



United States Department of Agriculture



# WOMEN *in* AGRICULTURE



## Dear Women in Agriculture:

Thank you for choosing agriculture as your life's work and for assuming leadership roles. As a whole, American agriculture could use a lot more people like you. But from what I have seen around this nation, there are great things to come for women in leadership roles in the various industries in our field.

USDA's Women in Agriculture Initiative is aimed at supporting and increasing the participation of women in agriculture in roles in our federal department,

across the United States, and throughout the world. We want women to feel empowered to enter the worlds of farming, ranching, foresting, and producing. But we also want women to succeed in related businesses and in boardrooms from coast to coast. If American agriculture is to be truly representative of our country, then it is only natural for women to ascend to its leadership heights.

Here at USDA we are already benefitting from the counsel of wise women every day. My Chief of Staff is a woman and many of my most senior advisors are as well. Their advice and input are valuable additions to our decision-making process, and we are a stronger USDA because of them. I hope our department can serve as an example to other organizations in agriculture.

I have traveled this country quite a bit and interacted

with the people of American agriculture in every state. And each place I visit, I am encouraged by the young people of Future Farmers of America that I encounter. They stand out in their trademark blue jackets, of course, and they are many in number. But what I have noticed about them is also an indicator of where U.S. agriculture is headed. When I am introduced to their elected officers – placed in positions of responsibility by their peers – their leaders tend to be overwhelmingly female. If this is the future of agriculture, it is bright indeed.

Thank you again for your hard work. And I wish you the best of luck as you – in the words of my new motto for USDA – “Do right and feed everyone.”

Sincerely,

**Sonny Perdue**  
Secretary of Agriculture



## IN THE NEWS

### Ivanka Trump Heads to Berlin for Women's Conference

<https://apnews.com/347663983dbc494eb4e3b7ca3770e702>

### The Queen Bee of Downtown Durham

<http://bittersoutherner.com/the-queen-bee-of-downtown-durham-leigh-kathryn-bonner>

### She Succeeds, We Succeed: Advancing and Improving Girls' Education:

<https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/blog/global-food-thought/she-succeeds-we-succeed-girls-education>

### How Women Pioneers Are Changing The Meat Industry In Massachusetts:

<http://www.wbur.org/bostonomix/2017/05/12/women-meat-industry-massachusetts>

## IN CONVERSATION WITH #WOMENINAG - RECENT USDA BLOG FEATURES

### Kristina Fast: USDA Farm Service Agency in Minnesota

<https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2017/02/28/conversation-womeninag-kristina-fast>

### Kelly Stange: Agricultural Counselor for Germany, Austria, Hungary & Slovenia

<https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2017/03/08/conversation-womeninag-kelly-stange>

### Hanna Lisenbe: High School Senior, 4-H & FFA Youth Leader, Lamb, Goat & Swine Exhibitor

<https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2017/04/26/conversation-womeninag-hanna-lisenbe>

### Sarah Jovan: Research Ecologist, 2017 Promising Innovations Medal Finalist - The "Sammies"

<https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2017/05/24/conversation-womeninag-sarah-jovan>

## ABOUT THE USDA WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE (WIA) INITIATIVE

Women have long been involved in agriculture but routinely go unrecognized for the integral role they play. These women represent all facets of agriculture and are leading in their industries but often their voices aren't heard. We take this challenge very seriously at USDA and created the Women in Agriculture Initiative in 2014 which has since developed into a driving force in USDA's mission to support the growing and diverse next generation of farmers and ranchers. It examines the role women play internally at USDA, supports women to assume leadership roles in the United States both on and off the farm, and acknowledges the unique challenges many women farmers and ranchers face around the world.

This newsletter is produced for the WIA Mentorship Network which is designed to support and engage women across all areas of agriculture and help foster partnerships between women with shared backgrounds, interests, and professional goals.

Contact [AgWomenLead@osec.usda.gov](mailto:AgWomenLead@osec.usda.gov) for more details on the initiative, to join the network, recommend blog features, and receive updates on future engagement calls and events. Get connected online and find resources at <https://newfarmers.usda.gov/women-in-ag>.

## THREE PILLARS OF THE INITIATIVE

Empower Engage Encourage, From Farm to Fork to Boardroom

### WIA Mentorship Network

The WIA Mentorship Network includes more than 1,500 external stakeholder members including farm groups, universities, and agribusinesses across the country engaging in dialogue about the future role for women in agriculture. Through regular engagement calls, blog posts and events, the network creates connections and allows women to share stories and relay advice.

### Global Women in Agriculture

Leveraging USDA's international footprint, the Global Women in Agriculture effort advances gender equality through food security and emergency response programming and U.S. Government interagency coordination. Strengthening women's economic development and land rights is a critical strategy for addressing underlying issues including food insecurity and poverty many communities face around the world.

### USDA WIA Employee Group

The USDA WIA Group consists of employees focused on elevating women's roles in agriculture and identifying leadership opportunities within USDA for women to grow. Bringing members from across USDA's many areas together, the group highlights USDA's existing efforts to support women through professional development.

## FARM SERVICE AGENCY COUNTY COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

### Opportunities for Women in Ag at USDA

Have you ever wondered how you could be more involved with USDA at the local level? Consider getting involved in your local County Office Committee. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) depends on farmers and ranchers to ensure local agriculture is represented and served on a local level through its County Office Committee system. FSA's county committee system enables producers to make important decisions on how federal farm programs are administered locally to best serve their needs. An FSA county committee is composed of elected members from local administrative areas.

Members are local agricultural producers responsible for the fair and equitable administration of FSA programs in their county or multi-county jurisdiction. They are the eyes and ears of the producers who elected them. Voting in the elections is a service to the community; we encourage all eligible producers, from large to small farms, to make a difference in their communities this year by nominating candidates and voting in their local FSA county committee election. It is important for county committee elections to reflect America's cultural diversity and the diversity of our agricultural operations.



**Beth Lee Dawson** has served on the Dickson County USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Committee in Tennessee for two years. Beth and her husband Phil grow corn, soybeans and winter wheat on 800 acres. They also run 250 head of Angus and mixed-breed cattle on 1,200 acres of pasture. Beth serves on a three-member committee and enjoys making sure producers in the county are aware of programs and benefits. She also serves as president of the Dickson Farmers Coop Board. Her advice to producers considering serving on their local FSA committee: **"Don't be afraid. Go for it."**

As demand grows for local, specialty and organic commodities, it's important that FSA county committees include representatives from these growing Ag sectors. We encourage all eligible farmers and ranchers, especially women, minorities and beginning farmers, to get involved, nominate candidates and vote in this year's elections. County Committees are a great way for producers to get to know others in their area, develop their leadership skills and help shape their local FSA office.

Learn more about County Office Committee Elections, election cycles, deadlines & eligibility: [www.fsa.usda.gov/elections](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections)



**Lorena Lujan** has served on the Reeves/Loving/Ward/Winkler County Farm Service Agency (FSA) Committee since 2013. Prior to becoming an elected member, she served as the advisor from 2008 through 2012.

Lorena decided to serve on the FSA county committee to help other producers. When the Lujan's bought their first plot of land to farm, an FSA county committee member at the time, directed them to their local FSA office to enroll in farm programs by setting up a farm number and reporting their acres. She is returning that favor now by helping the farmers and ranchers in her county get the assistance and information they need.

"We have a great opportunity to serve on this committee and do what's best for all of the farmers and ranchers," Lorena said.

Lorena and her husband, Manuel, grow wheat and grain sorghum and are working on expanding their livestock herd. Their two sons are also involved in the operation and their daughter just moved back to the area and plans to help on the family farm as well.

## WOMEN AND THE CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

**Do you know how many women are involved in farming and ranching? Thanks to the U.S. Census of Agriculture, you can find out!**

**What is the Census of Agriculture?** The Census of Agriculture, conducted just once every five years, is the nation's only source of uniform, comprehensive and impartial agricultural data for every county in the nation. The information produced by the Census of Agriculture guides Congress, agribusiness, policymakers, researchers, local governments and many others, on the creation and funding of agricultural programs and services – decisions that can directly impact your local operations and the future of the agriculture industry for years to come.

### BE COUNTED!


If you are new to farming or did not receive a Census of Agriculture in 2012, visit [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov) and click the **'Make Sure You Are Counted'** button by June 30 to ensure you receive your 2017 Census of Agriculture questionnaire this December.

There is no one picture of an American farmer or rancher. Women in agriculture are growing crops and raising livestock on farms and ranches that are small, large, urban, rural and diverse in production. Census data include even the smallest plots of land – rural or urban – if \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year.

With the 2017 Census of Agriculture, which will be conducted this winter, USDA seeks to learn more about the roles and contributions of women on U.S. farms and ranches. The census questionnaire has been updated this year to better capture this information and describe the various responsibilities of female farmers. For example, a question has been expanded to include functional decision making




categories, where the respondent can mark all decisions that are applicable, from day-to-day and land use/crop decisions to livestock, financial/record keeping, and estate planning decisions.



**1 in 5**

The proportion of principal operators selling directly to consumers in 2012 who were female.

[www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
National Agricultural Statistics Service


**2012 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE**

Source: 2012 Census of Agriculture, May 2014

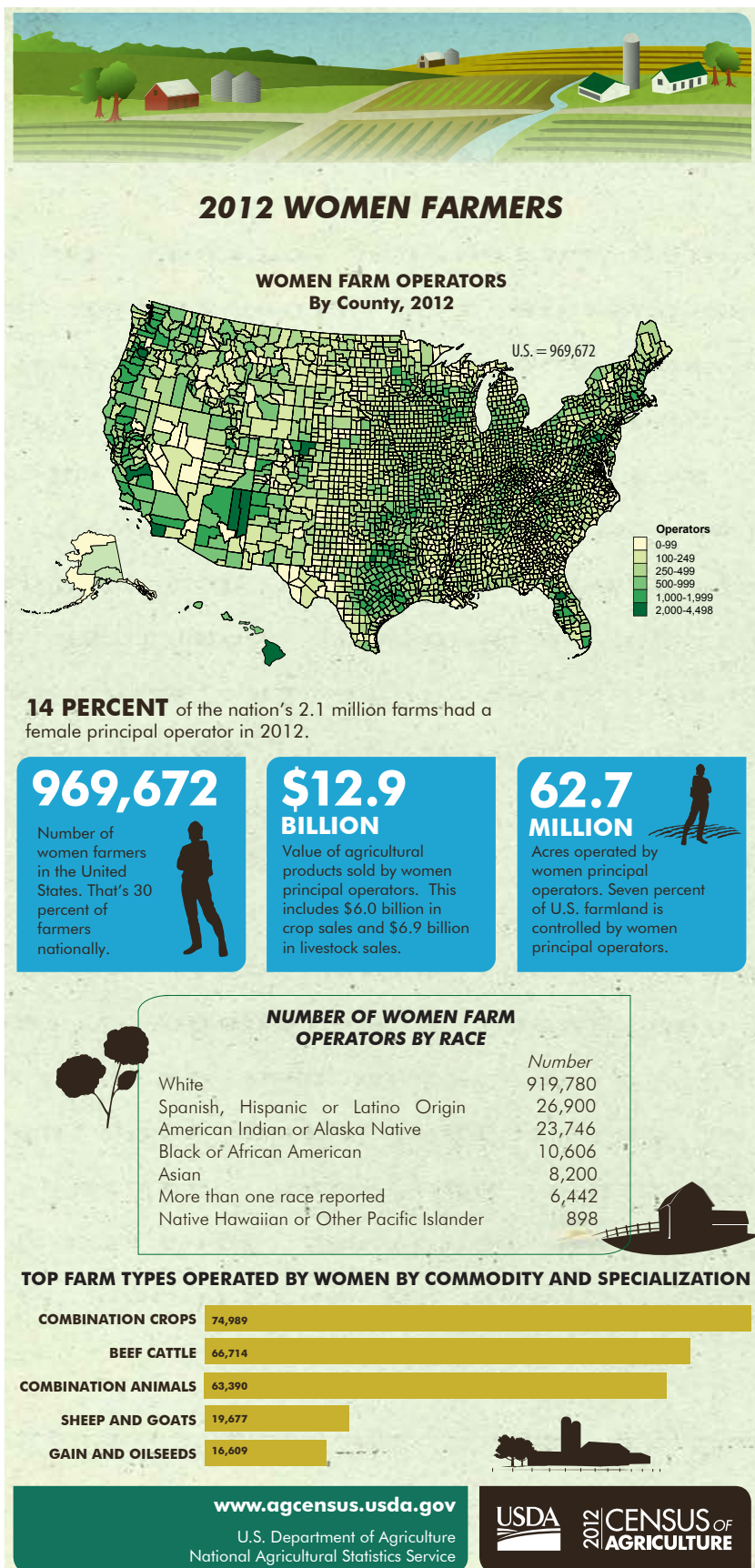
**America's farmers and ranchers, the Census of Agriculture is your voice, your future, your opportunity. BE COUNTED!**

While on the Census of Agriculture website, try the improved online census questionnaire demo. Dynamic and convenient, the questionnaire is accessible on any electronic device, calculates totals automatically, and skips questions that do not pertain to your operation. Responding to the census has never been easier!

**Want to help us spread the word?**

Visit [www.agcensus.usda.gov/Partners](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Partners) for tools you can use in this important endeavor.

The 2012 U.S. Census of Agriculture data revealed that nearly 1 million women, approximately a third of our nation's farmers, are working our lands. States in the Northeast, Southwest, and West have the most female farmers. Although Texas has the most women farmers of any state, Arizona has the highest proportion with 45 percent of all farmers in the state being female.



## ATTENTION ALL FEMALE VETERANS!



*Stefanie Pidgeon,  
USDA Vets in  
Ag Initiative*

**USDA's Veterans in Agriculture Initiative can support you!** The 2014 Farm Bill authorized the establishment of the position of Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison within the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Since then USDA has proactively identified and engaged in opportunities to inform and educate transitioning service members and Veterans about the “3 Es” in agriculture: Employment, Education and Entrepreneurship.

Did you know that approx. 200,000 service members transition back to the civilian sector every year and there are approx. 11 million Veterans currently in the work force? As 47% of service members are recruited from rural America, we can expect that many of them are returning home after service. USDA wants to ensure they have opportunities and resources as they re-join their communities. At USDA, we are grateful for the service our military Veterans have given to their country, and we hope to do what we can to pay it forward.

For more Vets in Ag resources visit  
<https://newfarmers.usda.gov/veterans>.



*Local U.S. Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Cadets (JROTC) take a selfie with Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue after a Veterans-to-Agriculture listening session with transitioning Airmen and their families, and veterans, in the South Dakota Air and Space Museum, at Ellsworth AFB, SD, on May 19, 2017. USDA photo by Lance Cheung.*



*Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue makes an impromptu visit with the photojournalists of the 28th Bomb Wing Public Affairs office, at Ellsworth AFB, SD, on May 19, 2017. Two of the staff were packing equipment for deployment when Secretary Perdue dropped in on the office. USDA photo by Lance Cheung.*

## EMPLOYMENT

Veterans receive preference and incentives in various USDA programs. Veterans receive special hiring authority for federal service positions with the USDA. With more than 2100 county offices across the country, USDA is always looking for skilled and qualified people to fill those spots. That's why USDA has set a goal to have 25 percent of its workforce be Veterans.

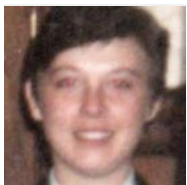
## EDUCATION

For those Veterans looking to leverage their GI Bill, we want them to consider pursuing a degree in the ag field. A recent Purdue University study found that there are, on average, approximately 58,000 job openings each year for graduates with a bachelor's or higher degrees in areas such as food, agriculture, renewable natural resources, and the environment.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP

As for entrepreneurship, farmers are essential to sustaining our U.S. food supply, and, ultimately to our national security. Farming is a great way for Veterans to continue giving back. USDA can help Veterans gain access to capital, land, and technical assistance. We do this through providing direct and guaranteed loans, microloans, raising the borrowing limit for small and mid-sized farms, and increasing the cost share of conservation practices. We also provide beginning farmers a 10 percentage point reduction in insurance premiums and waive their admin fees.





## IN HER WORDS: KATHERINE COLE

### Army Veteran Turned Land-Owner and Evolving Farmer

I was born in Arizona while my father was stationed at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. Being a military family, we lived in various places across the U.S. and Europe. While growing up, everyone wanted to be a lawyer or was focused on business. I found corporate life unfulfilling, so I joined the Army when I was 26 and completed five years of active duty service.

I left the service, and my last duty station, Fort Bragg, N.C., as a Corporal just after Sept. 11, 2001 and immediately applied for a position as an Army Civilian. This allowed me to continue to serve the nation and work alongside Soldiers. Throughout my Army career I've deployed to Kosovo, Bosnia and Iraq, among others.

While I've found my time with the military very challenging and rewarding, I found myself mostly sitting behind a desk. Feeling unhealthy and somewhat frustrated, I arrived at a point where I felt like I was not contributing as much, as I desired to do a "greater good". I think a lot of Veterans feel the need to be part of some larger purpose, and I've found working with sustainable agriculture to be the answer for me.

I began volunteering with the Arcadia Center for Sustainable Agriculture in 2013, and, in 2016, became a member of their first "Veteran Farmer" course. When I began to think about my own farm, I envisioned a bucolic farm ala Joel Salatin - pastures of cows and pigs, chickens and rows of vegetables creating healthy soil and happy customers.



**"I spent much of my life serving my country, now I'd like to spend the rest of it serving the land."**

Mid-way through the course, I fell in love with and bought 14 acres on the side of a mountain in Sperryville, Virginia (recently voted the Best Small Town to visit in Virginia). Trees, rocks and vines abound, but my vision is to support the health of the land by preventing erosion and supporting existing native plants.

Since then, I've enrolled in a permaculture course with a farm called *Forested* in Bowie, Maryland. Permaculture is a way

of designing and living sustainably by cooperating with nature. As part of the training, I'm designing a "Food Forest" that will be tailored to my land. Instead of row crops I'll be cultivating more fruits, nuts, herbs, mushrooms and other edibles that are better suited to my situation. Pasture for cows is improbable, but I plan to incorporate goats and pigs into the wooded areas at my place. And of course, bees, which no farm should be without. We put our first hive in place last month and will add more as time goes on.

I'm excited to see that the amount of resources for Veterans interested in agriculture is really increasing. Many of the skills we learn as Soldiers – technical (engine and gear maintenance), and personal (patience, problem solving, attention to detail, ability to deal with long hours and adverse weather conditions, commitment to the mission) are the same ones required to be successful in agriculture. I've seen military members find that they love being outside in 90 degree heat (or 30 degree cold) making sure farm chores get done. It can be a natural transition.

For transitioning service members and Veterans who might be interested in learning more, the Transition Assistance Programs at some posts are developing information programs, and the Farmer Veteran Coalition and USDA are both good resources. At the end of the day, it's critical to do lots of research and find good mentors. I hope Veterans will consider ag.



## WOMEN IN WILDFIRE - BASIC TRAINING CAMP

**Would you like a career working outdoors?  
Do you want to help your community and county?**

**If so, then a Wildland Firefighters career may be for you!** The U.S. Forest Service, Los Padres National Forest, is seeking highly motivated females interested in a career in firefighting to participate in our Women in Wildfire Basic Training Camp. This camp is geared toward providing a bridge for female and underrepresented groups to wildland firefighting careers of which they may not have otherwise been aware.

Participants will learn about careers in wildland fire with the Forest Service through basic firefighter training and leadership development. The camp provides a comprehensive wildland fire orientation, which includes classroom and hands-on field exercises as well as certification and physical agility test. Participants take part in leadership and

teambuilding exercises and receive professional development training through resume and USAJobs application workshops. Upon completion of training, participants will be highly competitive for

temporary wildland fire positions. Individuals selected for this opportunity will be provided with a comprehensive wildland fire orientation, professional development, formal firefighter training, as well as certification and

physical training.

Los Padres National Forest was the first National Forest to create a Women in Wildfire Training Camp and will be hosting its fourth camp in 2017. The previous year had over 160 applications of which 23 participants were selected and

**"I am challenged every day, am constantly learning and am surrounded by great people who love what they do."**

**-Kellie Lancaster,  
Graduate and  
Temporary  
Firefighter**

successfully completed the training camp. To date, a total of 64 participants have graduated from the program and at least 25 graduates have worked or received employment offers to work in firefighting positions and for the Forest Service or accepted permanent wildland fire apprenticeship positions.

## MORE INFORMATION:

**Sign up to receive more information & the 2017 Camp application when it becomes available:**

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeqDifgD\\_aqRdzTTQAh9GmuLXdkKrSK-LGLCmb0K0Wob1JrCQg/viewform?c=0&w=1](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeqDifgD_aqRdzTTQAh9GmuLXdkKrSK-LGLCmb0K0Wob1JrCQg/viewform?c=0&w=1)

**Watch a video overview of Los Padres National Forest 2016 Women in Wildfire Training Camp:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJLoKfDyJw>

**Read about the history behind the creation of the Women in Wildland Fire Training:**

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/r5/>

**Watch a video overview of Los Padres National Forest 2016 Women in Wildfire Training Camp:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJLoKfDyJw>

**Read about the history behind the creation of the Women in Wildland Fire Training:**

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/r5/home/?cid=FSEPRD534697&width=full>

**Watch a video of Los Padres 2015 Diversity Boot Camp:**

<https://vimeo.com/121200482>

**Contact Los Padres National Forest for more information or recommendations to other Women in Wildfire Training Programs at a National Forest near you.**

Email: [lpfjobs@fs.fed.us](mailto:lpfjobs@fs.fed.us)

Phone: [\(805\) 968-6640](tel:(805)968-6640)





USDA's 2017 Annual Flash Mentoring Event with Keynote Speaker, US Forest Service Chief of Staff, Angela Coleman

## HOW TO HOST A FLASH MENTORING EVENT

Flash Mentoring provides discussion and networking opportunities for individuals to learn and seek guidance from a more experienced professional who can pass on relevant knowledge. This time-efficient method enables participants to hear from several mentors in a short timeframe. Below are ten key steps to host a flash mentoring event for your organization or community:

1. Set the event date (double check there are no conflicting events) and reserve the event space (be sure to include extra time for setup and cleanup).
2. Arrange for any technical needs (handheld or wireless microphone for host, podium for guest speaker, TV screens to display event poster/slideshow, etc.). You can get a photographer for the event if there is a high level keynote speaker or take pictures yourself throughout the event.
3. Solicit for mentors - Ask for recommendations. Email potential mentors with an overview of the event and what they will be asked to do if they accept. If you need 10 mentors, look for 12 so you have 2 on stand-by should you receive any last minute cancellations (expect it!).
4. Solicit for an Opening Speaker and Keynote Speaker. The Opening speaker welcomes everyone to the event and talks about why mentoring is important, then introduces the Keynote Speaker, usually a guest, who talks about their career journey and the event theme if relevant. Both speakers can also offer advice for the mentees to use at the event.
5. Identify the mentoring topics that will be discussed (one topic per round).
6. Collect biographies and written advice from your mentors to be shared at the event.
7. Draft your event invitation and setup a way for your guests to register for the event. Send the invite out one month before the event, with reminders 2 weeks before and the day before the event.
8. Purchase event supplies and decorations to make the event festive! If your event has a theme, decorate around the theme (particular colors, posters, etc.). Table stands are a great way to identify table numbers. It's a good idea to have light refreshments and beverages but don't hesitate to solicit related groups to financially sponsor these items. Have posters printed to promote your event and place them in strategic locations for high visibility.
9. The day of the event, have your guests sign-in, receive their packet, and if applicable, their assigned seat. After the opening and guest speakers finish, you (the event host) will briefly announce of the event structure. For example, there will be 5 rounds, 20 minutes each with one topic per round. At the end of each round, the mentees will stay seated and the mentors will move up one table (person at table 10 will move to table 1, etc.).
10. The host, or a designated person, will serve as timekeeper, announcing the end of each 20 minute round and the next topic. At the announcement of the final round, remind guests to fill out the survey in their packet and to leave it on the table.



These ten steps were provided by Carrie Moore, an Executive Committee Member of the USDA Women in Ag Employee Group. Carrie has hosted several women's flash mentoring events as part of her Women in Leadership Program with the USDA Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Coordination (OHSEC). Feel free to reach out to Carrie with any further questions or for further advice: [carrie.moore@dm.usda.gov](mailto:carrie.moore@dm.usda.gov)



# 2017 | CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

YOUR VOICE. YOUR FUTURE. YOUR OPPORTUNITY.

## Coming in December

**Be counted. Your answers to the Census of Agriculture matter.**

They help grow your farm's future, shape farm programs, and boost services for communities and the industry.

For more information or to try the improved online questionnaire, visit **[www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)**.

