

Women, Food & Agriculture Network

Women in Agriculture: Good Work!



by Teresa Opheim

To all of you WFAN members, you who farm, garden, support, and care for others: "You do good work."

I'm not just giving you a casual compliment, like "good job." I'm saying that you are living your lives well.

As Matthew Fox explains in the book *The Reinvention of Work*, "work" is far different than a "job." One can turn a job into work, but work is about something much bigger. Work is growing healthful food, tending a patch of land, caring for loved ones, cooking meals—all of those actions that don't show up on the GNP (Gross National Product) but make life worth living.

Fox, an Episcopal priest, quotes Studs Terkel, in pointing out that work needs to be "about a search, too, for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying."

All work depends on healthy soil, water, air, bodies, minds, and spirits—all of the elements we are working for in sustainable agriculture. According to Fox: "When work moved from farm to city, from land to concrete, from hands to machine, music was lost. Perhaps the greatest loss was the sense of cosmic

wonder, of interrelationships with the universe, with nature, with the stars and breezes and plants and animals, that was integral to workers on the land."

"Where our work is service oriented—geared to relieving ignorance, physical pain, unemployment, sexism, neglect, emotional pain, boredom—we are trying to do something about the dark night. But work is also capable of creating the dark night—when, for example, our work contributes to the devastation of the planet, to the despair of the young, to hoarding when we ought to be sharing, to control and power games instead of celebrating, to putting people down instead of lifting them up, to injustice instead of to justice," Fox writes.

You all are doing something about the dark night.

Concludes Fox: "We all need inner work and work that opens the doors of interdependence of wonder, and of possibility. We need these things far more than we need thirty brands of toothpaste or forty styles of watches. If we pay attention to these basic needs, we would have work for everyone."

(Teresa Opheim is a fourth-generation Iowan and mother of a seven-year-old. She "works" for the Midwest Sustainable Ag Working Group, of which WFAN is a member.)

Mission

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



Calendar

Jan. 6-8, 2005: Midwest Sustainable Ag Working Group (MSAWG) winter meeting, in St. James, NE. Contact Teresa Opheim at <teresa@msawg.org> or see website: <www.msawg.org/>

January 6-8, 2005: The Great Plains Vegetable Conference, Ramada Inn in St. Joseph, MO. Call 785-532-6173.

January 14-15, 2005: Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference. Airport Holiday Inn, Des Moines. This year's conference will celebrate PFI's 20th anniversary with the theme "Reflections on Our Past, Visions for Our Future: Twenty Years of Sustainable Agriculture in Iowa." Dual keynote speakers are Stewart Smith from the University of Maine and Woody Tasch from the Investors' Circle.

January 19-22, 2005: Ecological Farming Conference. Asilomar Conference Grounds, Pacific Grove, CA. Call 831-763-2111; see website <www.eco-farm.org>.

January 21-22, 2005: Overall Conference for Rural Women. Marriott Hotel, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Registration is \$100 by Jan. 7. Late registration is \$125. Part-time registration options will be offered. For more information and to register online, visit <www.ucs.iastate.edu/mnet/overallwomen/home.html> or call 800-262-0015, or contact your local county extension office.

January 21-22, 2005: Minnesota Organic and Grazing Conference. St. Cloud, MN. Call Meg Moynihan, 651-296-1277.

February 1-2, 2005: Beginning Grower Workshop. St. Cloud Civic Center, St. Cloud, MN. Call 763-434-0400.

February 3-5, 2005: Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture Conference. State College, PA. Call 814-349-9856; see website <www.pasafarming.org/conferences/confinfo.htm>.

February 4-5, 2005: INCA Conference in Atlantic and Anita, IA. Find more information at: <www.growinca.org>. Contact Kevin Jensen at 515-450-0092 or <kevbojensen@yahoo.com>.

February 11-12, 2005: Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society Winter Meeting, Aberdeen, SD. Call Theresa Podoll, 701-883-4304; email: <tpnpsas@drtel.net>; website <www.npsas.org>.

February 24-26, 2005: Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference. Opening keynote speakers will be documentary photographer and video producer, Cynthia Vagnetti, and farmer and cultural organizer, Audrey Arner. Cynthia and Audrey will facilitate an interactive media experience featuring stories of farmers from the Upper Midwest. Other keynote speakers scheduled to present at the conference are Dana Jackson from The Land Stewardship Project, who will speak on "Organic Farming and Wild Nature: Setting a Higher Standard," and Organic Policy Specialist, Jim Riddle, who will discuss the "Values, Virtues and Visions" of organic agriculture. Email: <info@mosesorganic.org>, call 715-772-3153, or write UMOFC P.O. Box 339, Spring Valley, WI 54767; website: <www.mosesorganic.org>

February 24, 2005: Courses: eight separate courses will be offered to help you succeed in organic agriculture. Instructors include farmers and professionals in the organic field who will be able to give you the best, most up-to-date information possible. Each session will have detailed course material and an extensive resource notebook to help you apply your education long after the course is completed. The registration forms will be available in December 2004; website <www.mosesorganic.org/ou/ou.htm>

Opportunities

Growing Your Small Market Farm

Jan. 8-April 16, 2005—Curriculum Weekend Workshops
May-Oct.—One-On-One Assistance as Needed
Nov.-Dec.—Group meetings

A business planning program supplemented with:

- Accountant Software and Training
- Institutional Visits
- Marketing Material Development
- Become a Network Member

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:

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Non-Profit Management Academy

Anyone seeking professional development in the area of nonprofit management, including staff, management, volunteers, professional association employees, educators, and private sector employees who wish to make a career change to the nonprofit sector. Those interested in building skills of new managers or enhancing leadership are strongly encouraged to participate.

These are one day courses and are scheduled from January through June. For more information call Sandy Scholl at 319-234-6811 or <sscholl@iastate.edu> or Krishna Das at 319-337-2145 or <krdas@iastate.edu> or visit the website at <www.extension.iastate.edu/Countries/blackhawk.html>.

Classes will be held at the Black Hawk County Extension Office, Waterloo, Iowa. Sponsored by Iowa State University, University of Northern Iowa and Iowa Shares.

Southwest Iowa Family Farms Directory

A new online tool is now available for southwest Iowa's small and mid-size farmers who are seeking ways to expand their markets and increase profitability.

The Southwest Iowa Family Farms Directory is a free service offered by the Henry A. Wallace Chair for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University.



At the directory website, which is available at <www.wallacechair.iastate.edu>, farmers can set up an account to create a profile for their farm. Farmers can then search the directory for information about other producers in their area, including products, transportation, processing, storage, and interest in cooperation with other farmers. Consumers can also search the website to find farmers selling home-grown produce.

A Reflection on the Election: Just One Piece of the Pie

by Julia Olmstead

I know I was not alone in my feelings of despair the morning of Wednesday, November 3, 2004. Like many in this swing state of Iowa I had put in long hours knocking on doors and making phone calls in an attempt to "turn out the vote", with the hope that doing so would help to change the direction this country has been heading for many years. It was indeed bittersweet to know that we had turned out record numbers of voters, only to see the presidential election go to a man who has led this country into one of the deepest holes it has ever known.

My party leanings are obvious, but I have to believe that marginalized peoples across this country - women, minorities, rural residents, the poor, young people - felt disappointment that matched mine not only on Wednesday, but throughout this drawn-out and gut-wrenching election season - regardless of party. At what point did either of the presidential candidates talk openly and meaningfully about issues that particularly concern us?

Where were the forums and answers to questions about their views on education, healthcare, the environment, agriculture and rural economies, to name just a few? Why did it feel that no matter how many doors I knocked on, my voice (and my vote) was hardly large enough to create change no matter who won the election?

These feelings, I believe, are partly the result of the fallacy of this nation's focus on electoral politics - in particular, on presidential elections. This election was one of the most emotionally-charged and hotly contested in history, but every four years we stir up a dramatic combination of media blitzes, campaign inundations and inspired activism to be followed by feelings of utter defeat and apathy or a soft glow of victory into which we tiredly fade until another three years or so have gone by. The problem with this strategy is that no matter which party is elected, they continue consistently to mostly ignore our concerns as citizens. We watch as they set the stage, act out the play, and give themselves plenty of

applause.

But what leaves me hopeful after November 2, rather than ready to pack my bags and head to Canada, is that presidential elections are only one piece of the working-for-change pie. One of the best things to come out of this election was the fervor of activism inspired like never before. People across the country turned out in droves to work to see their candidate elected. And now, if we really hope to turn this country back into one we feel proud of, one we feel we really belong in, we can funnel this energy into creating grassroots movements with local thinking and practice. Such efforts include the Women, Food, and Agriculture Network that remains autonomous and strong in their work no matter the way of the winds blowing from Washington.

Less than a week after the election, I received an email convocation calling all activists in my community of Ames, Iowa, to a meeting to discuss "what's next". Though the meeting had no agenda and was marked mostly by expressions of disappointment over the election results, it was powerful in that so many people came together on a Monday night to figure out what they could do, together, as a community, to create change. It was the beginning of something powerful. It felt good like no amount of door knocking had.

As women in agriculture, we're faced with an uphill battle for the next four years - for improved access to healthcare, better education for our children, support for sustainable agriculture and strong rural communities. But we've got an advantage and a head start on our work. We're committed to place and local practice, we express our commitments to the Earth through our agricultural acts and ways of living on the land, and we have a network already of women who share common goals, concerns and dedication. Thank goodness presidential elections are only one piece of the pie.

(Julia Olmstead is a graduate student in sustainable agriculture at ISU.)

What's for Lunch?

by Audrey Hill, Public Citizen

In the last several years, as irradiated food has become more commonplace it has remained controversial, sparking debate by governments, scientists, consumers, and even school officials. Irradiation proponents see it as a way to reduce food-borne illness, like salmonella, that have become particularly common in recent years and have led to large-scale food recalls. However, there is much we do not know about irradiation's effect on food and consumers' health, and what we do know is concerning. Nevertheless, the USDA permitted irradiated ground beef in the National School Lunch Program, disregarding overwhelming public objections.

So What is Irradiation?

Irradiation exposes food to high doses of ionizing radiation to kill bacteria. Advocates of the technology tout its ability to kill bacteria that cause food-borne illness (important for the meat industry), as well as the bacteria that make food rot (important for global trade in fruits and vegetables.) But that's not all irradiation does. "Treatment" by irradiation disrupts the chemical composition of food, depleting vitamins and nutrients and causing the creation of new chemicals - some of which do not naturally occur in food and that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has never studied for safety.

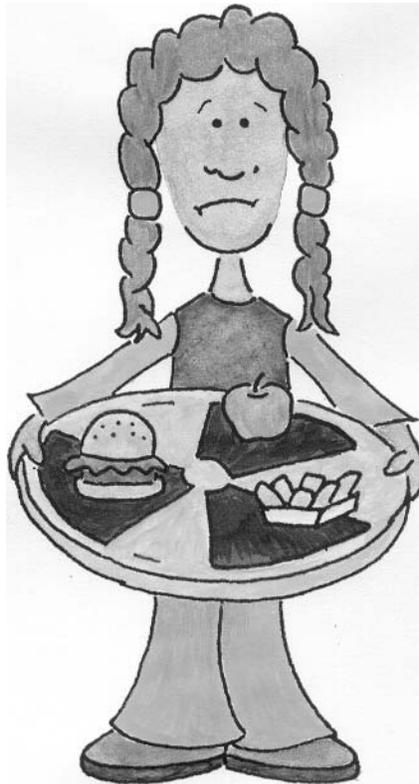
One class of chemicals created by irradiation has been shown to promote cancer development and genetic damage in rats, as well as genetic damage in human cells. Irradiation also increases the levels of known carcinogens, such as benzene, in some foods. Additionally, this technology can deplete significant nutrients and vitamins, for example, up to 80 percent of vitamin A in eggs and 48 percent of beta carotene in orange juice. Irradiation is particularly harmful to vitamins A, B, C and E. Some vitamins experience accelerated losses during storage after food has been irradiated, compounding depletion.

It's important to note that consumers do have a tool to use at home to protect themselves from the pathogens that cause

food-borne illness - proper cooking. As a 2002 Consumer Reports' article notes, "There's no reason to [buy irradiated meat] if you cook meat thoroughly. Irradiation actually destroys fewer bacteria than does proper cooking."

What Does Irradiation Mean for Farmers?

Large meatpackers are interested in irradiation as a quick fix for preventable contamination problems caused by unsanitary conditions and fast line speeds in slaughterhouses (up to 400 cattle per hour in some large slaughterhouses). Additionally, agribusiness corporations



want to grow more fruits and vegetables in the developing world, where labor is cheap and environmental regulations are weak or non-existent. Zapping this food with ionizing radiation would kill the invasive insects that are considered "barriers to trade" and allow food to be shipped over long distances. Family farmers and small producers cannot compete with overseas production and the large "factory" farms in the U.S. that drive prices below their cost of produc-

tion. In fact, two of the major purposes of irradiation, increasing shelf life and destroying barriers to importation, subvert a locally-grown, sustainable production system.

By and large, irradiated food has struggled to take hold in the marketplace. Irradiated food sold in grocery stores must be marked with the "radura," a flower-like symbol, and the words "Treated with Irradiation." Due to this labeling, and the fact that irradiated food is generally more expensive than non-irradiated, consumers have largely shunned irradiated food. Public Citizen recently surveyed grocery chains and found out that dozens of chains had stopped carrying irradiated meat because of low sales.

However, there's one group that does not have the benefit of a mandatory label: school kids. Unlike grocery stores, irradiated food served in restaurants, hospitals, and schools does not have to be labeled. Without this information, students and parents cannot make an informed decision about what they eat at school. Because of health concerns, and because children are uniquely vulnerable to toxics, ten school districts (including Iowa City) have banned irradiated food. The Seattle district has a strong directive against irradiated food as part of a "buy local, buy organic" healthy school nutrition policy. The public is increasingly recognizing the importance of healthy and local school food, as evidenced in the growing popularity of farm-to-school programs, and irradiated food is counter to these efforts.

What Can You Do?

As a consumer, you can choose not to buy it and tell your grocery store you don't want it. You can also write a letter to your school district's Food Service Director, expressing your concerns and asking them not to purchase it. Finally, you can work to get a ban passed in your school district, either on its own, or as part of a comprehensive, healthy school lunch policy. For more information, see www.foodirradiation.org or contact Audrey Hill at ahill@citizen.org or 202-454-5185.

Fifth Annual Fall Harvest: What Gives You Hope?

by Kate Jacobson

By breath, by blood, by body, by spirit, we are all one...

Thirteen women congregated for the Fifth Annual Fall Harvest Gathering for Women in Sustainable Agriculture at the Eagle Bluff Environmental Center in Lanesboro, Minnesota. There were farmers and consumers alike holding in common a desire for healthy food, families, and communities by supporting sustainable agricultural practices.

As we sat around the fireplace to begin the retreat, we were asked to share what gives us hope.

One and a half weeks after hearing the 2004 election results, this simple question took extra thought. Yet, listening to the diverse responses, I gained renewed hope just in the fact that people are not giving up. We spent the evening letting out frustration and hopelessness while accumulating greater reason to continue our efforts.

The air that is my breath...is the air that you are breathing

And the air that is your breath...is the air that I am breathing

The wind rising in my breast...is the wind from the east, from the west, from the north, from the south

Breathing in, breathing out.

After a delicious breakfast, Saturday morning consisted of fresh air, scenic views and balancing acts on single wire cords 30 feet in the air! Luckily for the five women in the treetops, there was strong support and encouragement from below. The ropes course at Eagle Bluff is used to build confidence and strengthen group bonds...I'll say, we renamed ourselves the Flying Feminist Farmers.

The water that is my blood my sweat, tears from crying

Is the water that is your blood your sweat, tears from crying.

And the rising of the tide is in our veins and in the ocean wide.

We are in the rising steam, rushing river, running stream.

We were honored to hear from five women over the course of the weekend. Beth Waterhouse shared insight and words from her recent book, *Time, Soil and Children: Conversations with the Second (and third) Generation of Sustainable Farm Families*. One person Beth had interviewed, Inga Haugen, was there to tell us first-hand her experience as a second generation farmer. Lea Karlssen gave us an introduction to principles of permaculture, a practice that



focuses on observing healthy natural systems and incorporating those systems into farms and landscapes.

Stacey Brown, a produce manager for Wheatsfield Cooperative in Ames, discussed her experience with local farmers from a retailer's perspective. Sue Abromaitis (our farthest attendee from Maryland), spoke about the creation of a farmers market in Souix City and the expanding role of the Humane Society of the United States.

Our day of workshops covered everything from working directly with soil and animals to selling and educating consumers. The hard work of these women are a few examples of the effort taking place throughout the world to change how we perceive food and our relationship with the land.

The earth is dust, the earth is clay, flowers blossoming and fading.

We are dust and we are clay we are blossoming and fading.

Every color, every sound, every place is holy ground.

Oh, every living thing, can you hear it laugh? Can you hear it sing?

An important but not always recognized role of organizations like Women, Food, and Agriculture Network, Iowa and Women in Sustainable Agriculture,

Minnesota is celebration of the voices of women and the beauty of the world around us. The words interspersed in this article are song lyrics by Sara Thomsen. Although Sara was unable to make it to the conference physically, she was with us every step of the way. We sang together at the beginning of the conference and we sang together these words at the closure. The words remind us of the necessity to work together to fulfill our mission of "linking and amplifying

women's voices on issues of food systems, sustainable communities, and environmental integrity".

Recognizing that there are others fighting the same issues we face is critical in maintaining hope and energy in our day to day lives.

The fire in my heart... my soul flame is burning

Is the fire in your heart... your soul flame is burning.

We are spirit burning bright by the light of day, in the dark of night.

We are shining like the sun and like the moon, like the holy one.

The 2004 Fall Harvest Women's Gathering was not just another ordinary conference. Besides the workshops and discussions, there was a strong element of nurturing our bodies and spirits. For the women gathered at the Eagle Bluff Environmental Center, this weekend was a chance to retreat from daily struggle in order to celebrate each other's support, efforts, and expression.

By breath, by blood, by body, by spirit, we are all one...and we will continue working toward a system of agriculture that strengthens rather than weakens our relationships with the world.

What gives me hope?

Flying Feminist Farmers!

(Kate Jacobson was an intern through the WFAN internship program for the summer of 2004. She worked on the farm of David and Perry-O Sliwa near Decorah, Iowa. She is a recent graduate of Luther College.)

Time, Soil, and Children: Conversations with the 2nd Generation

Book Review



Time, Soil, and Children, Conversations with the Second Generation of Sustainable Farm Families in Minnesota

by Beth E. Waterhouse

(Self-published by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, July, 2004.)

The blue eyes of a happy, muddy baby shine on the cover of this little book. Ariana Lentz Andres is playing in the soil of her Grampa's farm one warm summer day, and she looks to be enjoying every minute.

"I remember when I was quite young playing in the dirt near the garden while my parents worked. Later we weeded and we were always helping out,"

Brandon Rutter remembers growing up in southeastern Minnesota. The author, Beth Waterhouse, wondered if such memories of the hard work sustainable farms demanded were motivators or if they served to spoil the relationship to land. What had happened to the young people on those farms that became sustainable farms? Did hard work burn them out? Were they ever so glad to leave the farm or were they called to return to this lifestyle? What has influenced their lives? As adults, what do these farm children carry away from that particular family experience?

What Waterhouse did with her questions can now be read in a 52-page book called *Time, Soil, and Children* (2004). In 2003/04, with support from the Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems, she interviewed fifteen young people, all second generation to those Minnesota farm families who made the shift from conventional practices to sustainable farming in the 1970s and 1980s. Beth has also added her own voice exploring such topics as the meaning of work, the power of leaving home, the importance of direct experience, the impact of beauty, and the motivation that comes from your own children.

"First things that come to mind about

growing up in our family are all the chores we had to do," remembers Connie Carlson, daughter to Carmen Fernholz, grower of hogs and organic grains. It's true that the first recall in nearly every interview had something to do with chores—putting up hay, feeding sows, weeding strawberries. Connie's brother, Craig, probably wins the prize in this book as the youngest boy to do daily barn chores. Craig remembers that he pretty much ran the barn the year he was nine. "The hardest thing was to guess when to bring the pregnant sows in... you had to closely watch them." Later Craig admits, "I actually did come to hate it. I dreaded going out there every single day." Yet Craig Fernholz also details the ways in which this particular youth has left him the exact kind of person he is—a young man who loves to figure things out, loves to work with his hands, loves to gaze at stars.

Time, Soil, and Children does not tell you all the answers, but with the voices of fifteen young people, you surely get to hear many good stories. Waterhouse heard from young people who know what it's like to be rebels in farm country. She recorded the stories of those who now clearly know their own desires and who will likely be leaders in their own fields—be they diverse farm fields or diverse fields of interest. One theme was the power of leaving home.

"When I graduated, the last thing I ever wanted to do was anything with agriculture or the farm," recalls Amanda Bilek. "It took being out of that <home> environment to appreciate the value of the farm. You come to college in St. Paul and are around all these kids who don't even think about where their food is coming from." It was natural for Amanda, after slaughtering chickens on Saturdays as a teenager, to want to know the source of her own chicken sandwich!

"I figured the parents must have influenced the children," remarks Waterhouse in retrospect. "What I didn't understand is how the new baby, the child in arms, motivates parents even before they can talk or walk."

As Waterhouse comments, "It becomes apparent that each generation

puts its hopes in the next one, and not so much on specific behaviors or dreams of that next generation, but simply on their presence. Even operational changes on their home farmsteads are made in the name of the next generation. In the Van Der Pol clan, this seems to be true. I remember Jim standing in St. Paul in the Minnesota Project office one day in 1997 or so, saying that if he hadn't gone into diverse and sustainable operations, Josh might not want to come back to the farm. Now Josh does not so much talk about the opportunity for himself as he speaks of the opportunity to have his own children with him. "When Jacob was born," said Josh Van Der Pol, "I wanted to give him the life I'd had."

In its final aspect, this small book is a book about hope. And as she looks back on those stated hopes in her epilogue, Beth sees this: "This group of people have been handed a deeper-than-ordinary knowledge about the land and its ills and losses. This knowledge could have buckled the knees of these young lives, yet it did not. To a person, they meet their knowledge with enthusiasm and resolve."

Then she lists off eleven elements of life that this second generation calls for in their own hopes for the future. You'll read that they hope for such things as citizen awareness about food, a clean environment with a good mix of energy, children who can live without fear, land as a living entity that is free to heal itself. No small list, comments the author, and she calls the list, "guiding principles behind a hundred potential policies in agriculture, education, and environmental protection." Waterhouse ends with the voice of the young, but only after she reflects one more time on their collective wisdom. "These are solid, sustainable hopes for a better world, spoken at a time when young people could very easily become hopeless. They have not, and therefore we should not—there is work to be done and now is the time to get deeply into it."

(Time, Soil, and Children can be purchased for \$6 from the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, St. Paul, MN. Contact 800-909-6472 or www.misa.umn.edu. Beth Waterhouse works as writer and editor.)

Women, Land and Legacy Update

by Denise O'Brien

Over a year ago WFAN, Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), National Catholic Rural Life Conference (NCRLC), National Ag Statistics Service (NASS) and Ecumenical Ministries of Iowa (EMI) began the Women, Land and Legacy project (refer to March 2004 issue). With the backing of the Iowa State Outreach Council (SOC), Tanya Meyer-Dedrickson, Beth Grabau, Mary Swalla-Holmes, Dick Tremain, Kay Triplett, Carol Richardson Smith and Denise O'Brien have been putting together a unique program to reach Iowa women farm landowners. The organizations are working with local USDA agencies in Wapello, Howard, Lyon, Marshall and Cass Counties to bring women together to address their needs as women landowners.

This project is based on the cutting edge work that WFAN began in Cass County in 2000. Because women are becoming the majority farm landowners in Iowa and across the country, Federal agencies are beginning to realize that much of their work will be doing outreach to these women. According to the Cass County Survey that was completed in March 2003, women want to get information through one on one contact or through small meetings geared specifically towards women.

The first meeting with women outside of Cass County was held in Howard County on September 21st. The local USDA agencies blitzed the county with media. As a result, sixty one women came to the Howard County Nature Center in Cresco. The women spent the evening getting to know each other and to compare notes on what it is like to be a farmland owner.

The other three meetings in Lyon, Wapello and Marshall Counties will take place during the next couple of months. There will be a full report at the conclusion of these meetings.

For more information contact Denise O'Brien at 712-243-3264 or cwofan@metc.net/

Coordinator's Corner

by Denise O'Brien, Coordinator WFAN

The year has flown by and now it is time to reflect on what has happened over these past twelve months. It has been a roller coaster year. As far as my crops are concerned, it was not a good year. A late frost and lack of bees to pollinate my apple orchard meant a fall without apples. This hasn't happened very often but when it does, it makes me fully aware of the role of weather and beneficial insects. Having no cider is pretty devastating to our family. It is a staple for our Thanksgiving and Christmas. Chances are next year will be a banner year and will make up for the loss this year.

My strawberries also suffered from lack of pollination. There used to be several colonies of bees in the three or four square miles around our farm, but the beekeeper no longer has them here. My husband and I will have to decide this winter whether or not we will take up beekeeping next spring. Oh my, another project!

The election took up so much time and energy for so many of us that I believe everyone is in some state of exhaustion or post election stress. The hand-wringing and brow-beating will go on for a while, but those of you on the ground, organizing your communities, working hard for social change know that the work ahead is the most important work there is. After concentrating on the

national level in a number of elections over the past thirty years, I truly believe that change will continue to take place as long as we live in the manner of how we want the world to be. It is most important to communicate with our neighbors and our communities, to have open dialog about creating a better world. We all know that the issues we worked hard for during this election will not go away and in fact, may get worse. It is important not to give up and hide our heads in the sand. It is more important than ever to work for a clean environment, sustainable agriculture and healthy communities.

As we reach the end of the year, we can reflect on what has happened in 2004 and start to plan what needs to happen in the coming years. As a network of women involved in farming, the environment and our rural communities, we will prevail if we commit ourselves to working together to restore the health of our Mother Earth. It will be hard work, but all of us know that in the long run, we will succeed. There will be times of despair and frustration but as a community of women, we can support each other in our work.

Take time to rest this winter. Those long winter evenings with a book, music and conversation will restore us for another year. Winter brings a time of calmness for me. The frenetic world falls away so I can enjoy the beauty of snow and silence.

Access to Adequate Clean Water is a Human Right

Water is a basic element of all life. While a human being may survive without food for several days, water deprivation can kill a person within a matter of hours. Water is also a requirement for the most basic activities vital to sustaining human life, including agriculture, cooking, and sanitation. Yet while water sustains life, it can also bring death if contaminated. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares, "all human beings have the right to life"; this includes the right to water.

Although the international community recognized the right to water, as a component of the right to life, over fifty years

ago, millions around the world are still denied access to adequate amounts of clean water. Violations of the right to water come in many forms: industrial pollution of water sources, failure to provide purification and sanitation for the urban poor, pricing of water delivery beyond the reach of the rural poor. Recognizing a human right to water is an important step toward holding decision-makers accountable.

(Center for Economic and Social Rights, 162 Montague St., 2nd Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201; tel: 718-237-9145; email: <rights@cesr.org>

**Women, Food
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Network**

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