HERS®

Tools Tailored to Female Farmers

Longtime farmers Ann Adams and Liz Brensinger, of New Tripoli, Pennsylvania, know firsthand that it can be tough for a woman to wield the same tools as her fellow male farmers.

"At the farmers' markets, we got together with other women producers or couples farming, and the topic of tools constantly came up," Adams told *Modern Farmer*. "We saw a need for a place where women could go for tools that work for their bodies."

Poised to fill this novel niche, the ladies launched Green Heron Tools (GreenHeronTools.com) in 2008 with the help of Small Business Innovation Research grants through the USDA. They started by surveying women across the country for feedback and then hired specialists in engineering and occupational therapy to assist in designing tools tailored to women.

Throughout the research and development phase, Adams and Brensinger found that women use tools differently. For instance, a woman will often insert a shovel at an angle to take advantage of lower body strength, whereas men will dig straight down. "Women's strength is in their lower body," Adams explained, "So we decided to create a shovel that capitalized on how women put shovels in the ground."

Green Heron's signature HERS Shovel has an angled blade and a D-shaped handle (available in three sizes), and it weighs only four pounds. Green Heron also sells a slew of hand tools, such as soil knives, weeders, hand plows, and harvest baskets that are created by other companies with women in mind.

"Everything we sell has particular characteristics that make them ideal for women," Brensinger says. "Women play a critical role in producing food. Our philosophy is to build on the strengths of women."