

Emerging Roles and Leadership

Women in agriculture are uniquely positioned to influence sustainability.

Women play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the agriculture and livestock industry. It's not the first time I've written about that in this column. Yet, emerging as a niche of major importance is the role these ag-based women play in the environmental stewardship space. For women in sustainability careers, the journey is not just a professional pursuit; it's a powerful opportunity to make a lasting impact while serving as advocates for agriculture and the beef industry. As I began thinking about this impact specifically, several pivotal contributions women bring to the sustainability space came to mind.

No. 1 - Community engagement:

Women in sustainability positions uniquely foster community engagement. Sustainability is inherently linked to community well-being, and women are often adept at building connections. Whether leading local environmental initiatives or collaborating with diverse stakeholders, women in sustainability careers can leverage their community-focused approach to drive meaningful change. Besides, women are the primary local representatives for their families — at the store, at the ball game, at the school, etc. We carry our career passions with us wherever we go.

No. 2 - Science and research:

Fueling innovation through science and research is a cornerstone of sustainability, and women are making remarkable strides in

these fields. From climate science and environmental engineering to veterinary medicine, women in sustainability careers are contributing to cutting-edge research that informs sustainable practices. Embracing the scientific aspect of sustainability is happening in a big way as STEM careers, in general, are appealing to women of all ages and backgrounds.

No. 3 - Agriculture's impact on sustainability:

Women play a crucial role in reshaping the narrative of agriculture's impact on sustainability. Through sustainable farming practices, conservation efforts and agroecology, women in sustainability careers are actively contributing to the resilience of our food systems. Nowhere is this more evident than the number of women going into veterinary roles. Let's give a big shout out to the ladies out there in the field! Today, we graduate more women veterinarians and more women with animal science degrees than men.

No. 4 - Impact of entrepreneurial women:

Entrepreneurial spirit is a driving force in sustainability, and women entrepreneurs are making waves. Whether launching eco-friendly startups or driving sustainable practices within existing businesses, women in sustainability careers are demonstrating the power of innovation. Their ventures not only

contribute to the green economy but also inspire a new generation of women to pursue impactful entrepreneurial endeavors.

No. 5 - Chief sustainability officers:

The rise of women as chief sustainability officers (CSOs) signals a shift in corporate leadership towards sustainability. Besides the field and entrepreneurship realm, females are getting the nod for corporate roles at a fast pace. The percentage of women occupying CSO roles is on the rise, reflecting a growing recognition of the unique perspectives and leadership qualities women bring to the table. *Greenbiz.com* reports that in the U.S. today 54% of corporate CSO roles are held by women. Globally, this number rises to 63%.

The conversation for women in sustainability is growing into something really, really big, and it's a tremendous opportunity for women that grew up with livestock and have a deep understanding and care for the industry to get involved and lead. **HW**

Editor's Note: Readers of *Hereford World* know Sarah Beth Aubrey as the long-time author of ACT's Playbook. She takes on the rapidly evolving arena of sustainability with this new column. As Aubrey explains, "We'll cover definitions, concepts and ideas. We'll explore what's current and what we in the beef industry have known about sustainability all along. We'll do a little cussing and discussing, too. Bottom line, we know our business and we know we're the best at what we do. It's time to step into sustainability and tell our story."

