



International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF): Spotlight

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

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Linda Bentz | *Building Legacy Through Stewardship and Strength*

As the world recognizes 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF), the U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (USRSB) continues to highlight the women whose leadership, resilience and stewardship are shaping the future of agriculture. We are proud to spotlight Linda Bentz, a fifth-generation rancher whose story reflects both the weight of legacy and the strength required to carry it forward.

V Box Land and Livestock spans nearly 28,000 private acres and 180,000 acres of public land across Oregon, built through years of strategic expansion and a shared vision between Linda and her late husband, Mike Bentz. Together, they combined four separate ranches into one cohesive operation, laying the foundation for a multi-generational ranching system now carried forward by Linda and her five children.

Their operation is also recognized for its strong conservation efforts, with more than 6,000 acres of western juniper removed, 16,000 acres of invasive annual grass treated, 10,000 feet of riverbank restored, and nearly 4,000 willows and native shrubs planted. These efforts have strengthened water quality, improved sage grouse habitat, reduced wildfire risk, and supported long-term forage productivity.

Following Mike's passing in 2015, Linda stepped into a leadership role she had long been preparing for, guiding the ranch through transition while maintaining its operational strength and family-centered foundation.

A Life Built on Ranching and Responsibility

Linda grew up on a small ranch in eastern Oregon, where she developed an early commitment to ranching life and a long-term vision for staying in the industry. In 1989, she married her husband Mike, and together they began building what would become a large-scale cow-calf operation.

As the ranch expanded from 200 cows to nearly 2,000 head, Linda played a central role in both the operational and financial sides of the business.

She also managed irrigation and hay production, producing feed to winter the herd, while staying closely involved in cattle health and day-to-day ranch operations. Branding and roping calves each spring remain among her most meaningful responsibilities, connecting her to both tradition and the practical demands of production agriculture.

Leadership Through Transition

After the passing of her husband in 2015 she found herself responsible for the full scope of ranch management while continuing to support a growing family operation.

"I had been very involved in the business before his passing, but it was important that I knew every aspect of the ranch from bookkeeping to irrigating to cattle management," she says.

Her eldest son returned home to serve as cattle manager, and over time, each of her children and their families stepped into roles across the ranching system. That structure eventually supported a planned succession, dividing the ranch into five family operations while maintaining shared values and long-term stewardship goals.

"My greatest accomplishment is having my sons and daughters working together with their spouses and children in an atmosphere of respect and love for each other," Linda shares.

Stewardship in Action

Across V Box Land and Livestock, conservation and production go hand in hand. The ranch's large-scale habitat and watershed improvements reflect a long-term investment in land health and resilience.

These efforts have also strengthened the operation's ability to adapt to changing conditions while maintaining productivity across a vast and diverse landscape.

Linda emphasizes that resilience is not just environmental, but financial and emotional as well, especially in an industry shaped by uncertainty.

She recalls the cattle market downturn in 2016 and the challenges of wildfire impacts and invasive species pressure across rangelands. Through each challenge, the ranch focused on herd health and long-term recovery.

"You take a setback and you make a comeback," she says, reflecting a mindset that has carried her through both hardship and growth.

Strength in Family and Future Generations

For Linda, the most meaningful outcome of her work is not measured in herd size or acreage, but in the continuation of family and ranching values across generations.

She describes her motivation as deeply rooted in optimism for the future of agriculture and the next generation's ability to build on what came before.

"I am very hopeful for the future of the ranching industry," she says. "We love the land and we take care of it because our livelihoods depend on it."

She also emphasizes the importance of integrity and knowledge for women entering agriculture, especially in family operations where leadership may shift unexpectedly.

"Always do the right thing, be honest, be respectful and be humble," she advises. "Know every aspect of the operation so you can step in with confidence when needed."

Continuing the Story

Linda hopes everyone would understand something deeper than ranch operations alone: that resilience is built through responsibility, relationships, and a commitment to doing what is right for both land and family.

Her story reflects the evolving role of women in agriculture, not defined by limitations, but by stewardship carried across generations.

As the International Year of the Woman Farmer continues, USRSB is proud to recognize producers like Linda who are shaping the future of agriculture through a deep respect for the land they call home.

Learn more about sustainability across the U.S. value chain by visiting the [U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef](#).