



International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF): Spotlight

Developed by the U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (USRSB)

By Karley Williams

Amanda Butterfield | *Leading with Curiosity, Growing with Purpose*

As the world celebrates 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF), the U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (USRSB) continues to recognize the women whose leadership, resilience and innovation are shaping the future of agriculture. This month, we are proud to spotlight Amanda Butterfield, a first-generation farmer whose journey into agriculture reflects the power of resilience for continuous learning.

Finding Her Way to Agriculture

Amanda Butterfield's path into agriculture didn't begin on a farm. Rather, it began with a passion for animals and science.

Raised in Monongahela, Pennsylvania, with limited exposure to farming, Amanda discovered agriculture while attending Pennsylvania State University, where she studied animal bioscience with a minor in microbiology. It was there that she first gained hands-on experience working with livestock and began to understand the depth and opportunity within the industry.

After graduating, Amanda stepped into a role as a field representative with Dairy Farmers of America, working closely with producers across Indiana. That experience not only strengthened her understanding of agriculture but also led her to meet her husband, Mike.

Together, they built their shared vision from the ground up.

Building an Operation Together

Amanda and Mike began their farming journey with a rented dairy facility in southwestern Pennsylvania, where they milked cows while raising their young family and managing the realities of life on the farm.

In 2017, they made the pivotal decision to purchase their own farm and transition from dairy into a beef cattle operation. Today, Maple Valley Cattle Company consists of approximately 100 cows and operates on a foundation of intentional management and stewardship.

With support from conservation partners, they transformed 140 acres of former cropland into permanent pasture, implementing fencing systems, water infrastructure and intensive rotational grazing practices.

For Amanda, the farm is more than a business – it's a living, evolving system.

"Everyday is a science experiment, a conservation project, and an act of hope," she says.

A Life of Constant Movement and Purpose

Like many in agriculture, Amanda's days are anything but typical.

Mornings begin early with chores, cattle checks and planning before she transitions into her full-time role in the biotech industry. Evenings are spent back on the farm, tackling whatever challenges arise, from infrastructure repairs to pasture management.

It's a life that requires constant balance and resilience. Yet through the busyness, Amanda finds purpose in the work.

"One of the greatest motivations outside of our own farm is Beefing Up Backpacks," she explains.

Amanda is a partner of Beefing Up Backpacks, a program to provide shelf-stable beef sticks to food-insecure children through weekend backpack programs.

"On the toughest farming days, knowing that our industry can help feed a child who may otherwise go without is a powerful reminder of why this work matters and why I'll continue showing up every day," she shares.

Leadership Through Partnership and Transparency

One of the leadership decisions Amanda is most proud of is not a single moment, but instead, a mindset – choosing to run their family operation as true partners.

Every day brings decisions that impact the future of the farm, from financial investments to animal care. Amanda and her husband approach each challenge collaboratively, trusting each other's strengths and making informed decisions together.

Beyond their own operation, they have also made a commitment to openness.

Their farm serves as a space for connection, welcoming students, researchers, policymakers and consumers to learn firsthand about agriculture. Amanda believes that progress in the industry depends on a willingness to share knowledge and engage in honest conversations.

The Evolving Role of Women in Agriculture

Over the course of her career, Amanda has seen a significant shift in the role of women in agriculture.

While the industry has traditionally been male-dominated, more women are stepping into leadership roles and influencing the future of food production.

Though challenges still exist, Amanda is encouraged by the growing representation and believes diversity is essential to the future of agriculture.

"The future of agriculture depends on attracting the best people, regardless of background," she says.

Lessons in Resilience

Rather than one singular challenge, Amanda's journey has been shaped by the constant balancing of her roles as a farmer, professional, partner, and mother, all while navigating decisions that influence both her present and the future.

Agriculture, she notes, is defined by uncertainty.

Producers are constantly making decisions without knowing the outcome, whether related to weather, markets or herd management. Through these experiences, Amanda has learned a lot about resilience.

"Resilience isn't about being tough," she shares. "It's about doing the best you can with what you have and trying again tomorrow."

Amanda's motivation is rooted in both purpose and perspective.

She finds fulfillment in improving the land, caring for animals and contributing to a larger system that feeds people. She is also driven by the long-term impact of her work, knowing that the decisions she makes today can benefit future generations.

Her involvement in initiatives that connect agriculture to community impact further reinforces that purpose, reminding her that farming extends far beyond the farm gate.

Looking Toward the Future

As Amanda and her husband continue to evolve their operation, she says she is most excited about continuing to improve the efficiency and sustainability of their work.

Rather than focusing on expansion, her goal is to maximize the potential of the land they already manage, producing more while improving overall system resilience. She views her farm as a model for what is possible when thoughtful management and conservation practices work together.

“For me, the future isn’t about having the biggest farm,” she says. “It’s about having the smartest one.”

Continuing the Story

Through her leadership, openness and dedication to progress, Amanda Butterfield represents a new generation of agriculture – one defined by innovation, collaboration and purpose.

As the International Year of the Woman Farmer continues, USRSB is proud to highlight women like Amanda who are not only contributing to agriculture but helping shape its future for generations to come.

Learn more about sustainable beef and producer leadership by visiting the [U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef](#).