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## Outstanding women in agriculture recognized by Purdue

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. - Two women were recognized for their outstanding achievements and dedication to agriculture in Indiana by receiving the Purdue University Women in Agriculture awards on Friday (Aug. 15) during a ceremony at the Indiana State Fair.



The two award winners this year are Helen Witte of Wells County and Beth Bechdol of DeKalb County. A committee

consisting of Purdue Extension Women in Agriculture team members selected the two as the 2008 winners from among several applicants.

**Helen Witte, left, and Beth Bechdol, 2008 Purdue Extension Women in Agriculture awards winners**  
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"This award was created three years ago to recognize women who give their time to make a contribution to agriculture in Indiana and to bring awareness to the role women play in the agriculture industry," said Stacy Clupper, Purdue Extension Educator in Blackford County.

To be eligible to receive this award, applicants had to be active participants in production agriculture, agribusiness or entrepreneurial agriculture enterprises.

"Both of the award winners represent what the Purdue Women in Agriculture team is all about," Clupper said. "They are both successful in their chosen field and are making a difference in Indiana agriculture, which is why we are happy to honor them."

### The Achievement Award winner:

\* Witte and her family have raised registered Suffolk sheep since 1982 when they began their flock with just one ewe. By 2000 they had more than 100 registered ewes. Not only does Witte raise sheep, she also volunteers with the Make it

with Wool Contest and Ladies Lead contests at the Indiana State Fair. Witte also helps her husband and son raise corn, soybeans and alfalfa on their Wells County farm. She also spends a lot of her time helping in her community and played a large role in the development of the Wells County fourth-grade agriculture day, which is now held each year at 4-H Park. Her other accomplishments include serving as District Four Farm Bureau Women's Leader from 1999 to present, serving as a 4-H leader and volunteer for 10 years, and raising more than \$9,000 for the 4-H Foundation with cherry pies she donated.

#### **The Leadership Award winner:**

\* Bechdol resides on her family farm in Auburn where she represents the sixth generation of family members to live there and is currently serving as director of agribusiness strategies at Ice Miller LLP. Bechdol served Indiana agriculture most recently as deputy director of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture where she helped lead the process to craft a strategic plan for the industry and also participated and helped plan six governor and lieutenant governor trade missions to Asia, Central America, Europe and Mexico. She also helped Indiana's agriculture industry through her work in Washington, D.C., at the U.S. Department of Agriculture as chief of staff to the undersecretary for farm and foreign agricultural services and serving as deputy staff economist on the Senate Agriculture Committee with Sen. Richard G. Lugar. At USDA she was directly involved in the implementation of most of the 2002 Farm Bill programs as well as critical trade negotiations, including the World Trade Organization. Bechdol also is a member of the Farm Foundation's Bennett Roundtable.

Both women were presented with a hand-blown glass vase, a complimentary registration to the 2009 Midwest Women in Ag Conference and their names will be put on a plaque that is displayed in Pfendler Hall on Purdue's campus.

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**Note to Journalists:** Photos of the winners will be available at after 9 a.m. Monday (Aug. 18) at  
<http://news.uns.purdue.edu/x/2008b/080815ClupperAgwomen.html>

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