



Women's Council  
· Wisconsin ·

Minutes of the Meeting of the Wisconsin Women's Council – **DRAFT**  
June 28, 2024; 1:00 – 3:00 PM  
In-person at [St. Isidore's Dairy](#) - N45354 County Road E; Osseo, WI 54758

**Council Members Present:**

Ex.	Sen. Melissa Agard	x	Dep. Sec. Patti Epstein	Ex.	Carrie Richard
Ex.	Gabby Aranda-Pino	Ex.	Rachel Fernandez	x	Lt. Gov. Sara Rodriguez
x	Dr. Jolene Bowman	x	Denise Gaumer-Hutchison, <i>Chair</i>		<i>Vacant</i>
	Sen. Rachael Cabral-Guevara		Amanda Medina-Roddy, <i>Sec.</i>		<i>Vacant</i>
x	Rep. Jodi Emerson	Ex.	Nerissa Nelson, <i>Vice Chair</i>		<i>Vacant</i>

**Staff Present:** Jenifer Cole, WWC Executive Director; Genevieve Lambert, WWC Communications Intern; Leah Bell, DOA Communications Specialist

**Public Present:** Rick Witscher; Cynthia Witscher

- 1) **Call to Order & Opening Remarks:** Chair Gaumer Hutchison called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM, after a brief farm tour and remarks from host Inga Witscher-Orth, and welcomed Council members, panelists, and guests.
  - a) Chair Gaumer Hutchison shared a message from Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection Secretary Randy Romanski: "Thank you to the Wisconsin Women's Council for recognizing the important role women have in the agricultural industry on the farm, at processing facilities, in agribusinesses, through organizations, and in government. At the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) nearly half our workforce and more than half our executive leadership team are women. I value the perspectives and contributions of our women agricultural colleagues. About one in nine people in Wisconsin work in a job related to agriculture. The State of Wisconsin is committed to developing our future agricultural workforce. I am an active member of the Wisconsin Agricultural Education and Workforce Development Council to promote agricultural careers and support training programs. DATCP is proud of our Wisconsin Agriculture Youth Council members, who meet monthly throughout the school year to discuss a variety of agricultural topics. I applaud the Wisconsin Women's Council for celebrating women in agriculture, and I look forward to continuing to work alongside women across the industry to strengthen Wisconsin's diverse agricultural industry."
- 2) **Introductions:** Council members, staff, and guests introduced themselves.
- 3) **Panel on Women in Agriculture:** Panel moderator, Rep. Emerson briefly introduced the panelists - Inga Witscher-Orth, Host of WI PBS' *Around the Farm Table* & Owner/Operator of St. Isidore's Dairy; Kara Kasten-Olson, Agriculture Program Supervisor in the Division of Agricultural Development at DATCP; Julie Keown-Bomar, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Farmer's Union; True Vue, Co-Owner/Operator, Lor Family Garden & Executive Director, Eau Claire Area Hmong Mutual Assistance; and Sally Ladsten, WI State FFA Advisor with the Department of Public

Instruction. Each panelist shared more about their background, their connections to agriculture in Wisconsin, and their career paths.

Rep. Emerson moderated a series of questions and the panelists spoke about:

- The rates of women working in agriculture in WI and in what areas of agriculture women are most engaged
- How state agencies and non-profit programs support women working in agriculture.
- How agricultural education programs reach out to and engage girls and young women to attract them to and prepare them for work in the agriculture sector.
- The barriers and challenges that women may experience and how each of the panelists have navigated these unique challenges, as well as successes they experience.
- Innovative approaches women take to improve productivity, efficiency, sustainability, viability, etc. on farms and in the agriculture sector

The panel concluded with a few questions from Council members and spoke to the need for increased programming and funding for underrepresented populations engaged in agriculture. The discussion also noted the gender-based pushback women experience in certain agricultural settings, as well as the need for mental health care for Wisconsin farmers.

- 4) Closing Remarks and Adjournment** – Chair Gaumer Hutchison thanked Rep. Emerson and Inga Witscher-Orth for hosting the roundtable and all the panelists for sharing their experiences and areas of expertise. She adjourned the meeting at 3:04 PM

Respectfully submitted,  
Jenifer Cole  
Executive Director, Wisconsin Women's Council