



Mary Savalla Holmes photos.

# Women, Food, and Agriculture Network

*Women Growing Together.*



Summer 2011

## WFAN Members Share Values and Vision

### *2011 Survey Reveals Breadth of Members' Skills, Needs and Challenges*

by Angie Carter

WFAN Advocacy Committee Chair

Many thanks to all who participated in our 2011 WFAN survey this past spring. We appreciated hearing from you. The information and perspectives you shared with us in the survey will inform our advocacy and programming, as well as help us to better support your work.

Next year will be an important one for elections and policy-making. We gathered with women leaders in food and agriculture from across the country at the *Cultivate 2012* summit in late May in Racine, WI, and began a nationwide collaboration that will strengthen our roles and efforts as we work together to transform our food system. Your participation in our survey informs a national conversation about the health of our communities, land, and bodies. We look forward to a dialog with even more of you as the conversation continues.

In May of 2011, WFAN posted an electronic survey on our website and sent it out to our listserv. We were curious about what you value most about our network, what barriers you experience in your work, what resources you

most value, how we can strengthen our network, and what skills you are willing to learn and share with other women.

Seventy percent of you reported that a network just for women interested in sustainable food and farming is very important to you. This is an especially

an impressive list of skills you can teach and skills you would like to learn. One of our goals is to create a way for you to connect online, so that new and beginning farmers can find mentors, you can share stories, and collaborate better despite the distance or obligations that sometimes keep us apart.



You are an interesting and diverse group composed of farmers (37%), chefs, urban homesteaders, journalists, farmers, gardeners, teachers, non-profit staff, beekeepers, and engaged consumers. Most of you learned about WFAN through a friend or colleague and/or on the internet. You come from all across the US (see map).

important statistic, considering that 90% of you reported belonging to at least one other community, agriculture, health, or environmental organization.

Out of 179 participants (12% of the WFAN network), nearly half of you (48.6%) are 35-54 years old. Only 21% of respondents were under 35, which reflects trends that younger women are underrepresented in agriculture, and encourages us to continue our outreach to younger women.

You are interested in sharing your talents and learning from others who can teach you skills to improve your businesses, health, and families. You shared

Lack of affordable health care is the most often-identified barrier to your work. Half of respondents reported this as a very serious challenge. Lack of access to capital and lack of access to land followed as barriers number two and three.

You can read more of the results, including the rich array of individual comments (all anonymous, of course) at the WFAN website ([www.wfan.org](http://www.wfan.org)).

We will report on our plans to engage and connect more of you in the next year in upcoming newsletters and monthly e-bulletins. Stay tuned!

# House Leadership Supported Massive Giveaways to Big Ag while Taking a Chainsaw to Nutrition & Food Safety

by Elizabeth Kucinich

Director, Public and Government Affairs, Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. Reprinted from Huffington Post with permission.

As Congress returns from the Independence Day celebration recess, it is an ideal time for all of us to reflect on how dependent political figures and big agribusiness seem to be on each other.

Last month – in what I considered an outrageous political shell game – key

figures in the House of Representatives quietly blocked a bipartisan plan to cut \$167 million in government subsidies to agribusiness and wealthy farmers which was included in the House Agricultural Appropriations bill, as they took a chainsaw to funding for food aid and food safety programs in the House Agricultural Appropriations bill.

This penny-foolish, pound-foolish maneuver cut muscle from vital public health efforts and left a huge chunk of budgetary fat untouched. And it continues subsidies that encourage production of unhealthy foods that feed America's costly obesity and diabetes epidemics.

At a time when life-threatening outbreaks of E. coli and other food-borne illnesses surface almost weekly, the House leadership aims to cut the Food and Drug Administration's budget almost 12 percent – thereby killing much-needed efforts to improve food safety.

And even as many American families struggle to put meals on the table, House leaders are cutting food aid to low-income mothers and children and gutting efforts to improve school lunches.

The food aid and food safety cuts are especially disturbing because agricultural subsidies go mostly to some of the wealthiest people and corporations in the nation. From 1995 to 2009, the largest and wealthiest top 10 percent of farm program recipients received 74 percent of all farm subsidies, according to the Environmental Working Group.

But under the House leadership's new plan, rich recipients of agricultural subsidy payments – including those making as much as \$750,000 a year – won't see any decrease in subsidies.

We've been here before. Powerful agricultural interests have blocked most efforts to reform agricultural subsidies

for decades. But finally, we were seeing progress on a commonsense bill that included cuts in taxpayer-funded payments to the richest of the rich farmers. The cuts, which had been approved by a key House committee, were the most bipartisan possible, with support from both Tea Party-affiliated lawmakers and President Obama.

Then the House leadership stepped in to stop this reform effort in its tracks. And that could harm the physical and economic health of Americans for many years to come.

In addition to funneling limited resources to farmers who clearly don't need them, subsidies contribute to chronic diseases that kill millions of Americans every year.

Earlier this year, the federal government issued new dietary guidelines that urge Americans to reduce their intake of saturated fat and sweeteners. That means consuming less meat, cheese, and high fructose corn syrup – and more fruits and vegetables.

Yet more than 60 percent of agricultural subsidies for domestic food products in recent history have directly and indirectly supported meat and dairy production. Another substantial chunk has supported the production of high-fructose corn syrup. Less than 1 percent of these subsidies have gone to fruits and vegetables.

We can't afford to subsidize unhealthy foods. In 2008, the direct medical costs associated with obesity totaled \$147 billion. We already spend more than \$190 billion a year to treat diabetes and pre-diabetes – and those costs will rise to \$500 billion a year by 2020. The American Heart Association estimates that, by 2030, direct costs related to cardiovascular disease will triple to around \$818 billion.



This newsletter is a quarterly publication of **Women, Food, and Agriculture Network**. We welcome suggestions, stories, and news from your part of the world. Our emphasis is on women's lives, their relationships, communities and families as they related to sustainable agriculture and food systems. We publish first-person articles, research summaries, book or video reviews, original poetry and art, and letters to the editor.

The newsletter is published each March, June, September and December; submission deadline is the 10th of the month. Email submissions to [info@wfan.org](mailto:info@wfan.org), or mail to WFAN, PO Box 611, Ames, IA 50010.

WFAN website: [www.wfan.org](http://www.wfan.org)

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The risk of these life-threatening and expensive-to-treat conditions can be greatly reduced by eating diets low in animal products and sweeteners and rich in fruit, vegetables, and whole grains. But those healthy choices are actually discouraged by current agricultural subsidies.

The last thing our country needs is a taxpayer-funded subsidy system that favors the very foods that contribute to heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. All Americans deserve access to healthful foods – and should be able to eat their lunch without worrying about E. coli. Saving money is a good thing. But let's

start balancing the national checkbook by cutting subsidies to big agribusiness – not by chopping away at programs that improve food safety and keep kids from going hungry. We must make sure that the Senate takes more sensible actions in its agricultural appropriations bill.

## Cultivate 2012 Summit: Women Leaders Initiate Four Nationwide Action Steps for Fixing the Food System

A diverse group of 30 women food systems leaders from across the country met May 23-25 near Racine, WI, to begin the process of creating a national strategy for strengthening the influence of women in the healthy food and farming movement, from the farmhouse to the White House.

“We called this gathering ‘Cultivate 2012,’ reflecting the fact that next year will be a pivotal year for increasing women’s leadership and voice around food issues through the next election cycle and farm bill,” says Liz Johnson, National Director of Rural Leadership for The White House Project, a non-profit aiming to advance women’s leadership in all communities and sectors.

The Cultivate 2012 summit was the kickoff of Plate to Politics, a nationwide coalition of women in sustainable agriculture sponsored by The White House Project, Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES), and Women, Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN).

“Women have always been the primary drivers behind the healthy food and farming movement – as farmers, purchasers of their families’ food, and staff at the non-profit organizations that support the work,” says Leigh Adcock, executive director of WFAN. “Plate to Politics is the beginning of a national coalition of women in the movement who will work on a series of projects and initiatives to magnify our voices and influence in the arena of sustainable agriculture and healthy food systems.”

Women attending the Racine gathering represented a wide range of backgrounds, such as Lydia Villanueva, a Latino farmer organizer from the Texas Panhandle, Severine von Tscherner Fleming of New York, a beginning farmer advocate and producer of the film *The Greenhorns*, and Aurora Conley, a tribal leader working to preserve native strains of wild rice in northern Minnesota. The group included farmers, leaders of national grassroots organizations, federal agency staff, political activists, researchers and communications professionals. You can meet the women leaders at [www.thewhitehouseproject.org/platepolitics](http://www.thewhitehouseproject.org/platepolitics).

Key initiatives that emerged from the Cultivate 2012 gathering are development of:

- an authentic, positive **message** in the national media prioritizing the triple benefits of the movement for environment, economy and nutrition.
- a national **database** and social media platform for collecting and championing diverse and inspiring stories of women farmers and food activists across the country, including connecting them with opportunities to be policy leaders from the local to the federal level.
- a targeted **education campaign** for Congressional staff and leaders on



policy issues of importance to women in sustainable agriculture;

- and an informational **toolkit** and resources to educate and inspire a broad diversity of “food voters.”

“The core of our work and conversations at Wingspread was a deep and collaborative commitment to social and racial justice that drives the action agenda we developed, including perspectives from rural and urban, women of color, young women, native women, immigrant women and elders,” says Lisa Kivirist, director of the Rural Women’s Project for the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES). “We proved at the summit that as diverse as we are, we can coalesce around several key initiatives that will support the millions of women working to change America’s food system for the better.”

Visit the Plate to Politics website to learn more about these initiatives and find out how you and your colleagues and constituents can get involved in this vital work!

## Female Fare

# Harvest Justice: USDA Opens Process to Resolve Women Farmer Discrimination Claims

by Lisa Kivirist

For those of us fairly new to farming and the agriculture scene, it's easy to take the abundant resources and support we're surrounded by for granted. Vibrant networks like WFAN that champion the voice of women farmers in our agricultural system simply didn't exist until recently. We stand here today as a growing force as women in sustainable agriculture because of the battles fought by women farmers before us.

The unfortunate reality that these women farmers historically encountered was rooted in discrimination: specifically being denied USDA farm loans based on gender. A variety of things may have occurred, from simply being outright denied a loan they qualified for to being told to come back with a father or husband or having loan applications unaccountably lost and never processed.

Flash forward to today: The USDA under the current administration remains on a mission to rectify such discrimination of the past and ensure it doesn't happen in the future. While awaiting the outcome of the Love vs. Vilsack discrimination class action lawsuit, this summer the USDA has voluntarily initiated a claims process to resolve the claims of both women along with Hispanic farmers who experienced discrimination when seeking USDA farm loans. NOTE that if you choose to file a claim through this process, you are ineligible to participate in the lawsuit.

Here are some key elements of this process:

- Up to \$50,000 may be awarded to each woman farmer who demonstrates that the USDA denied her a loan or loan servicing for discriminatory reasons (i.e., because she is female).
- A total of \$1.3 billion has been



allocated toward these payouts. Financial resources for claimants toward debt relief on eligible farm loans and assistance toward federal taxes owed on the cash award also exist via additional funding.

- A specific timeframe within which the discrimination needed to occur: 1981 through 2000.
- Claimants are required to both prove this discrimination occurred and that the USDA's treatment of your loan or loan application led to economic damage.

If you or a woman farmer you know experienced such discrimination, your next steps would be:

- Examine the guidelines and criteria established by the USDA to deter-

mine qualification for this claims process: [www.farmerclaims.gov](http://www.farmerclaims.gov).

- Request a "Claim Package," via this website which will include the forms and instructions for filing a claim. You can also request a package by calling 1-888-508-4429. Note it is stated on the USDA site that you are not required to hire an attorney to file a claim; however, the USDA is also not in a position to provide legal advice.

- Individuals may register now to ensure they receive a claims package. Later this year, claims packages will be sent by the independent Claims Administrator. The information and registration outreach effort for this unified claims process is expected to continue until mid-summer. Once the claims period opens, there will be a 180-day time period in which to submit a claim. The Claim Package will arrive via mail. Requesting a Claim Package does not obligate you to file.

Please help spread the word about this claims process, both amongst your women farmer networks and the Hispanic farming community. Such opportunities for justice and retribution depend on those discriminated against going through this process and claiming what is rightfully theirs.

Lisa Kivirist directs the [Rural Women's Project](#) for the [Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service \(MOSES\)](#). Co-author of *ECOpreneurship and Rural Renaissance*, she and her family run [Inn Serendipity Farm and B&B](#) in Browntown, WI, completely powered by the wind and the sun.



## Interview: Pamela Standing, Willow Women Foods

Pamela Standing is a mother, grandmother, community activist, and creator of Willow Women Gourmet Foods of Long Prairie, MN.

She is also founder and co-chair of the Minnesota Indian Business Alliance of Detroit Lakes. She took the time to answer these questions for our newsletter.

### What are you passionate about in your work?

I have several jobs, and my passions run deep for our tribal communities and assisting in the development of sustainable small businesses. Whether it is a home-based business or bricks and mortar, it is highly satisfying to serve and support American Indian entrepreneurs! My other passion is our small family owned business, Willow Women. This business began in our home, with my grand-girls. This last year my focus has been on developing my line of maple syrup granolas, maple glazed nuts, fruit juice infused balsamic vinegars, and a line of specialty jams and jellies.

### What is a recent success you're proud of?

Raising two beautiful grand-girls and having the second chance to make a positive difference and pass on the teachings I've been given by the women in my family. Most recently, I was recognized with the Small Business Administration's 2011 Minority Small Business Champion Award for my volunteer work with the



*Pamela and granddaughter Delaja.*

Minnesota Indian Business Alliance.

### How did you come to the field of sustainable ag/food systems?

My childhood was spent with my grandparents and extended family. My grandma always had a big garden; she canned, she raised livestock and butchered, cooked on a woodstove, had an outdoor kitchen and gathered wild plants. There was no such thing as chemicals – everything flourished and was so healthy. All I wanted to do when I grew up was to have land, raise my own food and live a sustainable life. Many people thought I was old-fashioned, but I got to live my ream. Some people tell me this is a lost art, canning, dehydrating and baking from scratch. All I can say is that I am grateful to have learned under so many able hands – family and friends who generously shared their knowledge and techniques.

### What has been your biggest challenge in your work?

Not having enough hours in the day. Currently, having to lease commercial kitchen space is costly and sometimes inconvenient. Another challenge is sourcing locally grown and produced ingredients for my gourmet products. We hope our little business is successful so we can invest in our own commercial kitchen, one that is sustainably designed and energy-efficient. I have had a dream of putting a commercial kitchen on some land and sharing it with women in the community to come together and can, but also create delicious products that can be marketed.

### Tell us about a woman who inspired you.

My grandmother and my great-auntie Bette. They were two of the

hardest working and innovative women I have ever known. They were generous and known for their hospitality. Their guests would leave with canned goods, meat, fresh produce and eggs. My grandma could put a feast on in no time. My auntie Bette had a gentle way about her, always a good word and praise. Most of all I remember the laughter and the good conversations.

Throughout my life I have been blessed to meet other native women and elders who have played a part in shaping my life and freely shared their knowledge and teachings of how and when to gather foods and plants, and their uses. I was taught by older women that what ever I put my hand to, to do it in a good way with a happy spirit, because those who eat what you prepare enjoy that good energy and their lives are blessed.

### How do you balance your work and personal life?

Hmmm.... this seems to be life-long pursuit and learning. As I have grown older it has become more important to strike that balance. When I am juggling too many things, I have to stop, go outside and relax. I love to do beadwork; somehow I get lost, my busy mind settles into a nice rhythm. Another is gardening; one of my Cherokee relatives said that putting our hands in the earth is the best therapy around, we release the negativity into our mother and our minds quiet and we observe all the small miracles of life around us.

### What advice would you give a young woman interested in farming or food systems work?

I would share this quote from an elder I met named, Dr. Rosemary Christensen, enrolled member of the Mole Band of Lake Superior Chippewa;

“When you treat human beings with Respect, Relationships will be established and Reciprocity will occur.”

Take time to build a strong circle of women friends and colleagues. Don't be shy; if you meet a woman that inspires you, go up and shake her hand, ask to get to know her.

Learn about your community, both its strengths and weaknesses; take time to listen. Look for opportunities to partner and collaborate with others.

**What legacy do you hope to leave?**

My legacy is my family, friends and community. I hope I will be remembered in a good way as a woman who worked hard, cared deeply, laughed often, wasn't afraid to cry, took risks, was a loyal friend and advocate and a person who built strong partnerships and collaborations across diverse cultures.



*Willow Women granola.*

**If you could create the perfect food system for America, what would it look like?**

My perfect world would be a return to a simpler lifestyle, that families and communities have sustainable gardens, we learn how to can and preserve foods, and create local food and barter systems. We don't take more than we need, and most importantly, leave a gentle environmental footprint on whatever we care for and create.

**What's your favorite gadget?**

My steam juicer. This is the best invention in the world.

**Do you have a summer recipe you'd like to share?**

**Wild Rice Mango Salad**

**Ingredients:**

- 1 cup wild rice, uncooked (not to be mistaken for paddy rice)
- 2 cups shredded, cooked chicken breast
- 1/2 avocado
- 1 large, ripe mango
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced green onions

- 1/4 cup toasted slivered almonds
- 2 tablespoons frozen orange juice concentrate or fresh squeezed)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (optional, or cut in half)
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

**Directions:**

Cook rice in two cups water, bring to boil and simmer on medium low for 15-20 minutes. Cool slightly. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, combine shredded chicken, avocado, mango, red pepper, green onions and almonds. In a small bowl, combine the orange juice concentrate, oil, pepper, and a sprinkle of sea salt to taste. Toss with the chicken mixture. Add rice. Refrigerate 1-2 hours before serving.

Thank you so much for the opportunity be part of this amazing newsletter!

**Pamela Standing**

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**News and Resources**

**In Her Boots: Sustainable Farming Workshops For Women, By Women Offered in Wisconsin**

A new workshop series this summer champions women farmers and food-based business owners with a day-long session providing women passionate about transforming our food system with an inspiring blend of practical information, skill-building, farm tours, resource connections and networking and leadership opportunities.

Organized by the Rural Women's Project of the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) in partnership with the White House Project, *In Her Boots: Sustainable Farming For Women, By Women*, will take place on women-owned farms and be peer-led, with seasoned women growers, business owners and activists sharing their insights and experience.

The five workshops scheduled this summer include:

**July 24:** Still Point Farm (Brooklyn, WI – Madison area)

**August 17:** Moonstone Farm (Montevideo, MN --- West-Central)

**August 21:** Elsewhere Farm (Herbster, WI – Ashland/ Bayfield area)

**August 23:** Holm Girls Dairy (Elk Mound, WI –Eau Claire area)

**September 11:** Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (East Troy, WI –Milwaukee area)

Each workshop is independent and topics customized based on the host farm. Thanks to the Otto Bremer and other foundation support, this day-long workshop can be offered for only \$20 per person, which includes an organic lunch and snacks. Scholarships are available. For more information and to register, see: [www.mosesorganic.org/womensproject](http://www.mosesorganic.org/womensproject).



*Dr. Jean Eells (far left) helps women farmland owners think about their farm as a whole unit using felt pieces to map out land, water and plant features at a recent Women Caring for the Land meeting in Boone, IA.*

## WFAN's Women Caring for the Land Program Changes Lives

Women landowners in Iowa, Nebraska and Wisconsin will gain crucial knowledge this summer on conservation options for their farmland by attending *Women Caring for the Land* peer-to-peer discussion meetings.

Designed by Dr. Jean Eells and facilitated by WFAN program coordinator Lynn Heuss, these meetings bring together women landowners in two to four contiguous counties to share their dreams and challenges for conserving their farmland. Generally older women who have recently inherited farmland and have not participated in management decisions in the past, participants leave with not only information about conservation options for them and their tenants, but most importantly, the empowerment that comes from sharing their concerns in a women-only, informal learning environment. One recent widow who attended a meeting in western Iowa told us, "This meeting has changed my life."

To learn more, visit [www.wfan.org/programs](http://www.wfan.org/programs).

## Calendar of Events

### July 21

**Women Transitioning the Land Meeting**, Emmetsburg, IA. Women who own or manage farmland in Palo Alto and neighboring counties, and new or beginning farmers interested in finding land to farm, are invited to participate in a FREE informal discussion on Thursday, July 21, in the Bienfang Room at the Iowa Lakes Community College in Emmetsburg. A free lunch will be provided. In order for us to get an accurate meal count, please RSVP by Monday, July 18, by emailing Lynn Heuss at [lheuss@gmail.com](mailto:lheuss@gmail.com) or by calling (515) 201-9405.

### August 5

**Women Caring for the Land Meeting**, Seneca, WI. Women who own or manage farmland in Crawford and surrounding counties are invited to participate in a free conservation discussion and field tour on Friday, August 5, from 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. at the Seneca Town Hall. A free lunch will be provided. In order for us to get an accurate meal and transportation count, please RSVP by Tuesday, August 2, by calling Lisa Kivirist at (608) 329-7056 or emailing her at [lisa@innserendipity.com](mailto:lisa@innserendipity.com).

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**Women Caring for the Land Meeting**, Brodhead, WI. Women who own or manage farmland in Greene, Rock and surrounding counties are invited to participate in a free con-

servation discussion and field tour on Friday, August 5, from 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. in the meeting room of the Brodhead Library. A free lunch will be provided. In order for us to get an accurate meal and transportation count, please RSVP by Wednesday, August 3, by calling Lisa Kivirist at (608) 329-7056 or emailing her at [lisa@innserendipity.com](mailto:lisa@innserendipity.com).

### 12 - 13

**Farm Aid Concert**, LIVESTRONG Sporting Park, Kansas City, MO. Farm Aid is America's longest-running benefit concert, and has donated \$37 million to family farmers over its 20-plus year history. Visit [www.farmaid.org](http://www.farmaid.org) to see the artist lineup, buy tickets, and learn about other events going on in conjunction with the concert. Of particular interest to women in ag: Women of the Vine is hosting a farm to table benefit dinner for Farm Aid at [Pachamama's Restaurant](http://Pachamama's Restaurant) in Lawrence, KS, on Aug. 11 at 6 p.m. Visit [www.womenofthevine.com](http://www.womenofthevine.com) for details. Also, stop by WFAN's booth at the Homegrown Village during Farm Aid Friday evening and Saturday to say hello!

### October 24

**Food Day**. Modeled on Earth Day, Food Day is being led by honorary co-chairs Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Rep. Rosa Delaura (D-CT) and has the support of a wide variety of grassroots organizations including WFAN. Visit [www.foodday.org](http://www.foodday.org) for info.

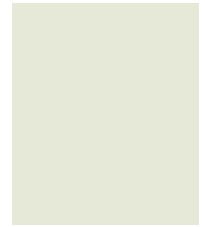
### November

#### 11-13: SAVE THE DATE

**Tri-State Fall Harvest Gathering of Women in Sustainable Agriculture**, Cedar Valley Resort, Whalan, MN. Details soon.



PO Box 611  
Ames, IA 50010-0611



Mary Swalla Holmes photo.



**2011 Sustainable Farming Mom of the Year**  
**Sandy McAntire from Kissing Emu Farm, Chelsea, IA**

Here is the nomination we received from Kim McWane Friese of Iowa City, co-owner of Devotay Restaurant:  
“Sandy is a fantastic mother to her just as fantastic daughter Miya [above]. Sandy raises emu, distributes emu meat and makes and sells emu-based skin care products. She is always enthusiastic and an inspiration to all she meets.”

Congratulations, Sandy! As our 2011 featured mom, you received a pair of gardening gloves donated by [Green Heron Tools](#).

**Tune In, Turn On, Eat Up**

Hosts: Kurt & Christine Friese, Elissa Altmann, Kate Manchester, Tom Philpott, Jane Black & Deborah Madison

Alexandra Zissu Alice Feiring  
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