



# EMPOWERING WOMEN IN AGRIBUSINESS

Women are an important piece of the agriculture puzzle—both in Canada and around the world

Support for women involved in dairy farming and agriculture is growing around the world. A quick Google search of women's contributions to dairy revealed a plethora of resources and support groups available to women from the United Kingdom to the United States, and everywhere in between.

From empowering women to better manage risks and make decisions, to educating them on how to run sustainable and profitable businesses, there is no shortage of information online for women who want to grow their knowledge and take their agribusiness to the next level.

I came across a number of conferences and seminars offered entirely to women farmers and business owners (and the men who support them), such as Dairy Women's Network (DWN), a New Zealand not-for-profit organization dedicated to giving unlimited opportunities to women in dairy. DWN not only develops, facilitates and promotes events and initiatives for members to acquire industry-based knowledge and soft skills, it also offers memberships and numerous volunteer opportunities. In Africa, for example, there is the Africa Women Innovation and Entrepreneurship Forum, which helps women connect, share, collaborate and make plans about how they can invest, grow and develop African women-led businesses and initiatives, including in food production and agriculture. Then there's Women in Agribusiness, a business unit of HighQuest Group, a global agribusiness consulting, events and media firm. Started in 2012 in Minneapolis, MN, the company has a goal to help organizations understand the value of recruiting, retaining and advancing women in agribusinesses.

By the time you read this column, the largest gathering of Canadian women in agriculture would have already taken place in Ontario at the Fallsview Casino Resort and Conference Centre in Niagara Falls. The Advancing Women in Agriculture Conference East (AWC

EAST) helps hundreds of women find inspiration among their peers, hear from leading speakers, take part in free pre-conference workshops, and engage in many opportunities for networking. I look forward to attending the event every year, knowing I will be hearing from and meeting with successful women from varied industries, experiences and walks of life who are all there for one primary reason—to leave feeling rejuvenated and inspired to make changes in both their professional and personal lives. I'm especially looking forward to the AWC sponsor panel, which will discuss how agriculture as a broad and dynamic industry is constantly changing and the role women can play in this industry and how to be the most effective leaders.

Whether you farm alone, are involved in the family business, or work as a veterinarian or on a dairy magazine, we are all contributing as women to growing a sustainable, profitable and growing industry. Women are an important piece of the agriculture puzzle—both in Canada and around the world. They are often the backbone of rural economies. Investing in women will only reap more benefits for families, rural and urban communities, and agribusiness development. When women succeed in business, it has a ripple effect on the economy and country. It's good practice to ensure women are equipped with all the tools they need to not just get by in their businesses or careers but to thrive, and gatherings such as AWC EAST are a good place to start.



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