

# Women Managing Farmland Programs Increase Sustainability and Quality of Life

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## ISSUE

Women are key decision-makers in Iowa agriculture. They own **46% of Iowa farmland** and make up **33% of farmers statewide**. Women farmland owners and operators make important decisions related to **land leasing, conservation adoption, and farm succession**. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach plays an important role in supporting this audience with trusted, practical education that helps improve farm outcomes and rural communities.

## EXTENSION RESPONSE

From **2021–2025**, the ISU Extension and Outreach Farm Management team delivered the **Women Managing Farmland** program to meet the educational needs of women farmland decision-makers.

### Educational activities included:

- 9 local workshops
- 3 multi-session courses
- 4 regional forums
- 9 statewide conference presentations
- 11 webinars
- 11 Ag Decision Maker publications

### Participation:

- **745** in-person participants
- **1,212** online participants

The program emphasized peer learning, practical tools, and real-world decision



## EVALUATION METHODS

In 2025, past participants were invited to reflect on how the program influenced their farmland decisions and quality of life.

- **Focus groups:** 8 participants
- **Online survey:** 124 participants
- **Evaluation partner:** ISU Research Institute for Studies in Education

Data focused on reported changes in management actions, economic outcomes, sustainability practices, and confidence in decision-making.

## RESULTS

### Farmland Management Actions

- **45%** negotiated new or improved farmland leases
- **45%** enrolled in conservation cost-share programs
- **43%** created or updated estate or succession plans

### Economic Impacts

- **43%** reported cost savings
- **48%** reported increased income
- Most common benefit: **\$1,000–\$5,000**

### Sustainability Improvements

- **63%** increased long-term farm or land planning
- **42%** improved land or asset transfer to the next generation

### Quality of Life Outcomes

- **83%** reported increased confidence in making farmland decisions
- **65%** expanded their agricultural support networks

## IMPACT

Women farmland owners and operators are effective change agents when supported with targeted education. Extension programs that strengthen women's knowledge and confidence contribute to:

- More equitable and transparent farmland leasing
- Greater adoption of conservation practices
- Smoother transitions of land to future generations

Supporting women farmland decision-makers advances all three pillars of agricultural sustainability: economic viability, environmental stewardship, and strong rural communities.