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**U.S Department of Agriculture**  
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**FARM WOMEN NETWORK OF WEST CENTRAL MINNESOTA:  
DEALING WITH THE CHALLENGES OF AGRICULTURE**

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***What is missing in this picture?***



# Women in Agriculture--The Invisible Role



Barely more than 15 years ago--women were invisible in research and policy accounts of the agriculture industry.

# Agriculture...commercial agriculture production as the standard



Only accounts for tasks directly concerned with productivity. Therefore, devaluing of women's input, much of their work went unrecognized and unrecorded because farming is viewed as a male occupation.

# Women have an equal if not more important role in maintaining the family farm.

→ Maintain political & community ties

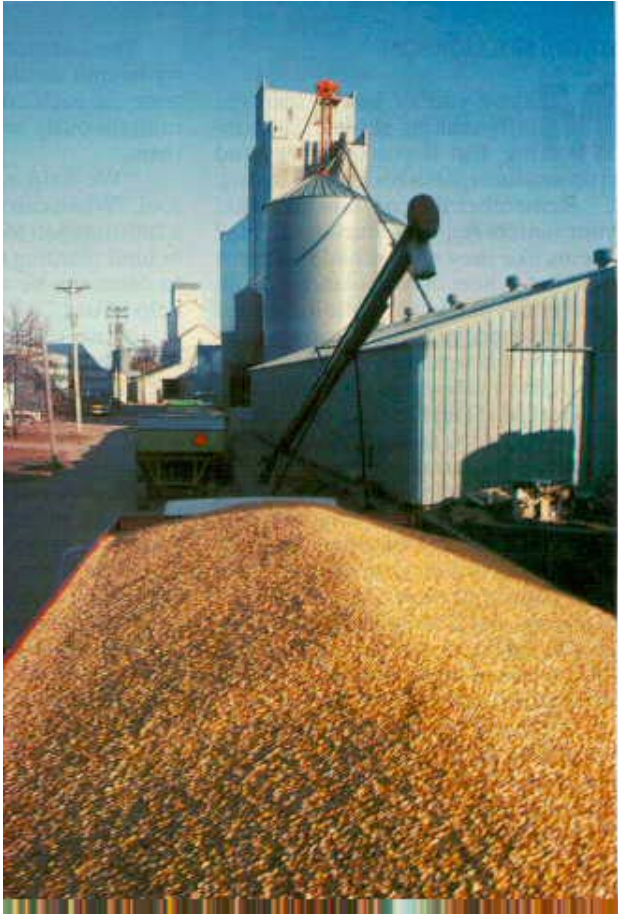
→ Mediate household conflict



→ Manage the household



# Farm Crisis of the 1980s



- Lowered land values
- World-wide recession
- Rise in the value of the US dollar
- Reduced demand for farm exports

**Crisis of Production**

# Studies of the 1980s Farm Crisis show that women experienced...



- Disruption of family consumption levels and stability
- Observed deeper deterioration in family economic well being
- Also saw personal strains in their ability to meet family reproductive needs

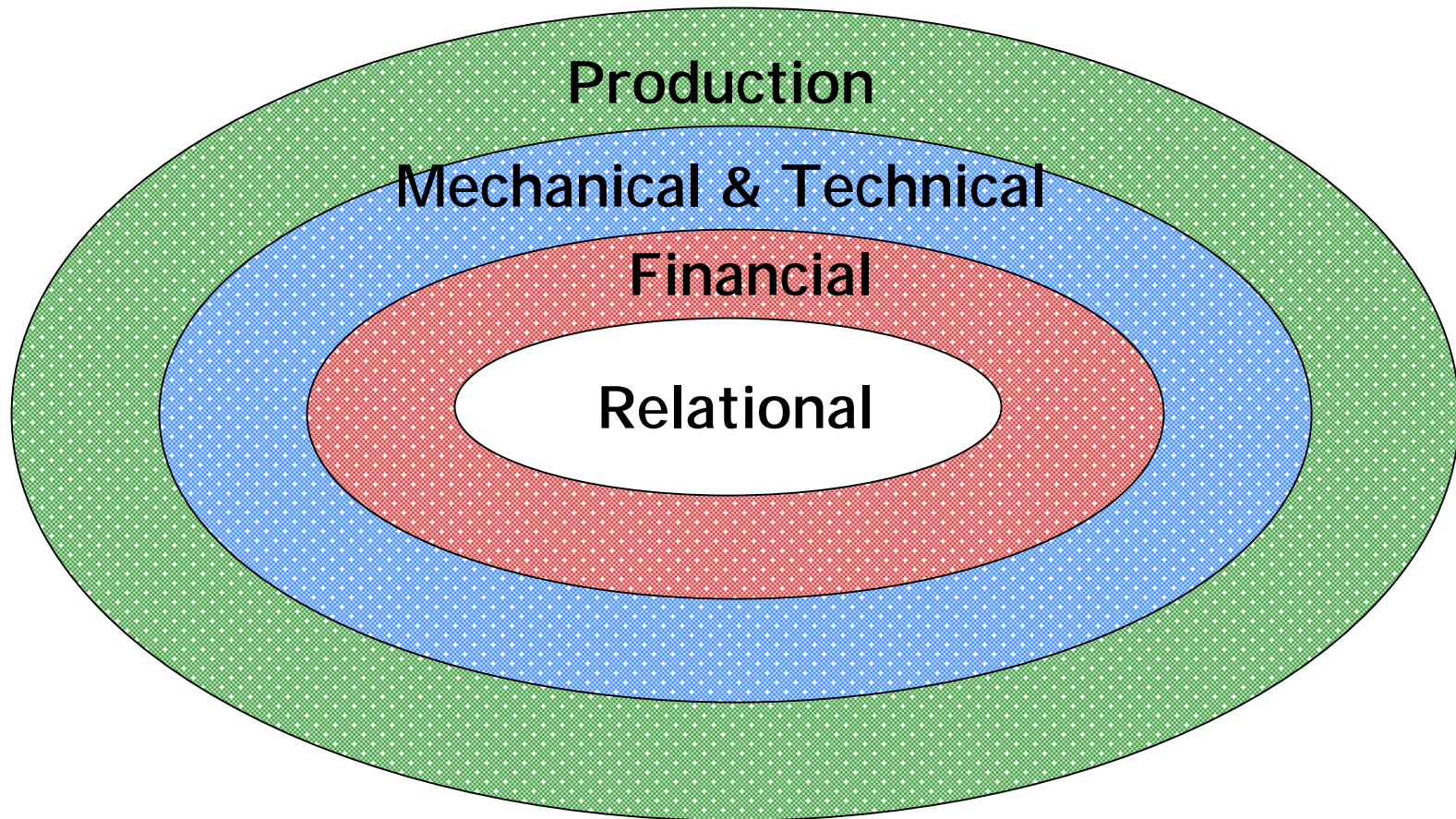
**A threat to their way of rural life**



# The Second Shift...



# Success in Agriculture Skills Needed



# Farm Women Network of West Central Minnesota



Network of farm women who act together to identify and address issues important to farm women, their families and rural communities. The Network fosters learning, sharing and personal growth through fellowship, communications and leadership education.

# Network Goals

- Build a sense of neighborliness vs. competition among farmers.
- Restore community trust among rural people.
- Recognize and celebrate the qualities of those present in rural communities.
- Get back the respect of being rural.
- Look for opportunities in change vs. only threats.



# Farm Women Network Activities



## Farm Women Forums:

- MN Farm Women in the 90's
- Farm Life Vignettes
- Importance of Women in Agriculture
- Quilting our Stories...New Patterns for Farm Women
- Different Strands, One Fabric

- Survey of farm women issues
- Published and distributed quarterly newsletter
- Video project
- Web page



# Healing Stories Video Project



*“In our own stories is the wisdom, and the sharing of them is the healing” Sr. Clara Stang*

- Video and discussion packet based on a play written by farm women on three farm life challenges-- communications, self worth, and overload
- Created to encourage neighborhoods, community and church groups to use “play acting” to open dialogue on the changes in agriculture and give support to farm women and their families

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Firmly Rooted in

## Growing Our Future

As the sun is our source of light, warmth and energy,

So too is this FARM WOMEN NETWORK

LIGHT to dispel the darkness

WARMTH to enjoy bonds of friendship and support

ENERGY to inspire, create and act