

Starting a story well about women in agriculture

We have always been here: women farmers in Palestine, [URL](#)

It was one of those days that my phone didn't stop ringing. "Hello, Om Sleiman?" – I'd lost count of the times I repeated this greeting.

Om Sleiman is the community supported agriculture farm I have managed for the last four years. It translates literally as 'the mother of Sleiman', but in our case it means ladybug, the insect that we're always happy to see in the farm; a pest manager offered by nature.

We often get calls from people looking to do photoshoots with our farmers and on this particular call I asked: "Do you want a woman or a man?" It took him by surprise. "Oh, I didn't know there were Palestinian women farmers..."

What should have been a two-minute call turned into a twenty-minute lecture by me about sexism, farming, colonisation, and patriarchy. The caller clearly wanted out. He agreed to see both male and female farmers and would give the company he worked for the two options.

In search of technical training for women, [URL](#)

Nestan Vibliani is an economist by trade. By day, the 43-year-old female farmer¹ works at the local municipality in the south-central Georgian town of Tsalka, and by night she cares for her four children and husband.

Somewhere in between she finds time to help her family cultivate 13 hectares of land which includes one hectare of potatoes.

"I've been farming potatoes since I was a child," said Nestan. "I love working the land and I want to learn about the new varieties and new technologies for growing potatoes."

Like many women in Georgia, Nestan hasn't had many opportunities to learn more about potatoes even though women make up half of the agricultural labor force. "Information often does not reach women because the training sessions are mostly attended by men while women are busy with household chores. My husband has learned about new mechanization techniques, but I haven't."

Evidence, participation and policy inclusion key to making women agents of change in global climate responses, Jenni Metcalfe, [URL](#)

Climate change is devastating for the communities of [Senegal's Saloum Delta](#), as it increases soil salinity, erodes coastal mangroves and reduces biodiversity, including fish populations.

The depleted coastal fisheries, along with the boom in fish-meal factories that provide for the world's farmed salmon and sea bass, means there is less fish available for the 700,000 Senegalese workers who depend on this industry.

¹ See note about the term 'female farmer' in the training handout *Writing for gender equality*. As Marlene Elias says, "I would simply call her a 'farmer' rather than a 'female farmer', to push people to start to think about farmers as women too (like 'women doctors')."

This fishery depletion affects Senegal's food security, given 80 per cent of the protein consumed in Senegal comes from fish. With men migrating away from the coastline to find work, this reinforces hardships for women.

In situations like this, women often find themselves alone dealing with multiple crises related to climate, social and economic impacts.

But in Senegal, according to [Ms Fatou Ndoye](#) from [Enda Graf Sahel](#), women have been actively putting in place strategies to adapt to and reduce the impacts of climate change.

Women are changing the rules of Australian agriculture, [URL](#)

Olympia Yarger's farming day starts at sunrise. By eight in the morning, she has already collected the eggs. Next, she feeds the animals and checks the climate control system. Then she cleans. "There's a lot of cleaning to do," she says. "Just like with any other animal. It's an all-day affair but a really rewarding job."

Yarger is an insect farmer. Growing up as a city girl, Yarger always enjoyed being around animals. She loved to ride horses and spent many of her weekends on her friends' farms. But when she transferred to an all-girls Catholic school in Year 11, Yarger had her first reality check.

"They were horrified that I wanted to go into agriculture," she recalls. "They told me that St Clare's girls didn't become farmers."

A woman farmer wasn't a thing. But Yarger was determined to follow her passion.

Like Yarger, many women in agriculture have started to reject traditional stereotypes and claim their space in the industry. Motivated by social and environmental justice, women farmers are thriving, showing the country that transforming farming into a more sustainable practice is possible and lucrative.

Mariana Vasconcelos: A Daughter of Farmers Creates Smart Software to Boost Crop Production, [URL](#)

In early spring of 2020, Mariana Vasconcelos found herself at a crossroads. With the COVID-19 pandemic spreading globally, the CEO of agtech start-up Agrosmart had to decide whether to cut costs, including staff. The timing seemed uncanny, if not potentially devastating, for in the growing landscape of start-ups, Agrosmart is a rising star.

Agrosmart monitors crops and provides farmers and the entire food supply chain with agronomic and traceability insights. Headquartered in Brazil, the company uses data acquired from sensors installed on farms to monitor crops, with the goal of boosting crop production. The company's mission is to "make agriculture more productive, sustainable, and resilient to climate change." Vasconcelos grew up in a farming family and says that she is driven by wanting to help all farmers be more efficient and increase their yield.

The company has built itself up to nearly 60 staff and to date has raised \$8.8 million. Vasconcelos, despite her youthful façade, is a dynamic presence and an engaging and passionate speaker. In 2020 she was included in Worth magazine's list of [Groundbreaking Women of the Year](#).

Vasconcelos's personal history inspired her to launch Agrosmart. She is the daughter of farmers and when younger witnessed the problems they faced. The family farm in Pedralva, Brazil, centered on sugar cane (Brazil is the world's largest exporter of sugarcane) and in recent years shifted to corn and horse breeding; her brother continues to grow organic vegetables and coffee. In this challenging profession, the fragile line between success and failure during a growing season was heavily dependent on Mother Nature and a grower's intuition.