



CHANGING PERCEPTIONS UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES

AMERICAN FARM BUREAU® WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE
PROGRAM OF WORK



Changing Perceptions, Unlimited Possibilities

is the theme for the AFB Women's Leadership Committee for 2010-2011. Following a strategic planning session, the committee members determined the theme to describe how the members feel about their role.

There are many areas in agriculture and in the general community where we are challenged to change perceptions about agriculture, family farms and ranches and about the role of women in agriculture. We have accepted the challenge to make a difference and to change some of those perceptions through direct contact, educational programming, leadership development programs and speaking out for our industry. The committee members also recognize the unlimited possibilities for women in agriculture.

As the number of women as principal operators on farms and ranches increases, so will the role of women in leadership in agriculture. The possibilities for involvement in the industry are limitless and the goal of our committee is to provide the leadership tools needed to make a difference. Our four priority areas for 2010-2011 are:

- **Influencing Political Perceptions**
- **Influencing Public Perceptions**
- **Unlimited Leadership Possibilities**
- **Unlimited Community Possibilities**

We encourage all women in Farm Bureau to become involved in this effort. There are many opportunities available to you. We invite you to apply to participate in the FB Women's Communications Boot Camp held in Washington, DC each July. We also encourage you to mark your calendars for the National Women's Leadership Conference, April 15-19, 2011, in Baltimore, Maryland.

Join our Facebook fan page – Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Program and follow us on Twitter @FBWomen.

Farm Bureau women can and do make a difference in agriculture and we are excited about our new program of work, “Changing Perceptions, Unlimited Possibilities.”

Terry Gilbert, Chair American Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee



Influence Political Perceptions

Involvement in political issues is critical to the survival of farming and ranching operations, and Farm Bureau (FB) women are well aware of this. They are making their voices heard on Farm Bureau policy issues in several ways. The American Farm Bureau (AFB) Women's Leadership Committee leads the way in influencing political perceptions about agriculture through involvement in ensuring policy implementation.

- **FBACT** – Committee members are involved and respond to action requests through FBACT. They also promote this program to FB women in the states and counties.
- **Personal Contacts** – Committee members make regular contact with their elected representatives and encourage other FB women to do the same.
- **Issues Communication** – Providing background information on priority issues of Farm Bureau is another way that the members of the AFB Women's Leadership Committee support increased involvement from other FB women.

Michelle Williamson of Florida Farm Bureau presents the Friend of Farm Bureau award to Rep. Gus Bilirakis



Influence Public Perceptions

The general public has many incorrect perceptions about farming and ranching which Farm Bureau women are focused on changing. Putting a face on agriculture is one way to reach the public. The AFB Women's Leadership Committee members will work to reach consumers and students using a variety of methods.

- **Consumer Education** – Food Check-Out Week (the third full week of February) is a primary focus of the committee in reaching consumers with a message of stretching your grocery dollar with healthy, nutritious food. Supermarket activities and charitable work with Ronald McDonald House Charities help spread this message in a very positive way. Other consumer education efforts are accomplished during National Ag Week (the first week of spring) and National Farm-City Week (the week preceding and concluding on Thanksgiving Day).
- **Consumer Recognition** – Recognizing consumers for their support of farmers and ranchers is another very effective way to influence public perceptions of agriculture.
- **Social Media** – The AFB Women's Leadership Committee recognizes that social media is an important vehicle for telling their story. The Facebook fan page is "Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Program" and the committee can be followed on www.twitter.com/fbwomen.
- **Agricultural Literacy** – The AFB Women's Leadership Committee is involved in agricultural literacy programs at many levels. They make presentations in classrooms and secure teachers to test new materials. They also support the AFB Foundation for Agriculture White-Reinhardt Fund for Education which provides mini-grants for local programs and teacher scholarships to the National Ag in the Classroom conference.
- **Farm Safety and Health** – Agricultural Safety Awareness Week (the first full week of March) and National Farm Safety and Health Week (the third week of September) provide two opportunities to educate farm/ranch families about farm safety. Farm women are extremely effective in delivering the safety message to family members and to others in the community.

Unlimited Leadership Possibilities

Leadership opportunities for Farm Bureau women occur throughout the year and the AFB Women's Leadership Committee is dedicated to surfacing women leaders in agriculture and providing them with tools to be effective leaders in Farm Bureau and in the industry.

- **AFBF Annual Meeting** – Farm Bureau women's programs from across the nation are showcased here. It is also when Farm Bureau Women elect their national committee.
- **Communications Boot Camp** – This program began in 2007 to enhance communications skills of Farm Bureau women. A class is selected each year. Sessions include intensive training on public speaking, working with the media, testifying and becoming a candidate for office. Graduates of the program are challenged to use their skills to tell their story about agriculture to the community.
- **National Women's Leadership Conference** – April 15-19, 2011, are the dates for the fourth National Women's Leadership Conference. The conference is open to all women Farm Bureau members. More than 600 women will gather in Baltimore, Maryland to participate in educational sessions and tours to further develop their leadership skills.
- **State and regional leadership conferences** and state committee meetings are other venues where members of the AFB Women's Leadership Committee interact with state and county leaders and provide leadership training.

Unlimited Community Possibilities

Keeping rural communities strong is vital to the success of farms and ranches. According to a recent report Making American Agriculture Productive and Profitable, “rural America, and agriculture’s role in it, is evolving such that now, farming is more dependent on rural communities than rural communities are dependent on farming.” Many members of farm families hold off-farm jobs in the community and depend on the community for educational, health care and other services. It is important that Farm Bureau women work to strengthen these communities.

- **Rural Development** – By focusing on opportunities for rural development, Farm Bureau women can make a difference in keeping rural areas strong and attractive to rural youth so that they will return to those communities.
- **Rural Leadership** – Farm Bureau has a presence in most counties throughout the country. The AFB Women’s Leadership Committee encourages women to take an active role in Farm Bureau and in the community.

Jan Holley of Mississippi Farm Bureau at the 2009 Women’s Communications Boot Camp



The AFB Women's Leadership Committee members are elected at the AFBF annual meeting. In addition to the committee chair and vice chair, there are two members representing each of four regions. The committee develops programs and materials that will empower women in Farm Bureau to strive for and attain leadership positions to strengthen the overall organization. Both the program of work and the committee budget are approved by the AFBF Board of Directors.

Top row left: Angela Ryden, Colorado/Western Region; Margene Harris, New Mexico/Western Region;
Ginny Paarlberg, Florida/Southern Region; Isabella Chism, Indiana/Midwest Region;
Beth Pool, New Jersey/Northeast Region; Frances Price, South Carolina/Southern Region;
Bottom row left: Ethel Nash, West Virginia/Northeast Region; Terry Gilbert, Kentucky/Chair;
Sherry Saylor, Arizona/Vice Chair; Helen Norris, Kansas/Midwest Region

For more information visit the AFBF web site, www.fb.org, or find us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter.

