



Women in Ag Award 2026: Announcement of Winners

Joint DLG and Women in Ag Magazine award – more than 170 women from 62 countries took part in the four-category award scheme – International jury – Award ceremony at EuroTier 2026 on 11 November in Hanover, Germany – www.eurotier.com

DLG (German Agricultural Society) and Women in Ag Magazine have announced the winners of this year's Women in Ag Award. The announcement comes in a year of particular significance, with the United Nations declaring 2026 the International Year of Women in Agriculture, an initiative aimed at increasing the visibility of women's achievements in agriculture worldwide and highlighting their central role in the sector. Now in its fifth year, the Women in Ag Award supports this objective by recognising women who have made outstanding contributions to the development of local, national and international agriculture. The award is presented in four categories: Farming, Agribusiness, Education, and Technology & Research

The award ceremony will take place at EuroTier, the world's leading trade fair for professional animal farming and livestock management, on 11 November 2026 at 16:00 CET at the DLG stand in Hall 13 in Hanover, Germany. Following the ceremony, the Female Agri Fellows networking event will take place at 17:00 CET. Female Agri Fellows is an international network for women in agriculture founded by DLG.

The Women in Ag Award is presented by an international jury and recognises the achievements of women working in agriculture, agribusiness, and in schools, universities, research institutions, media, and organizations within the agricultural sector. More than 170 women from 62 countries applied for this year's award.

In each of the four categories, a first, second, and third prize is awarded. In the Technology & Research category, two candidates were selected for third place this year.

Category: Farming

- **1st Place: Marianne van den Hoek-Huijbregts, Netherlands**

Marianne van den Hoek-Huijbregts is a Dutch arable farmer, freshwater innovator, and advocate for sustainable agriculture. Together with her husband, she manages a 220-hectare family farm on Schouwen-Duiveland, where salinization and water scarcity threaten food production. Determined to secure the farm's future, she developed Freshwater Focus, the first fully operational farmer-initiated Aquifer Storage & Recovery system in Dutch arable farming. The system captures, filters, and stores rainwater underground for later irrigation, making the farm self-sufficient in freshwater and improving crop yields, soil health, and resource efficiency. Beyond the farm, she serves on the board of Royal Cosun, where she champions innovation, sustainability, and greater representation of women in agriculture, while inspiring farmers facing similar water challenges worldwide.

- **2nd Place: Lavender Odeny, Kenya**

Lavender Odeny is a Kenyan agribusiness entrepreneur and founder of MashLav Foods. She is pioneering commercial mushroom farming in Kilifi County, a semi-arid coastal region where mushroom production was once considered unviable. Through climate-smart cultivation methods, she has demonstrated how agricultural waste can be transformed into nutritious oyster mushrooms using minimal land and water. Beyond production, she has built a farmer-centered enterprise that processes value-added mushroom products, supports market access, and trains women and youth in sustainable farming practices. To date, her work has empowered 120 farmers, improved local food security, and created new income opportunities, proving that innovative agriculture can drive both economic growth and community resilience.

- **3rd Place: Marlen Arkesteijn, Netherlands**

Marlen Arkesteijn is a Dutch city farmer, rural sociologist, and founder of Tuinderij de Stadsboerin, an ecological urban farm in Rotterdam. Since 2018, she has grown pesticide-free vegetables, herbs, flowers, and fruit for more than 150 local households through a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model. Combining her background in food systems, nature conservation, and social change with hands-on farming, she promotes healthy soils, local food production, and sustainable consumption. Beyond food production, she uses the farm as a platform for education, community building, and awareness, helping people reconnect with where their food comes from. Through partnerships with local organizations and active involvement in national sustainability networks, she works to make healthy, locally grown food accessible while inspiring a fairer and more resilient food system.

Category: Agribusiness

- **1st Place: Ifeoma Okonkwo, Nigeria**

Ifeoma Oluchukwu Mary Okonkwo is a Nigerian agripreneur and Co-Founder & Group Managing Director of Ifgreen Industries & Investment Ltd, a company transforming indigenous crops into nutritious food products while creating sustainable livelihoods. Since founding the business in 2016, she has driven innovation in cassava processing, renewable energy, and circular agriculture, converting agricultural waste into biogas, organic fertilizer, and animal feed. Under her leadership, the company has created more than 3,200 jobs, empowered over 800 female farmers, and reached millions of consumers with biofortified food products. With a strong focus on women's leadership, youth employment, and sustainable value chains, she is helping build a more inclusive, climate-resilient, and economically competitive agricultural sector in Nigeria.

- **2nd Place: Nakalema Assumpta, Uganda**

Nakalema Ann Assumpta is a Ugandan IT engineer, agritech innovator, and founder of HatchRite Co. Ltd, a company dedicated to making poultry farming more accessible, productive, and sustainable. She developed locally manufactured poultry incubators and brooding systems to help smallholder farmers overcome barriers to reliable chick production while strengthening local manufacturing capacity. Recognizing the need for solutions across the entire poultry value chain, she expanded her work to include farmer training, community hatcheries, and nutrition-focused initiatives. Through HatchRite, she has supported more than 700 farmers, particularly women, youth, and refugee communities, with technology, technical support, and entrepreneurship opportunities. Her vision is to build an integrated poultry ecosystem that combines innovation, nutrition, and sustainable livelihoods to strengthen food security across East Africa.

- **3rd Place: Valentyna Bolokhovska, Ukraine**

Valentyna Bolokhovska is a biotechnology pioneer, entrepreneur, and co-founder of BTU, one of Ukraine's leading producers of biological solutions for agriculture. With more than 50 years of experience, she has dedicated her career to transforming biotechnology from scientific research into practical, scalable solutions for farmers. Her work focuses on developing microbial and enzyme-based products that improve crop productivity, restore soil fertility, and support sustainable agricultural systems. Under her leadership, BTU established a full innovation cycle from research and production to field validation and farmer education, helping integrate biological solutions into modern

farming practices. By combining scientific rigor with commercial viability, she has played a key role in advancing responsible biotechnology and promoting productive, environmentally sustainable agriculture.

Category: Education

- **1st Place: Valeriya Yudina, Kazakhstan**

Valeriya Yudina is an education and talent-development leader with more than 30 years of experience, she is dedicated to building the next generation of agricultural professionals. By transforming Digital Agroleaders from a student competition into a comprehensive educational ecosystem, she brings together students, universities, employers, technology companies, and industry experts to address the agricultural sector's growing talent shortage. Her approach connects young people with real-world challenges in agronomy, engineering, irrigation, and digital agriculture, helping bridge the gap between education and workforce needs. Through internships, international learning opportunities, and career pathways, she is creating a sustainable pipeline of future agricultural leaders and driving the digital transformation and long-term resilience of the agricultural sector across Kazakhstan and beyond.

- **2nd Place: Sharon Monethi, South Africa**

Sharon Monethi is a sustainability advocate, social entrepreneur, and agricultural development leader dedicated to empowering women, youth, and underserved communities through innovative farming solutions. As founder of the Woman of Age Foundation and Chairperson of the Women and Food Fellowship, she has led initiatives that promote livelihoods, entrepreneurship, and food security across Africa. Her flagship innovation, the Hydro Coop farming model, combines hydroponic crop production with cooperative enterprise development, enabling women to grow food and generate income even where access to land is limited. Through training, incubation programs, and sustainable farming practices, she helps communities improve productivity, create employment, and strengthen local food systems. Her work demonstrates how inclusive, climate-smart agriculture can reduce poverty, enhance food security, and create opportunities for future generations.

- **3rd Place: María Blanco, Colombia**

María Blanco is a veterinarian and rural development specialist from Colombia. She has spent more than 30 years demonstrating how agriculture can drive environmental restoration, community development, and cultural preservation. As co-founder and

Executive Director of the El Porvenir Ecological Foundation, she has led the restoration of cloud forests, protected vital water sources, and educated more than one million visitors on biodiversity and sustainable land management. Her work integrates agroecological practices, silvopastoral systems, ethical livestock production, home gardening, and composting to strengthen rural livelihoods while restoring ecosystems. By empowering women and young people through environmental education, leadership development, and sustainable agriculture initiatives, she has helped create resilient communities and shown that agriculture can be a powerful tool for conservation, climate resilience, and lasting social change.

Category: Technology & Research

- **1st Place: Katharina Unger, Austria**

Katharina Unger is an industrial designer, entrepreneur, and founder & CEO of LIVIN farms, she has dedicated more than a decade to advancing circular agriculture through insect-based technologies. By harnessing insects' natural ability to transform organic by-products into valuable protein, oil, and organic fertilizer, she has helped pioneer a new approach to sustainable food production. Her current focus is scaling LIVIN farms' Hive PRO, a fully automated modular insect factory. Today, these systems process more than 100,000 tons of organic by-products each year, helping build one of Europe's largest circular biofactory networks and creating more resilient, resource-efficient agricultural systems worldwide.

- **2nd Place: Dong Xiaoxia, People's Republic of China**

Dong Xiaoxia is a researcher and innovation leader at the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, with nearly 20 years of experience advancing sustainable dairy systems, digital agriculture, and livestock economics. She has led more than 60 research projects focused on improving the economic, environmental, and technological performance of dairy production. Her team developed a national agricultural information platform serving over 180,000 farming households and supporting data-driven decision-making across the dairy value chain. Through research, digital innovation, and large-scale knowledge transfer initiatives, she has helped bridge the gap between science and practice, promoting low-carbon, efficient, and resilient dairy systems while empowering the next generation of agricultural researchers.

- **3rd Place: Mirjam Lechner, Germany**

Raised on a pig farm in Bavaria, Mirjam Lechner has dedicated more than 16 years to improving animal health, animal welfare, and sustainability in livestock farming. Working

at the intersection of research, technology, and agricultural practice, she helped identify and advance understanding of Swine Inflammation and Necrosis Syndrome (SINS), a significant health challenge in pigs and cattle. Her work bridges scientific insights and practical application. She initiates and develops visual scoring systems, digital apps, e-learning platforms, and thermography-based monitoring methods used by farmers, veterinarians, and breeding organizations. Through international research, training, and consultancy, she continues to bridge the gap between science and practice, equipping people in agriculture with the knowledge and tools they need to improve animal health and welfare in their day-to-day work.

- **3rd Place: Amna Shoaib, Pakistan**

Professor Amna Shoaib is a plant pathologist, researcher, and academic leader at the University of the Punjab, Pakistan, dedicated to advancing sustainable agriculture through biological crop protection. With more than two decades of experience, she develops science-based alternatives to chemical pesticides, including biofungicides, beneficial microbial consortia, and innovative delivery technologies that enhance plant health and resilience. Her work focuses on harnessing plant–microbe interactions to improve crop productivity, strengthen disease resistance, and support climate-smart farming. Through research, technology commercialization, industry collaboration, and farmer-centered solutions, she is helping translate scientific discoveries into practical innovations that promote food security, environmental sustainability, and agricultural development worldwide.

Partners:

The award is supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung – BMZ)
The patronage has been assumed by Alois Rainer, German Federal Minister of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity.

Further information about the winners can be found here:

<https://www.dlg.org/en/agriculture/awards/women-in-ag-award>

Further information:

www.eurotier.com

www.facebook.com/eurotier

[www.instagram.com/eurotier tradefair](https://www.instagram.com/eurotier_tradefair)

<https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/dlg-eurotier/>
www.linkedin.com/groups/2414416
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Media contact

Malene Conlong
+49 69 24788-237
m.conlong@dlg.org

DLG. Progress and sustainability in agriculture and the food industry

The DLG (Deutsche Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft e.V. - German Agricultural Society), founded in 1885 by Max Eyth, stands for productivity and resource conservation in a sustainable and innovation-friendly agricultural and food value chain. The goal of the DLG is to promote progress through the transfer of knowledge, quality and technology. The DLG has more than 30,000 members, is a non-profit organisation, politically independent and internationally networked. As one of the leading organisations in its industry, the DLG organises trade fairs and events in the fields of agriculture and food technology and tests food, agricultural machinery and farm inputs. With its Competence Center Agriculture and Food and the media of the DLG publishers, the DLG stands for independent know-how transfer. In addition, the DLG works in numerous national and international expert committees to develop solutions for the challenges facing the agricultural, agri-food and food industries.

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