



A WAY FORWARD ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN AGRICULTURE

BACKGROUND

Women working in the agriculture sector occupy positions in every industry from beef to beekeeping, from farm business owners, agri-business, research, education and government. But women have a bigger role to play. Numerous studies show that increasing gender diversity improves productivity, profitability, and retention. For the agriculture sector, which faces significant and increasing labour challenges in the coming years, increasing the proportion of women in the workforce at every level is crucial to success.

The Canadian Agricultural HR Council has undertaken foundational research to examine and address critical barriers to advancement facing women in the agriculture industry in order to support improved access to leadership opportunities and strengthen business success for women working in agriculture. *Supporting the Advancement of Women in Agriculture* examined the barriers that women face in pursuing leadership roles and provides tools to help break down those barriers. The research indicated that more needs to be done to ensure that women can participate to their fullest extent in the agriculture industry.

In December 2017, Syngenta Canada hosted a facilitated discussion around the challenges affecting the advancement of women in agriculture. The group agreed that:

“There are structural barriers that continue to limit the advancement of women in the Canadian agricultural sector. This restricts our reach for talent and capacity for innovation. We want to set an industry standard that values inclusivity and diversity to ensure that the sector reaches its full potential.”

The Canadian Agricultural HR Council continued the discussion by hosting a meeting with representatives of Women in Agriculture groups and agri-business in Niagara Falls in October, 2018 to move the discussion about supporting the needs of women in agriculture by working towards creating an inclusive environment in work places and in the industry. This report summarizes the results of that discussion.

INTRODUCTION

During the discussion, the group proposed that an industry-wide initiative be launched to increase diversity and inclusion within the agriculture sector that would involve attracting and developing capacity, not only of women, but also of all under-represented groups in the sector. The following actions are proposed by the group as a guide to moving forward in supporting an inclusive environment for all with the aim of increasing diversity in the sector. In this way, the agriculture industry will be able to take advantage of strong opportunities for growth and reach its full potential.

A WAY FORWARD

1. DEVELOP BUSINESS CASE FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN AGRICULTURE

Although numerous studies indicate that increasing gender diversity improves productivity, profitability, and retention in business, this is not well known within the agriculture sector. A business case is required to describe the economic benefits to agricultural businesses and link the importance of increasing diversity to the goals set by the Advisory Council on Economic Growth (the Barton Report) and recommendations from the Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy Table. Once evidence of the benefits of increased diversity in the agriculture sector has been established, the business case should be distributed widely to support industry's efforts in increasing diversity and inclusion.

2. AGREE TO A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The following Statement of Purpose is proposed as a guiding principle for the agriculture industry in working towards a diverse and inclusive agricultural workforce:

By working together, we will create a skilled, diverse and inclusive workforce with the experience and capabilities to meet workforce needs in the future. We are committed to working together to build a modern workforce with the capacity to meet the needs of a growing world. We will set an industry standard that values inclusivity and diversity to ensure that the sector realizes its full potential. (Connect to Catalyze, 2017)



Agriculture organizations including farm businesses, industry associations and agri-business should discuss the concepts of a diverse and inclusive workforce, and agree to a statement of purpose with the aim of increasing diversity and inclusion within the agricultural sector.

SIGN ON TO A COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN AGRICULTURE

Farm businesses, industry associations and agri-business should 'sign on' to a commitment to diversity and inclusion by endorsing the Statement of Purpose and committing their organization to creating an inclusive work environment. Organizations supporting the commitment to diversity and inclusion should be widely recognized and a kick-off meeting of initial partners should be held to promote the initiative.

Partners should report on their initiatives in creating and supporting an inclusive work environment, and their progress in increasing diversity on an annual basis. Best practices and success stories in creating and supporting an inclusive work environments should be shared widely in the agriculture industry.

3. IDENTIFY AND ENGAGE CHAMPIONS

It is important to engage all people in the agriculture industry to increase diversity in the sector. Women in agriculture have been discussing the factors that limit their participation in the sector. They now suggest that it is time to involve men in the conversation about increasing diversity. Many men, and women, act as sponsors and mentors within their workplaces and in their industries. These champions should be recognized for sponsoring and mentoring women and should be challenged to speak out and become vocal and about the importance of diversity and inclusion.

4. LEVERAGE EXISTING RESOURCES

Results from the *Supporting the Advancement of Women in Agriculture* survey found that many tools and resources are available to assist agriculture organizations in increasing diversity and inclusion but that more was needed to assist workers, employers and association boards in supporting an inclusive work environment.



New and existing tools and training, including those from the Canadian Agricultural HR Council, should be broadly disseminated to interested employers and industry associations through the creation of a single hub to house information about diversity and inclusion in the agriculture sector. The hub should be developed with a view to ensuring that the resources and access to them work for under-represented groups and the agriculture industry. For example, tools and training should be developed, piloted and validated before finalization. A feedback mechanism should be established to ensure that resources are useful, not only to underrepresented groups, but also to industry.

Leveraging existing resources also refers to making use of existing expertise within the agriculture industry. Women, as well as men, should act as speakers and panel members on a variety of topics during agriculture industry events. Topics related to diversity and inclusion should be included in the agendas of national and provincial agriculture industry events. In this way all people involved in the industry should be involved in supporting a diverse and inclusive environment to help the industry grow.

NEXT STEPS

These actions are proposed by the group as a guide to moving forward in supporting an inclusive environment with the aim of increasing diversity in the sector, keeping mind that there is, as yet, no clarity on how the initiative will be led or funded.

- **Develop a Business Case for Diversity and Inclusion in Agriculture**
 - Develop a business case to quantify why diversity and inclusion is necessary for the agriculture industry to grow to its full potential, as well as the implications of lack of progress. CAHRC will develop the business case in the first quarter of 2019.
 - Share the business case broadly within the agriculture industry.

- **Establish a Working Group**
 - Establish a working group to ensure continued momentum. CAHRC will work to bring together a working group during the first quarter of 2019.
 - The working group will:
 - Identify and engage industry champions to assist,
 - Develop key messages,
 - Develop a strategy and action plan,
 - Broaden the discussion to include others including men,
 - Consider potential sources of funding as necessary.

- **Agree to a Statement of Purpose for Diversity and Inclusion in Agriculture**
 - Develop a Statement of Purpose for Diversity and Inclusion in Agriculture.
 - Obtain wide agreement from industry stakeholders to the Statement of Purpose.

- **Sign on to an Industry-wide Commitment on Diversity and Inclusion in Agriculture**
 - Obtain commitments from industry stakeholders to increasing diversity and inclusion in their businesses and organizations.
 - Report back on progress on an annual basis during an industry-wide Summit on Diversity and Inclusion in Agriculture.
 - Measure progress and document success.

CONCLUSION

Representatives of Women in Agriculture groups and agri-business met in October 2018 to move towards action in creating an inclusive environment in work places and in the industry. The group proposed that an industry-wide initiative be launched to increase diversity and inclusion within the agriculture sector that would involve attracting and developing capacity, not only of women, but also of all under-represented groups in the sector. In this way, the agriculture industry will be able to take advantage of strong opportunities for growth and reach its full potential.



WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE: TOGETHER WE GROW

NIAGARA FALLS, OCTOBER 15, 2018

Pam Bailey	Ag Women Manitoba
Peggy Brekveld	Ontario Federation of Agriculture
Jen Christie	Ag Women's Network
Claire Cowan	Ag Women's Network
Heather Earle	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Erin Gowriluk	Syngenta
Debra Hauer	Canadian Agriculture HR Council
Candace Hill	Farm Credit Canada
Trish Jordan	Bayer Crop Science
Katie Keddy	Atlantic Women in Agriculture
Laura Lazo	Manitoba Women in Ag & Food
Portia MacDonald-Dewhirst	Canadian Agriculture HR Council
Croci Mandracchia	Archer Daniels Midland / Together We Grow
Jeannine Messier	Fédération des Agricultrices du Québec
Jody Proctor	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Mary Robinson	CAHRC/PEI Federation of Agriculture
Carmela Wall	Farm Credit Canada
Dan Wright	Canadian Seed Trade Association