

# SHINING A LIGHT ON women IN AGRICULTURE

by Kristine Penning, AgCareers.com Creative Marketing Specialist

**KRYSTA HARDEN**, a farm girl from Georgia, has dedicated her career to helping American farmers through various roles in the U.S. government, ultimately serving as Deputy Secretary of the USDA alongside Secretary Tom Vilsack. Throughout her 30-year history in agriculture, she admits that women have not always been treated equally in the industry, but she has never let that stop her from reaching her goals.

"There are times still when I am the only decision-maker at the table who is female and that is changing," Harden said. "In the past, I didn't have the automatic acceptance that some of my male peers had; I always had to earn it. There have been times I felt that my ideas or concerns were dismissed or even ignored because I was a female. I found I had to work harder and to always make sure my facts were correct and I had every detail just right. There was no room for even a minor mistake. I was raised by parents who helped me have confidence to be that different voice and to contribute even though it may not always be comfortable or easy."

While both men and women today would tell you that the perception of women in agriculture has changed for the better, a 2015 study done by AgCareers.com sheds light on the issues still faced by women in agriculture. More than 2,000 responses indicate a disparity in pay between genders with men typically earning more than women. Harden, who now serves as the Vice

President Public Policy and Chief Sustainability Officer with DuPont, recognizes that women are sometimes hesitant to ask for what they deserve.



"It's not always comfortable for women to ask for raises or promotions," Harden said. "It can be hard to recognize your own worth when others are making you feel less. I believe strongly that women need to help other women. We need to be fair to all candidates but certainly should be encouraging women to apply for key positions and help mentor them for growth at the highest levels."

Despite a wage and hierarchy gap in agribusiness, this study also revealed that more than 90% of both men and women believe that women are an integral part of agriculture.

"Women have always been involved in agriculture yet our roles haven't been valued as much as they should," Harden said. "The good news is the awareness of women's contributions is changing."

Harden said she is excited about the future of agriculture knowing that more and more women are getting involved.

"Not everyone will be on a farm or ranch and they will contribute to the industry in other ways," Harden said. "We need researchers, communicators,

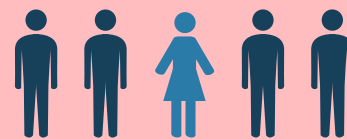
policy makers, nutritionists, marketers, economists, conservationists, teachers... the list is long and jobs are available!"

Her advice to young women in ag?

"Look at your opportunities, not your limitations. You can do it. And there are other women and men here to help. We need and want your voice, your energy, your ideas, and your passion!"

You can view the full "Gender Roles & Equality in Agribusiness" survey report on [agcareers.com/reports.cfm](http://agcareers.com/reports.cfm).

79% of women felt there was gender inequality in agribusiness. Just 47% of men felt the same.



1/2 of women surveyed said they had experienced blunt sexism at work.



49% of women felt they would be better compensated if they were male.



70% of women hoped to advance to a higher level role one day.



80% of both men & women felt the attitude toward women in ag has changed for the better in the past decade.