Women In Agriculture

Karrie Blake
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, kblake2@unl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/agecon_cornhusker

Part of the Agricultural and Resource Economics Commons

http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/agecon_cornhusker/190

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Agricultural Economics Department at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Cornhusker Economics by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.
Although farm numbers continue to decline, women in agriculture are increasing their responsibility in decision making and management on the farm. According to the 2002 U.S. Agricultural Census the number of farms in Nebraska was 49,355, down 10 percent from 1997. However, the number of female principle operators in Nebraska was up from 2,948 in 1997 to 3,005 in 2002 according to the census. This is a small increase compared to the 13 percent jump of women operating farms in the nation (209,784 in 1997 to 237,819 in 2002). Of those principal female operators in Nebraska, 1,568 have farming as their primary occupation and 949 work more than 200 days off the farm, compared to 883 in 1997. Of the women who are principal operators, 2,067 have been on the present farm for 10 years or more. The average age of the women principal operators is 59.7 which is 5.8 years older than the average age of all Nebraska farmers. As women’s involvement in agriculture continues and more women become principal operators, their need for education and networking is more important than ever. The University of Nebraska’s conference “Women in Agriculture: Today’s Critical Difference” provides farm/ranch business management information for women in agriculture to persevere in this challenging industry.

The 20th Annual Women in Agriculture Conference was held September 16-17, 2004 in Kearney, Nebraska. Over 385 women from seven states and 72 Nebraska counties attended. Lenders and agribusinesses played an important part sponsoring 274 women. This year’s conference offered twenty-three workshops focusing on a variety of issues including hedging, money management, options, carbohydrates, global positioning systems and ways to boost profit. Other topics included check-off dollars, achieving life balance, marketing, attracting and retaining quality employees and landscaping. In addition there were several keynote speakers. Joan and Julie Burney, natives of Nebraska, brought an essential message on the importance and value of laughter. Sarah Fogleman, an Extension Ag Economist from Kansas, spoke on family relationships. "How many of you came because you love..."
a farm or how many of you came because you love a farmer?"
This was a question Fogleman asked to support her point of the
importance of accepting people coming into a farming business
with different backgrounds and interests.

To celebrate the 20th Anniversary the original founders were
recognized. Glennis McClure, Jane Green, Pat Parmley, Larry
Bitney and Deb Rood put their knowledge and passions together
in 1985 to develop this very successful program.

There were several “new” components to the conference this
year. Karrie Blake was introduced to her first Women in Ag
Conference as the new program coordinator. This year was also
the first time for participants to have an opportunity to visit
attending educational booths. Ten businesses displayed informa-
tion for the women to peruse during breaks and between work-
shops. Lastly, a tradition of presenting a scholarship in memory of
Deb Rood was started. Lois Thomsen of Exeter, Nebraska, won
the scholarship when her name was drawn. This award will cover
her registration fees and hotel expenses for next year’s conference,
and her name will be put on a plaque in honor of Deb.

The 2005 Women in Agriculture Conference is scheduled for
September 15-16 at the Kearney Holiday Inn. On the horizon is a
new program called Annie’s Project. The goal of Annie’s Project
is to provide an educational program designed to empower
farm/ranch women to manage information systems used in critical
decision making processes, and develop network support which
is essential for continuing education and self-help. As a result of
this education, women become confident members of the manage-
ment team for their farm/ranch operation. Annie was a woman
who grew up in a small town in Northern Illinois. She married a
farmer and spent her lifetime learning how to be an involved
business partner with her husband. This project takes her experi-
cences and shares it with farm women living and working in a
complex business. The program is to be delivered in a series of six
workshops that are three hours in length. It will combine lecture,
discussion, individual work, small group work, computer work
and audio/visual support to address the topics of risk, financial
statements, understanding personalities, marketing plans, business
plans, estate planning, spreadsheets and technology. It is planned
for this project to be delivered during the spring of 2005. Addi-
tionally, Nebraska farmers and ranchers will be hosting approxi-
mately 20 visiting Australians in July.

Karrie Blake, (402) 472-0548
Program Coordinator
University of Nebraska
KBlake2@unl.edu

A special thanks to our sponsors who donate products
and money. Their support makes WIA a success.