

WOMEN . . .

An Agricultural Asset Not Yet Fully Recognized

By: Catherine C. Elverston

GAINESVILLE — When you think of a family farm, you probably have an image of a man plowing the fields and tending the livestock and while his wife runs the household, tends the dooryard garden, and gathers the eggs.

"Well, not so, nowadays," says Dr. Christina Gladwin, professor in the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS).

"Women spend more hours on the farm than men."

The current farm crisis threatens to put between 13 and 33 percent of the nation's farmers out of business, says Gladwin, a small farm management specialist in the IFAS food and resource economics department, and a growing number of farm wives are taking on comanagement of the farms while their husbands seek off-farm work to help sustain sagging incomes.

A recently completed IFAS survey, shows that the average farm wife works a 77-hour week compared to her husband's 62-hour work week. With modern conveniences, household chores take only 26 hours a week of the wife's time—50 years ago, it was 50 hours a week. The rest of her time is divided into 22 hours of farming, 17 hours of off-farm work, and 12 hours in the family garden.

"Unfortunately," says Gladwin, "these women feel isolated from production and marketing information, which their husbands obtain through the traditional network.

"Since generally it is likely to be the women who keep the records, they need this information also.

"Women," says Gladwin, "need to keep abreast of the times. They need to be at ease with computers and be aware of new available software, which will help them make the best use of their time.

"At the Florida Agribusiness Computer Short Course and Trade Show, scheduled for Feb. 27-28 (1987), efforts are being made to meet these needs and to introduce computers to farms."

The show is cosponsored for the third year by UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS), the Florida Farm Bureau, the Association of Agricultural Computing Companies, Citrus and Vegetable, Florida Grower and Rancher, and Citrus Industry magazines, and the weekly Independent Farmer and Rancher. It offers hands-on computer instruction, courtesy of Tandy Randy Radio Shack.

Also, Gladwin says, IFAS offers some 50 software programs, free for the copying to those who bring diskettes—all run on the IBM compatibles and the DEC Rainbow 100. Disks and user manuals can be purchased for a nominal fee.

These programs provide efficient monitoring of such farming techniques as chemical fertilization and pesticide spray calculations.

An aid to bookkeeping is the FARMMGR (Farm Manager Decision Support Budgeting and Financial Statement Analysis) and UFBUD (University of Florida Agricultural Budget Generator). A Citrus Grove Records System program is available as well (for Apple II+ and Apple IIe only).

Tutorials for these programs will be offered at the Computer Short Course. ■



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