

# Cultivate 2012 Summit: Women Leaders Initiate Four Nationwide Action Steps for “Fixing Food”

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

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

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

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

and initiatives to magnify our voices and influence in the arena of sustainable agriculture and healthy food systems.”

Women attending the Racine gathering represented a wide range of backgrounds, such as Lydia Villanueva, a Latino farmer organizer from the Texas Panhandle, Severine von Tscharner Fleming of New York, a beginning farmer advocate and producer of the film *The Greenhorns*, and Aurora Conley, a tribal leader working to preserve native strains of wild rice in northern Minnesota. The group included farmers, leaders of national grassroots organizations, federal agency staff, political activists, researchers and communications professionals. Meet all of the women leaders here.

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

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



- a targeted **education campaign** for Congressional staff and leaders on policy issues of importance to women in sustainable agriculture;
- and an informational **toolkit** and resources to educate and inspire a broad diversity of “food voters.”.

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

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