



# Why Focus on Beginning Women Farmers and Ranchers

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# Setting the stage

- What the numbers tell us
- Women NBFR challenges
- Women NBFR successes
- Access to programs and services
- New networks for women farmers

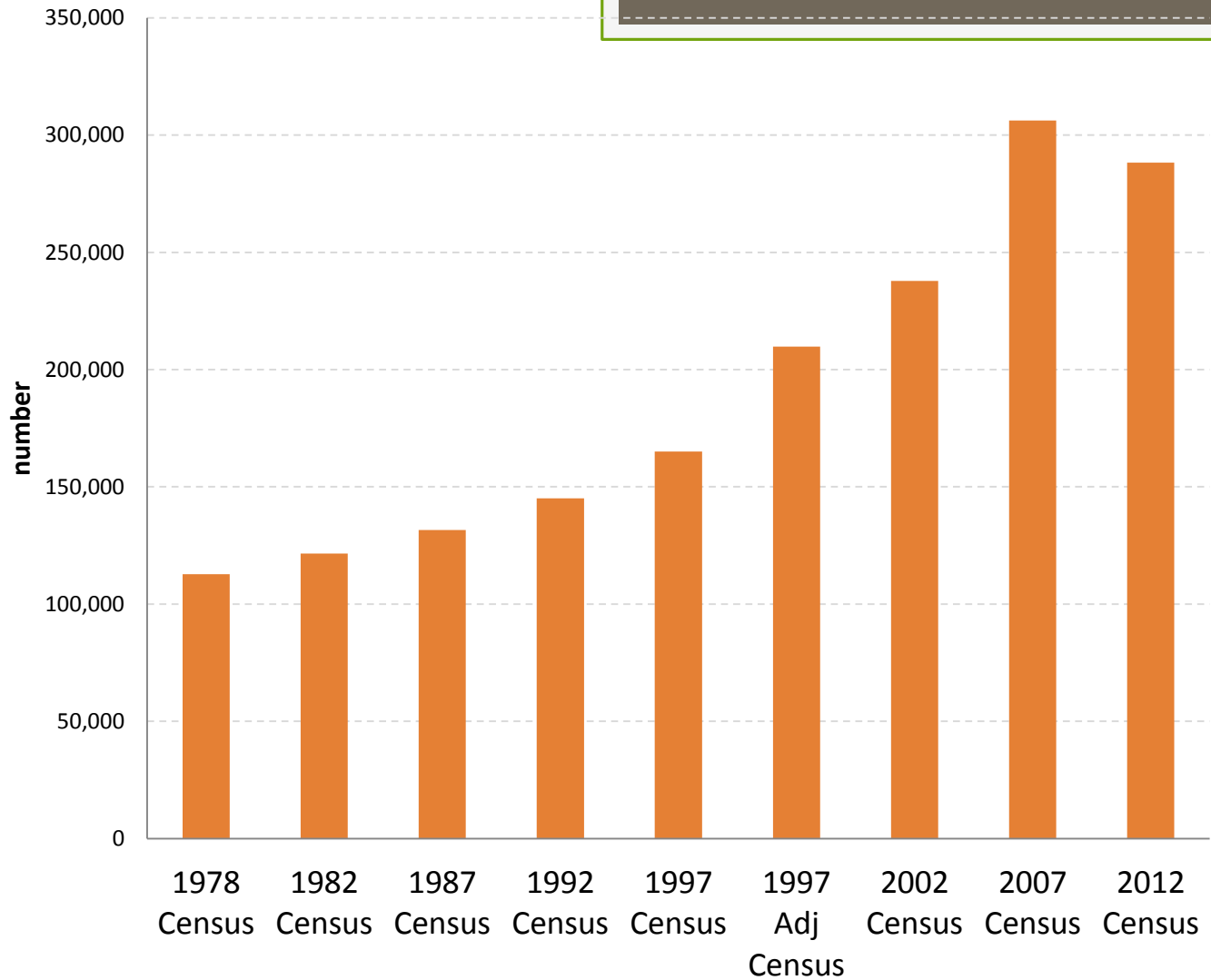
# Long-term trend: *More women* farmers

- 14 % of principal operators are women
- 30% of all farm operators are women



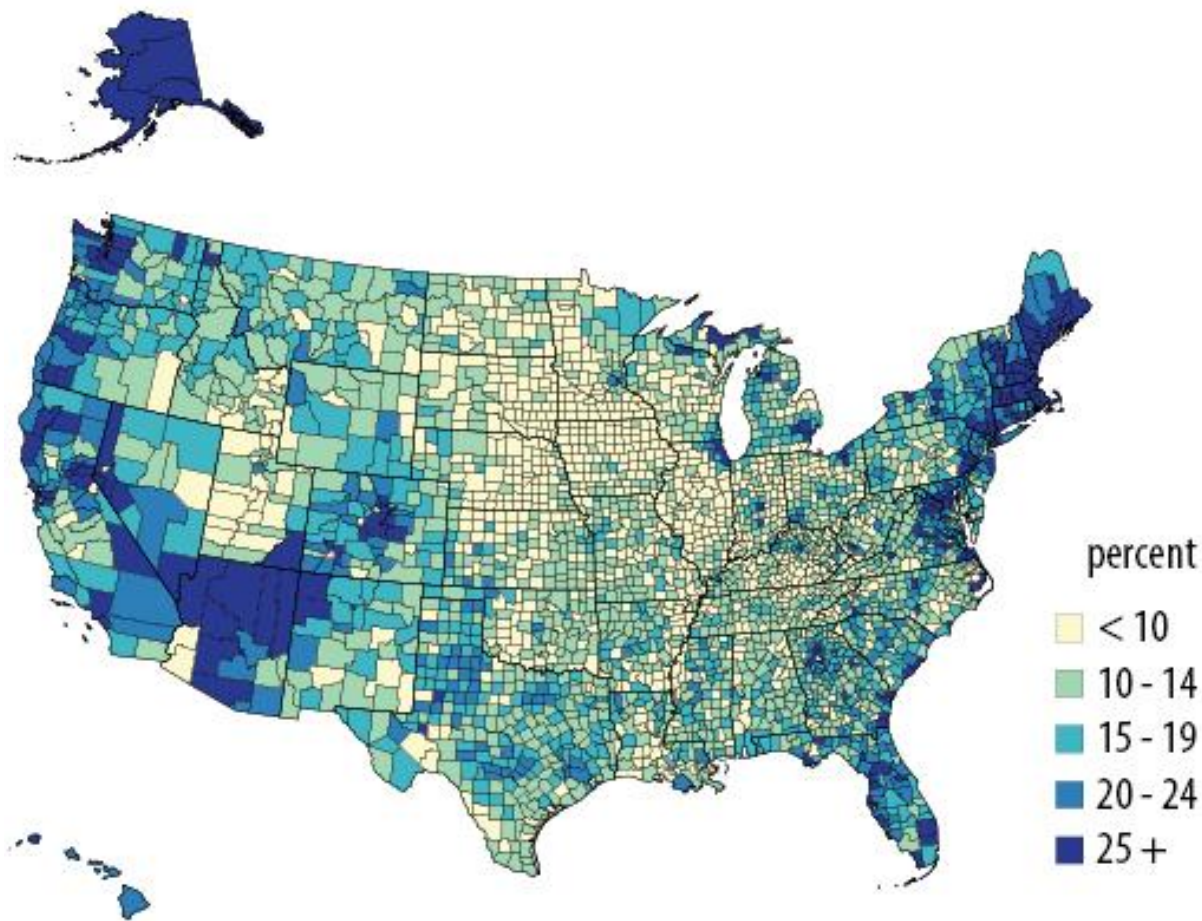
# Female Principal Operators, 1978 to 2012

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## Farms with Female Principal Operator, by County, 2012

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Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

# New Farmers Declining

## New Farmers, 2007 and 2012 (number of principal operators)

	2007	2012	% change
On operation less than ten years	583,286	469,098	-19.6*
On operation less than five years	223,741	171,550	-23.3*

Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

\*Statistically significant change.

# Shifts in Principal Farm Operators 2007-2012

- Fewer female operators
- More minority operators
- Higher average age of farm operators
- Fewer beginning operators
- Fewer small farms





# Women farmers face challenges

- struggle to legitimize position as farmers
- lack training/skills to operate farms
- approach problems in different ways than men farmers
- lack adequate capital and land
- want information





# Women Farmers Successes

- 1) shaping new environmentally sound food and farming systems;
- 2) creating gender equality on farms;
- 3) asserting the identity of farmer ;
- 4) pursuing innovative ways to access land, labor and capital;
- 5) navigating agricultural organizations reluctant to meet their needs, and
- 6) forming new networking organizations for women farmers.

\*book: The Rise of Women Farmers and Sustainable Agriculture Sachs, C. et al.



## Women Shape New Farming Systems

Smaller farms, diversified, high-value and value added products, unique marketing strategies, sustainable production practices



## Women principal operators on 22 percent of organic farms

Deb Brubaker of Village Acres Organic Farm



## Women farmers and scientists promote healthy soil and links to community

Mary Barbercheck talking about soil health



# More Gender Equality on Farms





## New Ways of Accessing Land and Capital

- From bathroom to barn
- Accessing public land
- Urban agriculture



## Innovative strategies

- CSAs
- Agritourism
- On-farm environmental education
- Value-added production
- Collaborative marketing





Agriculture organizations and institutions have not met the needs of many women farmers

USDA, commodity organizations, cooperative extension



## Why Cooperative Extension and other programs have missed women farmers

- Stereotypes that women are not competent
- “Not real farmers”
- “Not a real farm”
- Expert delivery method
- Focus on technology packages



## USDA Programs for women farmers

- FSA programs target new and beginning women farmers
- Beginning Farmer and Rancher educational programs
- Micro-loans for urban farmers
- Loans for African-American and Latino farmers



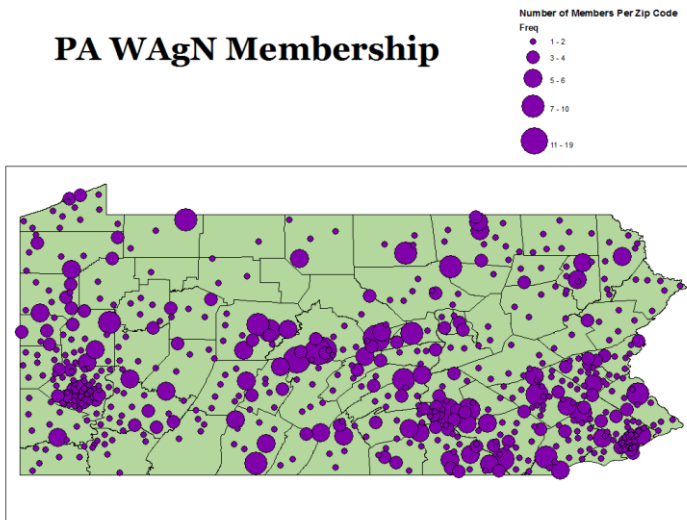


## Women Farmers Educational preferences

- Peer-to-peer learning
- On-Farm education
- Hands-on workshops
- Mentoring and networking
- On-line webinars
- Social Media

# Women form new organizations for women farmers

**PA WAgN Membership**



- Women's Food and Agricultural Network
- Vermont WAgN
- Pennsylvania WAgN



## Pennsylvania Women's Agricultural Network supports women farmers

- Farmer-led field days
- Study circles
- Farm walks/kitchen talks
- Mentoring
- Networking and leadership training
- Urban-rural farmer exchanges

# More work to be done!!

- Thank you



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