

Synopsis

Title: The Overlooked Sex: Women in Agriculture

Author: Rebecca Harris

Introduction: A woman's role, as reported by Laura Ingalls Wilder, "is a most important factor in the success or failure of the whole farm business." Yet, women are discriminated against on the basis of their sex every day.

Objectives: In my research, I sought to determine some questions. Are there still discriminations in Agriculture? If so, how are the discriminations being rectified? Is there still work to be done? In what area is the discrimination most prevalent?

Results: Historically, women have always fought to get rights to land ownership and autonomy from their husbands. The fight is not over, but it is better than it ever has been. The findings of my research are that there are still very prevalent discriminations in agriculture, especially in the factory farming and rodeo sectors, but it is also on the family farm to an extent. The issues range from depriving women farm employees of an appropriate wage to sexual harassment in the fields.

However, there are many programs the government has used to rectify some of the wrongs that are faced by minorities in the field of agriculture, such as special loans and grants that are set aside for women. Also, there are many clubs and outreach projects that are nation-wide. The most prevalent in this area are Sigma Alpha, Collegiate FFA, Post-Secondary Agricultural Students (PAS), and FFA/Vocational Agriculture programs.

Why this subject: The USDA reports 31% of farms are now owned solely by women. Yet, millions of women are working on farms, whether owners/partners or employees. The discrimination against women effect so many women, yet there is little research on the subject. My research brings light to the issue, hopefully to help change the statistics.

Conclusion: Women have worked very hard to get rights, the government has made rules, laws, and programs to ensure women have the same rights in agriculture as men. However, there are still issues that persist. To combat these issues, a number of women have either formed clubs or fought to join initiatives that empower women to join and persist with agriculture because Laura Ingalls Wilder once said, "a woman's role is a most important factor in the success or failure of the whole farm business," and this author tends to agree.