

Launch of the Engaging and Advancing Women in Agriculture Project

January 17th, 2023 – Ottawa ON – The Canadian Federation of Agriculture is pleased to announce the launch of the Engaging and Advancing Women in Agriculture (EAWA) project. The project is funded in part by the Government of Canada under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership's AgriDiversity Program. Further project support is provided by the Chicken Farmers of Canada and the Prince Edward Island Federation of Agriculture (PEIFA).

Despite continued progress, in many respects women are underrepresented in the Canadian agriculture sector and their contributions often go unrecognized. They face both systemic and attitudinal barriers to entering the industry and securing leadership positions. This constrains the sector's capacity, resiliency, and innovation; creates challenges in attracting and retaining women; and negatively affects the sector's public image.

This project, led by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, leverages previous work done by PEIFA and Karolyn Godfrey of Winding Path Inc. with support from the Government of PEI. This earlier work developed, in consultation with a working group of female agricultural leaders, a strategic plan which focused on the implementation of policies and programs to address barriers to women's full participation in the sector. The EAWA project is taking a systemic approach to pilot implementing this strategic plan in PEI with the aim of facilitating the adoption of similar approaches by other producer associations across Canada.

The project will develop, pilot, and document a framework through which producer associations can systemically address the underrepresentation of women in Canadian agriculture, support women in the sector to develop skills to take on greater leadership roles and raise awareness of the benefits of women's full participation, barriers women experience, all while addressing those barriers.

"The Canadian Federation of Agriculture is committed to supporting greater diversity in the agricultural sector and we are excited to have the opportunity to lead the Engaging and Advancing Women in Agriculture project, which will both celebrate the women leaders in our sector and help to reduce the systemic barriers women are face in getting involved in



the sector. Any person with an interest in a career in agriculture should be welcomed and encouraged to contribute to this industry. It's time to level the field."

– *Mary Robinson, President, Canadian Federation of Agriculture*

"Women have always played an essential role on family farms. Their hard work and determination contribute to the resiliency and success of the sector. Despite their efforts, women still face systemic barriers in the industry. I commend the Canadian Federation of Agriculture for its work to eliminate these barriers, strengthen women's leadership and support diversity for the future."

– *The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food*

For more information on the project, please visit <https://levelthefieldinag.ca/>

Additional Links: Promo Video: <https://vimeo.com/787036984>

Social Media: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#)

[Government of Canada invests in strengthening diversity in Canadian agriculture](#)

Media Contact

Laurie Karson

Director of Communications & Stakeholder Relations

613-236-3633

laurie@canadian-farmers.ca





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Karolyn Godfrey



Karolyn is the owner of Winding Path Inc., where she provides leadership, collaborative problem-solving, and management training, as well as strategic coaching services. She has created and led multi-year provincial and national projects focused on gender equality and diversity. She is a CMHA Certified Psychological Health and Safety Advisor for workplaces.

Prior to starting her current business, she was a partner in a Charlottetown law firm for 14 years.

Karolyn has served on not-for-profit boards and various committees for The Law Society of Prince Edward Island, the Council of The Law Society of Prince Edward Island, and the Federal Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee for Prince Edward Island (representing the Federal Minister of Justice). She is currently the

volunteer VP responsible for Vision, Volunteers and Community Relations on the Board of Management of the Host Society of the 2023 Canada Winter Games.

“Women in agriculture are strong. And just because they can overcome gender barriers, doesn’t mean they should have to. I am dedicated to doing everything I can, to level the field.”



winding path inc.

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It's Time to Level the Field.

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Our Goal: To Level The Field in AG

Between 1996 and 2016, the Census of Agriculture saw a **3% increase** in the proportion of farm operators who were women. However, this positive trend masks the reality that the sector is still heavily male-dominated, with only **28.7% of farm operators being women, the total number of women farming declining by 20% over that same time period, and significant contributions from women across the sector remaining unpaid and/or unrecognized**. Statistics on farm operators themselves likely fail to account for the breadth of women hold on-farm management responsibilities, if not labeled as such.

This is a concern for a sector that is primed for continued, strong growth, while facing constraints due to labour shortages and concerns around public trust that, in many respects, both reflect regressive images of the sector and its opportunities. At the same time, the research is clear, companies that promote and reflect gender diversity are more likely to outperform industry averages in financial returns, innovation, adaptability, growing their labour force, and critically in the retention and attraction of customers due to enhanced public trust. When viewed at a sector-level, the economic implications of women's underrepresentation alone present a compelling case to focus attention on this critical issue. However, for thousands of women whose contributions to the sector continue to go unacknowledged, who face challenges in operating their businesses successfully or access capital because of traditional gender stereotypes, or who lack visible role models, there are very real social and mental health facets to agriculture's continued male-dominance as well.

Most women face an exhausting reality of dealing with gender barriers every day. It consumes time, resources, and energy they otherwise would be free to dedicate to their work and other sector achievements which would benefit them, their operation, and the sector generally. For others, those barriers are reasons to not enter the sector or to leave the sector entirely.

Our goal is to **#LeveltheFieldinAG**





“Women in agriculture are strong. And just because they can overcome gender barriers, doesn’t mean they should have to. I am dedicated to doing everything I can, to level the field.”

– Carolyn Godfrey



Background

There isn't a gender divide in the work ethic or capacity to farm.

There isn't a gender divide in one's ability to learn to milk cows, farm chickens, plow a field, to seed or to cultivate crops.



Experience

Project lead, Carolyn is the owner of Winding Path Inc., where she provides leadership, collaborative problem-solving, and management training, as well as strategic coaching services. She has created and led multi-year provincial

So why is there still a gender divide in the roles, opportunities, expectations, and experiences that women face in farming .



Leadership

What can we do right now to make a difference?

- * Join a local Agricultural organization and take on leadership roles to recruit and retain women in the sector.
- * Find a mentor or become one , providing a pathway for recruitment and support for those already in the sector.
- * Share your experiences and be open about the challenges you or others around you have faced, so other women feel less isolated and understand it is not just them.

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Level The Field

Like all growing industries, empowerment of all genders will lead to better communities, better work and better end results.

Together, we can continue to grow, support, and respect all farmers in our communities.

Farmers of all genders working together in the greater agricultural community will bring us to a future where we are utilizing a wider range of our community resources to provide the food necessary to feed Canadians across the country.

Together, we CAN Level the Field.

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