

Women are Changing the Face of Farming

By Duarte B. Morais - March 05, 2021

Jennifer Johnson grew up frolicking about the outdoors and exploring her grandparents victory garden. After outgrowing her first career in commercial photography, she started taking classes in sustainable agriculture at Central Carolina. In 2016, her love for the outdoors blossomed into owning and operating Chickadee Farms, a sustainable vegetable farm in Clayton, NC.

Women farmers are a growing demographic and comprise nearly 40 percent of US farmers. In the last decade, women have taken the sustainable farming industry by storm. As more women assume the helm of farms, they continue to favor less conventional methods of agriculture. For instance, female farming operations take place on a smaller scale, employ regenerative and organic practices, produce food for human consumption, and incorporate technological innovations. The organic and local foods movement is in vogue yet again, and women farmers are at the forefront of its supply.

Farmer Jenn has always valued the principles of sustainability. Over time, her appreciation evolved into full-fledged environment stewardship on Chickadee Farms. The importance of soil health is often overlooked by industrial agribusiness for the sake of productivity and efficiency, but Jenn knows that soil is the key to fruitful harvests. As a result, she spends her time safeguarding and enhancing the soil microbiome by using row crops, low-till systems, and organic animal-based amendments. Additionally, Chickadee Farms is Certified Naturally Grown, a peer-review certification ensuring the farm avoids synthetic inputs and abides by organic standards.



Farmer Jenn, tending to her greens cover cropping,

How have women established a space for themselves in the marketplace?

In light of the pandemic, Chickadee Farms' market has fluctuated with the lapse in restaurant business in Raleigh and Cary. The uncertainty of restaurant buyers has forced Jenn to test out new strategies. Thankfully, the farm has established a strong presence at the farmer's market, and Jenn has used her photographic eye to curate her brand on social media.

Short video about the collaborative partnership between Jenn and Chef Caroline Morrison from Fiction Kitchen, <https://youtu.be/ZYUhR3OluLw>

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