

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 158

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 49

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 158—Relative to women in agriculture.

[Filed with Secretary of State May 10, 2022.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 158, Aguiar-Curry. Women in agriculture.

This measure would recognize the value of all women's contributions to agriculture and resolve to help realize their success as leaders on the land.

WHEREAS, California agriculture will experience extreme transitions in the coming years and decades, including threats to farmland from development, a high rate of farmers aging out of the profession, climate change, and global pandemics. It is clear that California's agricultural sector will need unprecedented collaboration, innovation, and equity to continue to thrive; and

WHEREAS, Women in agriculture represent an underutilized ally in the effort to navigate these challenges. Though historically relegated to less visible roles in agriculture, women have always been critical to the success of California's farms, ranches, and other production landscapes. Women are increasingly pursuing leadership roles as land managers, farmland owners, and advocates for sound agricultural policies that provide real solutions to the challenges facing the industry; and

WHEREAS, Women in agriculture bring richly diverse perspectives and skills to the field. Their presence appears to be increasing, but there is a need for greater acknowledgment of their potential as leaders in agriculture; and

WHEREAS, The formal participation of women in agriculture is at an historic high, with female enrollment numbers in agricultural programs at land-grant universities outpacing those of males since 2009, and girls' participation in 4-H programs exceeding that of boys across the United States. This trend holds in California, where roughly 75 percent of the students who earned a bachelor's degree in agriculture-related majors from the University of California, Davis, during the 2019–20 academic year were women, compared to 61 percent of women in the total University of California, Davis, undergraduate enrollment; and

WHEREAS, An analysis of the 2017 Census of Agriculture data showed that, across the country, compared to men primary producers, women primary producers represent greater racial and ethnic diversity; and

WHEREAS, Female producers in California represent 37 percent of California's total producers, however, only 32.5 percent of female producers are in leadership positions; and

WHEREAS, There is a continued need for equitable access to resources and support to realize the potential of women as allies in conservation, climate-smart agriculture, and farmland protection; and

WHEREAS, Women-led farms, on average, operate on smaller acreage compared to male-led counterparts. Due to social norms, women also tend to lead operations that produce products that are marginalized in agricultural support programs, such as diverse specialty crops and small livestock. In an increasingly competitive marketplace that favors economies of scale, these factors mean that women-led farms tend to have tighter economic margins; and

WHEREAS, Data indicates that more than half of women farmers across the United States have an off-farm job as their primary occupation. Beyond being a source of extra income, off-farm jobs are often a literal lifeline, since many women maintain them for healthcare benefits that would otherwise be out of reach; and

WHEREAS, Women play pivotal roles in agriculture at many levels and have unique needs depending on their role and intersecting identities; and

WHEREAS, Women have always been critical to the success of California agriculture, but many have done so behind-the-scenes in roles such as bookkeeping and financial management. In recent years there has been a significant increase in the transfer of farmland ownership to female surviving spouses, many of whom have not been provided the same education about agricultural practices and resources that can support their farm's success. Many female farm spouses are finding themselves in need of guidance to take on more leadership in their operations; and

WHEREAS, Targeted outreach programs for women can be a powerful tool for farmland protection and conservation practice adoption; and

WHEREAS, Women are at the helm as entrepreneurs and innovative land stewards. There are countless examples of women farmers and ranchers in California who are at the forefront of groundbreaking land stewardship practices that hold potential as climate solutions; and

WHEREAS, Many women also engage in small-scale, urban agriculture that contributes greatly to food security, nutrition, health, and economic resilience in their communities; and

WHEREAS, Women in California's tribal communities are stewarding land, producing food, and carrying on traditional cultural practices that support the resilience of California ecosystems and food security; and

WHEREAS, Women stand out as drivers of local economies, since women, on average, run smaller, more diversified operations that sell directly to consumers. Farms and ranches that feed communities directly also keep local dollars circulating in local economies and tend to lead to more regional job growth; and

WHEREAS, Women-powered farms played a critical role in improving community food security during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, Though challenges exist for many women farmers to gain secure land tenure, countless women are growing food for nonprofit organizations or are utilizing small plots of private, communal, or public land to provide fresh food for their communities. The fundamental, yet underestimated, value these activities bring to the health and resilience of women's communities was never more apparent than during the intersecting crises of the last two years; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature recognizes the value of all women's contributions to agriculture and resolves to help realize their success as leaders on the land; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.