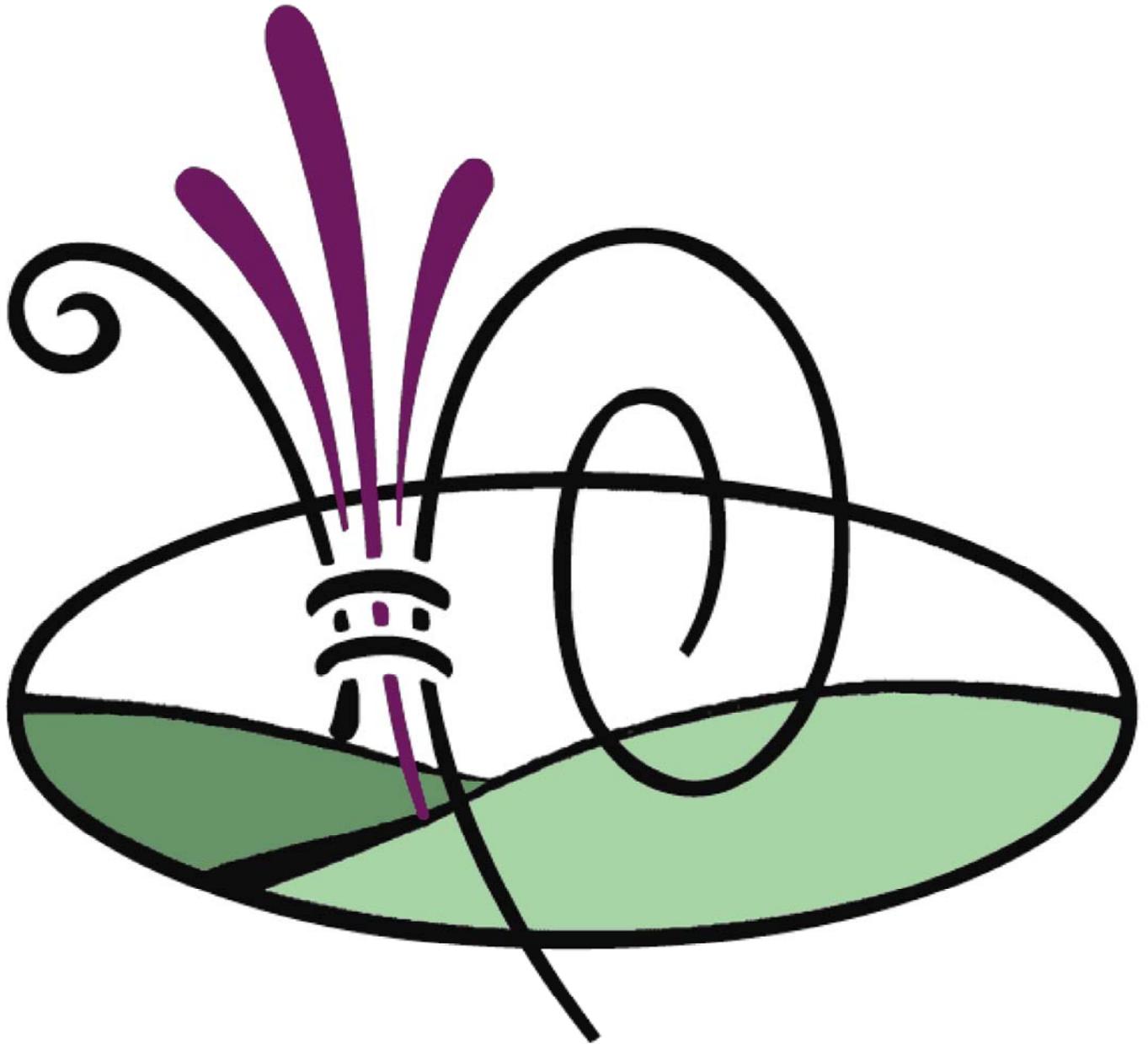


Women Managing the Farm



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Overview

Several persons involved with farm families and rural communities met in 2003 in Justin Hall lobby to discuss the possibility for collaborative activities to address the growing needs of women in agriculture. The initial focus was women who have been put in decision-making positions for the family operation due to unforeseen circumstances, but lacked essential agricultural management skills. These women had been pushed into making essential decisions previously made by their husbands, the primary farm operator. In numerous cases documented by the Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services and the Kansas Rural Family Helpline, these situations had led to distress or harm to family members, the farm business, and the rural community. It was concluded that this family distress or harm could be averted, or greatly reduced, if family farm members took action to prepare for these issues before tragic events brought them to the forefront.

An initial project in 2004, funded by the North Central Risk Management Center, Lincoln, Nebraska, offered 1 ½ day seminars in four Kansas locations to a total of 210 women on the management of human, price, production, financial, and legal risks on family farms. Although these four training seminars were designed for women over the age of 55, attendees represented a wide range of ages and circumstances. The 2006, 2007, and 2008 conferences, funded in partnership with the USDA Risk Management Agency, were a continuation of offering farm women information to help them become more competent in their roles on their family farms, to protect or enhance family dynamics, and to set up mechanisms that would keep them connected to each other for support and information gathering.

The Women Managing the Farm project, as it has become known, recognizes and acknowledges that women play an active role in all aspects of financial and risk management of farm operations and that the changing dynamics and economics of the farm household and the farm operation lead to the changing roles women play on the farm today. Currently this grant-funded effort is managed by personnel from Kansas State University and K-State Research and Extension, but with a very active and strong collaboration representing the following partners and sponsors over the years:

USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA)
Kansas Grain Sorghum Producers Association
American Farmers and Ranchers
USDA Farm Service Agency
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Kansas Soybean Association
Kansas Rural Center
Kansas Department of Agriculture
Kansas Agri-Women
Kansas Association of Wheat Growers
Kansas Corn Growers Association
Kansas State University Research & Extension
Kansas Rural Family Helpline
Kansas Department of Commerce
Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services
Kansas Farm Bureau
Frontier Farm Credit

Farm Credit of Central Kansas
 Farm Credit of Ness City
 High Plains Farm Credit
 Farm Credit of Western Kansas
 Farm Credit of Southwest Kansas
 Kansas Wheat Commission
 Kansas Beef Council
 Kansas Department of Commerce
 Kansas Cooperative Council
 Kansas Association of Family and Community Education
 Oklahoma Farmers Union

What have been the conference themes and participant responses to each conference?

The remainder of the report summarizes the outcomes/impacts of organizing and hosting, for three consecutive years, a bi-state (Kansas and Oklahoma) *Women Managing the Farm* conference. The fourth annual conference that will be held February 12-14, 2009, is now in the planning stages. The conferences have been totally organized, not by a paid conference service, but by the project partners and sponsors themselves.

2006: *Women Managing the Farm: A Comprehensive Program for Farm Owners, Partners and Rookies* February 17-18, 2006, Best Western Airport Inn & Conference Center, Wichita, KS.

2007: *Women Managing the Farm: Moving Ag Women Forward* February 9-10, 2007, Grand Prairie Hotel & Convention Center, Hutchinson, KS.

2008: *Women Managing the Farm: Celebrating Ag Women* February 7-9, 2008, Grand Prairie Hotel & Convention Center, Hutchinson, KS.

Table 1: Participation, Conference Fees, and Scholarships

Year	Number of Registrations	States Represented	Full Conference Registration Fee prior to February 1	Number of Scholarships Awarded*
2006	192	KS,OK,MO,CA,CO	\$50	51
2007	317	Information not available	\$65	65
2008	335	KS,OK,MO,SD,NE,IL,CA,TX,WY	\$75	44

* Conference registration and/or hotel/travel scholarships were awarded through applications for USDA RMA grant monies, USDA Farm Service Agency sponsorship, or member scholarships given by either Farm Bureau or the Farm Credit Associations.

What have been the funding sources in addition to the registration fees?

The conference has received funding through the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) Community and Outreach Partnership Program through a national competitive grant process. The RMA funding awards have been:

2006 \$115,000
 2007 \$50,000
 2008 \$100,000

Project partners also have financially contributed to the conferences. Farm Credits of Kansas have sponsored the conference keynote speaker for each of the past three years as well as meeting space for partner meetings. Cargill Meat Solutions has donated or reduced the price for the banquet steaks. Partners have donated employee time and support throughout the year to plan the conference as well as contribute resources for participant handouts and door prizes.

What topics have been on the conference agendas?

The conferences are designed to provide a safe, supportive setting for farm women in Kansas and Oklahoma to address their multiple needs, whether they were independent producers, agricultural partners, business managers, agriculture helpers and/or farm homemakers. Keynote and motivational speakers and concurrent workshops have addressed the five major risk areas for farming operations as identified by RMA: human, production, price, financial, and legal risks.

Table 2: Conference Keynote Speakers and Their Topics

Year	Keynote Speakers	Topic
2006	Nancy C. Pellet, Chairman of the Board and CEO Farm Credit Administration	Farm Issues and Challenges
2006	Charlotte Shoup Olsen (substitute keynoter), K-State Research and Extension Family Systems Specialist	Take Note of How You Communicate with Your Family
2006	Ron Wilson, Poet Lariat	Farm Stories
2007	Vincent Amanour-Boadu, Kansas State University Extension Ag Economist	From Ag Women to Managers: Wealth Creation as a Valid Objective in Agriculture
2007	Jolene Brown, Farm Wife and Informational/Motivational Speaker on Agricultural Issues	Top Ten Stupid Things Families do to Break Up Their Businesses; and Who's Hiding the Humor?
2007	Marci Penner, Distinguished Kansan of the Year, Kansas Sampler Foundation	Seeing Rural Communities with New Eyes
2008	Don Jonovich, Farm Business Management Services, Cleveland, OH	Surviving Farm Business White-water – 1) Strategies for Survival, and 2) Taking Action
2008	Elizabeth Kinney, Miss Oklahoma 2004, Top 10 Miss American Finalist, and KTUL News Reporter, Tulsa, OK	Celebrating Ag Women
2008	Charlie Griffin, Director of Kansas Rural Family Helpline	Relax! Your Most Important Management Skill is Self-Care

Each year over 5,800 hours of risk management training are offered through invited speakers, as noted above, and workshop presenters. The 2006 conference also offered in depth exploration tours to local agricultural enterprises around conservation, machinery

and fencing basics, innovative production agriculture, and planning safe farms. Concurrent sessions are organized around the five risk areas with workshop presenters being recruited from partner recommendations. The 2008 concurrent session topics, representative of the other conferences, were:

Table 3: 2008 Concurrent Sessions by Risk Area

Risk Area	Concurrent Session Topics
Human	*A healthy lifestyle for the on-the-go woman (repeated) *Facilitating family business meetings (repeated) *Generational differences in agriculture *Ag in the classroom – agriculture is essential (repeated)
Production	*Crop and grassland basics (repeated) *Empower yourself – Know your resources (repeated) *Crop insurance (repeated) *Going organic
Price	*What the bioeconomy means for farmers (repeated) *Farm policy update (repeated) *FSA USDA Farm Service Agency – Learn the basics to participate in FSA programs (repeated) *Above & beyond, marketing and value added ideas for women in ag
Financial	*Personal insurance – all you ever wanted to know about personal insurance but were afraid to ask (repeated) *Making retirement something you and your employees can look forward to (repeated) *RMA – Introduction to AGR-Lite (repeated 3 times)
Legal	*How to plan your estate to take advantage of changing tax law and to insure a smooth transfer of assets to the next generation (repeated) *Issues impacting land values (repeated) *Leasing – How do you decide what’s fair? (repeated)

What support systems have been offered to the women participants?

Networking opportunities are offered to conference participants related to the role that best describes their primary position in their farm operation: agriculture partner, agriculture helper/farm homemaker, business manager, absentee landowner, or independent ag producer (Bokemeier and Garkovich, 1987). Furthermore, each role group is broken into western and eastern areas of their states (i.e. Kansas and Oklahoma) during one designated discussion time at each conference, allowing participants to build support networks at the conference and after they return home. The partners have found that the personal contact was more important than maintaining year round email listservs for each group.

In addition, *Rural Route Women*, a chat room and message board system designed especially for farm women, has been established through K-State Online. To date, about 20 women are signed up for *Rural Route Women* and approximately 3-4 persons contribute to the weekly chat room (except during the summer) that is hosted by one of the partners. Information on how to join is available in conference materials as well as through the project’s website, www.womenmanagingthefarm.info

How satisfied were the participants in what they learned at the past three conferences?

Table 4: Satisfaction Levels from Completed Evaluations

	2006	2007	2008
No. of completed evaluations	92	168	180
Mean score for overall training satisfaction (1 not sat. – 5 very satisfied)	4.53	4.54	4.47
Mean score for satisfaction with keynote presentations	4.33	4.76	4.36
Mean score for satisfaction with workshops	4.31	4.23	4.28
% that would recommend conference to others	98%	98%	91%

Table 5: General Comments Representative of the Larger Sample

2006	2007	2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would liked to have heard more of other sessions and tours • Well done – variety of topics was good. • I like that young women were leading the conf. • Great job. Thanks to all who put time and energy into conference. • Very good program. Explain what sessions are about in detail. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference was wonderful, helpful, Very well organized, the flow was exceptional! • Will come back next year. • It was nice to have so many breakouts and handouts were wonderful. • Excellent, encouraging, practical, extremely valuable information. • Would have like to see some offerings for young women who are just getting in a farming operation. • The exhibition room was great idea. • Just talking with other farm women was more of value to me than any of the sessions • Learned about areas I hadn't even thought about. I feel like I have touched 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall wonderful and enjoyable conference with great breakout sessions. • Too much information in too short of time. • Will come next year and bring others. • Enjoyed all and learned a lot more than last year – probably because I have had last year's conference to build on this year. Thanks for all your work. • Thank you for this event. Each year gets better. Please organize a one day seminar to include family-children. Every member of the family should hear the presentations of Don Jonovich and Terry Arthur. I know it would benefit to have a seminar

	<p>the tip of the iceberg please do this conference again.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All who took part in this conference needs to be sincerely thanked. Has been a good quality of info, very useable by me. I know where to start now, questions and concerns to address, take pressure of my husband. Also enjoyed meeting others of all ages, concerns, and situations. • This conference had a lot of information and a few topics that I was bored with because I was no longer in entry-level mentality. • I was impressed with all the speakers and educators and the number of topics covered, I have so many questions as I am trying to find a way to take over the family farm. These meetings have given me great ideas and most importantly contacts to take those questions to. I look forward to attending next year. 	<p>for families that include the presentations these men made.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too much to take in, had to go somewhere for supper to get a break. When I go to work I expect to come home with a profit. Why should farming be any different? We tenants often qualify for WIC, food stamps and welfare. Owners do not have these issues.
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How will the conference training assist the women in their family farm operations?

The respondents were asked what changes they will make in regards to farming within the next 3 months, next year, and next five years. Their responses were:

Table 6: Changes Respondents Anticipate Making in the Future

2006	2007	2008
<p>Changes in next 3 months 37 responses Wide variety of responses Many had goals related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming more organized with bookkeeping (using 	<p>Changes in next 3 months 83 responses Wide variety of responses Many had goals related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning for intergenerational transfer 	<p>Changes in next 3 months 57 responses Wide variety of responses Many had goals related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having regular family business meetings • Communicating more

<p>computer more)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting more things on paper like goals and tenant leases • Becoming better informed of all aspects • Exploring agritourism • Communicating better with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopting better bookkeeping and record keeping strategies • Communicating and having regular family business meetings • Thinking about creative income generating ideas (e.g. agritourism) • Learning the agriculture language • Defining our roles on the farm 	<p>frequently with family and hired help</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working at lowering input costs • Working on estate planning (e.g. wills, transition plans)
<p>Changes within next year 30 responses Wide variety of responses Many had goals related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking more leadership on the farm and having a well defined role • Becoming more organized with recordkeeping • Considering new farming practices • Doing a better job of marketing crops 	<p>Changes within next year 74 responses Wide variety of responses Many had goals related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making stronger and more definite business plans • Putting long range plans in writing and in legal documents • Making record keeping improvements • Changing production practices • Working with FSA better 	<p>Changes within next year 55 responses Wide variety of responses Many had goals related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquiring more land, better equipment, and/or livestock • Having a joint family vision • Better management of production, marketing, and bookkeeping. • Communicating more with family and employees • Continuing to learn
<p>Changes within next 5 years 33 responses Wide variety of responses Many had goals related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing debt • Increasing land and livestock • Transitioning to other family members • Improving marketing strategies 	<p>Changes within next 5 years 72 responses Wide variety of responses Many had goals related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing more land or cattle • Bringing young family members into operation • Changing business structure (e.g. using computerized accounting data to improve operation) • Planning for retirement • Becoming more knowledgeable for making independent decisions 	<p>Changes within next 5 years 28 responses Wide variety of responses Many had goals related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retiring • Becoming more efficient (esp. with no till practices) • Working on intergenerational transfer • Acquiring more land • Diversifying operation

What have been additional benefits of the conferences?

Presenters are asked to send handouts and/or slide shows prior to the conference. This information is made available to all participants regardless of the sessions they attend. In addition, the conference features an exhibit hall where commercial, agency, and other interested parties display their information and products. 2008 exhibitor fees were \$50 per booth space with booth fees for project partners being waived. Each year, the demand for exhibitor space has increased – 31 booths were occupied at the 2008 conference. A new aspect also was added to the 2008 with a pre-conference event, the *Celebrating Ag Women's Health* fair, which featured a sampling event sponsored by the Kansas Department of Commerce and health information presented by the Curves Company.

What other outcomes have occurred as a result of the conferences?

County-level collaborations in Kansas have used the *Women Managing the Farm* model to replicate educational events for women in agriculture within their local areas. The events, either daylong or one evening sessions, have featured similar topics that have been covered at the conferences. Others have created ongoing activities to meet the women's needs. The following counties are known to have established some type of programming for women in agriculture: Smith, Lincoln, Ellis, Saline, and Harvey. No doubt, this list is incomplete.

Summary

The *Women Managing the Farm* project is filling a need for women in agriculture, mainly for women in Kansas and Oklahoma, although the web site (www.womenmanagingthefarm.info) has been a marketing tool for recruiting women from other states. Its success can be attributed to many things including the partnering support of the USDA Risk Management Agency and other agencies and commodity groups that understand the needs of women connected to agricultural operations. The program has been dual focused in that: 1) educational information is presented at the annual conferences, and 2) an ongoing support system through the *Rural Route Women* chat room and message boards are available on a regular basis throughout the year. Additionally, the networking structure based on each woman's primary role in the family's farming operation connects women to each other during the conference, thus opening opportunities for continued contact after they leave the conference. The educational nature of the conference focuses on five risk management areas (i.e. production, price, financial, legal, and human) at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of knowledge, addressing the needs of women at different comfort levels of agricultural information. Anticipated behavioral changes as reported on the returned surveys are encouraging indicators that the conferences are making a difference in supporting the roles women have in their family operations. It is not uncommon to hear women say that they can go with their husbands to local educational events, but are intimidated to ask questions. *Women Managing the Farm* offers a supportive environment to allow women to ask the questions that are on their minds and to also address issues of family dynamics and interactions that are so pertinent to the success of family farm operations.