

STATE OF ILLINOIS

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Proclamation

WHEREAS, the United Nations General Assembly has declared 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer, highlighting the vital role and essential contributions women hold in agriculture, food production, and sustaining rural economies worldwide; and,

WHEREAS, 33,927 women producers in Illinois accounted for approximately 28 percent of all agricultural producers, demonstrating the strong and growing leadership of women across the State's farms and agricultural enterprises; and,

WHEREAS, women farmers in Illinois not only cultivate the land but also contribute to innovation, entrepreneurship, conservation, leadership in food systems, agricultural education, and community resilience by enhancing rural vitality and economic opportunity in every region of the State; and,

WHEREAS, Illinois was home to Annette Kohlhagen Fleck, the woman behind Annie's Project, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing educational programs designed to strengthen women's roles in modern agricultural enterprises; and,

WHEREAS, Betsy Pech was the first female agriculture teacher in Illinois, dedicating 34 years to her students and opening the door to female agriculture teachers who now make up a significant portion of the ag education workforce; and,

WHEREAS, Mindy Elvidge (Bunselmeyer) was the first female State Future Farmers of America President in Illinois in 1990, breaking barriers to leadership roles within the student organization; and,

WHEREAS, Janice Seitz became the first woman to serve as 4-H Director in Illinois in 1997, leading the state program into the modern era, nearly doubling youth participation during her tenure; and,

WHEREAS, Becky Doyle served as the first female Director of the Illinois Department of Agriculture from 1991 to 1999, serving as a leader in the industry and a role model for women looking to advance in male-dominated industries; and,

WHEREAS, Illinois' agricultural sector is a cornerstone of the State's economy by producing top national commodities, supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs, and generating billions of dollars in cash receipts and economic activity for both rural and urban communities;

THEREFORE, I, JB Pritzker, Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim March 2026 as the Month of the Woman Farmer in Illinois.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Illinois to be affixed.

*Done at the Capitol in the City of Springfield,
this THIRTEENTH day of MARCH, in
the Year of Our Lord, two thousand and
TWENTY-SIX, and of the State of Illinois,
two hundred and SEVENTH.*



Alexi Giannouli
SECRETARY OF STATE

JB Pritzker
GOVERNOR