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Press Release

Outstanding women in ag receive WIA Demeter Award of Excellence

BOSTON, July 27, 2021 – Three ag industry all-stars have been named recipients of the *Women in Agribusiness Demeter Award of Excellence*, an honor bestowed each year to women who have achieved excellence in their field and/or who have exhibited an outstanding contribution to the agribusiness industry. Presented by HighQuest’s [Women in Agribusiness](#) (WIA) division, this year’s recipients are: Dr. Toni Bucci of AgBiome, Anne Cleary of Wilbur-Ellis and Dr. Vicky Salin of Texas A&M University.

Each recipient will be recognized at the 10th annual *Women in Agribusiness (WIA) Summit*, which will be held in-person (and online) this year at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis, September 21-23.



The annual award, so named for Demeter, the Greek goddess of agriculture, also seeks out women who have demonstrated a positive impact on her clients, her company, her colleagues or the agribusiness sector as a whole.

Dr. Toni Bucci

Chief Operating Officer, AgBiome

Dr. Toni Bucci has over 20 years of experience in the agricultural sector – from an R&D biologist at BASF to currently AgBiome’s chief operating officer, a position she has held since 2018. She also leads the commercial organization where she is responsible for attracting and retaining scientific and commercial talent. Under Toni’s leadership, Howler®, a revolutionary fungicide that harnesses the power of the plant microbiome, was launched and is now registered in 49 U.S. states. She is currently working on her second fungicide launch – Theia™ – which promises wide success as well. “During this time, she has led an organization in product development and growth, motivated her colleagues, and has inspired the industry of agribusiness as a whole to become the best it can be,” as was said in her nomination letter.



Toni also has stood out in her efforts in mentorship by growing the company’s program. “Toni’s approach to AgBiome’s mentor program is rooted in attracting and retaining the brightest talent. With a passion for building

female leaders in science, Toni is an example and inspiration for her female colleagues entering the field. Her enthusiasm for mentoring and sharing her knowledge and skills with others is highly appreciated by all of her AgBiome mentees,” as was noted in her nomination application.

Anne Cleary

Vice President of Human Resources, Wilbur-Ellis



Anne Cleary was commended in her Demeter nomination letter for her “ability to adapt and even anticipate change that has helped her to lead positive business transformation. And she’s done so with agility, a strong sense of vision, and always with humor and empathy.” She also is credited with centralizing the company’s HR systems across the U.S., Canada and Asia – and for the creation of THRIVE (a nod to the company’s purpose) to unify and enhance the recruiting, onboarding and ‘reboarding’ experience for all employees.

When in-depth analysis of the company’s demographics revealed that women represented only 30 percent of their workforce, Anne drove efforts to look at pay equity, growth opportunities, recruiting practices and culture for women. This led to the establishment of the first employee resource group, the Women of Wilbur-Ellis (WoW), and to incorporating diversity and inclusion as part of the broader company business plans.

John Thacher, Wilbur-Ellis’ executive chairman, said: “She turned it [the HR department] from a transaction-focused organization into a strategic business partner.” Added John Buckley, company president and CEO, “When I came to the company four years ago, it was important to me that our HR leader possess the skillset I knew we would need. But equally important, did they have their finger on the employee pulse? Did they have a clear understanding of what employees are thinking and feeling? With Anne, we have both.”

Dr. Vicky Salin

Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics, Texas A&M University

Dr. Salin was one of the founding supporters and board members of WIA and has been instrumental in growing WIA’s [student scholarship program](#). “Dr. Salin was eager to be a part of the creation of Women in Agribusiness in 2012 and remained on the advisory board for several years,” said Joy O’Shaughnessy, WIA event director and COO of [HighQuest](#). “She continues to be involved in this event in various ways, including supporting several of her ag students in attending the WIA Summit each year. This feeds the workforce pipeline and results in a high percentage of these students becoming the new hires with our attending companies.”



In her work, Vicky, who also is chair of the Intercollegiate Faculty of Agribusiness at Texas A&M University, researches food safety, traceability and efficiency of enterprises involved in food distribution. She provides economic and financial research for the Scientific Advisory Council of the World Food Logistics Organization, an affiliate of the Global Cold Chain Alliance. Vicky serves on the Board of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, where she monitors entrepreneurial ventures and other means to commercialize agricultural technologies to enhance food security in Africa.

Learn more about the Demeter Award and the *Women in Agribusiness Summit* at womeninag.com, and visit us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

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About Women in Agribusiness

Women in Agribusiness (WIA) is a business unit of HighQuest Partners, a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) global agribusiness consulting, events and media firm. The Women in Agribusiness Summit took root in 2012, and since then initiatives have grown to include WIA Membership, WIA Demeter Award of Excellence, Student Scholarships, and the WIA Today blog. Learn more at womeninag.com.