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Nebraska Women in Agriculture “Together Again”

A crowd of over 200 gathered Feb. 24 and 25 in Kearney, Nebraska for the 37th Annual Nebraska Women in Agriculture conference.

The conference is one of the longest-running women's conferences of its kind in the country. The goal of the Nebraska Women in Agriculture Conference is for women to build relationships with each other while gaining valuable knowledge about managing risk on their farms and ranches. The event featured four general session speakers and 28 workshop sessions. This year's conference was supported in part by USDA-NIFA under Award Number 2020-70028-32728.

The opening speaker this year was North Dakota farmer Katie Dilse. Katie's energy was contagious during her talk “Better Together.” She spoke of recognizing the gifts in one another, creating moments of pause in life, and ways to be present.

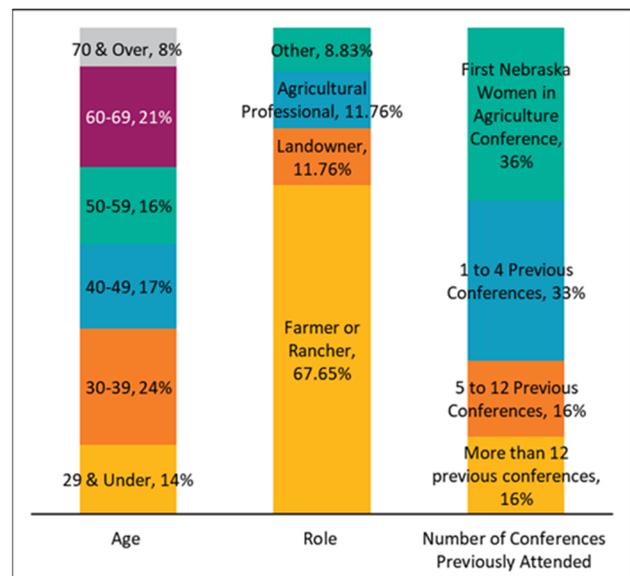
A survivor of a fatal drunk driving accident, Missouri Cattle Rancher, Carey Portell shared her story of being “beautifully broken.” Portell suffered severe injuries but now farms full time with the resources provided by AgrAbility, an organization that helps individuals with disabilities continue to farm or ranch.

Participants also heard from Maggie Holub, a Farm Credit Services of America Relationship Officer and Nebraska farmer. Maggie discussed her journey after losing her dad to cancer and coming back to her family's farm. She challenged attendees to get out of their comfort zone.

Finally, participants heard from Deb Gangwish, a Nebraska farmer and National Corn Growers Association Board Member. Gangwish encouraged participants to get involved in advocacy opportunities.

People attending the conference represented a wide variety of agricultural backgrounds and demographics. One hundred percent of the respondents identified as female and white. Ninety-nine percent resided in Nebraska. Figure 1 shows the roles, age, and prior attendance of those who participated.¹

Figure 1: Age, Roles, and Prior Attendance of 2022 Nebraska Women in Agriculture Conference attendees.



¹ 72 Overall Conference Evaluations were submitted, giving these results a 9 percent margin of error at a 95 percent confidence interval.

Participants noted that they enjoy the opportunity to network and spend time with friends and colleagues, all the while discussing issues important to their farms and ranches. Sessions covered risks in production, market, financial, human and legal areas. Training opportunities ranged from crop and livestock insurance to record-keeping and using financial documents to succeed. Furthermore, the event provided opportunities for participants to learn about mitigating stress and improving mental health.

The main goal of the conference is to heighten participants’ skills and knowledge. Four hundred and fifty-four workshop session evaluations were submitted during the 2022 conference. Survey respondents were asked to rank their knowledge of each workshop topic on a scale from 1 (no knowledge) to 5 (complete knowledge) before and after the workshop. On average, respondents increased their knowledge from 2.32 to 3.89.

Survey respondents were also asked how the workshop had affected them by selecting a series of statements to complete the sentence “This workshop _____.” The response options and percentage of survey respondents for each option are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Impact of workshop session statement results.	
...encouraged me to find out more about this topic.	66%
...improved my skills/ability.	51%
...increased my confidence in my ability to influence key decision-makers.	38%
...increased my confidence in my ability to make a decision myself.	40%
...empowered me to develop a plan to address this topic.	50%
...validated my/our current practices.	30%
...encouraged me to change my/our current practices.	35%

The future success of the conference depends on continued funding from grant agencies and supporters. Supporters included: the Nebraska Dry Bean Commission, Farm Credit Services of America, Nebraska Corn, Common Ground Nebraska, the Alliance for the Future of Agriculture in Nebraska, Nebraska’s Natural Resource Districts, Nebraska Farm Bureau, Nebraska Independent

Community Bankers, and Field Pocket. There were various other agricultural businesses and government organizations that participated in our exhibit space.

For more information on this conference and the Women in Agriculture program see our webpage, <http://wia.unl.edu>, or follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, @newwomeninag.

The 2023 Nebraska Women in Agriculture Conference is scheduled for February 23-24, 2023 at the Kearney Holiday Inn Convention Center.

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