Leading Beyond the Fence Line

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

by Karley Williams

As the world recognizes 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF) and the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP), the theme of pastoralist women provides the perfect opportunity to bring these two international initiatives together by recognizing our very own Kim Brackett.

As a rancher, industry leader and advocate for working lands, Brackett embodies the connection between women in agriculture and the people who care for our rangelands.

For Brackett, ranching has always been much more than a career. It is a family tradition.

Raised on her family's ranch in Wyoming, Brackett now lives and ranches with her husband and four children in Idaho. Both sides of her family have multigenerational ranching backgrounds, giving her a deep appreciation for the work required to sustain an operation across generations.

Today, Brackett combines her experience as a rancher with her involvement in beef industry leadership. Through her work with organizations including the Idaho Beef Council, Cattlemen's Beef Board, Idaho Cattle Association, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), the Public Lands Council (PLC), and USRSB, she has worked for continuous improvement across the industry and to represent producers beyond her own operation.

Saying Yes

Brackett's path into industry leadership began with a simple decision to step forward when the opportunity arose.

Early in her involvement with the Idaho Cattle Association, she attended a meeting where organizers needed someone to coordinate an event. When no one volunteered, Brackett raised her hand.

"I just leaned in and said yes," Brackett said.

That willingness to take on new challenges helped open the door to additional leadership opportunities. As she became more involved in the beef industry, she learned that effective leadership meant looking beyond her own operation and working toward the success of producers across the industry.

Her experience serving on the Idaho Beef Council helped reinforce that perspective. Working with other leaders to build support for an increase in the state Beef Checkoff showed her the importance of pursuing initiatives that benefit the broader industry.
"I just want to help," Brackett said. "I'm hoping that when I look back, I will be able to say that the work that I did helped improve the industry at least a little bit."

That commitment continues to guide her work with NCBA, where Brackett has steadily advanced through the organization's leadership. After serving as vice president in 2025, she was elected president-elect for 2026, placing her next in line to lead the national organization.

As president-elect, Brackett represents producers across the country, bringing perspectives from different operations, production methods and regions to the table.

Brackett saw firsthand how different cattle production can look across the country. Those conversations expanded her understanding of the challenges producers face in different regions and reinforced the importance of considering the industry as a whole.

For Brackett, leadership means recognizing that the work extends beyond one ranch or state.

Family and Mentorship
Balancing industry leadership with family responsibilities has been an important part of Brackett's journey.

When her children were young, she often questioned whether she could be a good mother while spending time away from the ranch for industry work. A mentor who encouraged her early in her career helped her see the value of her involvement differently.

"He really encouraged me at the very beginning," Brackett said. "He told me, 'Just because you have work off the ranch does not make you less of a mom.'"

That advice changed how she viewed her responsibilities. Rather than seeing her industry involvement as time away from her family, she began to recognize the example she was setting for her children.

Today, that influence is visible in her family. Two of her sons have graduated from college and returned to the ranch, while her daughter continues her education at Utah State University. Her youngest son is also growing up with the family ranching tradition, giving all four children an opportunity to see firsthand what it takes to carry an operation forward.

Brackett and her husband encourage their children to pursue an education and develop their own skills before deciding whether ranching is the right path for them. For those who choose to return, the family is working to establish responsibilities and prepare the next generation for leadership.

As the family business evolves, Brackett sees the importance of balancing independence with shared responsibility. Her children bring new ideas and an interest in technology that has helped the operation improve efficiency and profitability.

Keeping the ranch in the family requires planning for the future while remaining open to new approaches.

Brackett has also seen how her career has influenced her daughter's view of what is possible. She recalls a fellow board member once asking whether her daughter would recognize that her mother had helped break barriers for women in agriculture.

At the time, Brackett did not consider herself someone who had broken barriers. Looking back, however, she recognizes the importance of showing the next generation that leadership opportunities are within reach.

Connecting Ranchers Around the World

Although cattle production varies widely across the United States, Brackett sees a common thread connecting ranchers and pastoralists around the world: livestock are essential to their livelihoods and communities.

Her participation in the Eisenhower Fellowship gave her opportunities to travel internationally and learn about agricultural systems beyond the United States. A visit to Argentina, in particular, broadened her understanding of different production methods and the importance of livestock to families around the world.

She has also learned about livestock's role in communities through conversations closer to home.

During a trip to Pennsylvania for a cattle industry meeting, Brackett found herself in an unexpected conversation with an Uber driver whose family was from Ghana. When he learned she was attending a cattle meeting, he shared that his family raised cattle, too.

For Brackett, the encounter showed how livestock connect people across cultures. The role cattle play in her family's livelihood may look different from their role in a community in Ghana, but both reflect the importance of livestock to the people who depend on them.

These connections are central to the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, which recognizes the importance of rangelands and the people who depend on them.

Looking Forward

Beyond the ranch, Brackett hopes her leadership will be remembered through the people she has helped along the way.

Her mentor left a lasting impression, and she now finds herself serving as a mentor to others beginning their own leadership journeys becoming one of the most rewarding parts of her work.

She hopes to leave a positive impact on the people she meets and the industry she serves. "I hope there will be at least a handful of people that say I impacted their life for the good through my work in the cattle industry," Brackett said.

Whether she is helping prepare the next generation of her family to manage the ranch or working alongside producers to strengthen the beef industry, Brackett remains focused on leaving agriculture better than she found it.

As the International Year of the Woman Farmer and International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists continue, USRSB is proud to recognize producers like Kim Brackett, whose dedication to ranching, industry leadership and responsible land stewardship is helping shape the future of agriculture. Her story highlights the important connection between the people who care for working lands and the next generation of agricultural leaders.

Learn more about USRSB by visiting usrsb.org.