

WOMEN FOR THE LAND



California
Evaluation
Report - 2021



OVERVIEW

This report highlights feedback from American Farmland Trust's Women for the Land (WFL) programming in California between 2019–2021, funded by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In this time, the COVID-19 pandemic forced a shift to mostly online gatherings. Despite this challenge, we impacted **16,499 acres** of agricultural land by engaging **163 women** in **15 counties**.

Our gatherings built on the effective peer-to-peer learning model WFL has applied across the country, with an emphasis on topics that are particularly relevant for California agriculture.

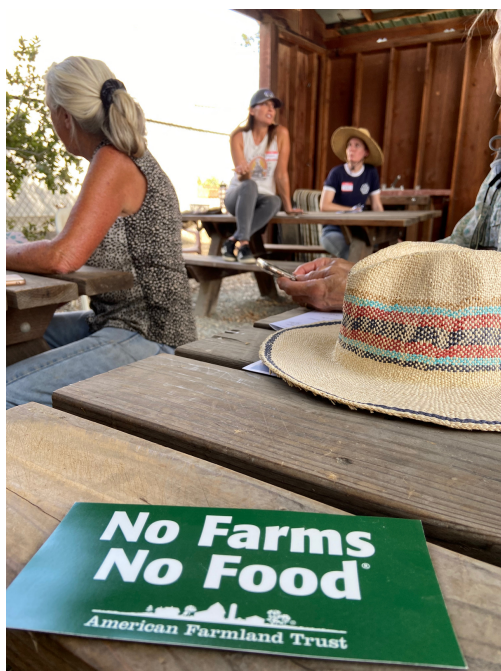
Caitlin Joseph

WOMEN FOR THE LAND
PROGRAM & POLICY MANAGER



WHAT WE DID

START DATE	TOPIC	GEOGRAPHY	ATTENDEES
8/5/2020	Climate Stressors and Solutions	Central Coast	19 (28 registered)
9/17/2020	Planning for Resilience (SGMA)	San Joaquin Valley	11 (24 registered)
1/19/2021	Succession Planning & Land Access (Ag Conservation Easements)	Statewide	16 (32 registered)
4/29/2021	Ag Conservation Easements	San Joaquin Valley	11 (22 registered)
7/8/2021	Negotiation Skills	Bay Area	18 (33 registered)
7/29/2021	Field Day: Land tenure & Conservation Intersections	Bay Area	18 (24 registered)



5 VIRTUAL LEARNING CIRCLES, 1 FIELD DAY

Topics for the Learning Circles were chosen using a collaborative process with local partners and impacted stakeholders, but all included a focus on connecting women with conservation technical assistance and field staff.



WHO WE ENGAGED

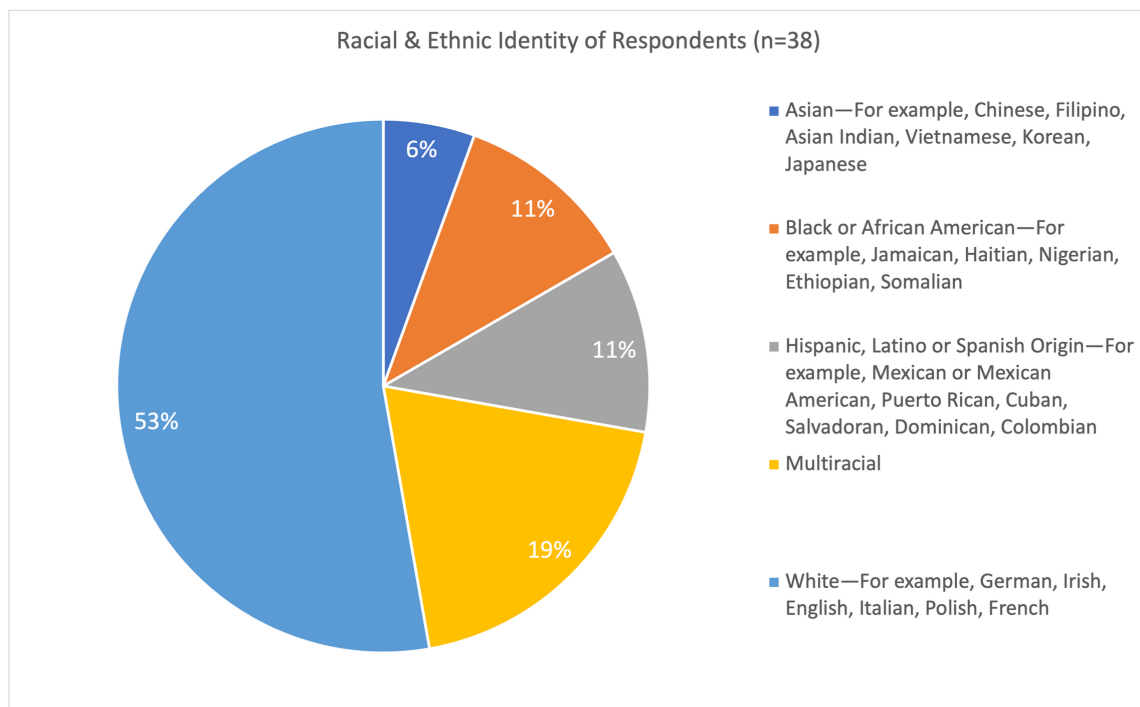
n=163 (all registered participants)

Relationship to Land	% of Participants	Acres Impacted
Operator	26%	1,367
Aspiring Farmer	24%	1,479
Other	19%	86
Owner	14%	4,385
Owner & Operator	18%	9,182
Grand Total	100.00%	16,499

163 WOMEN ON 16,499 ACRES

Compared to previous years of programming, a greater proportion of participants included women who do not own the land they produce on, including a significant increase in aspiring farmers. The "other" category included people set to inherit land, as well as ag professionals who joined as participants.

Spanish speaking participants were provided simultaneous interpretation during one event and strides were made to provide more written resources in Spanish. The figure below highlights the racial and ethnic identities of the participants who volunteered this information on our exit evaluation, and reflects the increasing diversity of women engaged in WFL programming.



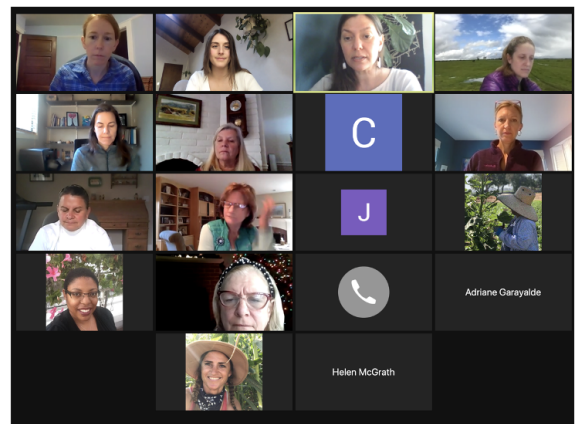
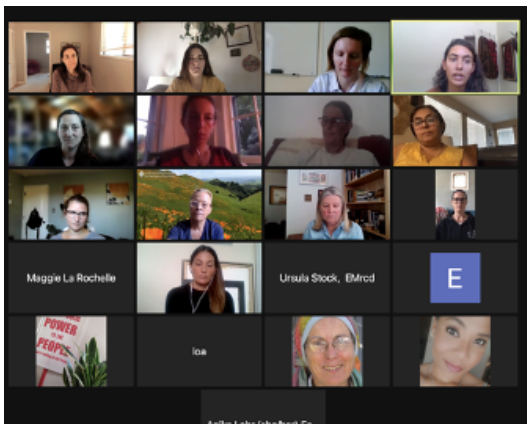
WHO WE ENGAGED

Partners Engaged

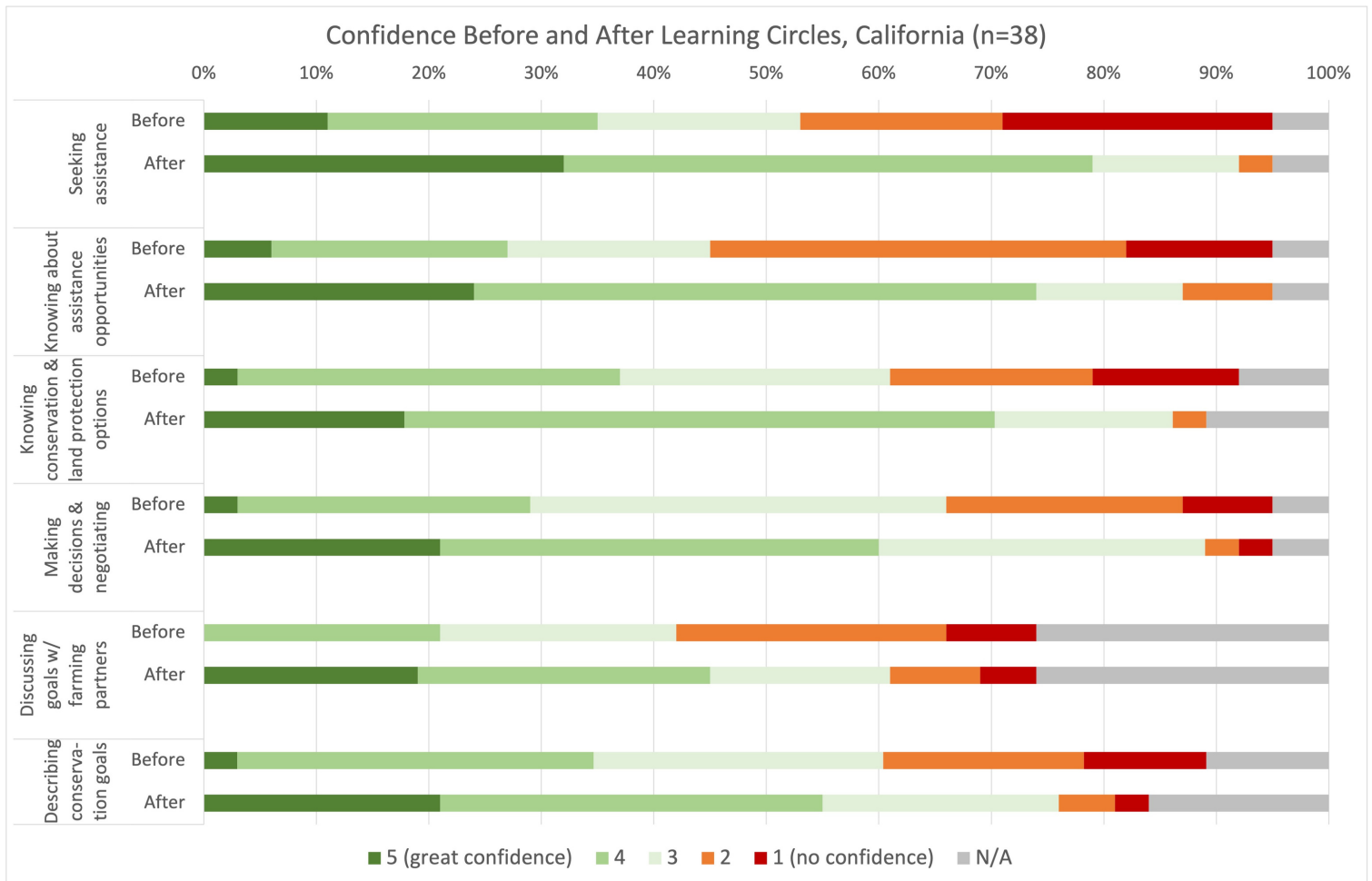
NRCS – multiple field offices
USDA Climate Hubs
UC Merced & EDF
Coastal San Luis RCD
Upper Salinas-Las Tablas RCD
Cachuma RCD
East Stanislaus RCD
East Merced County RCD
Madera Chowchilla RCD
California Farmlink
California Farmland Trust
California Women for Agriculture
Alameda County RCD
San Mateo County RCD
UCCE, Alameda County

COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL PARTNERS

Each Learning Circle engaged at least one partner organization in the planning and facilitation process, including representation from NRCS in all six events. New partnerships were forged during the scope of this project. For example, California Farmlink staff joined for two Learning Circles to highlight the succession planning, land access, business planning, and capital support services they offer. These were important supplements to the conservation technical assistance highlighted and provided participants with a more holistic set of relationships to build on. After each event, a resource list was provided to participants with contact information of key service providers, as well as information about agencies, grant programs, and a decoding acronyms list.



OUR IMPACT



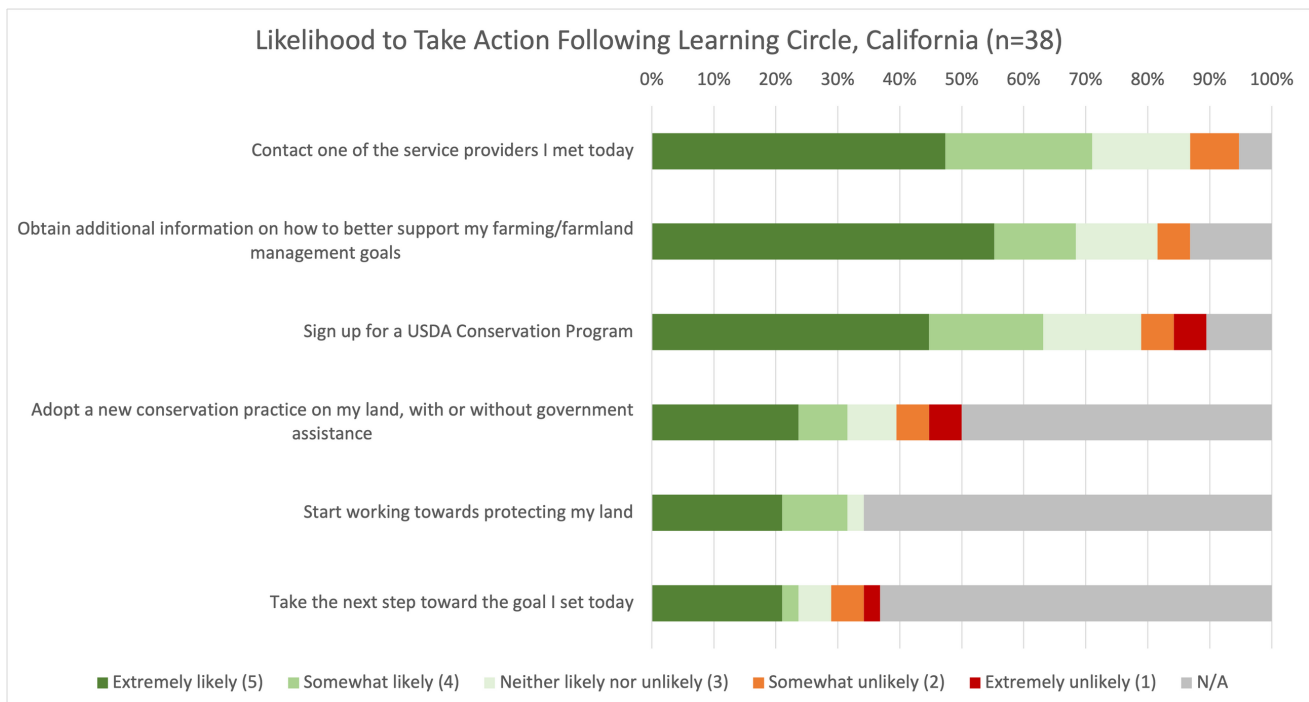
WOMEN GREW THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND CONFIDENCE

When asked on the exit evaluation to rank their level of confidence before and after the Learning Circle, our respondents reported gaining confidence particularly with knowing the conservation and financial assistance opportunities available to them as well as seeking that assistance. Women also grew their knowledge of conservation and land protection options available to them, and gained confidence with making decisions to work toward those opportunities. While some progress was made on helping women learn to describe and discuss their goals with farming partners, this might be an area to grow into in future programming.

OUR IMPACT

WOMEN INTEND TO TAKE ACTION TOWARD CONSERVATION & FARM VIABILITY

Following the Learning Circles, women were asked to report the likelihood that they would take a variety of actions as a result of what they learned. Among those who responded to the exit evaluations (n=38), the **greatest share of participants, 71%, reported that it was either somewhat or extremely likely that they would contact one of the service providers** they met at the event. Similarly, 68% of respondents said it was either somewhat likely or extremely likely that they would obtain additional information about the topic discussed, and **63% were either somewhat or extremely likely to sign up for a USDA conservation program**. Though not all Learning Circles addressed farmland protection opportunities, among those that did, respondents reported strong potential that they would start working toward protecting their land, with 32% of respondents intending to take action towards this. And indeed in the course of the project, one participant contacted the farmland protection team at AFT started working to establish an agricultural conservation easement on her San Joaquin Valley property to keep the land in agriculture in perpetuity.



OUR IMPACT



"This is so important and I feel so much gratitude to have a new circle of women to work together with. All kinds of support or whatever it takes to continue this is well well worth it."

"I found this Learning Circle empowering, informative and very comfortable. This group seemed to be especially open."

"Thank you for holding this forum. I believe that the key to learning and improving is communication and I love the fact that more women are getting involved in the actual farming practices and are making more farm decisions."

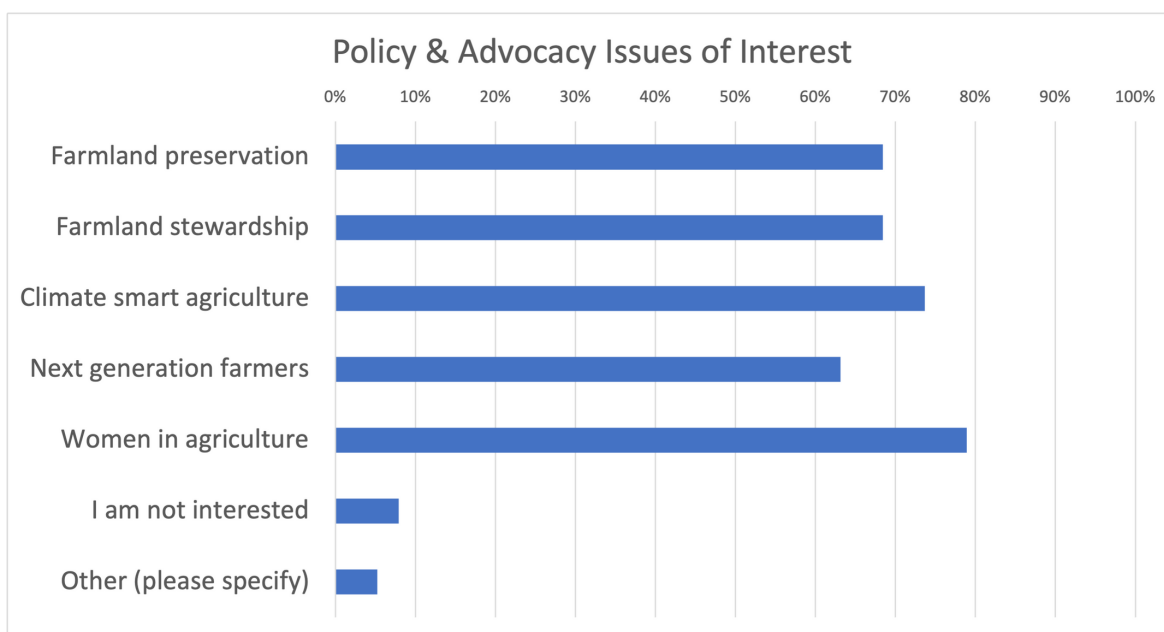
"Just a big thank you for providing this space & gathering these knowledgeable people. Connection is so missed."

"Thank you so much for this event, it was very encouraging, and like others said, it leaves us hopeful for the future of our land."

FUTURE INTEREST

WOMEN WANT TO TAKE ON LEADERSHIP AS ADVOCATES

Among the 38 respondents to our exit evaluation, the majority were interested in hearing about opportunities to advance the mission areas of AFT, with a particular focus on issues facing women in agriculture. This was a strong indication of the potential to activate this network for policy and systems change.



WOMEN WANT TO KEEP LEARNING TOGETHER

When asked what future Learning Circle topics might interest participants, top themes included:

- Conservation programs and grants
- Conservation easements
- Succession planning & farmland transfer
- Communications strategies for difficult conversations
- Tips for new farmers
- Marketing, crop planning, & business planning
- Rangeland topics

CONTINUING OUR WORK

CONTINUED COMMITMENT FROM NRCS

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in California has extended its support of WFL programming in the state for the next three years. This will enable the successes of the last two years to be build on, with renewed and deepened emphasis on reaching underserved agricultural communities and sustaining connections between the participants over time.



Intentions for the years ahead include:

- Continued focus on peer-to-peer learning
- Deepened engagement through multiple touch points
- Expanded web presence to supplement in-person learning & networking
- Additional needs-assessment, focused particularly on Black, Indigenous, and Women of Color
- Collaborative partnership with the Hoopa Valley Tribal Community
- Continued synergy with AFT's work in the San Joaquin Valley to accelerate farmland protection and the adoption of conservation practices to conserve and recharge groundwater.

To learn more about the Women for the Land Initiative in California, visit www.farmland.org/women, contact Caitlin Joseph at cjoseph@farmland.org, or call our California office at (916) 448-1064.