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State Agriculture Officials Kick Off International Year of the Woman Farmer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The nation's commissioners, directors and secretaries of agriculture gathered in Washington D.C. for NASDA's 2026 Winter Policy Conference, where members honored International Year of the Woman Farmer through several engagements.

"We were proud to be able to give International Year of the Woman Farmer the stage at NASDA's Policy Conference, and we look forward to elevating the voices of women farmers throughout 2026," NASDA CEO Ted McKinney said. "Women are vital to agriculture worldwide, from production to innovation to leadership. NASDA is committed to amplifying women farmers' voices and ensuring policies reflect needs and opportunities for all farmers."

Highlights from the meeting included:

NASDA opened the conference with a **plenary session panel**, "**International Year of the Woman Farmer: What it is and why it matters**" that examined the pivotal role women play in advancing global agriculture and highlighted how empowering women in agriculture helps strengthen and advance the entire industry. Moderated by NASDA President, Maine Agriculture Commissioner Amanda Beal, this session featured remarks from U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith, Global Farmer Network CEO Mary Boote and U.S. Dairy Export Council President & CEO Krysta Harden.

One topic covered by the panel was the next generation, discussing how to ensure women are not only inspired to work in agriculture but are also a respected and valued voice in the field.

"Seeing is believing and I think when you raise up other women in leadership positions, as farmers, that next generation gets to see them as well as an opportunity not only to be a farmer, to be involved in agriculture, but also to provide some leadership that their voice matters, that their perspective matters," **Boote said.**

Additionally, panelists discussed how International Year of the Woman Farmer can spur meaningful change through policy and beyond.

"Don't be afraid to introduce new legislation, whether it's in the State House or whether it's on Capitol Hill, that would make a difference," **Senator Hyde-Smith said.** "That may not seem that easy, but as long as it's logical and you have people that agree with you, it's like, wow, we can get that done."

"That recognition, to honor and to make real change, lasting change, is not just in one year. It's not a snapshot," **Harden said.** "It's forever changing our policies, it's changing our attitudes, it's changing our commitment, it's changing the way we spend money, how we spend, where we spend, who we recognize, who we honor. This is just the beginning. This is the launch of what I hope is going to be a change so more women will not have to have these conversations. That they will just be recognized for what they contribute."



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Overall, panelists emphasized the importance of bringing all people together to advance the agriculture industry, epitomizing NASDA's Winter Policy Conference theme of "United We Thrive."

"There are a lot of good things that we can do alone, even more that we can do together," **Boote said.** "And this is where I think the agriculture story is: men and women, the next generation, the institutional knowledge of those who went before us, the intuitiveness with innovation that the next generation is bringing, understanding that we need all of them and all of us to be able to do that together is important."



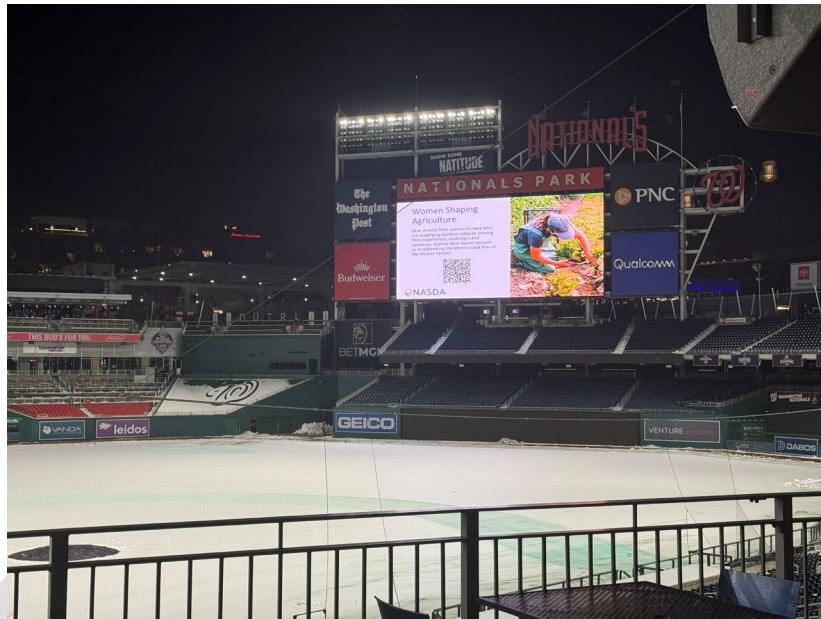
From left to right: NASDA President, Commissioner Amanda Beal, U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith, Global Farmer Network CEO Mary Boote and U.S. Dairy Export Council President & CEO Krysta Harden.

Following the panel, NASDA was honored to host U.S. Senator Deb Fischer to share about the **U.S. Senate resolution** celebrating the designation of 2026 as "International Year of the Woman Farmer." The resolution was co-sponsored by Senator Fischer and U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, Ranking Member of the Senate Agriculture Committee.



U.S. Senator Deb Fischer

NASDA also hosted a **reception at National's Park honoring International Year of the Woman Farmer** welcoming U.S. members of Congress, embassy officials from 14 countries and agriculture industry representatives. Four hundred fifty people attended. Members of the International Year of the Women Farmer workgroup and NASDA displayed [stories of women farmers](#) from across the U.S. for government and industry leaders to learn and be inspired from.



The scoreboard at National's Park displayed the stories of women farmers and additional International Year of the Woman Farmer resources.

Throughout the conference, **NASDA promoted the International Year of the Woman Farmer information hub** hosted on NASDA's website and its farmer survey to collect the stories of women farmers. These stories will be shared across NASDA's newsletter and social media platforms all year long. [Share your story with NASDA](#) or follow NASDA [on social media](#) and [subscribe to NASDA News](#) to hear these stories directly from the women shaping agriculture every day.

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NASDA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association which represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries, and directors of the departments of agriculture in all fifty states and four U.S. territories. NASDA grows and enhances American agriculture through policy, partnerships and public engagement.



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