



Knowledge grows

# The Courage to Be

Stories of Women in Agronomy: A Legacy to Inspire



*This book is dedicated to all women  
agronomists, living their lives with  
courage and resilience every day.*



# Women in Agronomy

**There are many reasons why this book will always retain a place in our hearts and minds. Some are more obvious, others less so.**

As the very first book to highlight women's careers at Yara, it is an important gender equality landmark. Within these pages, there are 37 stories, told by 43 remarkable women who participate in the Women in Agronomy Program (WiA). They show examples of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) evolution happening at Yara, as seen through the eyes of women.

Equally important, though of a more personal nature, are the results of reaching out to and capturing the stories of the women portrayed here. The effects of being seen, heard, and valued. The courage and vulnerability demonstrated by these pioneers who choose to share their experiences so that colleagues can avoid or overcome the obstacles they have faced. And lastly, the hope that these portraits can inspire and empower women across the agribusiness value chain and help to create a world that acknowledges their skills and experiences – a world where they can rightfully flourish and grow.





## Another Chance to Grow

I was shocked when I first learned about the extremely low number of women in agronomy. I certainly knew that the traditional fertilizer industry is male-dominated and has a long way to go to reach gender equality, but I had no idea that the representation gap between men and women agronomists at Yara was also wide. When my colleague Rejane Souza showed me the statistics a few years back, I immediately decided to support her work to address the inequality.

But how do you change a culture and way of thinking that have been decades in the making? Change starts with awareness, continues with setting clear targets, and is supported by managers that walk the talk. The Women in Agronomy program went from a successful six-month pilot of 60 participants to a ten-month global program of over 230 participants representing 34 countries. Now permanent, the program takes a holistic approach to supporting women through mentoring, networking groups, and visibility channels.

In parallel with this, I have also taken a good look at myself and the way I recruit my own management team. I can't expect everyone else to change if I am not willing to challenge myself. Today, Yara's executive management is gender balanced, and I can therefore use this experience when I demand change further down the organization.

Improving gender balance is the smart thing to do no matter how you look at it. And above all, it's the decent thing to do. We cannot discriminate on the basis of gender. It also makes sense from a purely financial point of view.

We can't risk missing out on half the talent, half the knowledge, half the experience. We need all hands on deck, we need all perspectives and we also need to reflect the markets in which we operate. And for those who need to put a number on it, a McKinsey report from 2015 concluded that there is 12 trillion USD in GDP growth to be achieved if we reach gender parity.

The Women in Agronomy program shows what can be done through systematic and targeted work and when we challenge the status quo. I want to thank my colleagues who are driving this change and providing training on DEI topics, such as the unconscious biases that we all harbor in different areas. Also, a special thanks to the brave women who share their experiences in this book. From your stories, we can all gain new perspectives and aspire to become better allies for women and their careers.

**I want to encourage you, dear reader, to share the stories in this book with others and use it as a reference tool to initiate conversations around gender equality. The job is not done yet, and we all have a part to play.**































**Svein Tore Holsether**  
President and CEO





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## Current Locations

One way to see the impact of our business is by looking at what happens at the farm level. Yara has a network of over 2000<sup>1</sup> agronomists worldwide, and according to the latest numbers, 26% of them are women.

Our goal with the WiA program is to reach all women in agronomy. Through this book, we are delighted to highlight 43 of our current participants from 21 different countries.

1. Yara People Path, accessed July, 2022.



- 1 Alessandra Bonamano - Germany
- 2 Alphonsine Nhiomog - Cameroon
- 3 Amparo Medina - Colombia
- 4 Anna Srichai - Thailand
- 5 Arunee Sankhum - Thailand
- 6 Caroline Quignon - Germany
- 7 Chiraporn Thipnong - Thailand
- 8 Chrystel Monthean - Colombia
- 9 Cíntia Neves - Brazil
- 10 Eugene Lee - South Korea
- 11 Fernanda Lopes Larsen - Singapore
- 12 Gabriele Oliveira - Brazil
- 13 Jamie Schechinger - United States
- 14 Karolina Frackowiak - Poland
- 15 Katelin Andrew - United States
- 16 Kawitsara Janchu - Thailand
- 17 Liz Gómez - Mexico
- 18 Lopamudra Mukherjee - India
- 19 Maiara Tedesco - Brazil
- 20 Margarita González - Argentina
- 21 Maria Luisa Martínez - Spain
- 22 Marion Martínez - Italy
- 23 Marta Vega - Germany
- 24 Mayteza Zelaya - Nicaragua
- 25 Mervi Seppänen - Finland
- 26 Micaela Bové - Argentina
- 27 Mónica Andrés - Spain
- 28 Mónica Sánchez - Spain
- 29 Narges Moradtalab - Germany
- 30 Natalie Wood - United Kingdom
- 31 Pamela Elias - Brazil
- 32 Patricia Dingus - United States
- 33 Patricia Rodríguez - Mexico
- 34 Praephan Sroysangwon - Thailand
- 35 Petra Junklewitz - Germany
- 36 Rejane Souza - Norway
- 37 Ridham Kakar - India
- 38 Suwanun Laopieng - Thailand
- 39 Thais Coser - Brazil
- 40 Thao Ho - Vietnam
- 41 Huyen Nguyen - Vietnam
- 42 Yi Xuan Lai - Malaysia
- 43 Zar Zar Win- Upper Myanmar



# Alessandra Bonamano

Regional Crop Knowledge and  
Agronomy Lead Europe



“

*I want to be an  
inspirational  
agronomist for  
everybody, not  
just as a woman!*

”

## The Changemaker

I have always been drawn toward the sustainability challenges facing our planet and have dedicated my career to helping solve them – first in academia and then in the “real world” as an agronomist. I am driven to blaze new trails with technology and knowledge and want my work to inspire farmers and other agronomists everywhere.

I am from Venice and have no background in farming whatsoever. My dream was originally to be a researcher at university and contribute to a sustainable future. After all, this is the only planet we have, which is why I was initially interested in environmental studies. But what caught my eye was that agronomists can also support sustainability goals, so I took my degree in agricultural science.

Academia turned out to be a tough, abstract, and political environment, so eventually I wanted to move on. Fortunately, life offered me a different path that allowed me to become a “boots in the soil” agronomist, working closely with farmers to understand their real needs.

After starting as a research and development specialist at a seed company, I have worked with precision farming since 2010, enabling farmers to use less resources while still getting high yields.

It is precisely this, seeing my knowledge directly applied to help farmers achieve sustainable solutions, which drives my love of this work. Unlike a factory with controlled conditions, we are out in the field, where I’ve discovered a passion for mitigating environmental challenges and supporting farmers in their everyday choices.

## The Family-Work Balance

My country of origin, Italy, is amongst the lowest ranked countries in the European Union with respect to gender equality. Besides discriminatory language and loaded jokes being commonplace, one of the workplace impediments we have is that a lot of people still believe that women have to give up careers because otherwise, they cannot be good mothers and wives. During job interviews, for example, there are still a lot of questions about this because companies are worried that women with families may harm their business.

I left Italy for Germany when I joined Yara in 2018, and I was initially anxious about losing the support of my family in raising my child. This was lessened when I was met with a mindset I never expected at work, where I’ve been given 100% flexibility to meet my family’s needs. I’ve even been considered for advancement to positions with more responsibilities, despite not always having the possibility to travel.

Even in Germany though, women in the field face many difficulties in a male-dominated industry, and it takes more time to gain trust as a woman before we can begin dispensing agronomic advice to farmers.

A key lesson here has been that at the end of the day, results matter most. And once this trust is established, my personal experience is that I can communicate my knowledge with passion to an eager listener.

**Position and years in the company:** Regional Crop Knowledge and Agronomy Lead Europe; 4 years  
**Location:** Germany  
**Region/Unit:** Yara Agronomy and R&D  
**Nationality:** Italian  
**Area of expertise:** Precision farming and irrigation management



## Motto

“Boots in the soil” is the only way to get the real picture of what is going on in the field.



## Word to the Wise

I think it’s important for women to remember to be ourselves, especially in this field. I once had a leadership position where I tried to lead like my predecessor by being tough and direct. But that’s not my way, and it didn’t work well. I usually take a gentler approach but sometimes worry that others would see this as “too female.” Ultimately, as women, we shouldn’t let such doubts force us to change our way of interacting with others at work.

**All in all, I love what I do and struggle to imagine doing something else in the future. But one thing has become certain in my mind, and this is my main goal: I want to build my credibility around technical knowledge and leadership, and be an inspirational agronomist for everybody, not just as a woman!**



**Favorite crop:**  
Wine grapes



“

*We should not be afraid to speak out if we want things to change.*

”



# Alphonsine Nhiomog

Crop and Agronomist Manager



## The Goalkeeper

I am very focused on professional and personal goals, but you can't focus on goals alone. You must remember people – they remind you why you're doing what you're doing. Goals and people are interconnected: my top professional goal now is meeting our yearly volume objectives, which involves teamwork and team goals. I have individual goals with farmers, and also for my six sales agronomists.

I have always wanted to understand what things are made of and how they function. My father was a mechanic who loved fixing things, and I often copied him. At school, my favorite subjects were biology and other sciences. So, my top career choices were medical studies and agronomy. In Cameroon, there is a national selection process for these studies. After failing the selection for medical studies, I bravely succeeded in the agronomist process.

Goals can help you keep one step ahead. I became fluent in English before starting my studies because some parts were not taught in French. I passed my driving test right after completing my studies, as it was clear to me that a good agronomist must be mobile and autonomous in their mobility. Later, I saw many opportunities in sales, and realized I needed to acquire sales and marketing skills. This led me to internships in a microfinance organization, a World Bank project, and an agricultural company.

After graduation, I worked as an independent agronomist consultant before joining Yara as Crops and Agronomist Manager in 2015.

## Positive Goals

I also want to impact people's lives positively. In agronomy, we learn every day by doing – and doing things well. It's a discipline that embraces fields such as biology, economics, chemistry, and soil sciences. To make a positive impact, we must work on mastering all of these. Yara supports me to do that, but it is ultimately my responsibility.

My favorite crops are maize and rubber. Maize is a key global crop and the most cultivated cereal in Cameroon. It's also the main source of income for more than a million smallholder farmers; we impact many millions of people by focusing on it. My main agronomic challenge is transferring technological innovations and expertise, which is a slow process.

The Cameroon government wants innovation and it supports agronomic education, but many people do not accept new ideas due to traditional beliefs and have no understanding of technology. To introduce something new, such as fertilizer, to a village, authorities such as the chief and mayor must approve it first. Women are generally more open to new ideas and want to attend our meetings to learn how to grow more food. They also do most of the manual farm work, especially with food and cereal crops. Men generally want to follow traditions and are more interested in large cash crop plantations.

**Position and years in the company:**  
Crop and Agronomist Manager; 7 years

**Location:** Cameroon

**Region/Unit:** Yara Africa & Asia

**Nationality:** Cameroonian

**Area of expertise:** Crop nutrition and technology transfer



## Difficult Conversations

Cameroonian culture is a major obstacle to gender diversity. Women are expected to perform all household and childcare duties. Men are unaware of the need for change and our culture supports this. Many Cameroonians assume that women cannot hold important work positions, and that some job roles can only be done by men. They say women shouldn't drive and do field work far from home. However, I manage to travel over long distances and to be away from my family and child.

These attitudes make it difficult for us women, and men don't realize that their behavior is hurtful. All of us women who face gender diversity challenges must speak up and inform our superiors whenever possible. Men must be told about the positive impacts of gender equality. We must break this glass ceiling!

## Inspire to Aspire

Begin by talking to your closest contacts who are more likely to listen. I sometimes say, "what if men say your daughter shouldn't work or accept a job; if you give in to this prejudice, will you be happy – will she? Doesn't she deserve the opportunity to become independent and have a good life?"

**I will continue my efforts to bridge this awareness gap as well as the knowledge gap between African and European farmers. My career will demonstrate that a woman can be a good agronomist and professional. I'm very pleased to say that several business partners have told me they are encouraging their daughters to do agronomy studies because of me.**



**Favorite crop:** Rubber

## Motto

**Don't lose sight of the goal!**







# Amparo Medina

Senior Agronomist

“

*In Latin America,  
“machismo” and  
patriarchy still  
persist.*

”



## Gender Defender

Amparo means “shelter” or “protection”. In the competitive business world – where it’s easy to overlook colleagues’ welfare and social connections – we all need some occasional “shelter”. I am a caring connector of people and sometimes also a “defender of gender”, in the sense that I encourage different gender perspectives.

Agronomic knowledge is the cornerstone of my work. It has allowed me to achieve my personal goals and those of the company. I also use it to collaborate with my colleagues, help them achieve their goals, and develop themselves professionally and personally.

At the age of 17, I was drawn to agronomy by the idea of multidisciplinary engineering dedicated to food production. A nerdy student of all subjects, I was interested in more than purely technical engineering aspects and was motivated by a romantic view I had of nature and farming.

For almost 35 years now, I have explored crop nutrition in my roles as a university lecturer, manager, technical advisor in business processes, and scientist doing R&D. I’ve delved into fertigation, foliar fertilizers and organic fertilization, developed nutritional solutions, and analyzed soil, plants, and water.

I love to solve problems holistically by employing ecological, social, and financial perspectives. Likewise, I enjoy interacting with people in the field, creating bonds with farmers and understanding their views, and discovering local community perspectives. Currently, I go into the field too little and I really miss it!

## Overcoming “Machismo” and Patriarchy

In the field, you sometimes discover how local cultural practices and habits can negatively impact women and their work. In Latin America, “machismo” and patriarchy still persist. Women are raised to be modest and humble and not to highlight their strengths and achievements. Therefore, we become ashamed to stand out, we tend to overfocus on our weaknesses, and are reluctant to give an opinion or disagree. We have to overcome this cultural conditioning!

Like many women my age, I have worked very hard to develop and demonstrate skills and abilities to get where I am today. I hope it will be easier for younger colleagues and that opportunities are not closed to them because of gender. As Latino women, we must stop fearing “machismo”, have confidence in ourselves and our abilities, express our opinions freely and, above all, recognize our own achievements. The WiA program has role models like Chrystel, Monica, and Fernanda, who show us that perseverance, doing what needs to be done, and learning from mistakes, can take you far.



## Motto

Collaboration creates better results than competition.

## Safe Spaces, Safe Men

The program also provides safe spaces where we can share stories and challenges, speak confidentially and seek guidance when gender issues arise. This is particularly important if you experience hostile work environments, such as when I had a manager that made sexually-loaded jokes. Hostile cultures stop you from enjoying work and make you afraid to share ideas, ultimately halting your development and career.

I have learned several ways to deal with dysfunctional male-dominated environments and stop them from stealing my self-esteem and self-confidence. Keeping a sense of humor helps me to understand male colleagues, and when the opportunity arises, I challenge them gently from a gender perspective. I might say, “how would you combine childcare and work?” In this way, I have gained support from some men who then defended me in hostile situations. Lesson: You should not assume the whole world is against you, despite the difficult environment.

To build cultures more supportive to gender challenges, we must include men so that they see the importance of the gender perspective. Men may

think DEI focus means women get unfair advancement and obstruct their career advancement. We need to explain the need for equity so that men are more open to listening to us and understand that there may be times when we require additional support, like flexibility for childcare. Discussing issues with safe male friends is a good first step.

**Gender diversity allows fairer societies with opportunities for men and women, which undoubtedly benefits people, protects the planet, and generates prosperity. We cannot waste female talent due to cultural barriers – why ignore half of society?**

### Position and years in the company:

Senior Agronomist; 14 years

**Location:** Colombia

**Region/Unit:** Yara Americas

**Nationality:** Colombian

**Area of expertise:** Plant nutrition and crop physiology





“

*DEI is not a short-term project, but a roadmap to a behavioral shift for everyone.*

”

# Caroline Quignon

*Agronomic Learning Analyst*





## Inclusion is the Key

When I became the first woman to manage the Pocklington glasshouse, I had come a long way from working at a farm shop during my schooldays. My early interest in vegetable production led me to a horticulture apprenticeship, instead of going straight to university. I loved being outdoors all day long, getting muddy in the fields and sweaty in the glasshouse, and I still feel great satisfaction doing physical work.

Two years later, I went to university to explore the scientific side of agronomy. It expanded my knowledge of agronomic topics and perfectly complemented my early fieldwork experiences. It's this combination that makes my work in Yara so enjoyable and special. My move to work at Yara in the UK in 2015 underlined my earlier experiences that change is a positive thing. The glasshouse in Pocklington allowed me to explore scientific topics, try new methods and innovate. Since then, my work planning, conducting, processing and evaluating agricultural R&D trials and commercial demonstrations for specialty fertilizers has even generated patents for Yara.

## Reflecting on Behavior

While doing a training course on understanding bias, I got frustrated seeing how many things I need to change and how easily communication can go wrong. Reflecting on our behavior and those apparently intuitive reactions towards people and situations is hard work! It's not easy rethinking the way you live, how to educate your children, how to interact socially, or how to communicate and behave at work. However, the more I learn, the better I understand why this is so important.

Having met hundreds of colleagues from all over the world on their visits to Pocklington, I realize that each team is a microcosm and each

individual is responsible for fostering a positive work environment. I saw how teams' communication dictates their dynamics. One visiting group was mostly male, but the women were very engaged and had many questions. After a while, the men asked them to stop "talking too much," which I supposed was because they wouldn't admit they didn't know the answers themselves.

As glasshouse manager, I felt the frustration when visitors went straight to male colleagues with technical questions, assuming the men in the room had the expertise. Occasionally, my team would pass queries on to me; other times I interrupted, introduced myself, and said I could answer all questions.



**Position and years in the company:** Agronomic Learning Analyst; 7 years  
**Location:** Germany   
**Region/Unit:** Yara Agronomy and R&D  
**Nationality:** German  
**Area of expertise:** Micronutrient fertilizers and product development

## Turn Learning into Action

Yara has been laying the structural foundation for gender equality, and enhanced gender diversity is becoming visible in many parts of the company. However, numerical balance is only a first step. Now it's time to turn learning into action on a daily basis, to lead by example, change mindsets, and really implement inclusion.

In many roles, women are still seen as outsiders. I worked in male-dominated horticulture, a physically demanding job with seasonal workload peaks. There was sometimes an underlying consensus among male colleagues that I should not be doing "men's work" – heavy lifting, repairing a tractor, or even driving it. It takes perseverance to overcome this, to not feel excluded and devalued. One strategy is to turn this into a positive lesson: to trust in and develop our skills, strength and manual dexterity. Equally however, inclusiveness requires us as an organization to recognize and accept people, to make them feel welcome.

Yara's commitment to inclusion is a great opportunity that can tip the scale towards more social fairness. However, inclusion requires us to be willing to retrain ourselves. My perception is that many colleagues are

still unaware about gender inequalities and other biases, and can become defensive or reject calls to alter their behavior concerning gender-related topics.

**To encourage change, it is important that Yara clearly communicates that DEI is not a short-term project taking place in just one corner of the company, but a roadmap to a behavioral shift for everyone.**



**Favorite crop:** Pumpkin



## Motto

**Decision. Dedication. Repeat.**



A woman with short grey hair, wearing a dark blazer over a white top and dark pants, is walking through a large field of colorful roses. The roses are in various colors including pink, white, yellow, and orange. The background consists of tall green trees under bright sunlight.

# Chrystel Monthean

EVP Americas

“

*All DEI starts  
with education  
and awareness.*

”



## Citizen of the World

I am a citizen of the world, having left my homeland of France 24 years ago and lived in four different countries. This has allowed me to experience many aspects of diversity. It therefore seems natural that Yara should reflect the diverse world in which we operate.

I never dreamed of being an Executive Vice President (EVP). Whenever I have found myself at life's crossroads, I have just responded. We only have one life, and tomorrow is unknown, so my approach is to enjoy each moment, appreciate others and make things happen through reflection and learning.

Personally, I have experienced little gender bias and barriers to my freedom. I think I've become bulletproof to bias; by learning to use my emotional intelligence and intuition, I've been able to turn gender to my advantage. However, I am fully aware of the need for change. I get very uncomfortable when I experience imbalances due to status quo and apathy. Gender DEI is an important element of a larger challenge – to rebalance unequal local, regional and global socio-economic eco-systems.

## Be Realistic

The Americas is a very diverse region in terms of ethnicity due to its history of colonization. I still see this stigma in the western white male stereotype who tends to consider himself superior. Another example of historical bias is the Oslo/European leaning that has been prevalent at Yara. It creates a lack of cultural awareness that staff don't dare to speak up about – especially if they see you as “superior”. For that reason, engaging and learning about DEI is essential, as all change starts with awareness and education.

I was originally against diversity Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), naively thinking change would happen by itself, but it won't. We have to be realistic about our gender targets. How many women presidents are there in the world? How many listed companies have a woman at the top or even a 50-50 executive committee? We are talking about a systemic change that won't happen quickly. I prefer “slow but fundamentally strong” to rapid change that falls apart the day KPIs are eased. Once a diverse culture is established, legislation can possibly be dropped, but only if your organization is stable. Change, however, is constant. Consider how Europe thought that there would never be war on the continent again. Culture, like society, is in constant flux.

## Prepare the Pipeline

To reach our gender targets for 2025, I obviously use my influence on the executive board, and we can reshuffle the organization, but this is the ‘tip of the iceberg’. Bottom-up structural change is the way forward, and that means preparing the pipeline. It requires external headhunters to include diverse profiles among candidates. Universities and schools must be made aware of our opportunities for minority students. And we should challenge Yara Americas leaders to treat vacancies as diversity opportunities – encourage women to apply, and when a male candidate is best qualified, prepare women candidates to be best next time around.

**Position and years in the company:** Executive Vice President - Americas; 32 years  
**Location:** Colombia  
**Region/Unit:** Yara Americas  
**Nationality:** French  
**Area of expertise:** Horticulture – Fertigation Open Field & Greenhouses



## Motto

Are you living to work or working to live?



## Build the Ladder

As well as recruiting and onboarding new minority employees, we must support existing colleagues to reach the top and become leaders. I am happy that Yara has a thorough maternity/paternity leave program; mothers get six months off, flexible working hours when they return and can use on-site breastfeeding rooms. At Yara Latin America we also provide gender awareness and domestic skills workshops for male employees.

To counteract people leaving mid-career, we should systematically interview employees that decide to resign to understand why. “Root cause analysis” used in our plants can help us reveal diversity issues: ask “why?” five times to get to the roots of the problem. We can then correct this, if it's linked to issues like gender and ethnicity.

## Stay Human!

Raised on a horse farm in Normandy, I have “dirty shoes” and I won't hide it. From my childhood, I developed a love for horses and the wish to be a vet. Through agronomy studies, business school and corporate business in four countries, I have adapted to many environments. In my experience, community is more important than difference.

**Of course, I want to succeed for my gender and instill confidence in women, but equally our workplace culture must be humane. I wish to role model this personally and shape my team so that it cascades down – to grow Yara in an inclusive and sustainable way.**



**Favorite crop:** Wheat



“

*Deconstruct the perfect superwoman model and stop romanticizing task overload.*

”

# Cíntia Neves

Business Development & Sustainability Manager





## No Perfect Superwoman

I see life as a growth process, of constantly being able to change and adopt new goals and strategies. Right now, I'm taking things step by step, and I look forward to celebrating the achievements of everything I am now planting in many years' time.

I grew up with a mother who worked in the fields belonging to my grandparents, who were rural producers. As a result, I've always had a passion for farming and connecting with nature, and a desire to produce food in a sustainable way. When I discovered an agronomy course at my local high school, I saw the opportunity to combine my roots with a professional career. Later, at university, I became the first in my family to study agronomy, specializing in soil and forest nutrition.

It was during my master's degree that Yara first appeared, and I joined the company in 2011 as an agronomic and commercial trainee doing technical sales while finishing my studies.

## Growing Gender Awareness

I believe that gender balance in agronomy is critical for creating diversity of thoughts and ideas that can accelerate the emergence of solutions. For example, adding women to the team can bring different and much-needed perspectives on the environment, planet, and people. After all, being open-minded is essential for us to remain innovative in the food solution business.

But at the start of my career, I admit that I struggled when I was one of only two women in a large team. I certainly didn't find I received much support at the time! Instead, there were sexist jokes that we would laugh at to be accepted in that environment, and we would act "masculine" because that was the obvious success model. Add to this the belief that

women have to be perfect mothers, partners, and professionals – the situation was neither healthy nor sustainable.

## No Superwoman, but Many Super Women

In short, I spent a lot of time and energy in my early career trying to be someone I'm not and living up to impossible idealizations. We are not perfect. It's normal to fail. Men fail too. We need to deconstruct the model of the perfect superwoman and stop romanticizing task overload. We need more flexible gender models and we need to increase awareness within the company.

Throughout my career, I've received feedback from world experts and other people I respect who have helped me see that I don't need to change who I am in order to do my job well. And by designing processes for accelerating women's careers from the ground up, Yara has since evolved in terms of leadership and recruitment.

There is still much work to be done, but I hope women won't need to go through what I went through. I believe that while it is important for organizations to implement effective gender policy, change is too often incremental and slow. That's why it is also important to recognize that women can take the initiative themselves and act as a powerful support network to drive change. I am part of several agribusiness women's groups, and I have seen first-hand how we can achieve more if we form an alliance.

**Position and years in the company:** Business Development & Sustainability Manager; 11 years.

**Location:** Brazil

**Region/Unit:** Yara Americas

**Nationality:** Brazilian

**Area of expertise:** Soil science and sustainability



## Women Sow Seeds Today to Reap Rewards Tomorrow

I always imagined I would achieve my dreams, but the first person who believed in and supported my dream of changing my life was my mother. She raised me alone after suffering from domestic violence, yet she continued to courageously face all the difficulties of life without choosing the easiest path. She inspires me to persevere and continue the journey myself.

Yet I am surprised by the path my professional life has taken. From grains in the south of Brazil to the tropical pastures of savanna, from fruits to vegetables to coffee – all these experiences have helped shape the professional I am today.

**Since 2021, I've taken a leap in my career to lead a team focusing on sustainability topics like decarbonization, circular economy, and regenerative agriculture. I'm now in a position I most definitely want to be in and I see this as the crowning achievement of my ten years of dedication at Yara.**



**Favorite crop:** Coffee

## Motto

Enjoy the journey and be happy!





# Eugene Lee

Sales Agronomist

“

*Women need to move beyond limiting thoughts and aim to excel at what they do.*

”



## The Communicator

I like working with a team to answer people's questions and connect them with the solutions to their problems. Later, hearing that I've made their lives better gives me immense pride and motivation to continue growing. For me, personal growth equals professional growth – and here, I have big plans!

While many of my peers see information technology as the future, I've always seen agriculture as the foundation of society. After all, many industries are born and then disappear, but not agriculture. I want to work in the most important industry in the world.

You could say I was raised in this field. My mother worked as an industrial livestock and agricultural consultant, and I remember fondly joining her on field trips where I could play with piglets. I later studied agriculture in high school and animal science and technology at university. Shortly after my graduation, I saw a job opening at Yara and applied, and here I am!

## Overcoming Prejudice

Despite my family and educational background, not everybody has seen me as belonging to this industry on account of my gender. In my experience, the most significant obstacle to gender diversity is individual prejudice that incorrectly assumes I'm not capable enough to do a "man's job".

A hero of mine sometimes comes to mind in the face of discrimination, the character Miranda Priestly of the movie "The Devil Wears Prada." Despite other less flattering traits, Miranda has confidence in her

ability to be recognized in her industry. I think that women need to move beyond thoughts that limit them on account of their gender and focus on excelling at what they do.

However, the pressure to be perfect both at home and at work can be exhausting, so equality requires that men step up and do what has been traditionally considered a woman's job. Things like this can't be changed overnight, but things are now changing, thanks not only to government legislation and company laws but also to people reconsidering their own prejudices.

### Position and years in the company:

Sales Agronomist; 2 years, 1 month

Location: South Korea

Region/Unit: Yara Africa & Asia

Nationality: Korean

Area of expertise: Sales and marketing



## Spreading Knowledge

While I work with many professionals who are world-class experts in agronomy, I'm not an agronomic expert myself. But as a sales agronomist, I do know how to promote agronomic knowledge to people, and it's here that my expertise and passion lie.

I also experience discrimination in this role because of my gender, particularly in rural areas where women are generally discouraged from sharing opinions. But at the same time, many male farmers are unsure of where or how to gain new information that is important to their livelihood.



## Motto

Avoid life choices you will regret, and happiness will always be close at hand.

In fact, there are many barriers to spreading Yara knowledge to the farmers, ranging from illiteracy to information overload. A marketing mindset like mine is exactly what's needed to make sure the message is properly adapted to the audience. That's why we try to approach people using methods and media that are both easily accessible and understood by everybody, such as YouTube videos or lectures that use animations and graphics. And it's working! I've been approached by many farmers who have thanked me for helping them to improve their crop yields. Being recognized in this way makes me so proud!

I've only just begun working with Yara, but I have a long-term goal of running teams and helping even more farmers to experience successful yields. I also would like to address gender discrimination in rural areas by informing local people of the issue. In my team, I have been encouraged to think that what is best for me can also be best for the company.

As our country manager for Yara Korea, John Woo, likes to say, "Think you first, not company first. Work for your self-development!"

I've taken that advice to heart and trust that the MBA specializing in digital transformation that I've now started will boost my ability to spread this important knowledge to the world.



Favorite crop:  
Shine muscat  
grape



“

*No organization  
in this day and  
age can succeed  
without a diverse  
workforce.*

”

# Fernanda Lopes Larsen

EVP Africa & Asia





## How to Enrich Monocultures

DEI connects directly with my purpose: to help minorities, particularly women of color, to gain opportunities in the corporate world. I lived half my life in Brazil, but have spent all my professional life in other places. As a Black woman with a corporate career in Europe, I have for sure faced gender and racial discrimination. I am used to being the “different one” in the room.

Discrimination and bias can be subtle or obvious, such as microaggressions wrapped in little comments like “Why did you come here?” or “Aren’t you better off back in Brazil?” They are often difficult to prove, but as a Black woman you know it when you hear it. Once, when traveling by train to Oslo airport for a business trip to Brazil, some of my luggage fell and hit a nearby passenger. She turned and said angrily, “What a mess, why don’t you go back to your own country!” I responded, “Well, I am going back to Brazil, where I was born, today. But I’m also a British citizen, so I’m not sure which country you’re taking about.” The other passengers smiled and voiced their support. But despite my witty response, a microaggression experience like this can disrupt and spoil your entire day.

## Multi-Layered Diversity

Then you have structural discrimination and bias that is inherent in a system, like discovering you earn less than peers or not getting a promotion despite your excellent performance. Systemic bias and discrimination are real, multi-layered and still common in many environments and cultures.

I represent several diversity layers – woman, black, foreigner – and have always advocated for diversity, but at start of my career I didn’t have the awareness I have today.

As a Black, female engineer in a southern German company, I have always stood out, but I didn’t always realize what was happening when I experienced a layer of discrimination. My “Black-layer” epiphany came when I attended a conference with only Black businesswomen. I felt like I had come home; they understood my challenges and frustrations!

## Fix Disparity First

I was very happy when Yara started discussing equity – fixing disparity – because different people have different starting points in life, due to historical and socio-economic barriers. I sometimes use a metaphor to explain this. Imagine students lined up to sprint for a scholarship, then the judge says “those that have primary education, take a step forward”, “those that went to university, take a step forward,” etc., etc. How fair is this race of privilege?

It is crucial that we first create a level playing field to ensure wider access to opportunities for all – only then can you look at meritocracy and other issues. I want to enrich “monocultures” that lack experience of diversity and enlighten people with DEI blind spots – which we all have. Then we can address dilemmas and together develop an appreciation of different demographics. Who can’t see the business sense in that? It’s why I use my position as a platform to speak my truth, to share my perspective. We must put these stories out there for others to relate to and to reassure them that they are not alone.

**Position and years in the company:**  
Executive Vice President - Africa & Asia; 10 years  
**Location:** Singapore  
**Region/Unit:** Yara Asia & Africa  
**Nationality:** Brazilian  
**Area of expertise:** Soil health



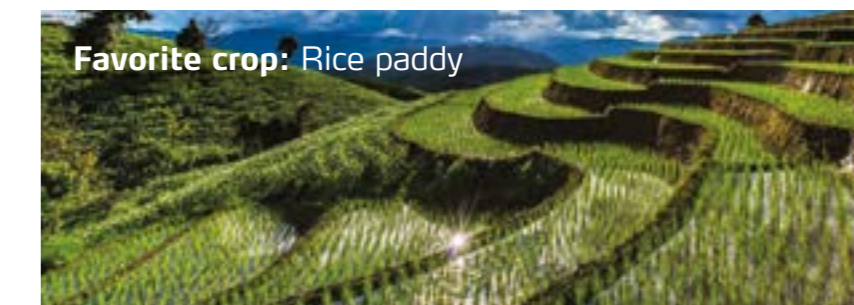
## Multi-layered Innovation

No organization in this day and age can succeed without a diverse workforce. Diversity correlates directly with creativity and innovation, helps to create a stimulating workplace and learning environment, and increases a sense of belonging. Progressively short company lifespans – the average today is 10-15 years – necessitate constant evolution. That can only happen if we get more variety in the room, more ideas on the table, more ways of thinking included – the multi-layered experience. Innovation will not come from groups of individuals who went to the same schools and universities and share the same peer circles.

Therefore, it’s important to focus on primary layers of diversity (gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and age) and ensure that people with these different backgrounds, life experiences and socio-economic conditions are present. The interrelated nature of categories like gender, race, age, class, and ability, called “intersectionality”, means that it’s not enough to fix just one type of discrimination, such as gender.

DEI advocates do a lot of “extra-mile” work, and maintaining passion is sometimes hard. The DEI process can’t only be driven by minorities alone – it professes deep learning for our whole organization.

Vernā Myers said, “If diversity is being asked to the party, inclusion is being asked to dance,” and “belonging is dancing like nobody’s watching.” As an executive, I still want to focus on who is issuing the invitations, so that we can all party!



## Motto

“I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own.”

[Audre Lorde]





# Gabriele Oliveira

Jr. Technical Sales Consultant

“

*With gender diversity, I believe the sky is the limit!*

”



## Passionate Learner

I'm passionate about learning, having new experiences, and making discoveries – not least about soil. I am supported by a circle of strong women who have taught me to believe in myself and stand tall. I strive to be a role model for other women – and men – and to help open minds.

My career has been more like a fun maze than a direct path, and my choices have often been directed by a lifelong calling to pursue learning. I grew up on a farm in a family with roots in the impoverished region around Pitarana, Minas Gerais, Brazil. So, when I was faced with choosing a university program, I found myself drawn to agronomy as it is a science that offers an opportunity to fight poverty and hunger.

While studying at university, I soon became passionate about soil fertility science in the laboratory, which was a “Eureka!” moment for me. Later, when I joined the workforce, I was thrilled to see how we were able to reduce machine hours, labor processes, and seedling loss dramatically by focusing on soil and plant physiology. It's amazing how proper soil management can promote sustainable agricultural production!

Entering the workforce wasn't entirely easy, however. Some members of my family believed that I should get married and take care of the home instead. But with gender diversity, I believe the sky is the limit! I quickly found that I needed to complement the hard skills I had gained at university with soft skills like emotional intelligence and negotiating skills.

I also needed to perform with more self-confidence in male-dominated places where our female voices are still not accepted with complete ease. I have experienced how women often live in the shadow of men in workplaces where their ideas are not given equal weight, and their efforts and achievements often go unrecognized.

## Learning from Women

That's partly why I was insecure at the beginning of my career. But with time and the help of strong women like Mara Cristina Cruz, Aline Veloso, and Rejane Souza, I improved my vision of the future and of women's place in agronomy. Aline Veloso, my Women in Agronomy mentor, turned on my “inner light” and taught me to talk about my work with pride. These and other women role models like my mother and my grandmother have taught me the power of being myself and they inspire me to become a better person for society, other women, and myself professionally. A circle of women is also there to support me when I face gender-related challenges at work.

It's also very important for men to support gender equity, for example, by reverse mentoring with women on diversity, equality, and inclusion issues. The WiA program is a powerful way to change mindsets and organizational culture. And it's not just important for the sake of equality but also because companies need a diverse talent pool of people with different backgrounds in order to remain innovative and competitive in the future.

### Position and years in the company:

Technical Sales Consultant; 2 years and 10 months

**Location:** Brazil

**Region/Unit:** Yara Brazil

**Nationality:** Brazilian

**Area of expertise:** Soil fertility and plant nutrition



## Motto

Tomorrow I can be sad, but not today.



## Life-Long Learning

Thanks to my parents, I was the first person in my family to go to university. This makes me both proud and grateful and has also given me a life-long passion for knowledge. That's why for me, growth in this field means not only having a variety of practical learning experiences with different cultures and products, but also continuing to take new courses and studies. I am proud to be a WiA ambassador in Brazil and I work actively to make the path easier for women who come after me.

Today, I have a strong vision of my future including a 20-year career plan and a 10-year personal “life timeline.” Of course, you never know what will happen. But my life will always revolve around my passion for knowledge.



**Favorite crop:**  
Citrus





“

*... bring our uniqueness into play and dare to set ourselves apart from the rest.*

”



# Jamie Schechinger

YaraVita Product Specialist



## Challenge-Seeker

**In this line of work, I'm often the only woman in the room – but I don't let that hold me back. Born and bred into agriculture, I look for challenges wherever I can and truly put my expertise to the test. I love everything to do with agronomy. But being from Iowa, I have to love corn most!**

I grew up close to a farm run by my family and was also active in several organizations that get kids involved in agriculture, livestock, and community service. Over the years, you could say that the people in the agricultural community, their passion, and their work ethic, really impacted me. That's why when it came time to choose a career, my desire to continue to be a part of this community drew me straight to agronomy and crop nutrition.

With a background steeped in agriculture and my education complete, I felt like I was ready for a challenge. And when I started at Yara in 2020, I got one! The combination of a “rock n roll” pace and being thrown into a huge territory of 4 million acres of corn largely unexposed to Yara products was perfect for me.

Today, I'm continuing my journey with the agriculture community as a YaraVita Product Specialist. I market and sell specialized fertilizer products and advise growers and retailers on how to achieve better crop nutrition.

## The Only Woman in the Room

This job isn't always easy – the agriculture industry can sometimes be slow to adopt new practices. There are many reasons for this, but a lack of diversity in its ranks certainly plays a part – particularly with respect to gender. Just as the farm I enjoyed as a child was run mostly by the

men in my family, the agronomists I meet today are usually older men with backgrounds very different from mine. This reality hit home while recently attending an agriculture event, where I discovered that I was the only woman in a room filled with nearly 200 people.

To me, this demonstrates a lack of diverse perspectives on a massive scale, and I'm convinced that getting women into all roles will help the agriculture industry develop more quickly. I'm encouraged by the current DEI progress at Yara, which I see as just the beginning. For example, Yara also does a fantastic job of creating community. I can call on people anytime for personal and professional support and advice.



**Position and years in the company:**  
YaraVita Product Specialist; 2 years  
**Location:** United States  
**Region/Unit:** Yara Americas  
**Nationality:** American  
**Area of expertise:** Crop nutrition



## Conquer Self-Doubt

I'm also lucky that I work in a more progressive community in terms of gender equality. From this relatively privileged position, I believe one of the biggest impediments to gender diversity in my region is time. More and more great women who are making an impact within the agriculture industry are emerging, and their stories are just beginning to be highlighted and shared. What we need is time for this to gain a foothold and patience for it to take effect – and it will! But nothing happens overnight.

Self-doubt can also make us our own worst enemies. At a recent annual review, for example, my superior commented “I have more confidence in you than you have in yourself.” So, one useful piece of advice that I would recommend to anybody else who can relate to this is: Don't expect a “no” until you get a “no”!

**As women, we need to continually keep working on ourselves. For starters, we need to know the strengths and weaknesses we bring to the table and look for our growth points. Then we can bring our uniqueness into play and dare to set ourselves apart from the rest.**



**Favorite crop:** Corn

## Motto

**Go all in!**





# Karolina Frąckowiak

Commercial Director  
East & Southeast Europe



“

*Invest in intelligent women who can show skeptics that we can be good professionals.*

”



## The Beautiful Science

Agronomy is the most beautiful science to practice and learn about. Studying economics bored me, but agronomy took me into biochemistry and plant growth, which is fascinating. Rerouting my education was hard, but really worthwhile – it got me into this people-focused profession that challenges you every day.

My career started early. As a daughter of farmers, I absorbed agronomy along with my mother's milk. I wasn't attracted to farming, though, as I saw my parents struggling to make a living despite working very hard. It's funny how uninterested I was as a girl when my dad drove me around saying things like, "what a beautiful field of rapeseed, they have spread fertilizer here." Today, I do the same thing as I drive around the countryside.

I decided to study economics at high school and wanted to become an accountant, a career considered more suitable for a woman. Four years later, having realized economics bored me, I surprised myself by deciding to study agriculture.

## Key Moments

I found the complex world of plants more interesting than the predictability of economics. It was a key moment in my life! I studied at the Poznań University of Life Sciences, where a professor inspired me with his in-depth knowledge. I did an agricultural sciences masters and PhD in his department, and he became my mentor. Finally, he told me it was time to move on, saying, "I want you to develop, so find another direction!"

Coincidentally, a Yara employee visiting our department said they had an open agronomist position and that they welcomed female applicants. I attended an interview out of sheer curiosity – the next day, I got the job and started my career as an agronomist. Since then, I have never looked back. Whatever I do, I try to do it well, and I am glad that this has been recognized with promotions.

## Women Growing Strong

As women, we are in a long transformation process and cannot give up. It's very complicated for women facing opposition: We got the right to vote in Poland in 1819; women in Qatar didn't get it until 1997. On a personal level, the opposition might come from your partner who's unhappy with you earning more than him, or from family and friends who don't want you to break norms.

Professionally, some old-fashioned farmers' views made it difficult for me to be the first woman agronomist at Yara Poland. At first, I often heard, "what could you know? I'm not sure I want to spend time with you on my fields." Later, this changed. Once, I visited a farmer who gave me a weed and asked what it was. I told him its name in Polish and then in Latin – he looked amazed and said, "OK, let's look at my field." I later asked him how many men had taken his test; he didn't answer.

**Position and years in the company:** Commercial Director East & Southeast Europe; 9 years  
**Location:** Poland  
**Organizational Unit:** Yara Europe  
**Nationality:** Polish  
**Area of expertise:** Fertilization and agronomic advice



## Motto

Never give up. If it rains in your life, a beautiful rainbow will appear later.

## Not About "Feeding Pigs"

Yara should invest in intelligent women who can show all skeptical people that we can be good professionals. This involves attracting younger generations by being active in high schools and cooperating with universities. Young women need to know that agronomy is not about "feeding pigs" (as a young friend once told me) – an agronomist works close to nature, sees fast results, earns well, and achieves independence.

We also get to make a difference. Every kilogram of higher yield resulting from my advice makes me very happy. I once told a potato farmer that 100 tonnes per hectare was possible to achieve, but he didn't believe me. So I persuaded him to try some pilot plots, and a few years later, we got that yield. Agronomy is my life. I adore field walk-throughs and the two-way knowledge exchange with farmers. It's also one of the most complex disciplines: you must develop your knowledge continuously; nature is ever-changing and teaches you humility.

I would love to spread my passion for agriculture to more young women – our industry needs them.

**Favorite crop:**  
Potato





“

*There is no limit to what I can do, as long as I have the right skill set.*

”

# Katelin Andrew

Sales Agronomist



## Honest Saleswoman

I am passionate about supporting the farmers I work with and will do everything I can to ensure their success. I also love to learn. If I encounter a question I can't answer on the spot, I say, "let me get back to you on that," and get to work solving their challenge.

My family has been growing and producing tree fruits and almonds for generations. I have watched crops awaken from dormancy, bloom, be harvested, and then go back to sleep. It's an amazing process and makes me appreciate the dedication and sacrifice it takes to get produce from field to store.

A career in agriculture was a natural choice for me, and I completed a degree in Agricultural Business at Fresno State University. During my time there and after graduation, I met a few people in the agriculture industry to learn more about different professions and fields of interest.

When I found out about the Sales Agronomist position at Yara, it felt like a perfect fit that combined many of my interests. Yet, I didn't think I would be considered because of my young age. Besides a few short summer internships in companies willing to work around my university swim schedule, my agronomy education still needed development. However, I got the position and my career began with Yara. I am so thankful!

## Honesty Goes a Long Way

There is plenty to enjoy about my job, such as working outside rather than in an office cubicle. I never get bored because each season is different from the last due to weather, crop economics, water, or product supply, just to name a few.

The best part of my work is the relationships I build with customers and who I share my knowledge of agronomy and crop nutrition with. Learning about their challenges and successes fills my cup and motivates me to find solutions.

Today, farm advisors who wouldn't call me back when I began ask for my advice or information about Yara products. Why? My time in the role and rapid responses are undoubtedly factors, but I think they appreciate my honesty the most.

### Position and years in the company:

Sales Agronomist; 3.5 years

Location: United States

Region/Unit: Yara Americas

Nationality: American

Area of expertise: Crop nutrition - almond and walnut



## Developing Thicker Skin

I work as a sales agronomist with expertise in tree nuts like almonds, walnuts, and some stone fruit – just as my grandpa and dad before me. Unlike them, I am a woman in a very male-dominated field. I'm not going to lie; sometimes, this means you have to have thick skin to handle certain comments and not take them personally. I still get intimidated in certain situations, especially talking to people who have worked in this field for many years. However, I strive to overcome this and see it as an opportunity to ask questions and learn.

Despite the challenges, I think it's very important for women to get into agronomy, as gender diversity also provides diverse and fresh ideas. Difference is good for our organization and industry. Besides, if we were all the same, this world and workplace would be incredibly boring!

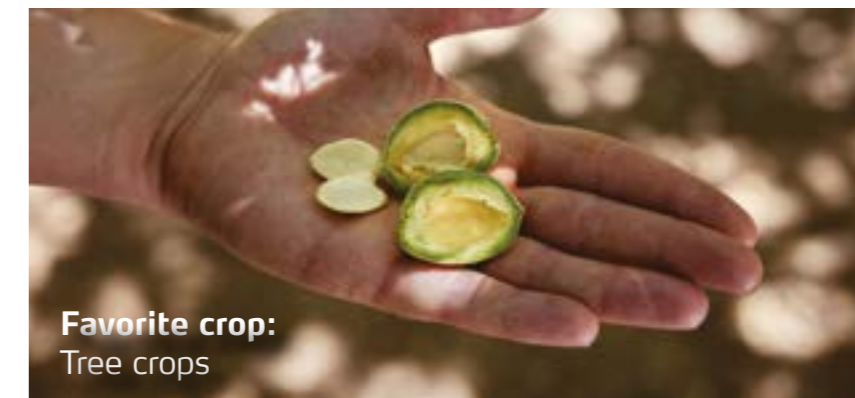
In my opinion, male resistance to women in field roles is the main obstacle to achieving inclusion in agriculture. I genuinely believe Yara is doing an excellent job of creating a more gender-balanced workplace in my region. We have several female agronomists on our team, not to mention in the leadership ranks.

Sometimes people try to shield me from physical work. They may think they're being polite or maybe that women aren't strong enough. In any case, I believe it's important never to use being a female as an excuse. To be taken seriously and succeed in the industry, women need to take on physical tasks and get their hands dirty wherever possible.

## Life of Achievements

Professionally, I've built many solid working relationships with customers, which is something that translates to professional and company growth. My experiences at Yara show me there is no limit to what I can do with the right skill set, openness to new ideas, and willingness to learn from mistakes. While gender diversity is important, I hope Yara continues to hire first and foremost based on merit.

Personally, my greatest achievement is yet to come in September 2022, when my husband and I get to welcome our first child into this world! I haven't figured out all the details of how to balance career and work life, but with a supportive family and Yara's "family first" attitude, I'm sure things will turn out just fine.



## Motto

Be respectful, be kind, be open to new ideas, and work hard!





# Liz Gómez

Commercial Manager  
South

“

*It's about using  
our diverse skill  
sets to work  
together as a  
team.*

”



## The Leader

**I am a natural leader. I use my expertise in agronomy, soft skills and a strong belief in myself to support and empower an amazing team – one that I am exceptionally proud of.**

Growing up in the countryside where my family produced our own food, farming has always been a big part of my life. My choice of agronomy as a profession was therefore a fairly easy one.

The beginning of my career, however, was anything but easy. As a young mother, I needed a lot of help from my sister and husband in raising my child so that I could dedicate myself to getting established. Fortunately, after Yara's gender equity actions and commitment three years ago, things have gotten much better. And not just in terms of equal pay, but also with improved parental leave programs that have made it easier to balance work and family commitments.

## Leader of Men

I've always admired Angela Merkel and her exemplary role in the diplomatic and political leadership of one of the most important economies in the world. But, for myself, I must admit that it took a great deal of time and effort before men acknowledged me as an authority figure. Southern Mexico is a conservative society, after all.

I had to earn their respect with good planning, discipline, and hard work. But what really won them over was good leadership, when I used my authority to help support them in setting goals and entrusted them with the freedom to achieve these as they saw fit. Ten years later,

I'm leading a group of twenty-one male sales reps and have genuinely come to enjoy this.

I believe that in my position, as a woman primarily leading men, I can serve as a positive role model for other women. But I was fortunate to have above-average confidence that enabled me to believe in myself. Unfortunately, I've encountered many young women suffering from low self-confidence, and I've seen how this can limit them. They need to understand that it's OK to make mistakes, just as men do.

But I also see the need to support male managers leading teams with women. For example, I've heard that male managers sometimes hesitate or even avoid approaching women employees altogether about certain issues due to uncertainties resulting from the gender divide. And for the same reason, women employees will hesitate to approach their male managers. The "new masculinity" training program for men that raises awareness and helps build communication skills promises to help overcome some of these challenges.

The bottom line is that diversity is not about putting the genders up against one another in competition. It's a win-win. It's about using our diverse skill sets to work together as a team.

### Position and years in the company:

Commercial Manager; 9 years

Location: Mexico

Region/Unit: Yara Americas

Nationality: Paraguayan

Area of expertise: Plant breeding



## Motto

**Look for the “yes, I can do that!” in any situation.**



## A Passion that Overcomes Obstacles

One thing I hope to see coming out of Yara's DEI program is a human resources team that is well-acquainted with the challenges women face in the field and better equipped to support them. I certainly would have appreciated more support earlier on, which is partly why I've set up informal women's coffee groups, weekly meetups, and workshops. Hopefully, by sharing my own challenges and experiences, I can help them avoid some headaches.

**But with gender-based challenges aside, agronomy is already a hard field where, in addition to the technical aspects, you really need to understand each farmer's pains and gains. My specific agronomic expertise is plant breeding, but I love to be in contact with the farmers just as much as the plants. I am passionate about having the opportunity to help farmers succeed through crop nutrition, and it is this passion that helps me overcome the challenges I meet.**



**Favorite crop:**  
Vegetables



“

*You cannot change  
your future, but  
you can change  
your habits.*

”



# Lopamudra Mukherjee

Digital Agronomist



## Seeds of Change

I connect with farmers daily to discuss nutrition solutions and follow up on crops. One of my most enjoyable moments after a hectic day in the field, is when farmers meet in the evening and share how they benefit from my suggestions about crop nutrition and agriculture-related issues. Then I know that I'm really planting seeds of change.

I developed an early interest in farming thanks to my grandfather. He took me on field visits to local farms, letting me hold soil in my hands while he explained its properties. Passionate about Indian farmers, granddad also taught me how agriculture is the backbone of our nation. He also inspired me to study botany and agriculture so that I could support the farming community and the modernization of agriculture.

I took the next step, directly connecting with farmers, during my Ph.D. research work at the University of Calcutta. In parallel with my studies, I worked as a research chemist on urban waste recycling, which involved explaining the importance of city compost to local farmers. It also showed me the importance of the commercial application of science. When my mother visited our lab, she saw our mountain of garbage as a mess – I saw it as the start of a beautiful career.

## Growing a Career

My career has been a series of diverse experiences. First, as a lab assistant for the government of West Bengal, I learned about soil analysis and hi-tech instruments used to analyze nutrients. Then, as a senior scientist developing a new generation of rice paddy, I took care of irrigation, plant protection, and nutrient management. I also developed a GAP-certified lab for tissue culture of banana crops and a pilot project applying aeroponics to potato seed production.

In terms of personal growth, I've learned to let go of mistakes, focus on the future, and to speak up and share my ideas. I believe in never giving up and aspire to be like my mom, who has overcome life's struggles to become a successful woman in terms of family and career. Our EVP for Africa & Asia is also a source of inspiration for me. Fernanda is a wonderful leadership mentor who consistently motivates me, especially via our ongoing Women In Agronomy reverse mentoring program.

## Seeds of Womanhood

I grew up in a male-dominated society that believes a woman's primary work is childcare, households, and family, which works against women who want a career. One example is relatives who give working mums a bad conscience when things go wrong in the family. Another example I faced is when the human resources people who interviewed me, recognized my knowledge, but said, "If we hire you for field work, we get an additional security headache. We're not here as diversity maintainers, but to do business." Luckily, my family supports me and gives me full freedom to follow a career. My husband tells me that if he can do a job, so can I, encouraging me to "fly as high as you can!"

I had some early demotivating experiences in the industry because of my gender, but at Yara I found a more gender-inclusive workforce. This made me more optimistic about making my contribution. I now have a good work-life balance between my roles as agronomist, daughter, daughter-in-law, and wife.

**Position and years in the company:**  
Digital Agronomist; 1 year and 9 months  
**Location:** India  
**Region/Unit:** Yara Africa & Asia  
**Nationality:** Indian  
**Area of Expertise:** Crop nutrition



Yara can still improve however. In the beginning, I had to work hard to get my position to speak. Now the team listen to me and value my opinion. When we have more women in leadership roles, Yara will be on its way to a diverse workforce with a collaborative and inclusive work environment.

## Sowing Digital Seeds

Watching the development of both DEI and digital tools, I'm reminded of Indian independence hero Abdul Kalam Azad, who said, "You cannot change your future, but you can change your habits, and surely your habits will change your future". Gender diversity and digital technology will combine to give Yara greater profitability. An agronomist can reach 100-200 farmers a day digitally, rather than just a handful face-to-face. Digital tools help me explore the market, gather knowledge, and understand farmers' pain points and how to help them. They also allow me to reach female farmers who are uncomfortable with going outdoors to meet retailers.

**Worldwide, 70% of agricultural employees and 80% of food producers are women. Therefore, we are more connected with "mother earth" and the soil. As a female agronomist, I am fulfilling my long-cherished dream to increase agricultural productivity and sustainability – for the betterment of humankind.**



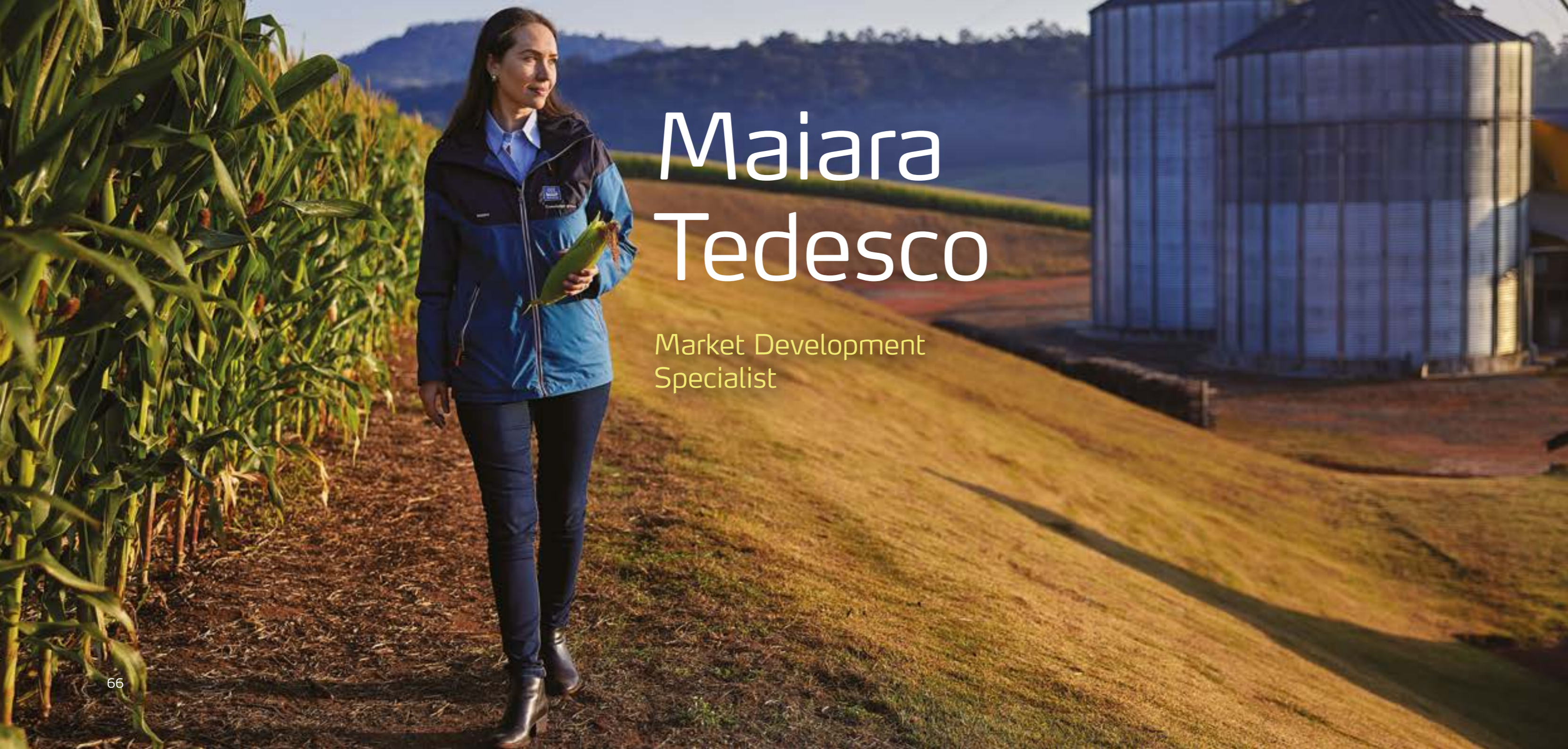
Favorite crop: Rice paddy

## Motto

For the betterment of the farming community and the modernization of agriculture.







# Maiara Tedesco

Market Development Specialist

“

*To feed the world is the noblest mission anyone could have.*

”



## The Mindful Manager

I'm set on changing the world for the better and see agronomy as a powerful platform for doing just that. I take a rational and compassionate approach to problem-solving that isn't tempted by shortcuts. Just as complex plant physiology information needs to be adapted correctly before a farmer can understand and implement it, gender equality must be understood and internalized for it to succeed.

I don't have strong family connections to agriculture, animals, or crops. My father used to work as a physical therapist, and my mother as a nutritionist. But I always knew that I had to work with something connected to nature, and as much as I love animals, plants were always my passion.

So, I decided to follow this passion and study agronomic engineering at the University of Caxias do Sul in 2008. While still in college, I worked as an intern for five years with soils, plant physiology, organic agriculture, and key crops to decide where I wanted to go next. Then, before graduation, I was recruited by a multinational provider of seeds and pesticides.

## Nobody's "Poster Girl"

A major turning point in my career was when I was dismissed from this company. Losing my job was bad enough, but hearing from a manager that agronomy "was not a field of work for women, especially a young and pretty one," was especially difficult.

I knew it actually had to do with cost cuts, yet his rationalization shocked me just the same. 'Is this true? Am I in the right place?' I asked myself. It took some time to recover. But I decided not to give up but to continue pursuing this career. I wanted to prove him wrong by dedicating myself and following my principles.

Sure enough, in 2016, my journey in the "Yara Viking ship" began when I was hired as a commercial analyst doing market and sales development

in southern Brazil. Looking back, I think that we have accomplished so much in terms of gender diversity. I now find myself surrounded by passionate, courageous women role models who have lived some incredible life journeys.

Some might want to see more rapid progress, but I believe we must approach this with care. It's easier to raise the flag and shout, but it's important to understand that obligations are not always readily accepted, and might even result in counterproductive backlashes. Consequently, I favor working to develop equality rather than imposing it.

This will involve consistent internal work, which should be discussed calmly, kindly, and whenever necessary. For example, some time ago, I had a male colleague who presented me as "a pretty face" to a grower. Afterward, I took this up with the colleague and told him firmly that I'm nobody's poster girl. He understood and has never made the same mistake again.



**Position and years in the company:** Market Development Specialist; 6 years  
**Location:** Brazil  
**Region/Unit:** Yara Brazil  
**Nationality:** Brazilian  
**Area of expertise:** Plant nutrition and production systems



## Motto

End every week knowing something new.

## Noble Mission

If asked what motivated me a couple of years ago, I would say that it was to spread information to farmers in an uncomplicated way and help them grow more produce. But recently, I became the mother to a little princess, which gives me another perspective. Now I'm supporting food production to help build a better place for my daughter's generation. I still want to help farmers produce more, but now I also want them to produce better quality too.

Yet no matter how far I get, there's always so much more left to achieve. I suppose that nobody can really expect to become "the complete professional", since we learn something new every day. I have worked with development, sales, technical, and marketing. I think that these steps, and learning from mistakes made along the way formed the professional I am today.

That said, I admit that I am immensely proud to have supported farmers over the years, especially when I meet the same individuals years later and see that they have developed their knowledge and are harvesting more. I'm happy if I have participated in just 1% of this development.

Moving forward, I see myself focusing on managing people, but not at the expense of disconnecting from my roots in the field and with growers. I want to be a hybrid manager! I want to continue bringing sustainable and viable solutions to producers and help create success for farmers. After all, we need to feed the world, and to me this is the noblest mission anyone could have.

Favorite crop:  
Soybean





“

*We must break mental barriers that prevent us from developing our full potential.*

”

# Margarita González

Regional Director South Region





## Channel Your Passion

My first job was managing the operations of a nursery with a mixture of breeding pastures, grazing sites, and small eight-hectare trial plots. I used to work from very early until late, and I remember a very experienced colleague, Juan, telling me, “Work will never end, but you have to!”. So true! But my passion drove me to work hard, and the constant learning kept me excited and energized.

My professional life is all about performing and transforming. As part of a commercial team, I focus on performing excellent marketing and communications. We aim to grow our high-value products family quickly and deliver fertilizer sales and promotion efficiently. We also play a key transformative role by developing business models for digitization and decarbonization of the food chain.

Getting where I am today, professionally and personally, has been an eventful journey. Along the way, my studies were interrupted by family tragedy, but largely due to the support of two classmates who I now consider as my sisters, I was able to manage the grief and I completed my course. After graduation, my father looked me in the eyes and said, “Hold your diploma tight; never let it go!” I knew what he meant and vowed to do just that: stay true to my values, always give my best, persist when challenged, and do something meaningful with my education.

## Channel My Passion

I developed an early curiosity about nature and biology that was later matched by a wish to do something meaningful for my country. Producing food is an essential activity and contributes to socio-economic development, so agronomy became the channel for my passion and mission. My career has developed thanks to 14 years at Yara. I started

working for the local unit in Argentina as YaraVita Leader before taking roles as supervisor and manager for agronomy and marketing. Later, I worked with the Latin America team as agronomy director, and now I’m farming solutions manager for Argentina. I have been very lucky because all my supervisors – men and women – encouraged and supported me to keep learning, growing, and developing myself.

Chrystel Monthean personifies this approach. She has truly supported me, especially after the birth of my daughter, Paloma, when I faced many challenges. I started working and traveling abroad again when Paloma was less than a year old, but I became ill and had an operation that resulted in a six-month sick leave. With Chrystel’s support, I was able to bounce back and discover how to be a present mother and to perform well at work. When I returned, the pandemic started, and the need to travel disappeared. This allowed me to step up and take the role as farming solutions manager for Argentina.

**Position and years in the company:**  
Regional Director South Region; 14 years

**Location:** Argentina

**Region/Unit:** Yara Americas

**Nationality:** Argentinian

**Area of expertise:** Plant nutrition and crop physiology



## See the Person, Find the Solutions

Chrystel also taught me the importance of seeing the person behind the computer and being willing to support them while also seeing the big picture and finding solutions for both company and individual. This is a good model for Yara’s development through DEI and for creating safe and supportive working environments.

I would like us to champion DEI development externally too, on the farm and in the industry. We are in a good position to communicate strong messages about diversity and women agronomists’ challenges in the field – safety, gender-role criticism, and not being given equal value to our male colleagues. This may be risky, but we can start by testing small pilots to fully understand the benefits and downsides. Agriculture is a tradition-bound industry, but we are all human beings. Sooner or later, things will change for the sake of the whole community – let us champion the change!

## Break Mental Barriers

In my region, gender stereotypes and microaggressions are distinct reflections of a macho society. As agronomists, we need to detach ourselves from limiting stereotypes to gain credibility. Rather than adopting male behavior to be listened to, we can anchor ourselves in our community of women and male allies. We can achieve inclusivity by breaking mental barriers preventing us from developing our full potential and by sharing our knowledge and experience. We have a mandate to change the inequalities faced by women agronomists.

Gender inequality is one of the many unfair ways people are treated. As a society, we cannot continue living in an unequal world, we cannot stand by and let inequality happen! Juan, my wise colleague at the nursery where my career began, told me, “You will never catch the carrot of success!”. This was a reminder to balance passion with patience when we have a long-term goal in sight. I will keep dedicating my energy and passion to this goal – I hope you will join me.



Favorite crop: Wheat



## Motto

Life is the sum of moments that allow us to perceive the harmony of the universe – make it worth living!





# Maria Luisa Martinez

Area Manager

“

*WiA is not just a solitary project, but part of a company-wide DEI evolution.*

”



## The Harvester

Some of my dearest childhood memories are the times spent with my family harvesting almonds, olives, and tomatoes on our farm. I loved being in the countryside, working together shoulder-to-shoulder, and being able to see the results of our efforts. To this day we still gather at harvest time, now with our children. I still love every minute of it.

Those early experiences inspired me to study agronomy at high school and later to take a degree in agricultural engineering at university. My graduation project was in a fertilizer company, which triggered my interest in fertigation and resulted in my first job. I soon discovered a passion for collaborating and sharing knowledge with farmers, as well as the sheer enjoyment of seeing the amazing harvests possible with correct crop nutrition.

After working for a seed company, I moved to Alboran Agrícola, the distributor for Hydro (Yara's predecessor) in Almería. Before becoming Yara's Product Manager for YaraTera and YaraRega in Iberia, I was a field technician and then a commercial delegate specializing in liquid fertilizers. Today, I am Area Manager for the southeast of Spain, and my story continues after 20 years at Yara.

## First in Fertigation

To participate in the initial development of HydroTerra in the Almería market was one of my proudest moments. It was 22 years ago, and there were no liquid fertilizers back then, so it was tough to introduce such a new concept. We visited many farmers and had innumerable meetings with technicians in the factory – fertigation is very technical! At that time, I never imagined I would participate in our fertigation strategy in Iberia, nor that we would achieve the significant market share we have today.

Today, farmers have more knowledge of fertigation but still need our support. I am really passionate about nutrition management of

greenhouse crops and love doing field visits to ensure our recommendations achieve the desired yields and quality. At Yara, we also share data from our research on intensive crop systems and products, which our customers make good use of to improve their nutrition management.

## Harvesting Knowledge

Agriculture is not an exact science, so I need to learn every day from the different situations that arise. I feel enriched by the new knowledge we generate with the resources and tools at our disposal. Using digital agronomy tools and training has also been enriching, especially as it connects me with colleagues around the world and their knowledge.

My mother allowed me to become a knowledge worker by supporting me to get training and become a professional. She wanted something different for me than what she had and does today, which is to take care of her family. She also passed on to me some important values for life and work – persistence, independence, and honesty have served me well!

### Position and years in the company:

Area Manager; 23 years

Location: Spain

Region/Unit: Yara Europe

Nationality: Spanish

Area of expertise: Greenhouse production and fertigation



## Harvesting Diversity

At Yara, I am lucky to meet female role models who are promoted to important positions due to their excellent performance. Diversity enriches groups, companies, and society by merging more views, perspectives, and opinions. I'm happy that Yara focuses on diversity as a whole, not just regarding gender, because this avoids putting people in boxes. I hope that the Women in Agronomy program can be presented properly to all our colleagues, so everyone understands that it is not just a solitary project, but part of a company-wide DEI evolution.

## Motto

Even when it's not easy, it's still possible.



Fortunately, I'm in a region with many women agronomists whose work is well recognized. Local companies often prefer them because of their reliable, direct, and methodical approach. However, most management positions in our agricultural segment still belong to men. There are both structural and psychological reasons for this. Women face cultural norms that make professional life more difficult, such as attitudes concerning domestic life and childcare. On the other hand, we are often more comfortable in lower management positions and leadership roles. I think the time has come to believe in ourselves and take the next step up – to apply for higher-level positions.

As a new generation of female professionals who seek a balance between our careers and family responsibilities, we must let go of being perfect in all our roles. That's easier when you realize that everything you do in all your roles supports your development and enriches your life. Let's harvest the fruits of our experience!



Favorite crop:  
Vegetables





“

*Happily, Yara has recognized that women work differently than men, but not less well.*

”

# Marion Martinez

SVP South Europe



## Trust Pilot

I have always loved biology and been fascinated by nature. I remember a family trip to a small village in Senegal: the baobab trees, the contrast between natural beauty and the villagers' struggles. I immediately fell in love with Africa and realized I wanted to help improve people's lives there. Inspired, I did an agriculture, environmental and food sciences degree, then a master's in agriculture, which included internships in Benin and Madagascar.

After graduation, I joined a voluntary project in Cameroon as a palm oil plantation manager. The plantation belonged to an orphanage, so it was an amazingly moving experience. After a year, it was time to join a company where I could build a future career around my passion. I applied for a position at Yara Tanzania but ended up in Ghana, where Yara was just starting operations. From sales agronomist, I became technical and marketing manager before taking the position of Yara Asia regional marketing manager.

Before joining Yara Europe as SVP South Europe in 2021, my career took me to Yara Thailand as marketing manager and Yara Vietnam as country manager. The Yara High Potential program supported my progress, giving me time to reflect on my aims and develop clarity and confidence. I also gained visibility and built my aspiration for a country manager role. My passion for understanding where things start, how they develop, and how a whole ecosystem works evolved over time to focus more on the people dimension.

## Trust and Confidence are Key

My Vietnam role was probably the most difficult, but also what I am most proud of. I doubted that I was ready to move up, a doubt I often hear from my female colleagues. Trust was key to helping me up my responsibility from a 60,000-tonne market to a roughly two-million-

tonne region in under four years. I had leaders who trusted and believed in me, and I delivered in a transparent, authentic way that allowed my team to trust me and one another.

On the path to gender diversity, we need to gain self-confidence, fight for what we believe in and be authentic. That can be difficult in a male dominant environment with male standards and references. You can soon feel alone with your female standards and needs. It's vital to find your allies, have open discussions and know you are not alone. Yara offers help to find those allies and gain confidence, so I think it's getting easier.

## Stop Non-Stop Travel!

For me, the perception that we must travel non-stop, with little awareness of the need for family time, has been a common challenge. Some men even see travel as a welcome break from family responsibilities. To begin with, I was expected to copy my male colleagues, leaving my kids at home when they were just months old. Talking to peers, I saw that this was painful for other women too. We must raise our voices on travel, and I would recommend managers to open their minds and be more proactive when employees have young kids.

I have become more comfortable speaking out and ensuring that I get the right balance between work and family. Today, I focus on enjoying my work and creating balance in a family that has relocated every 3-4 years. Norwegian organizational culture is very supportive in this respect.

### Position and years in the company:

Senior Vice President in South Europe; 15 years

Location: Italy

Region/Unit: Yara Europe

Nationality: French

Area of expertise: Smallholder farming systems, marketing & retail development



## Vulnerability as Strength

For women filling multiple roles while striving for a successful career, it's critical to acknowledge that we are not superwomen. We can have bad days, be tired, ask for help, and be vulnerable. This makes us stronger leaders, according to much feedback I have received. It's also important not to feel bad about doing things differently from our male colleagues – nobody should blame us for not staying up late at night with customers on business trips because we need to be present for our kids!

Happily, Yara has recognized that women work differently, but not “less well” and that gender diversity helps to create a balanced environment where everyone can feel included and perform. Unfortunately, however, the travel requirement is changing too slowly for our new, young female colleagues who struggle with travel schedules and don't dare to flag the problem.

## Women in Production

The production part of the business is the other main area where we struggle with female representation. To resolve this, we are working with universities and high schools to change perceptions and create awareness. And we should expand all the great work we are doing with Women in Agronomy – let's start Women in Production!

**I am passionate about DEI because our gender disparities reflect wider social inequality. Women's rights and the self-confidence we need to secure them are vital. That's why I'm dedicated to supporting my daughter's generation, the young women coming into Yara – my learning has to serve them.**



**Favorite crop:** Tropical fruits  
- mango

## Motto

Own your decisions and actions: focus on the positive and move forward!





# Marta Vega

Senior Agronomist - Digital Decision Support



“

*It's critical that male colleagues and managers are involved in diversity discussions too.*

”



## The Heart-Follower

The constant in my life is a relationship with the land through farming, which connects me to nature and my heritage. I bravely follow my interests wherever they lead – and this is not always in a straight line. Where will my journey take me next? I have no idea!

Farming has always been a part of my life. Growing up in Spain, I remember that whether I was helping in sowing, harvesting, foraging, sheep shearing, or preparing sausages and jams, I truly felt strong and valuable. This, in turn, allowed me to develop other skills and knowledge that not all kids are able to learn. It was a natural way of learning, without effort, by observing and then doing.

As I grew older, my love for agriculture developed as it connected me to both nature and my family. Looking back, I think studying agriculture and pursuing a career in this field was a way to stay connected to that part of my upbringing. But getting here wasn't a given. That's because I've always followed where my interests take me, which sometimes leads to what others would consider to be surprising choices.

## The Journey

I started out in the field of molecular biology, for example, but my career path started to truly define itself when a professor at university inspired me to take an extra module focusing on agriculture and plant diseases. I fell in love with it and soon found myself moving to Germany to pursue a masters and then PhD in agriculture and crop protection. When I saw the opportunity at Yara in 2020, I went for it. So, once again, I find myself following my interests into a new specialization in digital agriculture.

The important thing for me moving forward is maintaining a healthy life-work balance – and this is only possible with gender equality at the workplace. Having a DEI project specifically for women at Yara has allowed me to have a network where I feel safe to share concerns and problems. Having a female mentor has also been very important, because she is aware of the gender bias in a workplace and can put that perspective into practice when she helps me develop strategies to solve conflicts or improve my negotiation abilities. This has definitely made me more successful at work.

## “Journeymen”

But for gender equality to become engrained in company culture, we don't just need the women onboard. We need male allies. That's why I believe male colleagues and managers must be involved in diversity discussions too. Reverse mentoring, for example, where men learn from women about the difficulties they face, is a powerful method that could help men become aware of and overcome harmful, unconscious gender bias.

Another example is parental leave. There are very few men taking longer paternity leave, which may make those considering it feel it's too risky. I would like to see men being encouraged by their managers and company policy to take longer parental leaves. By eliminating gender expectations and stigma, both mothers and fathers win.

**Position and years in the company:** Senior Agronomist - Digital Decision Support; 1 year and 7 months  
**Location:** Germany  
**Region/Unit:** Yara Agronomy and R&D  
**Nationality:** Spanish  
**Area of expertise:** Crop protection and digital agriculture



## Motto

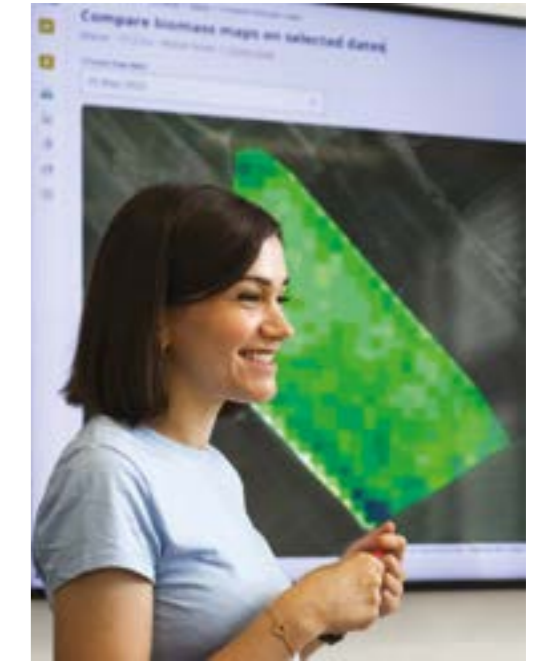
Always remember where you come from – it will help you to see how to move forward in life.



## Keep Moving

Achieving better gender diversity at the workplace demands serious efforts, but the benefits make it worthwhile. All-male teams, for example, can generate more friction during stressful phases, and majority male groups can drown out the voices of women – though this isn't the case in my group, fortunately! A good male-female ratio, however, can make a team more relaxed and creative, and improve the flow of communication.

Ultimately, I see workplace diversity as profoundly enriching, as it increases the pool of new ideas and helps us to solve problems. I'm happy to see that Yara is working intensively with this – but there's still more we can do!



## Favorite crop: Oilseed rape





“

*A satisfying professional and family life without having to sacrifice one for the other – to me, that's gender inclusion.*

”



# Mayteza Zelaya

Sales Agronomist



## Mother Earth

A love for the countryside is in my blood, and, as an agronomist, I'm as professional as they come. I strive to offer the best of myself as I work to help producers succeed. But behind every professional there's a personal side, sometimes including the role of mother. I don't believe that one side needs to come at the expense of the other.

I realized from an early age what the land means and how valuable the work of producing food is. Growing up, we would regularly travel to my mum's birth town, La Libertad, where I can still vividly recall everything being fresh: freshly milked milk in a glass of *pinolillo*, freshly cut cashews, and freshly cast corn tortillas. Not to mention freshly picked guavas, oranges, and tangerines.

I also soon realized that there was a way that I could contribute to putting all this on the table – with knowledge. So I studied agronomy, with the goal of helping farmers in my country use my knowledge to produce more, better quality produce while protecting our planet.

## Be Your Best

In my university program, it was just me and two other women in a class of fifty-two students. This didn't come entirely as a surprise – my region still has very rigid gender roles. This is especially true within agriculture, where boys usually join parents in the fields and girls stay home making food. While there has been some progress, it's really not that significant and many children still grow up with a lot of "machismo". I hope the next generation will see more change.

For me, the way forward is to be the best version of myself, personally and professionally, and to always perform to the best of my ability

while staying true to my values and principles. And I don't believe that gender alone should either gain a person a position in this industry or limit them. Instead, professional skills and characteristics should be the most important factors. That said, being a woman in an industry considered to be for men brings me great satisfaction.

## Workloads and Trade-Offs

There have been many trade-offs where I believe the workplace can help by being more supportive with gender challenges. In particular, we must take stock of workloads and understand that women play a fundamental role in the family. Many women are both heads of households, breadwinners, and emotional supporters for their children. How can a woman be a professional and a present mom if she has to travel on a Monday and only return home on a Friday? This greatly influences family life. If companies do not adapt to give women fair workloads, the role of the mother will suffer. In my case, as our only agronomist in Nicaragua, I have to regularly crisscross the entire country in my car. As a result, I sometimes live in a hotel during the week, which limits my roles as mother and partner.

That's why I think it is important for us to remember that a professional always has a personal side and to ensure that all women in our organization can have a satisfying professional and family life without having to sacrifice one for the other – to me, that's gender inclusion.

### Position and years in the company:

Sales Agronomist; 6 years

**Location:** Nicaragua

**Region/Unit:** Yara Americas

**Nationality:** Nicaraguan

**Area of expertise:** Agronomic research and advice



## Motto

Everything can be done.

## Improving Yields, Improving Lives

Returning to my original goal of helping producers in my region, I can confidently say that I have succeeded in my area of expertise, which is to produce food. Nicaragua has an overall low level of agricultural knowledge, so I see my contribution to transferring this knowledge as particularly important. As I progress at Yara, I hope to continue increasing our opportunities and consolidating our position here rather than transferring to a position abroad.

**We still have much to do, and I still have much to contribute. What I enjoy most in my work at Yara is seeing how our contributions help farmers go forward, improving their yields, crop quality, and quality of life. There is nothing that satisfies me more than knowing I have contributed to some extent to improving the lives of these producers.**



Favorite crop: Coffee



# Mervi Seppänen

Senior Development Agronomist



“

*If we reflect the outside world more thoroughly, we will become a true knowledge company.*

”



## The Dynamics of Knowledge

I'm passionate about translating the latest science into knowledge to improve farming practices. For Yara to be truly knowledge-driven, we have to grow in-depth knowledge. This takes time and extensive networking, but it will give us the broader perspectives that we need to succeed.

I grew up on a typical Finnish dairy farm, a smallholding with 25 cows. I took care of all the field work after my dad died, so I got to know grasslands from an early age. When I decided to focus on studying, we sold the farmland and our animals.

After studying and working in the USA and Denmark, I developed BSc and MSc programs for agricultural sciences and ran a research group on crop science at the University of Helsinki. I am passionate about applying natural sciences, especially plant physiology, in a farmer-centric manner. This is essential to promote plant development and growth that is profitable for farmers, especially in grassland farming. However, after almost 20 years in academia, I understood that scientific research – which always wants to drill down into details – was being pursued too narrowly and had lost contact with the realities of farming.

I wanted to work more closely with farmers, and I knew that Yara was joining a carbon-neutral milk production project. I was selected for a role on the project three years ago and have since been actively contributing with my knowledge and building bridges with my former research colleagues.

## Let Knowledge Flow

As a university director, I also mentored female academics to help them reach their goals and get equal opportunities and salaries. This is less of a challenge in academia – a meritocracy where salary grades and qualifications are transparent – than in rural agriculture, where women are expected to take traditional roles. The agronomy world can be

challenging for women, especially if you tend to be a “good girl” and don't prioritize your goals.

My journey with Yara is still relatively short, and I'm looking forward to equal opportunities and salary parity with male colleagues. We all deserve equal opportunities at work, including equivalent salaries for similar responsibilities. We should also have the right to get information. If you work in an organization where everything must pass down the line, you may not get the information you need to innovate and deliver. In this way, strict, inflexible routines can obstruct new knowledge and business opportunities.

If decisions are made by those with positions rather than those with knowledge, this affects and delays not only individual performance but also company-wide progress.



**Position and years in the company:** Senior Development Agronomist; 3 years  
**Location:** Finland  
**Region/Unit:** Yara Europe  
**Nationality:** Finnish  
**Area of expertise:** Crop physiology and agronomy



## Motto

Set high goals,  
use science-  
based targets  
and always  
collaborate with  
the best people.



## Make Knowledge Grow

Growing in-depth knowledge is not easy. A long-term perspective is difficult to achieve in any company with one-year horizons and annual organizational changes. Similarly, the best decisions are made by women and men *together*, not by male-dominated groups driven by individual KPIs. Overemphasis on KPIs can get in the way of broader organizational goals, individual freedom, and good decision-making. Many important tasks have no KPIs, making it challenging to prioritize them. Important non-KPI tasks – just like domestic chores – must be shared. All young female colleagues should be encouraged to ask male colleagues to share these tasks. Life is too short to behave in stereotyped ways!

The wise and sustainable use of mineral fertilizer is a worthy application of knowledge. Our CEO Svein Tore impressed me with the new strategy, which reflects the global focus on sustainability. I have always been a sustainability champion, including helping Finnish state steering groups to identify trends for university R&D courses, and I'm very happy that Yara is giving this more focus.

Yara values create more openness at ground level, but we can still improve the way they are carried out. If we can reflect the outside world more thoroughly, we will become a true knowledge company. On a personal level, I hope that Yara's “nature-positive” goal gives me a mandate to work on implementing science-based development of grassland farming.



**Favorite crop:** Grassland



“

*Just as biodiversity  
is crucial for  
ecosystems,  
diversity is vital  
for people.*

”

# Micaela Bové

Farming Solutions Director





## Powered by Joy

I am the sum of knowledge and experiences acquired together with many diverse people who have helped me become who I am today. During a work trip, I arrived at an airport in Africa. My baggage was lost, my phone wouldn't work. Concerned for my safety as I was traveling alone, I stayed put and found a bookstore. Opening the *Book of Joy* by Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama, I read something that spoke volumes to me. It was the concept of *Ubuntu*: a person is a person through other persons, and my humanity is caught up, bound up, inextricably, with yours.

Wise words from these men helped me calm down in a distressing situation – and later on they would also help to realign my direction in a difficult phase of my life. As I read the book, a local colleague rang and told me how to get to my hotel. When I arrived and saw the Yara logo, I was overjoyed and felt safe again. How to live joyfully and spread joyfulness has become important to me both personally and professionally. Joy energizes us and helps us grow.

Ultimately, work is about growing as a professional and a person and helping others do so. Many of the achievements I am most proud of involve supporting my colleagues' growth – in knowledge and as individuals. It's a real joy when this is reciprocal, when we support each other to grow professionally and also share the milestones of our personal lives.

## Find Energy

As Farming Solutions Director for Latin America, I need plenty of joyful energy to cover my many responsibilities, from agronomy, marketing and digital services, to customer experience, commercial excellence, and new business models. And, let's face it, agriculture never sleeps – in Argentina, the wheat harvest is at Christmas! Crops don't work from 9-5 Monday to Friday, and neither do farmers – so nor can we. This is all-consuming

work that sometimes disconnects you from “normal” life. So, finding your way to access energy is essential, and joy can be a good channel.

Our work is also ever-changing and as diverse as nature itself. I love agronomy, as it helps me experience how everything is interconnected – water, weather, crops, soil, farmers – such diversity! In soil alone, we have bacteria, organics, fungi, so many elements that interact to produce a good crop. Or think about citrus cultivation, which is about patient, long-term growth; you get just one harvest, one chance to learn how to get it right every year. I'm fascinated by one of agronomy's main challenges: to understand and support the biodiversity of food ecosystems.

### Position and years in the company:

Farming Solutions Director; 15 years

Location: Argentina

Region/Unit: Yara Americas

Nationality: Argentinian

Area of expertise: Plant Nutrition



## Create Balance

When you embrace change, it's easier to create a work-life balance. After I'd settled into my first position as a technical assistant and sales representative in Argentina, our business model changed from direct sales to distribution channels. I had to move on and became a sales rep in Mexico, before taking the role as agronomy and marketing manager – a major life change. I was basically handed some car keys and started traveling countrywide, getting to know many new crops and types of farmers. Though I enjoyed the work, after four years, I felt isolated and wanted to go home. I had professional success but needed a new balance in my personal life.

The solution was a role as Global Maize Manager, which took me back to my beloved Buenos Aires and my family. I worked at local, global, and regional levels from bases in Argentina and Mexico, visiting maize fields in the US, Brazil, the African continent, and Italy.

## Break the Glass!

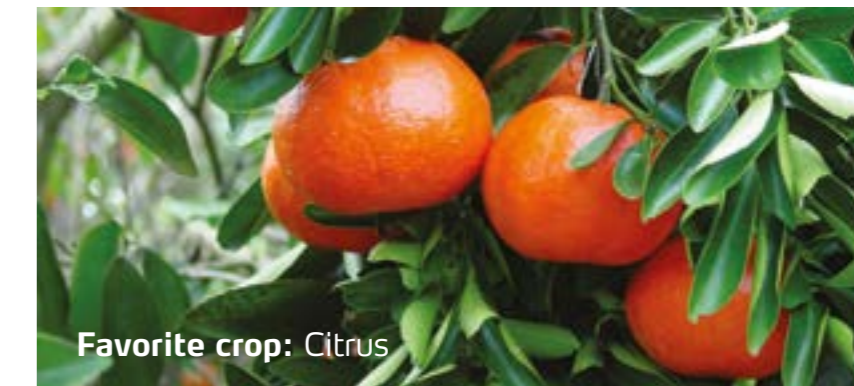
Just as biodiversity is crucial for ecosystems, diversity is vital for people. In Latin America, the “gender glass ceiling” is an impediment for working women. There are few women in commercial and key management roles in agribusiness companies, apart from at Yara. Agronomy is considered a subject for men. It's challenging to change a culture where women are expected to prioritize home and children, and men occupy the world of work. Nonetheless, new generations are making progress both in business and on the farm.

Yara is on the right path making women visible in commercial roles. “New masculinity” men who contribute to parental care and domestic chores help; the lack of public policies enabling women to continue their professional lives after motherhood doesn't. When I became a mother, my supportive partner and Yara's parental leave gave me the flexibility to combine home and work roles – it was priceless!

Some men only acknowledge you if you work twice as hard as them, and can easily stigmatize your mistakes as “hormonal.” This makes allyship

all the more important: I want to highlight those men who helped me grow professionally, gave me opportunities, and challenged me.

Today, our DEI mission is to transform the unconscious biases and fears that are our main obstacles and to become a wiser organization – a more joyful one.



Favorite crop: Citrus



## Motto

Live with joy and promote joy within the people around you.





# Mónica Andrés

EVP Yara Europe

“

*It is my  
responsibility to  
turn gender DEI  
into visible and  
living values.*

”



## Problem-Solver

A love of nature and physics led me to agronomy. When I started working with Spanish farmers, they had never met a woman agronomist before and were often hesitant. In those meetings, I discovered my talent for winning trust and respect.

I continued to develop my professional skills working with Yara's customers and farmers. There were few women colleagues back then and even fewer in commercial and customer-facing roles. I worked primarily as a problem solver and realized that I was accepted as a professional discussion partner if I could provide good solutions. Despite customers' initial surprise at meeting a female agronomist, the more they interacted with me the less gender acted as a barrier.

## Blend in or Stand Up

Looking back on twenty-five years as a female agronomist, I am delighted to see more awareness of gender diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). However, I still have to speak out when gender bias arises. In my experience, there are two strategies for women working in predominantly male environments and teams: either blend into the culture and norms or stand up for your ways of being and doing.

I recall business dinners where I was the only woman present. They were long, late, and the talk was usually about business and football. I tried to include topics like work-life balance and parenting, but the men seemed uninterested. Gradually, I became less welcomed as a dinner guest. Today, I expect male colleagues to understand their responsibility to promote DEI and listen to and support DEI ambassadors.

## Allyship and Mentoring

It is part of my professional and moral responsibility to turn gender DEI into visible and living values across the entire Yara organization. From my position, I can do many things: speak out and be a role model, increase women's visibility, open doors and be a mentor.

I didn't have mentors on my journey. I made my own way and focused on performing rather than career opportunities. Luckily, I had managers who kept an eye on opportunities for me. When young women began seeing me as a role model, I was surprised and overwhelmed – could I be responsible for both the business and gender DEI? I lacked self-confidence and felt I had to prove myself. Coaching helped me understand the fear behind my dilemma: what if they look up to me and I fail? I realized that allowing women to see me as role model is enough in itself.

Today, I keep an eye on young women across our organization, make them aware of opportunities, and show pride in their achievements. Mentoring and reverse mentoring are good tools for this. As I mentor new young employees, I learn from their experiences, studies, digital abilities, and work methods. Their insights will help us create new business and new DEI measures.

**Position and years in the company:**  
Executive Vice President - Yara Europe; 24 years  
**Location:** Spain  
**Region/Unit:** Yara Europe  
**Nationality:** Spanish  
**Area of expertise:** Crop nutrition



## Motto

**Be authentic: stay loyal to your values!**

## Positive Action and Excellence

In Europe, society is relatively equalitarian, but our European organization is far from a 50-50 gender balance. Despite our current progress, we have more men, especially in management, as well as higher female turnover. Beyond Europe, we have markets where our women can't take field positions because of gender-related risks, confining them to commercial roles or less risky areas. Other regions don't yet see DEI as an issue. All this suggests we must accept there are limits to what we can do.

My top DEI priority is to make everyone accountable for reaching our European gender DEI targets. It has to remain a core strategy and on our day-to-day agenda. Although initially against gender targets, I now see we won't get change unless we can measure it. KPIs for female recruitment, work-life balance regulations, and support for female graduates are all necessary to redress the thin pipeline of women in Region Europe.

**We must also guarantee excellence. Access to the total talent pool does not just mean favoring those less represented. I am building the best and most diverse team, because that provides more perspectives and more mature decisions, reducing our business risk. It also creates the mutual respect needed to grow the Yara we all deserve.**

**Favorite crop:** Broadacre crops







# Mónica Sánchez

Senior Agronomist

“

*I hope to be part  
of the changes  
the crop nutrition  
sector needs.*

”



## Be Part of the Change!

**Agronomy has always been a part of my life, as my parents were farmers, and we had olive and cereal farms. Today, I am passionate about my work as an agronomist and love being able to advise and help farmers improve their profitability and the quality of their produce.**

I also love my job at Yara, as agronomic knowledge plays a key role in my many and diverse day-to-day work activities. I visit farms with different crops in different areas and talk with technicians and farmers to understand their concerns and needs. I learn a lot and can then advise them how to improve crop fertilization. I also work with developing new fertigation, organic fertilizer, and biostimulant products, as well as new digital tools. I actively participate in marketing and promotional activities (research centers, farmers associations, universities, congresses), support the commercial department, and have responsibility for trials and demos too.

I also like being a Yara agronomist because of the company's values regarding environmental sustainability (for example reducing carbon footprints) and integration (diversity, inclusion and of course gender equality).

## Putting Knowledge into Practice

I decided to study agricultural engineering as the degree included all the subjects that I liked best: math, chemistry, physics, environment, and biology. I also saw that it offered many professional opportunities. As I studied, I liked the subjects related to agriculture the most, and when the degree was finished, I looked forward to starting work and putting everything I had learned into practice.

I initially worked on university research projects while also doing my doctoral thesis. My first opportunity in a private company was with Yara. I started doing field trials as an intern and Yara later offered me a contract as an agronomist in the agronomic department. I have since taken on more responsibilities and am now a Senior Agronomist at Yara Iberian for Spain and Portugal. I continue to learn from my colleagues, technicians, and farmers every day.

## Learning Never Stops

I love to learn from everything and everyone. I am very observant, and I learn something new from each person I meet. Farmers teach me a lot each day, and I admire them for their simplicity, humility, and ability to adapt – they always want to learn more. I get excellent treatment every time I visit their farms. They understand that I can help them make their crops more profitable and their environmental management better.

I think Yara is learning to create a diverse workplace with more gender balance. The company values us for how good professionals we are, not for being a man or a woman. I am lucky that Yara Iberian has gender equality in all its departments and that we are increasing our awareness of gender issues through different learning activities.

### Position and years in the company:

Senior Agronomist; 4 years

**Location:** Spain

**Region/Unit:** Yara Europe

**Nationality:** Spanish

**Area of expertise:** Fertilization and agronomic advice



## Slow DEI Growth

Although gender diversity is increasing at Yara, the agricultural sector is adapting and evolving more slowly. We are very few women agronomists, and I am often the only woman in a meeting or on a farm. Unfortunately, I still experience the attitude that a man can do this job better than a woman, for example when I recommend a fertilizer and then find out that the farmer has changed to another one on recommendation by a (male) technician.

People should be valued for their proficiency regardless of gender. However, I experience that as women, we have to demonstrate our professionalism before we are taken seriously. It's important that people know and trust you in this work. So female agronomists have to be extra patient because we need more time to establish trust and overcome skepticism.

In the same way, working women still need support and understanding to carry out the multiple roles of mother, wife, and family caregiver in parallel with our careers. There is still so much to do on this issue, which is a day-to-day challenge for many women around the world.

**I hope to be part of the changes the crop nutrition sector needs. I want to support the more efficient application of nutrients and improved management of soil and water, and help develop the new products needed for more sustainable agriculture. Not least, I want to help people understand that gender diversity benefits people, planet and prosperity because it enriches them all.**



## Motto

**Learn from everything and everyone!**





“

*Plants cannot run from their problems – they have to adapt and find solutions.*

”



# Narges Moradtalab

Research Scientist



## The Applied Academic

With Bachelor's and Master's degrees plus two doctorates in crop nutrition, I am passionate about using the knowledge I've attained to help solve some of the world's most pressing challenges. Mitigating the adverse impacts of climate change on the food crops we all depend upon is my top priority.

Since I was nine years old, I've always imagined myself as a scientist with a microscope. Later, my interest in plant physiology was triggered by botany textbooks in high school. Plants combining CO<sub>2</sub> and sunlight to make food – amazing!

Yet I quickly discovered that there were few opportunities to help me do the type of research I had in mind. And as the saying goes, if there's no door, you must find a window! So in 2014, I visited the University of Hohenheim in Germany for nine months for a research study related to my first Ph.D. thesis. After that, I began a second Ph.D. on a European Union project majoring in stress physiology and crop nutrition, and continued with postdoc work afterwards.

I was on track for a career in academia, but this can be difficult in Germany due to limited employment contracts. So, with the goal of a better work-life balance, I decided to look into other options. In early 2021, I found a position as a Research Scientist for Yara doing plant nutrition and stress physiology in the Biostimulants R&D and Agronomy unit. The job description was a dream for me, so I applied and was accepted. Since June 2021, I've been learning to put my knowledge into practice.

## Pushing Through Prejudice

Being an immigrant here in Germany is not easy, of course, as you must find your way in a new world. But when I joined the university, I faced the additional challenge of not being recognized as a highly educated scientist. I suspect this may have been due to a hidden bias that a woman from a developing country might not be well skilled or educated.

Regardless, I resolved to overcome these barriers by putting in far more effort and taking more risks. Finally, it paid off when, after four years of arduous work, I was awarded the prize for best research activity, published my findings in the best peer-review journal, and even had the results of my research patented in a crop-enhancing product.

These experiences have taught me that there is always a solution, a way to overcome any barrier if I stay hopeful and do my best.

## Diversity Goes Both Ways

I believe one way to overcome barriers caused by the many unconscious biases we all hold is through embracing diversity, through which we can learn to build bridges of trust and respect. This is particularly true of gender diversity, where negative stereotypes can go both ways. Providing training for all employees on unconscious bias can help. Such training can be regularly updated according to observed discrimination at the workplace, while women can mentor men to further clarify women-specific challenges. After all, everyone needs to be part of the push towards gender diversity, not only women.

I don't see this as a problem at Yara, where instead, I experience a great degree of respect and no glass ceiling that gets in the way of women attaining decision-making positions. There's a good atmosphere of open minds and equal opportunities here. I'm so impressed with Yara's DEI work so far. I can honestly say it has exceeded my expectations.

### Position and years in the company:

Research Scientist; 1 year

Location: Germany

Region/Unit: Yara Agronomy and R&D (YARD)

Nationality: Iranian

Area of expertise: Plant nutrition and stress physiology



## Motto

In the middle of a challenge, I can find opportunities, hope, and solutions.

## Fighting Climate Change

Throughout my career, there have always been major and minor obstacles and biases. I have worked hard and tried not to dwell on these. Instead, I focus on my passions, strengths, hopes, and goals, sharpening my skills and using all my potential.

One of my passions is to help find solutions to the effects of climate change. Since climate change and demand for food crops have now become worldwide challenges, my job researching how to overcome the adverse effects of stress on crops is really important. Plants cannot run from their problems – they have to adapt and find solutions. And ultimately, so do we.



Favorite crop: Strawberry





# Natalie Wood

Agronomy Operations  
Manager

“

*By being aware of differences we create better performing teams.*

”



## Question Everything!

As a kid, I used to ask 'how' or 'why' about everything, to understand how things worked or why they were done in certain ways. I still do this today and love having a good understanding and knowledge of the world around me, both at work and in my personal life. It gives me the drive to conduct research and enable better decisions in the workplace.

After graduating in biology from university, my biggest interest was plant sciences. I took a temporary summer job doing agricultural trials on pesticides and stayed for four years conducting field and operator exposure trials. This gave me a real love of crops and agriculture.

My move to Yara began by meeting Rosie Carne, the only woman on my interview panel. It was refreshing and reassuring to meet a woman in a managerial position. I got the job as Technical Agronomist, coordinating UK R&D trials. Two years later, I became Country Arable Agronomist, and five years on, I am the Agronomy Operations Manager, overseeing agronomy for UK and Ireland.

## Role Models

My role involves new responsibilities, including being line manager, as well as tasks such as training the sales team and writing content for publications and our website – not to mention public speaking and advising on industry panels. Luckily, two role models have supported my development.

My line manager, Mark Tucker, is a font of knowledge and has taught me everything I know about crop nutrition and fertilizers. He really cares about his team's health and wellbeing, as well as their work commitments. The first time I had to speak at an external event, it was quite daunting. I was hesitant, but Mark urged me to do it. It was a pivotal moment and a major confidence booster. I now regularly do public speaking. I would love to become as good a manager as Mark.

Rejane Souza is also a role model. I love her positive, easygoing way of working. She gained my respect and trust by demonstrating how a manager doesn't need to assert authority for the sake of it, but can still command respect. Rejane has given me really helpful advice, which has helped my career decisions at Yara.

Role models like Mark and Rejane help me step into new tasks and challenges. In April 2022, I began coordinating a new organo-mineral fertilizer knowledge transfer partnership (KTP) with Cranfield University. This is in conjunction with a project with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and Veolia. A first of its kind in the UK, this circular economy partnership utilizes municipal waste from households in London. The pilot will be replicated in New York and São Paulo.

## Gender Diversity is an Asset

Despite agriculture being male dominated, I experience very little gender bias in my everyday work. The fact that 50% of Yara EVPs are women has a good signal effect. Also, more women are studying agricultural courses at university and taking careers in agronomy. When I became Country Arable Agronomist, after just two years at Yara, some doubted the decision and my ability. Mark told me, "This is a long-term role, and you will develop the knowledge – you have all the qualities needed." He believed in me and that gave me the confidence to prove any doubters wrong.

We need diversity to get a more complete skill set from the different traits of the genders. For example, men often share their ideas quickly, whereas women often think through theirs before sharing them. Both traits have upsides and downsides. By being aware of the differences, we create better performing teams.

**Position and years in the company:**  
Agronomy Operations Manager; 8 years

**Location:** United Kingdom

**Region/Unit:** Yara Europe

**Nationality:** British

**Area of expertise:** Data analysis and application from R&D trials



## Motto

Only you can make your ambitions reality; be determined, hard work always pays off!



## Knowledge is Power

As DEI representative for the UK, I have a remit to keep DEI issues on the agenda. Ethnicity is a bigger challenge for us than gender in our recruiting. Of 250 staff, we have just two from ethnic minorities. Although people with minority backgrounds study agronomic sciences, many stay in academia and others prefer to join large agrochemical companies. Succession may be a barrier since we may not have enough positions in the sales or agronomy teams to entice new talent.

**Information is king, knowledge is power – this is what I can offer, both as agronomist and DEI ambassador. It's my job to share knowledge with our commercial teams and growers, universities, and industry peers. I do this through training, public speaking, writing articles, advising growers and government bodies and more. I love the diversity of my role.**



**Favorite crop:**  
Spring barley



“

*The best way to overcome gender challenges is to have a more diverse leadership team.*

”



# Pamella Elias

Market Development  
Specialist



## Self-made “Magician”

I am passionate about agriculture and the magic of planting a crop and getting food in return. Generating life through the soil, caring for, and contributing to humanity through knowledge and technology – I’m in love with this process!

Studying agronomy has always been my dream, but I had neither the family background in agriculture nor the financial means to study. In other words, to make my dream come true, I needed a plan.

I started working in a hotel to have an income but quickly began looking for another job linked to agronomy so that once I got into college, I would already have a network. I also identified potential grants that could help finance my studies.

This period required a lot of willpower, but my determination paid off when I landed a position as a secretary at a sugarcane cooperative and got accepted into a university agronomy night course. Then, finally, I was able to set my plan into motion.

## Dreams Attained

Years later, I now hold an MBA in People Management and Marketing with a focus on agribusiness and have had the pleasure of working with Yara since 2018 developing digital solutions for our business.

It is just how I dreamed it would be – it is magical work, with our great mission to responsibly feed the world and protect the planet. It is challenging work, for sure, but also fun and exciting. Today, the crop I love the most is coffee. I love the culture surrounding it, how the plant needs care and attention, the beauty and scent of its flowers – and drinking it, of course!

Having matured more into my role now, I understand that the technical skills we acquire in academia are only part of what makes a good

professional. Just as important is the way you interact with people. Working in a hotel with people of all types, as well as the way my parents raised me to treat people equally and with respect, are factors that have certainly helped make me the professional I am today.

## Diversity Takes Leadership

I learned more than just respect from my family; they taught me how to make it in the world as a woman. My grandma, for example, demonstrated how to be strong but also kind. My mother showed me how to speak up in a world that can sometimes be cruel, and my dad taught me everything he could to prepare me for it.

I’ve since needed to put many of these lessons to the test when faced with gender challenges in the workplace. In our male-dominated profession, a woman’s technical knowledge, intelligence, emotional and physical strength are constantly scrutinized and repeatedly need to be validated by male managers for a woman to have a voice.

This is very frustrating, and though I’ve learned to handle it and speak out, it is still what tires me most. I believe the best way to overcome such gender challenges is to have a more diverse management team. This change must be implemented right from the start, where people of different genders should be involved in the hiring process, from CV selection to the interviews. People tend to hire profiles similar to their own, after all.

Without clear representation in the management team, I’m convinced the path to gender diversity will take much longer.

**Position and years in the company:**  
Market Development Specialist; 4 years

**Location:** Brazil

**Region/Unit:** Yara Americas

**Nationality:** Brazilian

**Area of expertise:** People management and marketing with a focus on agribusiness.



## Motto

I can think, do and say what I want, as long as I take care in the way I do it.

## Past, Present and Future

On the topic of job interviews, I recall that the person who performed my job interview at Yara asked me where I’d like to see myself as a professional in ten years. I replied something along the lines that I wanted to be seen as a role model and a leader that my colleagues could turn to, and that I would like to make a difference for the farmers I work with.

I never dreamt then that I could achieve all this so fast! I imagined it would take at least ten years to get to where I am today at Yara, not four!

Looking forward to the next ten years, I now envision myself as the leader of an exceptional team, creating value and results for farmers and the company. I guess we’ll just have to see if the future surprises me once again.





# Patricia Dingus

Regional Sales Manager

“

*I just say, 'saddle up and go, girl!' Women must commit to their own success.*

”



## The Planner

I take responsibility for whatever I can control, and it turns out this can be quite a lot. My superpowers include a drive to learn continually and an ability to plan and set goals. With these abilities combined, I'm able to overcome gender bias in a male dominated industry and help growers defeat drought, disease and pests.

I grew up in a family of farmers in California's productive Salinas Valley, the so-called "Salad Bowl" of the USA, where all types of vegetables are grown year-round. My father worked for a major grower, and I still remember the feeling of excitement of being close to and a part of something huge whenever I'd visit him at work.

A fond childhood in a rural community inspired me to pursue an agronomy degree. From there, I've worked as irrigator, farmer, harvester, marketer, and pest control advisor, to name a few. I imagined I'd be a pest control expert for life, but when a recruiter asked if I would be interested in being a regional supplier rep for Yara in 2016, I accepted.

It turned out to be a good fit. I love my profession and am pleased to have become part of this huge industry that feeds the world!

My favorite part of the job is collaborating with growers, many of whom I now consider friends, who constantly face water and soil quality issues following years of drought and soil depletion. The pressures they experience with disease and pests are also nonstop, so my main focus is to understand their challenges and contribute to the solution. In my role, this means trying to help them optimize their use of inputs, and I feel so encouraged and charged with excitement when I see them realize significant returns on their investments.

## Gender Bias Meets Self-Determination

With respect to my role as a woman in a male-dominated field, I choose to take my share of the responsibility. It is my responsibility to take charge of my professional development, my responsibility to give feedback when I experience microaggressions, and it is my responsibility to move on from any toxic work environment.

As many others, I have certainly encountered gender bias in this industry. Such as management expressing concerns that my gender might be a detriment to my ability to succeed, for example. I've simply nodded my head, stepped out, done my job with diligence, and left these same managers amazed a few months later.

Part of the secret to my success is that I'm an avid goal-setter who has discovered how putting a plan together with a clear goal in mind enables me to better meet the growers' needs. I also try to be open to wisdom, knowledge, and growth as I press into learning and being teachable. I know strawberries and vegetables pretty well, but I'm still learning about wine grapes, avocados, and lemons. There are opportunities to learn and grow every day!

### Position and years in the company:

Regional Sales Manager; 6 years

Location: United States

Region/Unit: Yara Americas

Nationality: American/Mexican

Area of expertise: Crop nutrition - Strawberry, Vegetables, and Wine Grape



## Putting in "Sweat Equity"

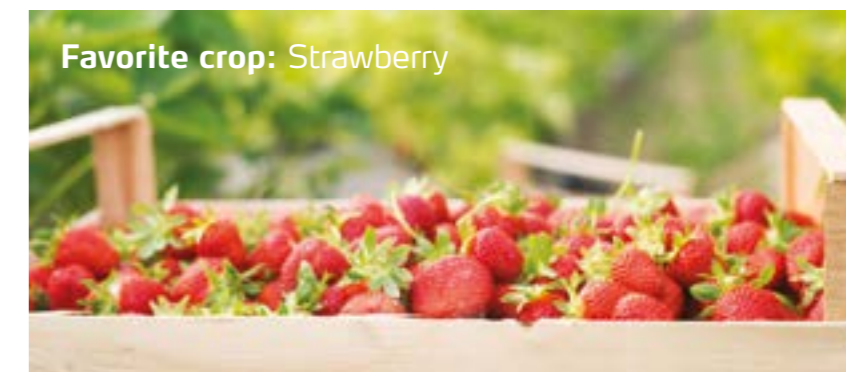
In other words, I don't believe there are any shortcuts in this business – it's all about time and experience or "sweat equity."

That's why I keep my Pest Control Advisor, Qualified Applicator License, and Certified Crop Advisor up to date so that I stay updated on the latest research and practices. Being skilled, dependable, and



trustworthy builds up my "brand," and I find that when folks do great work, great opportunities typically present themselves.

That said, one major impediment I've noticed to gender diversity is that women will often shy away from seeking the positions they really want. Perhaps it's self-doubt? I just say, "saddle up and go, girl!" Women must commit to their own success by following up on their goals, acquiring the needed skills, and taking risks.



Favorite crop: Strawberry



## Motto

Treat others the way you want to be treated.



“

*A company  
must lead by  
example.*

”



Patricia  
Rodríguez

*Agronomic Capability Lead*



## R&D Advocate

**My life continually takes new directions, and I never imagined I would be where I am today. I'm proud to be the first in my family with a degree and to use my education to help farmers succeed. Besides continuing to grow in my specialization within agronomy, I seek to educate myself and fight for improved gender diversity at work. I'm also a coffee lover and dream of one day going beyond just drinking it to actually cultivating it.**

I always loved biology, but I remember a high school teacher I respected saying that with increasing mouths to feed, agronomy was the career of the future. I had no connection with farming, and nobody else in my family had a professional degree, but after some research, I decided to enter the field.

Since then, my career path has not been exactly what I planned back in college. That's because university was mostly about acquiring technical knowledge and skills, while the real world proved to be very different. I had to quickly learn new skills like management and leadership, effective communication, and how to deal with people – things I was not prepared for at all. But that's not a bad thing! Experience is the greatest teacher.

## Overcoming Traditional Gender Bias

I had a good career start working for a family-owned business. But it was very traditional, with the owner making all the decisions and the few women employees regularly being treated unfairly.

In Latin America, you often hear the claim that gender bias is already taken care of, and many managers don't even think there are any unresolved issues. This is of course not the case. Instead, I believe that privilege blinds them to the truth. That's why, for starters, I believe it is important to make the problem visible. We should focus on educating managers and other staff about the impacts gender bias has on teams,

the seriousness of microaggressions, and the damage to mental health that this behavior can cause.

With support from Yara, I took part in the first gender balance program, where together with a local network of women, we explored topics that we've never otherwise discussed. We realized many things, but perhaps most significantly, that we were not alone with our experiences.

Coming out of this program, my advice to women is to keep confronting these biases by always speaking their minds and bringing their perspectives to the table. And not just arguments against, of course, but suggesting workable solutions. After all, diversity in the workplace is also about contributing to more creative business solutions.

That said, I'm convinced that to really make a workplace more supportive to gender challenges, a gender balance at the management level is crucial. A company must lead by example.



**Position and years in the company:** Agronomy Capability Lead; 9 years  
**Location:** Mexico  
**Region/Unit:** Yara Agronomy and R&D  
**Nationality:** Mexican  
**Area of expertise:** Agronomic competence development



## Motto

**Life is an eternal work in progress.**



## Enjoy the Fruits of Your Labor

Today, my key role at Yara involves communicating knowledge generated by our central R&D teams to colleagues in the markets who transform this into commercial messages and information for the farmers. Overall, I can't say that agronomy is an easy career choice – especially when working with smallholder farmers. Many of my customers face multiple problems related to education, health, and poverty. So, I also need to deal with this context in addition to the agronomic challenges.

**But at the same time, my favorite part of this job is precisely the farmer interaction. I've been impressed by farmers for some time and admire how they can actually touch their achievements and feel the satisfaction that comes from their efforts. This has gotten me thinking: I've always loved coffee as a drink, and now I appreciate it as a crop as well. So, my goal is to one day have my own farm where we produce coffee and fruits.**

**But first, I look forward to my new Agronomy Lead position in Norway and training new agronomists!**



**Favorite crop:** Avocado





# Petra Junklewitz

Senior Global Grassland Expert

“

*Work flexibility  
is part of fully  
respecting  
everybody and  
accepting them  
as they are.*

”



## 24/7 Curiosity

I'm very curious. I like to solve new challenges and continually learn more about crop growth processes. It's very satisfying to work with both crop development and research – to observe the results of R&D activities in the field. At home, gardening is a hobby that allows me to experiment. I discovered that lentils and chickpeas can actually be grown in Germany.

I have always worked for Yara at its R&D Center in Hanninghof, Germany. I started my career as an apprentice gardener, studied horticulture, and then connected with Hanninghof when they invited me to present results of my study on the suitability of the N-Tester, a nitrogen measurement tool, for use with vegetables.

Initially, I was a research assistant, evaluating data from trials and compiling crop nutrition-related data. Later, I became a crop expert for grassland and was then asked to lead the R&D team working on broad acreage crops. I had no specific grassland experience then, and the complexity of grassland agronomy slowly dawned on me. When given the choice, I stepped back from the team lead position to focus more on crop-related R&D work. I now do a lot of R&D, mostly collaborative, and I'm really happy being close to the knowledge again.

My professional role models excel in their own work and are also prepared to speak their truth. I admire good team players and enablers – people who prepare the way for colleagues, are supportive, and interact with a broad network. I am inspired by women who are both authentic and professionally passionate about their role or expertise. I also respect women who have different and complementary perspectives; as a pragmatist, I need visionaries and people who take a long-term view.

## Balance and Opportunities

Yara should work towards gender balance, but not at any expense. If you employ or promote somebody who is less suitable just because of gender balance, this ultimately handicaps them. In R&D at Hanninghof, we are used to women in leadership positions. I always put qualities and qualifications first, along with team fit. I only support gender quotas and positive discrimination when they are used temporarily to create balance in environments that oppose gender balance or display obvious prejudice.

Equal opportunity can be obstructed by cultural practices, such as expecting women to manage housework, childcare, and domestic social life. Why shouldn't men take responsibility for these tasks? Even at work, they can organize birthdays and gifts for colleagues and be the team's "social glue".

To help overcome this, Yara should allow flexibility to meet personal challenges beyond the workplace. Work flexibility is part of fully respecting everybody and accepting them as they are – in all parts of their lives.

Often though, achieving equal opportunities at work is less about general gender equality and more about the measures you create to support yourself. Don't wait for policies – take initiative! Seek to organize all parts of your life in a way that suits you best, prioritize what is most important to you, and review your measures from time to time.

**Position and years in the company:**  
Senior Global Grassland Expert; 26 years  
**Location:** Germany  
**Region/Unit:** Yara Agronomy and R&D (YARD)  
**Nationality:** German  
**Area of expertise:** Crop Nutrition



## Trust and Support

In many areas of agriculture, women's advice is trusted less, and customers prefer to get information from men. Similarly, women are sometimes not given the opportunity to speak out. This can happen when men talk among themselves, not allowing women to join the conversation, or when men are loud and dominating and interrupt women.

The best support for anyone facing such issues at work is to make sure that every employee has a person they trust and dare to discuss issues with – not necessarily the line manager, often a peer is better. For example, at Hanninghof we have many international employees and some get a "language twin" to discuss challenges with and help them integrate into the organization.

Work environments with strong gender imbalance can result in less collaboration, networking, and soft skills. And although performance may be good, they are less enjoyable to work in. Team wellbeing goes beyond individual careers and advancement.

**Succeeding on your own terms involves creating an environment where you feel comfortable and can grow and develop. Know your priorities, dare to demand what you need, and have open discussions. When you face difficulties, remember you are not alone. You are part of a team that can support you to make a stand or find a compromise.**



## Motto

**Respect people as individuals, irrespective of gender.**





“

*Find your purpose  
in life and live  
accordingly. You  
will then know  
when to upgrade.*

”

# Rejane Souza

SVP Global Innovation





## A Love of the Land

I was born and raised on our family farm in Brazil where we grew maize, soya, and other grains. My parents taught us that we were stewards of the land, which I grew to love in all its diversity. I remember at age five suddenly understanding that fertilizer was food for plants – maybe this is where my love of agriculture comes from.

My parents also taught me that I was as worthy as my brothers – we were raised as equals. In many ways, my dad was my role model and I wanted to follow in his footsteps. He was generous and determined and always treated people with respect. I also learned to constantly do my best, seek excellency and strive to perform. Not least, dad and mom taught me to reach my potential by using myself as a benchmark, rather than others. As mom would say, “I’m raising you to BE YOU!”

Throughout my younger years, I was encouraged to do whatever I wanted to do and be whoever I wanted to be. But I was also prepared for the world not always being fair. Despite this, it took some time after starting my career before I figured out the importance of DEI topics.

## Woman Among Men

When I graduated as an agronomic engineer (or agronomist) in 2006, I was the only woman among 50 men. I hadn’t quite felt at home in that masculine group nor the role I played in it. Neither really resonated with the values I had grown up with – to respect people regardless of their background, color, gender, or beliefs. In 2016, as a senior agronomic manager, I participated in a Yara leadership course that changed my perspective. It enabled me to use my experience, position and influence as a platform to support the next generation and support the development of a fairer working environment. It also helped me develop two of my guiding principles: “be the change” and “get started regardless of how blurry the future may look”.

## Be Like Nature

DEI is important to Yara because it embraces important factors that attract the best and most engaged people. For our success, diversity is essential in getting the different perspectives needed to face future challenges and seize opportunities. Problem-solving and innovating require curiosity, multiple perspectives, and the ability to challenge the status quo. Using the same perspectives, doing the same things, and approaching business as we always did won’t serve us on our transformation journey. Nature has amazing diversity and is always evolving, so should we!

Inclusion and equity are about providing the right conditions for people to grow, the equal opportunities to reach their potential. That means encouraging free expression and giving new perspectives equal airtime. It means helping people understand how all our contributions make a difference and helping us all develop a sense of belonging and collective responsibility. We have to create an atmosphere of trust where everyone can “flourish” without being afraid of judgment. Yara’s international organization means we can take the best from different cultures. For example, my Latin culture – where seniors get heard first and loudest – can learn something about good dialogue from the egalitarian Nordic way, which has less hierarchy. The opposite is true when it comes to decision-making, where long and totally inclusive meetings can be counterproductive.

### Position and years in the company:

SVP Global Innovation; 15 years

**Location:** Norway

**Region/Unit:** Yara Agronomy and R&D

**Nationality:** Brazilian

**Area of expertise:** Crop Nutrition & Business and People Management



## Motto

**Dare to be kind. Caring is a superpower, not a weakness!**

## Freely Flowing Knowledge

My current global position was a huge step for me. When I was encouraged to apply, my first reactions were doubt and hesitancy. But once I got over the initial “imposter syndrome”, I realized that others saw me as a good fit for the role.

**My top DEI priority today is to improve our performance by ensuring that knowledge flows freely and is shared evenly. When DEI is fully embedded at Yara, we will really see its impact.**



**Favorite crop:** Coffee





# Ridham Kakar

Digital Agronomist

“

*Women leaders have become leaders not BECAUSE they are women but DESPITE them being women!*

”



## Doctor Yes!

**As a passionate soil scientist, I aim to equip India's farmers with knowledge about balanced plant nutrition and soil health. I want them to realize how this approach can make their farming profitable, sustainable, and climate adaptive. Each and every farmer in India deserves returns equivalent to farmers in developed countries.**

I always wanted to get into research, write papers and teach people. I might have inherited this from my father, a great orator who was always studying and writing. While at school, I heard a female environmental researcher tell stories about research and passing on knowledge, which triggered me to get into R&D. After completing a Ph.D. in soil sciences, I aimed to become a professor doing academic research in a 9-to-5 job. I did that for some years before discovering that it mainly involved paperwork rather than research and learning – it just didn't excite me! I wanted to do something meaningful with my knowledge, learn something new every day and become financially independent.

That led me to the corporate world. When I was headhunted to a position at Yara, I wanted to work in the field and widen my horizons, though I never imagined I would be interacting at ground level with our farming community in the way I am today.

## Life-Changing Agriculture

Throughout my research career, I worked on balanced plant nutrition, and it pains me that most Indian farmers still haven't adopted this approach. They normally apply just nitrogen fertilizers, which give them short-term benefits but don't support good soil health, fertility or sustainability. India's agricultural shortcomings have been further aggravated by climate change. Recent heatwaves, resulting in major yield losses for farmers not practicing balanced fertilization, are just one example. Therefore, we must work towards climate-smart and adaptive agriculture.

The present scenario and India's agricultural potential are factors that have increased my passion for teaching balanced nutrition and soil health to farmers. I want to help them change their practices to improve both crop yields and standards of living. I am honored to pass on my knowledge to our farming community. Their success stories and blessings make my day.

At one of my retailer training programs, a man said he had attended hundreds of meetings, but mine was the first that equipped him to change his farmers' minds about crop nutrition. Similarly, a Punjabi farmer told me about the debt burden preventing him from giving valuable gifts for his daughters' marriages. I knew that I could help him increase his earnings. We taught him about Yara's balanced crop nutrition and this year he paid off all his debts and married off his daughters.

### Position and years in the company:

Digital Agronomist; 2 years

Location: India

Region/Unit: Yara Africa & Asia

Nationality: Indian

Area of expertise: Plant nutrition and soil science



## Women Torch Bearers

I want women farmers to become torch bearers of agricultural knowledge and to see farming as their path to success and empowerment. They deserve to be able to pay for their children's education and create decent lives. There's a saying: If you educate one woman, you educate a whole family. That's true of our women farmers – they take care of the soil the same way they care for their children.

We are trying to reach Indian women in farming but it's a slow process. Both women in the fields and educated women in agribusiness face discrimination from a patriarchal society that doesn't accept female

leaders and supervisors, nor do they get higher pay and speak out for themselves. Indian men see us as the weaker sex and sometimes stigmatize working women – many of whom choose to be softly spoken, quiet, friendly and compliant – as opportunists.

Thankfully, there are also positive trends. Digitization, the internet and smartphones enable knowledge to spread between regions and into rural areas. Especially after Covid, digitization and a feeling of connection to their roots are helping young people return to their native villages and agriculture. When younger generations get better harvests due to new technology and techniques, the older farmers get interested in using them too. Also, due to a governmental policy change, women can now become village leaders, traditionally a male role, while others are opening fertilizer stores.

## Begin at Home

Workplace gender diversity should begin "at home". Currently, Yara India has no local women leaders. It's important that we bring more women in and promote them as leaders. This has to be done right though,

so that male colleagues do not see female counterparts as PR stunts in a DEI program, rather than their equals.

**The Women in Agronomy program will help us create a defined path for women's succession and create equity. Ultimately, men must respect that women leaders have become leaders not BECAUSE they are women but DESPITE them being women!**



Favorite crop: Apple



## Motto

**Today, in every way, I am able to say I can and I will!**



# Team Thailand



Chiraporn Thipnong <sup>1</sup>  
Sales Representative (B2B)

Arunee Sankhum <sup>2</sup>  
Sales Agronomist



Kawitsara Janchu <sup>3</sup>  
Sales Agronomist

Anna Srichai <sup>4</sup>  
Sales Agronomist



Praephan Sroysangwon <sup>5</sup>  
Sales Agronomist

Suwanun Laopiang <sup>6</sup>  
Sales Agronomist



## Growing Together

Thai people are hard workers and we love to do things together – Our Yara team is just like this. There are eight of us women helping to run the front office, and with our teams we handle everything connected with sales and agronomy. We're here because Yara is a place where we can grow.

Although we all work together as a sales and agronomy team, we are spread across the whole country with bases in five different provinces. That means we mainly collaborate on training and achieving sales targets through group meetings with farmers face-to-face, as well as digitally or by phone. Thailand has more than 17 million farmers growing a huge variety of crops on around 24 million hectares of farmland. So, we are kept very busy traveling, visiting, and talking to our growers and partners!

## Family Focus

In Thailand, much of our lives revolve around the family, which can be challenging in our line of work. As professionals in sales and agronomy, we spend a lot of time traveling for field visits and trainings. On our trips, we often live in hotels, since we have to cover many cities in our provinces. Thankfully, we can return to our hometowns and spend time with our families for a week every month.

Most of us grew up in farming families or communities, and we know that agriculture is an important pillar for supporting family life and our nation's development. Farming allows families to develop and live better lives. Similarly, gender equality at work plays an essential role in supporting our development as women, which in turn supports our families. As the main caregivers we are still at the heart of most families.

Role models can be both women and men that inspire and support you. For many of us, our mothers are the best role models. They inspire us

with their strength, patience and versatility, and the way they set goals and overcome obstacles. We also admire how they work both in physically demanding agricultural jobs and spend evenings sewing, cooking, selling, baking, and doing chores so that we can have good lives.

## Learn Together

Yara Thailand consists mostly of men; our agronomy team has eight women with 34 male colleagues. As an organization, we cooperate well and are very supportive. When one of us runs into problems and obstacles, we always get help and advice from colleagues. With the Women in Agronomy program, we are also building a good network of female teammates to share our concerns with and get advice on issues at work and in our personal lives.

There are important lessons for women to learn in a masculine environment that can lead to self-improvement, adaptation, and collaboration insights. Equally, we must make efforts to have conversations with our male peers, so they can learn about women's views about work and understand our challenges.

In the field, we still meet some traditional prejudices about what women can and can't do. It's fair to say that both genders have strengths and limitations. We prefer to spotlight them rather than covering them up as "weaknesses," which they are not. Agronomy and farming should be like the crops themselves – they do not discriminate but grow regardless of whether a woman or man cares for them.

## I Grow, You Grow, We Grow

Gender diversity helps us grow as individuals, teams, and an organization. It enables us to change concepts and perspectives, and helps others to learn about how women prefer to work. Many skills are required to do this job, and we must constantly develop ourselves. Just like farmers, we have beyond-the-textbook knowledge to apply on the farm and in everyday life.

A good gender balance brings new knowledge and experience. It allows us to draw on the advantages of each gender to work together and bring greater benefits to the organization. However, it can be difficult to challenge groups of people who are used to performing or living in the same old ways. Initially, some people struggle to accept the differences in a team, but, in time, team diversity surely strikes a good balance.

Once differences are accepted, people dare to think for themselves, express themselves and improve daily. With patience, hard work and diligent study we can achieve self-improvement and grow together.

**Chiraporn Thipnong**  
Position and years in the company:  
Sales Representative (B2B); 1 year



**Arunee Sankhum**  
Position and years in the company:  
Sales Agronomist; 1 year

**Kawitsara Janchu**  
Position and years in the company:  
Sales Agronomist; 3.5 years

**Anna Srichai**  
Position and years in the company:  
Sales Agronomist; 1 year

**Praephan Sroysangwon**  
Position and years in the company:  
Sales Agronomist; 1 year

**Suwanun Laopiang**  
Position and years in the company:  
Sales Agronomist; 1 year

**Location:** Thailand  
**Region/Unit:** Yara Africa & Asia  
**Nationality:** Thai



“With patience, hard work, and diligent study, we can achieve self-improvement and grow together.”

Chiraporn Thipnong



“Both genders have their strengths and limitations. We should spotlight them, rather than covering them up as “weaknesses.”

Arunee Sankhum



“No matter how hard the work is, women can do it!”

Kawitsara Janchu



“We have beyond-the-textbook knowledge to apply on the farm and in everyday life.”

Anna Srichai



“Gender equality gives women the opportunity to express their full potential.”

Praephan Sroysangwon



“Be the best version of yourself and trust that your willingness to do things always has a good effect.”

Suwanun Laopiang





# Thais Coser

Senior Research and  
Innovation Specialist

“

*Be willing to  
learn from every  
experience and  
from every  
colleague!*

”



## Applying Science

My life and career have been a long process of acquiring knowledge, skills, and abilities. To begin with, this was an academic pursuit of knowledge. Then an undergraduate course in soil pedology showed me the connection between soil fertility and the environment. I've never looked back since.

That course inspired me to “dig deeper” into soil science and to try working in the field. I spent a period as an agronomist at the Agricultural Research Service in Maryland, USA, while also working on an organic farm, planting, harvesting, and selling produce at markets.

Later, I completed a doctorate in sustainable production systems and nitrogen use efficiency, lectured university students in Brazil, and also got a Fulbright position to develop a research network on biofuel production that connected US and Brazilian researchers. In 2018, I left academia, joined Yara as a research and innovation specialist, and started applying knowledge to real-life situations.

## Personal Passions

I am certainly passionate about searching for agricultural production and fertilizer management systems that are economically profitable and that sustainably benefit the farmer, the environment, and society. Building meaningful relationships also makes me happy and is of the utmost importance to me. In my personal life, it's supporting and loving my family, especially my daughter Júlia, and feeling their love for me. In my professional life, it's engaging with new colleagues and cultures and learning how to support our development of diversity.

I'm proud to have a passionate, strong, intelligent, curious, focused, loving, and supportive mother as a role model. She has raised three daughters, gone through three marriages, is successful and proud and

still working at the age of 76. She has certainly broken the social and professional norms of her time. There was always gender inclusion at our home, and that enabled my sisters and I to follow the careers we wanted, which was uncommon in Brazil at that time. It took me a while to realize that Brazilian culture was not like my family culture.

## Awareness and Knowledge are Key

I'm happy that Yara has the Women in Agronomy program. It has given me the opportunity to study and become more aware of DEI issues. I see that awareness and knowledge are key. The more we learn about gender balance/imbalance within countries and social-cultural backgrounds, women's history and achievements, and their experiences of microaggression and salary discrepancies, the more Yara will be able to construct a diverse workplace environment.

A workplace that takes gender challenges seriously must have safe spaces where we can discuss issues that are relevant to women and their challenges. This can be through workshops and networks or by ensuring that we have managers who are aware of gender challenges and imbalance. Transparency is also important – we want to see the changes in our company, the changes that are being made to match talk with action. For example, what are we doing to change the fact that 70% of our Code of Conduct reports in 2020 were connected with morality, discrimination and inappropriate gender-related microaggressions? I'm very aware that many women working in the field sometimes feel unsafe in local environments.

### Position and years in the company:

Sr Research and Innovation Specialist; 4 years

**Location:** Brazil

**Region/Unit:** Yara Agronomy and R&D (YARD)

**Nationality:** Brazilian

**Area of expertise:** Soil science



## Motto

Relax, nothing is under control – remain truthful to who you are



## The Appliance of Science

As a researcher, I always think we can have more knowledge, but its value depends on how well we apply it – both in the field and the organization. To grow professionally in our roles and also to grow Yara, we have to really apply all our unique insights – to be willing to learn from every experience and from every colleague.



**Favorite crop:**  
Cotton





“

*Gender diversity is the foundation of true love, and when people have true love, they shine.*

Thao Ho

*Any workplace that takes diversity seriously in Vietnam must have a special focus on supporting mothers.*

Huyen Nguyen

”



# Thao Ho

Channel Engagement Specialist

# Huyen Nguyen

Sales Agronomist



## Soil Sisters

Vietnam is in an exciting process of change, both in terms of its agriculture and the status of women's rights and gender equality. We are change agents in both areas – you could call us 'sisters of the soil'. We are very fortunate to work for a company that is also pioneering these changes.

Vietnam's agricultural sector has made enormous progress in yields, output, and exports, and Yara plays an important role in this. Thanks to a tropical climate, fertile soil, abundant water, rich biodiversity, and tremendous efforts from farmers, Vietnam ranks second in Southeast Asia and fifteenth globally in agricultural exports.

However, Vietnamese agriculture is now at a crossroads, facing rising labor costs and domestic competition for labor, land, and water. As a result, our farmers need to grow more using fewer resources, including agricultural inputs. This makes our knowledge of soil science and crop nutrition more vital than ever.

Yara Vietnam covers nine varied districts with a diverse mixture of competitors. Seven key crops – coffee, durian, mango, dragon fruit, tomato, orange, and chili – account for 85% of our sales. Vietnam's development into the world's second-largest coffee exporter is a good example of the importance of balanced crop nutrition knowledge – and our role in providing it.

## Sharing Soil Science

As soil sisters, we travel around the country to support and learn from farmers and our colleagues in the agronomy team. We are proud to help Yara spread the knowledge our farmers and customers need to meet their challenges. Between us, we know plenty about soil science, applying fertilizers, and how our products are superior to others on the market. Away from the field, we regularly discuss the market situation and what

customers think about fertilizer products, to ensure that our farmer campaigns are correctly targeted.

We joined Yara Vietnam within a year of one another, becoming the first two women in the organization. Thanks to shared experiences and compatible personalities – strong-willed and independent – we got very close from the beginning. We have since developed a deep mutual respect. With our passion for agriculture, working for Yara is a great opportunity to use our sales support and soil science skill sets, and build our strengths.

**Thao Ho**  
Channel Engagement Specialist; 6 years and 10 months  
**Area of expertise:** Sales and channel engagement



**Huyen Nguyen**  
Sales Agronomist; 5 years and 9 months  
**Area of expertise:** Soil science

**Location:** Vietnam  
**Region/Unit:** Yara Africa & Asia  
**Nationality:** Vietnamese

## Sisters Grow Together

Vietnamese culture favors men over women, and we have both experienced gender challenges in our family life and at work. Gender equality in the workplace is extremely important for helping women's talents to be recognized and appreciated. It can be difficult to join an all-male team; men sometimes think that women can only handle the paperwork and don't dare to go into the field to engage with customers. This can lead to awkward conversations when you try to express opinions, challenge these preconceptions, and get treated like a "little sister" that nobody listens to. It can also lead to very long nights reading up on crop nutrition and agronomy to support the team, gain their confidence, and become more confident about your own value.

Despite some progress in narrowing the gender gap, Vietnam still has deep-rooted gender stereotypes, especially the traditional expectation of women's domestic and family care responsibilities. Many people don't care if a woman has a career, only that she takes good care of the family. Others don't like women traveling for work and complain that working women don't spend enough time with their families. We want a good balance between family and work. We believe that gender diversity is the foundation of true love, and when people have true love, they shine.

## Soil Sisters' Network

We were very happy when the WiA program started, seeing it as a chance to learn about gender equality and how to speak up for it. Every woman needs to be inspired to understand her own worth so that she can thrive in work and life. When women are inspired by other successful women, they are more motivated to develop themselves and their careers. Allyship and role models are important for female advancement. Allyship encourages us to stand up and speak out; role models empower us to succeed.

Any workplace that takes diversity seriously in Vietnam must really support mothers. Yara respects each individual and their differences and supports working moms. This makes us more confident that we can use our full potential at work and get a great career path. Yara is the only agribusiness company we could imagine working for, both because it has the best products and due to its approach to diversity, ethics, and compliance.

**To work in agriculture in Vietnam, a woman must have strength of character. Having a wonderfully supportive "soil sister" is a great help; having an influential and knowledgeable network like WiA is a real bonus.**



**Favorite crop:** Mangosteen  
- Thao Ho



**Favorite crop:** Calla lily  
- Huyen Nguyen

## Motto

You are respected only when you respect yourself.

Thao Ho

Always do better than promised.

Huyen Nguyen







# Yi Xuan Lai

Business Development &  
Farming Solutions Manager

“

*To manifest our  
future, we need  
to celebrate both  
similarities and  
differences.*

”



## Manifesting Dreams

We can build positive beliefs and let go of fear and of old beliefs. Early in my career, I struggled with other people’s preconceptions about my “limitations” as a woman. When I changed the narrative in my head, people changed the way they treated me, and things changed for the better.

I believe in manifesting our dreams. We get to the places we need to be when we reflect and make micro-changes in behavior over time. This has helped me make good career moves. I always try to understand the role and organization, and most importantly, I thoroughly consider what value I can bring to the table, and if the role fits with who I aspire to become.

For example, I worked in a major Malaysian retail company’s marketing department before joining Yara as a Sales Agronomist – it was an unusual career move for a city girl. Retail was good learning and fun, but when I heard that Yara was hiring I was reminded of childhood farm visits with my dad, who worked with agricultural inputs. So, I thought: can there be anything more fulfilling than supporting farmers who literally put food on our tables?

## Manifest Change

My career move was demanding. When I joined Yara in 2017, I was the only female sales agronomist, and many naysayers thought a woman wouldn’t persevere in the role for long. Today, that narrative has changed to “yes, women can do this too.”

I was also different from my peers and had to balance the need to be myself with fitting into an all-male team. Learning to collaborate was a steep learning curve back then. However, I knew that manifesting change is about reshaping the narratives in our heads – regularly asking yourself

if your thoughts are helpful or harmful and what you can do to change the unhelpful ones.

Take for example how some of us who grew up being told not to be too loud or bold tend to become shy of speaking up. These behavior patterns limit our growth, and challenging them takes knowledge and wisdom – when is the right time to speak out, and what are the right things to say? What are the right actions to take?

## Manifest Growth

With agri-tech solutions on the rise, our professional growth opportunities are many. In the case of Malaysian farmers, who have to offset labor shortages and rising input costs, we can help them adopt new technology, as well as innovative ways of growing. As our work is being transformed, we must transform not only our farming solutions and business models, but also our behavior and perspectives. Let’s view ourselves as providers of solutions rather than crop nutrition; we feed plants with food and our work feeds the world.

My new role heading the Business Development & Farming Solutions unit is an opportunity to grow further with my team and Yara. Our collaborative projects seek to optimize resources, explore alliances, encourage young entrepreneurs and women to enter the industry, and demonstrate that this is one of the most important jobs on earth.

**Position and years in the company:** Business Development & Farming Solutions Manager; 6 years  
**Location:** Malaysia  
**Region/Unit:** Yara Africa & Asia  
**Nationality:** Malaysian  
**Area of expertise:** Marketing and crop nutrition



## Motto

The choice is ours – our minds have the ability to build up or to tear down.

## The DEI Manifesto

There are so many amazing female role models within Yara’s management team. I have learned from Monica, Marion, Rejane, Fernanda, and my mentor Sun Hye in the Women in Agronomy program. They’re true testaments to how women can make positive impact at scale, and their gender DEI efforts are really paying off.

The WiA network has driven vital discussions for improving women’s work life, and I feel that most colleagues now show more understanding and empathy towards each other. Another DEI payoff is that women and other minorities offer perspectives that result in different solutions and approaches. This can then filter down the food chain to ensure that food on consumers’ tables caters to different groups’ needs and tastes.

To manifest our future, we need to celebrate both similarities and differences. The gender agenda may start by prioritizing women, but ultimately it helps us all to see, learn from, and leverage our uniqueness.





“

*Keep developing  
your professional  
skills, be strong,  
and be patient.*

”

# Zar Zar Win

Senior Agronomist



## Knowledge-Sharer

I know how hard life can be for farmers in Myanmar, and I have solutions to many of their problems. My passion is to help farmers improve their lives, especially as they face new challenges as a result of the turmoil caused by the pandemic and recent political unrest.

I come from an agricultural family of rice producers and therefore have really understood the farmers' reality from an early age. It was my desire to improve their lives that drove me to pursue a career in agronomy.

I graduated from Yezin Agricultural University in 2006 and continued to work there for several years as a demonstrator in the Department of Horticulture. It wasn't until 2017 that my journey with Yara Myanmar began, when I accepted a position as a crop nutrition advisor.

Myanmar is certainly a difficult region for agriculture due to pricing and product availability fluctuations, a poor overview of supply and demand, as well as pest and plant nutrition problems. However, I see my work at Yara as a new chapter of my career and that overcoming these challenges with my crop knowledge is consistent with my goal of helping farmers.

## Balancing the Talent Pool

For me, mixing the talents of people with different backgrounds like age, education, and ethnicity is undoubtedly good for our company. The same is true of gender diversity, where men and women are hired at a similar and consistent rate, paid equally, and given the same work and promotional opportunities.

I furthermore believe that a gender diverse workplace can thrive by combining the strengths of each gender. Some men are, for example, good

at making quick decisions and getting things done, which is very useful in the field. Similarly, some women's meticulous attention to detail allows them to make good decisions at the planning stage. As getting the right result at the right time is one of the key factors in the agricultural sector, both of these strengths are very much needed.

It's encouraging to see that most of our agronomy teachers and university lecturers are already women. But on the whole, agronomy remains a male-dominated field in my region, and we still experience a lot of gender issues. The majority of the farmers we work with are also men, and some individuals seem more interested in flirting with female agronomists than heeding their professional advice.

Traveling is another key challenge for women. As our agronomist activities need to be conducted in time with the crop season, we often need to move continuously from township to township by car within a crop season of about two months. This can become an especially stressful situation for women as it conflicts with home and family life responsibilities.

I would encourage women struggling with gender diversity challenges at work to discuss their experiences with their line manager and local HR. Beyond that, keep developing your professional skills, be strong, and be patient.

### Position and years in the company:

Senior Agronomist; 5 years

**Location:** Upper Myanmar

**Region/Unit:** Yara Africa & Asia

**Nationality:** Burmese

**Area of expertise:** Agronomic research and demonstration plots



## Where Digital Meets Diversity

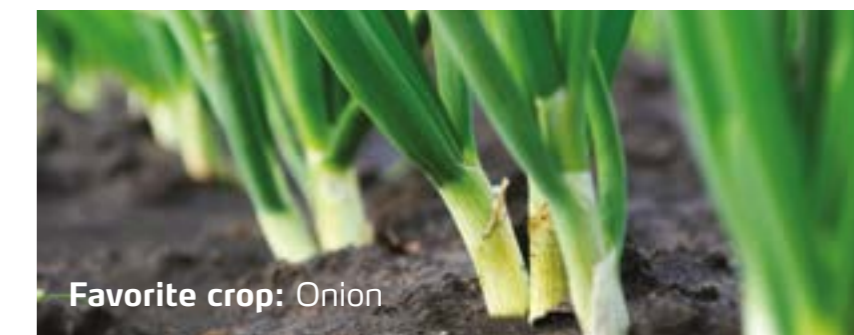
As a result of gender complications, women are often much more willing to get involved in the digital sphere with online meetings, digital agronomy tools, and training. And it's here that it can often be easier to see signs of female empowerment. In our country, for example, some of the major agricultural apps such as Green Way and Htwet Toe, which connect farmers with vital agricultural resources, are founded by women.

Besides "in real life" experience with field days, customer training, and setting up farm demo plots, I also have experience in online knowledge-sharing activities like farmer meetings via Telegram and live streaming via Facebook. These tools grew increasingly important during the pandemic.

## From Pandemic to Coup

But in 2021, the destruction and instability caused by the military coup in my country put many of our activities on hold. Fieldwork is especially affected, as are our digital efforts due to internet and electrical blackouts. At the village level, internet access is not even permitted.

In the meantime, we are changing our coping strategies and preparing for when things get back to some degree of normalcy. And while it has not been without its share of challenges, overall, I am satisfied with my career. What I enjoy most is doing research like trials and demonstration plots to show the real results of our products and knowledge. Of course, I am also happy to meet with farmers and to share crop nutrition knowledge with them as I initially set out to do.



Favorite crop: Onion



## Motto

Seeing is believing!





## The Women in Agronomy Program (WiA)

### Women Lifting Women!

Women in Agronomy is a yearly program focusing on **developing**, **retaining** and **attracting** more women in agronomy related fields. These fields can be technical, sales, digital, and research. WiA was designed and successfully launched in 2020 when Yara assessed the working conditions of women agronomists by sending out a global survey and conducting interviews. Results revealed a pronounced need to provide more equitable resources to women – by acknowledging that equal opportunities should be based on people's different starting points. By creating arenas for women to exchange knowledge, make connections and empower their self development, the program provides resources relevant to their specific needs and ambitions. These resources are **mentoring**, **networking** and **visibility**.

Photo: Rejane Souza (left) and Carolina Hernández (right).





The mentoring program links female talents with more senior employees to create safe spaces for career advice, exploration, and growth conversations. Over 202 employees have been paired so far in mentoring. In addition, 143 women have formed an official global network to connect and discuss topics of interest. Visibility channels such as this book, events with female leaders, and external industry events create pockets of opportunity for talents to showcase their expertise and profile themselves to female leaders and other colleagues in the company.

Within a year, the program went from a pilot of 60 participants to an official program with over 230 participants from 34 countries. The program runs annually and hopes to continue growing its community of women and allies in the cause to ultimately contribute to a more sustainable and fairer future for women in agribusiness.

In mutual collaboration, WiA and Yara Colombia launched the first external chapter in June 2022. Using similar methodology as internally, the program welcomed 33 women agronomists and technicians from 16 of Yara's strategic distributors. Yara Colombia expects all the participants to graduate in November 2022 and to extend the program to even more women the following year.

### People Behind the Program

The WiA program was created by Rejane Souza, current SVP Global Innovation, in close collaboration with Carolina Hernandez Lasso, Agronomy Graduate, who coordinates the program's daily operations.

Working together as *women* to develop a program for *women* has been an empowering experience. During this journey, many women in the company have proudly and wholeheartedly joined forces to take it forward. Fernanda Lopes Larsen, EVP Yara Africa and Asia, became the program's first official sponsor, followed immediately by Chrystel Monthean and Mónica Andrés, EVPs for Americas and Europe, respectively, as many other senior leaders in Yara, demonstrating full commitment to DEI's agenda. Moreover, a network of over 80 local champions, who represent the local voice of our members, have contributed and been paramount to the program's development and impact.

Additionally, across Yara, colleagues have welcomed the program and become key enablers and official ambassadors, contributing to its growth and local application. The program is proof of a borderless collaboration, and today we stand stronger thanks to the efforts of these colleagues.

### Yara's WiA Ambassadors: A diverse and committed group!



Left to right, top row to bottom: Dagmar Neukirchen, Carlos Berdugo, Rodrigo Prom, Rachel Addison, Juliana Xavier, Isabel Torres, Kim Huat Low, Jaime Vinces, Roberta Vilela, Taz Hassim, Umanand Jha, Papassarín Chajariyavet, Victor Villavicencio, Ximena Muñoz, Mark Tucker, Madelon Oussoren, Katty Londoño, Luis Alfredo Perez, Athena Milani, Edson Lopes, Richard Newman, Klaus Blankenau, Lucied Marques, Annaline Du Toit, Sergio Godoy Casas, Leesa Burns, Seksan Ekkajit, Hilde Bjerknes, Anja Wideburg, Otilia Esquivia.

### Women in Yara

The agricultural industry has traditionally been dominated by men. Yara currently employs too few women across all areas of its business, except for administration. At the end of 2021, approximately **24% of Yara employees in permanent positions were women**<sup>2</sup>.

 **24% women in 2021**

The share of women employed has grown consistently over the last five years.

Our ambition is to continue to increase the number of women at all levels at Yara. The more women that apply for our positions, the faster our female representation will grow. We have also raised the gender diversity target for senior levels to **40% women by 2025**<sup>3</sup>.

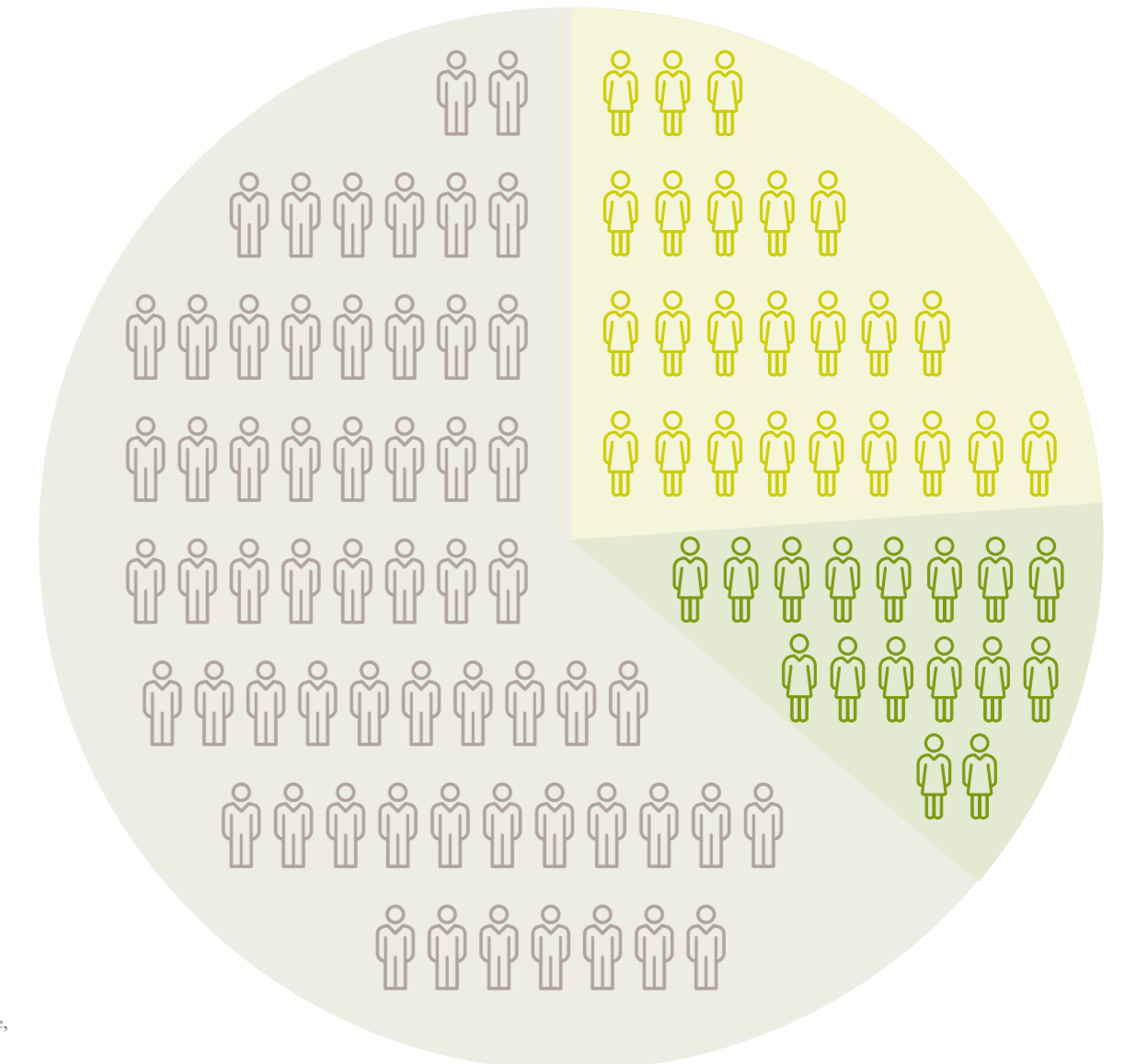
 **40% women by 2025**

To this end, several actions were implemented across our regions to make Yara more attractive to women. One such example is our **Women in Agronomy program**. Together with our overall Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) efforts, it contributed to a decline in **the turnover of female agronomists from 24% in 2020 to 19% in 2021**<sup>4</sup>.

2. Yara's Sustainability Report 2021, Growing a Nature-Positive Food Future, 2021, p. 49, <https://www.yara.com/siteassets/investors/057-reports-and-presentations/annual-reports/2021/yara-sustainability-report-2021.pdf>

3. Ibid., p. 49.

4. Ibid., p. 49.





“

*My work for Yara took me back to the fields of my youth and brought me closer to my late father.*

”

# Carolina Hernández

*Agronomy Graduate*





## A Project for Life

The term “boots on the ground” has really come alive for me during this project. I have tried to use positivity and empathy as my North Stars for building the WiA program and guiding the team who produced the book you are reading.

My first encounters with agriculture were through my dad, who was a veterinarian. Reflecting on my dearest memories of him, I can see how he always wanted my siblings and I to have a close connection to nature. Without us knowing what he was up to, dad would ask us, “what crop is that?” every time we passed a field. He then repeatedly told us their names until we remembered them ourselves. Eventually, his great affection for nature and agriculture permeated us all.

However, due to the instability in my homeland of Colombia during the 1990s, my parents didn't want us to pursue a career in agriculture. Instead, they encouraged us to become proficient at tennis, in order to obtain scholarships and study abroad. I think they knew tennis would also teach us to love sports, work hard, and be self-disciplined.

Their plan worked. My scholarship allowed me to study media communication at Young Harris College in the United States and paved the way for my master's degree in International Environmental Studies at the Norwegian University of Life Science.

## University of Life

Studying environmental issues resonated a lot with the values I was developing. And as I moved between different countries and cultures, I also learned a few valuable lessons from the ‘university of life’. The importance of practicing empathy, of putting myself in another person's shoes, was one. It has helped and guided my decision-making, and, despite sometimes taking longer to come to a conclusion, I always try to consider other people carefully before making decisions.

The importance of accepting differences and being open to reconsider new ways is another lesson. I have lived abroad for over ten years, and expat life has helped me develop a sensitivity to difference and how to empathize with people's cultural and life experiences. Staying true to myself and being clear about my own identity is part of this process. I disagree with people who believe that you “lose your Latiness” after living many years abroad. On the contrary, I have become more aware of both my differences and our similarities as human beings.

## Women's Working Life

My Women in Agronomy journey started in 2020, when I helped Rejane Souza do an agronomic skills survey. Our research revealed the low representation of women across Yara's agronomy departments. That prompted us to look more closely, talk to colleagues worldwide and begin a series of open conversations about the challenge of being a woman in agronomy.

Today, the WiA program has created an international alliance of women and is undoubtedly a success. Making gender DEI issues visible has moved the awareness needle for colleagues throughout Yara and helped many participants gain the confidence to grow in their careers and work. Despite this and everything that has been said about the importance of gender equity during the development of the WiA program, I still see many challenges to overcome before we can say that equity and equal opportunities have become everyday reality at Yara.

### Position and years in the company:

Agronomy Graduate, 2 years and two months

**Location:** Norway

**Region/Unit:** Yara Agronomy and R&D (YARD)

**Nationality:** Colombian

**Area of expertise:** Environmental sustainability and project management



## Motto

# Know your worth!



Therefore, although our ultimate goal is for the program to make itself redundant, I really hope it will be permanent until then. To reach that goal, we must continue to evolve WiA and replicate it in every country where more awareness is needed. And we have to develop future leaders who are aware of the immense value that diversity brings.

**And why should we stop there? Yara has an excellent opportunity to create and drive a program like this for the wider agricultural community. Now that's a project for life!**



**Favorite crop:**  
Sugar cane



## Acronyms

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DEI	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
EVP	Executive Vice President
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
R&D	Research & Development
SVP	Senior Vice President
WiA	Women in Agronomy
YAA	Yara Africa & Asia
YAM	Yara Americas
YEU	Yara Europe



### What is an agronomist?

Agronomists at Yara can have a wide range of expertise, for the most part connected with crop production and soil management. They provide advice on how to produce food in a financially viable, sustainable and efficient way, taking into account regional factors, among others. An agronomist can work in different areas and stages of the growing cycle, but at the end of the day their main goal is always the same – **to produce food, respect the land, and support farmers.**



### Writer

**Kevin Reeder** is a corporate storyteller and content provider for global companies and international NGOs. He is also the founder of MindLAB Oslo, a mental training studio that helps organizations and companies develop workplace awareness, EQ, wellbeing, and sustainable culture.

Kevin grew up in the agricultural fenlands of Lincolnshire, England, and was the author of *Yara Stories* in 2005. He describes the experience of being the ghostwriter for this book as “a gender DEI education that was both profound and inspiring.”

## Write Your Story

Would you like to share your story too?

Please follow the link from the QR-code below and tell us about yourself, your career, passions and achievements.

**We look forward to hearing from you!**



*The Women in Agronomy team.*







*“Women’s reflections, solutions, and ways of overcoming obstacles are valuable lessons for us all.”*

Narges Moradtalab

*“To any woman wondering “can I do this job; can I work in agriculture?” – read this book and know that you can!”*

Eugene Lee

*“Stories of women in our industry today... decades of experience... pointers to the future.”*

Jamie Schechinger

Alessandra Bonamano · Alphonsine Nhiomog · Amparo Medina · Anna Srichai · Arunee Sankhum · Carolina Hernández  
Caroline Quignon · Chiraporn Thipnong · Chrystel Monthean · Cíntia Neves · Eugene Lee · Fernanda Lopes Larsen  
Gabriele Oliveira · Huyen Nguyen · Jamie Schechinger · Karolina Frackowiak · Katelin Andrews · Kawitsara Janchu  
Liz Gómez · Lopamudra Mukherjee · Maiara Tedesco · Margarita González · Maria Luisa Martinez · Marion Martinez  
Marta Vega · Mayteza Zelaya · Mervi Seppänen · Micaela Bové · Mónica Andrés · Mónica Sánchez · Narges Moradtalab  
Natalie Wood · Pamella Elias · Patricia Dingsus · Patricia Rodríguez · Petra Junklewitz · Praephan Sroysangwon  
Rejane Souza · Ridham Kakar · Suwanun Laopiang · Thais Coser · Thao Ho · Yi Xuan Lai · Zar Zar Win

