

## **Conversation Circle for Women Farmers, March 2009, LaCrosse, WI**

Ag census data shows that the number of women operating farms in Wisconsin is increasing, especially of those who sell direct market or value added products. SARE has funded a project to study whether Extension is adequately serving this population. The focus of the project is on conservation and environmental management practices. At the recent MOSES Organic Farming Conference, approximately 35 women met to discuss these issues over lunch.

Women described plenty of situations where they still experience sex discrimination; such as at the local equipment dealer, the FSA office, and the veterinarian's office. Women who farm on a smaller scale than their neighbor farmers discussed the difficulties they had being understood and taken seriously by Extension and other government agencies and also by the local ag supply dealers.

The women farmers described a wide variety of ways they gather information, including 4-H project guides, email list serves, grower association farm tours, conferences, neighbors, and parts suppliers.

Researchers Astrid Newenhouse and Sharon Lezberg of the UW Environmental Resources Center will continue to collect data for a few months. If you are a Wisconsin farmer and would like to add your story to this project, please email or call Astrid at [astridn@wisc.edu](mailto:astridn@wisc.edu) <<mailto:astridn@wisc.edu>>, (608) 262-2635. Astrid Newenhouse, UW Environmental Resources Center, 445 Henry Mall, Madison WI 53706.