

## **MWAF interview:**

### **Work title:**

Policy Specialist, Animal Health and Welfare, and Food Safety - Manitoba Agriculture

### **Educational background:**

- Ph.D. Food Chemistry, McGill University, Canada
- M.Sc. Food Safety, Hygiene and Management, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom
- B.Sc. Biochemical Engineering, National Polytechnic Institute, Mexico

### **1. MWAF champions diversity in order to advance innovation and progress in the industry we love. We chose you because of your achievements and because, as a leader, you champion women in an underrepresented group. Please tell our readers what you do.**

My work dynamics aim to contribute ensuring food safety along with animal health and animal welfare within the province of Manitoba.

In particular, I am considered a recognized provincial specialist with technical expertise in food safety, food processing, research and analysis related to the development of legislation, educational materials, procedures, practices, policies and food safety programs for the Agri-food sector, including also work in the food inspection, animal welfare and animal health arenas. I also participate with interdepartmental and multi-jurisdictional committees involved in food safety and regulatory accountability, leading various projects at the National level.

In addition to work, it has always been a pleasure to participate as a leader with various groups, whether at the student, professional or community level, to contribute to their organization and development. Participating with these diverse groups is a very rewarding professional and personal experience, in addition to bringing high responsibility and social commitment.

### **2. What are or were the main challenges in your life and career and how did/do you overcome them?**

One of my main challenges in life was integrating to a new country. Being outside your comfort zone is challenging and sometimes overwhelming but when there is a will to follow your dreams, all obstacles can be manageable. My key to success was to focus on my goals and the most important aspect was the meaningful people I connected with.

In terms of my career, one of the challenges I faced was to enter into the fields of animal health and animal welfare. I had to do a lot of self-education and to establish new professional relationships who provided me with a lot of knowledge and guidance as we worked in different projects. I had to dig deep to know and understand the needs of the new groups I started to work with to obtain tangible results. Now, I feel fortunate to have had the trust to lead successful initiatives that extended my professional portfolio.

### **3. What do you see as challenges for women in underrepresented groups in our industry?**

I think that one of the challenges that women in underrepresented groups in our industry face is to have early opportunities in their career to work on their soft skills. In particular communication and interpersonal skills, as they are important in enabling professionals to advance to management-level positions.

### **4. What should be done to foster the engagement of women and of women underrepresented groups, in our industry?**

Creating a work environment that is not only diverse, but also inclusive, is an integral part of reducing the gender gap, especially of underrepresented women. Industry should create a culture where employees feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. They should focus on improving their cultures to increase inclusion and enhance employee experience and engagement. Industry should keep in mind that along with creating gender equality, fostering inclusivity can spur innovation and retain valuable talent.

### **5. What advice would you give to other women in our field?**

Engage not only at work but also with other groups to expand your network, learn from others but most important to share your talents with young generations to foster building capacity for the sector. Participating as a volunteer is an investment that always brings rewards. The most important outcome besides personal growth are the bonds of friendship created, besides multiple projects successfully completed.

### **Awards**

Aline has received multiple awards for her professional and volunteer activities. In Particular, on October 2019 she was selected to be part of a new permanent exhibit at the Manitoba Museum. She has been honoured to be on the Personalities Wall, which showcases 30 individuals in Winnipeg history from the 1870s to the present, who are part of the fabric of our community.