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CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL SAFETY ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DE SÉCURITÉ AGRICOLE

Celebrating Women in Agriculture: Wellness, Safety and Leadership

*Executive Summary: Expanding Opportunities
for Canadian Agriculture by Understanding the
Experience of Farm Women*



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is no question that women are indispensable to the strength and success of farms across the country and the entire agricultural industry. In fact, according to the Canadian Census of Agriculture, about one-third of farms have women as primary decision-makers, be it as sole proprietors or in a partnership.

Yet, despite women being vital to the success of family farms, their roles are often undervalued and unacknowledged, with limited initiatives undertaken to measure and provide a quantifiable assessment of the experiences of farm women.

However, a recent research project from Farm Management Canada, which the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) contributed to, has provided valuable findings on farm women's unique experiences and contributions.

The research, titled "Expanding Opportunities for Canadian Agriculture by Understanding the Experience of Farm Women," not only highlights the invaluable contributions of farm women, but also replaces generalizations and stereotypes with a foundation of facts about the roles undertaken by farm women, as well as their motivations, aspirations, and barriers.

This groundbreaking national study, which is the first of its kind in scope and content, highlights that a concerted effort to support the needs of farm women will undoubtedly help further expand opportunities for Canada's agricultural sector.

Study Objective

To improve the understanding of the roles and experiences of farm women.

1. By developing a data set in order to replace stereotypes with evidence of the activities undertaken by farm women.
2. By gaining an understanding of the experiences of farm women including their motivations, challenges, and aspirations.

Key Findings – Farm Safety and Health

The following are some key takeaways based on study participants' responses to questions about farm safety and health:

- Women are pivotal to safety plans on the farm. 46% of farm women reported they are responsible for creating and implementing a safety plan on their farm, 42% said they are constantly reminding people on their farm about safety issues, and 25% indicated that without them a focus on safety would not exist on their farm.
- The findings highlight the challenges farm women face regarding farm safety. For example, 68% of farm women said finding safety apparel (including personal protective equipment) that fits them is not easy, while 39% agreed that safety apparel for women is more expensive than men's. And 42% agreed with the statement that equipment and machinery are not designed with women in mind.
- 59% of respondents indicated they think women should be included in safety training more often.
- Safety is a common stressor for women on the farm. 65% of respondents reported experiencing stress when they think about the possibility of injury on the farm, and 49% indicated that stresses relating to the farm negatively impact their health.
- The safety of children is a top concern for many farm women: 64% said that caring for children due to a lack of daycare is concerning from a safety perspective.
- 38% of farm women reported being concerned by health hazards relating to childbearing due to farm obligations.
- 29% of respondents said that others on the farm do not respect their opinion regarding health and safety.
- When asked about what is most representative of their definition of personal success, 27% of farm women cited health and safety.

Recommendations

With its unique and in-depth look at the experiences of farm women, the study's report outlines more than 30 recommendations under six distinct groupings. Below are the overarching groupings and the associated recommendations that align with CASA's vision and priorities:

1. Create and enhance programs and resources that specifically address the needs of farm women

- Use the Five Patterns of Experience (content, inspired, constrained, uncertain and obstructed) to focus efforts on meeting the needs of farm women based on their distinct situations.
 - Create learning and networking opportunities dedicated exclusively to farm women focused on enhancing their desired skills (ex. equipment operation and repair) and designing solutions to overcome their unique challenges and barriers (ex. building confidence, supporting farm transition, etc.).
 - Highlight and encourage the enhancement of services in rural communities, including daycare and support for farm women experiencing sexual harassment and domestic violence.
2. Dedicate efforts beyond women in agriculture to focus exclusively on supporting farm women
- Enhance initiatives focused on “women in agriculture” to recognize and meet the unique needs of farm women in policy, programming and resource development, including learning events through, for example, the formation of special committees.
3. Support gender equity and equality initiatives
- Promote and support inclusivity and the implementation of the 50-30 Challengeⁱ on farms and within farm organizations and academic programs to ensure farm women are represented and their participation is supported and encouraged.
 - Ensure marketing, promotions and communication efforts around farming include depictions of farm women and the various activities they are involved in – for example, farm ownership, management and leadership.
 - Advocate for farm equipment, machinery and safety apparel designed with women in mind.
 - Advocate for farm safety equipment and apparel for women specifically that is affordable and on par with the cost of men’s.
4. Promote communication and interpersonal skills along with business management practices as essential parts of farming
- Create resources and tools to support the adoption of effective on-farm communication processes and practices for all types of communications, including long-term planning and day-to-day operations.

- Support farm safety training and increase the participation of women in farm safety training on and off the farm.
 - Support the adoption of performance evaluations for farms and their supply companies and service providers that take into account measures of feeling valued, recognized, supported and empowered.
5. Expand existing research to more effectively capture data related to farm women
 6. Conduct additional research on the experiences and contributions of farm women, factors that influence farm success, and a comparative study of farm men using the same human-centred lens
- Study gender as a contributing factor to farm safety challenges and opportunities.
 - Understand the programs, resources and supports available to farm women including accessibility, use, impact, gaps, and opportunities.

For more information about the study and its findings, please refer to the full report, which can be found [here](#).

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ⁱ The 50-30 Challenge is an initiative to challenge Canadian organizations to increase the representation and inclusion of diverse groups within their workplaces. More information can be found at <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/ised/en/50-30-challenge-your-diversity-advantage>.

