



## **International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF): January Spotlight**

*Developed by the U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (USRSB) in recognition of the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF)*

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### **Debbie Lyons-Blythe** | *Leadership and Legacy*

As the world recognizes 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF), USRSB is turning the spotlight on the women shaping agriculture every day here in the United States. From innovative land management strategies to raising livestock with care and precision, women are vital contributors to our food systems and communities.

To begin our spotlight series, we are proud to highlight Debbie Lyons-Blythe, a familiar name and face around USRSB-related events and in the broader industry.

As co-owner of Blythe Family Farms in White City, Kansas, Debbie Lyons-Blythe combines hands-on ranching with visionary leadership. Debbie's passion for the industry runs deep, which is evident through her advocacy and open dialogue about environmental stewardship, succession planning, family operations, and keeping grazinglands viable for future generations.

### **A Life Rooted in Ranching**

Debbie's story begins on an Angus ranch south of Manhattan, Kansas. Growing up, she and her sister learned that cattle care knows no gender. They worked alongside their mother, Jan Lyons, fellow cattle rancher, and showed Angus heifers across the U.S. in the National Junior Angus Association - building lifelong connections and sharpening their skills in livestock management.

After marrying Duane in 1989, she brought her cows to her husband's family farm, starting a new chapter that blended two legacies. Today, her five grown children are involved in the operation -three sons work full-time on the ranch, two daughters remain co-owners, and the third generation is sure to continue the family tradition.

### **Leadership, Learning and Legacy**

Debbie's leadership extends far beyond feeding and caring for cattle. A proud example of Debbie's leadership is her long-standing commitment to advocacy. She has been active at the local, state and national levels, working alongside organizations and fellow producers to help shape policies and conversations that impact the industry.

Debbie's noteworthy achievements are in abundance, which is a reflection of her strong character and dedication.

While the list extends well beyond this, here are just a few accolades and leadership highlights:

- Past Chair of the U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (USRSB) from 2022–2023
- A founding member of USRSB and helping shape the organization from its earliest days
- Represented USRSB on a national stage as a panelist at NYC Climate Week
- Blythe Family Farms was named the 2022 Certified Angus Beef® Progressive Partner Award
- Named the 2012 America's Farmers Mom of the Year, awarded by Monsanto for her work as a rancher, mother of five, and agricultural advocate
- Provided board leadership through her service on the Kansas Livestock Association and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA)

### **Women in Agriculture: Then and Now**

Reflecting on her career, Debbie has seen significant change in the role of women in farming and ranching. "When I was a kid, women couldn't even get their own bank loan without a husband's signature," she recalls.

Today, she notes, women are recognized as vital partners and leaders, making decisions alongside men and taking on leadership roles across operations and organizations.

Her advice to young women considering agriculture?

"Do the work. Don't worry about being a woman. The cows need fed, the hay needs cut, the job needs done. It does not matter whether you are a guy or a gal," Debbie shares.

### **Lessons from the Land**

Farming and ranching come with constant challenges, from unpredictable weather to market shifts, but Debbie finds motivation in family, teamwork and the land itself. She stresses the importance of passing down values as well as skills.

"Every day on a ranch is busy, but there are ways to include the entire family - grandkids, too - in the daily work," she says.

Her hope for the future? A new generation of ranchers who blend respect for tradition with openness to technology, efficiency and sustainability.

“The future of the Blythe Family Farms is in excellent hands,” she notes, “and I believe the entire farming and ranching industries are as well.”

### **A Legacy in Action**

Debbie’s story is a reminder that women in agriculture are not only caretakers of the land and animals, but they are leaders, innovators and role models. Her legacy at Blythe Family farms is demonstrated through collaboration, resilience and mentorship, showing young women and families across the U.S. that all have a place at every table in agriculture.

For anyone curious about Debbie’s work, learn more through her family’s ranch website [Blythe Angus](#) or her personal blog [Kids, Cows and Grass](#).

2026 is the year to celebrate all the women shaping our food systems. Stories like Debbie’s remind us that farming is more than a job. *It’s a legacy, a community and a calling.*