

OFA FACT SHEET

March 2024

The changing face of women in agriculture

Historically, agriculture in Canada has been a male-dominated industry, but women have always played very pivotal roles in farm businesses – just mostly behind the scenes or in a supportive rather than leading capacity.

This is now changing. Along with the general demographic shift in agriculture as older farmers are retiring and a new generation is taking over, women are also increasingly stepping into management and leadership roles in farms of all types and sizes.

According to the 2021 Census of Agriculture:

More women are farming in Canada than in 2016:

79,795 compared to 77,970 five years before – first increase in 30 years!

30.4% of the farm population is female compared to 28.7% in 2016.



Did you know?

Statistics Canada attributes this increase to a rise in women who farm on their own, led by women in Alberta and Saskatchewan raising cattle and growing grains and oilseeds.



26%

Ontario

About one quarter (26.2%) of Canada's female farmers are in Ontario, followed by Alberta, Saskatchewan and Quebec.

Women are adopting modern technology and sustainable farming practices:

- Renewable energy including solar, bioenergy and wind power
- Robotic milking systems
- Farm equipment with automated guidance systems
- GIS mapping



Women are running larger farms:

86.3% increase in women running farms with \$2 million+ in revenue

41.5% increase in women running farms with \$1 – \$1.99 million in revenue

Women are most likely to run sheep and goat farms (41.1%) than growing grains and oilseeds (25.6%).



Almost half of female farmers work off the farm to supplement their income.

Source: Canadian Agriculture at a Glance – <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/96-325-x/2021001/article/00013-eng.htm> and A portrait of Canada's female farm operators – <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2022053-eng.htm>

OFA Ontario Federation of Agriculture



At the Ontario Federation of Agriculture:

One third of board directors are female

Two thirds of staff are female

Three provincial presidents have been female

OFA is part of the national AgriMentor women in agriculture mentorship program (2024)

OFA was part of two recent University of Guelph projects related to women in agriculture:

- *A Statistical Analysis of Women Farmers in Ontario* (Richard Vyn, 2018-2019)
- *The Inclusive Ag Project* (2019-2020)

Ontario agriculture overall at a glance:



50,000 farms



11.7 million acres of farmland



\$47 billion in economic activity



10% of Ontario jobs



\$20 billion in annual exports



31% of Ontario farmers are women

Excerpts from recent OFA Viewpoints focused on women in agriculture:

"Knowing you're not alone and being able to draw on the experiences of someone who has been in your shoes offers encouragement and empowerment. Having a mentor is also very motivating as it can help you increase your confidence in yourself, your business and your career."

Vanessa Renaud, Director, Ontario Federation of Agriculture
New mentorship opportunities for Canadian women in agriculture, March 2024

"I encourage women across our sector to take advantage of these resources – and others – and to not be afraid to take a chance, whether it's speaking up at a meeting, dealing with service providers or deciding to take on a leadership role."

Sara Wood, Vice President, Ontario Federation of Agriculture
Role of women evolving in farming sector, November 2023

"Women have always been in the background of agriculture, but we've proven that we're very capable to be at the forefront of farming too."

Tracey Arts, Director, Ontario Federation of Agriculture
Role of women in farming and food production is changing, March 2023

For more information and resources on women in agriculture, including the AgriMentor program

Visit our website at ofa.on.ca