

AWC EAST 2026 Conference Agenda

Sheraton Fallsview, Niagara Falls, Ontario

November 22,23,24, 2026

Sunday, November 22, 2026

11:30 - 7:00 pm **AWC Registration Opens - 3rd floor, Sheraton Fallsview**
Delegate bag sponsored by P&H

12:00 pm **Registration opens for AWC EAST 2026**
Coffee will be served

1:00 - 5:00 pm **The Rural Watch: Because No Farmer Stands Alone - Fallsview Studio A**
Lauren Van Ewyk, CEO, National Farmer Mental Health Alliance, Courtright, ON
If your job brings you into regular contact with farmers, or anyone in the ag industry, this training is for you. This session ensures participants gain practical, realistic skills to navigate tough conversations and respond in ways that are supportive, respectful, and helpful. This hands-on, discussion-filled, case-study-rich workshop will equip participants with the skills needed to tackle the hard conversations.

3:00 pm **Coffee Break**

4:00 - 5:20 pm *****Special Film Screening at AWC: Cows Come Home*** - Great Room C**
Be among the first to experience Cows Come Home in a special screening at AWC EAST 2026, after it won two Canadian Screen Awards.

7:00 - 8:30 pm **Student Sponsor Networking Reception – Fallsview Studio C**
The Importance of Networking and Building Strong Relationships
Iris Meck, Conference Director, Iris Meck Communications Inc., Calgary, AB
Anne Miner, President, The Dunvegan Group, Founder of Women with GRIT, Woodstock, ON
All students and sponsors welcome.

Monday, November 23, 2026

7:30 - 8:00 am **General Registration, Continental Breakfast and Networking – 3rd Floor**

8:00 - 9:10 am **Stream A Workshops – 5th Floor**

Workshop 1 – Strategy Room 1
From Farm Gate to Future-Ready: How Women Can Lead AI and Robotics in Agri-Food
Dr. Wendy Cukier, Professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Ted Rogers School of Management at Toronto Metropolitan University; Founder and Academic Director, Diversity Institute; Academic Director of the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (WEKH); and Academic Research Director of the Future Skills Centre, Toronto, ON
AI is moving beyond chatbots and office tools into the physical and operational core of agri-food, from crop and soil monitoring, robotics, autonomous equipment, and quality inspection to supply-chain forecasting, traceability, marketing, and customer service. This workshop will show where AI can create real value across the agri-food value chain, where human judgment and accountability must remain firmly in place, and how women leaders can shape adoption that improves productivity, resilience, and inclusion rather than widening existing gaps

Workshop 2 – Strategy Room 2
Raising the "Steaks": From Farm to Fork, Building Partnerships That Feed Canada
April Cleary, Advisor, Strategic Accounts, Cargill, St. Catherines, ON
Ever wonder how Canada's food value chain connects farmers, processors, retailers, restaurants, and consumers? Collaboration and strong partnerships! April uses real-world examples highlighting consumer trends, career opportunities, and the importance of a "Hungry, Humble, & Smart" mindset in building successful relationships and driving impact across the agri-food industry!

Workshop 3 – Strategy Room 3
Beyond Work-Life Balance: How To Win At Work And In Life, Without Pulling Out Your Hair!
Carol Schulte, The Brave Initiative, Oakville, ON
Does work-life balance even exist? In this bold and refreshing session, you'll discover practical strategies to manage stress, set brave boundaries, and protect your well-being — so you can reclaim your energy and lead your life on your terms.

Workshop 4 – Strategy Room 7
Passing the Farm, Preserving the Family: Navigating Communication, Conflict, and Change in Farm Succession
Lauren Van Ewyk, CEO, National Farmer Mental Health Alliance, Courtright, ON
Farm succession is about far more than transferring assets—it involves navigating complex family relationships, differing expectations, and deeply held emotions. This session explores common family dynamics that can complicate the succession process, practical tools for improving communication and resolving conflict, and strategies for moving forward when progress becomes stalled. Participants will gain insights into preserving both the farm's viability and the strength of family relationships while creating a shared path toward the future.

Workshop 5 – Upper Fallsview Studio C
The Leadership Mirror
Lesley Hawkins, Co-Founder, Marsley Canada, Newmarket, ON
Leave this workshop with a real ask drafted and ready to use, whether it is a raise, a new role, more visibility, or a seat at a table you have been waiting to be invited to. You will also build a plan for handling rejection and protecting your energy, so a "no" does not derail you.

Workshop 6 – Upper Fallsview Studio A
The Right People Change Everything: Recruiting for Culture, Capability and Commitment
Grace Nugent, Managing Director, De Lacy Executive Recruitment, Worcester, UK
Hiring is about more than skills and experience—it's about finding people who will strengthen your culture, contribute to your team's success, and stay for the long term. This workshop will explore practical strategies for attracting and selecting people who align with your values and help build stronger, more engaged teams.

9:10 – 9:25 am **Coffee Break**
Sponsored by FCC

9:25 – 10:35 am Stream B Workshops - 5th Floor

Workshop 1 – Strategy Room 1

From Field to Future: Cultivating Compliance

Marla Rice and Tracy VanPuymbroeck, Partner, BNG Chartered Professional Accountants, Tillsonburg, ON

Understand the new bare trust reporting rules and the first steps in navigating farm succession.

Workshop 2 – Strategy Room 2

Rooted in Resilience: How to cultivate optimism (even during tough seasons)

Trish Tutton, Mindfulness Teacher, Trish Tutton Speaker and Mindfulness Teacher, Canmore, AB

In day-to-day business- managing land and people to navigating markets and changing weather- it's easy to focus on what's NOT working because the challenges don't take time OFF. But research shows that when we train our brain to focus on what's good - amidst the hard - our intelligence, creativity and energy levels rise. It's not about thinking positive - it's about building the mindset and habits to help us face reality with resilience and resourcefulness.

Workshop 3 – Strategy Room 3

"Can we interview you?" From Farm Gate to Front Page: G.R.O.W. Your Visibility™

Beverly Beuermann-King, Leadership, Culture, and Human Performance Expert, R 'n' B Consulting - Work Smart Live Smart, Little Britain, ON

Whether you're growing flowers, raising cattle, producing crops, crafting specialty products, or building an agricultural business, your story is one of your greatest assets. Beverly shares what she's learned from more than 500 media interviews to help you confidently tell your story, build credibility, and grow your visibility. You'll learn how to uncover stories the media actually wants, prepare for interviews without freezing when the microphone appears, and turn every conversation into an opportunity to showcase your business. Leave with Beverly's G.R.O.W. Your Visibility™ framework and practical tips you can put to work the very next time someone asks, "Can we interview you?"

Workshop 4 – Strategy Room 7

Role VS Soul: Staying Grounded Through Every Shift

Siobhan Chinnery, Resilience Advocate & Transformation Expert, Bee Grateful Management, Calgary, AB

This session is a practical guide to maintaining your edge when you lose your footing. We explore the often-overlooked grief that comes with career loss or transition when identity, belonging and purpose suddenly shift. It's about finding the strength to rebuild with confidence and rediscover who you are beyond the title.

Workshop 5 – Upper Fallsview Studio C

Your Network is Your Net Worth- Stop Networking. Start Building Relationships.

Steph Towers, Dairy Manager - Macksvilla Farms Ltd. / Director of Business Development & Training - Fresh Air Media, Glencoe, ON

The strongest careers aren't built by collecting business cards—they're built through authentic relationships rooted in trust, generosity and curiosity. Discover practical strategies to build a network that opens doors, creates opportunities and supports you long before you ever need to ask for help.

Workshop 6 – Upper Fallsview Studio A

Less Frustration, Better Results: Communication That Drives Performance

Grace Nugent, Managing Director, De Lacy Executive Recruitment, Worcester, UK

Great leadership starts with understanding that different people need different levels of communication, support and accountability to thrive. From onboarding new hires to managing established teams, this workshop will provide practical tools to improve communication, strengthen working relationships and bring out the best in your people

10:35 – 10:50 am **Coffee Break**
Sponsored by FCC

10:50 – 12:00 noon Stream C Workshops

Workshop 1 – Strategy Room 1
Table Talks
Keep the conversation going with an informal, interactive opportunity to connect with speakers and fellow attendees. Join the tables that interest you, dive deeper into ideas and topics from the day, ask questions, share experiences, and exchange perspectives. It's a chance to have meaningful conversations, build connections, and explore ideas together! **Have a seat at the table with**:

- **Lauren Van Ewyk**
- **Carol Schulte**
- **Siobhan Chinnery**
- **Wendy Cukier**
- **Lesley Hawkins**
- **April Clearly**
- **Tracy VanPuymbroeck**
- **Marla Rice**
- **Trish Tutton**

Workshop 2 – Strategy Room 2
Financial Wellness
Sandy Alfonsi, Financial Advisor, Cooperators, Alfonsi Torosantucci Financial Group, Hamilton, ON
Strong financial management is the foundation of success – whether you're expanding your operation, planning for the next generation and succession planning, or navigating uncertainty, financial resilience creates peace of mind for you and your operation. The best time to plan is now, but where do you start? This insightful presentation will provide you with practical advice to help take control of your farm's financial future with confidence.

Workshop 3 – Strategy Room 3
When Playing Nice Doesn't Work: Recognizing and Responding to Manipulative People
Beverly Beuermann-King, Leadership, Culture, and Human Performance Expert, R 'n' B Consulting - Work Smart Live Smart, Little Britain, ON
Some people leave you questioning your memory, doubting your instincts, or wondering how every conversation somehow became your fault. This eye-opening session explores why traditional conflict-resolution strategies often fail with manipulative personalities and how to recognize common tactics before you get pulled into their emotional games. You'll leave with practical strategies to protect your confidence, set healthier boundaries, and respond in ways that reduce manipulation's power - not your voice.

Workshop 4 – Strategy Room 7
Preparing for Uncertainty in Agriculture
Rebecca Posthumus, In the Know Program Coordinator, Agriculture Wellness Ontario, Toronto, ON
Farming and agriculture are met with many unpredictable events, causing uncertainty and often lasting impacts due to these uncertainties. Utilizing practical approaches within agriculture, this workshop provides an informed explanation of uncertainties that farmers experience, while normalizing the importance of addressing difficulty that is present during and following unpredictable events, with the goal of using strategies to be better prepared.

Workshop 5 – Upper Fallsview Studio C
Lost in the Noise - Why Trust Is Your Greatest Communication Strategy
Steph Towers, Dairy Manager - Macksvilla Farms Ltd. / Director of Business Development & Training - Fresh Air Media, Glencoe, ON
We're surrounded by more information than ever before, yet connecting with people has never been more challenging. Learn why trust—not louder voices or more messages—is the key to communication that cuts through the noise, inspires action and builds stronger relationships.

Workshop 6 – Upper Fallsview Studio A
The Business Is Asking You To Grow: What happens when the business you build requires a different version of you?
Christine Manning, Founder, Christine Manning Coaching, Scarborough, ON

You know what your business needs next. So why can making the decision feel so uncomfortable? In this interactive session, Christine explores the mindset and patterns that can keep us operating at a level we've already outgrown. You'll learn to recognize when discomfort is a sign of growth rather than a reason to stop, and leave with practical questions to help you make the decisions your business is asking you to make.

12:00 - 1:00 pm **Lunch Break - Great Room A, 3rd Floor**

1:00 – 1:15 pm **Welcome and greetings**
Dianne Finstad, Communications Specialist, Red Deer, AB

1:15 - 2:00 pm **Speak up, Stand out: Master the Art of Influence and Impact**
Carol Schulte, The Brave Initiative, Oakville, ON
Communication isn't just another skill—it's your superpower. In this high-energy, interactive session, you'll learn practical strategies to communicate with confidence, navigate difficult conversations, and amplify your presence so you can speak up, stand out, and make the impact you are here to make.

2:00 - 2:40 pm **From "Uh-Oh" to "I've Got This!" Building Your Adaptability Advantage**
Beverly Beuermann-King, Leadership, Culture, and Human Performance Expert, R 'n' B Consulting - Work Smart Live Smart, Little Britain, ON
As a woman in AG, you already know the unexpected is part of the role. Just when everything is running smoothly, something changes, breaks, or lands on your lap with "urgent" written all over it. While resilience helps you bounce back afterwards, adaptability helps you respond effectively while it's happening. Join Beverly as we talk about how high AQ (Adaptability Quotient) helps you to stay flexible, think clearly under pressure, solve problems more creatively, and navigate surprises with greater confidence, less stress, and hopefully even with a smile.

2:40 - 3:15 pm **Coffee and Networking Break**
Sponsored by Cargill Limited

3:15 - 4:00 pm **Leader Panel Discussion:**
Building Teams and Cultures that Stick
In a fast-moving world, company culture isn't built by chance; it is crafted with intention. The panel will explore how executives and owners can shape resilient and productive teams where employees feel seen, supported and motivated. How to build a company culture where people want to be part of it, for the long run. What it takes to create a workplace where everyone can thrive, and no one gets left behind.

- How to foster a workplace where people feel valued and connected?
- How do you promote your purpose, mission and vision so that you can get buy-in from your employees?
- How to develop a long-term culture that stays true to your values even under pressure.
- How to lead with flexibility? Using situational leadership to tailor your approach to individual needs and strengths.
- Practical strategies to energize your team and align culture with everyday behaviors.
- Strategies to maintain employee loyalty. (Or is there such a thing anymore?)
    - **Nicole Harris, Director, Human Resources Business Partner – Commercial, Cargill Limited, St. Thomas, ON**
    - **Jacqueline Fisher, Director of Farm Excellence, King Cole Ducks, Stouffville, ON**
    - **Ronald Smith, Desjardins Business Agriculture, Desjardins Ontario Credit Union, Welland, ON**

4:00 - 4:45 pm **The Courage to Define and Own Your Worth**
Lesley Hawkins, Co-Founder, Marsley Canada, Newmarket, ON
Thirty years in male-dominated industries taught Lesley Hawkins that the biggest barrier to women's advancement is rarely ability, instead it is the habit of staying quiet when it matters most. This keynote takes audiences on a journey from the price of silence to the courage to ask, the confidence to lead, and the unapologetic protection of their own energy.

4:45 - 5:00 pm **Day Recap**
Dianne Finstad, Communications Specialist, Red Deer, AB

5:00 - 7:00 pm **Reception and Networking – 3rd Floor**
Featuring King Cole Duck appetizers!

7:00 - 10:00 pm **Banquet - Great Room C, 3rd Floor**
Q **Sponsored by Bunge**
Welcome and greetings
Dianne Finstad, Communications Specialist, Red Deer, AB
Iris Meck, Conference Director, Iris Meck Communications Inc., Calgary, AB

Guest Speaker:
From Source to Voice: Empowering Shea Women and the Future Generation through Sustainable Supply Chains
Barbara Macon, Program Manager Sustainability, West Africa, Bunge, Greater Accra, Ghana

Special Presentation:
Taste of Style
Carolyn Drummond, Cabi Stylist and Group Leader, Cabi Clothing, Stratford, ON

Tuesday, November 24, 2026

7:00 am **Luggage room – Fallsview Studio A**

7:00 - 8:00 am **General Registration Continues and Buffet Breakfast – 3rd Floor, Great Room A**

7:00 – 8:00 am **AAFC Roundtable - Private event, by invitation only – Fallsview Studio C**

8:00 – 8:15 am **Welcome Message**
Dianne Finstad, Communications Specialist, Red Deer, AB

8:15 – 8:45 am **The Myth of Balance: Leadership, Priorities & Women In Agriculture**
Lisa Pallister, Pallister Farms Livestock Ltd., Dundalk, ON
Women in Agriculture are often told they must "balance it all", but true leadership is less about perfect balance and more about understanding priorities in different seasons of life and business. This presentation explores the realities of leadership, resilience, family, farming and the evolving role of women in agriculture through honest conversation and lived experience.

8:45 - 9:25 am **Bloom Through the Dirt**
Siobhan Chinnery, Resilience Advocate & Transformation Expert, Bee Grateful Management, Calgary, AB
Bloom Through the Dirt™ shows how adversity can be our greatest fertilizer for growth. In this session, learn how to cultivate resilience, nurture connection, and rise stronger than before.

9:25 - 10:00 am **Bounce Back with a Smile: Joyful Resilience in a Demanding World**
Nelly Elinam Kurd-Marckay, Quality and Food Safety Manager-West Africa, Bunge, Tema, Greater Accra, Ghana
"Bounce Back with a Smile" explores how joy, humour, and small wins can transform resilience from a heavy burden into a source of energy and connection. Through inspiring stories, including women farmers in Ghana and interactive moments, it shows how thriving without burnout is possible when we choose to lead with laughter and lightness.

10:00 – 10:30 am **Coffee and Networking Break**
Sponsored by Bayer CropScience Inc.

10:30 - 11:00 am **Sunshine. Soil. Soul.**
Lori Kinnee, Founder, RancHer By Lori, Ten Bar Cattle Company Ltd., Fairview, AB
After both she and her ranch were brought to their knees, she found her way back not through a program or a plan, but through the land itself. Drawing on the principles of regenerative ranching, she shares soil-rooted practices for women who are carrying more than anyone sees – and are ready to rebuild from the

ground up. This is a conversation about capacity, rest, legacy, and what it truly means to remember your worth.

11:00 - 11:30 am

The Career I Never Planned: Lessons in Curiosity, Courage, and Saying "Yes"
Christine Baes, Professor & Associate Dean, External Relations; Canada Research Chair in Livestock Genomics, University of Guelph, Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph, ON
Every career is different, and there is no single path to success. Drawing on personal experiences from agriculture, research, and leadership, this presentation encourages women to embrace unexpected opportunities, invest in relationships, and define success on their own terms.

11:30 – 12:00 noon

A Girl Least Likely: an unexpected journey through agriculture
Cami Ryan, Senior Business Partner, Industry Affairs & Sustainability, Bayer CropScience Canada Inc., Calgary, AB
In A Girl Least Likely, Cami Ryan shares her unlikely path from small-town Saskatchewan, through grief, self-doubt, reinvention, and single parenthood, into a career at the heart of agricultural innovation. Her story is a candid and hopeful reminder that our personal lives and professional paths are deeply intertwined, and that even the most unexpected detours can lead to purpose, impact, and belonging.

12:00 - 1:00 pm

General Lunch & Student Sponsor Lunch – Great Room A

1:00 – 1:30 pm

The PARAPET Habits - 7 ways to build competitor resistant customer relationships
Anne Miner, President, The Dunvegan Group, Woodstock, ON
Learn the seven specific habits that The Dunvegan Group has identified as essential to building competitor resistant customer relationships. Strengthen your customer relationships by treating customers the way they want to be treated.

1:30 – 2:00 pm

Harvesting a mindset to thrive: Simple strategies for long-lasting success in the agriculture option.
Trish Tutton, Mindfulness Teacher, Trish Tutton Speaker and Mindfulness Teacher, Canmore, AB
Soil is the foundation underneath it all. You might not see it day-to-day- but it determines EVERYTHING: yields, water retention, disease resistance, and long-term success.
No matter how good the seed is or how hard you work, depleted soil limits growth. A depleted MINDSET is the same. When your mindset is supported, just like the soil, everything grows with less effort (your career, skills, attitude AND resilience to the challenges you face).

2:00 - 2:45 pm

Leader Panel Discussion
Smart Strategy: How AI is Powering the Business of Agriculture
AI is no longer just for the field- it's revolutionizing the business behind agriculture. From supply chain optimization to market forecasting, financial planning, customer insights, and product development, agri-businesses are using AI to stay competitive and agile in a rapidly evolving global market.

- What AI platforms do you use in your day-to-day work, why and how
- How AI is transforming logistics, distribution, and inventory in agri-business
- Leveraging AI for sales trends, customer behaviour, and demand forecasting
- AI-driven tools for financial analysis, risk assessment, and decision-making
- Enhancing marketing and customer engagement through AI insights
- Skills women need to lead in the AI-powered future of agri-business
- Real challenges and barriers to implementation- and how to overcome them
    - **Dr. Wendy Cukier, Professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Ted Rogers School of Management at Toronto Metropolitan University; Founder and Academic Director, Diversity Institute; Academic Director of the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (WEKH); and Academic Research Director of the Future Skills Centre, Diversity Institute, Ted Rogers School of Management, Toronto, ON**
    - **Nicole Hayes, Director, Innovation Hub, Farm Credit Canada, Regina, SK**

2:45 – 3:15 pm

Lead Boldly. Lift Generously. Leave a Legacy.
Lauren Van Ewyk, CEO, National Farmer Mental Health Alliance (NFMHA), Courtright, ON
Women play a vital role in shaping agriculture, businesses, families, and communities in Canada and around the world. Through inspiring stories and practical leadership lessons, this plenary explores how

confidence, compassion, and generosity can transform workplaces and strengthen the people around us. Participants will be encouraged to embrace their influence, lift up others, and leave a legacy that reaches far beyond their own success.

3:15 – 3:30 pm **Closing Comments**
Dianne Finstad, Communications Specialist, Red Deer, AB