

# Cornhusker Economics

## 2023 Nebraska Women in Agriculture Conference

A crowd of just over 300 gathered Feb. 23 and 24 in Kearney, Nebraska for the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Nebraska Women in Agriculture Conference.

The conference is one of the longest-running women's conferences of its kind in the country. The goal of the Nebraska Women in Agriculture Conference is for women to build relationships with each other, while gaining valuable knowledge about managing risk on their farms and ranches. The event featured five general session speakers and 28 workshop breakout sessions. We also had our first-ever PreConference session on Feb. 22. *This year's conference was supported in-part by USDA-NIFA under Award Number 2020-70028-32728.*

The opening speaker this year was California rancher and life coach, Kiah Twisselman-Burchett. Kiah's message, "Cultivating Confidence" set the tone for unity and a growth mindset for the entire conference.

Participants heard from Nebraska Entrepreneurs Stephanie Anderson of Our Lavender Co and Britany Wondercheck of Marble Industries in our 'Open for Business' luncheon panel. The business owners were raw and honest with their tried and true entrepreneurship lessons.

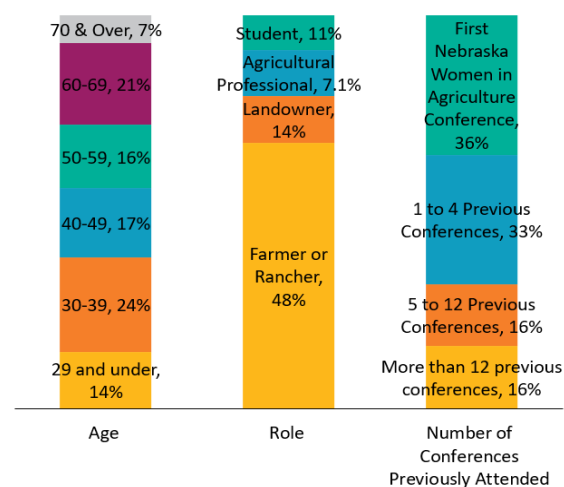
We had an evening 'dinner and a show' featuring the play "Map of My Kingdom", which tackles the critical issue of land transition. The work was commissioned by Practical Farmers of Iowa and written by Mary Swander, a recent poet laureate of Iowa. The play was performed by actress Lindsay Bauer.

Paul Stoddard, senior lecturer at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the Department of Agricultural Economics, discussed the current agricultural market outlook and provided insight on farm and family risk management for 2023.

It is the policy of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln not to discriminate based upon age, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, gender-identity, sex, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran's status, marital status, religion or political affiliation.

The conference concluded with Anne Meis of Elgin; a Nebraska farmer, member of the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance, and treasurer for the Nebraska Soybean Board. Meis encouraged participants to remember that it's "Never the Way We Imagine It". Meis' experience constructing the Decade of Ag vision statement brought a tremendous wealth of knowledge to conference attendees.

People attending the conference represented a wide variety of agricultural backgrounds and demographics. One hundred percent of the respondents identified as female and white. Ninety-five percent resided in Nebraska. Nine states were represented at the conference, including Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, South Carolina, Alabama, California, Illinois, Wyoming and Colorado. Figure 1 shows the roles, age, and prior attendance of those who participated.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>44 Overall Conference Evaluations were submitted, giving these results a slight margin of error.

**Figure 1: Age, Roles and Prior Attendance of 2023 Nebraska Women In Agriculture and Conference attendees**

For the first time ever, we hosted a PreConference training on February 22 with 40 attendees. Participants built skills in QuickBooks Online software presented by the virtual bookkeeper Mary Faber of Illinois. PreConference survey respondents were asked to rank their skills with QuickBooks Online on a scale from 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent) before and after the workshop. On average, respondents increased their skill level from 2.3 to 4.1.

Participants noted that they enjoy the opportunity to network and spend time with friends and colleagues, all the while discussing issues important to their farms and ranches. Sessions covered risks in production, market, financial, human and legal areas. Training opportunities ranged from crop and livestock insurance to record keeping and included two hands-on beef reproduction and calving workshops. Furthermore, the event provided opportunities for participants to learn about mitigating stress and improving mental health, especially through the ‘Balancing it All’ panel offered as a breakout session.

The main goal of the conference is to heighten participants’ skills and knowledge. Three hundred and ninety-two workshop session evaluations were submitted during the 2023 conference. Survey respondents were asked to rank their knowledge of each workshop topic on a scale from 1 (no knowledge) to 5 (complete knowledge) before and after the workshop. On average, respondents increased their knowledge from 2.25 to 4.12.

Survey respondents were also asked how the workshop had affected them by selecting a series of statements to complete the sentence “This workshop \_\_\_\_\_”. The response options and percentage of survey respondents for each option are listed in Table 1.

The future success of the conference depends on continued funding from grant agencies and supporters. Supporters included: the Nebraska Dry Bean Commission, Nebraska Soybean Board, Farm Credit Services of America, Nebraska Corn Board, SARE, We Care for Kids, Alliance for the Future of Agriculture in Nebraska, Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health - UNMC (CS-CASH), Nebraska Association of Resources Districts, Nebraska Farm Bureau and Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation. There were various other agricultural businesses and government organizations who participated in our exhibit space.

For more information on this conference and the Women in Agriculture program, see our webpage, <http://wia.unl.edu> or follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, @newwomeninag.

The 2024 Nebraska Women in Agriculture Conference is scheduled for February 22-23, 2024 in Kearney, Nebraska.

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<b>Table 1. Impact of workshop session statement results.</b>	
...encouraged me to find out more about this topic.	69%
...improved my skills/ability.	55%
...increased my confidence in my ability to influence key decision makers.	46%
...increased my confidence in my ability to make a decision myself.	49%
...empowered me to develop a plan to address this topic.	56%
...validated my/our current practices.	34%
...encouraged me to change my/our current practices.	47%