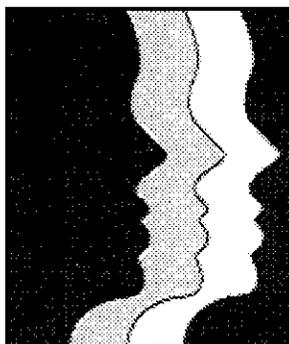


Women, Food & Agriculture Network

International Rural Womens' Fair

by Denise O'Brien



Logo for the Federacion Nacional de la Mujer Rural (National Federation of Rural Women)

The setting was Segovia, Spain; the time was early September. I was invited to participate in the First International Rural Women's Fair sponsored by the National Federation of Rural Women (FEMUR). The Fair was held in the town plaza with over 150 women participating in the four-day event. It was a combination of a market to sell goods, speakers from government, and receptions honoring rural women and their contributions to the economy.

The invitation came as a result of a visit in June by the president of FEMUR, Juana Borrego, to my farm near Atlantic, Iowa. During the visit, we discussed issues concerning rural women ranging from land ownership to domestic violence. Juana mentioned the fair, but I told her it probably was not in the budget. When the invitation to attend as their guest arrived by email, I eagerly made the necessary arrangements to go. If FEMUR could find it in their budget to get me to Spain, I could find the time to accommodate them!

I have never before been to Spain, but, I must say, I could certainly consider living there. It was beautiful. I arrived in Madrid and was met by a young woman, Rocio, who helped me and Ana Julia from the Dominican Republic gather our

bags and whisk us off to Segovia.

My responsibility at the fair was to represent rural women in the United States and give a presentation on the conditions of rural women here. For my presentation I spoke of the current economic, social and environmental impact of large hog facilities, low prices, and the overall picture of industrialized agriculture. I also told them that women farmers in the United States who farm with their husbands are not counted as farmers in the Agricultural Census.

The Minister of Agriculture of Spain, Loyola De Palacio, officially opened the Fair. She honored the women in attendance by relating how important they are to the rural economy. She noted that women do not receive the same recognition as men when it comes to the economic contribution they make. Her office was among several sponsors of the fair.

After the official opening, women from the various provinces of Spain opened the market place. They had brought everything from crafts to food products to tourist information to sell and share with those attending. During the first two days of the four-day fair, most of the women had sold all of their products. Juana Borrego declared the Fair a remarkable success and vowed to have

(Fair, continued on page 7)

Mission

The *Women, Food, and Agriculture Network* links and amplifies women's voices on issues of food systems, sustainable communities and environmental integrity.



Calendar

November 27-28, 1998: The Seventh International Buy Nothing Day.

Participate in this worldwide protest day against over-consumption! For more information look at <http://www.ddh.nl/nwd> (partly in English).

January 8-9, 1999: Practical Farmers of Iowa winter workshops. Ames. (See story this page.) Call Nan Bonfils at the PFI office, 515-294-8512, for details.

January 30, 1999: Fourth Annual Iowa Local Food System Conference. (snow date February 6) Grinnell United Church of Christ, Grinnell, Iowa. Keynote, Denise O'Brien. Production techniques, marketing, organizing. Call Jan Libby, 515-495-6367; email: libland@kalnet.com.

February 13-14, 1999: Practical Farmers of Iowa Women's Winter Gathering. Boone, Iowa. Contact Nan Bonfils, 515-294-8512.

February 18, 1999: Iowa Women in Natural Resources Conference. Indian Creek Nature Center Contact Pam Krug, 319-362-0664.

February 27: 1999: Annual Meeting of the Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society. Theme: "Adding Value: Promoting Health, Generating Wealth." This meeting will feature keynote speaker Gary Valen, director of the Humane Society's Sustainable Agriculture Program. Workshops will cover a range of sustainable agriculture issues and practices that can help sustain family farms. For more information, call 402-471-0817 or email crisc@navix.net.

March 4-6, 1999: Tenth Annual Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference. Sonsinawa Mound Center in southwest Wisconsin (12 miles northwest of Dubuque, IA). Theme: "Organic Works—At Home and Around the World" Workshops on a full range of topics and in-depth seminars limited to 50 registrants. Keynote: Elizabeth Henderson and Michael Albeman, and a panel on Organic Agriculture Around the World. To receive a flyer with complete information, call UMOFC at 715-772-6819; website: <http://agile.net/UMOFC/>.

Call for Papers

Ideas and best practices for finding new ways to balance economic, environ-

mental and social goals is the focus for the National Town Meeting for a Sustainable America (NTM) to be held May 2-5, 1999 in Detroit, Michigan. It is sponsored by the President's Council on Sustainable Development and the Global Environment & Technology Foundation.

The NTM program will include an exhibition, plenary sessions, learning sessions, networking opportunities, cultural activities and other elements that will highlight solutions and opportunities for a sustainable America.

We are seeking presentation proposals for the NTM program's 90-minute "learning sessions." A submission may be developed by a single presenter or by a team of presenters. The program will emphasize building individual and institutional capacity so that best practices can be replicated elsewhere.

NTM Sustainable America: email: ntm@getf.org; website: <http://www.sustainableamerica.org>; tel: 888-333-6878.

PFI Conference

Winter Workshops with Practical Farmers of Iowa

by Nan Bonfils

Mark your calendar and plan to be at the Gateway Center Holiday Inn in Ames on the weekend of January 8 & 9, 1999 for Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI) winter workshops and annual meeting.

PFI, Practical Farmers of Iowa, is "dedicated to promoting farming systems that are profitable, economically sound, and good for families and communities."

This year's program is loaded with workshops from GMOs (genetically modified organisms) to urban sprawl, from multi-generation family farm issues to CSAs (community-supported agriculture). Most workshops are participatory and feature a panel of farmers whose experiences often create a lively juxtaposition with what the experts or media report.

We're especially excited about our two keynote speakers on Saturday. Loren Kruse, Editor in Chief of Successful Farming magazine, will speak on "How to Grow More Joy in the Farming Business." Odessa Piper, chef and entrepreneur, from L'Etoile Restaurant, Madison, Wisconsin, will speak on

Women, Food and Agriculture Network

This newsletter is published by the **Women, Food and Agriculture Network**, a Tides Center Project with the help of the Stanley Foundation, Muscatine, Iowa, and Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. We welcome suggestions, stories, and news from your part of the world. Our emphasis is organic agriculture, but we are also interested in women's lives, their relationships, communities and families.

Address: RR 2, Box 79
Atlantic, IA 50022
712-243-5752

Newsletter Production:
Denise O'Brien
(hnob@nishna.net)
Katy Hansen
(katywhansen@igc.org)
Betty Wells

“Spirit of Place, the meaning and practice of regional reliance.” Odessa designs meals at her restaurant with an emphasis on locally grown ingredients. She’s keen to support farmers in her community. In keeping with Odessa’s outlook, the noon menu will feature products from PFI farms. There’s also a fun evening planned for families on Friday with live music.

This great conference is open to anyone. The cost is \$20.00 if you are not a current PFI member. For members it’s only \$5.00 per person or \$10.00 per family, as long as you register before January 1. (Prices higher for walk-ins.) Child care service is also available.

Call me at the PFI office at 515-294-8512 for details.

(Nan Bonfils is Program Assistant for PFI, 2104 Agronomy Hall, ISU, Ames IA. 50011; tel: 515-294-8512)

News Briefs

Pesticides and Children

A report by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) indicates that children living on or near farms in the U.S. face disproportionately high exposure to dangerous pesticides, putting them at serious risk for adverse health effects.

The report, “Trouble on the Farm: Growing Up With Pesticides in Agricultural Communities,” shows that this special population, including over 500,000 children under the age of six, is surrounded by a virtual sea of pesticides. Agricultural insecticides and weed killers too toxic to be legally used indoors have been documented inside farm homes, on children’s hands, and in their urine. Concentrations of these chemicals, when quantified, have sometimes exceeded current regulatory “safe” levels.

The report is available on the NRDC website at <http://www.nrdc.org>. Copies of the report are also available for US\$10.59 plus US\$3 shipping prepaid from NRDC Publications, 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011.

Genetically Engineered Crops

The October 25th New York Times Magazine cover article “Fried, Mashed or Zapped with DNA?” raises the question of whether or not the rapid explosion in

genetically modified crops could be at the root of the next farm crisis.

“Uncertainty is the theme that unifies much of the criticism leveled against biotech agriculture by scientists and environmentalists. By planting millions of acres of genetically altered plants, we have introduced something novel into the environment and the food chain, the consequences of which are not — and at this point CANNOT be — completely understood.” (NY Times Magazine, October 25, 1998)

“Like pesticides and chemical fertilizers, the new biotech crops will probably, as advertised, increase yields. But equally important, they will also speed the process by which agriculture is being concentrated in a shrinking number of corporate hands.” (NY Times Magazine, October 25, 1998)

Monsanto Stomps Ecologist

The Ecologist, an environmental magazine well known for challenging corporate interests, recently wrote an edition that focused solely on Monsanto and its genetically engineered crops. Just before press time the printers pulped the entire 14,000 copy run. “We have a long history of being forthright about issues and attacking powerful firms, yet not once in 29 years has the printer expressed the slightest qualms about what we are doing,” stated the magazine’s publisher Edward Goldsmith. Although it refused to comment on its decision, it is understood the company was afraid of laying itself open to a libel action.

Factory Farming

The USDA and EPA are taking public comments on a “Draft Unified National Strategy For Animal Feeding Operations (AFOs).” This Draft Strategy is the overall blueprint for dealing with surface water pollution from all AFOs, including large-scale, confined animal factory farms with more than 1,000 animal units. Many animal feeding operations pose unacceptable risks to family farms, the environment, the health of rural communities and the water resources upon which both rural and urban communities depend.

The Draft Strategy is available on the Web at <http://www.epa.gov/cleanwater/afo/>. Mail comments to Denise C. Coleman, Program Analyst, Natural

Resources Conservation Service, ATTN: AFO, Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013-2890. Comments must be received by January 19, 1999.

Public Hearings (called “Listening Sessions”) will be scheduled. Check the website for the Clean Water Network <http://www.cwn.org> and click on “What’s New.”

Resources

Fact Sheets Available

- Fact Sheets on factory farming are available from the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture P.O. Box 396 Pine Bush, NY 12566; tel: 914-744-8448; email: campaign@magiccarpet.com
- 1: Environmental Degradation and Public Health Threats From Factory Farm Pollution
 - 2: Sustainable Alternatives to Factory Farm Animal Production
 - 3: Environmentally Sound Standards for the Land Application of Animal Waste
 - 4: The Factory Farm Quagmire: An Overview of All Factory Farm Problems
 - 5: A Sustainable Agenda for the Research Plan of the USDA-EPA Unified National Strategy for AFOs: Pollution Prevention, Not Mitigation and Cleanup

Websites

<http://www.ree.usda.gov/smallfarm> — lots of information for people interested in alternative agriculture enterprises, small farms, or sustainable practices. Some publications can be downloaded, some ordered, there is an online newsletter on small farms.

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/afic> — then go to “Links” for information from all over the national extension system - from how to grow flowers in North Dakota to recipes from famous chefs in California. Many bulletins can be downloaded and

Take Note

The review of *Slow Food* that appeared in our last issue (August 1998) first appeared in the *Rural Development News* of the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development at Iowa State University. Their web page is <http://www.ag.iastate.edu/centers/rdev/RuralDev.html>.

WFAN Gathers to Plan Area Meetings on Microenterprise and Determine Structure of the Network

Meeting Summary

October 17-18 brought together eleven women from the Women, Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN) for a fall meeting. We gathered at the Garst Family Farm Resorts in Coon Rapids in the beautiful rolling hills of the Middle Raccoon River. Liz Garst, proprietor of the Garst Resorts, provided warm and comfortable surroundings at the Oakridge House.

The agenda focussed on 1) a discussion on the Kellogg Project and 2) the organizational structure of WFAN. Articles on this page cover these items in detail.

WFAN gatherings have evolved into a pattern of work, education and just plain visiting. An effort is made to set aside some part of the meeting for an outdoor or nature activity. This weekend Danielle Wirth brought some Biltmore sticks and taught us how to estimate the board feet, and therefore the "value," of the oak trees surround-

ing our meeting place.

Liz Garst, former banker, talked about women and credit, credit reports, micro-credit and other issues under the general topic of banking. She stressed that women need to know more about what goes on in the credit world.

Our next meeting will be in March or April. We are looking for a place in the northern part of the state. The meetings are usually 24 hours in length starting around 1 or 2 in the afternoon and going until the next afternoon. We try to meet in places such as church/nature camps that have sleeping facilities and meals prepared. The costs are in the \$30 to \$40 range. Scholarships are available.

Anyone interested in helping with the preparations or wanting to attend the next meeting, please contact Denise O'Brien at 712-243-5752 or hnob@nishna.net.

Laura Krouse, Mary Steinmaus, and Denise O'Brien. The location for the third meeting is yet to be determined. Please contact us immediately to suggest a location for the third meeting.

The funds for the meetings will be used to bring in speakers, pay for child or elder care, and mileage or other expenses that might deter women from attending.

The project organizers hope that these meetings will foster the development of support groups to sustain women as they explore concrete income opportunities.

"We want to bring together women who are seriously committed to self development and want to explore possibilities of creating income from their homes and communities. WFAN can help create the support network to do this," says Denise O'Brien, coordinator.

For more information, call Denise O'Brien at 712-243-5752.

Structure for WFAN

The Women, Food and Agriculture Network met to determine the organizational structure of the network. Prior meetings held focused on developing a mission statement and working out goals and objectives.

We decided there will be membership dues of \$10 and \$30. The \$10 dues will be for people with limited incomes. Members regardless of dues category will receive the WFAN newsletter. WFAN is establishing a database and will be working on solicitation of members and building a membership base to support the newsletter.

This is a crucial step in the organizational development of Women, Food and Agriculture Network. To date, the Network has been based in the Midwest yet keeping in touch with women from across the country and the world.

To join, please fill out the member form on the back and look forward to a relationship with women from all over around the issues of food, the environment and the economy

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Supports Meetings on Microenterprise

In June, Women, Food and Agriculture was notified by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation that it was the recipient of a \$20,000 grant. This grant is for bringing women together who are interested in creating supplemental or full income from microenterprise development relating to food. Its purpose is also to create opportunities for cross-cultural exchange.

WFAN will hold a series

of three meetings across Iowa with the first one in the Adair/Audubon/Cass/Guthrie area the second week in December. Donna Bauer of Audubon, Carol Smith of Guthrie Center and Denise O'Brien of Atlantic will explore with a group of approximately ten to twelve women what it means to develop an enterprise that can create income.

The second meeting will take place in the eastern part of the state in the Linn and Cedar county area in January or February. The coordinators for this meeting are



Enough is Enough!

Living Downstream: An Ecologist Looks at Cancer and the Environment
by Sandra Steingraber. Published by Addison-Wesley, New York.

Review by Danielle Wirth

"There is something animate about corn, which starts out as a merged, green expanse and then sharpens and stiffens into lines of individual, human-shaped form. Corn is proud. It seems to stand in judgment somehow. It has conspicuous body parts—ears, tassels, silks and stalks—and it has the power to alter the landscape. . . . Walking through a field of corn can feel very sheltering. It can also make you have half crazy thoughts, or bring on panic, as when swimming in a large lake and suddenly realizing you are too far from shore. Much of corn's power to soothe and disorient surely has to do with the fact that it becomes taller than we are."

Sandra Steingraber knows corn, she knows and loves the Midwest, the landscape that formed her and framed her compassion. Yet this rural Illinoisan has been called "a poet with a knife" by *Sojourner* magazine because she looks without flinching at what has become of the landscape under the imposition of industrial agriculture.

As many hometown children do, Steingraber left home to attend college. She finished an undergraduate degree in science and, while a graduate student in ecology at the age of twenty, discovered she had a very rare form of cancer. Her "area of specialization" was her intimate understanding of forest ecosystems. She became an ecologist and has been on the faculty of two medical schools.

Yet one recognizes, while reading her book, that she is an observer of space. She tells you immediately that Illinois had 23 different prairie types, yet, she, her parents and grandparents have never seen that landscape because of the alteration of the land by humans.

The description of the Midwestern sky is evocative, so are her musings about the rivers, people, birds and other creatures that live in her former home territory. The sensitivity to people and place does not prevent Steingraber from leveling critique at modern agriculture... "cornbelt

weeds have become the number one target of agricultural warfare." Modern synthetic organic chemicals literally "trespass" into our air, our water, and into our bodies and the bodies of our children.

We learn that since World War II, total crop loss from insects has almost doubled. In the 1940s, crop loss was seven percent. By the 1980s the loss was up to thirteen percent. This despite the heavy use of insecticides. True, the increase in crop loss is more than offset with higher yields. But Steingraber looks deeply at the costs. In the 1940s, only 30 insect species were known to be pesticide resistant. By the 1960s, 137 insect species were pesticide resistant. Wildlife species located where there are concentrations of chemical use are developing many types of cancers. And, here is another rub. Human cancers are following the same pattern.

Steingraber used her researcher's eye to delve into a daunting amount of raw data kept by the National Cancer Registry. What emerged was a picture of diseases with environmental fingerprints. That is to say, people develop certain diseases, one of them cancer, because of where they live, what they do for work and some quirk of their heredity that predisposes them to become ill. One leaves the pages of this book with a skepticism of pronouncements about "safe exposure levels."

This is a wonderfully written book. It is engaging, informed, powerful and profoundly disturbing. From descriptions of human cancer cells in a growth medium, through her own discovery, treatment and remission of cancer, to asking tough questions of government, industry and society, Steingraber remains compassionate without slipping into over-sentimentality.

The research is first rate. There aren't holes, and Steingraber has covered the bases. She has done her homework. It is a long book, but one quarter is the references used to create the picture.

Every term I must teach about these things. Almost every term I learn that one of my students suffers from cancer. Many developed it at an early age. It

Book Review



breaks my heart. I marvel at their courage and strength. They become my teachers. I am grateful to know them and how they mark time, how they are hopeful, and how I am persuaded that this insanity must stop.

We in the Women, Food and Agriculture Network envision an agriculture different from this insanity. It is a balm for these wounds to know there are others who agree. The Network is a part of the growing collective of voices saying that enough is enough. Read this book. It will make you think. It will make you angry, and it will give you plenty of hope and ammo. We need the data and we need the passion. This book has both.

(Danielle Wirth teaches environmental science and natural history at the Des Moines Area Community College.)

Autumn Stopover

(When the muse visits, heed.)

by Nan Bonfils

I pull over at a roadside park on the edge of Bagley. I've been traveling east on this flawless October afternoon, reverse on a route that I took yesterday in failing light to join my friends at the Garst Farm.

Now the light is perfect. Bright harvest activities flank my passage. I ponder the women I have met, marveling at their knowledge, impressed by their prospects. So ambitious.

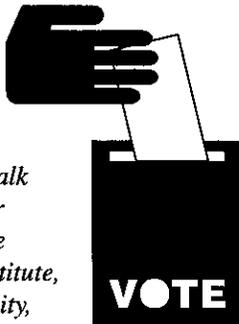
Exchanging energy to last through winter.

It's coming. This morning I needed gloves. Now it's a t-shirt day. Setting the truck in motion again,

I promise myself that I will go directly home and take the dog for a tramp through the timbered ravines of Full Circle Farm. We will pause at our favorite oak, set our backs to its spine to feel its pulse and count geese and blessings.

(Nan Bonfils is first of all a farmer, but also program assistant for Practical Farmers of Iowa and member of Women, Food and Agriculture Network.)

Gaining the Vote for Women — Women in Politics



(Excerpts from a talk by Kappie Spencer given at the Carrie Chapman Catt Institute, Iowa State University, October 2, 1998)

"In July I was privileged to attend the 150th celebration of the first Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, new York. Possibly it would have been more fitting to call it a wake! Those courageous women adopted a document called 'The Declaration of Sentiments' patterned after the Declaration of Independence. And they passed 11 reso-

lutions calling for women's rights. Only one of those resolutions has been fully realized—that of equal voting rights for women.

"In 1848 political affairs were 'for men only.' Women were not allowed to speak in public, and their opinions, if expressed at all, had to be voiced by sympathetic males. During the 72 year campaign for voting rights, women were silent no more, and took to the churches and meeting halls to deliver their messages. . . .

"Here in Iowa a woman-suffrage amendment to the Iowa constitution was first approved by the General Assembly in 1870. Unfortunately it was not again passed by the next General Assembly. It passed again in 1874 only to be defeated again in 1876. This became a pattern with one or two unexpected votes defeating the amendment each time. It would

be 1915 before the measure was finally submitted to a vote of the people (read that MALE PEOPLE). . . .

"The anti-suffrage movement was so successful that the amendment lost by more than 10,000 votes. In fact, there were 29,341 more votes cast on the suffrage amendment than the total cast for all candidates for Governor. Does that look a little suspicious?

"It was only with the ratification of the federal amendment in 1920 that Iowa women were granted the vote.

Gaining the vote for women took 72 years of incredible dedication among the early suffragists. Only one of the signers of the Declaration of Sentiments, Charlotte Woodward, was around to cast a vote in 1920. In the 1900s scores of new feminists had moved in to make the ratification a reality.

International Rural Womens' Fair

(Fair, continued from page 1)

another one next year.

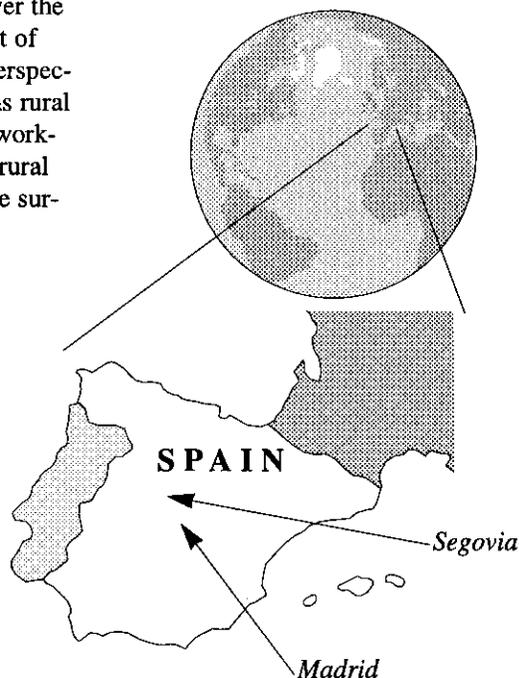
FEMUR is focussing on marketing the products of rural women and is very interested in establishing trade with rural women in the United States. While I know nothing of the trade industry, Juana Borrego and I discussed the possibility of trade between Spain and the United States. We talked about what type of products could be traded and what kind of framework would need to be in place.

I was able to visit with women through my interpreter, Rocio. While that was limiting, I was able to gain a first hand knowledge of some of the issues that concern the rural women in Spain, the Dominican Republic and Germany. Income was a major issue as well as the aging population of farmers, the young people leaving the rural areas, and domestic violence. I am no longer surprised when the issues are the same as those in our own country. It makes it all the more clear to me that the same

forces, free trade, transnational corporations, free flow of capital, to name just a few, are effecting rural areas all over the world. These issues put the context of "think globally, act locally" into perspective for me. It is important for us as rural women to understand that we are working for the survival of the world's rural communities when we work for the survival of our own.

Upon returning home to Iowa I enrolled in a conversational Spanish class. In travelling I always feel so limited by speaking only one language even when there is translation. So to rectify that.....Yo tengo que estudiar el Espanol. Adios amigas!

(Denise O'Brien is from Atlantic, Iowa. She is interested in international and women's issues and has been the driving force behind the formation of the Women, Food, and Agriculture Network.)



WHO ARE RURAL WOMEN?

Rural women comprise more than one quarter of the total world population.

500 million women live below the poverty line in rural areas.

Women produce 60-80% of basic foodstuffs in sub-Sahara Africa and the Caribbean.

Women perform over 50% of the labor involved in intensive rice cultivation in Asia.

Women perform 30% of the agricultural work in industrialized countries.

Women head 60% of households in some regions of Africa.

Women meet 90% of household water and fuel needs in Africa.

Women process 100% of basic household food stuffs in Africa.

(Source: Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF) <http://www.woman.ch>)

7.5% of all farms in U.S. are female-operated. (Source: 1992 U.S. Census of Agriculture)

One out of every four farm women view themselves as managers in the farm operation, 41% see themselves as assistants to their husbands, 34% silent partners (Source: Survey by Rockwood Research of U.S. farm.)

While female-operated farms represent 7.5% of all farms, they only represent 3.1% of the value of agricultural products sold and control 4.7% of all the land in farms. (Source: Joseph Reilly, National Agricultural Statistics Service)

More than 25% of Canadian farm operators are women (Source: 1996 Canadian Census of Agriculture.)

**Women, Food
& Agriculture
Network**

A Tides Center Project
RR 2, Box 79
Atlantic, IA 50022

Women, Food, & Agriculture Network links
and amplifies women's voices on issues of food systems,
sustainable communities and environmental integrity.

Address Service Requested

Let's keep connected:

Women, Food and Agriculture Network

Membership in Women, Food and Agriculture is either \$30 or \$10 (your choice). Fill out the form below and we will sign you up. This newsletter is a benefit of membership.

We are a network of women with food, agricultural, environmental and economic concerns. Please share your thoughts, ideas, successes, interests, and solutions with us.

Enclosed is \$30 for my membership.

I have the following to contribute

Enclosed is \$10 for my membership.

Name _____

Phone _____

Organization _____

Fax _____

(if you are joining as a representative of a group)

Address _____

E-mail _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please mail this form to:

Women, Food & Agriculture

RR 2, Box 79

Atlantic, IA 50022