

KEY RESOURCES FOR BEGINNING WOMEN FARMERS & ECOPRENEURS

*Collected by the Rural Women's Project, a project of the
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES)*

While there are many different resources out there for beginning farmers, this list uniquely provides a “getting started” synthesis specifically for **women in organic and sustainable agriculture, with a focus on beginning farmers in the Midwest**. As programs change and new opportunities added, this list will be updated online: www.mosesorganic.org (click “Rural Women’s Project” under “Projects.”)

1. Federal Farm Bill Programs Part I

Programs with money prioritized for women/socially disadvantaged farmers. First point of contact would be your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) or local USDA office:

- **Down Payment Farm Ownership Loan Program:** Special loan program to assist beginning farmers and ranchers and Socially Disadvantaged applicants to purchase a farm. Helps transfer land from retiring farmers to new farmers. www.attra.ncat.org/guide/a_m/downpayment.html

- **Direct Farm Ownership & Operating Loans:** Government loans to farmers and ranchers for farm ownership and operating expenses: www.attra.ncat.org/guide/a_m/direct_farm.html

2. Federal Farm Bill Programs Part II

Grant programs that typically are the best “points of entry” for beginning farmers and first time grant writers:

- **Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG):** Grants to help producers move into value-added ag enterprises; provides planning and/or capital investment. Simplified application process for requests less than \$50M. Ten percent of the funds are set-aside for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and rancher, which include women
Info/templates at the Center for Rural Affairs (CFRA): www.cfra.org/resources/vapg/fact_sheet

- **Organic Certification Cost Share (NOCCSP):** Financial assistance to defray certification costs up to 75% of certification costs; \$750 annually. www.attra.ncat.org/guide/n_z/nocccsp.html

- **Small Business Innovation Research Program (SBIR):** Research funding for small businesses; stimulates technological innovations in private sector. More complicated federal grant application, but encourages women-owned businesses to apply. Phase I grants up to \$90M. www.attra.ncat.org/guide/n_z/sbir.html

Note:

For a complete listing of federal programs for sustainable agriculture, forestry, entrepreneurship, conservation and community development:

“Building Sustainable Farms, Ranches & Communities” USDA guide: www.attra.ncat.org/guide/
“Grassroots Guide to the 2008 Farm Bill”, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)
www.sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/

3. SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education)

Note: SARE is a USDA program separate from Farm Bill funding.

Full listing of SARE funding opportunities: www.sare.org/grants/.

- “Producer Grants” (\$1M to \$15M) directly fund producers to conduct research, marketing and demonstration projects and share the results with other farmers and ranchers. Grants administered by region. Midwest is part of North Central Region: www.sare.org/ncrsare/cfp.htm

- * SARE also has many free/low cost resources for farmers; www.sare.org/coreinfo/farmers.htm

4. Formal Beginning Farmer Training Programs

While both of these do not have a specific sustainable agriculture focus, many of the participants and much of the information conveyed incorporates this perspective. Typically have a reasonable registration fee – but still don't forget to inquire about scholarships.

• **Farm Beginnings:** www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/whatisfb.html

A Land Stewardship project initiative, for farmers to “to learn firsthand about values clarification and goal setting, whole farm planning, business plan development, and low-cost, sustainable farming methods.” 36 training hours. Currently offered in 7 states including Midwest: IL (3 locations), WI (Northwest), MN (several locations), SD, ND.

* **Annie's Project:** www.extension.iastate.edu/Annie/

Extension-led program “dedicated to strengthening women's roles in the modern farm enterprise.” 6 educational sessions. Currently offered in 19 states, including Midwest: IL, IN, MI, WI, NE, ND, SD, OH, IA.

5. Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES)

In addition to organizing the nation's largest organic farming conference, MOSES offers:

- Free farmer Resource listing: www.mosesorganic.org/resources.html Check out links for the Rural Women's Project, Organic Starter Pack, Field Days and Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring Program, free on-line monthly newsletter (sign-up on website).

6. CRAFT (Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training)

www.csalearningcenter.org/what/training/craft

Organized by the Learning Center at Angelic Organics, members (\$30) can attend a variety of on-farm field days and workshops (April – Oct) for free. Primarily southern/central WI & northern IL.

7. WFAN (Women, Food and Agriculture Network) www.wfan.org

National network for women in sustainable agriculture. Free quarterly newsletter, listserve (sign-up on website). Organizes annual conference & retreat. Various programs.

8. Key National Organizations & Resources

These organizations offer free support for beginning farmers and ecopreneur start-ups. Often advocate for sustainable agriculture policy and funding priorities in Washington D.C. Most of these groups have free newsletters and Facebook pages. Sign up on-line.

* **National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC):** www.sustainableagriculture.net/

* **Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (MFIA):** www.michaelfieldsagainst.org/

* **Center for Rural Affairs (CFRA):** www.cfra.org

* **ATTRA (National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service):** www.attra.org

* **Renewing the Countryside (RTC):** www.renewingthecountryside.org

9. Resources Specific by State

Wisconsin: Great list from UW Extension/Environmental Resources Center:
www.uwex.edu/erc/sustainableag/newWlag/

Find something you think would be a helpful addition to this list? Contact:

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Co-Author, Rural Renaissance & ECOpreneuring

Various green business start-up resources at: www.ecopreneuring.biz

**PLANTING FRESH SEEDS:
RESOURCES, OPPORTUNITIES & INSPIRATION
FOR WOMEN FARMERS & ECOPRENEURS
CASE STUDY WEBSITES**

Denise O'Brien
Rolling Acres Farm (Atlantic, IA)
<http://rollingacres.wordpress.com/>

Zoe Bradbury
Valley Flora Farm (Langlois, OR)
www.valleyflorafarm.com

Charlene Torchia
Journey Inn (Maiden Rock, WI)
www.journeyinn.net

Barb Perkins
Vermont Valley Community Farm (Blue Mounds)
www.vermontvalley.com

Melinda Hemmelgarn
Food Sleuth, Journalist & Radio Show Host (Columbia, MO)
<http://food-sleuth.blogspot.com/>

Angie Tagtow
Environmental Nutrition Solutions (Elkhart, IA)
www.environmentalnutritionsolutions.com/

Nancy Vail
Pie Ranch (Pescadero, CA)
www.pieranch.org

Adrienne Caldwell
Powerkraut (Viroqua, WI)
www.organicpowerkraut.com

Kim Marsin & Rachel Reklau
Sweet Home Organics (St. Charles, IL)
www.sweet-home-organics.com

Jodi Bubenzer
Sunflower Hill Farm (New Glarus, WI)
www.sunflowerhillfarmstead.com

Annie Perkinson
Flying Cloud Farm (Fairview, NC)
www.flyingcloudfarm.net

Xe Susane Moua
City Backyard Farming (St. Paul, MN)
www.citybackyardfarming.com

Erin Schneider
Hilltop Community Farm (LaValle, WI)
www.hilltopcommunityfarm.org

Ann Adams & Liz Brensinger
Green Heron Tools (New Tripoli, PA)
www.greenherontools.com

Katie Wied
Laughing Sprout Farm (Reedsburg, WI)
www.laughingsprout.com

Carrie Johnson & Kristi Langhus
Argyle Fiber Mill (Argyle, WI)
www.argylefibermill.com

Diana Kalscheur Murphy
Dream Farm (Cross Plains, WI)
www.dreamfarm.biz

Jordan Champagne
Happy Girl Foods (Big Sur, CA)
www.happygirlkitchen.com

Gail Myers
Farms to Grow (Oakland, CA)
www.farmstogrow.org

Madeline Rains
Crystal Organic Farm (Mansfield, GA)
<http://crystalorganicfarm.wordpress.com>
www.barn-raising.blogspot.com

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www.radicalhomemakers.com

Jamie Collins
Serendipity Farms (Aromas, CA)
www.serendipity-organic-farm.com