



TREASURE PHOTO/STOCKPHOTO

## Women for the Land

### Women in Agriculture Finding their Voice

In the U.S., 43% of farmland—nearly 388 million acres—is now farmed or co-farmed by women. We're building a network of these women to change the way farming and ranching gets done, for our food, for our families and communities, and for our planet.

Women have always been a critical part of agriculture, but they are becoming increasingly visible leaders in our production systems. Over the past few decades, women have entered agriculture in unprecedented numbers. More and more women own farmland and rangeland, are farmers, or have become more involved in other aspects of agricultural production. With the burgeoning food movements across the nation, women are the backbone of re-envisioning how agriculture is being done and how it can be a force in building and sustaining families and communities, as well as building a secure, ample, and climate-resilient food supply.

There are now over 1.25 million women producers, and **over half-a-million additional women are non-operating landowners who own nearly 90 million acres of farmland in the U.S.** Their impact on a significant portion of the agricultural acreage of our nation cannot be overstated.

Over the next 20 years, over 370 million acres of farmland are expected to change hands as farmers retire or leave their land to the next generation. During that time, women and non-farming landlords are likely to increase in numbers, but this outcome is not inevitable. Intentional outreach

and support of women is needed to ensure their success in these roles. Research shows that many women farmers and landowners have a strong conservation and stewardship ethic; they are deeply committed to farmland protection, sustainable practices, and supporting the next generation of operators. However, women face gender-based barriers that affect their ability to access financial and technical resources that ensure they can manage their land for long-term operation viability. And women from marginalized communities face even more barriers when accessing resources and the land itself.

The Women for the Land initiative is a suite of services and activities that help all women farm and ranch owners and operators make the best decisions for their businesses and their land. By engaging women leaders in research, on-the-ground practices and training, and advocacy, we are transforming agriculture for the better for all our futures.



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# Women for the Land

## Building Power Among Landowners and Operators

### Women Combatting Climate Change

Climate change will have a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable across the world, including women, children, the elderly, and those who are in poverty. There is clear evidence that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are especially at risk, many of whom have been given little recourse to influence how, or whether, climate change is addressed in a meaningful way in the rural, natural resource-based economies in which so many of these women live. In order to fundamentally tackle the problem of climate change and land degradation, we must look to build a more equitable future, one that has women's empowerment and the engagement of women of color and other marginalized groups at its core.



and learning sessions aimed at helping women landowners and farmers in the U.S. better steward their farmland, improve their knowledge of how to preserve and maintain land in agricultural production, and support their equal access to resources at the local, state, and federal level. This work is ever more important given the pressure on land development and the very real challenge that climate disruption has had and will continue to have on farm country. In addition to the Learning Circle model, a new focus is emerging to reach women ranchers to address the unique concerns of these large operations. A final element of the peer-to-peer networks we engage is a “train the trainers” program that helps other NGOs and government agencies understand the process for and efficacy of Learning Circles for creating community engagement with women and other underserved farmers.

### Peer-to-Peer Networks to Support Women Farmers and Ranchers

AFT's near decade of work with the Women for the Land Learning Circle model uses women-dedicated networking



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## Applied Research to Better Our Practices

AFT's Women for the Land program is a thought leader when it comes to better understanding non-operator landowners, or NOLs. This is an important audience to reach when



advocating for farmland preservation, farmland stewardship, and farm access, yet it can be an elusive audience. To this end, we led groundbreaking research on male and female NOLs across 13 states. Findings suggest NOLs can be effective partners in facilitating conservation practice adoption on rented lands. We have also partnered to conduct rigorous peer-reviewed research on the efficacy and impact of our programming. We aim to explore the science of women's networks and best practices for convening, engaging, and activating women farm and ranch leaders to do conservation and climate resilience work at local and community levels.

## Policy Work to Advance the Power of Women in Agriculture

The Women for the Land initiative works to engage in policy efforts that advance AFT mission areas with attention paid to women farmers and landowners and an emphasis on promoting:

- The need for greater research conducted on and about women farmers and landowners and their use of conservation practices and climate resilient strategies;
- Allocation of federal and state resources to support women, including women of color and LGBTQI farmers, to access financial and technical resources;



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- Activation of diverse women in agriculture networks to facilitate greater advocacy for farmland preservation, stewardship, and access;
- Responsive legislation addressing the unique challenges women of color have, including the heirs farming families whose land tenure and tenancy is in question, and the specialized needs of women farmers in Indigenous communities.



## Reach Out to Women for the Land!

- Request information about **hosting a Learning Circle** in your region by visiting [farmland.org/learning-circles-for-women-landowners](https://farmland.org/learning-circles-for-women-landowners)
- Learn more about our **research into women in agriculture** by visiting [farmland.org/research-into-women-landowners](https://farmland.org/research-into-women-landowners)
- Reach out to the Women for the Land program national director, Dr. Gabrielle Roesch-McNally ([groeschmcnally@farmland.org](mailto:groeschmcnally@farmland.org)) to request help in **advancing policy efforts** to support women farmers and ranchers in your region
- Participate in our **interest survey** to help us learn more about your needs ([farmland.org/women-events](https://farmland.org/women-events));
- Join the AFT network of women farmers and ranchers to receive our **Women for the Land newsletter**: [farmland.org/women](https://farmland.org/women)
- **Join AFT** and stay on top of the WFL program and other news from the nation's leader in the agriculture conservation movement by visiting [farmland.org/membership](https://farmland.org/membership)



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## How to Support Women for the Land

American Farmland Trust is a registered nonprofit organization in the U.S. and its work is made possible through the generous philanthropic support of individuals and organizations, as well as the direct financial support of granting agencies. We seek investors who want to help frame a better future in agriculture by ensuring the success of women farmers and ranchers!

Here are the ways you can support the growth and development of the Women for the Land program:

- Underwrite individual learning circles for \$15,000.
- While we currently provide all Women for the Land services and programs at no cost, smaller donations of \$1,000 to \$5,000 can provide increased access to these programs and support program enhancements.
- Program supporters, or donors at any level who designate their gift to AFT to the Women for the Land program, are needed to ensure the overall delivery and administration of Learning Circles, train the trainer programs, research and publications, and delivery of specialized programs to unique audiences.
- To grow the Women for the Land program, we seek investors who will underwrite community engagement specialist positions that would be embedded in communities, particularly communities of color, to develop responsive programs to support women farmers and ranchers. Gifts to underwrite positions are needed from \$60,000.
- To ensure a long-term future for the Women for the Land program, we seek investors to endow the program, assuring that the operating costs are fully covered through invested funds and annual resources raised can be used to amplify results. A multi-million-dollar investment is needed to establish this funding approach, and donors are encouraged to reach out to [support@farmland.org](mailto:support@farmland.org) or Gabrielle McNally at (360)726-2686 or [groeschmcnally@farmland.org](mailto:groeschmcnally@farmland.org).



ASHLEY LIMA PHOTOGRAPHY

### American Farmland Trust: Sustaining the Land That Sustains Us for 40 years

American Farmland Trust is the founder of the modern agriculture conservation movement, and for over four decades has had an outsized impact in addressing the future of agriculture. AFT is distinct in its approach in that it is in the only organization working holistically to address issues facing the land, the practices, and the people of farming and ranching.

Organized initially by farmers and activists to examine the threat of farmland loss through urban expansion and non-agriculture use of land, AFT offers the most comprehensive review of farmland conversion in the country and offers solutions to government, policy and community leaders to save the farmland needed to provide secure food systems for our growing populations.

Fortunately, our land in agriculture is our greatest hope for a better future for all of us. Agriculture, done right with regard to sustainability, can be productive while also helping to heal the planet by putting carbon back into the soil and increasing our soil health for the long term. This is the mission work of AFT – assuring we have the land we need, assuring it's farmed in ways that contributes to soil and water health, and assuring we have the farmers and ranchers we need to work the land.

The Women for the Land initiative is one of the national focus areas for AFT that contributes to the mission of the organization. With its unique focus on sustainable and regenerative practices as an outcome of the Learning Circle programs nationwide, the Women for the Land effort contributes significantly to the second tier of the mission. Increasingly, our work touches on all the mission areas of AFT while focusing on all women as critical partners in this work.

