AGRICULTURE
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The Rise of Women Farmers and Sustainable Agriculture
by Carolyn E. Sachs, Mary E. Barbercheck, Kathryn Brasier, Nancy Ellen Kieran, and Anna Rachel Terman

A profound shift is occurring among women working in agriculture—they are increasingly seeing themselves as farmers, not only as the wives or daughters of farmers. The authors draw on more than a decade of research to document and analyze the reasons for the transformation. As their sense of identity changes, many female farmers are challenging the sexism they face in their chosen profession. In this book, farm women in the northeastern United States describe how they got into farming and became successful entrepreneurs despite the barriers they encountered in agricultural institutions, farming communities, and even their own families. Their strategies for obtaining land and labor and developing successful businesses offer models for other aspiring farmers.

Pulling down the barriers that women face requires organizations and institutions to become informed by what the authors call a feminist agri-food systems theory (FASST). This framework values women’s ways of knowing and working in agriculture, emphasizing personal, economic, and environmental sustainability, creating connections through the food system, and developing networks that emphasize collaboration and peer-to-peer education. The creation and growth of a specific organization, the Pennsylvania Women’s Agricultural Network, offers a blueprint for others seeking to incorporate a feminist agri-food systems approach into agricultural programming. The theory has the potential to shift how farmers, agricultural professionals, and anyone else interested in farming think about gender and sustainability, as well as to change how feminist scholars and theorists think about agriculture.

Cofounder of the Pennsylvania Women’s Agricultural Network, Carolyn E. Sachs is professor of rural sociology and women’s studies at Penn State University. She lives in State College, Pennsylvania. Mary E. Barbercheck is professor of entomology at Penn State University. She lives near Port Matilda, Pennsylvania. An associate professor of agricultural economics and rural sociology at Pennsylvania State University, Kathryn Brasier lives in State College, Pennsylvania. Nancy Ellen Kieran is professor emerita at Pennsylvania State University. She resides in State College, Pennsylvania. Anna Rachel Terman is assistant professor of sociology at Ohio University. She resides in Athens, Ohio.

“Half investigation and half storytelling, this book provides the theoretical and practical frameworks necessary to ensure women farmers’ success in creating a more sustainable food future for all of us.”—Teresa Costa, author, Farming for Change: Women Changing the Way We Eat

“This is an important and timely study as the growing number of female farmers and landowners are navigating the complexities of agriculture. It is easy to envision this highly accessible book on the shelves of extension workers, activists, and farmers.”—Jenny Barker Devine, author, On Behalf of the Family Farm

“This book will do well with a wide audience. It presents unique data sources gathered by a diverse research team in collaboration with women joining together to redefine the term ‘farmer.’ A great book for both graduate and undergraduate courses in women’s studies and sustainable agriculture.”—Cornelia Butler Flora, Kansas State University
Farmers Helping Farmers
The Rise of the Farm and Home Bureaus, 1914–1935

NANCY K. BERLAGE

One of the largest volunteer movements in the twentieth century, local farm and home bureau organizations have been woefully underrepresented in sociopolitical studies of the American Farm Bureau Federation. Nancy K. Berlage addresses this omission with an insightful look at how bureau members put university science to work in agricultural and rural life at the local level, even while industrialization and urbanization profoundly shifted the landscape of labor in the U.S.

In Farmers Helping Farmers, Berlage explores how bureaus served as the locus of science-based agriculture for rural communities. Drawing on community bonds and culturally powerful metaphors to overcome skepticism, bureaus played a critical role in circulating knowledge grounded in the new disciplines of rural sociology, agricultural economics, home economics, veterinary medicine, child science, and public health. Throughout the book, Berlage weaves a novel consideration of women’s roles into the story of farm and home bureaus, noting that these organizations served as places where supporters could grapple with issues beyond farming practices such as child welfare, personal health, and gender ideals. They were also crucial in supporting the organizations’ underlying mission to strengthen community and family ties to the benefit of more efficient and productive farms.

In addition to bureau documents, Berlage draws from cartoons, films, photographs, and personal correspondence to add a human dimension to this organizational history. The resultant analysis offers a fresh look at the local bureaus’ social, economic, cultural, and political functions and highlights the organizations’ significant influence on American life in the early twentieth century.

NANCY K. BERLAGE is assistant professor in the Department of History and Public History at Texas State University.
A person who has food has many problems. A person who has no food has only one problem.—Chinese proverb

Feeding the World
Agricultural Research in the Twenty-First Century
Gale A. Buchanan

The astounding success of agricultural research has enabled farmers to produce increasingly more—and more kinds—of food throughout the world. But with a projected 9 billion people to feed by 2050, veteran researcher Gale Buchanan fears that human confidence in this ample supply, especially in the US, has created unrealistic expectations for the future. Without a working knowledge of what types and amounts of research produced the bounty we enjoy today, we will not be prepared to support the research necessary to face the challenges ahead, including population growth, climate change, and water and energy scarcity.

In this book, Buchanan describes the historical commitment to research and the phenomenal changes it brought to our ability to feed ourselves. He also prescribes a path for the future, pointing the way toward an adequately funded, more creative agricultural research system that involves scientists, administrators, educators, farmers, politicians, and consumers; resides in one “stand alone” agency; enjoys a consistent funding stream; and operates internationally.

Texas A&M AgrLife Research and Extension Service Series

Gale A. Buchanan of Adel, Georgia, is former dean of the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and former undersecretary at USDA. He is coauthor of Leadership in Agriculture: Case Studies for a New Generation.

“ If you have not been on a farm or ranch in the last five years, you do not understand agriculture in the early twenty-first century. Dr. Buchanan provides a thoughtful, historical portrayal of the importance and contributions of agricultural research to today’s world of food production, primarily borrowing from historical fact and personal experience. He then strategically pivots to not only challenge today’s academic and political leaders, but also provide them a possible roadmap to a viable sustainable solution for meeting the research needs for food production in the future.”—Charlie Stenholm

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Cities of Farmers
Urban Agricultural Practices and Processes
edited by Julie C. Dawson and Alfonso Morales

"Cities of Farmers seeks to expand and deepen a growing topical concern for scholars and practitioners in urban planning, social justice, and the built environment: the role and practice of urban agriculture. The book is quite successful."—Brandon Born, University of Washington

FULL-SCALE FOOD PRODUCTION IN CITIES: IS IT AN IMPOSSIBILITY? Or is it a panacea for all that ails urban communities? Today, it's a reality, but many people still don't know how much of an impact this emerging food system is having on cities and their residents. This book showcases the work of farmers, activists, urban planners, and city officials in the United States and Canada who are advancing food production. They have realized that, when it's done right, farming in cities can enhance the local ecology, foster cohesive communities, and improve the quality of life for urban residents.

Implementing urban agriculture often requires change in the physical, political, and social-organizational landscape. Beginning with a look at how and why city people grew their own food in the early twentieth century, the contributors to Cities of Farmers examine the role of local and regional regulations and politics, especially the creation of food policy councils, in making cities into fertile ground for farming. The authors describe how food is produced and distributed in cities via institutions as diverse as commercial farms, community gardens, farmers' markets, and regional food hubs. Growing food in vacant lots and on rooftops affects labor, capital investment, and human capital formation, and as a result urban agriculture intersects with land values and efforts to build affordable housing. It also can contribute to cultural renewal and improved health.

This book enables readers to understand and contribute to their local food system, whether they are raising vegetables in a community garden, setting up a farmers' market, or formulating regulations for farming and composting within city limits.

Julie C. Dawson is an assistant professor in the department of horticulture at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the state extension specialist for urban and regional food systems. She focuses on diversified vegetable production for local markets in and around cities. More information on her program is at dawson.horticulture.wisc.edu. She lives in Madison, Wisconsin. Alfonso Morales is a professor in the departments of urban and regional planning and civil society and community studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The founder of the Foodglossary website, he also cofounded and currently cohosts openair.org, a website on street vendors and public markets. He lives in Madison, Wisconsin.

I do not think we will be able to survive in the future without a dramatic change in the way we produce food. There are going to be 3.1 billion new people on Earth in the next forty years, and we cannot even feed our population with good food now. The only way that we are going to be able to survive is to grow food closer to where people live—inside cities where there is a lot of vacant land."—From the foreword by Will Allen, founder and CEO, Growing Power, Inc.

"This is a rare find! An academic book that is highly readable, relevant, well researched, and, as the title requires, down to earth. Especially helpful to city planners, health promoters, community leaders, and all who love what a garden does for a day outdoors, a yard or parkette, a great meal, and quality time with others."—Wayne Roberts, author, The No Nonsense Guide to World Food and Food for City Building.
The Future of Family Farms
Practical Farmers’ Legacy Letter Project
edited by Teresa Opheim

“PF and its members are an inspiration! They remind us all that family, community, and stewardship are at the heart of farming. Their stories are a call to action to everyone who ‘belongs to the land.’ Start the conversation about your farm’s legacy today. The future of rural communities and regional food systems may depend on it.”
—Jim Habana-Hafner, executive director, Land for Good

A MONUMENTAL TRANSFER of farmland is occurring in the United States. The average American farmer is fifty-eight years old, and the forty percent of farmland owners who lease their land to others are even older: sixty-six on average. Five times as many farmers are over sixty-five as are under thirty-five. What will happen to this land? Who will own it? What if one child wants to farm but can’t afford to buy out the non-farming siblings? What if keeping the farm in the family means foregoing the significant profits that could be earned from selling it? These sometimes painful and divisive questions confront many farmers and farmland owners today. How they answer them will shape their families and the land for generations to come.

The Farm Legacy Letter project, developed by the member-driven nonprofit Practical Farmers of Iowa, is designed to help farmers and farmland owners think about their farm’s future and talk about it with their families. An essential complement to handbooks on business succession, this book gathers the letters and stories of midwestern families about the land they cherish—how they acquired it, what they treasure most about it, and their hopes for its future. Some of the writers descend from families who have owned a particular patch of the earth since the 1800s, while others became farmland owners more recently—one as recently as 2015. Some are no longer farmland owners at all, because—after careful thought about what mattered most to them—they sold their land to the next generation of farmers.

All of these writers hope that, by sharing their farmland legacies, they will encourage others to ponder and then write about the histories, accomplishments, challenges, and hopes for their farmland for the generations who come after they are gone.

Teresa Opheim has worked for the Iowa Environmental Council, the Environmental Law Institute, and the US Environmental Protection Agency. She led the Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group before serving as the executive director of Practical Farmers of Iowa from 2006 to 2016. Opheim is coauthor of Our National Wetland Heritage. She continues to work on farm transfer issues from her home in the Twin Cities.

“As a company geared toward holding farmland indefinitely, we understand deeply the emotional commitment farmers make to building their business from the land. It means everything for young farmers to be able to own their land someday and then hopefully pass it along to the next generation. It is, in fact, what is worth working for. Teresa’s work bridges the entire life and hopes of farm families.”
—Dave Miller, CEO & cofounder, Iroquois Valley Farms, LLC

“The Future of Family Farms is a timely and important new book about the future of farmland and the hopes and challenges of the families who farm it. More than 40 percent of America’s agricultural landscape is owned by seniors aged sixty-five and older so, as the authors note, we’re in for a lot of drama in the coming years. The book’s framing chapters make a compelling case for action, and the Practical Farmers’ stories are both moving and relevant, reinforcing the need for families not only to have shared commitment but also a vision and plan for the future—whether they’ve been farming for more than a hundred years, or are beginning farmers.”
—Julia Freedgood, assistant vice president of programs, American Farmland Trust
Religion and Sustainable Agriculture
World Spiritual Traditions and Food Ethics

Edited by Todd LeVasseur, Pramod Parajuli, and Norman Wirzba

Foreword by Vandana Shiva

Distinct practices of eating are at the heart of many of the world’s faith traditions—from the Christian Eucharist to Muslim customs of fasting during Ramadan to the vegetarianism and asceticism practiced by some followers of Hinduism and Buddhism. What we eat, how we eat, and with whom we eat can express our core values and religious devotion more clearly than verbal piety.

In this wide-ranging collection, eminent scholars, theologians, activists, and lay farmers illuminate how religious beliefs influence and are influenced by the values and practices of sustainable agriculture. Together, they analyze a multitude of agricultural practices for their contributions to healthy, ethical living and environmental justice. The contributors address current critical issues, including global trade agreements and indigenous rights to land and seed. Covering indigenous, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Muslim, and Jewish perspectives, this volume makes a significant contribution to the study of ethics and agriculture.

Todd LeVasseur is visiting assistant professor in the religious studies department and director of environmental studies at the College of Charleston. He lives in Charleston, South Carolina.

Pramod Parajuli currently serves as associate faculty for the PhD program in sustainability education at Prescott College. He lives in Prescott, Arizona.

Norman Wirzba is professor of theology, ecology, and rural life at Duke Divinity School and research professor in the Nicholas School for the Environment at Duke. He is the author or editor of several books, including The Essential Agrarian Reader and Food and Faith. He lives in Hillsborough, North Carolina.

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Vandana Shiva
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