

**Farm Women  
and  
Canadian Agricultural Policy**

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## ABSTRACT

While women play a critical role in the day-to-day operation of Canadian farms and the Canadian government have committed to achieving gender equality at all levels of decision making, there has been no explicit effort to identify farm women's policy needs or their vision of an inclusive Canadian agricultural policy. This research project documents critical issues that rural women and girls believe need to be fully integrated into Canadian agricultural policy. In five regional workshops across Canada, during the winter of 2003-2004, farm women expressed deep connections with their farms and communities despite overwhelming social and economic pressures. Farm women established that the major stress in their lives and the lives of their families is the farm financial crisis created primarily by current government policy directions and corporatization of agriculture. Women confirmed that if these root causes of the financial crisis were solved, the quality of life in rural communities, and their health and environment would improve.

Women's vision for agricultural policy rests on four pillars: financial stability, domestic food policy, safe, healthy food and environment, and strengthening the social and community infrastructure. The agricultural policy that farm women envision is grounded in their daily life experiences. It responds to the needs of their families and their communities, and addresses social, cultural and environmental aspects of life and community, as well as economic well-being. To make those changes, women must be present at all levels of policy making, and their concerns and needs given equal weight to those of others. To address this need, the research outlines policy recommendations that will enhance the inclusion of farm women's concerns, and their participation in developing Canadian agricultural policy.



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAFC	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
AFSC	Alberta Financial Services Corporation
APF	Agriculture Policy Framework
BSE	Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (mad cow disease)
CAIS	Canadian Agriculture Income Stabilization
CAISP	Canadian Agriculture Income Stabilization Program
CFA	The Canadian Federation of Agriculture
CGC	Canadian Grain Commission
CHST	Canada Health and Social Transfer
CUPE	Canadian Union of Public Employees
CWB	Canadian Wheat Board
ENGO	Environmental non-governmental organization
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCC	Farm Credit Corporation
FCM	Federation of Canadian Municipalities
FTA	Canada–U.S. Free Trade Agreement
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
GM	Genetically Modified
GMO	Genetically modified organism
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NFU	National Farmers Union
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NISA	Net Income Stabilization Account
OCIA	Organic Crop Improvement Association
OCPP/PRO-Cert	OCPP/Pro-Cert Canada Inc. (OC/PRO Canada)
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SAP	Structural adjustment program
TPW	Two Price Wheat
TUA	Technology Use Agreement
UPA	Union des producteurs agricoles
WINFA	Windward Islands Farmers Association
WTO	World Trade Organization

## PREFACE

Good public policy depends on good policy research. In recognition of this, Status of Women Canada instituted the Policy Research Fund in 1996. It supports gender-based policy research on public policy issues in need of gender-based analysis. The objective is to enhance public debate on gender equality issues to enable individuals, organizations, policy makers and policy analysts to participate more effectively in the development of equitable policy.

The focus of the research may be on long-term, emerging policy issues or short-term policy issues that require an analysis of their gender implications. Funding is awarded through an open, competitive call for proposals. A non-governmental, external committee plays a key role in identifying policy research priorities, selecting research proposals for funding and evaluating the final reports.

This policy research paper was proposed and developed under a call for proposals in September 2002, entitled Restructuring in Rural Canada: Policy Implications for Rural Women. Research projects funded by Status of Women Canada on this theme examine issues, such as the impact of long-term care patient classification systems on women employed as caregivers in rural nursing homes; rural women's experiences of maternity care in British Columbia; farm women and Canadian agricultural policy; the employment of women in Canadian forestry and agri-food industries; and the participation of rural Nova Scotia Women in the new economy.

A complete list of the research projects funded under this call for proposals is included at the end of this report.

We thank all the researchers for their contribution to the public policy debate.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This participatory research grew out of a shared commitment to building sustainable and viable rural communities and food sovereignty in Canada. The research would not have been possible without the full participation of the Women's Research Team of the National Farmers Union (NFU). Each member of the team brought different skills, experiences and insights into the project. Together they contributed years of organizing experience, practical know-how, collective wisdom and sophisticated analysis drawn from years of struggle. The success of this project is largely due to their commitment, participation and good humour in developing the research design, organizing the research workshops and providing much-needed feedback on initial drafts of the report. We are deeply grateful to the NFU Women's Research Team:

Marilyn Gillis	NFU Women's Advisory Committee member, Saskatchewan
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Wendy Manson	Workshop facilitator, former NFU National Board member and former NFU Women's Advisory Committee member, Saskatchewan
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2003, the National Farmers Union initiated the Farm Women and Canadian Agricultural Policy Research Project with funding from Status of Women Canada. This project grew from the identified need to determine farm women's policy needs with regard to Canadian agricultural policy, and to examine their participation in developing national agricultural policy. The goals of the research project were to:

- document issues rural women and girls consider as critical features of rural Canada that need to be fully integrated into agricultural rural development policy;
- conduct a gender analysis of the new Canadian Agricultural Policy Framework (APF); and
- develop recommendations that rectify the historical exclusion of women and their legitimate concerns.

During the winter of 2003-2004, a research team comprising three key researchers and 12 research assistants designed and delivered participatory workshops in which 105 farm women across Canada analyzed the changing realities in their lives and envisioned an inclusive agricultural policy. Farm women identified realities that encompassed five major themes:

- the quality of life in rural communities;
- health and environment;
- the farm financial crisis;
- corporatization; and
- government policy directions.

Women need structures, mechanisms and processes to ensure their concerns and interests, and those of youth, are heard and responded to, and are given equal weight in policy development. Thus, an inclusive agricultural policy must address social and cultural, as well as economic, needs. Workshop participants argued that a gender-inclusive, family-farm-friendly agricultural policy must:

- strengthen the voices of farm families;
- be a practical policy process that starts with farmers' needs;
- respect farmers by acknowledging farming as a full-time profession/occupation;
- be accountable and responsive to farmers;
- centre on fair trade not free trade, and benefit farmers;
- solve the financial crisis and provide long-term economic, environmental and social stability;

- provide mechanisms to support and enhance the quality of life in rural communities;
- ensure that both food and the environment are safe and healthy;
- educate consumers about the contributions that farms and farmers make to society; and
- bridge the rural/urban divide.

Farm women envisioned an inclusive agricultural policy built on four pillars:

- farm financial stability;
- domestic food policy;
- strengthened social and community infrastructures; and
- safe, healthy food and environments.

At the core of their vision for sustainable, inclusive agricultural policy, farm women identified their need to be paid a fair price for their products and to receive a fair share of the consumer food dollar.

Farm women see a strong, central role for government in ensuring future development of agricultural policies that include farm women and respond to their concerns and needs. They favour a two-pronged approach, that first reorients governmental policy development toward gender inclusion, and second, requires and supports farm organizations to become more gender inclusive.

The research team developed strong policy recommendations that, over four years, will increase farm women's participation in leadership and policy development with farm organizations and in all levels of government. The highlights of the recommendations include the following.

1. Require that all input to agricultural policy development processes, whether from farm or women's organizations or agribusiness, identify and address gender issues and impacts.
2. Implement a grass-roots agricultural policy development process that starts with farmer needs, and identifies and addresses the concerns and needs of farm women.
3. Require all farm organizations and businesses providing input to agricultural policy development processes to develop and implement strategies to achieve gender equality and equity in organizational structure and in policy content.
4. Establish segregated marketing and distribution food chains.
5. Research and implement new market strategies and support, and expand existing market strategies by which farmers can be fairly compensated for legitimate production costs, receive a fair return on investment and earn an income equivalent to that of urban families.

6. Determine and implement strategies to assure fair distribution of profit among all participants in the food chain, in part by limiting vertical integration in agricultural and food-related industries, thereby increasing competition.
7. Support the participation of existing farm organizations and movements in having a legitimate chair in international forums where agricultural policies are discussed and decided.
8. Compare the costs and benefits of small and medium-scale, and organic agriculture.
9. Fairly compensate farmers for the social benefits of environmental stewardship and responsible production.





## 1. CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL POLICY IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Changes in the Canadian agricultural economy over the past 20 years are well documented (Boyens 2001; Epp and Whitson 2001; Ervin et al. 2003; Knutilla 2003; Troughton 2003). Those who support the current direction of change talk about the need to achieve greater productive and economic efficiencies. They claim that this can only be achieved by Canada's successful integration into the global economy through the modernization, industrialization and consolidation of its agri-food industry. Those who disagree talk about the loss of family farms, decimation of rural communities, social disintegration and the destruction of biological diversity. Regardless of which view one supports, it is clear that the changes are real, and that they are the result of policy choices developed and implemented by federal and provincial governments during the last two decades.

*Growing Together: A Vision for Canada's Agri-Food Industry* clearly outlines the direction of Canadian national agricultural policy for the 1990s. The minister's letter introducing the new vision states that:

Looking ahead to the 1990s, we can see more challenges. The pace of change is accelerating, and change is likely to occur on even wider and more complex fronts. If we do not respond effectively, the Canadian agri-food industry will be left behind in a rapidly changing world.

Our action plan must be guided by some clear principles that give us a sense of direction. Our vision of the future **is a more market-oriented agri-food industry** that aggressively pursues opportunities to grow and prosper (Agriculture Canada 1989; emphasis in original).

To achieve this vision, Canadian agricultural policies would emphasize marketing, international trade development, diversification and adding value to products. Farmers were told to become better business managers by lowering production costs, increasing production by adopting new technologies and improving their ability to manage risk. Farmers would have to become more "self-reliant" and be more "market responsive" (Agriculture Canada 1989: 30-37). The new Agriculture Policy Framework (APF) introduced in 2001 embraces these same principles and follows the same course (AAFC 2003c).

The roots of *Growing Together* and the APF are easily traced to the 1969 Report of the Federal Task Force on Agriculture entitled *Canadian Agriculture in the Seventies*<sup>1</sup> which advised that it was "desirable to end farming by the individual farmer and to shift to capitalist farming.... In sketching out this kind of model for agriculture circa 1990, we are of course rejecting the 'Public utility' or socialized concept of agriculture." The Task Force also emphasized the realignment of the Canadian agricultural economy to that of our primary trading partner, the United States.

It did not take long for the Task Force's vision to come to fruition. By 1989, Canada signed the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA), followed five years later by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1993 and the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Agriculture in 1994. All sought to reduce various barriers and increase agricultural trade. This led some to argue that Canada no longer had an agricultural policy; instead, it now had a trade policy (Wiebe 1998).

The shift in Canadian agriculture policy also fit well into a rapidly changing international policy environment. Since the mid-1980s, many governments have adopted a neo-liberal development approach that emphasizes an unrestricted market, rather than the state, as regulator of the economy and society (Berthoud 1992: 73). Globalization, or market liberalization, is often portrayed as the "natural order" and "inevitable" (Mohan et al. 2000: xiv). Indeed, politicians, governments, international institutions and the media constantly remind the public that there simply is no alternative to globalization.

By the mid-1990s, the world political ethos was governed by a rush to reduce government debt and deficit by eliminating "overspending" on social programs, erasing national economic borders and increasing foreign investment, increasing production for export and integration into an international market, and encouraging unfettered economic growth. This shift to globalization transformed whole social orders, and it will continue to do so in the foreseeable future.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the agricultural sector. According to Goodman and Watts (1997: 1) the 1990s were

a moment of unprecedented deregulation of agriculture (a shift from aid to trade), the hegemony (the so-called new realism) of export-oriented neoliberal development strategies, and a recognition that globalisation (a word not even part of the lexicon of the earlier Rome summit [World Food Conference, 1975]) of the world agro-food economy was proceeding apace.

Agriculture is being restructured in radical ways. In commenting on the global trends in agriculture, Desmarais (2002: 91) noted:

With the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), economic restructuring, regional and bilateral trade agreements and the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Agreement on Agriculture, rural landscapes everywhere are undergoing rapid and profound change as national governments redefine agricultural policies and legislation to facilitate integration into an international market-driven economy. Existing agricultural and marketing structures are being dismantled while new agrarian laws aimed at restructuring land tenure, land use and marketing systems are being promulgated to increase production for export, industrialize and further liberalize the agricultural sector. These

laws emphasize the “modernization” and the creation of a more “market responsive” and “dynamic” agricultural sector.

The inclusion of agriculture in SAPs, regional trade agreements and the WTO clearly demonstrates a move to treat agriculture and food no differently than other industries (Desmarais 2003: 45). This represents a significant shift in how we “value” food (Goodman and Watts 1997). Rather than seeing food as a basic need and human right, food is increasingly seen as only a profit-making venture.

More disturbingly, the production and distribution of food is increasingly in the hands of transnational agribusiness corporations (Lehman and Krebs 1996; Heffernan 1998; Heffernan and Constance 1994; Heffernan et al. 2002). To use *The Economist* language, vertical and horizontal integration and concentration of agro-business transnational corporations are creating a “new food web” in which only a few “food clusters...will control the passage of food from soil to supper.”

In this era of globalization – through the WTO’s Agreement on Agriculture and Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights, as well as various bilateral and regional trade agreements – national agricultural policies are now, more than ever, increasingly defined at the international level. Agriculture is now a global industry. Researchers, policy makers, governments, international institutions and the media now talk about the globalization of agriculture, the global food chain and global restructuring. Consequently, it is difficult, if not impossible, to discuss Canadian agricultural policy without putting it into a global context.

In her assessment of existing research on gender, agriculture and international trade, Angeles (2002: 37) identified an important gap in the literature: little has been written on just how the lives of Canadian farming families and rural women are affected by trade liberalization and economic restructuring. This is precisely the void that this research aims to fill. This research explores, from the perspective of farm women, what a gender-sensitive agricultural policy would look like.

Having set the context for this project, we present the goals, objectives and methodology of the research. This is followed in Chapter 2 by a discussion of the foundations, various elements of the restructuring of agriculture and the social, economic and political impact on Canadian rural communities and farm women and their families. In Chapter 3, we report on the changes in the realities of farm women’s daily lives resulting from government agricultural policies. In Chapter 4, we present farm women’s analysis of recent agricultural policy and of the APF, and their vision for an inclusive agricultural policy, paying particular attention to women’s participation throughout. Finally, in Chapter 5, we present the conclusions and outline the policy recommendations resulting from the participatory research conducted with farm women.

## Goals and Objectives

Men and women tend to be engaged in different aspects of farm and community life. Women may identify very different benchmarks as measures of well-being on the farm and in rural communities than have been the basis of policy making in the past. Policy recommendations proposed by women, therefore, should be expected to differ from those defining historical policy directions. This research project was designed to:

- document issues that rural women and girls consider critical features of rural Canada that need to be fully integrated into agricultural rural development policy;
- conduct a gender analysis of the new Canadian Agricultural Policy Framework; and
- develop recommendations that rectify the historical exclusion of women and their legitimate concerns.

Specifically, the research addressed these questions.

- What changes in their daily lives have farm women experienced as a result of current Canadian agricultural policies? What are the policy implications arising from rural women's lived experiences? What policy recommendations are required to address farm women's concerns in these areas?
- Does Canada's Agricultural Policy Framework equally reflect the unique needs of men and women? If not, what is missing? What would a gender-sensitive agricultural policy look like?
- What would be required to ensure that future Canadian agricultural policies are gender inclusive?

The research team anticipates that the research findings will inform other researchers and public policy makers in agriculture and rural development, and point out the need to conduct further research concerning farm women and their participation in agricultural policy development.

## Research Methodology and Methods

Before proceeding, a clarification of terminology is necessary. According to the well-known feminist scholar, Sandra Harding (1987: 2-3), epistemology is "a theory of knowledge. It answers questions about who can be a knower (can women?); what tests beliefs must pass in order to be legitimated as knowledge...what kinds of things can be known." Harding (1987: 2-3) proposed that methodology can best be defined as "a theory or analysis of how research does or should proceed" while a method is "a technique for (or way of proceeding in) gathering evidence." This research project relies on these definitions.

The study used feminist participatory action research and qualitative methods throughout. Feminist inquiry seeks to address — from women's perspectives — the

issues and problems that women themselves identify as important in their lives and political struggles. Many feminist researchers argue that research for the sole purpose of accumulating knowledge is not sufficient. In other words, not only must research examine the causes of women's oppression and subordination, it must also contribute to the emancipation of women.

Feminist participatory research seeks to provide information and analysis that can empower women with the necessary tools to engage in collective action and advocacy aimed at changing inequality in women's condition and position in society. As such, feminist research must be linked to women's struggles and women's movements; it must lead to action and ultimately help effect social change. Another important feature of participatory research is that research participants are protagonists in that they are directly involved in developing the research questions and methods. Often, they are also involved in carrying out the research itself.

The choice of qualitative or quantitative research methods is still a source of heated debate among researchers and one method or the other is entrenched in some disciplines. However, each method has its strengths and limitations.

Neuman (2000) stated that quantitative social research is characterized by a detached researcher, measuring objective facts, a focus on variables, many cases or subjects, hypothesis testing, statistical analysis, and a claim to reliability and being value free. The main preoccupations of quantitative researchers are measurement, causality, generalization and replication (Bryman 2001). However, quantitative methods have been subjected to a number of criticisms including not acknowledging the ability of humans for self-reflection, an artificial sense of precision and accuracy, a lack of connection between research and everyday life and the failure to capture the complexity and richness of people's lives and experiences (Bryman 2001; Kwan 2002).

Quantitative methods have dominated the collection of data on Canadian farms by Canadian government agencies. Much of this research was conducted with the assumption that farmers were male and solely responsible for the farm. This meant that data gathering and consultation by Canadian government agencies on Canadian farms was based on a single, usually male farm operator.<sup>2</sup> The long-term systematic bias inherent in this approach made the roles and work of women on farms invisible and has been noted by researchers in Canada (Martz and Brueckner 2003), Australia (Alston 1998), Ireland (O'Hara 1994) and the United States (Lobao and Meyer 2001).

Using qualitative methods, the researcher aims to generate concepts and theory from the data, rather than to test theory. The researcher is involved, the goal is to construct social reality and cultural meaning, the focus is on interactive processes and events, there are often a small number of cases or subjects, analysis is based on themes, values are present and explicit, and authenticity is key (Neuman 2000). Qualitative researchers reject the assumed objectivity of quantitative methods in order to be engaged with the respondents and are more likely to include a large amount of description and detail in an attempt to

provide context for behaviour and values as well as a background for the explanations valued in quantitative research.

Critics of qualitative research claim it is too subjective, difficult to replicate, cannot be generalized and lacks a transparent research process (Bryman, 2001). We have addressed the transparency of the research process and the difficulty of replication through a detailed explanation of the research process. Along with other qualitative feminist researchers, we view the subjective nature of qualitative research along with the close connections the researchers have with their subjects and the unstructured nature of the research as positive. Qualitative methods are particularly useful for this research, which aims to value women's experiences and knowledge, and enabled much greater insight into the lives and concerns of Canadian farm women.

This research project stemmed from the National Farmers Union (NFU) women's initial critique of the content and process leading up to the new APF developed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). The capacity of NFU women to mount this critique and pursue an ambitious research project is due to the NFU's unique constitutional recognition of women.

Formed in 1969, the NFU is the only national, federally chartered, voluntary farm organization in Canada. Specific women's positions exist within the structure of the NFU and do not constitute a separate section of the organization. This recognizes that the participation of women has to be ensured and supported. The NFU represents farmers producing all foodstuffs in most regions of the country (except Quebec). The purpose of the Union is to unite farm families to gain a just price for the foods they produce. Social justice, economic well-being for family farms, environmental sustainability and building healthy rural communities are primary goals.

This project also sought to empower; this is perhaps one of the most important goals of participatory feminist research. There are three elements to this empowerment. First, the research project was developed as a leadership capacity-building tool among the NFU women's leadership so women leaders would have the opportunity to reconnect with members in their region. Given farm women's already over-stressed and busy lives, these workshops sought to provide a rare opportunity to build community. Second, the research aimed to strengthen women of the NFU by engaging them directly in the process of policy analysis and development in a way that validated their own personal lives and experiences and then collectivized/socialized these. Third, the project went beyond the NFU membership to include the participation of women from other farm organizations and/or rural community groups (Table 1).

### ***Research Design***

The research team consisted of three key researchers (two geographers and one agricultural scientist all with extensive rural research experience) and 12 farm women leaders of the NFU. Two members of the research team facilitated the workshops; both are NFU members. The research team organized a series of participatory workshops, one each in Saskatchewan, Ontario, Prince Edward Island (which included participants from

New Brunswick), Manitoba and Alberta. The workshops brought farm women together to identify their agricultural policy concerns and policy gaps. Subsequently, the research team developed recommendations to ensure that future policy discussions identify, include and address farm women's policy concerns.

**Table 1: Number of Participants in Regional Workshops and Organizational Affiliation**

	Number of Participants	Organizational Affiliation	
		NFU	Other
Saskatchewan	24 (23%)*	12	12
Ontario	23 (22%)	8	12
Prince Edward Island/New Brunswick	24 (23%)	17	7
Manitoba	20 (19%)	8	12
Alberta	14 (13%)	9	5
Total	105	54 (51%)	48 (49%)

Note: \* Calculated as percent of 105 participants.

The research questions and workshop format were developed during a two-day planning meeting of the research team. All aspects of the workshops were tested on the research team to examine the viability of this process. We sought to use research methods that would allow women to identify their concerns in their own voices, using their own words and based on their daily lives and lived experiences.

The team felt it was important to use women's time productively without overworking them, and still leave enough time for women to visit with each other. To this end, the workshops were planned to begin on Friday evening with unstructured time that would allow women to recover from the day's travel, which for some women would be as much as six hours. As well, participants could meet and visit with each other and get a good night's sleep. All day Saturday and Sunday morning were intense work periods, while Saturday evening was set aside for social time planned by the local organizers. The workshop ended with lunch on Sunday so women would be able to get home by a reasonable hour.

Each workshop was facilitated by the same team of two women. The original plan was to use local facilitators in each region, but before the first workshop was held, the research team reconsidered, believing that using different facilitators across the country might unnecessarily influence and confound workshop results. Moreover, to facilitate participatory processes effectively, the facilitators should be deeply involved in the planning process, and fully cognizant of both the rationale and content of the design.

Key researchers attended all the workshops and kept detailed notes of the discussions on computers. All discussions were taped. When collating the research data into workshop proceedings, the research assistant often referred to the tapes to ensure that what women said had been accurately captured. The research proceedings for each workshop were compiled and a content analysis conducted for each component of the workshops.

Researchers extracted common themes from the data generated in the workshops. A first draft of the report was reviewed in a face-to-face meeting of the full research team. The results of that discussion were incorporated into a second draft, which was reviewed by team members.

Five regional participatory workshops were organized to capture a wide diversity of contexts and experiences (Table 2). The objective was to have 25 participants plus the members of the research team in each workshop. For each workshop, a research team member who was the NFU woman leader responsible for that region sent an invitation letter to about 40 to 50 possible participants. Those invitees were identified on the basis of various criteria:

- years of experience on the farm;
- membership and involvement in the NFU;
- activism in local farm and community issues, and groups; and
- involvement in farm-related or rural community boards, farm organizations or farm women's organizations.

Participants were accepted on a first-come basis.

**Table 2: Dates of Regional Workshops**

Location	Date
Saskatchewan	November 7 – 9, 2003
Ontario	January 9 – 11, 2004
Prince Edward Island/New Brunswick	February 13 – 15, 2004
Manitoba	March 13 – 15, 2004
Alberta	April 2 – 4, 2004

### ***Participant Information and Regional Context***

A total of 105 farm women participated in a research workshop. Each workshop had a distinctive character reflecting both the long- and short-term issues affecting agriculture in each region of Canada. The age structure of the participants, the types of farming operations and the size of farm operations varied across the regions. Fifty-one percent of the participants were members of the NFU while 49 percent were members of other farm-related or rural community boards, farm organizations or farm women's organizations. Appendix A discusses in detail the collective personality of each workshop and presents data on the age of the workshop participants, farm type and farm size.

### ***Workshop Design***

The success of this research project largely depended on an innovative, inclusive and participatory workshop process — a process that had to create an environment safe enough for relative strangers to trust each other and the research team to share the vulnerable realities of their lives. In so doing, the process encouraged and empowered



farm women to voice their needs and concerns, analyze their realities and inform policy solutions. Given the significance of the workshop design, it is worth explaining in detail.

The workshop was designed to move from the individual to the collective and from the personal to the political in eight steps:

- introduction;
- naming rural women's realities;
- naming the forces that led to changes on the farm and in women's lives;
- envisioning sustainable agriculture and rural development policy;
- introduction to and analysis of the Agricultural Policy Framework;
- naming the critical elements needed in an inclusive Canadian agricultural policy;
- identifying processes to ensure the inclusion of women and their policy concerns in policy development and content; and
- evaluation and closing. (See Appendix B for the workshop template.)

Workshops began on Saturday morning with women taking two or three minutes each to answer the question: "What did you do to get here?" As each woman introduced herself and said where she was from, she outlined what had to be done so she could be away from home from Friday afternoon to Sunday evening. The question was designed to draw out the complexities of farm women's lives in their roles as farmers, parents, non-farm workers and volunteers.<sup>3</sup>

The next part of the process focussed on acquainting women with the purpose and methodology of the research project, and with obtaining informed consent from participants. Participants were provided with a summary of the research project. Local members of the research team explained that the project had been conceived by women leaders in the NFU as an opportunity for farm women to gather to examine Canadian agricultural policy, identify its effects on their lives and envision an inclusive policy, as well as provide an opportunity to get together with other farm women. The research assistants described the participatory development of the workshop template, and discussed the goals, objectives and anticipated outcomes of the project. A key researcher then thoroughly discussed the consent form (Appendix C) with participants and answered relevant questions. Some participants who were journalists wanted to write stories for their local papers, and the boundaries about what could be reported were clarified. All workshop participants signed consent forms.

The women then used mapping and storytelling to give other participants and researchers a snapshot of their lives. Using markers and a piece of white paper, women were asked to draw a visual representation responding to the question: "What does farming look like in my life?" Each woman then took three or four minutes to describe the main elements of her life-map to the rest of the group.<sup>4</sup> From their individual stories, each woman identified three to five major issues about which they were most concerned and wrote a five to seven word

description of each on large index cards. This exercise marked the transition from individual to collective analysis. Using the cards of one or two women, facilitators modelled the process of placing the cards on workshop walls, clustering related concerns closer together. The rest of the women employed a similar sorting process with their cards during the lunch break.

Following the Saturday lunch break, the group clarified boundaries between clusters, and went through a process of developing consensus on a title for each group of often widely divergent issues. This was the most difficult and frustrating activity of the whole workshop, and facilitators had to remind women that, in fact, they were finding the activity hard, because it really was hard to do! Once the naming was complete, women spent a short time brainstorming answers to the question: “What factors or forces have contributed to this picture?” This facilitated the transition from naming their realities to envisioning the elements of sustainable agriculture and rural development policies. Women’s responses to that question were written on flipcharts, and no attempt was made to sort or categorize the women’s ideas during the workshops. When all workshops had been completed, the research team sorted the data.

The next task was done in small groups, as women responded to two questions: “What keeps you connected to farming?” and “What would make your connection with farming more desirable and/or sustainable?” The wording the research team chose was critical here, as research team members who were also farmers said that even when things are bad, they find farming desirable. Thus, what farmers are most interested in is long-term sustainability. One member of each small group recorded highlights of the discussion. Results of only the second question were shared in the plenary, but notes of the discussion of both questions were collected and compiled for analysis. Groups prioritized their top three issues, and took turns reporting their first, second, third and other priorities. As each idea was presented, facilitators wrote it down on a large index card, using action-oriented phrasing. Each additional card was clustered according to whether it was the same or different from those already grouped on the wall. Eventually, the workshop ended up with between five and nine different clusters of policy needs.

To ensure that women had an opportunity to hear about the APF from the government perspective, the team invited a representative (either federal or provincial) to join the workshop at the lunch break, and observe the afternoon’s visioning exercise. The task that the research team presented to government representatives was three-part: look at the concerns raised by women, listen to the elements of women’s vision and respond to the statement: “In the context of the APF, respond to the issues raised and remedies developed in today’s workshop.” The research team was very deliberate in its choice of this process and question. The objective of the workshop was that all processes would centre on women’s experiences and voices, rather than on information or voices from outside their lives. To maintain that focus, the research team did not send any information about the APF to participants before the workshop. As well, having the government representative respond to women’s concerns and vision rather than the other way around also contributed to maintaining a woman-centred focus. After the government representative’s presentation, there was a discussion and some questions,

with facilitators making sure the discussion stayed on track. After the representative left, participants engaged in a short debriefing session around the questions: “What is good about the APF? Bad? Missing?” The group then broke for the day. Again responses were recorded on flipcharts and computers for compilation and analysis.

On Sunday morning, after a short review of Saturday’s achievements, the workshop began with small group work. Three questions were posed, one at a time.

- Is this policy different from past agricultural policies (i.e., is it the status quo)?
- Where will this policy take us?
- What will this mean for farm women and their family farms?

Again, to keep women focussed on their own lived experience and vision, no additional written information about the APF was provided to participants during this activity. Women recorded their discussion on sheets, which were handed in to researchers, and were offered the opportunity to give a succinct report to the plenary about the main theme of their discussion.

Following this activity, participants returned to the vision/policy clusters assembled the previous day, and in plenary by consensus, developed action-oriented titles for each cluster, which facilitators wrote on letter-sized paper and placed on the wall above the appropriate group.

Once policy clusters were named, a key researcher summarized the five pillars of the APF and handed out an overview of the APF that had been downloaded from the government Web site (Appendix D). In plenary, the group discussed the following questions.

- Do any of the five APF policy elements describe our clusters?
- What other elements have we identified as necessary?

Women then broke into self-selected groups, with the benefit of sober second thought, to “tweak” the policy clusters by responding to the question: “What (else) would we want in this element?” They were able to suggest either that a card be added or modified, or that the title of the cluster be changed or modified. Those suggestions were brought back to the group and, by consensus, either adopted or rejected.

The final exercise in the workshop was again conducted in small groups — differently sorted this time. Women were asked to respond to two questions, one at a time.

- What is needed to get women’s concerns addressed when agricultural policy is developed?
- What is needed to ensure women’s involvement in agricultural policy making?

The two questions differentiated between policy content and policy development processes, a differentiation that repeatedly required clarification by the facilitators. As an example of policy content, facilitators pointed to the cards with the individual issues and needs named by women. The workshop itself was the example of a woman-friendly process that provided the social and economic supports needed to ensure their participation. Discussion highlights of each group were recorded, and presented in plenary. All notes were handed in to the researcher team and transcribed.

In the final stage of the workshop, all participants filled out information sheets (Appendix E). Then, the group assembled in a large circle and each woman gave a very brief reflection on her experience of the weekend. During the lunch break, women filled out evaluation forms and handed them into the facilitators.

That women found the workshop meaningful and constructive is evident in the evaluations. The workshop was rated overwhelmingly good to excellent in all areas except for the APF presentation by the government representative. Many women found that exercise frustrating, because while it did allow for questions, it did not encourage challenges of the government perspective. That feeling was captured perfectly in this comment:

*He's going back to his bosses without any real understanding of our concerns.*

Women valued the time together, the opportunity to share life stories and experiences, and the opportunity to develop a collective understanding of the wider issues with which farm women deal. While many found parts of the process very challenging (e.g., naming the clusters of concerns), most appreciated the opportunity for collective analysis, especially in the small group activities. The workshop process was evaluated as friendly. It invited and supported women's participation by starting with their lived experiences, and then provided a structure by which they could expand their individual experience into a collective analysis.

The workshop evaluations also revealed a deep cynicism about whether the information and policy recommendations developed through this process will have any impact on government policy. In part, that is due to the nature of policy making in general, and the lack of grass-roots involvement in its development. One participant remarked:

*Labelling this as a "women's" perspective may render our point of view as unimportant, worthy of only token acknowledgment.*

This comment highlights the critical need for the federal and provincial governments to work closely with farm women to develop grass-roots led processes that identify and respond to women's realities and needs, and which then have concrete policy results. This research project is a timely example of how that might be accomplished.

## 2. RESTRUCTURING OF AGRICULTURE IN CANADA

This chapter examines the literature on the restructuring of agriculture in Canada and its impact on rural communities, farm women and their families. In doing so, we examine how Canadian farm policy has been influenced by global processes and institutions.

### **Foundations of the Restructuring**

The SAPs imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund on numerous debt-enslaved developing countries fundamentally restructured and liberalized the agricultural sector. While this was called structural adjustment in the South, in the industrialized countries of the North the same phenomenon came to be known as economic restructuring.<sup>5</sup>

Across the board, in the North and South, the pillars of structural adjustment and restructuring of agriculture entailed, among other things:

- expanding export production;
- reducing government spending and removing support mechanisms;
- deregulating and privatizing;
- attracting and increasing foreign investment; and
- liberalizing agricultural trade through free trade agreements (Mohan et al. 2000; Dasgupta 1998; Dennis 1997; Barry 1995; Qualman and Wiebe 2002).

### ***Expanding Export Production***

Canadian agricultural policy has focussed on increasing production, especially for export. Over the past two decades, agricultural exports have risen tremendously thus fulfilling Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's goal "to be the world leader in food safety, innovation and environmentally-responsible production" (AAFC 2003c: 1). Since 1975, Canadian agri-food exports have increased by 700 percent, and since 1988, just before the FTA was signed, they have tripled (NFU 2002a). At the time of writing this report, the Government of Canada is working to consolidate a hemispheric market through the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

### ***Reducing Government Spending and Removing Support Mechanisms***

When Canada signed NAFTA, it committed to reduce government spending on trade-distorting supports. Nevertheless, there was room for Canada legally to offer agricultural subsidies of up to \$4 billion. Instead, the federal government dramatically reduced agricultural supports, cutting spending by 48 percent: from \$6.1 billion in 1991-92 to approximately \$3.3 billion in 2001-2002 (Qualman and Wiebe 2002: 6). No other country in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), with the exception of Australia, cut so broadly or deeply. Table 13 in Appendix F lists seven major government cuts to agriculture made between 1988 and 2001.

At the same time that spending on agriculture was being cut, federal and provincial governments focussed on reducing deficits by cutting funding for social programs and health care. One of the most critical changes in federal–provincial cost sharing was the replacement in 1995 of the Canada Assistance Plan with the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST). According to Day and Brodsky (1998: 7), that move “eliminated the regulatory underpinnings and the funding framework for crucial components of a national safety net” and fundamentally changed the way health, social assistance and social services would be delivered. Moreover, in enacting the CHST, the federal government also surrendered the power to determine how and where those federally sourced funds could be spent. With no clear accountability for using the funds received, and increased dependency on provincial funding for social programming, it is unlikely that the federal government will have the power, the will or the ability to demand that national standards for those programs be maintained (Day and Brodsky 1998). It will become much more difficult for rural communities, with their lower population densities, to maintain, let alone increase, access to those funds. Municipalities stressed by responsibility for services that have been downloaded from the federal government are seriously considering private–public partnerships as ways to meet needs within very limited budgets (CUPE 2000).

Supply management is a fundamental support mechanism that benefits farmers who produce eggs, dairy and poultry. The Canadian supply-managed industries have been least affected by cyclical crises in farm income, because supply management assures farmers’ ability to recover production costs. At the same time, supply management stabilizes prices for consumers. When the WTO Agreement on Agriculture came into effect in 1995, import controls became illegal. Consequently, the federal government instituted high tariffs to protect the supply-managed sectors. These tariffs, however, must be reduced and eventually eliminated. When that happens, there is no doubt that the economic viability of dairy, egg and poultry producers will follow that of their grain-growing and livestock-producing neighbours. It is expected that cheap imports will flood the Canadian market and undercut prices. Farmers will be unable to recover production costs, and the sectors will follow the path of consolidation and corporatization seen in U.S. chicken and hog production.

### ***Deregulation***

Deregulation is closely linked to cuts in government spending and is another key element of restructuring. In the Canadian context, deregulation of state responsibilities and functions was often introduced under the pretext that these were too costly (Qualman and Wiebe 2002: 9). In reality, these greatly benefited farmers and consumers both, and were of little or no public cost. Deregulation in agriculture significantly altered the environment in which farmers operate. According to Qualman and Wiebe (2002: 8), four cases are particularly noteworthy.

- Under the Two Price Wheat (TPW) program, farmers received a benefit of about \$4.40 per bushel for the 15 percent of wheat that was used domestically. That 21-year-old program was terminated in 1988, because the government claimed it would be incompatible with the soon-to-be enacted FTA.

- Systematic deregulation of grain transportation was accomplished by ending railway costing reviews and productivity gain sharing in 1992, and abolishing the railway rate cap in 2000.
- Another facet of the deregulation in transportation was the ending of government control on railway branch line abandonment. Railways were no longer required to provide service to specified locations.
- In 1995, the government deregulated handling and elevation costs by removing the Canadian Grain Commission's (CGC) authority to regulate how much grain companies charged farmers.

### ***Privatizing Government Industries and Utilities***

The federal and provincial governments have also actively pursued privatization of public utilities and Crown corporations (Qualman and Wiebe 2002: 10). This effectively gives transnational corporations unfettered access to all potentially valuable economic activity for which there is a demand and a market. The Canadian National Railway, Petro-Canada, the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan and Manitoba Telephone, all of which have connections with farmers and rural communities, have been privatized.

There has been persistent pressure to dismantle (thus privatize) the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB), a public institution that markets western Canadian wheat and barley internationally on behalf of farmers. Since 1990, the U.S. government and American grain growers have challenged the CWB through the dispute reconciliation mechanisms of the WTO. In the 10 cases resolved to date, the CWB was proved to be following WTO rules and not distorting markets in any way. At the time of writing, the 11th challenge was still under consideration.

### ***Attracting and Increasing Foreign Investment***

Canada has been so successful in attracting foreign investment that the majority of capacity in at least four Canadian agri-food processing sectors is now foreign-owned (Qualman and Wiebe 2002: 9). For example:

- Seventy-nine percent of Canadian flour milling facilities are foreign owned. Archer Daniel Midlands ownership of those facilities has risen from 0 to 46.3 percent since the FTA.
- Eighty-eight percent of our malt plants are now under foreign ownership, up from five percent in the 1980s. Just one company, ConAgra owns 51 percent.
- Ninety percent of pasta plants are foreign owned, with 67 percent of these being American.
- Seventy-four percent of our beef-packing plants are not Canadian (Qualman and Wiebe 2002).

Similarly successful foreign investments are on the horizon, as corporate consolidation continues and foreign investment penetrates the broader Canadian economy ever more deeply.

### ***Trade and Corporatization of Agriculture***

The expansion of export production, reduction of government spending, removal of support mechanisms, deregulation and privatization, and attracting and increasing foreign investment are essential components of the restructuring and liberalization of agriculture. Through vertical and horizontal integration, consolidation and concentration, transnational agri-business corporations control virtually every aspect of the global food chain (Lehman and Krebs 1996; *The Economist* 2000). The food trade is controlled by a very few transnational agribusiness corporations. For example, 90 percent of the global trade in wheat, maize, coffee and pineapple, and 70 percent of banana and rice markets are controlled by only a handful of trans-national corporations while five agribusiness corporations control 75 percent of the world's trade in grains (Torres et al. 2000: 14, 40). Research compiled by the ETC Group (2001: 1) clearly demonstrated the increasingly concentrated nature of agriculture and food markets today.

- The top 10 veterinary pharmaceutical companies control 60 percent of the \$13.6 billion world market.
- The top 10 seed firms control 30 percent of the \$24.4 billion commercial seed market.
- One company's genetically modified (GM) seed technology — Monsanto (now owned by Pharmacia) — accounted for 94 percent of the total area sown to GM crops in 2000.
- The top 10 agrochemical corporations control 84 percent of the US\$30 billion agrochemical market.
- The 32 leading grocery retailers account for 34 percent of the total global food retail market, estimated at US\$2.8 trillion. The top 10 grocery retailers account for US\$513.7 billion, or 54 percent of total sales for the top 32 retailers.

The high levels of concentration evident at the global level are also found at the national level in numerous countries (Torres et al. 2000: 14-15; Heffernan 1999; Heffernan and Constance 1994; Heffernan et al. 2002).

The global trend to corporatization of agriculture is a critical aspect of the restructuring of agriculture everywhere. This pattern has also occurred in Canada. Agribusiness corporations are getting larger, richer and more powerful. In a study of the corporatization of Canadian agriculture and food, the NFU (2000b) clearly highlighted corporate concentration along most links of the food chain (Table 14). A handful of corporations control inputs (seeds, fertilizers, chemicals, machinery and credit), the purchase of raw product from farmers, food processing, distribution and retailing. Moreover, as was discussed earlier, increasing foreign investment in the Canadian agri-food industry means that control of our food system by interests outside our borders is rising. In the same study, the NFU calculated the return on equity for several large agribusiness corporations. As data



in Table 15 (Appendix F) demonstrates, corporate return on equity in 1998 ranged anywhere from 22 to 222 percent.

Corporatization of agriculture skews market power. Through the successful pursuit of consolidation, concentration and globalization, transnational corporations have gained enormous market power (Murphy 2002; NFU 2000b; Heffernan 1999; Heffernan et al. 2002). Market power can be measured by, among other things, profit.

In comparing net income and return on equity between agribusiness corporations and farmers, the NFU (2000b) revealed a startling reality. While corporate net income is calculated *after* everyone is paid, net farm income is calculated *before* anyone is paid. The NFU estimated that a conservative annual income on a farm selling \$100,000 of product would be approximately \$30,000. Based on that estimate, the farm would generate a five-year average return on equity of just 0.7 percent — approximately \$1,326 per farm. Compare this with the 37.3 percent return on equity generated by George Weston Ltd. — 53 times that made by farmers. Indeed, in 1998 the profit of this one Canadian food retailer was twice that earned by all Canadian farmers: \$773 million compared with \$366.8 million. As corporations gain market power, farmers lose it.

While the profitability of many family farms is questionable, large food processors and the grocery retailing sector are doing very well. A recent study by Smith and Trant (2003) of the profitability of the food sector in Canada concluded that it enjoyed higher than average rates of return during the 1990s.

### **Impacts of the Restructuring**

An important impact of the restructuring of agriculture that is rarely discussed in the literature is that small- and medium-sized farms everywhere now share much more common ground. Indeed, the globalization of agriculture effectively led to the formation of a new international farm and peasant movement in 1993, the *Vía Campesina* (Desmarais 2002; 2003). According to the *Vía Campesina*:

[T]he globalization of an industrial model of agriculture, together with increased liberalization of the food trade, is leading to the destruction of biodiversity and subsequent loss of cultural diversity, further degradation of the environment, increased disparity and greater impoverishment in the countryside.... [E]conomic liberalization endangers national food security and threatens the livelihood and very survival of peasant families. As a result peasant and farm families everywhere, in the North and the South, are disappeared and rural communities are decimated.<sup>6</sup>

Evidence from numerous countries, including several international studies, support these claims (Barry 1995; Murphy 1999 and 2002; Torres et al. 2000; IFPRI 2000; IFAD 2001; FAO 2001; Mittal and Kawaii 2001). One word that captures the experience of farmers and farm families everywhere during the last 20 years is “crisis.” In Canada, the cause of the crisis may be natural: drought, flood, frost or disease. Sometimes it is economic: collapsing commodity prices combined with high input costs. Increasingly,

it is technological: Roundup Ready™ canola contaminating fields of pedigreed seed, organic foundation seed or strains developed by a farmer's years of selection and seed saving. More frequently, however, many name the one major cause of and influence on the Canadian agricultural crisis as political. That is, the crisis is a result of an agricultural policy focussed more on the interests of agricultural industrialization, free trade and transnational corporations rather than on the interests of Canadian farming families producing for domestic markets. Boyens (2001: 18) stated this reality bluntly.

Is it a crisis? Well, the word "crisis" implies a situation that may improve. Sadly, this is a fundamental, structural change in agriculture that is dimming the lights on a way of life that defined Canada's very nature throughout the past century.

Canada's "go global" policies are more attentive to the needs of corporate food processors — many of them headquartered in other countries — than to the farmers who grow our food. Canadian farmers have been allowed to slip through the cracks (Boyens 2001: 149).

### ***Impact of Restructuring on Canadian Farms and Farmers***

While the Canadian government, politicians and media continue to stress the benefits of rising levels of agricultural exports, they rarely talk about what is actually happening on Canadian farms. As Table 3 indicates, the restructuring of agriculture is taking its toll on farm families and rural communities.

#### **There are now fewer farms.**

Between 1996 and 2001, the number of farms in Canada fell by 10.7 percent to 246,923. That loss of almost 30,000 farms constitutes the largest decline in any five-year period since 1981, and accounts for just over 41 percent of the total number of farms lost between 1981 and 2001.

#### **There are fewer farm operators and those who remain are getting older.**

More than 39,000 farmers have left the business, a decrease of 10.2 percent in just five years. During that period, the number of farmers under 35 decreased by a third. Since 1991, the number of farmers under the age of 35 has declined from 20 percent to just 11.5 percent of all operators (Wilson 2003). Only those farms with higher receipts are retaining their young. With just over 11 percent of remaining farm operators under the age of 35, it is clear that youth are fleeing their rural roots in droves.

#### **Farms are getting bigger.**

Average farm size increased from 207 hectares in 1981 to 273 hectares in 2001. The area being farmed has increased slightly by 2.5 percent, and the average area in crops increased by 60 percent. Land tenure is shifting from ownership to leasing/rental agreements. Since 1981, average land owned has increased by 17 percent, while the average area of land leased or rented has increased by 40 percent.

### **Bigger farms need more capital investment.**

As profit margins continue to fall, farming is increasingly subjected to industrial corporate pressures. The quest for industrial economies of scale generates a push for greater efficiency and lower costs which, in turn, forces a move to bigger fields, larger machinery and larger barns. Small farms are being squeezed out of business and agriculture is becoming big business as shown by consideration of farm capital investment. Between 1995 and 2000, the number of farmers with capital investments under \$100,000 decreased by 50 percent; by 33 percent among those with capital investments between \$100,000 and \$199,999; and by almost 18 percent among those with investments between \$200,000 and \$500,00. On the other hand, 43 percent more farm operators have capital investments of \$1 million or more (Statistics Canada 2002b).

**Table 3: Selected Farm Statistics**

	<b>1981</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2001</b>
Area being farmed (ha)	65,888,9 16	68,051,9 56	67,502,44 7
Number of farms	318,361	276,548	246,923
Number of operators	n/a	385,610	346,195
Number of women operators	n/a	97,345	91,180
Average age (yrs)		45	48
Average farm size (ha)	207	246	273
Average area owned (ha)	153	164	180
Average leased/rented area (ha)	174	224	244
<b>Average cropped area (ha)</b>	106	147	169

Sources: Data selected from Statistics Canada (2002a,d).

### **Increased trade has not translated into higher realized net income for farmers.**

While more farmers report gross receipts of \$250,000 or more (Statistics Canada 2002c), realized net income has remained virtually unchanged. Figure 1 clearly demonstrates that the assumption that increasing exports automatically leads to improving farmers' economic well-being is wrong. Despite a tripling of agri-food exports since 1989, and a sevenfold increase since 1974, farmers' realized net incomes remain stagnant (NFU 2000b). Farmers are caught in a cost-price squeeze among the increasingly vertical and horizontally integrated corporations that manufacture and sell seed, pesticides and fertilizers, purchase raw product from the farmer and add value to those products.

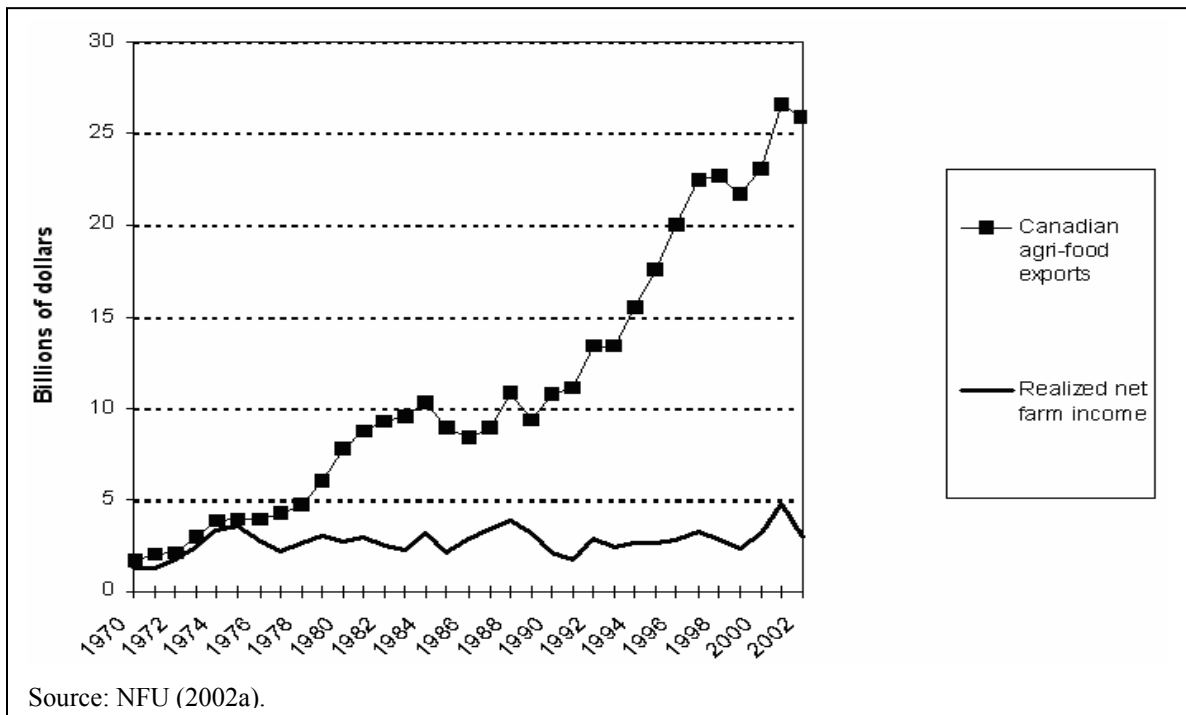
### **Higher gross receipts are not necessarily translating into higher realized net income for farmers.**

Let's take the example of pig farmers. Concentration in hog production and processing means that profits generated in the system are being distributed differently. In 1988, hogs generated \$1.44/kg and consumers paid \$6.88/kg for pork chops (NFU 2002a). In 2002, however, hog farmers received \$1.46/kg, while pork chops retailed at \$9.54/kg.

The additional \$2.66 that consumers paid went right into the retailers and processors' pockets, despite the reality that production costs for farmers had increased considerably, evidence of corporate market control and the willingness to use it.

Yet another example of the negative impact of highly skewed market power on farmers is demonstrated by looking at wheat. In 1987, the year before the Two Price Wheat system was ended, farmers received \$7 a bushel for wheat consumed domestically (NFU 2000b). In 1988, consumers paid \$1.12 for a loaf of bread. In 2002, however, farmers received \$4.48 per bushel of wheat, while consumers paid \$1.46 per loaf of bread (NFU 2002a). Each bushel of wheat produces almost \$90 worth of bread (NFU 2000b). That profit differential generates returns for cereal companies that are 186 to 740 times those of farmers.

**Figure 1: Canadian Agri-Food Exports and Net Farm Income**



At the same time, the cost to produce that wheat escalated. Nitrogen fertilizer prices have risen, paralleling wheat prices rather than the actual cost of materials — mainly natural gas — required to make it (NFU 2000b). Freight costs (from Saskatoon) alone increased from \$7.15 to \$35.68 per tonne as a direct result of losing the Crow Benefit in 1995 (NFU 2000b). Farmers lost access to more than 100 rail loading points in 2000 alone (NFU 2000a). Closure of those rail branch lines and wooden elevators means farmers drive farther to deliver commodities to transportation points, and they need much larger trucks to get it there. Once their grain is in one of the new inland grain terminals, farmers also face higher handling and elevation costs, because the Canadian

Grain Commission no longer has the power to regulate those charges (Qualman and Wiebe 2002).

**Farm debt has increased dramatically.**

In an environment where gross farm income has tripled since 1974 and expenses have quadrupled, there is little profit and farm debt grows by leaps and bounds. In 2001, farm debt was estimated at almost \$41 billion, an increase of 150 percent since 1996, and of 224 percent since 1981 (Statistics Canada 2003b).

**High-volume, export-oriented industries are economically vulnerable.**

This was clearly demonstrated by the impact of the recent discovery of a single case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in Canada. That single cow closed U.S., Mexican and other borders to Canadian live cattle and processed beef, and decimated income for beef producers. In a three-month period, Canadian beef producers lost an estimated \$11 million per day (MacArthur 2003), while piling up costs for feed, housing and veterinary supplies. Overfed animals lost quality and price premiums, and overcapacity in the system overwhelmed Canadian demand, even though Canadians bought and consumed record quantities of domestic beef. The long-term effects of this export freeze are unknown, but if history is any indicator, depopulation will result, and both infrastructure and local businesses will be eroded.

***Restructuring Affects Rural Infrastructure***

“The people who leave farming...are not simply commodity producers; they are members of communities that will bleed with their departures” (Epp and Whitson 2003: xxxii).

In export-dependent economies, good physical and social infrastructure is critical. In Canada, the costs of maintaining and upgrading that infrastructure are shared, based on population, among federal, provincial and municipal governments. The Canadian Federation of Municipalities (FCM 2003: 1) stated that rural communities are increasingly at risk as “livelihoods are threatened by economic downturns, unfair trade restrictions, world market prices, changing demographics, social challenges caused by high unemployment, depletion of natural resources or changing climatic and environmental conditions.” The bleeding to which Epp and Whitson refer means that an ever smaller tax base remains to support necessary rural infrastructure.

The rural road system is one example of how agricultural restructuring and subsequent rural depopulation plays out at the municipal level. Roads are crumbling and municipalities cannot keep up with repairs. They are crumbling, because of more and heavier traffic than they were ever designed to handle. With fewer, larger farms, fewer rail branch lines and fewer, but much larger inland grain terminals, farmers haul larger loads over longer distances. By establishing conditions that favoured branch line abandonment and elevator closure and consolidation, governments and corporations effectively downloaded the costs for maintaining the grain transportation system from national (railway) to municipal levels.

That rural municipalities are in dire straights is evident from a sampling of issues raised by provincial municipal associations that affect rural communities:

- the lack of ambulance services and higher hydro costs in Ontario (Association of Municipalities of Ontario 2003; NFU 2003b);
- the lack of policing, protection of water quality, health care, recycling and waste management in British Columbia (Union of British Columbia Municipalities 2002);
- an increase from \$0 in 1998 to \$20 per capita in 2002 in the cost of policing in rural Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Association of Municipalities 2003);
- the lack of funding for education, roads and highways; and
- the growth of intensive livestock operations and inadequate land use planning procedures in Manitoba (Association of Manitoba Municipalities 2003).

### ***Health and Well-Being in Rural Communities***

Handy and MacGregor (1993) stated that “farming is known to be one of North America’s highest stress-producing occupations, and the stress factor is growing worse.”<sup>7</sup> They further argued that “the economic pressure, the decision-making, the high seasonal work loads, mounting restrictions, increasing paperwork, family conflicts and excessive off-farm activities are all stress factors. Farming is a lonely high-pressure job.” Moreover, farming is dangerous, particularly for the young and the old, and particularly around farm machinery. The Canada Safety Council (2002) estimated that there are “130 farm-related deaths” and “1,200 people hospitalized from farm-related injuries every year... [and a] further 50,000 people sustain farm-related injuries requiring them to either seek medical attention or to take a day away from normal work activities.”

In this environment, any changes that reduce either availability of, or access to, health and well-being services will be detrimental to rural people. Restructuring in the health care system, however, has profoundly reshaped the delivery of health care to rural Canada (Pong 2002). Skinner (2003) noted that despite recent budget commitments, federal and provincial governments, among other things, have cut back health care funding across the country, regionalized decision making and closed health care institutions in some provinces. As a result, private, voluntary and informal sectors are under greater pressure to provide the care previously provided by the state.

Certainly, the delivery of quality health and education services becomes more difficult as communities are depopulated and the remaining population ages. Rural communities now face chronic staffing shortages in health services as doctors, specialists and counsellors are in short supply and waiting lists are long (NFU 1995; Kubik and Moore 2001). Moreover, unless they come from rural communities, many practitioners may not understand the complexities and stresses with which farm people live and the toll those stresses take on physical and mental well-being. Those health care professionals who are available are far away, adding both time and financial cost to already overstressed farm families. Bad weather and deteriorating roads further add to the stress.

### ***Restructuring Affects Rural Environments***

In addition to financial consequences and threats to rural infrastructure, the restructuring of agriculture contributes to significant environmental degradation. As previously noted, there is a slight increase (2.5 percent) in the total area of land being farmed, but a 17 percent

increase in the actual area seeded to crops (Table 3). That increase occurs because marginal land, like steeply sloped hills, wetlands and tree lines has been brought into production and crop rotations are less frequently practised. Those marginal lands are fragile, produce lower yields and are at higher risk for soil erosion. Run-off and leaching increases the possibility of contaminating ground and surface water by soil, fertilizers, agricultural chemicals and animal manure (AAFC 2000: 1). Consequently, potable water on farms and in rural communities is becoming scarcer as surface and groundwater supplies are exhausted or contaminated.

A combination of factors contributes to more frequent threats to water safety in the countryside: reduced water quality testing, inspection and monitoring due to funding shortages; aging and outdated water treatment facilities in rural areas; and the growth of intensive livestock operations. Ducks Unlimited Canada (2000), for example, noted that the loss of between 60 percent and 90 percent of wetlands to farming and urban sprawl contributed to reductions in water quality. A recent study of Saskatchewan wells found that in 38 percent of cases where water exceeded safe nitrate levels, the cause was due to livestock manure (Rogers 2002: 74). Similar research findings were noted in Ontario and Alberta.

Growing concerns about the possible links between antibiotic use in animals, antibiotic-resistant bacteria and human antibiotic resistance is fuelling much needed research on what antibiotics remain in the ecosystem and just how they got there (Raine 2002: 20). Some research is looking specifically at intensive livestock operations as the potential source of high levels of antibiotics in soil and rivers (*Star Phoenix* 2002: A10). Certainly, contamination of the water supply that occurred in the spring of 2000 in Walkerton, Ontario by *E. coli* H-0157 from cattle manure points to the need to better understand the relationship between changing farm practices and infrastructural needs to ensure safe water (Bell 2001).

### ***Rural Women and the Impact of Agricultural Restructuring***

The restructuring of agriculture is having a direct impact on women's lives everywhere. In the countryside of many developing countries, women, in their gendered roles as mothers, housewives and those primarily responsible for the well-being of their families, were most immediately and directly affected by structural adjustment (Asfhar and Dennis 1992; Elson 1991; Cornia et al. 1987; Leon 1990). A more recent study (Razavi 2002: 2) examined the impact of neoliberalism in rural areas. "Rather than 'shifting the terms' of trade toward agriculture, neoliberal policies have been, in effect, 'shifting the burdens' of adjustment toward small farmers, and especially the women in rural households who often bear the double burden of farm (and off-farm) work and the care of human beings."

Rural women themselves confirmed this shifting of burdens in a series of papers written in preparation for the World Food Summit held in Rome in 1996 (Johnson 1996; Castillo 1996; Ramirez 1996; O'Brien 1996; Storey 1996), an international conference held in Tlaxcala, Mexico (Vía Campesina 1996a), and five regional workshops organized in Asia, South America, Central America and the Caribbean between 1997-2001 (Asian Peasant Women's Workshop 1999; CLOC-Vía Campesina 1997, 1998; WINFA 1999;

Via Campesina 2000a). The load women now shoulder as a result of structurally adjusted agriculture is remarkably similar across all regions.

- Cutbacks to social services force rural women to take greater responsibility for caregiving of children, the sick and elderly.
- Declining farm income leads to increased male migration often leaving women to hold down the farm, or whole families are displaced to urban centres.
- Falling farm income also means increasing work on and off the farm.
- Social disintegration takes place within households as family members seek work in far away places.
- There is less access to education and health care.
- Access to resources, such as land, credit and extension services is reduced.
- Poverty is feminized.
- Violence against women increases.

The list goes on.

There is also growing evidence that many of these changes are also shared by Canadian farm women. To understand clearly the impact of agricultural restructuring on farm women's lives, it is important to situate women's place, roles and responsibilities in agriculture. Canadian farm women have responded in a number of ways to agricultural restructuring. Some women farmers focus their work lives on the farm as operators and equal partners in the farm operation. Other farm women work off the farm and contribute capital to the farm operation. Still others contribute both labour and capital to the farm operation (Martz and Brueckner 2003).

A recent survey found that Canadian farm women spent an average of 3.5 hours per day working at farm tasks (Martz and Brueckner 2003). Over half were involved in livestock work, drove trucks on the farm and supervised farm work. The percentage of women operating farm machinery as part of their regular duties has also increased substantially and Canadian farm women in 2001-2002 were much more active in traditional farm tasks than they were in 1982 (Martz and Brueckner 2003). Despite an increased contribution to the management and physical labour of farming, farm women still perform most of the household work.

More than 80 percent of the farm women had direct input into the farming operation through farm management activities. For many years, farm women have played a major role in farm management by maintaining the farm books and records; in the 2001-2002 study, this was a task dominated by women. Farm women are often more highly educated than farm men and have the skills to keep accounts and use computers.



The increasing profile of farm women as skilled and knowledgeable on the farm is evident in their larger roles in supervising the work of hired help and dealing with salespeople for farm purchases (Martz and Brueckner 2003).

Farm women have always played a key role in the survival of family farms. Traditionally, Canadian women managed the family household and raised the next generation of farmers (Bennett and Kohl 1982). Women adapted to the need for a continuous flow of household income through the production and local sale of commodities. They adapted to farm income shortages through strategies to reduce household consumption and by working at a non-farm job to bring in additional capital. Farm women also co-ordinated family work, both on and off the farm (Martz and Brueckner 2003). Many of these contributions have not been credited to the accumulation of capital for the farm. However, feeding hired labour, washing work clothes and raising food that frees up money to invest in the farm operation all contribute to the financial and social viability of the family farm (Reimer 1986).

As early as 1995, the National Farmers Union was concerned about the structural changes in health care delivery in rural Saskatchewan. In a one-day rural health policy development conference, participants collectively analyzed the impact the changes in delivery were having on the lives of rural women, as health care workers, volunteers and receivers of health services. Women claimed they experienced a disproportionate share of the impact including:

- the loss of employment and income opportunities;
- higher workloads as both employees and volunteers;
- increased responsibility as untrained family caregivers (child, ill and elderly);
- increased paperwork;
- less time for quality client care and lower job satisfaction;
- longer travel time for both workers and consumers;
- the loss of population, because of failing health/inadequate community health services; and
- increased stress and reduced morale for all stakeholders.

The tremendous increase in the proportion of women caring for aged or chronically ill family and friends illustrates the impact of the loss of services in rural Canada. In rural areas, reduced medical services, shorter hospital stays and in-home care services mean people remain in their homes longer. The impact on women is an increased demand on them to support and assist with the care of the elderly or ill family or friends. In effect, these changes have moved the delivery of health care services from institutions to people's homes (Martz and Brueckner 2003).

Moreover, Blakeley and Jaffe (1999: 14-16) noted that caregiving limits farm women's work and social lives; it can also lead to physical health problems. For example, women with caregiving responsibilities are less likely to be involved in community and social

activities, and therefore, are more isolated. Women adjust their work and lives to accommodate caregiving, leading to sleep deprivation and other health problems like headaches, chronic back pain, depression, and physical and emotional exhaustion. Rural women's health is further compromised by the lack of access to health care facilities and health providers that are geographically distant (Kubik and Moore 2001: 30) and unevenly distributed (Skinner 2003). Women also may be reluctant to use services that might help deal with stress, because they fear being "labelled" (Kubik and Moore 2001: 30).

Farm women are increasingly concerned with financial problems. They are overworked and stressed (Kubik and Moore 2001: 36). Regardless of the particular circumstance, women are doing more work on and off the farm, while facing increasing demand for caregiving and community voluntarism — all in the context of rural depopulation. Martz and Brueckner (2003) showed that the number of farm women working off the farm to supplement farm incomes increased by over 50 percent from 31 percent in 1982 to 49 percent in 2001. Canadian farm women with both on-farm and non-farm work commitments, work an average of 2.5 hours each day more than the average Canadian woman age 35 to 44. This additional work comes at the expense of leisure time as these women spend 2.2 hours less each day at leisure activities.

Farm women are also affected when their partners take jobs off the farm to supplement farm incomes. Women and their children must increase their workloads to replace some or all of the farm work of their partner. Women whose partners are working off the farm spend almost an additional hour working each day, and again this is time taken from leisure activities. A lack of time and greater commitments at work both on and off the farm have led to decreased participation in voluntary, leisure and family activities, and a decreased quality of life for Canadian farm women and their families.

Farm women are an important source of support for rural communities everywhere. In the United Kingdom, for example, Little (2002) argued that community participation is considered a woman's duty, an extension of her domestic role. As governments withdraw services and support from rural communities, rural people assume the role of delivering these services. In both the United Kingdom and Australia, the lack of basic health and community facilities are more readily tolerated in rural communities where women's traditional roles lead to expectations that they will take on additional responsibilities (Alston 1998; Little 2002). Alston (2003) demonstrated that Australian farm women play a larger role in caring work and have voiced a higher level of concern for health and the environment. In her study of rural Nebraska, Fink (1988) underlined the importance of women in supplying "moral capital," which kept the family on the farm in times of crisis. Women nursed people, listened to troubles, cheered people up and neutralized the shocks of the world on farm families. Although the details of these activities may have changed, they continue today. In Canada, the demand for women to engage in voluntary activities in the community is increasing due to the withdrawal of services and the decentralization of rural development to the local level. At the same time, the increased demands of farm and non-farm work reduce the time farm women have available for voluntary and community work. Despite longer hours of work,

Canadian farm women spend more time at civic and volunteer work than the average Canadian woman. This additional volunteer work replaces the services lost in small rural communities.

Domestic violence can result from an increase in family stress, yet there are no Canada-wide data specific to rural areas (Minister of Supply and Services Canada 1994: 4). In fact, according to Statistics Canada's "Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2003" (2003a), data on rural domestic violence are systematically excluded except in Quebec. The report also refers to the difficulty of providing shelter and transition services in rural areas. In a study of domestic violence in rural East Central Saskatchewan, Martz and Sarauer (2000) found a dearth of knowledge about the extent of woman abuse, of services and supports to victims of abuse, and of women's awareness about limited existing services. Their study highlighted a number of critical issues.

- The dire need for services dealing with domestic violence was evident when a support group in a rural community filled up within three hours of its establishment.
- Working with violence against women in rural circumstances has a particular set of challenges.
- Confidentiality in small communities may be difficult to preserve.
- Isolation, especially on farms, is both common and dangerous, especially given the length of time it would take for police to respond to an on-farm complaint of domestic abuse.
- Attitudes among rural dwellers contribute to an environment that encourages women to keep violence a secret.

A participant quote from a previous study of farm women illustrates the extent to which farm families experience the impacts of the farm crisis.

We can no longer control our own destiny and this is why we are witnessing increased depression, addictions (to drinking and gambling) suicides, divorce, family abuse, etc. Even children in schools are concerned that Mom and Dad argue more and there is a decrease in harmony in rural families. The bottom line — Farm crisis because of low commodity prices (Kubik and Moore 2001: 27).

### ***Farm Women and Agricultural Policy Development***

Despite 25 years of research showing that farming relies on the work of both women and men, and the significant role of women in farm financial management and raising the next generation of farmers, Canadian farm women continue to be marginalized in policy development and political debates around agriculture (Gerrard and Russell 1999; Kubick and Moore 2001).

The lack of meaningful inclusion of farm women in political decision making breeds powerlessness. As one woman stressed: “If we’re not involved, and we remain peripheral and voiceless, it’s very detrimental to our psychological health, to our physical health” (Gerrard and Russell 1999: 8). Commenting on her involvement in rural health policy development, a participant in Gerrard and Russell’s work (1999: 5) remarked that a “lot of that [policy] work has been male work, and it’s set up to suit the schedule and demands of your male counterparts.” Yet another summarized her experience as follows.

What matters is that there doesn’t seem to be a space or even if there is a space for you there’s none of you there. I mean, it’s sort of a self-defeating argument. There are none of you there because it doesn’t seem like your space, and then it doesn’t seem like your space because there are none of you there (Gerrard and Russell 1999: 5).

In recent years, Canadian women’s limited access to the policy process has been further undermined. In exploring the effects of restructured health services and support programs, Gerrard and Russell (1999) found that the loss of funding profoundly affected women’s ability to participate in a variety of activities related to policy development. The study demonstrated that as government funding for meetings, communications, workshops and research was cut women were left with:

- greater isolation arising from the loss of opportunity to gather face to face, and the concurrent loss of supportive sharing and problem solving;
- less ability to plan collectively and participate in decision making and policy development on issues that affect their daily lives; and
- a sense of betrayal and anger at losing opportunities to effect change that would improve well-being in rural communities (Gerrard and Russell 1999: 7-8).

This situation is even more cogent for the participation of young farm women in policy development, given the statistics on large numbers of youth who are leaving farming. This leaves an even greater gap in information and policy needs of female farm youth. They are, quite literally, right out of the picture.

The literature on women’s involvement in and consideration of women’s issues in Canadian agricultural policy making is embarrassingly sparse. There are three main reasons. First, similar to what Gibson et al. (1993: 23) found in their analysis of Australian farm politics, Canadian farm women’s absence may be, in part, a result of what they call the “continuing male hegemony” in rural areas, a reference to “the persistence of conservative attitudes concerning men’s and women’s work, the prevailing ideology of farming as men’s work despite a great deal of evidence to the contrary, and the role that women view themselves as being ‘helper’ or farmhands rather than farmers.”

Second, as Scott and Van Dine (1995: 41) pointed out,

it is in mainstream farm organizations and government bureaucracy that farm women meet the most resistance to being treated as equals.... For

example, farm organizations and boards are still male-dominated organizations with only one farm woman or no farm women present. Women on agricultural boards still tend to be seen as “token women” who are not taken seriously. This is one of the most obvious places where the authoritarian family system is carried into the business of farming.

Third, and perhaps most important, women farmers have only recently been counted. Because farm women entered official Canadian statistics as farmers only in 1991, it is perhaps no surprise that they have not been actively involved in developing Canada’s agricultural policy.<sup>8</sup> Overnight, 25 percent of Canadian farmers suddenly became women. They had been there all along; they just had been invisible.

As we have demonstrated, women are major contributors to farming through their farm work and their non-farm incomes. Furthermore, given their different roles and responsibilities, women can be expected to have a different perspective on Canadian agricultural policy, because they experience agriculture and agricultural restructuring differently than men. Their larger roles in community work inform their concerns about the decline of rural communities and services.

Governments in Europe recognized this reality when the Agricultural Ministers of the European Union committed, in May 2002, “to mainstreaming gender into its proceedings, emphasizing the importance of including women in efforts to create sustainable agriculture, given their importance in civil society, in the labour force and for the diversification of agriculture in the context of multifunctionality” (Prugl 2004: 361).

For Canadians, the European discussion is especially informative given that in 1995, the Canadian government made a commitment to gender equality at “all levels of decision-making,” as outlined in a document entitled *Setting the Stage for the Next Century: The Federal Plan for Gender Equality*.<sup>9</sup> Objective 6 of that plan states that the federal government aims to “incorporate women’s perspectives in governance” and to

achieve gender equality, the social arrangements that govern the relationship between men and women will have to change to give equal value to the different roles they play, as parents, as workers, as elected officials and others; to foster equal partnership in the decision-making process; and to build a just and equitable society (SWC 1995: 14).

Yet, farm women participate less in the traditional policy-making forums and are underrepresented in farm and commodity organizations (Pettersen and Solbakken 1998; Shortall 1994; Teather 1996; Gerrard and Russell 1999; Kubick and Moore 2001; Martz and Brueckner 2003). Consequently, new methods of consultation that include farm women must be designed to create a Canadian Agricultural Policy Framework that accurately reflects the perspectives of all agricultural producers. Given the opportunity, would farm women add other realities?

It is exactly this gap that our research addresses, and to which we propose recommendations to increase the participation of farm women in the policy-making process and the responsiveness of agricultural policy to the realities named by farm women. In Chapter 3, we report on how farm women name the realities in their lives that have changed as a result of agricultural policies that have restructured Canadian agriculture.

### 3. FARM WOMEN ANALYZE THEIR CURRENT REALITY

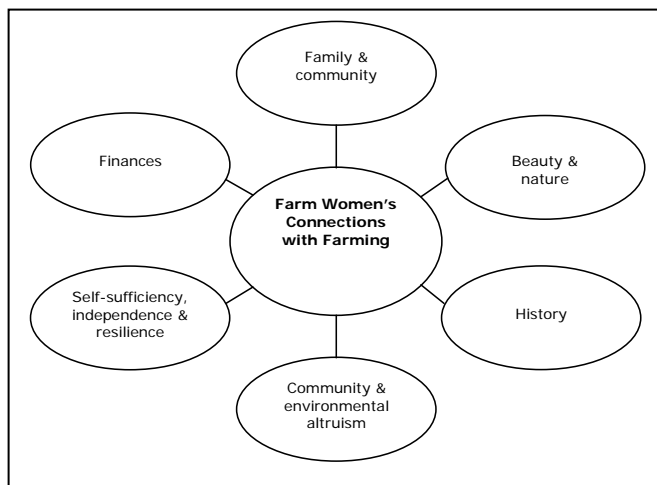
The preceding chapter explored various elements of the current agricultural crisis and demonstrated that this crisis is a consequence of national and international agricultural policies that have fundamentally restructured agriculture and profoundly affected farm families. This chapter explores the complex realities of farm women's lives and the forces they see as contributing to their changing realities. It begins by examining what keeps farm women on the land. Then, we report on four of the five key themes that emerged from women's collective analysis of what their farms and their lives on those farms look like today: quality of life in rural communities, health and environment, the farm financial crisis and corporatization.

The chapter takes the perspective of the women participants. The individual concerns arising from women's stories and their subsequent collective analysis are reflected in the groups and titles summarized in Appendix G. The contributing factors that women brainstormed are included in Appendix H. The bulk of what women said in the workshops is paraphrased throughout the text. Direct quotes are in italics and researchers included any points requiring clarification as endnotes.

#### What Keeps Women Connected to Farming?

It is important to understand clearly the range and depth of forces that motivate women's deep connections with their farms and communities, in spite of the overwhelming pressures of poor finances and a seemingly hostile political environment. Despite the grim financial situation farmers now face, with the BSE crisis, and low hog and grain prices, and the anger and despair these realities provoke, women retain incredibly strong attachments to their histories, their communities and their land.

**Figure 2: Forces that Keep Farm Women Connected to Farming**



In five regional workshops held in the winter of 2003-2004, six key themes emerged from women's discussions of what keeps them connected to farming: family and community; beauty and nature; history; community and environmental altruism; self-sufficiency, independence and resilience; and finances (Figure 2). A brief description of each follows.

### ***Family and Community***

*I love the rural values. We have neighbours that work well together, that we can depend on.*

*It is a safe place and a happy place.... We love our family. Our family is [the] number one thing and farming has allowed us to be close to the family.*

Living and working with extended families, working side by side with parents and children, eating together and emotionally supporting each other is a prime motivator keeping farm families on their farms. Women spoke passionately about love for family and neighbours. Some women appreciated a greater equality in male–female partnerships than they thought was typically found elsewhere. Community spirit is seen to be more easily found, achieved and maintained in rural communities. Farm women like to stay connected with each other and are revitalized by participating in farm organizations, conferences and other community events.

Women saw great benefits in bringing up children in communities where people care for each other, and have a greater sense of loyalty and responsibility to their families and their communities than they thought would be found in urban centres. Women claimed that farms are a safer place to bring up children than cities.

### ***Beauty and Nature***

*You can...look in four different directions and get four different landscapes. The lighting is beautiful.*

*Basically, I feel a connection with the earth and that is very supportive to me. I feel like my spirituality and whole being is...connected to that.*

Farm women ranked their attachment to beauty and nature very highly. There is a sense of rootedness — a deep connection to and passion for the land — that women value, both for themselves and their children. Farming is deep in their spirit, heart and blood and, for many, farming is all they have ever wanted to do.

The smell of the soil in the spring, and the quiet and peace of living in a serenely beautiful landscape untainted by the sounds of traffic and sirens are powerful connections, as is the open space and isolated backyards, and the opportunity for time to think. There is beauty in the darkness and moonlight on their farms, and women take great pleasure in staring at stars in a night sky unpolluted by artificial illumination. Farm women are attached to the acts of farming, garnering deep satisfaction from planting, growing and harvesting crops and gardens, being outside and experiencing all the seasons. Caring for animals keeps women



connected with farming, the joy and satisfaction of seeing animals born and then grow through their life cycles. There is a passionate commitment to farming and to nature that is intensely spiritual.

### ***Self-Sufficiency, Independence and Resilience***

*Our farm is pretty well self-sufficient. The only thing we don't have is chickens, but I trade milk for chickens or for eggs.... We make all our own butter, cheese and we have a garden.*

*The thing I really like about the farm is the amount of independence and self-reliance you can have. I've got one quarter of land and I'm trying to be self-sufficient.*

The greater degree of self-sufficiency that is possible on their farms and the ability to produce healthy food for their own needs keeps women attached to farming. Some put great value on knowing how their food has been grown and ensuring the health of their land. The independence of farming, of being their own boss and having control over what they grow and eat is valued, as is owning their own place, and having the freedom to do what they want when they want. The variety of work available on farms, and the challenge of being all things and doing all things is attractive, as is the concrete satisfaction of seeing a job completed, a crop planted and harvested, an animal born and grown.

Despite the dire financial straights these women and farm families face, idealism, hope and optimism were common themes that keep women connected to farming. Repeatedly, women expressed their expectation and belief that farming would “get better next week,” and that there would be a better future.

### ***Community and Environmental Altruism***

*For our future, we have to have healthy farms, we have to be able to work with the people in the cities...it's health not only for us as farmers and health for our farms, but also health for people all the way around.*

*We need sustainable agriculture...we need something that isn't going to wreck our environment.*

*The impact on the environment is of great concern. It is like we are farming outside of the environment. We've expanded a lot of acreage, cut a lot of trees, put lots of chemicals; fish are dying.*

Women also named altruistic reasons that keep them connected to farming. Many are motivated by idealism, hope and optimism that contribute to a deep sense of responsibility to build strong communities, maintain a healthy environment and produce healthy food safely. They see farming as a valued and valuable occupation — one of the most important jobs on Earth. Women also want others to discover and become as connected to the land as they are. Many women see their farming as contributing to continuing life, and ensuring that their children and grandchildren know the source of the food they eat.

### **History**

*We are trying to keep the farm in the family for the simple reason that it's been there since 1913 when it was homesteaded. And how we're going to do that, we don't know.*

*We're in an old historic farm house...it's [the] J.J. Morrison... homestead.... He was part of the first, really the only Ontario farm government that existed here in 1919 to 1922. They actually had farmers in power for a few years, and his daughter [and] Agnes McPhail, [were] the first woman members of Parliament.*

History keeps women connected with their farms. In parts of Canada, fourth and fifth generations occupy the same farms, where land and buildings are saturated with stories and memory. Women talked about wanting to reconnect with the way they grew up, and their husband's deep desires not to be the ones to quit, sell out and lose the family farm.

The decision to leave farming is not just a business decision, but a decision to terminate long-term relationships with the land, the family, their history and their community. As a rule, too stubborn and too proud to give up and leave the farm, farmers hold on to the family tradition, while bearing increasingly heavy burdens in today's agricultural crisis.

### **Finances**

*We're in too deep to get out.*

*It's impossible to sell our herd because of the BSE.*

*We're both too old to start anything new...nobody would hire us.*

Finances keep women attached to farming in a negative way: being too far in debt and having too great an investment to get out now. Even the current BSE crisis keeps some connected, because there are no markets to sell their herds. Others stay attached, because their age limits other economic opportunities, while others find it too complicated to leave.

By their own descriptions, women's connections to farming are relational and economic, altruistic rather than selfish. Despite the reality that women see the negative financial situation of their farms as problematic, they remain dedicated to their history and the land. Above all else, they are committed to retaining the strong family and community relationships that form the core of their identity. These values, beliefs and culture ground farm women's analysis of their realities.

### **Farm Women Name Their Realities**

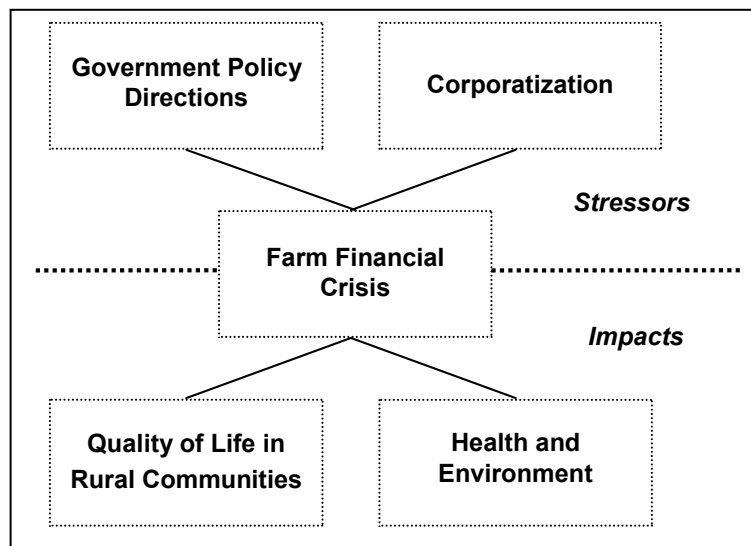
Five major themes emerged as central in farm women's lives on the farm and in the community:

- the farm financial crisis;

- the quality of life in rural communities;
- health and environment;
- government policy directions; and
- corporatization.

The central element in farm women's reality is the farm financial crisis (Figure 3). It is the major stress, and they see it as created primarily by current government policy directions and corporatization. Two other themes emerged: quality of life in rural communities and health and environment (Figure 3). Both continue to deteriorate as a result of the farm financial crisis. Solving the root causes of the financial crisis would also address issues related to quality of life in rural communities, and health and environment. Nevertheless, women recognized that their lives could, and likely would, still be strongly affected by government policy directions and corporatization. It is important to examine the multi-dimensional nature of, and the complex relationships among, the five major themes as summarized in Figure 4. Although we report on each key theme individually, the women clearly saw many issues as cross-cutting and intimately linked.

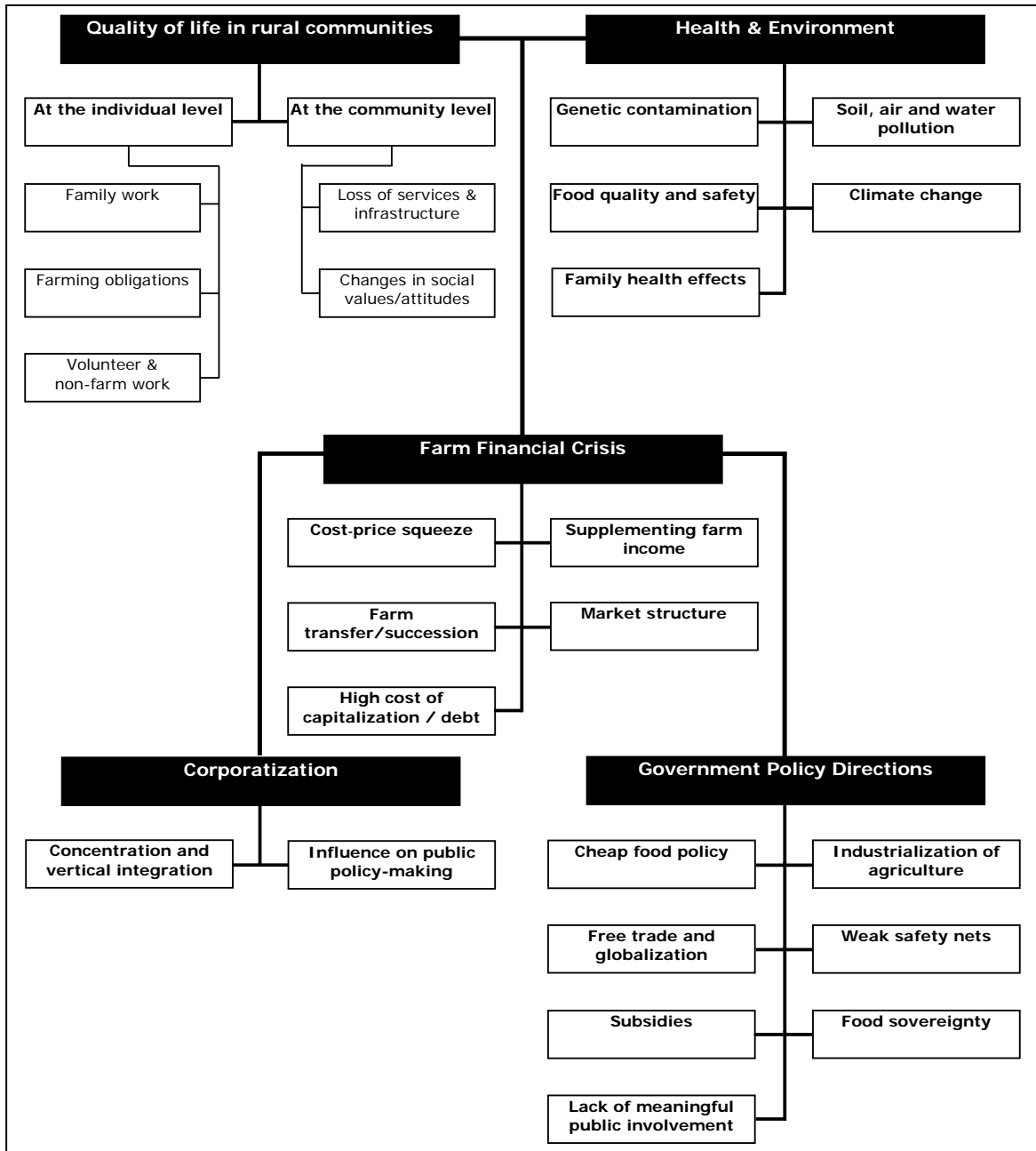
**Figure 3: Major Themes Emerging from Farm Women's Analysis of Their Lived Realities**



### ***Quality of Life in Rural Communities***

In their analysis of the impact of Canadian agricultural policy on their lives, farm women frequently named quality of life issues, which are subjective and multi-dimensional. Quality of life informs all the key themes presented in Figure 4. This research takes us beyond the findings discussed in the literature review section of this report (Chapter 2). Farm women's perspectives and lived realities expand and shed new light on our understanding of the changing social context in rural communities.

**Figure 4: Key Themes that Farm Women Name as Changing Realities in Their Lives**



### At the Individual Level

A review of what women had to do to get to the workshops offers a “quality of life” snapshot.

*I have five small children and had to organize baby-sitters out the wazoo. Everybody has to get to hockey and everything.*

*A lot of my life is just survival. ...I think sometimes that [my kids] see the chaos around and they see a lot of the stress.*

**Family work:** Just because the tasks done by women are often invisible to their families and to policy makers does not mean they are simple or unimportant. Farm women's co-ordination of farm and family activities makes them indispensable to the smooth functioning of the farm and the family.

That women assume greater responsibility for domestic chores was evident in their description of what they had to do to get ready to come to the workshop. Women participants said they started preparing for their absence as long as three weeks before the workshop by reminding their spouse that they *had* to be home to take care of the children and their children

*would have make their own dessert for 4-H [on the weekend of the workshop].*

Most women also made sure that

*everything [was] prepared for the children [and that] everything [was] ready for my husband.*

That meant doing the laundry so there would be clean clothes, stocking the fridge and making sure that there was a big pot of soup on the stove.

Women organized child care, whether with their spouses, friends or family, and arranged rides for children to get to and from school and after-school activities like 4-H, birthday parties, hockey and soccer. Even when their spouses undertook those tasks, women had to leave detailed plans telling their husbands when and where to pick up and deliver children.

Women's participation in off-farm activities is more likely to be hampered by family illness. One participant, however, noted that her family had the stomach flu the night before she left, so she had to

*wash about eight loads of barfy stuff before [leaving at] noon.*

Many women would have felt compelled to stay home with sick children, but this woman felt her husband more than capable of providing appropriate care for their sick children. For some women, fewer co-ordinating activities were required, simply because they

*don't have to negotiate [absences] with [their] husbands [or they have] started to delegate responsibilities to [the] husband.*

One woman stated that she had

*allowed [her] husband to go on a trip a couple of years ago to motorbike around England and now [she doesn't] have to negotiate anything any more!*

Some of the older women were retired, but even if there were no children at home, some women felt the need to make arrangements so their husbands would not be alone or lonely. One participant called her son-in-law to see if he would have dinner with her husband, while another woman made arrangements for her husband and those of the other participants from her community to enjoy a nice meal while the women were at the workshop.

**Farming obligations:** Getting out of the yard is a constant challenge for farm women, many of whom had numerous farm- and family-related chores to finish before leaving for the workshops.

*We got the sheep all sorted and tagged. I baked bread and made soup so they had something to eat.*

*I went to two different towns [on various errands] and also got a loan just before I left.*

*It was a bit of a commotion for me to get here. We have a dairy operation so work had to be done. Then I had to wait for my three daughters to come from the university to help out [while I am gone].*

*We had to rush around getting animals ready for Agribition [the morning I left].*

*I had to do the chores the morning I left, because my son was gone.*

*I left [my husband] with the marketing and said don't call me – I don't want to hear about it!*

**Volunteer and non-farm work:** Women also had to make arrangements to cover their volunteer and paid work commitments, and several had to make arrangements for dependent spouses and elders.

*I'm involved with 4-H and cadets. I worked a bingo, baked for a bake sale, had my son's birthday, and arranged to pick up three other women. ... My son was stranded in K... and we had to figure out how to get him home.*

*I took the weekend off work, organized my four children and said goodbye to my husband. I started [planning] two weeks ago.*

*I'm a nurse part time [and] had to change a shift.*

A few women operated their own farms without partners. For them, leaving the farm meant trying to find people to do the essential chores, and then catching up on everything that wouldn't get done in their absence. As well, if their operation involved direct sales, then any time away from their sales directly affects their income. For the small niche market operator, those losses can make the difference between breaking even or going into the red.

Finally, many farm women are not used to being explicitly involved in policy development processes.

*Most of the time my husband goes to...meetings; this time it was my turn.*

*I didn't know if I had time, but my husband said "You have to go."*

Many doubted their ability to contribute anything of value to the discussion, because they were "just farm women."

*I don't think I have anything important to say.*

It is not surprising, therefore, that women feel that it is too hard to get away, and that there is not enough time for them to be away, because their families depend on them to be at home.

### **At the Community Level**

Farm women's daily lives, as we have just demonstrated, are multi-faceted. Yet another layer of complexity is added when women extend their analysis to the larger picture — to the changes that have affected quality of life beyond their farms and in their communities. When women named their realities, two sub-themes emerged: loss of services and infrastructure and changes in social values/attitudes.

#### **Loss of services and infrastructure:**

*The school is in the process of being closed. We are concerned about this, because one of the grandchildren is 3 years old now. If they do close the school, the child will have to spend lots of time on the bus. Our elevator and railway [are] already gone.*

Farm women's quality of life is negatively affected by the loss of services and infrastructure that results from agricultural industrialization. The cost-price squeeze<sup>10</sup> forces farm families to sell out to larger farming operations and head for the cities. Farm land close to larger urban centres is being fragmented as urban dwellers seek their version of rural quality of life, without any of the attendant smells and noises. There are fewer taxpayers to support maintenance and upgrading of required infrastructures. Fewer but larger grain terminals and less rail branch line service means that grain is transported longer distances, destroying grid roads never designed to carry either the volume or weight they now do. With fewer people, local businesses close their doors, and rural dwellers lose not only access to retail and other services, but to potential jobs.

Medical services are thinly spread and under constant threat in rural locations. Communities find it hard to recruit and retain doctors who may be required to be on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. One community fortunate enough to have a doctor and a hospital was unable to recruit enough nurses to keep all the beds open. It can be hard to attract professionals and their families to rural communities that have few and eroding services and amenities, and where their children may face limited educational, recreational and cultural opportunities and choice. Farm and rural children face longer bus rides to schools in ever more distant communities. Most rural schools cannot provide the range of programming and resources found in larger centres. Distance and sparse services also means that women now have “three-town days” each week, because they have to go to different towns to do different kinds of business. One woman’s life map depicted the important role her van plays in managing farm family life. They travel miles every week, taking children to various activities and appointments, picking up groceries and running farm errands.

Communities have lost banks and access to agricultural extension. Those services are now delivered by telephone or over the Internet. Child care continues to be a worry for rural and farm families. Finding care in rural settings that is comparable to that found in many urban facilities is difficult to impossible. Furthermore, farm families need child care during long spring and harvest days, which even if it were available, would be expensive and out of reach for already financially strapped farm families. Some have buddy seats for the kids in all their equipment. In view of the lack of affordable child care, farm men and women have no choice but to keep their young children with them as they work on the farm, despite their very real safety concerns and the greater likelihood of childhood injury and child fatality on farms.

**Changes in social values/attitudes:**

*We aren’t respected by anyone. No one wants to be a farmer. I don’t call myself a farmer, because when I do, I get no respect.*

*Those were still pretty good times in the early ‘80s. [You] had the feeling you were respected for producing the food. From there on, it sort of went downhill.*

Women identified two changes in particular that stood out: the increased focus on competition and its attendant reduction in co-operative activities, and the lack of respect accorded food, food production and food producers by governments, consumers and corporations.

Women see that socially and economically vibrant rural communities are important to ensure the maintenance of infrastructure that benefits urban dwellers as much as rural people. In recent years, governments and consumers have shifted their view of farming from being a way of life to being a business in which economics are more important than anything else, including the vitality of rural communities and the health of food and the environment. The result, farm women believe, is that consumers, politicians and government bureaucrats have little respect for the work that farm families do and,



thus, do not recognize their value and contribution to society beyond just providers of raw commodities. Women link the deterioration of rural communities with that lack of respect.

Women claim that mass media contribute directly to the lack of respect accorded to farming and to farmers. The oversimplification required by sound-bite journalism further contributes to public misperceptions about the reality of farming. Media depict farmers as being subsidized by government, when women believe that, in reality, it is farmers who are subsidizing consumers and Canada's cheap food policy.<sup>11</sup> Corporate advertising contributes to misperceptions about food and farming in other ways. Advertising shows farmers in expensive combines. It contributes to the often unrealistic expectation that, what we see on TV, we should have. People want the perfection that advertisers work so hard to achieve. Even in food, appearance is everything, and the cosmetic wins over quality and safety.

In lifestyle, the same is true. Farm families now expect that their quality of life and lifestyles should be reasonably similar to those lived by urban folk. They, and the workers they hire, want a safe work environment, labour standards, a fair wage and benefits for their labour, a fair return on investment, reasonable access to cultural and educational activities, education and retail services, and medical care. The lack of benefits is a problem for farmers injured on the job. They are not automatically eligible for worker's compensation or Employment Insurance, and private sickness/disability insurance is beyond the means of farmers whose production costs are not covered by commodity prices.<sup>12</sup> With no one else to do the work, the families and farms of injured and unprotected farmers are at risk.

The rural–urban divide and the rapid increase in urbanization over the last decades has reduced personal connections between rural and urban folk. Women see that split due, at least in part, to media and government representatives that misrepresent farmers' realities. They said that if farm families were truly valued as the environmental stewards that they are, government policies would support small and medium family farms, and consumers would pay prices for food that fairly represent their actual production costs.

Competition and class divisions divide farmers. In a shift away from co-operation, the individual is more important than the group. There is a perception of widespread greed — that everyone, including farmers, is out for more, more, more. Furthermore, there is a lack of group support and community understanding for both men and women, which isolates farm families, especially women who may find it more difficult to leave the farm due to family obligations. Unable to unite, farmers express a diverse and contradictory analysis that contributes to their lack of unified political power.

Women named a number of elements related to competition and the loss of neighbourliness that are affecting quality of life in their communities.

- There has been a loss of nurturing, love and spirit/spirituality among neighbours. As humans, we are forgetting how to care for each other and the earth that sustains us.
- There is a lack of supportive social programs for rural women, farm families and their communities.

- Given the portrayal of farming as a physically demanding, low-quality, low-pay seasonal job, fewer people are willing to work as farm labourers. The resulting shortage of skilled labour makes it hard for farm families to take time away from their farms, especially if animals are involved.
- Finally, women resent the fact that every available dollar must be sunk into the vortex of farming, including savings and inheritances.

The driving factors contributing to changes in social values and attitudes are related to science and technology, and information, knowledge and education.

- **The loss of mentoring and sharing of land lore:** Historically, farmers developed and passed on their intimate understandings of the particular idiosyncrasies of their lands, crops and animals to their neighbours and the next generation. This rural local knowledge is being lost as farmers move away from traditional, non-commoditized knowledge and practices like seed saving toward increased dependence on science and technology. The loss of traditional knowledge, history and mentorship changes farming practices, families and communities and, hence, fundamentally changes rural culture. Attempting to capture higher returns, farmers appear too ready to adopt new technologies that presumably improve their economic position, making them seem gullible or overly compliant.
- **A shift from knowledge to information:** Women saw information as very different from knowledge. For example, a farmer can easily gain access to information about how to control weeds by applying a particular chemical. Knowledge, on the other hand, was seen as more holistic and inclusive of ecology, culture and social relations. Moreover, institutional information has been elevated and given greater credence than that gathered by farmers through decades of hands-on experience and observation. In other words, while information is increasing, knowledge is decreasing.
- **Information overload:** Most workshop participants noted that the amount of paper and paperwork they had to deal with was onerous. The amount of information available, the pace at which it is generated, and keeping track of who is generating it, is problematic. Lack of time due to farm and off-farm employment, house and child care, and community activities means that farmers often fail to keep themselves well informed on new developments in agricultural policies, farm programs and technology — to their own peril. Information does not necessarily equal knowledge.
- **Privatization of research:** According to participants, agricultural research is fundamentally shaped by the way it is funded. Research that used to benefit the common good now benefits private interests, adds to farmers' costs and greatly limits the conditions under which the products of research can be used.
- **Research priorities:** Women see that the changes on their farms are products of research and development that “lack wisdom and integrity.” The trust placed in researchers and policy makers has been betrayed when results turn out not to be in

the best interest of farm families, especially regarding technologies that are unproven in the long term.

Clearly, quality of life has changed significantly in recent years as a result of Canadian agricultural policies. Women reported that they are much busier with farm work, non-farm work and community volunteer work. They and their families now travel further to access everything. Changing social and cultural attitudes lead to more competition and less co-operation among farmers. Food, food production and food producers are accorded less respect by the public, politicians and bureaucrats. Urbanization reduces and distances personal connections with farming, widening the rural–urban divide. Mass media further contributes to these changes. Despite the increased availability of information from a variety of sources, local knowledge and its transmission among neighbours is decreasing. Privatization of research and the current direction of research priorities are key concerns.

### ***Health and Environment***

Because farmers are not yet fully or fairly compensated for all productive activities, including environmental stewardship, they are less willing and able to direct precious resources toward that end. A few women noted that society had adopted an arrogance toward the environment that fosters exploitation of natural resources for short-term gains. There were five major elements to this theme: family health effects; genetic contamination; soil, air and water pollution; food quality and safety; and climate change.

### **Family Health Effects**

*For my parents, money is an issue. My mom drives [an hour to work] everyday. My father is an insomniac. He doesn't think this is related to stress, but we all are convinced that it is.*

*I worry about my health and my husband's health. He had a heart attack.*

Farm women see the physical and mental well-being of their families under attack from a number of directions: chronic and acute stress, chemicals, and soil, water and air pollution. What farmers love best about country living no longer offsets the impacts of farming's downward economic spiral. Finances, especially the cost–price squeeze and debt load are the most frequently named stressors.<sup>13</sup> When farm families take non-farm work to mitigate their financial crisis, workloads and stress levels rise.

Women describe lives of too much work and too little play. There is less time and energy to be fully engaged with their families, let alone attend to the social, cultural and recreational activities that generate vitality and spirit within their communities. Farm women experience the negative impacts of financial instability: increasing isolation, loss of rural health, education, transportation and communication services and erosion of needed infrastructure. Women also lamented the loss of family and community heritage as farmers leave their rural communities.

Other physical and mental health concerns were related to the short- and long-term effects of stress arising from overwork, fatigue and worry about their farms, in their communities

and at their off-farm work. Making arrangements for farm succession also contributes to stress in farm women's lives. Long and complex farm transfers can stir up conflicts that are themselves stressful.<sup>14</sup> The succession process can require exiting and beginning farm families to work closely together for years before the transfer is completed. Farmers from different generations may have dissimilar and conflicting visions about the overall direction of the farm. They may also have different management and decision-making styles, which further contributes to painful and sometimes frightening conflicts. Treating non-farming siblings fairly is a significant worry for many women.

For the most part, women's language indicated that farms continue to be handed down to sons. This assumption, however, was challenged by younger female participants who were taking over the farm. Conducting a successful intergenerational transfer requires foresight, sophisticated communication and negotiating skills, and a high degree of technical knowledge about the legalities involved. Insufficient skill and knowledge can contribute to irreconcilable divisions within the family and thereby increase stress.

Women are also concerned about their own health, and that of their spouses, parents and children, especially with respect to chemical and pesticide use. They worry about the direct and indirect effects of living and working in environments characterized by long-term, low-level exposures to multiple chemicals.

### **Genetic Contamination**

*Some [neighbours] are causing us enormous problems. We don't know how to deal with their genetically modified crops that they're growing all around us and making us feel hemmed in and frustrated.*

*GMOs are a tremendous threat. If our crops are contaminated or polluted by it, we cannot sell our products as organic. We will lose everything.*

The use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), like canola and corn, was a key issue for women in all workshops. Many who grew genetically modified canola did so despite reservations about its long-term environmental and health safety. Many felt there was little choice if they wanted to achieve even a slight economic advantage over their neighbours. In contrast, for others, genetically modified canola is the best business decision. GMO production is sold to farmers through strong government policy and business promotion as *the* most efficient production system.<sup>15</sup>

Many doubted the breadth and depth with which questions and risks about genetically modified crops have been investigated, a position strengthened by the ease with which the genetic modification inserted into Monsanto's RoundUp Ready canola escaped. That escape has eliminated Canada as a supplier of organic canola oil throughout the world, leaving farmers frustrated and angry about genetic contamination of their land and crops, and with few readily accessible mechanisms to recover their losses.<sup>16</sup> Given the experience with canola, there are questions about the wisdom of continued research into and release of genetically modified crops.

Regardless, farm women are alarmed at the increasing degree of ownership and control that corporations are gaining over genetic material. Consequently, farmers' traditional seed-saving and seed-sharing rights are threatened. Moreover, higher seed prices and technology use agreements are driving up production costs.<sup>17</sup> While corporations are able to protect genetic modifications with patents, farmers have little recourse if their crops are contaminated by GMOs. Here women pointed to the *Monsanto v Schmeizer* case as an example of the situation that farmers will face more frequently in the future. Finally, the introduction of GMOs threatens the livelihoods of organic farmers, as genetic contamination is so rampant. For example, organic farmers have lost their international organic canola markets, and women fear a similar future should other genetically modified crops, like wheat, be introduced.

Women were also uneasy about whether genetically modified foods, in the long term, are safe for use by humans and animals. Genetically modified crops have been deemed "substantially equivalent" to their non-modified relatives and, therefore, do not need to be tested for human or animal health safety effects. Women noted that this theory is largely untested, and pointed to the precautionary principle as a more socially responsible approach.<sup>18</sup>

### **Soil, Air and Water Pollution**

*We spray before we seed, we seed, we spray again. We watch our crop grow but if there is a disease, we spray again. ... And of course, we spray before we harvest, we harvest and then we spray again.*

*Yes we spray, spray, spray. But we do it only when we feel we have to.*

*We have an organic farm, because [my husband] decided if he was going to learn how to farm, he didn't want to learn how to use pesticide and sprays. We were already really philosophically against it. My dad has been an organic farmer I think for about 15 [years] so it's part of my growing up, and my thinking process.*

Women's description of environmental concerns paralleled many of the issues raised in Chapter 2. Organic producers saw increased dependence on chemicals as negatively affecting the environment, while conventional producers saw chemicals as safe and useful inputs, provided they were used properly. However, women saw the industrialization of agriculture as leading to ever larger farms that operate more like factories than farms. This has contributed to farming practices that are often environmentally problematic.

To address emerging concerns about the impact of agriculture on the environment, many jurisdictions have developed or are developing requirements for farm environmental plans. For some farm women, environmental planning is a very good exercise. Others view it as onerous and unnecessary, because they are already environmentally cautious, and meet provincial standards. They believe, however, that they should be compensated both for the time required to do it, and for the social/environmental benefits being provided as a result of their work.

News stories about contamination of air and water by farm chemicals and by animal waste from large-scale hog and beef enterprises are becoming common. Women talked about the Walkerton water tragedy as an example of what might become an increasing occurrence. On the other hand, women farmers with large beef and hog producers stated that they must keep their herds healthy or they lose money. This depends on good management of animal waste, and also requires that all provincial standards are met.

Women are also concerned about their own health, and that of their spouses, parents and children, especially with respect to chemical and pesticide use. They worry about the direct and indirect effects of living and working in environments characterized by long-term, low-level exposures to multiple chemicals.

### **Food Quality and Safety**

*I am involved in food politics. We started a good food box out of our house. We purchase locally grown food. I have a garden for the first time in my life.... Food and agriculture are an essential and large part of my life.*

*[We] loved farming – wanted to make better land and [healthier] food. We started with low input sustainable agriculture in the early '80s to diminish the chance of pollution.*

Another element in the health and environment theme raised in every workshop was food quality and safety. Women were suspicious of chemical companies' claims that their products have no harmful effects on humans, animals, the soil or the wider ecology. They feared that since neither the long-term effects of chemical use, nor the potential interactions among chemicals are known, there could be negative health consequences for their families, their crops and their livestock in the longer term. However, there was divergence on whether governments should play a stronger role in food safety regulatory activities.

Notable differences emerged between large and small farmers, and between organic and conventional producers. Organic producers saw larger conventional farmers as more dependent on chemicals and fertilizers that allow them to manage time, soil fertility and crop quality with fewer people and larger, more costly machinery. These farmers use a variety of chemicals to enhance uniformity in size and time of harvest, which means that foods can be handled, stored, transported and processed more easily and therefore, more cheaply. Smaller farms, on the other hand, were more likely to vary the kinds and amounts of chemical and fertilizer used, depending on the farm's cash flow, weather conditions and expected returns. There was a desire to change farmers' "chemical attitude," a reference to the dependence of high-volume, industrial farms on fertilizers and chemicals, especially in zero-till systems that depend on chemicals to burn off unwanted or untimely plant growth.

Organic women farmers see their foods as being more nutritious and of higher quality than foods grown with chemicals and fertilizers.<sup>19</sup> They stated that consumers currently use cosmetic perfection as the best indicator of quality. Organic foods frequently have

imperfections that do not affect quality, but consumers incorrectly see a blemish or a range in size of fruit as indicators of poor quality. Some viewed conventionally produced foods as toxic, and stated that all food should be produced organically.

Overall, workshop participants want a Canadian domestic food policy that focusses on safe, healthy, high-quality food rather than on “cheap” food, and that recognizes farmers’ need to reduce onerous paperwork. Both conventional and organic farm women want more stringent government regulation to ensure food safety and quality of imported foods. They seek more certainty that food is produced safely and is inspected to ensure that it is free of chemical and biological contamination. Finally, women want a regulatory system that better responds to the needs of small farmers who produce and market locally.

### **Climate Change**

Farmers are experiencing the impacts of global climate change with increasingly variable and turbulent weather patterns, and their pervasive effects on production. Hence it is more difficult to make good production decisions and, consequently, farm income suffers. Women had a great deal to say about the new Canadian farm safety net, which does not adequately deal with consecutive years of climate-induced losses. Moreover, given the role that carbon dioxide plays in climate change, women questioned the wisdom of shifting the transportation of grain on the prairies from rail to road, since trucks use more fuel than trains, and are very hard on local roads.

### ***Farm Financial Crisis***

*We are working harder to stay at the same spot financially. Ten years ago we had the same income. [Now] we just have less time, because we are working harder.*

*Right from the beginning, ...we diversified and diversified and got larger and did all these things, but we just actually always held our net income to the same [level].*

*We are struggling with BSE; don’t know if there is enough income for us. There is also the issue of TB [tuberculosis] in our area.*

*We had a good harvest, good yields so we filled all of our bins. Then we discovered that the price is too low. It doesn’t cover your costs. So there the grain sits.*

*We went to organic farming, because we knew we either had to get better prices for our products or cut costs.*

Women saw diminishing financial returns as leading to a chronic lack of income, with ensuing depopulation, and erosion of the rural tax base which, in turn, leads to the collapse of the rural community — a downward spiral. In a very real sense, therefore, women see the farm financial crisis as the root cause of the difficulties they experience in their lives and in their communities.

Women approached the farm financial crisis from various perspectives: power and control, marketing, government policy, fairness, rural culture and lifestyle, values, succession and maintenance of the family farm, physical and mental health, corporatization, and health and environment. Five sub-themes surfaced in the workshops: cost–price squeeze, supplementing farm income, farm transfer and succession, capitalization and high debt load, and market challenges. Once again, women’s analysis confirmed and expanded our understanding of issues that were covered in past research reviewed in Chapter 2.

### **The Cost–Price Squeeze**

Across the country, the cost–price squeeze is *the* major financial concern for farm women. Commodity prices do not cover their production costs, let alone generate profit or a return on investment. Women attribute this situation to the failure of a free market system that is neither fair nor friendly to farmers. They compete as individuals for both input purchases and commodity sales against increasingly concentrated, vertically integrated corporations. Ever more frequently, farmers buy inputs from and sell their commodities to the same corporate entity. Women saw corporations as tying prices for inputs to commodity prices rather than to the cost of the raw materials needed to make them. Thus, farmers cannot and do not receive a fair share of the consumer dollar relative to other players in the food chain.

Women noted that supply-managed sectors, like dairy, eggs and poultry, do not experience the cost–price squeeze to anywhere near the same extent as do operators in other livestock or grain enterprises. The supply management model is structured so farmers recover a cost of production equal to that of the most efficient operators in the sector. However, there are two obstacles with this model. First, the cost of quota is prohibitive for many. Second, current trade agreements restrict opportunities to extend this production and marketing model to other sectors. Women see the cost of complying with those trade agreements as resting overwhelmingly, and unfairly, on farmers who have the least market power and political influence in the food chain. Some believe that the loss of various government supports and subsidies has unfairly disadvantaged Canadian farmers relative to those in the United States and the European Union, where subsidies and supports constitute a much higher proportion of farm income.

### **Supplementing Farm Income**

*I have a full-time job, shift work now.... And there’s one word that caused me to go and do that: security. Does it matter how much [money] I put into the [farm]vortex?*

*I looked for a full-time day job, because we had three years of disastrous weather.... I still market garden. I deliver to restaurants and health food stores in London. I do specialty produce.*

*To supplement our income, because we’re not in a supply-managed situation, ...[m]y husband has an off-farm job. It’s not enough money to raise my kids and pay our mortgage and keep us going.*



*He quit his job two years ago when I was five months pregnant with our fifth child. I thought if he's not coming home now, he'll never come home. Financially – not a really great idea.*

*He has a full-time job off the farm, so it's basically me who looks after things on a day-to-day basis.*

The farm financial crisis continues to force families to supplement farm income, either through off-farm employment or on-farm diversification. Official reports of farm family income include non-farm income, a practice that skews public perception of farmers' real economic situation. Moreover, it legitimizes the idea that farming is, and should be, a part-time endeavour, rather than a full-time job. Family farms eat up full-time employment income as well as personal investments and inheritances. In some cases, farming families must sell some of their land just to stay ahead.

Another option that farm families choose is to diversify; some are more successful than others. On the prairies, most women stated that their diversification was from grains and oilseeds into livestock, usually cattle. Given the BSE crisis, and Chronic Wasting Disease among elk producers, this has not been a successful strategy for many, including producers of other ruminants (sheep and bison, for example).

In Ontario, many participants were small direct marketers of organic or ecologically grown market fruits and vegetables, various specialty dairy products and livestock. One woman explained her family's unending pursuit of an adequate family income from the farm.

*I had to think of some way to market our farm products. Organic wasn't acceptable then, even though we were growing it that way. We had a van and we loaded it with different kinds of produce for home delivery. The girls were in car seats and they'd say: "Look Mom, full van, empty pockets." We'd come home: "Look Mom. Empty van, full pockets!" They realized that what we produced is what made the money. We did that until 1990, when the delivery got to be too much. We said [to our customers], "If we opened a farm market at our place, would you start coming there?" So, we opened a farm market at our farm.*

*Then we wanted the store to be open full time [throughout the year], so we had to think of ways to add in other things. We have 500 certified organic laying hens. We sell the eggs to OntaBio for the Organic Meadow label and we also sell them in our own market. We have 25 beef cattle, about 50 pigs, meat chickens and turkeys. Distributors from Toronto bring organic oranges and bananas, so we have a full line of organic products: Harmony Milk, Mapleton Cheese and lamb.*

*We've been certified by OCIA Organic Crop Improvement Association] and OCPP/Pro-Cert [a company]. This past year, we built a big garage shed and a workshop for [my husband], but he's most happy because we bought a combine. It's a really good, well-maintained combine — an organic combine for the 70 acres of soybeans. We have to grow all [organic] feed for these laying hens, cattle and pigs. He also did some custom organic combining, because then it's not contaminated with GMO or Roundup Ready.*

In some parts of the country, like Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, on-farm diversity had become too onerous, and is seen as less of a viable option. More land is turned over to monoculture. Despite their best intentions to the contrary, one participant's life story describes a pernicious shift to monoculture.

*One thing for sure — we said we would never be a one-crop farm. We had hogs and we had dairy cattle at that time. I grew strawberries and potatoes. Well, eventually the cattle were too big a job with all the other work, [so we let them go]. Then the potatoes got big, and there was no price for the hogs, so we had to let the hogs go. And then the strawberries were just nothing but a pain in the butt, because we worked all year and then come summer, when you should have a little bit of time off, we worked all summer picking strawberries for nothing. So I was the one that said: "Let's get out of strawberries." The last couple of years have been really, really bad. In 2003, it had been a really bad fall, so we ended up with a lot of our crop left in the ground. Then in 2004, we had all the crop [off] in great condition. [But] no sales — the warehouses are still filled.*

In all workshops, whether a family chooses to work off the farm to supplement the farm income, or to diversify its production and/or processing, time management was an issue. Farm families now fit farming into their off-farm work schedules rather than the other way around. The pace of life is hectic, governed by calendar and clock. Too little time and money leaves farm families struggling with too many jobs, increased fatigue, stress, mental and physical health problems, and family break-ups/ breakdowns. Women drew parallels between fast food and a fast life.

Communities pay the price as well. There are fewer people with less time and energy to participate in the volunteer activities that maintain vital communities. Personal time and self-care are sacrificed. Moreover, as businesses shrink or close their doors, local jobs disappear and those seeking work must travel ever greater distances, and in some cases leave their communities entirely in search of work. Generally, when men take seasonal work away from home, it is women who are left alone with children, off-farm work and farm responsibilities.

### **Farm Transfer/Succession**

*Our sons are... taking over the farm. A big concern is the huge expenses on machinery. Investing in land is O.K., but machinery?*

*There are six of us. Since I've come back to the farm there have been some changes. We are trying to rearrange things so that I as one person can replace six people.*

*But Dad, he always has to phone or remind us daily of the things that we didn't get done.*

Women linked farm transfer/succession intimately with the farm financial crisis and the long-term sustainability of the family farm. They are deeply concerned about their children's ability to make a living from farming given the current situation. Many doubt the wisdom of advising their children to take on the farm, questioning whether farming will sustain their families in the long term. Women also questioned how best to resolve the older generation's need to sell the farm for a fair price so they can retire comfortably, while still not sinking adult children with an enormous debt. Those who farm with siblings or adult children worried about the impact of a possible farm failure, which would affect more than just one family.

### **High Debt Load and Cost of Capitalization**

*We don't know whether to build and go a bit further into debt to get a bit bigger to compete or just stay where we are. We can manage with just the two of us and a hired boy to do the power washing [of the hog barn]. At some point if we were to get bigger, then we would need [extra help].*

*Everything is about money. And everything is about debt. That's what drives my life.*

*We had problems three years ago. We were going just fine and then the banks came along [and said] you've got too much debt, you can't keep farming.... They decided they wanted to try and foreclose on us, but somehow or other we got out of that situation, refinanced and we're still going.*

*AFSC [Alberta Financial Services Corporation] [had] another program saying that the farmers [affected by the drought] could come and apply.... We went and applied [and were told]: "No sorry, you don't qualify because your debt is too high."*

The high debt load is a major component of the farm financial crisis. The cost-price squeeze, poor prices, weather-related losses and trade embargoes force many farming families to re-finance their operations on a yearly basis. Those same conditions make it increasingly difficult for farmers to repay their operating loans in a timely manner. Farm loans are harder to access and lenders more willing to foreclose. Women noted that 20 years

ago, farmers had to be full-time farmers and could not have a non-farm job to qualify for a loan from the Farm Credit Corporation (FCC). Now, the FCC prefers that the family have some non-farm income. Regardless, beginning farmers have to take out large start-up loans that are impossible to service in the current market environment.

### **Market Structure**

*One of the big issues is corporate control, 90 percent of them U.S. based. They've really got the farmers on a string. They've also got the federal government on a string.*

*Don't ever speak against things like single desk marketing anywhere in Canada. Those are the farmers who are surviving and they're able to raise their kids and educate them.*

Farm women see the current free market system as effectively marginalizing and disadvantaging farming families relative to other players in the food chain. Food is now just another commodity bought, sold and traded in international markets increasingly dominated by multinational corporations. In this context, women affirmed that free trade benefits corporate interests to the detriment of farmers, as evidenced by the fact that despite a tripling in the value of farm exports since 1988, farmers have seen virtually no increase in their incomes. Very little, if any of the increase in consumer prices has been captured by farmers; it has all gone to other players in the food chain.

Small local direct marketers have difficulty in gaining access to shelf space in local stores. Large distributors squeeze local product off the shelf by undercutting prices or by threatening to discontinue supplying a retailer who shelves local product. Even organic producers are losing their competitive edge to corporate interests. As this organic farmer stated:

*But now President's Choice [organic] products are really undercutting everything and everyone, and keeping everybody out of the distribution system. It's hard to get into the stores.... We got a call from President's Choice [asking] if we wanted to do a private label ice cream for them. Said no thank you. We're not that desperate yet.<sup>20</sup>*

The geographic separation of production and processing is widening. Live cattle and hogs are shipped to processors across the U.S. border. The stability of those markets is suspect, given market price volatility and trade actions. When the doors on those markets slam shut, as is the case with BSE in the beef industry, farm families lose access to both market and processing.<sup>21</sup> Combined with the loss of access to local abattoirs arising from the industry's embrace of a continental beef market, farmers are less able to either market or process livestock for local or domestic consumption.

Thus, women view the farm financial crisis as largely driven by inequitable and corporate-led market structures. Women argued that this crisis is a result of government policy and its impact is multi-dimensional. Farm families are forced to seek other

sources of income to supplement their livelihoods. This adds to their workload and stress. Moreover, succession plans for family farms are uncertain, as retiring farmers need to “cash in” the retirement equity they have invested in their farms, while at the same time not burying their sons and daughters in debt. Given low prices and high input costs, the long-term survival of the family farm is in question. Consequently, rural communities are doubly disadvantaged. They lose people, businesses and services through depopulation, and there are fewer people available to do the critical volunteer activities that keep communities vibrant.

### ***Corporatization***

Corporatization<sup>22</sup> has profoundly affected the lives of farm women and their families, changing their relationship with each other, their neighbours and their land. Those impacts are pervasive as is clearly demonstrated in the previous discussion by women’s frequent allusion to the many areas of their lives that have been touched by corporatization.

In assessing changes in their lives, women named a number of realities they see as resulting from government policies influenced by corporate rather than citizen interests. They equate the industrialization of agriculture with corporatization. In seeking efficiencies of scale, the policy environment pushes for fewer, larger farms. The resulting cascade of changes degrades the quality of life for the farm families and communities that remain. Although most of these changes have been mentioned earlier in this report, it is important to note that women linked the issues raised below with corporatization:

- depopulation resulting in a degraded quality of life;
- consolidation in grain handling and the resulting impacts on rural infrastructure;
- a shift from co-operation to competition, as farmers strive to gain competitive advantage over their neighbours;
- a shift from citizenship to consumerism;
- the loss of mentoring and sharing of local knowledge about land and seed; and
- a focus on a cheap food policy rather than on nutritious and/or organic food.

The mass media, which are highly corporatized, contribute to these perceptions. They also contribute to changed expectations about quality of life — again promoting consumerism over citizenship and contributing to the rural–urban divide.

- Sound-bite<sup>23</sup> journalism is a factor in the skewed perception of farming.
- Corporate ad campaigns portray farming as a highly technical and mechanically modern industrial activity. Farmers drive clean, shiny new farm machinery, and farm buildings are new and modern. The message is “to be successful, you should look like this. If you don’t, you are not successful.” This kind of campaign also contributes to class divisions among farmers, pitting smaller against larger operators.
- Government advice promotes the need for farmers to take advantage of new production and marketing opportunities and niches, which contributes to a public

image of farmers as being inefficient, ineffective, unskilled, uneducated people who perform menial low-quality physical work for low wages and few or no benefits, because they can do nothing else.

Women see privatization and commodification as going hand in hand with corporatization.

- Government policy has commodified seed, moving ownership, and thus control, from public to private interests. This benefits agribusiness corporations.
- Genetically modified seeds are the latest manifestation of that privatization, and their use is supported by government policy and research funding. The results are detrimental to farmers.
- Certified organic land that is contaminated by genetically modified crops loses its certification, and those producers lose their livelihoods through no choice or fault of their own. The corporate response has been to remove the contaminating plants.<sup>24</sup>
- Women are deeply concerned about the long-term health and environmental effects of the widespread use of GMOs.

Family health is negatively affected by industrialization and corporatization. The current model seems to expect farms to operate like corporations and farm families like corporate directors. Unlike most corporations however, farmers are price takers on both ends of the system, and cannot recover extra costs by increasing sales prices. Many farm families see themselves as people who are deeply connected to their land and communities and who want to earn a living doing what they love and do well. They just want to provide good food and healthy environments in exchange for a family income comparable to the Canadian national average. Instead, they experience stress, fatigue, worry and overwork. They live and work in environments where chemicals are used on a regular basis, the long-term effects and interactions of which are largely unstudied.

The farm financial crisis is where the influences of corporatization on farm families converge.

- Farmers live in a constant cost–price squeeze. To increase family income, some diversify and some expand. Both strategies increase debt load. Still others take off-farm employment.
- All strategies affect personal quality of life with increased stress, mental and physical health difficulties, too many jobs, too little time and greater distances to necessary services.
- Communities suffer. Fewer volunteers means more work for those remaining, and there is the loss of schools, medical services, and local businesses, and fewer local jobs.

- Industrial agriculture depends on larger, highly capitalized farm units. This makes intergenerational transfers challenging, both financially and emotionally.

### **Corporate Concentration and Vertical Integration**

Women's analysis and daily realities provided evidence that multinational corporations are acquiring an inequitable share of power in national and international policy making, as well as in the food production and marketing chain. Corporations are consolidating their control and influence on all aspects of food production, processing and distribution through mergers and vertical integration. Thus, women pointed to two key elements of corporatization that have had a devastating impact on their daily lives: corporate concentration and vertical integration, and corporate influence on public policy making.

Farm women noted that individual family farmers with no collective market presence have little impact against the few, very large corporations from which they can buy inputs and sell product. Fewer corporations and less competition means corporate entities are price setters in virtually all links in the food chain, which creates the cost-price squeeze.

Vertical integration and concentration has enabled large food processors to profit from narrow margins, because they can buy, process and sell huge volumes. Contract farming, which women called "modern day serfdom," is on the rise especially in pork production and potatoes. Farmers contract with corporate entities to grow out animals according to prescribed directions. It is they, not the corporations, who bear the business risk and impact of losses due to disease and price crashes. Producing food in this manner ensures "cheap" food for consumers and good returns for the processors and retailers, but unfairly reduces the farmer's share of the consumer dollar relative to that of other players in the food chain. While farmers' realized net incomes are down, food corporations continue to generate huge profits.

### **Corporate Influence on Public Policy Making**

Women expressed deep concern about the apparent hand-in-glove fit between governments and multinational corporations. As governments withdraw from the public sphere, corporations step in, but focus more on generating profit than providing for the public good.

This is evidenced by, among other things, the privatization of the seed industry and the protection of corporate research and development by intellectual property rights. Farm women do not see themselves or farmers in general, as having the same access to or influence on policy as do corporate interests with professional lobbyists constantly monitoring the government's policy pulse. Money buys access and influence, and farmers have neither. Even the farm organizations — the commodity groups and sector associations — from whom the government takes direction on behalf of farmers are dominated by industrial rather than farmer interests. The result is a policy environment that is detrimental to family farmers.

This chapter explored the impact of agricultural restructuring on farm families. Farm women acknowledged the farm financial crises as the core issue most affecting their lives and further identified a fifth theme, government policy directions, as the major cause of that crisis.



#### 4. FARM WOMEN ANALYZE CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL POLICY

This chapter begins with a detailed exploration of the eight major elements of government policy directions that have so profoundly affected farm women's realities. We then explain the new APF developed by the federal government, and end with farm women's analysis of that policy and the process leading to its development.

The pervasive influence of government policy on farm women's lives is reflected in the following life story.

*I've always had this vision of the family farm as business, science and lifestyle. I grew up on a potato farm so I know all the stress incorporated with that ...*

*We went for mixed farming but when he [my husband] was sick, we went out of the cattle and...into dry beans. Now we're moving toward retirement. ... We're one of two farmers in New Brunswick that grow [dry beans]. ... What I am frustrated with in business right now is that we tried to add marketing, and we're getting less [money] .... And on top of that the APF comes along and I just see that as five strategies and more cost to us. I'm looking at the market changing, some losing dollars and I've got a great big question mark here. How are we going to handle the whole business part?*

*We have three children and they're married. There are six grandchildren, with two living next door to me. We have one in a wheel chair and she's had [three operations], so we have had around-the-clock health care. So health care has been a big component for 10 years, and I work it in among this other stuff. It gets bigger and heavier.... I run around to hospital meetings trying to keep the hospitals from closing. I baby-sit one of the little boys from the community as there is no child care in the community. His mother didn't have a place to send him when he was a baby, and I was home with this one so I took on the other child. Now he has a little sister so I have three. Monday and Wednesdays I market outside the farm. On Thursday [and Friday] I go to the Farm Market.... I probably have one or two of these children on Saturday and Sunday, so there is really not an empty day.*

*[My husband] works full time, farms nights and weekends full time.... He does the planting.... And then we've got these eerie scientists running around creating more problems than we've ever had before.... Anyways, both of us kind of tear our hair out....*

*Then there is our lifestyle.... We [focus on] what is important in our lives; that's how we keep our sanity. It's these three children and their spouses.*

*They have two little boys [and live] in Ontario. We [see] them every four months...because their relationship is important to us. The two little ones next door practically live with us, and [there are] two more in Fredericton...*

*We live in a hundred year-old farm house...that you see is falling down.... [If you go to] the New Brunswick tourism front page on the Internet, you might see a picture there of a farm. It's ours and we were truly kind of surprised with that. We live in a beautiful scenic area and I can step out of my door and breathe in the air to keep my sanity. Church and our faith in God keeps us strong.*

*We do not see ourselves farming in the future. I'm not going to be farming. Health care is probably one of our biggest concerns. We'll probably have to move to a trailer and our children will have to move into our house, because of the health care situation.*

### **Government Policy Directions**

Women identified the cheap food policy, industrialization, research priorities, free trade and globalization, weak safety nets, subsidies, the lack of meaningful public involvement and food sovereignty as the eight major elements of this theme (Figure 5). An explanation of each of these elements follows.

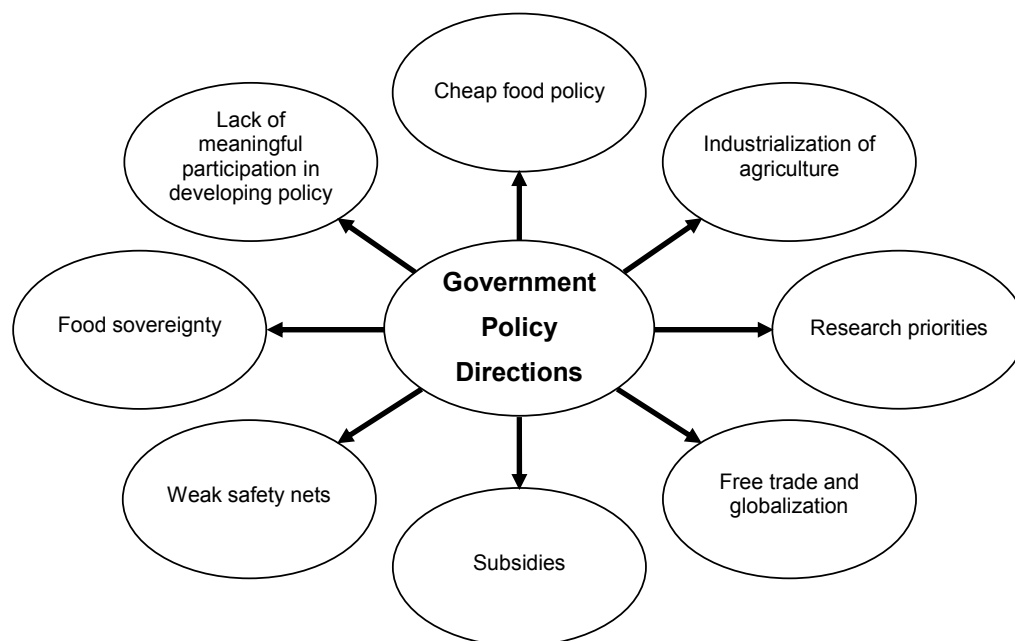
#### ***Cheap Food Policy***

*It seems to be the farmer's responsibility to provide cheap food for the population.*

Women noted that Canadian culture no longer appropriately values food production. In support of that argument, women raised reservations about two key issues: Canada's decades-old "cheap food" policy, and consumer expectations that they should spend a much lower percentage of income on food than in most other locations in the world.

The cheap food policy is a key obstacle to garnering a fair price for agricultural products and thus contributes to the decline of smaller farming operations and the subsequent erosion of rural communities. Women connect the cheap food policy directly to industrial agriculture in a cause and effect relationship that jeopardizes food quality and food safety, and facilitates a shift from responsible citizenship to careless consumerism. In distancing production from consumption, the social links between food producers, production, the preparation and consumption of food, the environment and human health are weakened and broken. The result is dissatisfaction, demoralization and apathy as people are unhooked from each other and their communities. The consequences are negative and have long-term social, economic, environmental and health implications for farm communities.

**Figure 5: Government Policy Directions that Have Changed Farm Women's Lived Realities**



### ***Industrialization of Agriculture***

*[The rural municipal] council...is convinced that the pig factory is the best thing for the community. This is a group of people who...will not...consider another way. This woman lives just downwind from the proposed site. It did not take her long to realize that we should be friends.*

Women note that for decades, federal and provincial agricultural policies have supported, promoted and enhanced agricultural policies and programs that actively endorse industrialization. They see this policy direction as a result of a bureaucratic mindset that lacks foresight, because it offers greater benefit to corporations than to farmers. Since agricultural industrialization depends on fewer, larger enterprises producing large volumes for export, rural communities are increasingly at risk. Moreover, it relies largely on the free flow of capital around the world.

To garner profit in a production system characterized by narrow profit margins, farmers have little choice but to increase the volume of their production. The philosophy of bigger is better farming and mega-farming, depends heavily on technology and monoculture that leads to the loss of biological diversity. Overproduction<sup>25</sup> depresses commodity prices and, thus, farm incomes. However, at the same time, women were disturbed by how they could experience the effects of overproduction while millions of people around the world go hungry. The pressure to get even larger brings with it more debt, until at some point, farmers must seek off-farm employment just to make ends

meet. Moreover, as regulatory activities are off-loaded to farmers, both the time and money needed for compliance increases, a job which usually falls to farm women as they are primarily responsible for the paperwork associated with farm management.

### **Research Priorities**

*We're having problems getting the seed, because seed research has been dropped.*

*We are heritage seed growers, and there is absolutely no compensation [for] saving our seed. At some point, I guess somebody else will take the seed and sell it [back] to us.*

Women see the movement from government-funded and publicly owned research to private or private–public partnerships as contributing to significant negative changes in their lives, especially regarding agro-biotechnology and GMOs. Seeds (and genetic diversity) have been a public good for millennia, but corporations now appropriate and control those resources through patenting.<sup>26</sup> Farmers are tied to the corporation through technology use agreements, and must purchase key inputs from that same corporation.<sup>27</sup> As a result, farmers lose their traditional rights to save, re-use and exchange seed.

As stated earlier, intellectual property rights protect research done by these companies from the usual peer review processes, and thus from public scrutiny. The majority of the women are concerned about the lack of research concerning the human, animal and environmental safety of genetically modified crops. Moreover, they doubt the quality and validity of research that has already been conducted. Consequently, women questioned the wisdom of continued research into and release of genetically modified crops.

### **Free Trade and Globalization**

*The global trade agreements that lost us the farm, ... [have] gotten him into a job that he really doesn't like, because it keeps him away from home for one or two weeks at a time.*

*I think we need a fair trade system to keep our land arable and farms going.*

Women see Canadian agricultural policy as increasingly focussed on free trade and production for export rather than on stable farm income, farm families and vibrant rural communities. Some referred to the intimacy of corporate–government relations as collusion. As proof, women pointed to the federal government's continued commitment to free trade, despite incontrovertible proof that free trade has been unfair to farmers.<sup>28</sup>

Most women stressed that free trade is killing farmers, because net farm income has fallen steadily. In conjunction with a cheap food policy, free trade feeds a persistent pursuit for the lowest possible cost of production. Canadian farming families must compete with producers in other countries where government supports are higher and standards of living lower.

Most women are dismayed that the current government policy focus on free trade and globalization threatens Canada's most farmer-friendly production and marketing structures, orderly marketing and supply management. For example, the Government of Canada guarantees advance payments made to farmers by the CWB.<sup>29</sup> However, this orderly marketing structure is under attack. Here, women referred again to the U.S. initiated challenge of the CWB through the WTO as a prime example. The legal costs of these battles are born almost entirely by farmers.<sup>30</sup>

Free trade has opened borders to more than just trade: disease, pests and trade actions from any number of trading partners contribute to volatility. While international trade rules are intended to create an environment for international compliance and co-operation, and bind participating countries to play by the rules, women see little evidence of this happening. A single case of BSE in Canada in May 2003 closed the U.S. and other borders to live cattle.<sup>31</sup> With inadequate remuneration plans to address trade-related injury, farmers bear a disproportionate share of those losses.

### ***Weak Safety Nets***

*We were supposed to get...\$7 an acre.... We spent \$10,000 and we got two back.*

*One of the big things we are doing right now is...trying to meet with government people...to put in place a program...to cut back [potato] acreage. But that is a big struggle, I tell you.*

Women said a great deal about the insufficiency of current farm safety net programs. Rather than targeting a predetermined socially and environmentally appropriate "ideal" farm size, safety nets are based solely on economics, and thus direct benefits flow preferentially to the largest enterprises. In favouring ever-larger enterprises, the programs pay little attention to social, cultural and environmental costs, or to their impact on communities, services and infrastructure. Moreover, as previously noted, safety nets do not respond to trade-related income losses like those resulting from the BSE crisis. Women pointed to the fact that the ad hoc emergency funding provided by the government in that case went to industrial feedlots rather than to the farmers who supply those feedlots with stock.

While most women stated their dismay with governments' reduction in cost-sharing safety net programs, a few women took an opposing view, especially in Ontario and Alberta. Their approach was that farmers should forget about government programs and focus on getting a fair price for their product. Their rationale was that if farmers could sell at their chosen price in a completely open market, then they could choose to sell at the price that generated profit for their farms. Most, however, disagreed that completely open markets would enable them to earn an adequate income. All agreed that fair prices would go a long way to solving their income crisis.

Furthermore, safety net programs are constantly redesigned, undergoing major changes and redirection every two or three years. The frequency with which farmers — usually

farm women — must figure out new rules and complete complex paperwork is frustrating, expensive, time consuming and inefficient.

### ***Subsidies***

*I'm really feeling the pressure from the U.S., because when I try to sell my produce [to local] stores, they say: "Why should I buy it from you when I can buy it cheaper from California?"*

Women noted that there is a common perception among Canadians that farmers are heavily subsidized. However, relative to other players in the agriculture and food chain, Canadian farmers receive less public support and fewer subsidies. Although Canadian subsidies have typically been lower than the export subsidies provided to farmers in the United States and the European Union, even those subsidies have been slashed under recent trade agreements. Western producers have seen grain transportation costs rise substantially since the loss of the Crow Benefit.<sup>32</sup>

### **Lack of Meaningful Involvement in Developing Policy and Regulatory Environments**

*I have lived farm policy for a lot of my life. It's a big thing. Farm organizations, farm meetings, awareness of what's going on outside of my 100 acres is important to me.*

*Now that we've got the farm sort of settled...I can get back into farm policy. ...I'm [not] going to have a whole lot of time to be away from the farm, but it's something that I'm very much interested in.*

Women argued that farmers' lack of meaningful involvement in developing policy and regulations is another key component of government policy direction that has affected their lives. Consequently, they noted an increasing powerlessness and loss of control over many aspects of their lives. Many of the decisions affecting their farms are not and cannot be made on their farms. Legitimate farming choices are limited by policies, regulations and international agreements about which they had little say, and over which they have little influence.

While most women felt that governments needed to be more involved in appropriate regulatory activities; others felt that outdated regulations or over-regulation inhibited them, especially with regard to local sales. Women's experience with existing regulatory norms — whether of supply management, pricing or pasteurization of goat or cow's milk — indicate that, at all levels, the regulatory system seems unfairly biased toward very large high-volume, high-speed producers and processors. Here the example of small abattoirs is noteworthy. These are more able to preserve and track the identity of a particular animal, which is difficult in larger plants that batch animals from a variety of sources. Small local abattoirs are required to implement expensive handling and tracking mechanisms similar to those used in the very largest slaughterhouses. The volumes these small plants process cannot support the costs involved, and they are closing down. Farm women who lost their local abattoirs were finding it impossible to continue to do business with discerning customers who want meat from identity-preserved carcasses. Women see

vast differences between large and small abattoirs and believe that their regulatory requirements should be different.

Farmers also bear more of the cost of complying with government regulations, and have no mechanism for input into the development of those regulations. Most inspection and regulatory services formerly provided free of charge or for very nominal fees are now provided on a cost-recovery basis, another cost that farmers must absorb.

Women see wider and deeper alienation between government policy makers and farming communities. Many government officials are male, urban and unaware of the reality of life on family farms and in rural communities. The policies that are developed, therefore, address only the issues they can comprehend. At times, these policy decisions are informed by representatives of farm organizations, commodity groups and industry that are largely dominated by males. Except for the NFU, none of the general farm organizations or commodity groups has structures or mechanisms to solicit farm women's input on farm and agricultural policy. Thus, women's interests are not adequately represented at policy consultations.

### ***Food Sovereignty***

*We grow spelt as a cash crop, mill our flour at home and sell it to the local businesses. It's a good way to talk to people about farming.*

*Because my customers [are] restoring native plant populations for this area, they require that genetic material. So I collect the seed, clean it, treat it and grow it in the greenhouses.*

*I think that consumers need education about why it's a good thing to eat locally – whether you eat organic or whatever...why you have to make good choices.*

Farm women are appalled at the lack of government policy that assures domestic food security and food sovereignty.<sup>33</sup> Food sovereignty is an approach to food production, distribution and consumption in which farmers provide healthy food that is grown in ways that sustain the earth and its inhabitants over the long haul. Significant components of this policy direction are local production for local consumption and supply management.

Government agricultural policy focusses instead on producing for export and, thus, is diametrically opposed to food sovereignty. Some women argued that many foods now imported can and should be produced domestically. If this were done using a food sovereignty approach, there would be greater focus on smaller production units, closer links between producers and consumers, and reduced scale of processing and distribution. Tracking for food safety purposes would be simplified in smaller, more local scales of operation.

In summary, women note that government policies contribute directly to industrialization of agricultural production. This focus excludes small producers and enhances the

movement away from food sovereignty. Industrial farming supports a cheap food policy and high corporate profits. The real costs of large-scale enterprises are largely unpriced: they have not been identified, quantified or responded to in current government policy.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, those costs have had a broad impact on rural communities; they are the realities that farm women live with on a daily basis, and name as important in their lives. Farm women's perspectives offer a unique point of view to inform future government policy regarding food sovereignty. Are these perspectives reflected in the agriculture policy of the Government of Canada?

### **The APF Consultation Process**

To integrate Canadian agriculture into the global marketplace more effectively, the provincial and federal governments in the 1990s sought to define a new agricultural policy for the 21st century. As stated in the introduction to the APF Consultations (AAFC 2002b), the APF was conceived as “an action plan to develop an architecture for agricultural policy to contribute to the sector's growth and profitability....” The national APF that was announced in June 2001 has subsequently been signed by all provinces and territories. Information about the five pillars of the APF is summarized in Appendix D.

The federal government conducted two phases of consultations on the APF (Figure 6). Phase One consisted of two waves. Wave One was conducted between March 27 and April 20, 2002 and Wave Two during June 2002. In Phase Two, there were consultations on two specialized topics; farm animal welfare was addressed in September 2002 and business risk management in December 2002.

Tables 4 and 5 show the distribution of participants and observers in the Wave One consultations. This wave collected input from participants on the overall direction and goals of the APF. There were 766 participants and 320 observers present in a total of 45 sessions. Producers accounted for more than half of the participants while government representatives accounted for the majority of observers.

In Wave Two consultations, 11 consultations were held between June 10 and 19. One meeting was held in each province, except for Ontario, where there were two meetings. Table 6 shows the distribution of participants in Wave Two consultations. There were 651 participants, including 381 producers, 66 processors and 57 academics. Eighty-four participants were “other.”



**Table 4: Distribution of Participants in Phase One, Wave One Consultation on the APF**

Sector	Participants	% Total Participants
Producers	475	62.0
Processors	74	9.7
Distributor	11	1.4
Retailer	9	1.2
Consumer	3	0.4
Academic	32	4.2
ENGO*	25	3.3
Other	137	17.9
Total	766	100

Note: \* Environmental non-governmental organization.

Source: AAFC (2002b).

**Table 5: Distribution of Observers in Phase One, Wave One Consultations on the APF**

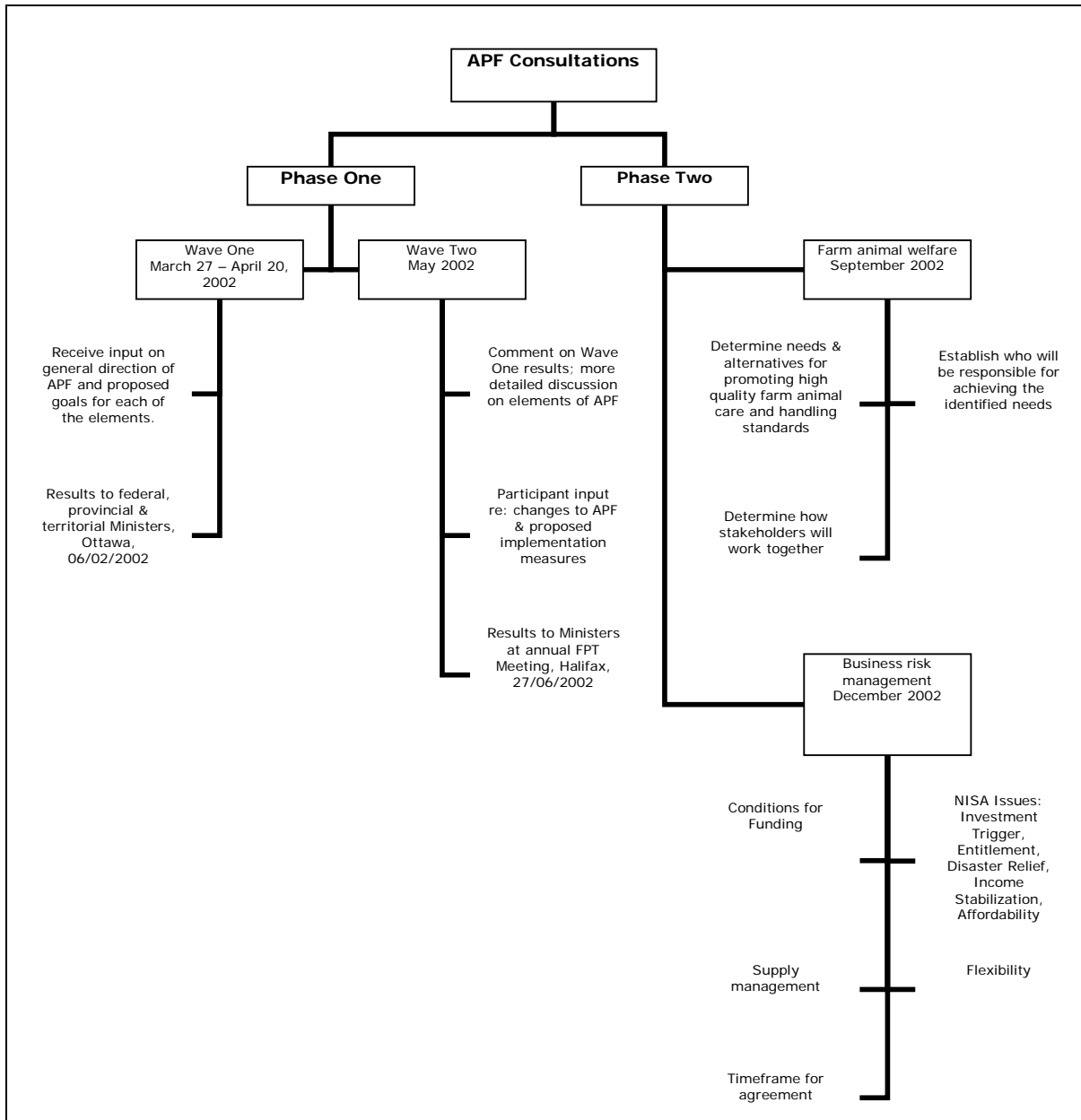
Sector	Participants	% Total Participants
Federal	128	40.0
Provincial	135	42.2
Portfolio	55	17.2
Other	2	0.6
Total	320	

Source: AAFC (2002b).

**Table 6: Distribution of Participants in Phase One, Wave Two Consultations on the APF**

Sector	Participants	% Total Participants
Producers	386	59.3
Processors	66	10.1
Distributors	7	1.1
Retailers	6	0.9
Trade	9	1.4
Consumers	2	0.3
Academics	57	8.8
Biotech	18	2.8
Environment	16	2.5
Others	84	12.9
Total	651	100.0

Source: AAFC (2002b).

**Figure 6: Structure and Purpose of Public Consultations for APF**

Note:

Content from information gathered from APF Web site <[www.agr.gc.ca](http://www.agr.gc.ca)>.

In Phase Two consultations, AAFC sought input through industry roundtables on two specific issues: farm animal welfare (September 23-24, 2002) and business risk management (December 13, 2002). In the animal welfare workshop, organizers used a series of questions to draw out information that would ensure that the objectives of the workshop were met. Those objectives were to:

- determine the needs and alternatives for promoting high-quality farm animal care and handling standards;

- establish who will be responsible for achieving the identified needs; and
- determine how the stakeholders will work together to that end.

In the consultation on business risk management, 24 agricultural leaders met with the Honourable Lyle Vanclief, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to discuss issues related to conditions for funding, Net Income Stabilization Account (NISA) issues (investment trigger, entitlement, disaster relief, income stabilization and affordability), supply management, flexibility and the time frame for agreement (AAFC 2002a).

Leaders in the agricultural sector raised many points of concern, even disagreement, about the proposed business risk management framework. According to the AAFC Final Report (2002a), leaders “expressed concern with trying to meet [the] deadline, indicating that substantial work is still required in order to reach agreement. Some suggested extending current programs for an additional year while discussions continue on developing credible programs that meet the needs of producers.”

Interestingly, the final report fails to mention that 51 representatives of the Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA) “... left the meeting after the morning plenary session, saying that they had already stated their views on the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) and were disappointed that many of those views had not been adequately reflected in the Framework. The Quebec government observers left the meeting at the same time” (AAFC 2002b). Attendance figures do not include the Quebec delegation.

Indeed, the two major national farm organizations ultimately rejected the APF. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) identified three problems with the new APF: an unsatisfactory design process, a flawed “new NISA” and a questionable implementation process (CFA, 2003). The NFU argued that the APF consultations attempted to manufacture farmer consent and questioned whether any policy that does not address the issue of increased corporate market power could improve circumstances for farm families.

### **Gender and the Making of Agricultural and Rural Policy**

Consultations on the new APF also appear to have ignored another significant part of the farm population — farm women. This section addresses two questions: Did women participate in the consultations leading up to the APF and if so, what issues did they bring to the table?

One fairly easy and basic measure of accountability toward realizing Canada’s commitment to gender equality in policy making is the collection of gender-segregated statistics in every arena where policy development and decision making occur. This, however, did not happen during the APF consultation process.

Finding no gender-segregated statistics in on-line meeting reports, the researchers sent an e-mail query to AAFC about their availability. The contact reported that the Department “didn’t track gender, nor do we have suffixes (e.g. Mr./ Mrs/ )” by which gender might be inferred (Chartier 2003). Understandably, individual participants may

have chosen not to use a title (Ms., Mr., Mrs.), but it would require little effort for organizers to count and record the number of women in attendance, and their affiliation.

To determine the extent to which women and their issues have been considered and addressed within the APF consultation process, the researchers conducted a keyword search of APF-related documents available on the Internet. The results of that search are summarized in Table 7. Aside from 12 references to two women ministers of agriculture, there were no hits for the keywords beginning with “wom.” Nor were there any references to gender, youth or young.

**Table 7: Results of Keyword Search in APF Consultation Documents**

	<b>5 Columns</b>	<b>19 Speeches</b>	<b>3 Media Releases</b>	<b>24 APF Documents</b>	<b>Total # of Hits</b>
Farmer	238	2	35	113	388
Farm	366	3	13	113	495
Producer	377	6	41	91	516
Trade	84	2	10	105	201
Globa*.*	38	0	0	33	71
Enviro*.*	277	4	8	148	437
Business	165	3	10	67	245
Risk	265	0	26	104	395
Market	215	25	5	106	351
Rural	12	36	0	28	76
Community	12	6	1	15	34

The government, however, is not alone in its exclusion of women’s voices and concerns regarding agricultural policy development. Researchers also conducted a search for the same keywords in articles about the APF consultation process in the weekly prairie farm newspaper, *The Western Producer* (Table 8). Again, there were no references to women or gender. Males were quoted or referred to more than five times as frequently as were women.

Not surprisingly, a mere 6.7 percent of the farm women who participated in this research project attended an APF consultation (Table 9). The lack of women’s voice in the development of the APF is a serious omission. Clearly, the consultation process to inform the APF failed to take account of the government’s own commitment to a gender lens outlined in the 1995 Federal Plan for Gender Equality.

The lack of women’s participation in the APF consultation process, similar to their absence from decision making in other aspects of rural policy development, inevitably means that the subsequent policies do not address their specific concerns, needs and interests. This research points out that women were largely absent at all stages of the public consultation process informing the APF.

**Table 8: Results of Keyword Search of Articles Relating to the APF Consultation Process in *The Western Producer***

Keyword	# of Hits
Farm	330
Producer	65
Family	2
Wom*.*	0
Gender	0
Youth	0
Young	1
Trade	68
Globalization	0
Environment	28
Business	40
Risk	45
Market	10
Rural	13
Community	11

**Table 9: Women Workshop Participants Who Attended APF Consultations**

Workshop Participants	Number	Percent
Informed	11	10.5
Invitees	9	8.6
Attendees	7	6.7

### **Farm Women Analyze the APF**

Chapters 3 and 4 of this report documented the major issues in Canadian agriculture as identified by farm women from across Canada. Using these issues as a foundation, farm women analyzed the degree to which the proposed APF addresses their issues. This involved discussing the following questions.

- What is good, bad or missing from the APF?
- Is the APF different from past agricultural policies? If so how?
- What will this mean for farm families?
- What processes and mechanisms are needed to increase women's participation in policy development, and how can their interests best be addressed?

*Under every category, the problem seems to be that farmers don't have enough education, farmers can't manage their own farms, we don't understand how [the world] works, we're not integrated into the market. ...Every solution...was about how it's our fault and that...we were thinking "inside the box!"*

On one hand, farm women saw the titles of the APF pillars as relatively appropriate; their problem was with the content. Many favoured the concept of branding Canada, especially if it includes country of origin labelling. Some were keen on the APF's greater attention to environmental issues, as well as potentially improved funding for all-encompassing safety nets. Women were pleased that programs would be evaluated with greater transparency. They also affirmed the importance of improved animal tracking and increased funding for research, as long as it directly benefits farmers. Several women were pleased at the five-year planning component, the addition of the food safety/food quality pillar, and the development of a system to measure whether government programs achieve the results desired.

On the other hand, women did not see the APF as different from previous agricultural policies. In fact, they argued that it is fundamentally flawed in the following ways.

1. **The APF does not address the root cause of the farm income crisis — the cost-price squeeze.** By not addressing family-farm-friendly marketing options, the APF has done nothing to improve farmers' bottom lines; it perpetuates and deepens the farm financial crisis. With no solutions to market failures, increased international competition and the cost-price squeeze, women see lower commodity prices, less net income and more debt and bankruptcy in their futures. The proposed business risk management is expensive and weak. It lacks mechanisms to deal with trade-related injuries and favours larger producers. Finally, women see the bureaucracy administering the programs as top heavy, with any new money going first to government staff and researchers before it comes to farmers.
2. **The APF does not address farmer-friendly production and marketing structures, and does not adequately address production for domestic consumption.** As was the case with past policies, the APF is an international trade policy rather than an agricultural policy. As such, it promotes and enhances globalization, free trade, corporatization and corporate control in the food system. While some saw greater possibility for entrepreneurship and access to new international specialty markets, most women saw little that would benefit farmers in the long term. Some stated that the APF could take us exactly the way of the fishing industry — toward social, economic and resource collapse. The APF's focus on agricultural industrialization favours continued development of ever-larger operations without recognizing the associated inefficiencies and costs. This approach will continue to benefit large food corporations and give them more power to better influence future government policy.
3. **The APF does not provide adequate farm safety nets.** Under the APF, the government has changed its safety net policy direction from insurance and disaster relief to risk management, and has withdrawn from cost sharing in provincial crop insurance plans.<sup>35</sup> As well, compensation will be based on farmers' initial investment rather than their actual losses as it has been in the past. Farmers have one chance to buy their way into the new program, which is a concern for many. If farmers do

not have a lump sum of \$50,000 or more to invest, they will be unable to recover production costs. Assembling a lump sum cash investment of that size will also be an immense obstacle to beginning farmers. The government expects that most farmers will use their NISA funds to buy into the Canadian Agriculture Income Stabilization Program (CAISP). However, many farmers, especially smaller family operations, may not have a NISA and, thus, the cost of participating in the new program is beyond them.<sup>36</sup> Finally, women noted that because CAISP operates on a five-year Olympic average, it will work well for farmers only if they experience insurable crop failures in one of six years.<sup>37</sup> Each consecutive claim reduces the payout for which they would qualify. The reality of this situation is clear; women pointed to their experience of having consecutive years of low prices and weather-related losses like drought or excess rain.

4. **The APF takes a far too narrow approach to environmental and food safety/quality issues.**<sup>38</sup> Women were concerned that the APF does not explicitly address or deal with the role of agriculture in global warming, and found the lack of an integrated approach to global warming problematic. They said that the APF tries to solve environmental problems primarily through the agricultural portfolio, which offloads the costs of environmental stewardship onto farmers. Women questioned why the APF was not more similar to policies developed by the European Union, where farmers are compensated for their environmental work through environmental budgets. These are not considered agricultural subsidies and are therefore not covered by international trade agreements. The APF will increase responsibility for farm-level monitoring. Women see much heavier workloads ahead, because of the paperwork and recordkeeping needed to comply with new rules and programs. With no real ability to recover those additional costs, the cost-price squeeze will tighten and further strangle farm operations.

Many women are troubled by the primary focus on conventional farming as opposed to more research, promotion and segregated marketing for organic farming. The APF continues to favour private over public research and disclosure, especially in the biotech sector. Missing from the APF are mechanisms to analyze critically new technologies and determine how benefits and risks are distributed. Nor are there means to determine the long-term food safety and environmental effects of GMOs. There is no stated intention in the APF to label GMOs.

5. **The APF does not take a holistic view of rural communities or food production and consumption, and separates agriculture from everything else in a very piecemeal fashion.** Women saw the renewal pillar of the APF as essentially a retraining program designed to get farmers off the land. As well, they were offended, because this training component suggests that farmers are in financial crisis, because they do not know what they are doing. The APF does not propose solutions to issues of critical concern to farming families: rural services and infrastructure, depopulation and off-farm employment — issues that could be addressed by supporting small- and medium-sized farms and encouraging their development. There is little support for programs to stimulate on-farm cottage industries as a way for farm families to add

value to their farm produce. The policy contains very little that would encourage young farmers to either enter or stay in farming. It fails to address the increasing distance between food production and food consumption. This minimizes the value of community and the quality of rural life.

In summary, while there are changes in the wording of the pillars of the APF, women stressed that the APF is “more of the same.” Like past policies, it fails to address issues related to quality of rural life, rural communities and rural culture in any significant way. They argued that the APF will benefit neither their farms nor their communities, because it does not respond to the needs of small or medium farmers, address farm size or promote expansion of farmer-friendly marketing mechanisms. In fact, the policy will do great harm. For example, women argued that the APF will lead to:

- larger, more industrialized farms, fewer neighbours, loss of community, loss of the rural tax base and therefore, of services and infrastructure, more driving time, more stress and family break-ups;
- continued corporatization and consolidation in the food chain thus further reducing farmers’ market power;
- greater dependency on expensive technological solutions;
- a tighter cost–price squeeze, more financial insecurity and more debt due to lack of market mechanisms that would improve commodity pricing or increase the farmer’s share of consumer dollars;
- government programs (like CAISP) that continue to favour the largest operators;
- an increased need for off-farm income;
- greater on-farm responsibility for and cost of implementing food safety/quality and environmental programs, for which farmers will not be compensated;
- more on-farm work, especially paperwork; and
- the increasing threat to the environment and to human and animal health from chemicals and animal wastes.

### **Women’s Engagement in Policy Development**

Clearly, there were a number of problems regarding the APF consultation process. Essentially:

- The APF employs the same old bureaucratic rather than farmer-driven process.
- There is a lack of communication between farmers, farm women and governments.
- Industrial, rather than farmer interests, play a significant role.
- Farm women’s input was not specifically sought out in the APF process.



In part, the gaps in the APF are the result of a flawed policy development process that has not used transparent, meaningful consultation that clearly identifies who, how, when and where consultation is sought. The consultation process did not provide sufficient lead time and mechanisms for farmers, specifically women, to participate effectively. Had women been consulted, and their needs and interests addressed, the APF would certainly look considerably different.

Women's expertise as those who most immediately and directly experience the impact of agricultural policies on their families and communities is frequently minimized by bureaucrats, politicians and industry groups. Even in these workshops, one government representative was openly derisive of some of the specific needs and policy directions that women identified, an attitude that women stated they face all too frequently in policy discussions.

Although most women see the APF as destructive to sustainable agricultural communities, Canadian farm communities have a long history of fighting for survival. The APF is seen by many as the trigger for rural community protest and action that will ultimately strengthen rural-urban links. This protest and action involves increased participation of the farming community in agricultural policy development.

Women want to engage in policy development through a very different process than the consultations proposed by the male-dominated agricultural sector. Women favour and respond to more participatory processes. Although farm women are well educated and articulate, many still do not see themselves as policy makers. They may need some grass-roots training, practice and encouragement to voice their views, especially given that their views are too frequently the object of derision, or minimized as off topic or out of scope by moderators of the consultations. A policy development process that really wants to include women and their vision must therefore include them in its planning. Furthermore, the process must be progressive, provide adequate lead time and supports for women to rearrange their families' lives, and give time to relationship building with other women.

Small, women-only meetings were identified as a good training ground for women to develop and practise policy-making skills. Eventually, more women would be empowered to participate in typical policy development processes. As an example, women said that the research workshops were very useful, and would go a long way to including women in policy development in a meaningful way, but only if the concerns and needs raised are actually addressed in subsequent policy development. Too frequently, disappointed and cynical farm women say that any time they spend in workshops like this is a complete waste of time and resources, because their opinions and input do not lead to any changes.

Women also spoke about the need to have more women involved in leadership positions in general farm organizations, commodity groups, agencies like the CWB, and various departments in AAFC. Some called for measures to ensure a 50 percent ratio of women hired by AAFC, and the designation of woman-only seats in policy discussions. Another

suggestion was made that any time the minister of agriculture is male, the deputy minister must be female and vice versa.

These statements clearly indicate the critical need for women's participation in policy development. The government's responsibility, therefore, is to provide whatever supports are required to ensure women's involvement. Women listed several mechanisms to get women to the policy discussion table.

- Require government departments to be accountable for ensuring women's participation, and in every policy discussion, collect, differentiate and publicly share information about women's participation and contributions to the process.
- Direct invitations specifically to farm women and ensure that meeting formats are woman friendly and facilitated by people familiar with participatory methods and sympathetic to gender dynamics.
- Hold consultations during farmers' off seasons; give lots of notice of meetings, and publicize dates, times and locations widely.
- Hold policy consultations in smaller rural communities, and have them at two different times, perhaps a weekday and a weekend, or an evening and an afternoon so farmers with off-farm employment can attend.
- Ensure gender parity in all consultations by requiring existing agricultural organizations to collect and represent the distinct interests of both farm men and women.
- Require existing general farm organizations or commodity groups to establish processes to increase women's participation and leadership, and to bring women's input to policy tables.
- Provide funding to existing general farm organizations to improve women's access to and participation in leadership and policy development, and support farm women's groups to build leadership capacity among farm women, including assertiveness training.
- Ensure that a diversity of farm women are invited to each policy discussion, representing different ages, life stages, political views, farm sizes and kinds of production.
- Collect contributions using a variety of mechanisms, including e-mail.
- Provide wage replacement for farmers who have to hire help to do their chores while they attend meetings.
- Pay farm women to attend these meetings. Bureaucrats and industry representatives are paid, but time away from the farm is time without pay. As well, most farm

women now have off-farm jobs from which it may be difficult to obtain time off to attend meetings.

- Provide on-site child care or financial support for child care.
- Work with government and farm organizations to ensure that media give equal weight to women's views of policy needs.

If the Government of Canada is to take seriously its commitment to gender equality as outlined in the Federal Plan for Gender Equality (1995), it must engage in the development and implementation of a gender-inclusive planning process. This means more than ensuring that women make up half of the voices at the policy discussion table. Women must also be active participants in defining the process to identify policy needs, determining desired policy directions and outcomes, determining the appropriate language and planning public consultations. Moreover, the issues that farm women identify, the solutions they propose and the policies they develop must be given equal weight and importance in developing national policy as the issues and solutions put forward by men.

This chapter has demonstrated that few workshop participants either knew of, or had participated in, the APF consultations. Evidently, current government consultation practices pay insufficient attention to ensuring that women are able to attend, or are able to voice their concerns. We have also reported that farm women agreed that the process of developing a Canadian agricultural policy must begin with farmers — both men and women. While some participants wondered whether the issues that men and women identify as desirable in agricultural policy are really that different, most felt that women do see that agricultural policy must address a wider range of issues than do men. Clear evidence of this difference is highlighted in the next chapter, which discusses the inclusive and gendered policy envisioned by farm women.

## **5. FARM WOMEN ENVISION AN INCLUSIVE CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL POLICY**

This chapter summarizes the conclusions of the 105 farm women who attended one of five workshops each held in different regions of the country. We explore farm women's priorities and their vision of an inclusive agricultural policy. These conclusions form the basis of a set of policy recommendations.

Farm women see a strong, central role for governments and their various departments in ensuring future development of agricultural policies that include farm women and respond to their concerns and needs. They favour a two-pronged approach to that involvement, first in reorienting governmental approaches toward gender inclusion and second, in supporting farm organizations to become more gender inclusive.

To begin with, women want both structures and processes to ensure that their issues and needs, and those of youth, are heard and responded to, and are given equal weight in policy development. Thus an inclusive agricultural policy must address social and cultural as well as economic needs. Workshop participants argued that a gender-inclusive, family-farm-friendly agricultural policy must:

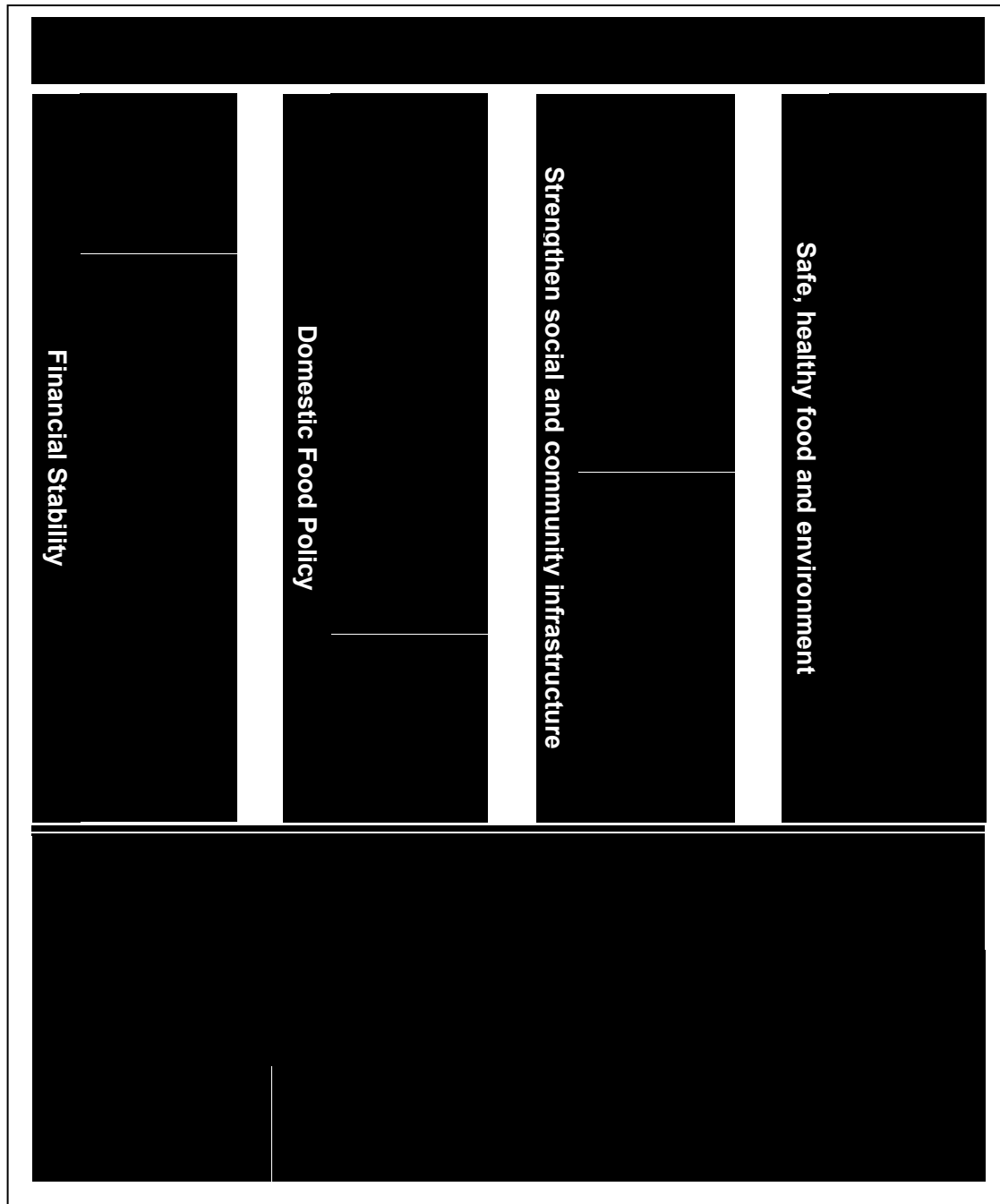
- strengthen the voices of farm families including farm women and youth;
- be a practical policy process that starts with farmers' needs;
- respect farmers by acknowledging farming as a full-time profession/occupation;
- be accountable and responsive to farmers;
- centre on fair trade not free trade, and benefit farmers;
- solve the financial crisis and provide long-term economic, environmental and social stability;
- provide mechanisms to support and enhance the quality of life in rural communities;
- ensure that both food and the environment are safe and healthy;
- educate consumers about the contributions that farms and farmers make to society;
- bridge the rural–urban divide; and
- provide social, economic and environmental stability.

Women's needs and policy interests are summarized in Appendix I.

### **Elements of an Inclusive Agricultural Policy**

Women's vision for an agricultural policy rests on four pillars: financial stability, domestic food policy, safe, healthy food and environment, and strengthening the social and community infrastructure (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Policy Goals and Strategies Identified by Farm Women as Contributing to an Inclusive Canadian Agricultural Policy**

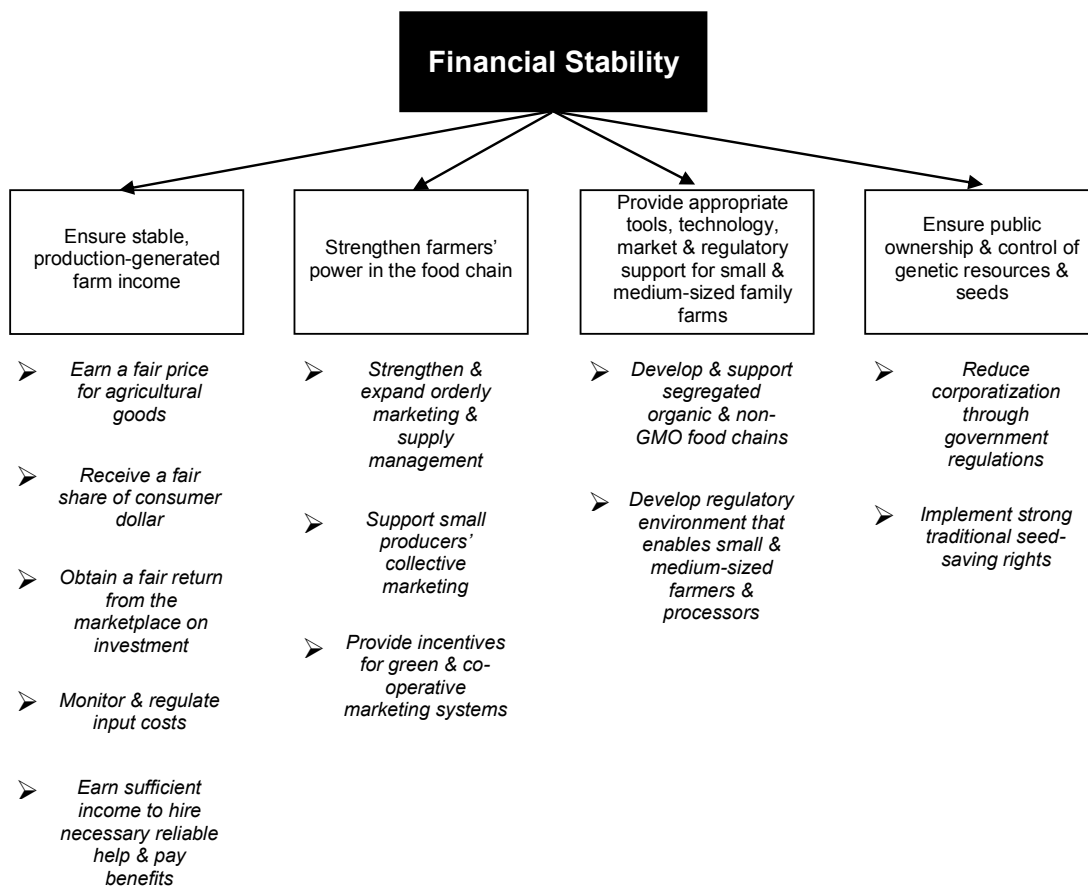


Not surprisingly, these pillars correspond very closely with women's realities that were discussed in Chapter 3 and their analysis of government policy directions and the APF in Chapter 4. It is important to note that these pillars are holistic, and women do not separate them; all are essential to the integrity of their agricultural policy. Nor can elements of the policy goals and strategies of each pillar be isolated from the whole without threatening its overarching strength and wisdom.

### ***Farm Financial Stability***

Just as the farm financial crisis is at the core of women's concerns about agriculture, farm financial stability is at the core of a gendered agricultural policy. Key requisites of that stability are fair pricing, family-farm-friendly production and marketing structures, and limitations on corporatization. Overwhelmingly, farm women prefer to make a living from production-generated fair income rather than from various government support programs. Figure 8 highlights policy directions and programs that women believe would make farming more economically sustainable by ensuring a secure, stable income for producing quality food and increasing farmers' market power in the food chain.

**Figure 8: Policy Goals and Strategies that Farm Women Envision as Contributing to Farm Financial Stability**

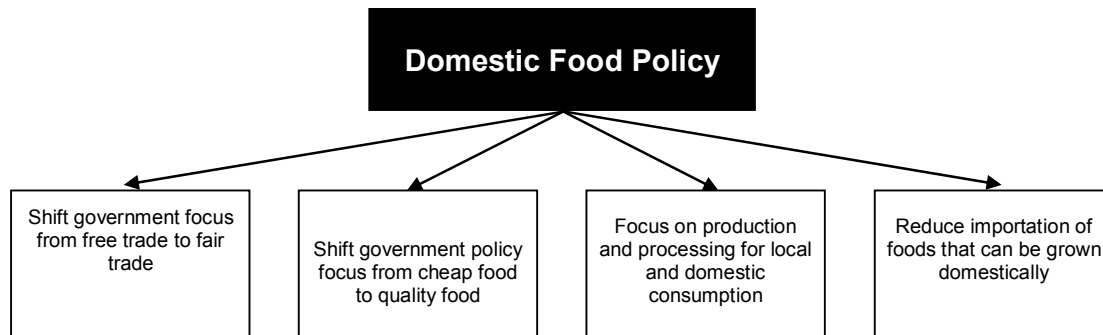


### ***Domestic Food Policy***

Farm women see the need to include a domestic food policy in Canadian agricultural policy. Such a policy would enable Canadian governments, consumers and farmers to construct a food system of the highest possible quality — one that, because it operates at a smaller and more local scale, will provide food that is safer and healthier in ways that have less impact on the environment. Moreover, smaller, more local and domestic agri-

food businesses will enable fairer distribution of benefits arising from agricultural trade. Figure 9 summarizes policy goals that farm women identified as necessary for a domestic food policy.

**Figure 9: Policy Goals and Strategies that Farm Women Identified as Contributing to Domestic Food Policy**



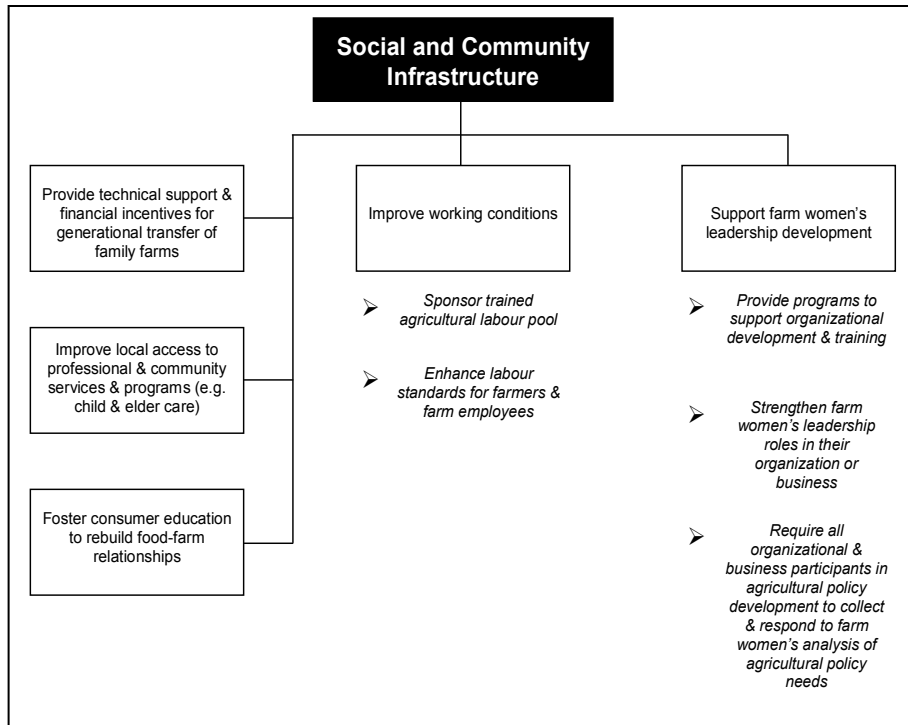
### ***Strengthen Social and Community Infrastructure***

Farm women see the depopulation and decline of rural communities as a consequence of narrowly focussed, long-term government policy directions, and believe that agricultural policy must be holistic, giving equal weight to economic, social and cultural aspects of rural communities. Thus, the economics of farming and the community of farming are inextricable; agricultural policy goes far beyond just economics. Like an agricultural policy that addresses only economic issues, an agricultural policy that excludes women's voices and their concerns is only half complete. Moreover, as urbanization widens the gap between food production and consumption, there is a loss of understanding about the critical role farmers play in the food chain. Farm women want government policy to foster consumer education to rebuild and strengthen food–farm relationships. Figure 10 compiles the policy directions and content that farm women identified as supporting quality of life in rural communities.

### ***Safe, Healthy Food and Environments***

Farm women's holistic Canadian agricultural policy equally addresses economic, social, cultural and environmental needs. Since women are deeply connected to the land, their vision for agricultural policy is grounded in a respectful relationship with the environment and their neighbours. Safer food is seen as a product of smaller, diverse and less-intensive farming operations requiring size-appropriate regulation, and using alternative energy sources and on-farm nutrient cycling. Agricultural policy must respect, protect and fulfill environmental human rights, and thus hold citizens, governments and corporations accountable for their actions (Figure 11).

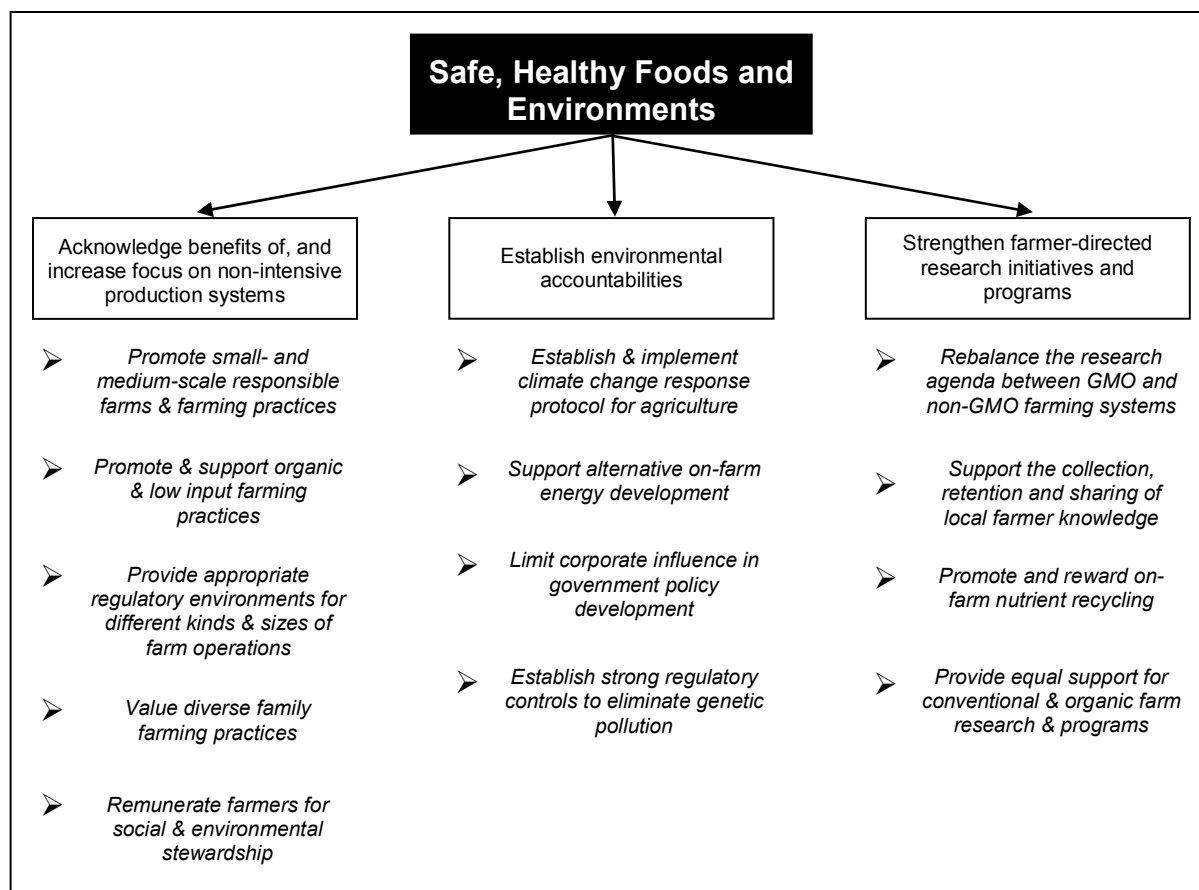
**Figure 10: Policy Goals and Strategies that Farm Women Identified as Critical to Strengthening Social and Rural Community Infrastructure**



The agricultural policy that farm women envision is grounded in their daily life experiences. It responds to the needs of their families and their communities, and addresses social, cultural and environmental aspects of life and community, as well as economic well-being. Women's vision for Canadian agricultural policy attends to the central roles that health and environment play in sustaining any future. While current agricultural policy talks about increasing production for export, women talk about increasing prices for the product they already produce. As the primary producers in a multi-billion dollar sector, they want a fair share of the consumer dollar. Women want the needs of farming families and their rural communities to play as important a role in determining agricultural policy as do corporate needs. To make those changes, women must be present at all levels of policy making, and their concerns and needs given equal weight to those of others.



**Figure 11: Policy Goals and Strategies Needed to Achieve Safe Healthy Foods and Environments, as Envisioned by Farm Women**



The following recommendations were developed by the research team based on the findings of the five research workshops.<sup>39</sup> When implemented, these recommendations should contribute to an inclusive Canadian agricultural policy.

### **Policy Recommendations**

It is important to recognize that the development of an inclusive agricultural policy requires that AAFC consistently consults with all appropriate levels of government and government departments. While AAFC, by definition, will be the lead in implementing the recommendations, the Department will need to work closely with relevant ministries and secretariats.

### ***Participation of Farm Women***

1. That AAFC, in conjunction with farm women's organizations and existing farm organizations with structures to promote women's participation and representation:
  - Require all input to agricultural policy development processes to identify and address gender issues and impacts.

- Build a policy development process that, within four years, includes and responds equally and equitably to farm women's needs and vision for agricultural policy.
- Ensure that all AAFC staff receive gender-sensitivity training and that training is updated regularly.
- Provide funding to support the enactment of the federal plan by requiring that within four years, all farm organizations, commodity groups and businesses providing input to the development of agricultural policy develop and implement a strategy to achieve gender equality and equity in organizational structure and policy content. To qualify for funding support to achieve this goal, organizations will need to develop and enact strategies and policies that substantially increase women's participation and leadership in the organization.

### ***Policy Development Process***

2. That AAFC, with existing farm women's and farm organizations:

- Undertake a community-based participatory process to develop an inclusive farmer-friendly agricultural policy development process.
- Negotiate a realistic time line for developing agricultural policy, one that respects the seasonality of farming, the competing priorities that farmers must balance (e.g., off-farm employment) and the very limited finances farmers have to fund lobbying efforts on their behalf.
- Provide farm and farm women's organizations with that time line.
- Ensure that any changes in the time line are renegotiated at least six months in advance of the original time.

### ***Farmer Participation in the Definition of Policy Goals***

3. That AAFC, with existing farm women's and farm organizations:

- Use community-based processes to define the goals and objectives that farmers and rural communities want a gendered Canadian food and agriculture policy to achieve.
- Develop mechanisms to share these goals and objectives with other governments and government departments whose initiatives operate in or affect rural communities.
- Engage in a grass-roots process to develop segregated marketing and distribution food chains.
- Research, define and implement size-appropriate regulatory requirements.

***Ensure Fair Compensation for Production and Labour***

4. That AAFC, with existing farm women's and farm organizations:

- Research and define market strategies by which farmers can be fairly compensated for legitimate production costs, receive a fair return on investment and earn an income equivalent to that of urban families.
- Develop mechanisms by which identified farmer-friendly market strategies can be implemented and expanded.
- Track the distribution of consumer dollars in food prices by developing criteria defining what constitutes "fair distribution" of profit among players in the food chain, establishing consequences for non-compliance, implementing the plan and monitoring compliance, and disseminating results with the general public.
- Define and determine what constitutes a fair price for particular farm inputs and whether farm input prices are fair.
- Determine and monitor compliance, and implement consequences for unfair pricing.

***Redistribute Power and Control***

5. That AAFC, in consultation with existing farm women's and farm organizations:

- Identify and act upon opportunities to increase fairness in international trade. One way of doing that is to support strongly farmer-friendly production and marketing structures in international trade negotiations, and encourage the development of similar strategies in other countries.
- In conjunction with existing national farmers' organizations, research and develop legislative and regulatory mechanisms to limit vertical integration in food-related industries, thereby increasing competition.
- Support the participation of existing farm organizations and movements in having a legitimate place, voice and influence in international forums where agricultural policies are discussed and decided.

***Environmental Stewardship***

6. That AAFC in conjunction with existing farm women's and farm organizations:

- Establish research funding for existing farm and farm women's organizations to partner with academic researchers to investigate the comparative quality of food produced under different farming systems; calculate the real costs and benefits of small-scale, organic and conventional agriculture; determine the value of farmers' environmental stewardship and responsible production practices; investigate methods by which farmers can be fairly compensated for environmental stewardship and responsible production practices; select the most appropriate remuneration

strategy and develop an implementation plan for remunerating farmers for environmental stewardship; and enact and monitor the plan.

- Co-fund a plan to remunerate farmers for environmental stewardship, together with other federal departments and provinces.

## APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

This appendix provides information about participants and discusses some of the similarities and differences in provincial contexts and among the five groups.

**Table 10: Number of Participants in Age Groupings**

Age	AB	SK	MB	ON	PEI/ NB	Total
< 25 yrs	0	2 (2%)*	1 (1%)	0	2 (2%)	5 (5%)
25 - 35 yrs	3 (3%)	9 (8%)	0	4 (4%)	4 (4%)	20 (19%)
35 - 55 yrs	7 (7%)	3 (3%)	15 (14%)	17 (16%)	17(16%)	51 (49%)
>55 yrs	4 (4%)	9 (8%)	7 (7%)	2 (2%)	7 (7%)	29 (28%)
Total	17 (16%)	23 (22%)	23 (22%)	23(22%)	22 (21%)	105

Note:

Percent is calculated as a simple percentage of total participants (105) and rounded to nearest whole percentage point.

Of the 105 women who indicated their age grouping, five were under the age of 25 years (Table 10). Twenty participants were between 25 and 35 years of age, while 29 were older than 55 years. Almost half the group (51) were between the ages of 35 and 55. Two workshops had participants in all age ranges: Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island/New Brunswick. In Saskatchewan, there were nine participants in each of the 25 to 35 and over 55 groups. Two participants were younger than 25, while three were between the ages of 35 and 55. In Ontario, however, the majority of women (17) were between the ages of 35 and 55. Four women were 25 to 35 years old, and two were over the age of 55. In Prince Edward Island/New Brunswick, two participants were under 25 years, and four were between 25 and 35 years old. Women between 35 and 55 years constituted the largest group (nine), while seven women were older than 55 years. In Alberta, four women were older than 55 years, while three were between 25 and 35 years. The largest age group, 35 to 55 years of age, contained seven women.

**Table 11: Types of Farming Operations among Participants**

	Dairy	Poultry	Grain/Oilseed	Livestock	Market Garden	Mixed	Other
SK	0	0	9	2	0	10	2
ON	4	4	2	4	6	5	5
PEI/NB	3	3	4	4	1	4	13
MB	0	0	6	3	0	13	0
AB	0	0	2	3	1	6	0

The type of farming operation among workshop participants varied across the country. Women frequently checked off more than one descriptor for their farm. For example, some mixed operators may have also identified themselves as grain/oilseed and livestock producers, while others did not indicate the nature of their mixed operation. Grain/oilseed and livestock producers participated in each of the five workshops (Table 11).

Saskatchewan had the largest number of grain/oilseed operations (nine), while Alberta and Ontario had the fewest (two each). There were between two and four livestock producers in each workshop. Dairy and poultry farmers were absent among Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba participants, but there were four of each in Ontario and three of each in Prince Edward Island/New Brunswick. There were eight market gardens: Alberta (one), Ontario (six) and Prince Edward Island/New Brunswick (one). In Prince Edward Island/New Brunswick, 13 women identified themselves as producing “other.” Among those, five identified themselves as potato growers, one as a producer of dry edible beans, and another as a soybean grower. In Saskatchewan, the two “other” were both honey producers, while in Ontario, two of the five participants who indicated “other” on their information sheet identified their farms as dairy goat and agro-forestry operations.

There was also variation in the size of farming operation among participants across the country (Table 12). Only five farms were larger than 2,401 acres: two were in Saskatchewan and three in Manitoba. Twenty-three farms were smaller than 160 acres: two in Alberta, three in Saskatchewan, and nine each in Ontario and Prince Edward Island/New Brunswick. There were 25 farms between 161 and 640 acres. Ten were in Ontario, while five each were in Alberta and Prince Edward Island/New Brunswick. Saskatchewan and Manitoba each had four farms between 161 and 640 acres. Forty-two farms were between 640 and 2,400 acres, but none were in Ontario. Manitoba had 16 farms of that size and Saskatchewan had 13. Prince Edward Island/New Brunswick had eight and Alberta had five. As might be expected, larger farms are found in the provinces with larger numbers of grain/oilseed and livestock producers, while smaller operations like market gardens and potato growers, are located in provinces where farms are smaller.

**Table 12: Size of Farm Operations among Women Participants**

	<160 Acres	161-640 Acres	640-2,400 Acres	>2,401 Acres	Total
AB	2	5	5	0	12
SK	3	4	13	2	22
MB	0	4	16	3	23
ON	9	10	0	0	19
PEI/NB	9	5	8	0	22
Total	23	28	42	5	98

Just as there were differences between participants in each workshop, there were differences in the collective personality of workshops. In Saskatchewan, several years of drought, grasshoppers, the BSE crisis and failures in safety nets left women inured to their circumstances. In a sense, their stress was chronic rather than immediate. Their world view had broadened and their analysis deepened. There were diverse political viewpoints within the group, with a brief but heated discussion about whether the CWB was a good thing. There were organic and conventional farmers, younger and older women, retired and beginning farmers.

In Ontario, the collective personality of the workshop might be characterized as ecologically minded, and was relatively uninfluenced by the few larger producers present. In general, most of these producers wanted to grow healthy, wholesome food for themselves and their customers. They tended to purchase whatever they could not provide themselves from other organic/ecological growers and fair trade suppliers. A number of women had specialized businesses within the larger farm operation, such as herb production. There were also unique business directions in the group. One woman stated that when they began their market farm, they were among the original “back-to-the-earthers.” Another woman was “off the grid” and solar powered, growing native plants for reclamation projects. In Prince Edward Island/New Brunswick, participants were clearly stressed by immediate financial problems. With recent consolidations of small farms and continuing industrialization of potato production, there was a glut of potatoes. Prices were low, and many farm families were sitting with sheds full of potatoes, no market, and of course, no income to pay back production loans, meet family needs and get set up for the upcoming planting season. During the first day, that worry appeared to limit their world view and analysis to how they as individual farms were going to survive. The local co-ordinator suggested that as many as half the potato producers in her area might be bankrupt by spring, with many more unable to plant. As they talked more about their concerns, women were able to distance themselves from their immediate crisis enough to recognize and address the broader concerns and solutions apparent in their circumstances while at the same time staying in touch with their own stressful reality.

The Manitoba workshop had a uniquely global analysis. Participants linked personal experiences as farm women with national and global economic and policy influences. Their analysis was both deep and broad. The Alberta workshop was the smallest of the five, which the research team attributed to the province’s historically conservative and ruggedly individualistic political and economic climate. In this province, it is difficult to organize farmers to promote their collective interests. During the first few hours of the workshop, many participants were self-protective, more so than had been the case in other workshops. While a few women seemed immediately comfortable with a process that invited them to share their lived experiences and build from there, researchers noted that many others required more reassurance that their stories and thus, their experiences, were valid and valuable. By the end of their time together, however, most women had opened up and shared more deeply.

## APPENDIX B: WORKSHOP AGENDA

### Morning

#### Part One: Introduction:

Introduce participants, research team members, project and agenda

9 – 9:10	<b>Plenary: Welcome, logistics and housekeeping</b>	NFU Women’s Advisory
9:10 – 9:40	<b>Plenary: Getting to know one another</b> • “What did you do to get here?”	Facilitator, Co-facilitator
9:40 – 10	<b>Plenary: Purpose &amp; methodology of workshop</b> <b>Consent form</b> <b>Workshop agenda</b>	NFU Women’s Advisory Key Researcher Facilitator

#### Part Two: Naming rural women’s reality

Assess current situation on the farm: Analyze women’s key concerns

10 – 10:20	<b>Individual: Mapping Exercise</b> • “What does farming look like in my life?”	Facilitator, Co-facilitator
10:20 – 10:30	<b>Break</b>	
10:30 – 12:20	<b>Individual storytelling</b> • In no more than four minutes, describe the life your map represents (no interruptions). • Facilitator invites, listens, clarifies; co-facilitator flipcharts.	Facilitator, Co-facilitator
12:20 – 12:30	<b>Identify major concerns from individual stories</b> • “Looking at your map and your life as you have described it today, what would be your 3 – 5 major concerns?” (3 – 5 cards per participant)	Facilitator, Co-facilitator

#### Part Three: Naming the forces leading to changes on the farm and in women’s lives

Identify forces that have caused these changes on the farm and in women’s lives

12:30 – 1:55	<b>Cluster major concerns (Plenary)</b> • Using cards from 1 or 2 participants as examples, facilitator models process; participants sort own cards	Facilitator, Co-facilitator
	<b>Lunch</b> • APF representative introduced as a listener when she/he joins workshop	
<b>Afternoon</b> 1:55 – 3	<b>Name clusters of major concerns (Plenary)</b> • Group clarifies and adjusts boundaries between clusters, clarifies content where needed, names clusters • <b>3 – 3:25 Brainstorm (Plenary)</b> “What factors or forces have contributed to this picture?” (Facilitator lists responses on flipchart)	Facilitator, Co-facilitator
3:25 – 3:40	<b>Break</b>	



## Part Four: Envisioning sustainable agricultural policy

Identify issues that should be included in Canadian agricultural policy

<b>3:40 – 3:55</b>	<b>Vision – Part 1</b>	<b>Small Groups</b>	Facilitator, Co-facilitator
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give first discussion question, “<i>What keeps you connected to farming?</i>” (5 – 7 minutes)</li> <li>• Then give second discussion question “<i>What would make your connection with farming more desirable and/or sustainable?</i>” (5 – 7 minutes)</li> <li>• Each group records discussion highlights from both questions and gives to facilitators</li> </ul>	
<b>3:55 – 4:45</b>	<b>Vision –Part 2</b>	<b>Plenary Report Back on Second Question Only</b>	Facilitator, Co-facilitator
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As each idea is read, facilitators write synopsis of each idea on large index card. Each card is sorted into either existing groups or a new category in response to the question, “<i>Is this idea the same or different than other cards already up on the wall?</i>” Set contentious cards to one side, and return to them at end. <b>DO NOT NAME CLUSTERS.</b></li> </ul>	

## Part Five: Introducing and analyzing the APF

Familiarize ourselves with the federal agricultural policy

<b>4:45 – 5:30</b>	<b>APF responds - Plenary</b>	Facilitator, APF representative
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• APF representative responds to statement, “<i>In the context of the APF, respond to the issues raised and remedies developed in today’s workshop.</i>” (Representative leaves after session)</li> </ul>	
<b>5:30 – 5:40 pm</b>	<b>Debriefing and reflections (Plenary)</b>	Facilitator, Co-facilitator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “<i>What’s good about the APF? Bad? Missing?</i>” Co-facilitator records responses on flipchart</li> </ul>	
<b>DAY TWO</b>		
<b>Morning 9 – 9:20</b>	<b>Review of APF consultation process and women’s participation in its development</b>	Key researcher
<b>9:20 – 9:40</b>	<b>Analysis of APF (Small Groups)</b>	Facilitator, Co-facilitator
	<p>Group records discussion on sheets. They do not have APF summary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First give small groups this question: <i>Is this policy different from past agricultural policies (i.e., is it the status quo)?</i>”</li> <li>• Then give small groups this question: “<i>Where will this policy take us?</i>”</li> <li>• Finally, give small groups this question; “<i>What will this mean for farm women and their family farms?</i>”</li> </ul> <p>(Allow a 30 second report back per table. <i>What is the most important thing that you talked about that you want to tell the rest of us?</i>)</p>	

## Part Six: Naming critical elements needed in Canada's agricultural policy

### Identify Pillars of Inclusive Agricultural Policy

**9:40-10:45 am**      **Name policy clusters (Plenary)**      Facilitator, Co-facilitator

**Determine fit between women's vision and APF (Plenary)**

Facilitator, Co-facilitator

Key Researcher summarizes five APF pillar using overheads, answers questions of clarification

- *“Do any of the five APF policy elements describe our clusters? What other elements have we identified as necessary?”*

**10:45 – 11:00 am**      **Break**

## Part Seven: Identifying processes to ensure inclusion of women and their concerns in policy development and content

### Identify Critical Agricultural Policy Content

**11:00 – 11:15**      **Small Group Discussion, report back on Vision – Part 2**

Facilitator, Co-facilitator

Groups self-select (encourage equal distribution) and select cluster to work on (i.e., add a card, modify wording on card, suggest changes to name of cluster)

- *What (else) would we want in this element?*

Report back to plenary; plenary accepts or rejects proposed changes

**11:15 – 11:45**      **Small Group Discussion, report back**

Facilitator, Co-facilitator

Each group brainstorms around questions:

- *What is needed to get women's concerns addressed when agricultural policy is developed?*

Concerns are what the women had written on their individual cards earlier in the process.

- *What is needed to ensure women's involvement in agricultural policy making?*  
Involvement would include the kinds of processes and supports entailed in organizing this workshop.

## Part Eight: Evaluation and Closing

Report back to plenary

**11:45 – 12:30**      **Individual evaluation sheet**

Facilitator, Co-facilitator

- Each person completes generic evaluation form, information sheets, expense forms
- Gather group in a circle; each participant says five to seven words that reflect her workshop experience

**12:30**

**Lunch**

## APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

**Research Project Title:** Farm Women and Canadian Agricultural Policy

**Key Researchers:** Annette Desmarais, Carla Roppel and Diane Martz

**Research Assistants:** Karen Pedersen, Colleen Ross-Weatherhead, Marie Hendricken, Michelle Melynk, Marilyn Gillis, Susan Proven, Nettie Wiebe and Shannon Storey

**Funding Agency:** Status of Women Canada

This consent form, a copy of which will be given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. The form describes the research project entitled Farm Women and Canadian Agricultural Policy that is being conducted by the National Farmers Union; the key researchers and research assistants are listed above. The form then describes what your participation will involve and requests your consent to participate in the project. If you would like more information, please ask.

The purposes of this research project are to:

- document issues that rural women and female youth consider as critical features of rural Canada that should be integrated into agricultural and rural policy;
- conduct a gender analysis of the Canadian Agricultural Policy Framework; and
- develop policy recommendations that rectify the historical exclusion of women and their legitimate concerns.

The project consists of organizing workshops in Saskatchewan, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Alberta and Manitoba. Researchers will compile and analyze the results of all five workshops and develop policy recommendations based on the research findings. A research report will be submitted to Status of Women Canada, and within six months Status of Women Canada will inform the National Farmers Union whether or not they will publish it. If Status of Women Canada publishes the report, it will be made available to farm organizations, policy makers, academics and the general public. In addition, on receiving permission from the National Farmers Union, the researchers may publish articles based on information obtained during these workshops.

You have been contacted to participate because of your involvement and experience in rural issues. Your participation will consist of a 1½ day workshop (all day Saturday until lunch on Sunday). A workshop agenda has been provided to you so you can review the workshop content. Essentially, during the first half of the workshop, research participants will discuss their lives as women on Canadian farms, identify the key concerns that affect their day-to-day lives and name the forces that have contributed to that experience. During the second half of the workshop, participants will identify issues that should be included in the Canadian Agricultural Policy Framework, assess whether the APF addresses those issues, and develop processes that ensure that women and their concerns are addressed in future development of agricultural policy.

Your role will consist of participating in all aspects of this workshop. This includes group work and individual contributions. All aspects of the workshop (whenever possible) will be recorded by tape recorder and all workshop proceedings (or summaries of) will be recorded in a word processor program. Information collected at the workshop (i.e., flipchart notes, index cards, etc.) will also be entered into a computer. Only the key researchers and research assistants of the research project will have access to the tapes, workshop materials and proceedings. The results of the study, including tapes, workshop proceedings and results will be securely stored by the National Farmers Union and the Centre for Rural Studies and Enrichment in a locked filing cabinet for a minimum of five years.

There are certain risks associated with revealing information about your experiences and the experiences of your organization in developing agricultural policy. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in any research process but all reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize risks. Because of the risks this consent form provides you with the following options. Please indicate which of the two options you prefer by clearly printing your name on the line provided. If you choose Option A, your name will not be associated in any way with any published results. If you choose Option B, your name will be indicated in the published results.

**Option A:** Due to possible risks, your identity will be kept strictly confidential. I, (please print your name) \_\_\_\_\_ agree to participate in this research under the following conditions:

1) That a pseudonym is used to identify any contribution/information I provide.

**Option B:** You fully recognize the possible personal risks involved with your participation in this research and you do not wish to have your identity kept confidential. I (please print your name) \_\_\_\_\_ agree to participate in this research under the following condition:

1) That the research will use my name when referring to any information I provide.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in this research project and agree to participate as a research participant. In no way does this waive your legal rights or release the investigators, sponsors or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact:

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Your signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **APPENDIX D: THE FIVE PILLARS OF THE APF**

The following summary of the five pillars of the APF contains material quoted directly from two APF documents. This material was provided to workshop participants orally and as part of a handout.

### **Business Risk Management**

Business risk management is an integral part of the Agricultural Policy Framework (AAFC undated). The APF is looking at new approaches to current safety net programs that address business risks on the farm, such as yield losses because of weather. The new approach to business risk management would not only protect farmers against traditional and emerging risks but would also encourage the use of new practices and strategies to reduce risk in the future. Governments are working with industry stakeholders to build on the best of existing risk management programs, such as crop insurance and the Net Income Stabilization Account, to provide effective tools for the evolving sector. The goal is a more integrated system of programs that cover risk, provide producers with more choice, and promote future growth and profitability.<sup>40</sup>

Among the goals being considered for food safety and food quality are to:<sup>41</sup>

- provide a permanent disaster relief program which farmers can rely on, instead of the ad hoc programs that were available in the past;
- offer more stability by protecting both small and large drops in income;
- provide equitable treatment to all farmers, across all commodities and in all provinces;
- better direct funds to where the need is;
- provide a streamlined set of user-friendly programs that work well together.

### **Environment**

Environmental stewardship is key to both the industry's long-term sustainability and its profitability. The industry is well aware of this and is already taking action to manage known environmental risks. The APF sets out areas where governments can provide help, including better information and research on the links between agriculture and the environment, the development of best management practices, and stepped-up action on environmental priorities on farms through agri-environmental scans and environmental farm plans.

Among the goals being considered for environment are:

- to reduce water contamination from nutrients, pathogens and pesticides;
- to reduce agricultural risks to soil health and reduce soil erosion;
- to reduce particulate emissions, odours and greenhouse gases;
- to ensure compatibility between biodiversity and agriculture.

## **Renewal**

As agriculture is knowledge intensive, producers are increasingly engaging in continuous learning to keep pace with change. Renewal efforts include enhanced public and private business management and consulting services, management and marketing information to assist farmers to enhance their profitability, and networks to better link scientific advances to the creation of new economic opportunities.

Among the goals being considered for renewal are:

- to enable beginning farmers to acquire the skills and expertise to manage their business and adapt to evolving consumer preferences and new scientific advances;
- to engage farmers in the continuous upgrading of the skills needed to farm in an evolving sector;
- to provide farmers with the strategic management skills they need to make their farms as profitable as possible; and
- to provide farmers with access to a wide range of choices to enhance their future quality of life.

## **Food Safety, Food Quality**

Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector enjoys a global reputation for consistently delivering safe, high-quality food. Many players in the industry are already moving to adopt systems that will offer documented evidence of safety and quality to meet consumer demands. The APF will help industry develop these systems to trace their products through the entire food chain to consumers and expand food safety and quality monitoring at the production level. The food safety surveillance and information systems that governments currently have in place would be strengthened.

Among the goals being considered for food safety and food quality are:

- to adopt recognized food safety and quality systems throughout the food continuum
- to put in place comprehensive tracking and tracing systems throughout the food continuum in order to increase our capacity for targeted, effective responses to potential disease or contamination outbreaks
- to meet consumer preferences and commercial requirements
- to share critical food safety and surveillance information among governments.

## **Science and Innovation**

Advances in science and technology have long been part of the success of Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector and one of the goals of the APF is to make the sector the world leader in innovation. The APF emphasizes the coordination of research and innovation efforts across governments, the sector and private research institutions to achieve maximum return on investments in the key areas of food safety, the environment and innovative production.

Among the goals being considered for science and innovation are:

- research and development in environment, food safety and food quality, renewal and risk management;
- the adoption of new economic opportunities generated from innovative agriculturally-based products; and
- collaboration and coordination across market, policy and scientific disciplines, among research organizations, and throughout the agri-food production and processing chain.

## APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Participant Information						
Name						
Address						
Town				Postal Code		
Telephone				Fax		
Email						
Farm Organization Affiliation						
Age	<25 yrs <input type="checkbox"/>	25 - 35 yrs <input type="checkbox"/>	35 – 55 yrs <input type="checkbox"/>	>55 yrs <input type="checkbox"/>		
Farming information						
Type of farm	grain/oilseed <input type="checkbox"/>	livestock <input type="checkbox"/>	dairy/poultry <input type="checkbox"/>	market garden <input type="checkbox"/>	mixed <input type="checkbox"/>	other <input type="checkbox"/>
Size	<160 ac <input type="checkbox"/>	161 – 640 ac <input type="checkbox"/>	640 – 2600 ac <input type="checkbox"/>	> 2601 ac <input type="checkbox"/>		
Years in farming			Did you grow up on a farm?			
Paid off-farm work (hrs/wk)	Service	Health	Education	Self	Other	
Unpaid off-farm work (hrs/wk)	Service	Recreation	Church	Other		
Travel time (hrs/wk) to	Work	Recreation	Shopping	Health care	Other	
Caregiving (hrs/wk)	Parents/inlaws	Child	Spouse	Sibling	Other	
Do you think your children will want to farm? Why or why not?						
What do you like most about farming?						
What do like least about farming?						
Have you been involved in a farm organization? If so, in what capacity?	Member <input type="checkbox"/>	Local <input type="checkbox"/>	Regional <input type="checkbox"/>	Provincial <input type="checkbox"/>	National <input type="checkbox"/>	



<b>Have you ever been involved in developing policy? If yes, how and when?</b>	
<b>Are you interested in reviewing the policy recommendations developed by the research team?</b>	

## APPENDIX F: TRENDS IN CANADIAN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

**Table 13: Major Government Cuts to Agricultural Spending**

1988	The Special Canadian Grain Program ended abruptly after only two years of implementation. This was a payment made to Canadian farmers at the height of the trade war between the United States and the European Union.
1994	Dismantling of Tripartite Stabilization Program that helped stabilize prices for livestock (i.e., hogs and cattle) and various agricultural goods like honey.
1991	Western Grain Stabilization Program, which, during its 15-year life paid farmers approximately \$3.4 billion to stabilize grain prices.
1995	The Crow Benefit was terminated. This program indirectly assisted farmers by covering some of the increased costs of transporting grain when the Crow Rate was terminated in 1984.
1995	The Feed Freight Assistance Program was abolished. This was yet another beneficial program for farmers that reduced shipping costs for feed grains going to the Maritimes and British Columbia. The Gross Revenue Insurance Program (GRIP), a mechanism designed to provide some income stability for farmers, was dropped after only four years of use.
2001	The Dairy Subsidy was terminated.

Source: Adapted from Qualman and Wiebe (2002: 7).

**Table 14: Market Share Indicates Concentration of Corporate Control in the Canadian Agri-Food Industry**

Product	Number of Companies	Market Share %
Canadian oil, gasoline and diesel fuel	3	
Nitrogen fertilizer	3	71
Pesticides	9	85
Seed corn	4	69
Soybean seed	4	47
Canola seed	1	33-50 (est.)
Grain collection	9, anticipated soon to be 4 (only 1 will be Canadian)	
Beef packing	2	74
Canadian flour milling	4	80

Source: Adapted from NFU (2000b: 17-20).

**Table 15: Profit and Return on Equity among Selected Corporations Involved in Canadian Food Processing and Retailing in 1998**

Corporation	Sector	Profit (\$)	Return on Equity (%)*
Campbell Soup	Food processing	971 million	76
Philip Morris	Food processing	7.9 billion	33
ConAgra	Food processing	901 million	22
Kellogg	Cereal Company	N/A	56
Quaker Oats	Cereal Company	N/A	165
General Mills	Cereal Company	N/A	222
George Weston Ltd.	Retailing	773 million	37

Note:

Return on equity is commonly calculated by dividing net income (i.e., profit) by average equity (assets minus debt).

Source: Adapted from NFU (2000b: 21-22).

## **APPENDIX G: SUMMARY OF FARM WOMEN'S CONCERNS AND REALITIES**

This appendix contains individual concerns that were grouped and titled by women participants. For ease of presentation and to avoid repetition, researchers consolidated similar concerns within a group.

### **Quality of Farm Life**

- Build a sustainable vision
- Learning to make connections
- Fighting to keep the dream; maintain lifestyle; enjoy/savour my life
- Keeping neighbours for a vital community
- Maintaining rural options for the future
- Struggling younger generations to keep farming
- Nurturing love and spirituality
- Family benefits: sharing; exposure (grandkids)
- Building family farm-friendly global economy
- Farming for a peace of mind
- Shorten the road to vital community [services]
- Provide a future for my kids
- Supporting my husband in his belief for better farmers' right.

### **Financial Insecurity**

- Money is a constant shortage
- Stress due to lack of money
- Rising cost of production, low grain prices; waiting for higher grain prices
- Waiting for profitable cattle prices and movement
- Need for off-farm income; eliminate need for it; work harder to pay for farm
- The stress of too many jobs; 24/7 work, small returns; overworked and no time to play
- Worrying about effect of stress [on everyone]
- Time management
- Everybody is leaving
- Co-ordinating finances for a secure retirement
- Spending within your means

**To Farm or Not to Farm**

- Deciding my future on the farm; defining my needs; am I wasting my education?
- Confusion on direction of farm - where do I go now?
- We should have the right of growing and saving our own seed
- Save the farm environment
- Trying to maintain my connection to the farm

**Understanding Complexity of Values, Securities, Technicalities**

- Saving family farms and keeping them within the family
- Resolving conflicting ideas on intergenerational farms
- Planning and surviving a complex intergeneration succession and transferring land ownership

**Efforts to Be Heard; Shift of Power**

- Challenge political direction of agriculture that is driven by government and corporations rather than farmers (ditch old men from “Agrivision”)
- I am here! I want to be heard! Empower rural folk through participation; make grass-roots decision important
- Need to change municipal by-laws that affect us directly
- Abrogating free trade agreement
- Working to provide alternatives to corporate/commercial agriculture
- Eliminate corporate control of Agriculture (Canada)
- Promoting farm-friendly global economy
- Regulations to reduce destructive forces

**Seeking Sustainability**

- Give us a choice sustainable agriculture
- Find support for alternative farming
- Determine profitable alternatives for farm
- Educate and model sustainable living
- Feed myself clean food
- Protection for our fragile environment
- Maintain my rural community
- Working to change chemical attitude
- Promoting organic production
- Protecting a healthy environment

### **Sharing Knowledge and Experiences**

- Learning from others (mentorship)
- Find balance between lived experience and advocacy work
- Use past experiences to support farmers
- Use education toward developing policies to meet farmers' needs
- Searching for ways that would help others find inner peace
- Respect for food production and consumption
- Special recognition of the right to food, those who produce it and agriculture
- Respect for food
- Build urban food awareness

### **Re-Envision a Canadian Food System**

- Consumer awareness of the importance of diverse family farms and strong rural communities
- How Canadian citizens and politicians see agriculture/farming/farmers
- Consumer awareness of the need for fair prices for farmers
- Too much focus on cheap food rather than healthy food
- More educational opportunities
- Governments working with smaller farming operations
- Concern that my peers will lose sight of the value of supporting our local farmers/community
- Loss of neighbours and community, and still having neighbours who are farmers
- Offer more support to organizations that protect our way of life
- More farm organization presence in communities
- Concern that as humans we are forgetting how to care for each other and the earth that sustains us
- Farm life is too isolated from the realities of the rest of the world

### **Escalating Environmental Pressures: Threats to Our Water**

- Impact on the environment by agriculture
- Environmental degradation; destruction/pollution creating deserts
- Concern that in a very short time the earth will no longer be able to sustain us given our choices
- Concern that my children's future won't be as healthy as my present (due to environmental degradation)
- Contamination of well water; running out of potable water

- Less environmental contamination
- Environmental concerns/farming practices, land stewardship

### **Escalating Environmental Pressures: Threats and Impacts of GMOs**

- GMOs and RoundUp Ready crops
- Fast-tracking of GMOs to farm operations
- GMO contamination and encroachment threaten organic production
- Labelling of GMOs products

### **Escalating Environmental Pressures: Threats to Health and Food Safety**

- Toxic food and health problems
- Safety in the health system

### **Impact of Financial Squeeze**

- Uncertain financial future
- Low farm income
- Debt increasing each year
- Capital costs of farming
- Where does the money come from?
- Workload: all work no play
- Start up (small business) funding
- More farmers having to work off farm and use off-farm money (including personal investments, selling land, inheritance, full-time work being sucked up by the farm)
- Can we get down to one off-farm income, start really working the farm and leave the off-farm work and income behind

### **Corporate Bloodsucking**

- Powerlessness/lack of democracy
- Corporate control throughout the food system (even in organic agriculture)
- Concentration of the food supply
- Criminal/unethical enrichment of transnational corporations
- Conflicting values and agendas will “force” farmers into taking actions that “save the farm” but don’t support their vision/purpose
- Small businesses (farms) being pushed out by large corporations
- Can we compete with the corporations as a single family farm
- Split in the farm community especially supply–management, big/smaller farm, niche/organic/commercial
- Small farm survival

- Over-regulation that inhibits and does not encourage local food systems
- War machine/destructive technology
- Who will fight for us

### **Health/Well-Being Insecurity**

- Rural support services
- Female accessibility to farming (physical, political, financial, support)
- My personal health
- Farming full time with a quality of living
- Injury – who will do the work (if I'm injured)?
- Physical, emotional/mental demands of farm causing family break-ups/breakdowns
- Marketing challenges
- Develop a “beyond organic” culture, recognition sales technique
- Fair price for product
- Having a market for our product
- Marketing opportunities – industry monopolies make it hard to find markets for our products; local areas
- Integrity of organics

### **Continuation of the Family Farm**

- Hard for younger generation to afford to stay in farming
- Children's interest in the farm
- Will our children be able to afford to farm (take over) and will the farm provide a sustainable future for them

### **Appropriate Government Policy**

- Cost of quota; quota requirements for small producers
- Government incentives and programs to become green, off grid, alternative
- Keep off-farm income out of the farm revenue stats
- Sort out the Ministry of Natural Resources (Ontario), their mismanagement and resulting problems (deer overpopulation wild turkey crop destruction)
- Over-regulation of small producers that inhibits direct marketing
- Government regulations/policing
- Regulations affecting small abattoirs; loss of small meat processing plants
- Cheap food policy
- Local government people trying to impose urban standards on farming people and properties



- Government's need to work FOR us instead of AGAINST us farmers
- Free trade killing us

#### **Access to Affordable Timely Services**

- Education...legal literacy; never sign when you don't understand, dollars for legal help
- How to divide/include non-farming children in inheritance
- Services for conflict resolution: e.g., if we give up potatoes, will farming one commodity create conflict?
- Mental health support: farming is stressful; need to foster a happy healthy family on the family farm
- Stress, how much longer will our health last?
- Transition/transfer: Need guidance/education/mentor to assist at building the farm into a business
- Young farmers wanting to start out/go into partnership

#### **Decline of Farm Income**

- Lack of income security, financial rewards for our cost of production
- Need better marketing (return for investment of time and money)
- More work and stress, less money
- What will happen to my family in the future? Will we have money to provide for your family? Is there another financial aspect to help provide for family?
- Need to work off the farm; not enough money to support family from the farm

#### **Environment Issues**

- Effect of agriculture on the environment
- Large farmers will ruin what we have tried to conserve over the last 30 years

#### **Farm Succession/Restructuring**

- Family farms help young farmers; family farm disappearing
- Generations being left out of the picture because of big corporations
- What does the future hold for our children (i.e., farming, moving off the island)
- Will there be enough money to sustain two families?
- What happens to our boys and their families if we lose our farm?
- How do we advise our son re: taking over the farm?
- Farm youth do not see future in farming: inputs too high, income too low; too much work for the pay
- Money for retirement
- Larger farms and loss of small farmers and loss of community

- Expansion: how much is too much, what guidelines?
- Labour/management conflicts
- Who will replace older farmers?
- Who will own our farms in the near future?
- Educated labour supply
- Food quality is going to decrease because of large farms
- Child care needed if both farmers working

### **Food Quality**

- Health: what's in our food; what's the quality?
- More resources for organic growing feasibility

### **Health and Wellness**

- Ability to maintain our health so we can do multiple jobs
- Health: people, animal — the bigger we get, the more diseases in our animals and workers
- Am I healthy enough/strong enough to farm for 10 more years to make a smooth transition to the next generation? Health issues (aging fast, back problems, lifting, arthritis, what's in foods?)
- Mental health support: farming is stressful; how do we win back our spirit?
- If this is what you really enjoy, will you be happy with it no matter what? Farming really has to be a passion to help make it work. Be in it for yourself and enjoyment not to hurt the next farmer

### **Impact of Government on Farming**

- Can't afford a farm as a young person; need bank loan just to buy one
- Government has created a lot of the problems. When are they going to correct some of them?
- Government regulations without thought for compensation to farmers who implement them
- Government/non-farm agents impact our ability to make sustainable decisions for our lives, land and production
- Government aid regulations, crop assistance, financial burdens
- Money issues: need more money for our products
- NISA program: how to use it for starting new farm program

### **Insecurity/Instability**

- Agriculture policy developed by bureaucrats; plan is to push farmers out of farming

- Need to separate from the dream of farming and look at the realities and challenges in farming
- What will our retirement look like with no pensions and no savings?
- When forced out of farming what work is out there?
- The complexities farm families have to deal with: health (people, animal), wealth (less), work (more), family, weather, labour (finding people to work on the farm), knowledge (can we keep up with it all)
- Should we gamble by borrowing big money to get the milk quota we should have to grow and prosper? How can we afford to do this?
- Need wealth, more money for our produce, retirement fund
- Marketing
- Too many farms becoming bigger
- Will we be able to keep growing potatoes?
- Will there be sales for our product?
- Loss of market for our primary production
- Increase share of consumer dollar to the farmer
- Can we afford to expand with quota being the price it is today?
- Should we retire now, cash in our quota which is worth something and work at other things for the next 10-15 years?
- Organized market sharing so everyone gets a fair chance at getting a balanced budget
- Is diversity, value added good or bad (i.e., work, investment, markets)?
- Less government control in markets
- Research and access markets/new markets for our product

#### **Mutual Awareness**

- Educate consumers of need to support local domestic products
- How do we take the control back
- Public awareness, big business values reshaping our communities
- When are non-farm people going to start to show respect for farmers?

#### **Need for Greater Voice Including Women**

- Mostly men in the policy process. Men/women are different and have different but equally valuable views
- More voice for farmers
- How to entice more farm families into speaking out about injustices
- Not enough farm women presenting their voice/vision of agriculture

- Need more support and leadership training to help empower women to speak out and become involved in meetings
- Farmers need to respect each other and accommodate different views to build a stronger unified farming community

### **Uncontrollable Production Issues**

- Weather conditions

### **Stability and Fairness Through Farmer Controlled Marketing and Appropriate Regulation**

- Loss of markets because of BSE; American challenges and subsidies
- Commodity process to cover cost of production
- Where will money come from for young people to buy farms
- The future of supply management; unending attacks on Canadian supports for CWB, medicare; need to protect supply management
- Disaster programs: a new program every two to three years! Means too much time spent on paper for no income improvement
- Grain licensing and registration: need feed grain category to allow progress in dealing with *Fusarium* blight
- FTA, NAFTA, WTO

### **Sustaining Rural Culture**

- Future of the family farm and rural community at risk
- Will the small farm be able to give the next generation a good living?
- Farms keep getting larger; will kill off our rural communities
- Stop rural depopulation; the lack of farmers destroys community
- Maintaining rural communities and lifestyle; keeping our rural coffee shop
- Loss of infrastructure
- Loss of rural culture and people; rural brain drain
- Loss of heritage; need heritage building support

### **Value for Values**

- Counter consumer ignorance and complacency
- Cut the programs: provide decent money for products
- Need financial compensation for environmental stewardship
- Value of farm work to society
- Stress due to lack of money
- Farm employees want health and pension benefits

- Food security; perpetuating idea of perfectly safe food production
- Producing for export market not bringing money to farm
- Off-farm jobs are needed to support the farm
- Food safety
- How will environmental concerns affect the industry?
- How big is too big? Want to keep it in the family — no employees; want to keep investment risks down

### **Ensuring Family Farm Ownership**

- Retirement; who will take over my farm?
- How to involve our children on the farm with larger, very expensive and complex equipment
- Whether to encourage or discourage kids to farm
- That young people have the opportunity to farm
- Farm families: who can pay taxes?
- Succession: will our children marry someone who will jeopardize the farm family?
- Transition to next generation: lots of problems to be faced. Starting farming when, how, why? How do we keep young people on farm?

### **Loss of Control/Power**

- Global trade; multinational corporate agenda controls governments; need to reduce their control, collusion
- Globalization: multinationals have taken over; loss of producer control and profit in food production
- High store prices, but farmers get such low payment for it
- Lives negatively affected by rationalizations
- When will prices turn around? Will prices cover production costs?
- Need more processing plants or packing plants in Manitoba
- Reform taxation
- Who drives our farm — us or business?
- Public research and access to research results
- No control of prices and input costs; will farming be able to sustain itself?
- Being able to make a decent living from farming and return on investment
- Programs dictating farm decisions
- Business sector making decisions that affect my farm

- Decisions (many) affecting our farm cannot be made on own farm. Farmers cannot be own bosses
- Inability of farmers to unite to save themselves
- How to keep “family” in the family farm
- Reduce hoops to jump through (less paperwork)

### **Loss of Balance: Physical and Mental Health**

- Reliable labour
- When do we retire?
- How can we better communicate with family?
- Family relationships; will my husband ever be on time for a meal; child care for young farm families
- Major repairs needed on our house
- Increased stress fewer volunteers less time (who will get the volunteer of the year award?)
- Stress, mental, management stress, drought very stressful
- To expand or not; [husband] wants more land
- Stress from always getting bigger and more hectic for less financial return will reach a breaking point
- How long will health allow us to farm and to meet physical labour demands – health can change in a heartbeat
- Dependence on chemicals; are the chemicals we are using safe; organic way to go
- Safety concerns on the farm
- Long work hours

### **A Need for a Shift in Communication Culture**

- Farmers unite: education experience, products, clinical trials and tribulations
- Lack of female voice, gender bias
- Educating the public [about farming and food]
- Isolation from other farm wives

### **Why Continue?**

- No incentives for young people to farm
- Young people don’t want farm jobs; who will grow food?
- Farming programs: who receives [i.e., inequitable distribution]
- Future of the family farm; is it still possible? What will happen to the farm we put our whole life into? How can we make it survive an uncertain financial future?
- Surviving natural disasters: weather, BSE, bird flu

- Intergenerational communication: how will/are decisions made?

#### **Effect of Externally Imposed Constraints on Time Management**

- Need for reliable and secure government support
- Lack of time to do job properly
- Time management, programs, equipment costs
- Forms and information are not accessible or user friendly
- No day off
- Continual compliance with auditing for government programs

#### **Lack of Stable Markets and Control of Prices**

- Establishing markets for our products
- Lack of sufficient return on investment
- Inability to plan long-range due to instability
- Forget government programs: pay us for our product (i.e., \$5/lb of \$11/lb beef in store, increase wheat/barley/canola price)

#### **Negative Impacts on Farm Family Health**

- Lack of community supports
- No social support programs for rural women
- Maintain health to cope with physical and mental stress
- Farm safety for kids, people and environment (i.e., disposal of chemicals)
- Health problems and solutions (e.g., my dad's heart)
- Not growing safe, healthy food

#### **Diminishing Financial Returns and the Collapse of the Rural Community: A Downward Spiral**

- Lack of money due to increased costs, low prices; unable to plan, especially for small farmers
- Bank foreclosing, operating loans, financing, debt
- How to get money to farmers, not use it up in government paper work
- Fair grain prices
- Economic stability
- No surplus reserve to acquire improvements for operations
- Income has to be diversified; have to work off farm to keep farm, diversification

#### **A Food System that Disrespects the Environment**

- Health of our environment, soil, air, water and animals

- Cherish the environment/ecosystem, natural fertilizers pesticides health living for animals, more trees
- Consume responsibly
- Build urban understanding and support

**Negative Effect of Corporate Control**

- Introduction of GMO wheat
- Corporate farms push out smaller farmers
- Corporate control over our seed stocks
- Cost-price squeeze budgeting no control of final price, no control over input costs; profit margins squeezed
- Insurers have their own regulations which don't seem to help farmers



## **APPENDIX H: FACTORS IDENTIFIED BY FARM WOMEN AS CONTRIBUTING TO THE CHANGING REALITIES IN THEIR LIVES**

This appendix contains the list of factors identified by farm women as contributing to the changing realities of their lives.

- Trust in science
- Globalization
- Farmers only three percent of the population
- Freer flow of global capital
- Government policy
- Corporate control
- Trade agreements
- Markets volatility; lots of change
- Free trade
- Government agenda, as opposed to farmers' agenda
- Born into farm family to be able to enter farming
- Industrialization
- Globalization
- Lack of foresight at all government levels
- Cheap food policy
- Government influence
- Neo-colonialism/destruction of farming culture
- Independence of farmers
- Cheap food policies
- Globalization
- Corporate influence on the government
- Centralization/consolidation leads to loss of services
- Unstable situations
- Urbanization of society
- Free trade
- Independence of individual farmers
- Deregulation
- Weather

- Setting policies with the help of corporations; corporate influence
- A change in the way they look at farming: a business not a way of life
- Extremely low commodity prices
- Erosion of democracy
- Expanding human populations
- Fast food
- Growth/advancing technology
- Increased input costs
- Greed (everybody wants to make more money)
- Industrialization of farming advanced technology after WWII
- Media and sound bite journalism
- Lack of group support
- Bigger is better philosophy
- Proactive vs. reactive
- High cost of production, low return
- Fast life
- Class division in agriculture, dualism between very large farmers
- Weather
- Economics more important than anything else
- Government policy
- Over-consumption of resources
- Corporations leading government
- Overproduction of some grains
- Primacy of market considerations
- Political will
- Corporate gouging
- Consumer demands have changed
- Free trade agreement; NAFTA
- Individual more important than group
- Demographics of the farm population
- Greed
- Farm lifestyles; hard sell
- Lack of united voice

- Consumerism
- Vertical integration of multinational corporations
- Everybody wants more, more, more
- Smaller families; not producing our own work force
- Farm debt
- Rural urban divide
- Multinational corporation concentration
- Loss of communities
- Lack of labour
- Absence of women's voices in farm policy; no influence or consultation
- Farmers don't come together to speak with united voice that makes sense to a listener
- Greed; everyone wants more
- Immediate corporate threat; when a corporation decides to take over the farms around you
- Unfair competition
- Landing institutions
- Competing with each other vs. co-operation
- Technology decreases need for labour, leads to rural depopulation
- Economists
- Contradiction of willingness of farmers to adapt to change; reluctance of farmer to adapt to changing environment
- Advertising
- Us not supporting local business leads to their loss
- Too busy to watch these things encroaching on us. (i.e., technology)
- Dissatisfaction: demoralization, apathetic, unhooking from community
- Lack of experience
- Farm machinery price gouging
- Have more training, less education
- Farmers too compliant
- Shift from citizenship to consumerism
- More dependence on technology
- Lack of education

- Elevation of institutional knowledge (if you have letters behind your name you know more)
- Cheap food policy
- Environmental degradation
- Generational issue with regard to hard work and technology
- Trade
- Increased specialization has decreased actual knowledge base
- Advanced of technology
- Competition; lack of competition on the other
- WASP mentality; arrogance
- Increased knowledge base
- Fewer people producing food
- Research and development lacking wisdom and integrity
- Mega-farms
- Consumer unwillingness to pay more money for food
- Climate change
- Media misconception
- Declining farm population; less clout.
- Cost of machinery/inputs
- Pollution
- Weather
- Rural–urban split
- Farmer gullibility re: new technology
- Lack of community understanding
- Chemical companies manipulating prices; tie prices to commodities
- Corporate control
- Failure to keep ourselves well informed on impacts of new developments
- Self-interest and greed of corporations and those with deeper pockets than the average farmer
- Markets
- Technology/industrialization
- Too busy to address changes
- Change in community values

- Age bracket of who is farming; changes how they respond
- More middle men take more of the profit, less for farmers
- Lack of information among farmers
- Accept technology too quickly
- Lack of diversity of plants and animals
- Bigger farms, fewer people
- Age of farmers; most are near retirement and things won't affect them
- Factory farming
- Government representing corporations not people
- Consumer ignorance
- Monoculture
- Overproduction
- Public misperception of farm reality
- Poor decision making; some is lender driven
- Corporate concentration
- Public misperceptions fed by media
- Public perception; media show farmers in expensive combines
- Subsidies (who benefits from what kind of subsidy)
- Lack of personal connection between rural and urban
- Declining rural population
- Smaller families
- Perimeter perception
- Changed work ethic
- Changes in gender roles, especially women's change in role after WWII, and women's expectation that they wanted to be able to continue working outside the home
- Perception that farmers being subsidized rather than consumers being subsidized is wrong, consumers are being subsidized (i.e., cheap food policy)
- Global neo-colonialism
- Changing demographics; aging population
- Trusting those doing research and policy, and that turned out not to be in our best interest
- Technology
- As a country, we have forgotten to put the importance on food production that it really deserves

- Media
- Privatization of agricultural research
- Our unrealistic expectations that what we see on TV we should have
- Mindset of senior bureaucrats re: the need for reduction in farm numbers; for decades
- Apathy: everyone's, especially media
- People running out of options for dealing with stress; diminishing ability to deal with loss of control
- Our perception of lack of respect for farmers and farming by everyone (we aren't respected by anyone; no one wants to be a farmer; don't call myself a farmer, get no respect)
- Lack of realization that farming is a full-time job; you shouldn't have to have another job
- Rural–urban divide
- Devaluing food production
- Stress; how do we deal with it?

## **APPENDIX I: ELEMENTS OF AN INCLUSIVE CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL POLICY ENVISIONED BY FARM WOMEN**

This appendix contains agricultural policy needs identified, grouped and titled by farm women during five workshops in the winter of 2004-2005. Needs marked with an asterisk (\*) were accepted by participants and added after women had talked about the APF. Titles or individual needs marked with a number sign (#) indicate a change in title or wording that was adopted by participants in the workshop.

### **Stability**

- Fair price and reasonable share of retail dollar (x2)
- Make farming more economically sustainable
- Fair prices (i.e., supply management)
- De-normalize off-farm work
- Production-generated fair income\*

### **Healthy Environments**

- Healthy environment (i.e., no sewage lagoons)
- Acknowledge benefits of non-intensification (animal health, air, water, soil quality, human health, food safety, social implications, etc.)\*

### **Stewardship and Marketing Power**

- Right to organic production
- Regain power and control over own farm and marketing
- Acknowledge value of farming on its own without value-adding
- Reward ecologically responsible farming practices
- Support for marketing of diverse crops
- More mixed vs. specialized farming
- Government research money must be producer-driven vs. corporate-driven

### **Food–Farm Relationships**

- Good communication with farming partners (hard to do when working off-farm)
- Smaller farms
- Produce for local consumption
- High knowledge (farmers') vs. high technology farming
- Young people should have input into the future of farming (vs. feudal serfdom)
- Respect for farms, food and food producers (if people respected farmers and what farms do for society; food is essential)

- Educate consumers (i.e., farming knowledge)
- Bridge rural–urban divide

### **Healthy Communities**

- Good local access to social support services
- Policies that address social and environmental as well as economic aspects
- Need to continue pride of ownership
- Less stress
- Policies that reflect environment and social aspects as well as economics

### **Fair Return from the Marketplace on Our Investment**

- Stable income, cost of production, incentives for green and co-operative marketing systems
- More return for work; price covers cost of production
- Income stability program for small farmers
- Equal support for conventional and organic farmers

### **Food Sovereignty by Canadians for Canadians First**

- Farm programs designed to support the family farm
- Fair trade not free trade
- Make Canadian produce a priority supported by regulation
- Develop food culture in Canada
- More local food systems; local food collection and distribution networks
- Small producer access to quota commodities
- Domestic food security\*
- Regulation appropriate to unique specialty markets\*
- Become more self-reliant; close systems for energy and inputs

### **Managing Our Relationships with Our Environments**

- Responsibility for environment, respect for neighbours
- Improve sustainability and land stewardship, etc.
- Weather
- Environmental human rights: accountability for our actions\*
- Wildlife management

### **Nurturing Communities**

- Mutual support through farm organizations and community groups
- Treat farmers with more respect



- Raise awareness of how the food system works\*
- More young farm boys for farm girls to meet

### **Improved Working Conditions**

- Time to do what is important to us
- Time off, on farm research, environmental stewardship, observation etc.
- Access to a pool of trained agricultural workers to do respite on farms

### **Appropriate Infrastructure and Technology for Small and Medium Family Farmers**

- Develop infrastructure and co-ordination between direct market growers and consumers (i.e., organic food terminal, relay trucking, shelf space, distributors, trucks)
- Access to small abattoirs
- Develop more closed energy and input systems
- Develop infrastructure and co-ordination between direct market growers and consumers (i.e., organic food terminal, relay trucking, shelf space, distributors, trucks)\*
- Small-scale technical solutions for small- and medium-sized farmers

### **Orderly Marketing for All Commodities**

- Better marketing
- More money for products
- Financial security; to be able to make a living
- Single desk selling
- Immediate help for potato, beef, pork producers
- To be able to make a living

### **Acknowledgement of Farming as a Professional Occupation**

- More respect for farmers
- Civil servants more respect for farmers
- A strong voice to take back control of occupation\*

### **Domestic Food Promotion and Policy**

- More support for local farmers
- Increased availability of local products to consumers\*

### **Supported Social Infrastructure for Rural Communities**

- Strong local community
- Financial assistance for child care and elder care\*
- To farm in the way you dream
- Access to professional services and programs\*

- A vacation
- Reconnect with nature
- Trained labour pool for various seasonal work\*
- Incentives to make niche operations viable\*

### **Accountable and Responsive Government to Farmers**

- Government more accountable for their actions
- Improved government policy process; open participatory consultation
- Expand single desk selling
- Government resources for farmer-led research\*
- Increase government role in research and local infrastructure
- Increase resources for alternative farming\*

### **Quality of Life**

- More sex more often
- Time off to do things with family
- Have more neighbours your own age to socialize with
- Attract children back to farm and communities
- Balance making a reasonable living with leisure time
- Community services (schools, recreation, hospital, art)

### **A Fair Opportunity at Profitability #**

- Profitability
- Fair price profit margin
- Better value for products and control of input costs
- Ability to hire reliable help and pay benefits\*

### **Farmer-Controlled Market Structures**

- Small producers' collective marketing with adequate profit
- Supply management; long-term government support
- Increase focus on producing for the domestic market
- Work toward farmer unity; start small and concrete, and build\*

### **Family-Farm-Friendly Agricultural Policy**

- More favourable national agriculture policies
- Federal agriculture programs that are long term and consistent
- Have a critical mass of people with a rural heart in the community\*

- Farmers compensated for environmental stewardship
- Find balance in paperwork and regulations
- Reduce duplication in paperwork\*
- Review policy on border closing due to diseases and contamination; changed from open border marketing (i.e., open the border to cattle) #
- Benefits for farmers

### **Long-Term Stewardship**

- Knowledgeable, responsible farm practices
- Universal environmental care system\*
- Farmer-initiated, long-term planning for farm

### **Public Relations**

- Foster consumer understanding of farming\*
- More appreciation for farmers and farming

### **Establish Fair Pricing Mechanisms for Primary Producers**

- Secure stable income for producing quality food
- Fair price fair distribution among participants in the food chain
- Value for production
- Safer, secure income
- More control of marketing (i.e., becoming price setters)

### **Reduce Overwhelming Effects of New Demands**

- More time
- Less stress and no boss demands (you are independent)

### **Ability to Maintain Viable Family Farms**

- Make hobby your job
- Ability to maintain lifestyle without working off the farm

### **Respect Farm Families and Value Their Contribution to Our Society**

- Recognize and value producer
- Educate the consumer about farmer and farming
- Respect for product and producer work

### **Develop a Practical Policy Process that Starts with Farmers' Needs**

- Programs beneficial to the family farm; changed from less control from government; who benefits from their direction (e.g., government promotion of expansion)
- Affordable borrowing program

- Need for women's voices to be heard in government policy

**Harness Tech to Make Farming Sustainable**

- Harness tech to make farming sustainable
- Farmer participation in developing technology\*
- Retain genetic resources in the public domain

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Page 9. As quoted in Warnock (1971).

<sup>2</sup> British researcher Letherby (2003: 65) cited McFarlane (1990) who noted that official statistics are “anything but neutral, objective and value free.” This point is especially pertinent for this project.

<sup>3</sup> In the literature, the term “off-farm” is most often used to describe additional sources of income for farm families. However, this ignores the fact that many farm women and their families actually do non-farm work from their farm home. One participant’s comment clarified the difference between non-farm and off-farm income: “A wise woman once told me a lot of farmers don’t leave the farm if they can figure out how to get paid or do non-farm work at home.”

<sup>4</sup> These life maps offer visual insights into farm women’s realities. However, for technical reasons, they could not be included in this report. Another version of the report with the life maps is available at <[www.nfu.ca](http://www.nfu.ca)>.

<sup>5</sup> A number of terms are used to reflect existing differences between poor and wealthy nations: Third World, First World; North, South; developed, undeveloped; industrialized, non-industrialized. This report uses the terms North and South while fully recognizing the limitations of terminology.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Desmarais (2002: 99). In the Latin American context, “disappeared” is used as a verb describing people who disappear because of political violence.

<sup>7</sup> As quoted in Scott and Van Dine (1995: 33).

<sup>8</sup> In 1991, the Canadian Census of Agriculture was revised to allow farm families to list multiple producers and thus allow women to be counted as agricultural producers. However, the long period of allowing only one producer per farm means women will continue to count themselves out for some time.

<sup>9</sup> Objective 1 is to implement gender-based analysis throughout federal departments and agencies. As the document notes, “introducing gender analysis in the developmental stage of a policy is more efficient and potentially less costly in human and social terms for women. Since it helps identify any negative impact the policy might have on women, it leads to more effective public policy while providing greater opportunities for the economic and social development of Canadians.” Furthermore, objective 9 seeks to “accord women an equitable share of power and leadership in decision making processes affecting Canada’s social and economic development” (1995).

<sup>10</sup> The cost–price squeeze occurs when production costs are higher than, and/or increase faster than the commodity prices received. Farmers do not receive prices for their



commodities that cover their production costs, provide a return on investment and generate an annual family income equivalent to the Canadian average.

<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that the terminology of “cheap food” voiced by participants might have also been in reference to low farm gate prices. Historically, the implementation of a cheap food policy was a mechanism to enable low industrial wages. At that time, farmers received a greater share of the consumer food dollar. However, in the current environment where low-priced food is imported and discipline in wages is accomplished through the possibility of exporting jobs, the price of food is no longer determined by government policy. Instead, food prices are determined by an international market place that is increasingly controlled by transnational agribusiness corporations. Consequently, farmers’ share of the consumer dollar has decreased considerably over the past 30 years as corporate entities have inserted themselves in the food chain. See Martz (2004) for an analysis of the farmers’ share of the consumer food dollar in Canada.

<sup>12</sup> Coverage under Worker’s Compensation is not automatic for farmers and farm workers. They must apply, and pay the premiums to receive it.

<sup>13</sup> Endnote 10 contains more information about the cost–price squeeze.

<sup>14</sup> Women had more to say about succession. That information is reported in the section on the Farm Financial Crisis.

<sup>15</sup> Some producers claim there is little market impediment to growing genetically modified canola, but in fact, Japan does not accept GM canola. The EU only recently started accepting GM canola.

<sup>16</sup> In November 2004, Saskatchewan’s certified organic farmers applied to the court to be certified to undertake a class action lawsuit against Monsanto and Bayer Crop Science. In this “precedent setting class action lawsuit,” organic farmers want “to stop genetically engineered wheat and to get compensation for losing canola as a crop due to genetic contamination.” More information is available at <[www.saskorganic.com/oapf/index.html](http://www.saskorganic.com/oapf/index.html)>. Accessed February 14, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> The Monsanto Web site describes the Technology Use Agreement (TUA) as “a contract that defines, by variety, the number of acres of Roundup Ready seed a grower has purchased.” It further states that “the vast majority of growers indicate that they will respect their agreement not to save Roundup Ready seed.” An excerpt from a sample contract for a “Single Season Limited License” states that the licence covers the “planting of a commercial crop in the country of purchase in one and only one season.” Applicants are required “not to supply any of this seed to anyone for planting” and “not to save any crop produced from this seed for replanting or supply saved seed to anyone for replanting, and agrees not to use this seed or provide it to anyone for crop breeding, research or seed production.” Finally, the grower agrees to allow Monsanto “reasonable field access for sampling and testing during the year and following year of the TUA.” For more information on TUAs, please refer to the

Monsanto Web site at <[www.monsanto.ca/advantages/programs/agreements.shtml](http://www.monsanto.ca/advantages/programs/agreements.shtml)>. Accessed February 14, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> The “Wingspread Statement on the Precautionary Principle” states: “When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically.” The full text of the statement was obtained online on February 9, 2005 at <[www.gdrc.org/u-gov/precaution-3.html](http://www.gdrc.org/u-gov/precaution-3.html)>.

<sup>19</sup> There is public debate about whether organic food is more nutritious than foods produced conventionally.

<sup>20</sup> There is a clear contrast between adaptive strategies adopted by this farmer and the woman whose life story was presented earlier. Here, the farm woman is actively resisting corporate control in the organic sector by refusing to market through President’s Choice. The other farm family’s strategy seemed based more on economic pragmatism.

<sup>21</sup> The borders were closed in May 2003. According to an AAFC press release dated December 30, 2004 “The US rule will once again allow for the importation into the U.S. of live cattle under 30 months for immediate slaughter or for feeding, provided they are slaughtered before reaching the age of 30 months. The rule also allows for the importation of meat from animals older than 30 months and removes segregation requirements at Canadian slaughter facilities.” The rule, intended to take effect in early March 2005, has been delayed. There is now some cross-border movement of cattle, but governments are still negotiating related regulatory elements.

<sup>22</sup> Farm women define “corporatization” as the process by which corporations increasingly dominate industrial activities in agriculture. It is linked to agribusiness, vertical integration and corporate concentration.

<sup>23</sup> In many media, brevity is the order of the day, at the expense of in-depth analysis. Whereas a 30-second sound bite used to be the norm, now a speaker must make her/his point within 10 seconds.

<sup>24</sup> According to a news story published in a major farm newspaper, *The Western Producer* (February 21), new “national standards in the United States and those under development in Canada state that unintentional GM contamination has no effect on a producer’s organic status” (Pratt 2005: 1). The new standards mean that in the United States farmers will not lose their organic certification as long as they “didn’t purposely plant GM seed and took reasonable steps to avoid incidental contact with the banned substance [GMO], such as setting up buffer zones” (Pratt 2005: 1). The Canadian Organic Standards Committee is finalizing its new standards.

If and when accepted, these new standards will make it increasingly difficult for consumers to discern products that are GMO free from those that are GMO contaminated. In addition,

organic farmers will face greater risks, because buyers will still be able to reject a product if it is found to be contaminated.

<sup>25</sup> It is important to note that participants voiced experiences that historically were characteristics of overproduction. That is, low farm-gate prices and difficulty in marketing products usually signalled overproduction.

<sup>26</sup> Control is also acquired through plant breeder's rights.

<sup>27</sup> Another tool that agribusiness uses to protect ownership of seed is identity preservation. The American Soybean Association and United Soybean Board describe it as "a process by which a crop is grown, usually under contract, and handled, processed and delivered under controlled conditions, whereby the end user of the product is assured that it has maintained its unique identity from farmgate to end-use." See <[www.tomorrowsbounty.org/library/usb2.htm](http://www.tomorrowsbounty.org/library/usb2.htm)>. Accessed February 14, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Women's claims about the dis-benefits of trade are substantiated in Chapter 2.

<sup>29</sup> The cash advance program is authorized by the *Agricultural Marketing Programs Act*. It enables eligible Western Canadian farmers who have wheat, durum and barley stored on farm to receive up to \$250,000 per crop year for all crops, regardless of the number of farming operations in which the applicant has a financial interest. The first \$50,000 is interest free until the advance is repaid or August 31. The 2004-05 per-tonne advance payment rates are wheat \$80, durum, \$75, barley \$40, designated barley \$63. Advances are repaid by delivering wheat, durum and barley to the CWB at the same price. (See CWB, nd).

<sup>30</sup> Since 1990, the CWB has spent \$15 million on 13 studies and investigations resulting from U.S. challenges to various aspects of the CWB. Most of that money has been spent since 2002. The challenges are becoming more complex, and are labour and data intensive. (Potts 2005).

<sup>31</sup> See endnote 24.

<sup>32</sup> In fact, grain transportation costs have risen by 700 percent, as stated in Chapter 2.

<sup>33</sup> The concept of food sovereignty was first introduced by the international peasant and farm movement, the *Vía Campesina*, at the non-governmental forum held in conjunction with the World Food Summit in Rome in 1996. Since then, the *Vía Campesina* has worked in coalition with other social movements and non-governmental organizations to elaborate the "Peoples' Food Sovereignty" position.

The *Vía Campesina* (2000c) defines food sovereignty as "the right of peoples to define their agricultural and food policy," and the "right to produce our own food in our own territory." Since its introduction in the international arena, the concept has spread widely and is now being explored by local, national and international movements as well as global institutions such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Commission

on Human Rights. For example, in a report to the Commission, the United Nations special rapporteur on the right to food advocated food sovereignty as a way to ensure people's rights to food and food security (Zeigler 2003: 21). See the *Vía Campesina* Web site at [www.viacampesina.org/](http://www.viacampesina.org/), Desmarais (2003) and Rosset (2003) for further discussion of food sovereignty.

<sup>34</sup> Costs associated with large-scale farming include effects like pollution of ground and surface water from large volumes of animal waste, contamination of air, water and soil by pesticides, soil degradation, and safety and quality problems associated with intensive production systems. Another example is the degradation of rural roads from transporting grain since rail branch lines were abandoned. Still other costs are social, like the rural depopulation that leads to a rural tax base unable to maintain infrastructures critical to their communities, and to the broader society.

<sup>35</sup> The new program is called the Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization (CAIS) program or CAISP. The program has changed, and continues to change, since the workshops were held in 2003-2004.

<sup>36</sup> The NISA program was established several years ago to reduce the negative impacts of income loss. In good years, farmers could make deposits into their NISA accounts and these were matched by government contributions. During bad years, farmers could make withdrawals to offset losses. Many farmers, however, were unable to generate sufficient income to invest in a NISA account.

<sup>37</sup> An Olympic average is the best three of the past five years of production.

<sup>38</sup> The lines between the provincial and federal responsibilities regarding the environment are blurred.

<sup>39</sup> The team included 12 women farm leaders and three key researchers.

<sup>40</sup> Introductory paragraphs describing each pillar are excerpts from an undated AAFC News Release Backgrounder "Overview of the Agricultural Policy Framework." <[www.agr.gc.ca/cb/index\\_e.php?s1=n&s2=2002&page=n20712c](http://www.agr.gc.ca/cb/index_e.php?s1=n&s2=2002&page=n20712c)>. Accessed February 12, 2005.

<sup>41</sup> Bullet points have been excerpted from "Overview of the Agricultural Policy Framework." <[http://www.agr.gc.ca/cb/apf/index\\_e.php?section=info&page=gen](http://www.agr.gc.ca/cb/apf/index_e.php?section=info&page=gen)>. Accessed February 12, 2005.

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\* Some of these papers are still in progress and not all titles are finalized.