

Women, Food & Agriculture Network

Why Free Range Chickens?

Take a Look at Confinement Chickens!



(based on the experiences of Susan Jutz, Kelsey Heeringa, Jenny Schneidman, and Zoe Anderson)

Susan, Kelsey, Jenny, and I had just ended a short, but entertaining weekend in Kawana with a group of Women in Food and Agriculture members. We were driving through Wright County (famous for being the location of Iowa's largest hog confinements) on our way back to Solon when we spotted the same row of long, aluminum-sided confinement buildings we had seen on our way up. We were amusing ourselves, as you must do when faced with mysterious corporate livestock operations among long and monotonous stretches of Iowa corn, by imagining what kind of security precautions we would be up against were we to attempt a drive-up visit to one of these less-than-inviting confinements.

Being the curious organic farmers that we are, we decided to test our luck, assuming we would be stopped at least 50 ft. from any of the buildings. But we weren't. No, before we knew it we found ourselves driving around eleven long, buildings, gawking at the large fans used to ventilate the windowless structures

and marveling at the gigantic feed containers.

At first we assumed we were looking at hog confinement buildings. However, a few clues led us in another direction. First was the piles of white poultry feathers that littered the edge of the buildings. Second was a sweet, young woman on the porch of her small, single-storied home who informed Kelsey, in Spanish, that yes, this was a chicken confinement and to find out more, we should go and ask for Jaimé. The third clue was the tattered, almost-illegible, wooden billboard we noticed while heading back to the buildings with our new "in," announcing that the chickens were being kept for their tremendous egg producing capabilities.

Lucky for us, our second drive around the buildings was timed perfectly with one worker's smoke break. We piled out of the car and walked up to our new friend and asked him if it would be possible to talk to Jaimé. The man looked at us questioningly for a moment and then preceded to usher us around one of the long buildings and into a large door.

(Chickens, continued on page 6)

Mission

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



Calendar

September: Latino Heritage Month (Sept. 15-Oct. 15) and **Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month**

September 18, 2004: Eleventh Annual Iowa Women's Music Festival. Iowa City. Call 319-335-1486.

September 21, 2004 Indicators for Women's and Girls' Well-Being. 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Holiday Inn & Conference Center, Coralville. Iowa United Nations Association and Iowa Women's Foundation. Contact Rebecca Turner, 888-488-4293 or email: turner@iawf.org.

October 4, 2004: The Spirit of Harriet Tubman. 8 p.m., Memorial Union, Iowa State University, Ames. 515-294-9934, email: lectures@iastate.edu or see www.lectures.iastate.edu

October 7, 2004: A Matter of Choice. 8 p.m., Memorial Union, Iowa State University, Ames. Speaker: Sarah Weddington. 515-294-9934, lectures@iastate.edu or see www.lectures.iastate.edu.

October 7, 2004: Voices of Iowa Farm Women, Brunner Art Museum, 7-9 pm, 290 Scheman Building, Ames. Women, Food and Agriculture Network will present a story of Iowa's heritage and legacy told through the oral history interviews of contemporary farm women promoting small farm, value-added and direct marketing practices. A discussant panel will consist of one ISU scholar, selected farm women and facilitated by project producer, Cynthia Vagnetti. The project is funded by Humanities Iowa.

October 15-17, 2004: Bioneers Conference, Fairfield, Iowa, contact: Fairfield Bioneers, 2375 235th Street, Fairfield, IA 52556; website: <http://www.eco-living.org/>

October 15: National Mammography Day.

October 16-19, 2004: 8th Annual Community Food Security Coalition Conference "Celebrating a Decade of Community Food Security," co-hosted by Growing Power, Milwaukee, WI. Contact information: tel: 310-822-5410; email: andy@foodsecurity.org

October 23, 2004: Farm Beginnings Class starts Oct. 23. Deadline for signing up, Oct. 5. Contact: Amy Bacigalupo,

LSP, Montevideo, tel: 320-269-2105; email: amyb@landstewardshipproject.org; Karen Stettler, LSP, Lewiston, tel: 507-523-3366; email: stettler@landstewardshipproject.org

October 27, Iowa Women's Foundation 8th Annual Grant Awards Luncheon. 11:30 a.m. -1:00 p.m. Sheraton Hotel, Iowa City. 888-488-4293, or turner@iawf.org.

October 29-30, 2004: Strengthening & Valuing Latino Communities in Iowa Conference. State Historical Building, Des Moines. Fee varies. Iowa Division of Latino Affairs, 515-281-4080, john.chaisson@iowa.gov, or www.latinoinstitute.org.

November 5-6, 2004: National Catholic Rural Life Conference: The Entrepreneurial Spirit, This year's 81st Annual Gathering will provide participants an opportunity to explore the spirit of innovation and hope now needed in rural America. This gathering will bring together members to focus on the entrepreneurial spirit. Please join us in Saint Louis, MO, where NCRLC was founded in 1923. Registrations are due by October 31 to guarantee registration. Contact: Sister Pauline Tursi at 515-270-2634 email: Ncrlc@mchsi.com.

November 12-14, 2004 WFAN's Annual Women's Fall Harvest Gathering. Watch for more details.

PFI Field Days

Corn: Past and Future, Rotational Grazing. Thursday, September 16, 2004, 2:30 pm-8:00 pm; Linda and Ron Grice, South English, 319-667-2350

ZJ Farm Tour, Potluck and Dance. Saturday, September 18, 2004, 3:30 pm-5:00 pm. Susan Zacharakis-Jutz, 5025 120th St. NE, Solon. 319-624-3052

Vegetable Production and Marketing Sunday, September 19, 2004, 1:00 pm-4:00 pm. Chris Blanchard, 3765 Highlandville Rd., Spring Grove, MN, 563-735-5613

Getting to Know Henry A. Wallace Day. Sunday, September 19, 2004, 1:30 pm-5:00 pm. Henry A. Wallace Country Life Center, 2773 290th St., Orient, 641-337-5019 (Diane Weiland)

Women, Food and Agriculture Network

This newsletter is published by the **Women, Food and Agriculture Network**, a Tides Center Project. We welcome suggestions, stories, and news from your part of the world. Our emphasis is on women's lives, their relationships, communities and families. We welcome first person articles, analyses, book or video reviews, original poetry and art, and letters to editor. Deadlines for upcoming issues:

December 2004 issue: Nov. 15, 2004
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WFAN Summer Retreat

by Cassi Johnson

This summer's WFAN retreat held an unexpected surprise: almost all in attendance were either interns or farmer/mentors. Along with the five WFAN interns came several other young interns who had heard about the summer meeting and decided to check it out. We took advantage of this great opportunity to share our experiences and to discuss the future of WFAN's internship program.

Two points became very clear: providing young women with internship opportunities is a vital part of fostering their personal growth and of building a women-centered sustainable agriculture movement. Each of the young women spoke of the personal relationship they built with their mentor. About half hope to soon begin farming on their own. They spoke of the need for continued networking and mentoring as they set out on a path to build their own farming operation.

One story from our discussion was particularly compelling. Lauren Hackman, a recent Iowa State horticulture graduate and intern at Seed Savers International, learned of the summer meeting from Kate Jacobson, a WFAN intern. The two met at the Decorah farmers' market the week before. In our evening discussion, Lauren said she had felt a little lost since graduation and wasn't sure where she was headed next. She wants to farm, but doesn't really know a lot of people with her interests in sustainable, small-scale production. She said she found her place after meeting and speaking with the other interns and farmers, and that she now felt motivated to pursue her passion.

Some of the recommendations from the summer meeting included: building a stronger support network for both farmers and interns and extending the program to include mentoring and business skills training.

Do you have any comments or ideas about the WFAN internship program? What training or support would make a better mentor? Please give your feedback by emailing Cassi, the internship coordinator, at cassi@iastate.edu.

Antibiotics in Agriculture: The Problem and the Solution

by Kathleen Lane who is WFAN's representative to the Keep Antibiotics Working Campaign

While it is true that physicians have over-prescribed antibiotics and patients have demanded them for illnesses not caused by bacteria, it is now livestock producers who use the vast majority of antibiotics produced in the United States. An estimated 70 percent of antibiotics produced in this country are used for non-therapeutic purposes such as accelerating animal growth and compensating for overcrowded and unsanitary conditions on large-scale confinement facilities.

Antibiotic-resistant bacteria are reaching crisis proportions. As more bacterial strains develop resistance, effective antibiotics are not developed quickly enough to counter specific diseases. In some cases the bacteria causing the disease are resistant to all available antibiotics. Studies are also being conducted on the impact of the non-therapeutic use of antibiotics in agriculture on water quality.

Both the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization have stated that antibiotics on which we depend for human medicine should no longer be used as growth promoters in agriculture.

Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME) have joined their House colleagues, Representatives Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Wayne Gilchrest (R-MD), to introduce legislation that, if enacted, will end the overuse of medically important antibiotics in animal agriculture. The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (S. 1460/H.R. 2932) will phase out, within two years of enactment, the practice of routine feeding of antibiotics to food animals.

Statement of Principles

Women Food and Agriculture Network has endorsed the principles of the Keep Antibiotics Working Campaign:

1. We support efforts to curb the growing public health threat of antibiotic resistance by reducing the overuse and misuse of antibiotics in both agriculture and human medicine.

2. We support a ban on the use in healthy farm animals of antibiotics used in human medicine or closely related to human drugs.

3. We support efforts to promote sustainable agricultural production methods that provide alternatives to the use of antibiotics in healthy farm animals.

4. We urge companies involved in the production and marketing of meat, poultry and fish (livestock producers, supermarkets, restaurants, etc.) to voluntarily agree to stop using, buying, or selling products produced with using antibiotics other than for the purpose of treating sick animals.

5. We support efforts to educate patients and doctors about the prudent use of antibiotics, including the importance of prescribing them only for bacterial infections and of taking the entire course of the drug.

6. We support the creation of a nationwide system to collect objective, verifiable data on the production and use of antibiotics in both human medicine and animal agriculture, and to make that information available to the public.

7. We affirm the importance of ongoing collection of data at the state and federal levels on antibiotic residues and antibiotic resistance, including antibiotics and antibiotic-resistant bacteria both on food and in surface and ground waters.

If you are a member of other organizations and public interest groups, encourage them to endorse these principles. For more information, see www.keepantibioticsworking.org or www.saveantibiotics.com.

(Kathleen Lane has 20 years experience in organizing and advocacy for sustainable agriculture and food safety issues. She is a nutritionist in private practice in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.)

The Fate of Family Farming

Book Review



The Fate of Family Farming

by Ronald Jager

University Press of
New England, 2004

Review by Pat Hynes

The author of *The Fate of Family Farming* is a retired professor of philosophy who grew up on an 80-acre family farm in the Midwest. Like his life, this book joins four case studies of contemporary New Hampshire family farms that, through resilience and adaptability, have survived the tragic decline of small farms in the twentieth century. These farms have survived with a history of American ideas and ideals about farming over the past four centuries.

Ideas developed in this book include the vicious cycle of technological efficiency driving greater production and lowering prices so that farms have to “get big or get out.” This is also an important critique of biotechnology that, with government collusion, has invaded the U.S. food system like an epidemic. Farming in the author’s lifetime has changed from “small, comprehensible, and manageable in scale” to a one-dimensional, industry-dominated commodity enterprise, with farmers being the losers. In 1950, farmers received 50 cents of every food dollar; today they receive less than 20 cents per food dollar.

The lessons drawn from the four family farms, which produce and market maple syrup, corn and eggs, milk, and apples, respectively, include the following:

1.) Farmers have to specialize in one or two crops and concentrate on producing and marketing;

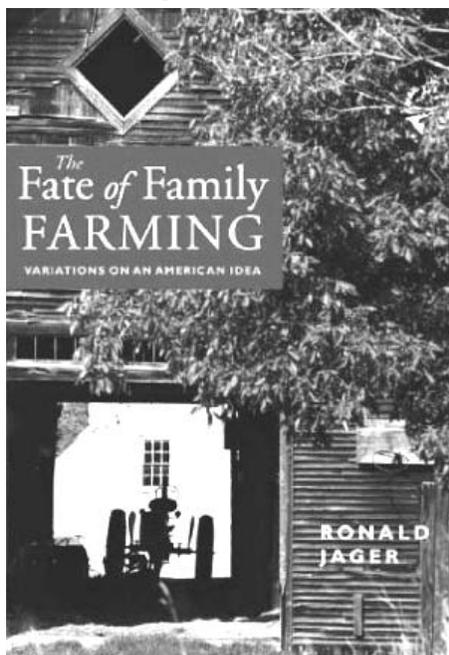
2.) Farmers may benefit from buying from local small farms and wholesalers, in order to work with an economy of scale.

3.) Farmers may benefit by contracting with other farmers or growing for a processor who contracts with them.

4.) Farmers are developing niche products (such as goat cheese) which sell

well locally as well as in specialty shops and large markets, where they compete with global markets of the same product.

Late in the book, we learn that family farms have stabilized in New Hampshire; that the number of women farmers in that state is growing with 17 percent of farms headed by women (the highest percentage in the country, according to the author); and that several Women in Agriculture Networks (or WagNs) exist in New England. This book finishes with the insight that the “soul of agriculture” is being renewed by a combination of resistance to agribusiness and creative



initiatives, including farmer and consumer networks of community food security, food policy councils, coops, CSAs, re-emerging farmers’ markets, sustainable and organic agriculture, and the emergence of women as leaders in all of these domains. The book’s major shortcoming is that the author did not provide a case study of a woman-headed New Hampshire farm to document the evidence of women’s central role historically in family farm agriculture and the significance of women’s growing role as farm owner.

(Pat Hynes teaches, does research and community service in the Department of Environmental Health at Boston University School of Public Health.)

The Importance of Women’s Voices

by Stephanie Andersen

I grew up in a small town in Iowa. My parents both grew up on farms, and my dad continued to work for a family farm after he moved to town. Often, I accompanied my dad to work where I learned about tractors, cornfields, pigs, and life on the farm in general. Although I grew up around agriculture, I didn’t really understand the economic and worldly importance of agriculture until joining the “Life in Iowa” program at Iowa State University.

Through the “Life in Iowa” program, I have learned that the economical, ecological, and spiritual connections we make with the land are important to developing sustainable agricultural practices that protect our water sources and our delicate ecosystems.

I have had the opportunity this summer to volunteer for Denise O’Brien and WFAN. This has given me insight into the role women have in agriculture. Where I grew up, farming was, and is still, seen as a mostly male-dominated occupation. WFAN supports women who are making a living in agriculture, committed to the preservation of the land and environment, and who deserve to have a voice in agricultural policies.

I am glad that I did this volunteer service. It was an honor for me to work with the Women, Food, and Agriculture Network this summer. Although the summer is close to its end, I will continue to stay in contact with Denise and WFAN.

(Stephanie Andersen is a senior at Iowa State University.)

Life in Iowa at Iowa State University

Forty-six Iowa State University undergraduate students are interning in Iowa nonprofit organizations. Four students are interning in Iowa businesses. Each student also volunteers 100 hours to civic service projects that are of high priority to leaders in their summer communities. Thirty Iowa counties are hosting Life in Iowa students.

Summer Intern Stories of Life on Iowa Women-Run Farms, 2004

Farming is a hard business

by Rachel Hein of Cedar Rapids.

Farming is a hard business, full of bittersweet realities and little rewards that take your breath away. When I came to ZJ Farm the ground was still cool and the thunderstorms rolled in one after another. I had just left Seattle, and was feeling the culture shock of returning to my rural roots. The farm life that I had imagined back in my West coast apartment wasn't completely unrealistic. As the weeks wore on, my arms and shoulders grew stronger, my skin tanned and I grew more confident with my chores and with the plants we were growing.

What I hadn't expected was to see how the farmers sell their heart and soul when they buy into a plot of land. Their life and the lives of their family become intertwined with the footsteps of lambs and the rhythm of plantings almost to the point of being unable to untangle even for a day. There is an energy that infuses that way of life that doesn't come from the buzz of espresso stands or adrenaline rushes in traffic, but from the vibrations of nature itself. Bees buzzing. Thunderclouds rolling. Hooves beating.

Women farmers don't escape the stress levels of their urban counterparts, it just comes in a different form, as a constant dull hum. Farm bills are a harsh reality always hanging overhead. Often there is a second income that must be earned to support a way of life that now must be sought and created. Markets have to be hunted and conquered, and it's a daily battle to keep not only your farm in working order, but also your own muscles and bones.

The rewards: A healthy family pulled together tightly, an involvement in the community around you that runs deep with friendships and meaning, ruby red cheeks warmed by the sun. Nature!

While my own body enjoyed the hard labor and a well-earned meal at the end of the day, my back was beginning to ache. The money that had seemed like enough to for a start, paled when set next to a

\$4,000 hoop house. The goats demanding to be milked morning and night and the tractors constantly breaking began to emerge as a love/hate relationship with no end.

There's good reason to respect the farmers who provide us with food, and especially the one's who go the extra mile on their knees to provide the conscientious foods that feed the heart, soul and community. But don't expect to be a real farmer until you're ready to give your heart and soul to that farm. It will pay you back in time.

(Rachel Hein interned at the farm of Susan Zacharakis-Jutz near Solon, IA)

Green Beans

by Zoe Anderson

Green Beans the magical fruit
The more I eat, the more I dispute
Whether they're bad or whether
they're good
Face it green beans, you're
misunderstood
Whether they're fat or tall and thin
Sorry green beans, you just cannot
win
'Cause out in the garden,
down on my knees
I'm not begging for you, I'm begging
for peas

I Walked the Produce Section

by Kelsey Herringa

I returned to the brightly-lit superstores of my home city today following my five month stint at farm life. I walked the produce section, overwhelmed at how much I (or not-so-suddenly) understood

about the blood, sweat, and tears that goes into growing that food on the shelf. I see a huge ad to buy locally which is encouraging, but no evidence of local food. There is a continual dim hum from people milling around, many of whom might like to purchase organic or local but say it's too expensive and inconvenient to do all the time. I want to tell them that destroying the land through poor sustainability practices is going to eventually be quite expensive and inconvenient too.

I spent my spring and summer on a CSA (community Supported Agriculture) farm in Iowa, and I'm warning my family that I am not coming back the same person. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday through the summer, I watched the boxes pile high as members walked off with their share of the bounty. I knew that these customers escaped with a bargain of a deal.

Near the end of my stay at the farm I decided to do some comparison shopping. I recorded an average CSA half share: garlic, three cucumbers, three to four summer squash, two onions, beans that took hours to pick, pounds of potatoes, kohlrabi, Swiss chard, cilantro, basil, a pound of peppers, eight ears of corn, tomatoes and eggplants. Oh my!

I then walked around the Farmer's Market making sly observations on price to roughly size up what it would cost to buy this same food. Eventually I cascaded my way over to the Co-Op for a similar investigation. It turns out, through a very unscientific and random sampling, that this average box would run between \$26.50 and \$41.50! That means that for a season of growing, a half share at my farm would equal \$530 of Farmer's Market food, or \$830 worth from the store. All this available from the CSA for \$275. Not a bad deal, considering you meet a farmer and join a little community to boot. I met many a farmer and a joined the community during my experience in Iowa. I cannot think of a more convenient way to add meaning to my life. In fact, money and convenience appear to be just the incentive to join a CSA.

I'll work on these city folk for you.

And I'll be back.

(Kelsey Herringa interned at the Z-J Farm for the summer.)

Why Free Range Chickens? Take a Look at Confinement Chickens!

(Chickens, continued from page 1)

Without warning we were shuffled into a large, dark room with low ceilings and only slivers of light sifting in from the floor above. Our eyes didn't need to adjust much to notice the gigantic piles of chicken manure towering over the heads of five fugitive chickens. One after the other, the pyramids of chicken poop disappeared into the darkness as we were led by our smoker-friend up the stairs and into the dim light of the second story. Just as the piles disappeared below, the slow-moving conveyor belts covered

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in perfect, white eggs appeared above us, and the gradually increasing whisper of thousands of hens turned into a dull squawking, uncharacteristic of healthy birds.

At first glance, it was a nightmare. After a couple minutes of standing in front of the conveyor belts, it became a horrifying reality. Our shock turned to fear as we followed our smoker-friend down one of the aisles of chickens toward a man crouching down 100 feet in front of us. We were suddenly in a horror film where the walls were caving in and breathing normally was not an option. The runway we were walking on was not much more than one foot wide, leaving almost no room to turn around. We were surrounded by rows of cages the size of a small desktop computer stacked three high. And truly, the din of laying hens was so eerie and overpowering that talking over it seemed pointless.

Kelsey, leading us down the runway, would turn around every few seconds only to see each of us lag farther and farther behind as we attempted to take in what we were seeing without passing

out. Chickens with minimal feathering packed four and five to a cage with their beaks and claws slightly clipped and their indistinguishable croaks smothered by their neighbors. The chickens in the top row pooping on the chickens below them pooping on the chickens below them pooping on the pyramids of manure on the lower level. And all the while little, perfect, white eggs were being delicately carted away by the miniature conveyor belts that line the cages and fed into the larger conveyor belt at the end of the rows.

After what seemed like much too long, we ran into the man we were supposed to see, whose name turned out to be Orlando, not Jaime. Orlando had been working in the confinement for a little over two months and showed no sign of regret. He was, in fact, quite pleasant. He left what he was doing to follow us back down the runway to the conveyor belts where we had started our trek. On the way I looked up to see the dull florescent bulbs lighting the entire building, including the strips of fly paper that dangled between each bulb and gave the room an even creepier feel. I wanted to cry.

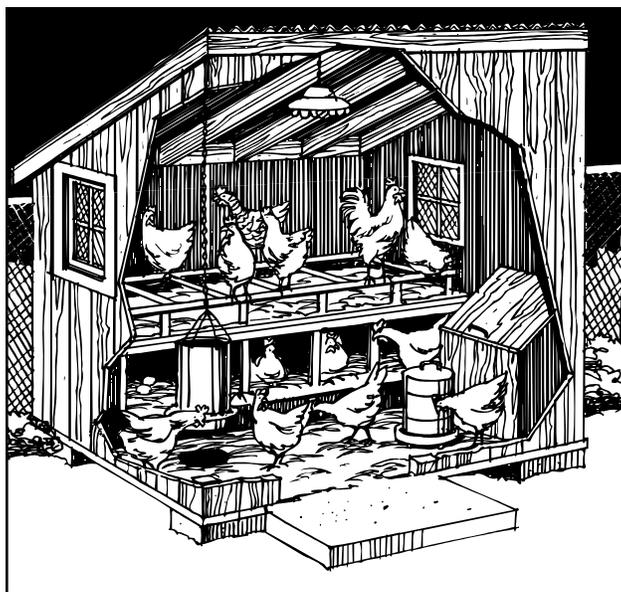
Kelsey was able to pay attention to what Orlando was explaining and learned that there were ten thousand chickens in each building. We later estimated that this single confinement probably contained ten buildings. One hundred thousand caged chickens! Orlando also explained that he and other "operators" were to allow the chickens to lay for six months. The operators then starve the chickens for two weeks. After that, they are able to lay for another six months and are then "done" and used in other products such as dog food.

By the end of this explanation of a confinement hen's short life span, we had reached the conveyor belts at which we began and thought our tour was

over. However, Orlando assured us, with pleasure, that we could see the packaging plant in the last building in the row. We followed him down the narrow hallways and through three more buildings that looked and sounded exactly as the first. We reached a small door and behind it found the expensive egg-cleaning machines that put people out of jobs and allow a huge corporate confinement to be maintained by a new employee such as Orlando.

Other than the woman standing next to the egg x-ray machine picking out the cracked ones and throwing them in a waste basket next to her, there were probably five other workers taking the neatly-packaged eggs and packing them swiftly into larger boxes to be shipped cross-country to Kroger's and WalMart. The machines washed, dried, fluffed, sorted, and packaged all of the eggs. No need for human contact whatsoever. And that's where the tour ended, as quickly and as shockingly as it had begun.

Outside we found ourselves on a patch of green grass around the corner from our car. We were as shocked and dismayed as we would have been being thrust back into Kansas after an overwhelming stay in Oz. We drove out of the parking lot without words. What was there to say? We had just come to the terrifying realization that everything we'd heard about confinement operations and the horrors within is true.



The White House Project

(<http://www.thewhitehouseproject.org/>)

The White House Project, a national non-partisan organization, is dedicated to advancing women's leadership across sectors, enhancing public perception's of women's ability to lead and fostering the entry of women into leadership positions, including the presidency.

The challenges:

- Although the United States is considered the birthplace of the women's movement, the U.S. ranks 52nd in the world in women's representation in national legislatures.
- Of more than 12,000 people who have served in the U.S. Congress since our country's founding more than 200 years ago, only 215 have been women. Similarly, only 26 of the nearly 500 United States Cabinet appointees have been women with 17 having been appointed since 1993.
- Women make up 60% of the workforce, yet only 6 women run fortune 500 companies.

The White House Project's groundbreaking initiatives are designed to transform the political and cultural climate so that it becomes commonplace and normal in the eyes of the public and the press for women to be governors, CEOs and president.

Women and Elected Office

* There are only nine women governors- And that's an all-time high! (www.cawp.rutgers.edu)

* Five states- New Hampshire, Delaware, Iowa, Mississippi, and Vermont- have never sent a woman to Congress! (www.cawp.rutgers.edu)

* Women make up 51% of the US population, and only 14% of the US Congress. (www.thewhitehouseproject.org)

* In total, 73 of the 535 members of Congress (both houses) are women (13.6% overall). (www.cawp.rutgers.edu)

* Looking at the young elected leaders of today- 86% are male! (www.eagleton.rutgers.edu)

Coordinator's Corner

by Denise O'Brien

What a wonderful busy summer this has been. The cool weather in Iowa was received with mixed blessings. The coolness was such a relief on our bodies and minds, but on the other hand, it was hard to get the tomatoes and green peppers to ripen. I have talked with a number of farmers and everyone has had great greens, brassicas and potato crops, but it has been a terrible haymaking year! In all my years of farming I have dreamed of that perfect summer, that intersection of good moisture and good temperatures that equal good to excellent crops. Mother Nature is so very much in control! When you are a farmer or gardener, you must roll with the punches and take what She wishes to bestow.

The WFAN summer meeting was a great success. Everyone came together in north central Iowa near Jan Libbey's One Step At A Time Garden to share experiences of interning and mentoring. Friday night found us gathered in a large living room telling stories and sharing dreams. Lauren, who had just graduated in Horticulture from Iowa State University, found herself among like-minded women. Women who want to farm and take care of the land.

It was apparent that taking time out from a busy growing and marketing season is very difficult but very necessary. Nan, a producer, said that this was the best WFAN meeting she had attended. Michelle brought her eight-month-old, Otto, (the only male in attendance), and of course he was the center of attention.

We took time to canoe on a small lake where a large number of pelicans were residing. The Wright County Conservation Board equipped us with six

canoes and off we went. At times we would pull up next to each other to talk and then paddle off to another part of the lake. The day was topped off with a tour of Jan's farm and a potluck supper. The consensus of the group upon everyone's departure was that taking a break in the peak of growing season can restore lagging energy and create lasting friendships.

The highlight of August was taking the "Voices of Iowa Farm Women" project to the Iowa State Fair. WFAN and the Iowa Farmer's Union partnered to staff a booth for the eleven day fair. Cynthia Vagnetti created the thoughtful, inspiring video of seven Iowa women farmers, all WFAN members. A public screening and discussion was held on the first Saturday afternoon of the fair, and a booth where Cynthia's black and white photos of women farmers from around the United States were on display. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped staff the booth. Thanks also to Iowa Farmer's Union, Humanities Iowa and the Iowa Women's Foundation.

Zoe Anderson, Kelsey Herringa, Stephanie Anderson, Rachel Hein and Cassi Johnson, women who participated in WFAN's summer intern program, write most of the articles in this issue of the newsletter. It has been a delight to meet these young, energetic women who want to change the face of agriculture. The Coordinating Council of WFAN is committed to building a strong, credible intern program.

And finally, November 2nd is Election Day. A truly vibrant democracy depends on participation and an informed electorate. Please play an active role and help get out the vote.

Vote on November 2

**It is more important for you to vote this year
than in any other election of your lifetime.**

**Decisions about women's issues, the environment,
foreign policy, and civil and human rights
will be made in the next four years that will affect your life
and that of your children into the foreseeable future.**

**Women, Food
& Agriculture
Network**

A Tides Center Project
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Women, Food, & Agriculture Network

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on issues of food systems,
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