



# **The Development of Mentorship Programs for Women in Agriculture**

## **A Global Perspective**

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## Salutation

*"Although we are many miles apart – we share the same earth and the same sky."* This was the opening statement of my first Nuffield travel blog. Little did I know how it would capture the very core of my being and bring such joy to me as I met the many wonderful people along the way. As I prepare for another journey, the next step, I feel again the thrill of adventure as we share our common interest of agriculture.

In all times and in all places, our very sharing of the same earth and sky knits us together. And, because we are connected in the production of food, there is a societal obligation to empower those who produce, process, prepare and present it. It is especially important to recognize and empower our global women who make up the majority of the agricultural workforce and grow more than half the world's food. A quote of my own, *"farming is without the restraint of border, class, gender, location, income, culture or politics,"* reflects the extraordinary opportunity of the business that we are in. And although in my lifetime I may never be able to properly measure or fully appreciate the impact all those new friends across the globe have had on my life, I will always be connected to them with a common thread. A thread that through my studies has propelled me from country field right through to the urban stage so that those who eat our food may understand that we share something very special and that we, the world's farmers, and in particular the world's women farmers, are as important as the air they breathe.

As my Grandfather used to say *"Once in your life you need a doctor, lawyer, preacher or policemen – but every day – three times a day – you need a farmer."* No other work is more honorable, no other life more complete, no other opportunity more exciting.

Hear my prayer! No man, women or child will taste the salt of hunger, suffer the disgrace of illiteracy, sit alone without light or suffer from the hands of the unjust in our future as we live, learn and work together. Women and women farmers will untie the bounds of the past when they are empowered, liberated, and enabled to work in an equal world that *holds in reverence* the hands that grow and prepare our food.





## **In Appreciation**

A very sincere thank you to my extraordinary family who loved me while I was away and joyfully welcomed me home. I deeply respect your care. You are all amazing!

Thank you to dear friends who encouraged this dream and were of great emotional support. You will always be in my heart.

Thank you to my community and sponsors that helped financially and to a greater Nuffield community who were my hosts, friends, guests and cheerleaders. Your name is written in my book for a lifetime.

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*This report is dedicated to my granddaughters who are strong, curious and innovative. They are our future leaders and they will inspire us with full knowledge of a borderless world. A world that appreciates and holds in reverence the hands that feed them – a world that honors women and girls – a world that that is built not on power - but empowerment.*



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## Background on Mentorship

The definition of mentorship is to empower. The meaning of empowerment is to enable, liberate, engage, free and permit. It is the drawing out of the very best in a person without the constraints of expectation or entitlement. Thus, to mentor is to guide the process so that an individual has the power to change their life, succeed in school, business and relationships, to lead and to love.

The antithesis of empowerment through mentorship is to measure or to set out conditions of performance. It is conditional while true mentorship is unconditional because you are the witness of another's choices without having a say in the outcome.

The research behind this report found that the term mentorship was also often misinterpreted as some sort of management or leadership training. Most certainly within corporations it has been used both properly to encourage individual growth and improperly to "train" an individual to conformity. There is a wide span of difference between the two which may result in confusion for administrators and for participants.

A study of mentorship models that are currently successful found that they were short in term, well- funded and had a strict protocol for the mentor. As funding is of major importance, this is an area that needs to be developed fully to deploy a national mentorship program. As an example, highly successful leadership programs for women in Australia had some difficulty with funding for mentorship because of the difficulty in reporting a measurable. There are currently not any long term national mentorship programs for women in agriculture anywhere in the world although there are state, province, regional or industry programs that have varying degree of engagement.



Women are passionate about agriculture and ready to serve the industry in leadership roles. Regardless of their country or status, they all face many of the same challenges worldwide and mentorship is important to equip women to address these issues.



## Executive Summary

This research project includes work in 12 countries, 184 farm visits, 250 interviews and sixty paper and media reviews. The travel was largely independent although I did participate in a global focus tour. A creative format of a global survey for women resulted in 3,900 entries from women aged 14 – 73 who farmed in eight countries. Women constitute 53% of the international workforce and in some areas that rises to over 90%. Globally, 30% of rural households are headed by women with 60% - 80% of those women solely responsible for all food production. As we face a global shortage of *access* to food: created by an exploding population, women farmers and indeed all farmers, will know unprecedented stress and challenge in the procurement and development of agricultural products. A failure to improve infrastructure and address policy that is enabling for women to access the same level of education, technology, credit and land ownership has not prepared farming women for the current and future complexities in farming, including the increases in input costs and the challenges of marketing. Indeed, women farmers in all culture are facing added stress without the support of systems that make much needed capital or knowledge readily accessible. Although consumers around the world are asking for a shorter link between the farmer and the fork, the political environment lacks an appreciation for this and fails to recognize that as resources for women increase, so does agricultural production and consumer interaction.

As rural economies are drained, the role of women in agriculture takes on urgency. In March of 2011, *Earth Times* reported that *"hungry people could be reduced by 150 million persons per year if women had the same access to land, technology, education, financial security and markets."* This is a call for gender equality that resonates worldwide. The *Dairy Women's Network of New Zealand* has stated that *"Gender equality is not just a lofty idea. It is critical for agricultural development and food security."* Agriculture and agri – food remains a family business. Issuing a standing invitation for girls and women to continue the legacy will be imperative to either maintain or grow an agricultural economy.

The research for mentorship programs for women in agriculture was driven by the statistical need for more engagement in mentorship of women in agriculture, the creation of a safe platform for women in all areas of agricultural production and processing, the lack of recognition for women in agriculture specifically in Canada, and the changing demographic of world residence, food patterns and future hunger challenges.



Overall, the global production and processing of food is in the hands of women. In North America women own and operate 30% of all farms with the exception of the province of British Columbia, Canada, where women own and operate 40% of all ranches and farms.

Although leadership and management models exist and flourish in many of the countries of the world for women, agricultural mentorship models implemented on a national scale are scarce and do not have longevity. This is reflective of the unmeasurable aspect of mentoring, *which is the empowerment of an individual*, and therefore difficult to fund. Most funding bodies have a desire or requirement to “tick off the box” of the measurable achieved. The personal nature of mentoring does not fit into this restrictive and thus the lack of nationally funded mentoring models for women in agriculture.

When asked, women in agriculture are firm that they are not a special class or a special needs category. They seek equality in the production, processing, marketing, preparation and presentation of food. They do however have strong views on how mentorship programs should be delivered and why they are of vital importance. In the global survey, 51.3% of respondents indicated that the reason for a mentor was for personal growth and 48.7% responded that the role of the mentor was for business growth. All respondents from eight countries expressed that the overarching reason for mentorship was to *optimize production and efficiencies on the farm*. Women clearly love farming and are deeply committed to the functionality and profitability of the farm.

Access to land is the most relevant handicap to agriculture worldwide. It is not that the land is not available; it is that it is so *uncertain*. Short term leases dominate agricultural production and in this, men and women, but especially women, face specific challenges particularly in cultures where land can be lost or taken away upon the death of a spouse or in times of political conflict.

A true lack of access to credit often hinders growth in what could be a thriving agricultural practise. Women in particular continue to be tied to their husband’s financial performance even when they are solely responsible for the production of food for family use and as income. Before we can advance women in agriculture *anywhere in the world*, there must first be gender equality from banks and local or village credit. Gender equality is not about separating men and women. It is *standing up for the excellence of the other* so that both may contribute in a way that they are gifted. Research has shown that given a level playing field in terms of access to credit, land and technology, production increases by 20% - 30% on land owned and operated by women.



Credit is often dependent on financial literacy. This resounds as a compelling argument for literacy worldwide for all boys and girls and in particular for women. Children should be taught commerce and financial literacy starting at a very early age. With a full knowledge of business and a business plan, the outright refusal to loan to or the conditional acceptance to loan to women is discriminatory.

Demographic shifts dictate that by the year 2020, 80% of the world's population will live within 60 km of a shore. The massive urbanization in almost every nation on earth has resulted in complexities with infrastructure, including Canada. It is interesting to note that women in remote areas that lacked supporting infrastructure to get food to market chose trade and marketing as priorities in mentoring. While urbanization has ignited cities this transition has parched rural landscapes. Women worldwide are taking on greater workloads and responsibilities in agriculture and need the financial and technical support. As one woman reminded me *"we need tractors too!"*

All survey respondents looked for a safe and accessible platform that included 50% face time and 50% interaction through modern technology, such as Skype. The gender of the mentor was not a significant factor as women were open to male and female mentors.

Mentorship programs that took into account the safety and security of the mentee had a good success rate with 70.3% of the women still involved in a mentorship relationship. Respondents indicated that mentorship was "critical" to personal and business growth and had great expectations of the mentor wanting them to "ask the tough questions".

Mechanisms to bring mentees and mentors together was a point of struggle for all women and further research indicated that although safe platforms were essential, the mentor was the critical point of success. A national study which I conducted, of current successful and past mentorship programs in a variety of agricultural sectors, including academia, revealed that the conduct of the mentor was pivotal to achievable outcomes. Mentorship programs repeatedly failed when there was a lack of process for screening and matching and training the mentor. In addition, it was important that the mentee have an avenue to terminate the relationship at any time. *Schoepp 2013*



Moving forward, 70% of participants in this research project indicated that government should support the development of mentorship programs for women in agriculture. Through this research it became very clear that if there was to be a mentorship program for women in agriculture in Canada, then I would have to build it and lead it. And so it is with this commitment that I have built a strategy based on the platform of *women empowering women to grow food, protect environments, enhance trade and secure financial independence for themselves, their families and their communities.*

The policy goal of the project is to introduce and educate communities and government departments on the benefits of mentorship programs. This is ongoing and I have spoken internationally to groups who wish to implement a long term national mentorship or internal mentorship strategy and I now mentor women in eight countries. In Canada, my current mentorship activities includes boys and girls (youth), young entrepreneurs (men and women), First Nations women and executive women in agriculture.

Women have expressed a need to learn in international teams and I will lead the first Women's Global Inspiration Tour in 2015. To bridge the gap between urban and rural I earned my *International Permaculture Design Certification* as part of this scholarship. My purpose was to be a bridge between urban and rural women and to have the technical training to implement urban and small scale agriculture.

The results of a research project such as this are many and are expressed fully in the complete document. Often, it is the unexpected that is the most cherished outcome. As I traveled, lived and conversed with folks around the world it became apparent that the presence of someone who cares has a dynamic impression on the host. A women farmer in Cuba, Cusa, said to me *"It is important that you are here – so others know that I exist."* As a Nuffield Scholar I have a societal obligation to ensure my research has application, not just so that I may prosper, but so that every man, women and child I have encountered is enlightened by our sharing of perspectives, knowledge, core values and beliefs.



## In Canada

Although it would seem at first glance that inequality and a lack of access to resources is limited to developing countries, the *United Nations* gives a very candid description of farming women worldwide labelling them as “*undervalued, underpaid and under recognized.*” Issues for women farmers and women engaged in agriculture are not limited to a far-away place. Canada does not have designated assistance, mentorship or support for women farmers. A collective voice of women for women that represents and addresses the issues that are truly Canadian is silent. Blanket statements regarding agriculture, farming or farming women are rarely valid. By working with and learning from women farmers at home and around the world, there was an opportunity to discuss and sift out what can and will work in a mentorship program.

Canadian women own and operate 30 % of agricultural enterprises (40% in the province of British Columbia) and they own 53% of small and medium businesses (SMB) which contribute \$27 billion the economy annually. Females in Canada are highly educated and in terms of agricultural education they are the majority of graduates. It is important that we provide these future farmers and farm leaders with the tools they need. As a national mentor through the *Cattlemen Young Leaders Program*, I appreciate the value of mentorship to both mentor and mentee. From the back forty to the boardroom, mentorship is vital to the success of the farm, company or corporation. The *Conference Board of Canada* has reported that it is not the glass ceiling that women hit in executive positions; it is the lack of mentorship and structure *for women from women* that often cripple advancement.

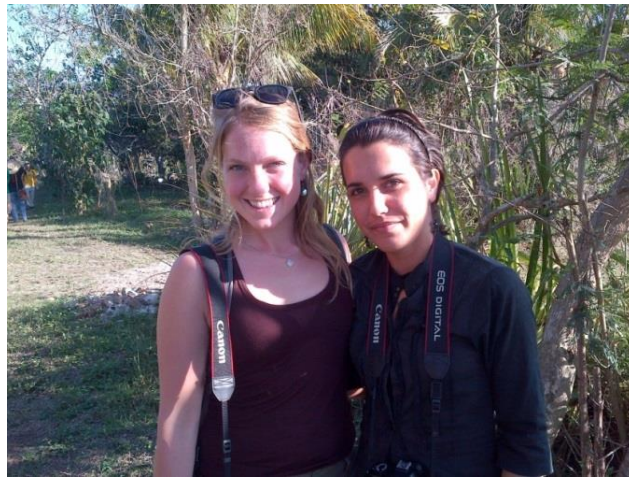
The World Bank Group recently identified gender equality as the key to stimulating economic growth. Yet governments struggle with the concept of ensuring food supplies through enabling policy regarding access to credit, education, tools, materials, technology, land ownership and gender equality for women in agriculture. Despite the overwhelming evidence that addressing the issue provides sound economic foundations for men and women, boys and girls, for families, communities, regions and countries – women farmers continue to struggle. Only when we empower these resourceful and committed women and provide for them an infrastructure which includes mentorship, will we grow our human resources, strengthen our economies including food processing and begin to feed our world.



## Methodology

This research included group and independent travel for a total of 18 weeks that was often long stay, to observe, meet or work with persons in agriculture, agri-processing and agricultural policy. Countries visited include Canada, USA, Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Australia, New Zealand, Holland, England, Fiji, India, Qatar and three weeks of working with farmers in Cuba earning my International Permaculture Certification. The project included 184 farm visits, 250 interviews or meetings and sixty paper and media reviews. Women from eight countries participated in a global on line survey, encompassing the participation of 3,900 women that were actively farming aged 14 – 73 years. Survey participants were given a set of questions specific to mentorship while interviews and farm visits were less structured to gain the most from the experience.

The results include factors outside of mentorship programs that directly affect women in agriculture and their ability to improve economically - even when mentored. These are the big picture items that are prominent worldwide and are to be given careful consideration in mentorship development. The outcome of a recommended model was determined not only by successful programs but on the programs that failed. An extensive look at mentorship programs in Canada was used to mitigate risk in proposing new models for implementation.



We live in a borderless world. Young women farmers from Canada and Cuba share their connection to food.



## Snapshot

I met many great leaders while traveling and one of them was Ingrid Nza Collin. Ingrid is the face for Maori agriculture and culture in New Zealand. She is at the top of her game, working with corporate Maori farming models that now cover 1.5 million hectares. She is amazing in her own right but still seeking the growth and empowerment of women within the traditional structure to take leadership roles. She said *"I once thought that what was needed was education but now see that it is also empowerment."*

The complexity of leadership calls for an orchestra of thought and action. As women in agriculture we need to be proud to say "I am a farmer" because it is a truth. Visiting with Ingrid reminded me that regardless of how our farm is orchestrated, we contribute to the symphony of good business because we have many strings to our bow.



Ingrid knows that a healthy agricultural community starts with maternal care, education and understanding the culture and beliefs while empowering Maori women and girls. While in New Zealand, I was invited to speak to Maori girls.



Relationships are imperative in agriculture as rural people depend on each other. Experiencing the collaboration between Canadian and Cuban permaculture (permanent agriculture) was empowering. I earned my Permaculture Design Certificate in Cuba where there are many independent women farmers. My objective was to build a bridge with urban consumers and gain technical training to develop urban agriculture.



Women and girls are looking for mentors. Here I share a meal with women in Fiji and we talk about our goals as farmers.



## Challenges for Women

### Land Access

Access to land for the purpose of agricultural production is the foremost challenge from a global perspective. When asked what the biggest challenge to the growing need for food was to be in the future, current Executive Chairman of the Board of Cargill, one of the world's top food companies, replied that it was *land access*. In his address (*Calgary 2011*), Mr. Page explained that agricultural production from a global perspective is at risk until there is some resolve to land access issues. The short term lease under which most farmers operate was not an acceptable platform from which to launch into the future.

There is opportunity in very few of the world's 196 countries to own land and make improvements. Male and female farmers have difficulty being motivated to incorporate new agronomic practises when access to land is continuously jeopardized. But access to land is especially difficult for women. (*Fletschner 2009*) Land access may be restricted by law or policy or taken away for cultural reasons such as the death of a spouse. It may be driven by fear of loss such as seen in emerging countries or simple hoarding. Given the opportunity, women farmers have repeatedly asked for access to land through ownership or long term leases.

In Canada, rented land makes up 40% of cultivated soil and for many Canadian farmers renting forms the majority of the land base from which they work. Information from the province of Alberta indicates that 40% -50% of land lease or rental agreements were short term – one year contracts. Only 20% of land lease agreements were made for a five year term with 30% being for three years. (*Agrisuccess March 2014*)

The global tendency toward short term leases is the major handicap to improvement in land and land productively. Steeped in tradition, the short term lease is seen as a cultural norm. It does not however, empower farmers, especially women farmers who may walk many miles to access the land and walk that many miles again to water it. Stress, strife and constant market change has left farmers in countries of all stages of development putting in the bare requirements on the leased land. Environmental degradation often occurs because of these practises, further pressuring the need for more land. In addition, the diversion of critical resources, such as water, seriously influences the productivity of agricultural land.



In areas of land reform, farmers actively get involved in first class farming. This has readily been adopted, especially by women. Land reform which includes title or long term lease, offers opportunity for women farmers.

Women in all countries and at all levels felt they did not have equitable access to land. Passionate, smart and prepared, they still had difficulty being taken seriously when procuring land and agri - businesses. Some held no hope of obtaining land for cultural reasons while others were frustrated or insulted in the process. Those who were independently farming were exceptional farmers, well read and informed, creative and profitable. They often had mentors who supported them. They were not deterred by discrimination although they could identify it. They were open to or practising diversified farming operations without sole dependency on mono cultures.



Edith had to fight for her land. When the Cuban government threatened to annex her farm she stood her ground, appealing directly to Raul Castro. She not only kept her land but obtained a ten year hold on it from further development. Her 1240 square meters produce 29 varieties of fruit and vegetables and 30 medicinal plant species as well as trees and fish. A soil wizard, Edith left her job as a professor to farm. She now supplies food for sale and to social programs in the area.



What needs to happen?

There needs to be a continued lobby for the reduction of short term leases and elimination of gender discrimination on leased or owned land. Regulators need to be urged to consider the tax benefits of long term leasing and water security. We must continue to mentor girls and women to empower them to find the appropriate information, ask for longer term leases, access legal advice and production necessities such as water security, while ensuring their safety.



Australian farmer Jemma is independent, well read and informed, precise, creative and profitable. When asked about mentorship, she said her mother was her mentor because she always facilitated a platform for dialogue and growth.



## Credit and Inputs

It would be inaccurate to assume that land access alone would empower farmers. Access to credit, tools, technology, seed and other inputs, equipment, fuel, markets and education all impact the success of the farmer. If women were to have the same access to resources as men, farm yields increase by 20% – 30% and that raises the total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5% - 4%. (FAO)

Breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty or intergenerational dependency starts by putting money in the hands of women. Women in all countries tend to reinvest in healthy families and communities and are quick to take calculated risks. They also have the highest payback record of any industry. So why is that women are discriminated against in *all* countries when it comes to accessing credit?

Research in this area has found that even in developed countries only 58% of all equally eligible loans applied for by women were approved and at a higher interest rate than the same proposal by men. (Emran *et al.* 2006) The study found that the reason for credit refusal was that lenders do not wish to be associated with specific types of borrowers such as women, racial minorities, classes and castes. In short, banks did not loan to women because they presented a bigger perceived risk, they did not loan to women because they were women. (Muravyev *et al.*)

A true lack of access to credit often hinders growth in what could be a thriving agricultural practise. Women in particular continue to be tied to their husband's financial performance, permission or signature, even when they are solely responsible for the production of food for family and income. Before we can advance women in agriculture *anywhere in the world*, there must first be gender equality from banks and local or village credit.

Credit is often dependent on financial literacy. This is a compelling argument for literacy worldwide for all boys and girls and in particular for women. Children should be taught financial literacy starting at a very early age. With a full knowledge of business and a business plan and the appropriate requirements, the outright refusal to loan to or the conditional acceptance to loan to women is discriminatory.



For the woman farmer the entire field must be laser leveled flat! Studies have shown that agricultural services, discounts, loans, technology transfer and perks were primed toward the large male owned farm. Small farms run by men and women and farms run by minorities were not treated as priority clients by service providers. Through interviews both women and men farmers acknowledged that there was indeed gender discrimination against women when it came to obtaining credit, equipment, tools and technology. This was particularly frustrating for young and beginning female farmers. For agriculture to continue to truly prosper, access to technology and finance is critical. Nuffield Scholar Damien Murphy wrote *"It is imperative young farmers have a stable finance market to make the most of the opportunities that present themselves in agriculture."*

I spoke to several international financial institutions about "young farmer loans" in which they had an interest but were slow to implement any solutions. *Farm Credit Canada* is seen as world leader in terms of offering young farmer loans for men and women and this model has been studied by other scholars. In developing countries, women are dependent on micro credit projects. These have been successful and have a very high payback rate.

What needs to happen?

As individuals, partners, families and community members it is important to continue to mentor women in regards to their rights as a person when accessing credit and direct them to educational resources that provide financial literacy. Where needed we will continue to work with literary projects at home and around the world so women farmers have choices and to encourage the development of organizations that offer financing and micro-financing with flexible repayment.

***Before we can advance women in agriculture anywhere in the world, there must first be gender equality from banks and local or village credit.***



## Urbanization and Labor

The massive movement of rural children and workers from the country to the city has created a mirage of challenges for the urban planner and the rural dweller. The urban planner is faced with infrastructure issues varying from food delivery to waste disposal. In rural areas, a shortage of labor is the major outcome of urbanization and this is magnified by a loss of services and political influence.

Technological advancements may address the shortage of labor in certain areas at certain times. In Canada, the food processing industry uses robotics extensively to counter the lack of workers, as does the dairy industry and manufacturing. In many countries, the inconsistency in power and fuel availability is a greater risk than the labor shortage. In India for example, over 90% of the food processing is done by women workers earning approximately \$2.00 per day. Indigenous equipment is not heavily used because of purchase cost, the ongoing cost of operation and challenges in obtaining parts for maintenance. The pull of the city because of massive wages compared to the country, has left many mothers without helping hands in the home and on the farm. In certain parts of Africa, the high price of beef has sadly placed the women and children at the front of the plow.

During my travels, the one consistent problem discussed was the shortage of labor in the country for the production and processing, marketing and transport of agricultural crops and food. Aggressive immigration or migrate worker programs solved the basic labor needs but did not ripple over into the areas of first and second manager positions. Illiteracy is a problem worldwide with the work force, Canada included, and machinery now comes with pictures showing the driver how to operate the equipment. At all times and in all places, the majority of the field and processing workers were women while men had management positions. All farms and agri-business stated that labor shortage was their primary concern.

Intense global urbanization will see 80% of the world's population living within 60 km of a shore by the year 2020. Rural women are deeply impacted by urbanization and the loss of labor, support and local economies. They find themselves going further afield for basic supplies and in some countries this is a safety risk. Long treks for parts on the prairies, dangerous pathways in the jungles or the closure of rural schools and longer rides for education are just some of the outcomes of urbanization.



South American women are particularly dependent on their local cultural economy and the loss of children to mining and other resource development has left them exposed and vulnerable. They are doing more, with less. Trade routes are giving way and water is threatened. In Canada, finding help to start the farm is difficult and young couples rely heavily on each other. Widows find the farm particularly challenging because they are confronted with finding good help that is willing to train for a management position. In Canada in particular, women in agriculture face challenges offering a wage that attracts skilled workers because wages compete with the resource industry.

What needs to be done?

While there are few solutions to urbanization that is driven by wage, there are ways to encourage women and girls to live on the farm. We must approach farming as a profession and agriculture as a societal need, treating the people within it professionally and encouraging wage equity. It is important that women carefully consider the labor line in their business plan.



The author with one of her urban based granddaughters ensures that she teaches the wonders of agriculture to the children as well as always discussing the business side. The trend in Canada to farm and to return to the farm is growing and it is important for every generation to be educated and prepared for the profession of agriculture.



These women in Ukraine were responsible for the harvest. The use of equipment eased the workload to a degree. Half the machines were not running because of lack of employees, putting further pressure on those already working in the field.

*Photo courtesy of Linda Eldredge*



Women process and sort Kiwis for export in New Zealand. The ground floor workforce is almost entirely female and represented many cultures.



## Infrastructure

The lack of infrastructure to get product to market is a deep frustration for men and women farmers worldwide. There are many countries that do not have adequate infrastructure to accommodate the movement of product pre and post-harvest. Post-harvest woes are especially concerning with product spoiling at the side of the road or depreciating in bins. It is now estimated the investment required in global infrastructure to move product is \$57 trillion dollars. (*The Economist* 03/ 2014)

When asked to rank the importance of infrastructure, trade and market access; 14.3 % of women indicated trade was important and 32.1% felt market access was an outstanding concern. When a full one third of women farmers cannot access markets or timely market information, there is a huge economic loss. This becomes complicated when rural residents leave for the city and take their votes with them. A loss of voters often results in a lack of spending priority for rural infrastructure and market access. The situation becomes compounded as production increases. It is important to note that *while men and women are equally capable, governments are not.*

Today, we technically produce enough food to feed a growing world but do not have a vested interest in the development of infrastructure and market access projects to support production. This delivery uncertainty can impact access to credit and to land. Farmers need to know they are in control of the marketing and delivery of their product rather than hope it will sell and sell well. This shift must occur at all levels of government and be a prominent part of food policy and food security policy. Until there is a societal appreciation of agriculture that *holds in reverence*, the hands that produce food, infrastructure will be the failing point in agricultural production.

Infrastructure failures were evident in every country. For example, in Canada, a record grain crop for the 2013 harvest was kept binned as railways opted to move oil and gas products at higher prices. At the same time, a truckers strike at port kept Canadian meat from leaving. Argentinian farmers were crippled by sovereignty policy and the status quo in India was a safe haven because of the \$3 trillion dollars needed in infrastructure improvements. In Australia the missing storage on farms ensured that farmers would always be price takers.

**While men and women are equally capable, governments are not.**

What needs to happen?

The need for *functioning systems* is profound. On farm storage should strongly be supported and is viable. In addition, three times the cold storage in primary food processing should be encouraged in business plans. From the larger lens, farmers must continue to lobby for systemic infrastructure improvements to ensure timely delivery of product to domestic market or port.

***Until there is a societal appreciation of agriculture that holds in reverence the hands that produce food, infrastructure will be the failing point in agricultural production.***



Women are great innovators when infrastructure fails. For small farms: farmers market and road stalls are an option, such as for this woman in Argentina. Larger farms face a greater challenge when they are without infrastructure support or contract to independently move thousands of tons of product. Worldwide, the delivery infrastructure is broken or highly dependent on a few companies.



## Why women?

Gender equality is associated with lower rates of poverty and higher standards of living as well as a protected environment. Women are the “front line” of food security and education in the world. A thriving farming community that reinvests in itself attracts other value added and further industry. The *World Bank* reported that for one dollar loaned to a woman had a greater development impact than one dollar loaned to a man. (2007, page 165) Repayment rates, especially on micro finance are much better with women and present a lower credit risk than a man because ladies are knowledgeable and driven both by conservatism and moral consciousness. *“Women are consistently better in promptness and reliability in payment.” (Result 1997:8)*

As for human resource output, the *World Bank* found that when discrimination against women workers and managers was eliminated, productivity per person working increases by 25% - 40%. Economic empowerment is achieved through acknowledging the gifts that women bring to the business of food and addressing the challenges they face. *“Closing the gender gap and ensuring equal access of women to resources and assets is indispensable for accelerating agricultural and rural development and poverty alleviation.”* FAO

Women see in a systems context and therefore are quick to understand cause and effect. They are sensitive to the need to have a social license in which to operate because they are both the buyer and the seller. *Henk Van Dongen of Fresh Retail* reminds us there is really only one customer to remember and that is *her*. The current economy has been branded the *she-economy*, in recognition of the value of the female customer and her power in the marketplace. The she-economy is the sum of the whole.

More than half of small and medium sized businesses in Canada are owned by women (a small or medium business is defined as under \$25M) while the food product from those business make up over 80% of our items for trade. As a consumer *she* buys and sells food, clothes, houses and cars, appliances, vacations, tools, trucks, tractors, feed, seed, welders and combines. *“For global development to be sustainable, the issues of climate change, gender equality and food security must all go hand in hand.”* Mary Robinson, former UN High Commissioner on human rights.



Annabelle is a highly respected Australian rancher but her knowledge of food security and animal welfare reaches far beyond her borders. She is part of a growing team of women that teach animal welfare at places where Australian livestock is shipped. Annabelle works portside with Qatari men to ensure the safety and security of Australian product.



Empowering girls for self-sufficiency is important in every country. *“Small scale farmers, the majority of whom are women, produce 80 percent of the food consumed. These small, family-based farms have tremendous potential to make agriculture a key driver for both sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction.” (Canada's Food Security Strategy. 2009)*

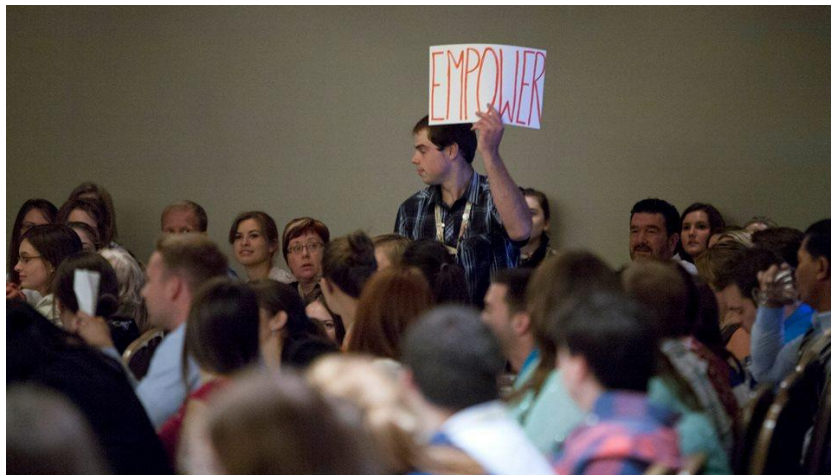


## Just for Men

The exciting part about the feedback this research project has received is that there is a strong interest from men. They have been highly supportive and fully engaged. They have however expressed that they feel excluded. I have often been asked “what about us?” In 2013 after a motivational presentation to international female executives, the men came in from the next room with this question. At other times, when discussing the structure of the research project men asked when there would be something exclusive for them. As I present domestically and internationally – it is clear that men are hungry for formal mentorship too.

How do we interpret this need? It tells us that agricultural food production and processing remains a highly engaged and interactive business with a strong focus on family. In Canada, 98% of farms are family farms and one in eight jobs is in agriculture and agri – food. (FCC 2014) The 25,000 farmers in Canada under the age of 35 years represent a growing demographic. New entrants are information and *self-formation* hungry and are looking for trusted mentors to help set boundaries and achieve balance. These are highly engaged men and women with great passion for their family, their farm and their nation.

**Gender equality is not about separating men and women. It is standing up for the excellence of the other so that both may contribute in a way that they are gifted. Mentoring empowers men and women as individuals.**



A young man responds at the Global Youth Summit at which I was a speaker. Men and women want mentorship because it is so empowering.



## More Work to Do

### Social and Cultural Roadblocks

There are still social and cultural roadblocks to overcome such as marginal working jobs and poor conditions, lack of health and child care and discriminatory lending practises. Socially, the pendulum of safety for women is always swinging and in this world one in three will be a victim of violence. Countries with intense agricultural output do so on the backs of women. In India for example, 70% of all girls and women face violence or abuse at some juncture, while holding more than 90% of the agricultural jobs, especially in food processing. In other places, such as parts of Africa, the lack of identity (absence of a birth certificate) makes it difficult for girls and women to obtain educations and credit.

Globally, women in agriculture earn 50% of their male counterparts. *FAO* In Canada, agriculture is seen as a primary industry and women earn below the global baseline at \$.49 for every dollar earned by a male. This wage gap is not attractive to new entrants into agriculture nor does it reflect the value of the female in the production, processing or marketing system. Until we address the wage gap in agriculture there will always be a drag on community growth and family health. Communities struggle if mothers struggle and paying less for the same work is discriminatory in every way. Women do not abandon their children or aging parents and remain caregivers even when farming full time. They need supportive communities and governments to maintain their farms, families and health. Access to education and child care must be a priority for governments worldwide.

Relative Earnings of Women and Men by Occupation, Canada  
(ratio of female to male earnings)

	1986	2010
Natural and applied sciences	0.63	0.94
Art, culture, recreation, and sport	0.54	0.88
Management	0.59	0.71
Social science, education, government service, and religion	0.57	0.70
Processing, manufacturing, and utilities	0.52	0.65
Business, finance, and administrative	0.58	0.60
Trades, transport and equipment	0.50	0.59
Sales and service	0.48	0.57
Primary industry	0.46	0.49
Health	0.48	0.47

Source: Statistics Canada, *Income in Canada 2010*.



The incorporation of equipment most certainly is an asset as is access to soil nutrients and water, but this is not the whole of the answer. Women need access to credit, technology and markets in all places and at all times. Women need equal pay when working within agriculture and to be respected as farmers who understand the family dynamic. Women farmers tend to diversify in their farming and seldom focus on monocultures, which is an environmentally sound practise. Support for this way of farming should be supported as it makes for better cash flow within the family farm. *Lovely* a farmer from Bangladesh reminds us about the importance of diversity. *"In order to live with dignity we have to be self-reliant and curb our dependency on others."*



Women are working toward closing cultural, generational and information gaps. Welch farmer Jamie McCoy broadened my view of her world during her 2013 visit.

## Literacy and Maternal Health

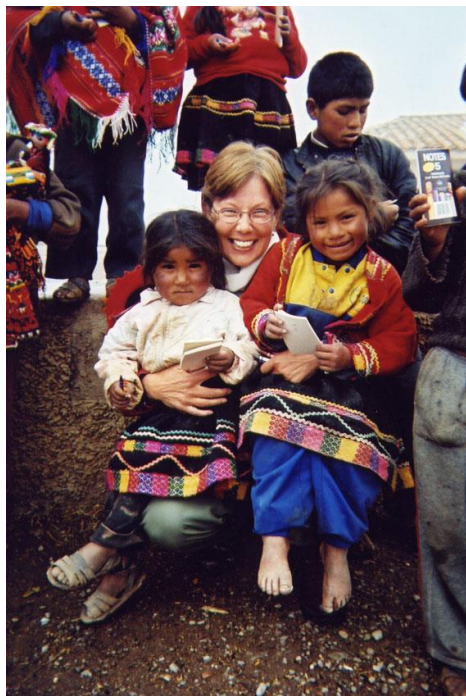
The right to birth control and extended health care for expectant mothers is needed for mothers in many countries. The health of mother and child is the foundational piece in mothers' ability to continue to farm and feed her family. This is often overlooked when "farm aid" is delivered to those in need. We can also draw comparisons to rural Canada where distance is a factor in accessing medical attention and follow up care. For many, maternal health is the turning point for community health and economic growth because the household is entirely dependent on the mother to farm. We cannot have mentorship on the surface without implementing maternal health initiatives and considering child care as a fundamental family need.



This woman is part of a project that has reduced infant mortality from 67% to 17% in her area. Her improved health and the health of her children allow her to make decisions without the fear of personal loss.

Literacy is the technical foundation for economic prosperity. This includes fundamental literacy and financial literacy in all countries. Withholding a female child from words and therefore killing her voice has huge economic implications. Literate girls raise the standard of living for their families. For every extra year a girl stays in school her income may increase by up to 25% and if only ten percent more girls had the right to education the GDP of a country increases by 3%. ([www.becauseiamagirl.ca](http://www.becauseiamagirl.ca))

We need to make our farms places of empowerment for women and girls, encouraging health and education, curiosity and innovation. *"I believe that projects about livestock, mainly cattle, are very meaningful and have a huge influence on the world," "Projects like this, and my previous projects, could all propose a theory that could influence the way cattlemen carry out a certain task or idea." Heleigh Prosser, grade 8 science student, Colorado USA as reported in Drovers, March 2013*



These girls in Peru valued books, pens and paper above all else. Literacy is the passport of the future for women and girls. At any given time 65 million girls are blocked from school.



## Men Return from Work

Women also face challenges, especially in Canada, when men come back to the farm after working away. Often, the decision making power shifts back to the male occupant. It is important for women who wish to farm inside and outside of partnerships that there be defined boundaries of management and ownership. This allows for the gifts and talents of women to continue to be deployed on the farm and male partners to enjoy their part of the enterprise. It also provides financial security if shares have been transferred over time or if independent land, tools, technologies or equipment has been purchased by the female partner.

## Displaced Families

In interviewing displaced women, it was clear that there was a feeling of stress, shame and fear regardless of their location. Displacement could come from financial stress (forced to move because of financial loss), divorce (the female partner leaves the family farm) or political interference (governments seizing land). The trauma for women and their families in any of these situations should not be minimized as farming and food mean survival. *"Agricultural development plays a huge role in our lives because we have food security, income security and it is a huge investment for our children as well."* Ilisapeci Ralulu of Nasaibitu Village of Wainibuka,

For farming families in parts of Africa the displacement comes from a complete removal of oneself from the farm. In addition to leaving friends and other extended family, the core of stress was often animal related. Forced to leave and without the financial capabilities to feed animals while being exiled, often these animals, including family pets, were disposed. This trauma rippled into new farming enterprises in new lands and farm women expressed their fear of family suicide, physical illness and post-traumatic stress. It is important for governments and communities to realize that farming families need extra support when they are starting over. Women often led the charge in creative solutions in these instances, self-employing themselves in small business to buffer the stress and to keep the family together.



## Farm Safety

Heather died as most farmers do in a farm accident– from a tractor rollover. Two decades later – her family still struggles with the loss and with establishing new relationships. What is missing is the intervention for families post farm crisis. The sobering fact is that in Canada, agriculture is the second most deadly occupation next to mining. In Canada, the largest percentages of farm deaths were male but accidents including women and children (14%) continue to increase.

Women become farmers by choice or by default. I have met hundreds of farm widows over the years that chose to keep farming after the death of a spouse, even though they had no previous experience. Most women want what is best for their children and they often chose the farm as the right environment (if it is made safe). Spouses or partners of injured male farmers also need additional support to enable them to work within the family unit and outside the family farm in a way that values both partners. The workplace must be safe for men, women, boys and girls.

Facilities and tools that are exclusive to women such as toilets, hand washing stations, change rooms, small size gloves and safety boots, ladders, light gates and safety switches also ensure a productive workplace and food safety. Standing on a pail to start an auger engine because it is six feet off the ground is not safe for any worker but women face these challenges every day. Farm safety has to include women and children and farm equipment should reflect the needs of female workers as should all farm and food processing buildings.



Women continue to choose the farm as the best place to raise a family even after tragic events.



## Mental health

By Canadian standards, there are countries in which the farmers enjoy equitable wealth, such as Australia. In comparison to Canada, there has been little spent in Australia on the prevention and awareness of mental health issues. Australian male farmers commit more suicide on an annual basis than all traffic injury combined. (Every five hours an Australian man under the age of 45 commits suicide. Suicide is now the leading cause of death for Australian men). Governments do need to respond to potential crisis in a way that ensures farmers have access to information, help, resources and financial assistance. Although countries like Australia lead in terms of research investment into the specific commodity sectors, financial support in crisis is rarely offered - adding to despair. This is especially true in the livestock sector. Canada's ability to respond to crisis and the open discussion on physical and mental health and wellness is important to a healthy agricultural population.

## Work Environment

Men and women have the right to enjoy a welcoming workplace that is free from bullying, oppression and fear. For many women their place of work, including the farm, does not provide this haven of safety. Bullying is common as are other forms of oppression. This carries through to the food processing floor and the corporate boardroom. Occupational health research in Alberta found that bullying occurs in 36% of workplace environments, severely hampering production and deflating individual growth. On farms, it is often unseen – taking place in private. Farm women need to be assured that this behaviour is not acceptable and seek help if they can access it. On- line information would benefit women all over the world to ensure they are aware of their rights and freedoms (according to the *United Nations* 75% of the global population has access to a cell phone).

**“What is missing in the country is the heart and creative thinking of women. We need to invite them back into agriculture. The trick is still the family piece for most people. It takes years to get it right and it is different for every farm. We need to create an atmosphere so women can participate in farming and have a cherished family life.” (Hector, Cuba)**



Sometimes you just need a voice! These women worked outside in extreme conditions without adequate facilities or cover. I spoke to the owner while in India and through my lobby the women now have protection.



## Harmonization of Credentials

Even in the most impoverished of countries, the majority of the intellectuals are women and girls who are making a profound impact on their country and in agricultural advancements. These women offer a great deal to Canada but are often excluded from their profession as immigrants because there is a lack of international recognition of credentials. As an example, 60% of all Cuban women are intellectuals and they are fiercely independent often owning and operating highly successful small farms. In Argentina, women are highly educated and inheritance is equal for males and females. Many matriarchs control agricultural production through their sons. These women and others from both inside and outside the Commonwealth, are great farmers, professionals and scientists and they bring education along with them.

A true commitment to the advancement of girls and women would include either the recognition of credentials or the supported upgrade to ensure compatibility with Canadian requirements.



This woman in Argentina has just as much education, financial power and inheritance rights as her male partner although it may be the man who is the front line manager. Unfortunately, her education may not be recognized in Canada.



## In the Boardroom

Women face their greatest challenge in the boardroom and that is also true for agriculture. A gender balanced board has great benefits, increasing ROE by 40% and creating effective governance. ( *Brown, Brown, and Anastasopolous*)

Agriculture is big business and has big boards. At least one third of all board members should be women in production agriculture to accurately represent the farming demographic. In SMB, the distribution should be 50% or greater as that reflects business owners of which 80% are vested in food. Currently women make up 12.1% of publically traded boards in Canada and that increases to 30.4% for crown corporations. The lack of females at the board table is a global issue. In Japan, for example, the “bamboo ceiling” keeps female executives at the board level at 9% even though Japan will soon have one of the oldest populations on earth.

This is not to say that the lack of women at the board table is strictly a result of male behaviour. There are other factors at play. One is the “hanging onto the skirt” phenomenon (*Africa*) where women hold onto the skirt of the one climbing to success. We often see this start at the community level and it escalates right to the international level. It may result in “tall poppy syndrome” (*Australia*), which is the fear of standing up and standing out. The *Conference Board of Canada* found that women did not hit a glass ceiling but a steel wall at the boardroom level. The reason - mentorship programs *for women from women* were not in place to support and ensure the success of the female candidate.

In terms of recognizing women in Agriculture by government – there has *never* been a woman named to the Alberta Order of Excellence in Agriculture which was created in 1979 and the Alberta Agriculture Hall of Fame has seen only 18 female inductees since 1951. From a national perspective, only four women have been inducted into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame since 1960. In areas of the world where culture dictates a male hierarchy women are free to form their own boards to advance their own good. This is a model which Canadian women may wish to consider.



Despite these challenges on which we can all work toward addressing, women are very clear that they are not special needs persons. When it comes to business, women who chose to farm, process food or represent their industry in the boardroom strongly indicated that it was equality in the farm, in the business world and *at the bank* that they sought. As creative thinkers they are aware that their ideas might be different but that they are not less. Women and girls should be asked how they wish to invest on the farm and in business and have a respected and equal voice at the decision making table. A good business plan always allows for farming partners to respectfully regroup on common ground. Good government recognizes women for their accomplishments and appreciates that women farmers will play a key part in the success of our country, meeting food targets while operating under an ethical social licence.

***“Canada is far better off when the talents and skills of women are fully utilized in every sector of our economy– from biotech to construction, and all the way to the corporate boardroom,” Hon. Minister Leitch, Status of Women, Canada***



Australian Linda is outstanding in her field. Here she is with fellow scholars during our visit to England. In 2014 Linda was awarded Australia's *Women in Agribusiness top 100*, one of a multitude of recognitions for women in agriculture in Australia. Unlike Australia, Canada lacks business and leadership training, mentorship and recognition for and of women farmers and female agri-business owners.



In Ludhiana at the Punjab Agricultural University and farm show pictured with Case New Holland (CNH) Regional General Manager Seema Singh. Seema is one of the 10.7% of female managers within CNH. CNH employs 71,192 persons worldwide. *CNH 2013*



## Breaking all Barriers

Women farming in Canada and around the world face their challenges with intense ingenuity, creativity and resolve. Their leadership is exemplary as they are driven by passion *"farming is the best job in the world"* and operate from a place of core values and beliefs. Women know food and families and weave the social fabric of healthy communities, are often well educated and comfortable with advanced technology. As leaders, they take accountability for their actions showing their sons and daughters, partners and friends, that agriculture may be full on - but it is an extraordinary opportunity and a great career choice. They are committed to their family and their farms.



Women are very clear that they are not special needs cases. Canadian farmer Linda is the perfect example of breaking all barriers. She and her husband farm together and have a very successful beef and grain farm in Canada. They are very well read and master sportsmen. Linda has won gold in curling both nationally and internationally. Entirely self-made, Linda raised two sons while farming each day. Neither Linda nor her husband can speak or hear.



The ability to see life in sequence is a great benefit for female farmers and they tend to be fully prepared and they make great business partners. It is this preparedness that sets them apart allowing for them to have high coping skills in a demanding environment. As our world becomes truly borderless, we hope that all women may access the information, education, credit, capital, tools, and technology that ensure continued growth in the production, processing and marketing of food. Most importantly, women recognize that they are a symbol of hope – that at all times and in all places they are someone to somebody – a beacon of light for a bright and rewarding future.



Young women such as Emily are focused and clearly operate from a place of core values and beliefs. Emily also makes huge contributions to her community through her charitable work.

## **Mentoring as part of the solution**

I know the leader of tomorrow will lead through inspiration. They will have a way of attracting the right people and keeping them for the betterment of their community and their nation through mentorship. All great leaders carry a passion that burns from a core belief that aligns with their values. They are prepared at all times for all things and do not let incidences hinder their leadership. They own their mistakes and with great skill and kindness empower those around them. As they are there for the long haul and they are engaged mentoring and being mentored— so that someone else at any point in time can fill their shoes. It is leading without fear of self or threat of others.

The background of this paper allows us to fully appreciate the current status of women in agriculture and the complexities of the environments in which they live. From this point we look forward and develop models that are on target. Mentoring is a critical component to success on the farm and in leadership development.



Nearly 70% of the women in this New Delhi slum had come from the farm. They implemented a governance and mentorship program and now support their families and send children to school, including university.



## Mentoring Models

The basis for a successful long term mentorship model resides with the structure of the mentorship. There must be safe and transparent platforms that include face to face dialogue preferred at least 50% of the time. Other methods of communication can be used for the other half of the mentorship discussion.

The mentor must be eligible, *available*, screened and willing to participate in an evaluation. When mentorship programs fail, they do so because of a lack of process for the program and a lack of due diligence in determining a mentor. You must have earned the right to mentor, care and be dedicated to the process. The greatest challenge is in finding a pool of mentors that will dedicate the time for mentoring and evaluation.

At all times, there should be an exit for the mentee without the need for cause.

At this time a Canadian mentorship program for women in agriculture does not exist. An evaluation of current short term mentorship programs in Canadian industry and business revealed that they were designed in a variety of ways:

- Mentee chooses a subject and pays a fee (*WXN*)
- Mentee chooses a mentor and pays a fee (*WXN*)
- Industry/association pays for the mentee to access a mentor (*4H step up*)
- Industry pays for the mentor to be available to the mentee (*UCVM Mentorship Program*)
- Costs are shared between industry and government (*Cattlemen Young Leaders*)
- Costs are covered by government (*Bio Talent Canada Initiative*)
- Costs are covered by industry/association as part of a budget line (*ACCA/CCCA*)
- Individual groups representing diverse industry form an association for the purpose of mentoring (*WXN in Canada*)
- Mentors work for free as a contribution to industry and administration costs are covered by industry or corporation (*Farm On*)
- Sponsors or company cover all costs (*Agrium Women's Leadership*)
- Funds are raised by gala/event/convention for the mentee/mentor (*done with small business initiatives across Canada*)
- Mentors and mentees connect electronically thus erasing borders (*e-mentoring*)

\*WXN Women's Executive Network \*ACCA Alberta Community Cooperative \* CCCA Canadian Community Cooperatives



***Women empowering women to grow food, protect environments; enhance trade and secure financial independence for themselves, their families and their communities.***

**Call to Action:** A proposed model

- Build a collaborative model that is easy to adopt by government, private industry and service groups such as Rotary Clubs
- Develop a web based platform that defines the program and has a screening mechanism for mentors and mentees
- Build a mentor base in preparation for the national pilot
- Develop terms of contractual agreements and delivery expectations
- Seek to build a shared cost system with industry, government and individuals
- Build a mechanism for income generation to reduce/eliminate funding dependency
- Explore e-mentoring to erase borders
- Engage an advisory board
- Clearly define the objectives - repeatedly
- Ensure the process is fun, seamless and has accountability to all
- Tell the story throughout the process
- Start locally think globally and be prepared for success
- Issue this report through the summer and begin the process in September 2014



With members of the Dairy Women's Network in New Zealand sharing the potential structure of a long term mentorship for women in agriculture. DWN has now implemented a pilot mentorship program in New Zealand.

The Development of Mentorship Programs for Women in Agriculture  
Brenda Schoepp  
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## Does Mentorship Work?

*"Through Brenda and the dynamic and effective team that she puts together, you are brought to a higher plane of thought in business as well as in life. Her positive attitude and realistic outlook that she shares her information, has shown us regularly that agriculture is ripe with opportunity. She is connected, genuine and accessible."* Chelsea Cunningham - rancher, singer and songwriter.

*"Brenda was a keynote speaker and brought such insight and passion to the room when it came to agriculture and market insights that I knew we needed to connect. Brenda is not only a consultant but a true mentor and friend who not only has taught me a great deal but challenged me as well. She sets a high standard for women in agriculture who are making a difference. In addition to her mentorship, her connections within the industry are exceptional and one of the supportive elements to the recent growth and success of our business."* Laura Laing , President and CEO of Diamond 7 Ranch.

*"I think that we all need people like Brenda in our tool box of people to help make us more adapt and successful in our business of ranching. Within her circle we have a huge pool of like-minded people that we can get advice, opinions and information from to help each other improve our lives and operations and within this group we also have made some good friends."* Graeme & Heather Finn, Southern Cross

*"By urging young people to develop unconventional ideas she helps them gain the self-confidence to become innovators in their industries. As a mentor Brenda focuses not only on the business success of young people but also helps them address their personal challenges that would over time limit their success. While maintaining strict confidence Brenda works with businesspeople to create a systematic approach to achieving the goals they set. I am pleased to consider Brenda a mentor and a friend."* Matt and Rhonda Tees

*"Brenda has been essential to guiding me towards who is doing what, and often facilitating an introduction or conversation. When we started down the path of mentorship, she would often ask me the necessary questions to get me thinking about what I was trying to do and why. This was something critical for me at the time, which was not even on my radar. She started me thinking about what I was focusing on and then aiding to clarify my vision. At the end of the day, business is about the people involved; Brenda firmly understands this and emphasizes its importance. Brenda is a huge asset to the industry that we are fortunate to have."* Jeff Braisher  
KLR Solutions Ltd.



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*"We will empower each other through mentorship. We are all on a journey sharing the same earth and the same sky. Sisters, walking each other home."  
Brenda Schoepp*

