ICWA Network News

International Conference on Women in Agriculture Winter 1999

Ag Women Stress Need for New Focus at ICWA Conference

Brenda Curtis
USDA Office of Communication

Australian women, who hosted the First International Conference on Women in Agriculture, present the ceremonial "Handover Bowl" to Jill Long Thompson, chair of the Second Conference. The bowl will be passed on to Spain when it hosts the Third Conference in 2002.

"Women coming together to feed the world, let us unite," said Uganda's Princess Irene Ndagire, speaking last summer before the second International Conference on Women in Agriculture. More than a thousand women from fifty countries came together in Washington to voice common problems and goals that rural farm women share around the world.

In her keynote address, U.S. Under Secretary of Agriculture and Conference Chair Jill Long Thompson, herself a life-long farm woman from rural Indiana, showed she clearly understood the role women play in the success or failure of a farming operation.

"When our urban friends hear the phrase 'women feeding the world' they may think of women going to the market buying groceries and preparing meals for their families, " she said. "When we hear the phrase, we think of women planting a field, harvesting a

Continued on page 4

Network Countries

Argentina
Armenia
Antigua
Australia
Belgium
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belgium
Botswana
Brazil
Canada
Cameroon
Chile
China
Comoros
Costa Rica
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
El Salvador
England
Ethiopia
France
Germany
Ghana
Grenada
Guinea
Guatemala
Honduras
India
Indonesia
Ireland
Italy
Jamaica
Kenya
Kiribati
Korea, Republic of
Kyrgystan
Lithuania
Madagascar
Mali
Mexico
Mongolia
Nepal
Netherlands
New Zealand
Nigeria
Pakistan
Panama
Papua New Guinea
Peru
Phillippines
Poland
Russia
Saint Lucia
Senegal
Spain
Sri Lanka
Somoa
South Africa
Sudan
Suriname
Switzerland
Tanzania
Thailand
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United States
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Vietnam
West Indies
Zambia
Zimbabwe

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Ce bulletin peut être visualisé en français en allant á notre website:www.wia.usda.gov

Message from Jill Long Thompson

Jill Long Thompson addresses the conference, outlining the need for women to assume more leadership roles in agriculture worldwide. Next to her on the podium is Senator Beatriz Paredes of Mexico.

Dear Friend,

Chairing the Second International Conference on Women in Agriculture was one of the most important and satisfying experiences of my life. The sessions, discussions, and networking were invaluable. As I said at the conference, what happens in follow-up to the conference is even more important than what happened during the conference itself. This newsletter and our Internet website are the beginning of that important follow-up.

One of the clearest outcomes of the conference was the call for a communications network for women in agriculture. Whether or not you were able to actually attend, I hope that the network we are establishing will be of use to you personally and professionally. We have three ways for you to keep in contact with your counterparts:

- Visit our website: www.wia.usda.gov
- Add your name to our listserve through Project Scope, which you can access from our website or through e-mail: womeninagriculture-scope@igc.org
- Write, call or fax our office to put an announcement in the newsletter to the attention of : Leanne Powell, USDA, Room 211-W, Washington, DC 20250-0107, (202) 720-4581 (phone) (202) 720-2080 (fax).

Please be assured, you don't have to have access to a computer to make this work for you—just contact us with information you want to get to others and we will make sure it is included in the next issue. If you are looking for a trading partner, a mentor, or someone like yourself who understands what it is like to balance work and family — we want to help you make that connection.

Please pass this information on to other women in your community and make them part of our network. We have considerable work to do before the Third International Conference on Women in Agriculture, which be held in Spain in 2002.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jill Long Thompson
Under Secretary, USDA Rural Development

Making Connections

Linda Reinhardt

On behalf of American Farm Bureau Women and the International Federation of Agricultural Producers Standing Committee on Women we thank the President's Interagency Council on Women for sponsoring the Second International Conference on Women in Agriculture. We thank Under Secretary Jill Long Thompson and Conference Director, Leanne Powell for their time and efforts in planning and carrying out an excellent conference.

The conference brought together women agricultural leaders from throughout the world and gave us a unique opportunity to discuss common issues. From an educational standpoint, the exchange of information and promotion of international understanding has been priceless.

And from a networking standpoint, it has been a tremendous success. Through e-mail, women agricultural leaders are connecting with one another weekly or sometimes daily. The more we share with each other, the more we can work to develop practical solutions to the problems and concerns that face us in our industry.

The results of this conference will be long lasting, not only in the exchange of ideas, but upstanding of each other and the friendship made. ■

Lost and Found

If you lost items at the Second International Conference on Women in Agriculture, please contact Marylan Chapman at (202) 720-4356

Kerry Sanderson, chief executive officer of the Port of Fremantle, Western Australia, discusses leadership roles for ag women in Australia.

Zambia delegate Cecilia Makota celebrates the opening luncheon of the conference.

Tipper Gore, right, wife of Vice President Al Gore, greets Elizabeth Aguirre de Calderon, first lady of El Salvador.

Ag-Scope Links Women Worldwide Via Internet

The Women in Agriculture-Scope listserv, (an e-mail subscription service) sponsored by Project Scope, will provide an open forum for persons interested in the Second International Conference on Women in Agriculture including conference proceedings and subsequent global impact, as well as providing support for women in agriculture worldwide.

This listserv will provide an excellent resource for women in agriculture globally. We welcome your participation and involving others in the listserv who would benefit from and contribute to the discussion process.

To join womeninagriculture-scope, send an e-mail message to ***majordomo@igc.org*** *with the words "subscribe womeninagriculture-scope" in the message area. Do not include the quotes and leave the subject line blank. If you have any difficulty subscribing or questions, please e-mail* ***Carolyn Manjourides directly at cmanjourides@projectscope.org*** *for assistance.*

Following is a message about the Second Conference that was posted on the Ag-Scope listserv.

In planning for the new millennium, this conference brought together women from all walks of life in agricultural communities to network with experts, meet their peers, exchange views with policymakers and devise strategies to improve our world. The First International Conference on Women in Agriculture, held in July 1994 in Melbourne, Australia, was designed as a forum for women in agriculture to share experiences and learn about successful farming and agri-business techniques.

The Second International Conference on Women In Agriculture recognized the pivotal role of women in agriculture and sought to continue the work begun with the first conference. Women need strong networks and sound information to tackle new technical and societal changes facing today's agricultural and rural communities. Women came together to share best practices, learn from one another, and engaged in discussions with policymakers.

The intent of the Second International Women in Agriculture Conference was to continue creation of new opportunities and raise international awareness of the contributions of women to rural development and production agriculture. The conference provided practical information and training which participants can take back to their communities.

Women working on farms and ranches play a vital role in ensuring a healthy, safe, and abundant supply of food. In developing countries, rural women—small farmers, laborers, and entrepreneurs—help produce most of the food, create many of the jobs and manage most of their countries' natural resources. Despite these contributions, millions of rural women worldwide live below the poverty level, struggling to survive with scarce resources and little training or education. Therefore, this conference focused on the status of women in agricultural economies, the impact of rural policies both in the United States and globally and the networking and outreach opportunities for rural women.

Participants of the Second International Conference on Women in Agriculture include the President's Interagency Council on Women and USDA (United States Department of Agriculture). ■

crop and marketing their commodity." But Long Thompson said farm women here and abroad are not usually given credit for the work they do.

Mary Salce is a dairy farmer from eastern Australia. She chaired the first International Women in Agriculture Conference in Melbourne in 1994. In her speech, Salce said the first conference was the building block for this farm women's movement.

"The conference revealed the widespread lack of self-esteem and confidence among women," Salce said. "They wanted a voice in decision-making that affected their communities and industries, but lacked the confidence to make themselves heard."

Salce reported that as a result of the first conference, farm womens' issues are now being heard. Because women in agriculture are farmers first, their concerns are about the environment, conservation practices, farm subsidies and, of course, farm prices -- topics that were covered and debated during speeches and break-out sessions.

In the African country of Uganda, it is highly unlikely to find a woman in the president's cabinet, but Princess Irene Ndagire told the conference that Uganda's current administration is trying to begin to improve the status of rural women.

"Women in Uganda constitute 70 percent to 80 percent of the agricultural labor force, but only 30 percent have access to land and control over proceeds," she said. Women's productivity is further hampered by inadequate access to credit. This was a recurring theme voiced by women from throughout the world.

From Mexico came Senator Beatriz Paredes, who told the audience that rural women may own more land but they are still the poorest in Mexico. "Faced with this situation, the Mexican government is carrying out major efforts to contribute to the development of rural women."

The first lady of El Salvador, Elizabeth Aguirre de Calderon, spoke about the daily life of women in the rural areas of her country, which includes an 18-hour work day on land owned exclusively by men. However, it is the women who actually sell the farm goods.

"Lacking market knowledge and many times without being able to read and write, they must participate in marketing relationships at a great disadvantage," she said. "Obtaining credit is very difficult for women."

U.S. Congresswoman Eva Clayton from North Carolina, a member of the House Agriculture Committee, pointed out the reason farm women are not officially recognized. "When (the government, counts, people we count the men if there is family there. We don't count the women as being farmers or partners in the farm. That is why it is so very important that we make sure that women in farming are counted in the Census conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture."

Concepcion Dancausa Trevino, Director of the Women's Institute of Spain, announced Spain would host the Third International Conference in 2002.

Other conference speakers included: Tipper Gore, wife of U.S. Vice President Al Gore; Kerry Sanderson, Chief Executive Officer of the Port of Fremantle Australia; Teresa Sola, Under Secretary for Women's Affairs of Argentina; Sissel Ekaas, Director of Women and Population for the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and Gilbert Normand, Secretary of State for Agriculture, Canada.

On the final day of the conference, as these farm women were leaving to return to their countries, a Canadian delegate reflected on the conference this way: "The bottom line is all over the world there are children that are hungry, we have to put emphasis on clean air, pure water and wholesome food." ■

This newsletter was produced for the International Conference on Women in Agriculture by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development mission area. For additional copies or general information, contact Leanne Powell at (202) 720-4581, or write: ICWA, c/o Leanne Powell, USDA Rural Development, Stop 0107, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-0107

Production By Loraine B. Hill

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Calendar of Events

Women Uniting our Rural Communities
Monash University—Gippsland Campus Australia
Jill Long Thompson, Keynote Speaker
March 30, 1999
For more information call
Monash University
5 122 6508

Women in Agriculture Conference
April 16-17, 1999
Dillard House
Dillard, Georgia
United States
For more information call
Georgia Healthy Farmers Program
(800) 367-9083

Second China-U.S. Conference on Women's Issues
Beijing, China
October 11-14, 1999
For more information call
Global Interactions, Inc.
(602) 906/8886

Agricultural Outlook Forum 1999
Feb. 22-23, 1999
Arlington, Virginia
United States

For more information, call (202) 314-3462.Website: www.usda.gov/local

If you have events to add to the calendar, please contact Leanne Powell at leanne.powell@usda.gov or call (202) 720-4581.