 Invest in improvements to rural community infrastructure**, including childcare facilities, broadband access, and affordable housing and transportation, and leverage any existing resources to ensure they support women in agriculture. Foster collaborations across state and local departments of agriculture, jobs and family services, childcare advocacy organizations, community development corporations, industry, commodity groups, and farm nonprofits to expand conversations around childcare programs and more that can better meet the needs of farmer and farm worker parents. Agricultural practitioners can work to connect women and farm parents with childcare and transportation resources when hosting educational programming to ensure they can access these offerings. Furthermore, as citizens, these practitioners can advocate to their elected officials for improved investments in these community resources.



“Our federal policy around childcare leave and support is terribly lacking. Parents should have paid time off to care for children, across all industries. Children should have health care, etc. I think the food movement needs to make sure agriculture does not get exempt from rules and regulations and innovative policies to address these challenges.”

—ACADEMIC RESEARCHER

**14 Reform cost-share models** in existing federal and state programs to reduce the up-front costs marginalized producers need to provide to participate in conservation incentive contracts and more. Strides have been made on this issue in recent Farm Bill cycles. However, further improvement is needed to make programs like NRCS-EQIP more economically viable for small and low-income producers.



**15 Explore passing a Women in Agriculture Resolution** in more states and at the federal level. California and New York have already passed Women in Agriculture Resolutions in their state legislatures, recognizing the critical and diverse roles women play in the agricultural systems unique to those states. These resolutions can help educate lawmakers on the issues women farmers and land stewards face in their state and build commitment from the legislative bodies to address these challenges in future bills and state programs.



# Conclusion

Women in U.S. agriculture have made extraordinary strides in recent decades and have fostered innovative and resilient agricultural operations even in the face of many challenges. The future of U.S. agriculture hinges at least in part on the extent to which women and other marginalized communities can successfully access financial and technical resources that will support the viability of their farms and ranches. Staff in government agencies, community-based organizations, land-grant universities, and advocacy organizations have an important role to play in shaping this future. By implementing the recommendations in this report and using the evidence it presents to advocate for change, a resilient, equitable future is possible for U.S. agriculture.



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## ABOUT AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST

American Farmland Trust (AFT) is the largest national organization dedicated to protecting farmland, promoting sound farming practices, and keeping farmers on the land. AFT unites farmers and environmentalists in developing practical solutions that protect farmland and the environment. We work from “kitchen tables to Congress,” tailoring solutions that are effective for farmers and communities and can be magnified to have greater impact. Since our founding, AFT has helped to protect more than six and a half million acres of farmland and led the way for the adoption of conservation practices on millions more. AFT has a national office in Washington, D.C., and a network of offices across America where farmland is under threat. For more information, visit us at [farmland.org](https://farmland.org).

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