

## The Women in Agronomy, Crops, Soils, and Environmental Sciences Committee

In the information about the November 2009 International Annual Meetings of the American Society of Agronomy – Crop Science Society of America – Soil Science Society of America (ASA-CSSA-SSSA), we noticed that the agenda included a luncheon for the Women in Agronomy, Crops, Soils, and Environmental Sciences (WACSES) Committee <https://www.acsmeetings.org/home> and wondered how this organization came into existence and about its focus.

What we learned is that women working in agronomy, crops, soils, and environmental sciences in the United States have the opportunity to participate in a committee dedicated to:

- “promoting the status of women in the three Societies [American Society of Agronomy – Crop Science Society of America– Soil Science Society of America],
- encouraging women to achieve professional excellence,
- establishing networks of women in the agronomic, crops, soils, and environmental sciences,
- sponsoring meetings to address issues of special concerns to professional women in our sciences, and
- fostering the informal exchange of information and contacts in support of professional activities of women. “

Eleven members are appointed to the WACSES Committee, including a staff member as an ex officio non-voting member. Each society president appoints three members to the committee each year to serve for a three year term. The presidents work with the WACSES Committee “to promote the status of women and to encourage women to take an active role in society programs and activities.”

We asked a few questions and learned the following:

1. What is the current membership of ASA-CSSA-SSSA combined, and what is the gender makeup of the membership?

*Combined, membership on December 31, 2009, is 9,791. The gender breakdown as of December 31, 2008 (we are still working on our complete 2009 membership statistics) is ASA 91.6% male, CSSA 90.2% male, SSSA 86.9% male.*

2. What is the membership number of each organization individually?

*ASA membership is 7,108 (gender breakdown above)*

*CSSA membership is 4,683*

*SSSA membership is 5,752*

3. How many members belong to or participate in the Women in Agronomy, Crops, Soils, and Environmental Sciences committee?

*Membership on the committee is a minimum of 9 members (three representing each Society) and additional members as needed.*

4. How has the gender makeup of each society's membership changed and how has the committee played a role in that change?

*We have converted several years ago to a new database and have spent considerable time working to clean-up and update records, so it is difficult to know what gender changes have occurred due to greater support of the Societies.*

5. What was the motivating force that led to the development of the committee to focus on the interests of women scientists?

*The committee was formed in December, 1982 to function as “a forum to share ideas regarding the promotion of scientific exchange and career advancement of women professionals in Agronomy. The committee will act as a career network, sponsor meetings and educational programs, and promote the professionalism of women agronomists.” The committee was expanded in November, 2003 to become a joint committee of all three Societies with the name they have today: Women in Agronomy, Crops, Soils, and Environmental Sciences (WACSES).*

6. What supports does each parent organization offer the committee members, beyond the appointments to the committee?

*The three Societies provide staff support to develop and maintain the committee web page, support a Mentoring Award (promotion of the award nominations, luncheon ticket, plaques, write-up in CSA News), and provide support to the Women’s Lunch with discounted graduate student tickets. Our leadership is also very prominently in attendance at this event.*

#### **Some Details About the Mentoring Award:**

“Mentoring is one important way to promote the status of women in their careers. The influence and support of persons established in their careers is essential for young scientists to achieve high levels of accomplishment, job satisfaction, and career advancement. In 2008, the ASA/CSSA/SSSA Women in Agronomy, Crops, Soils, and Environmental Sciences Committee instituted an award to recognize the efforts of established scientists or agricultural professionals who have encouraged the advancement of women and girls in agricultural and environmental sciences based on their teaching, mentoring, and acting as a role model for advancement. “

“The award will be given based on:

- 1) demonstration of consistent leadership and support for the advancement of women and girls in agronomy, crops, soils, and environmental sciences;
- 2) service as a mentor, role model or key player to encourage and advance girls and women in agronomy, crops, soils, and environmental sciences; or
- 3) work to stimulate change in the social conditioning of girls and women with regard to agronomic sciences.

The nominee need not be a member of ASA, CSSA, or SSSA. Nominees must be living at the time of nomination.”

#### **References:**

Personal correspondence with Susan Chapman, Director of Member Services, Crop Science Society of America.

Each society’s website features a link to the WACSES committee. See:

- the American Society of Agronomy <https://www.agronomy.org/membership/wacses>
- the Crop Science Society of America <https://www.crops.org/membership/wacses>
- the Soil Science Society of America <https://www.soils.org/membership/wacses>

WACSES Committee appointments:

[www.crops.org/about-society/committees/get-file/ACS526/ACS526-guidelines.pdf](http://www.crops.org/about-society/committees/get-file/ACS526/ACS526-guidelines.pdf)