



Aslihan Spaulding is a Professor of Agribusiness and Food Industry Management in the Department of Agriculture at Illinois State University (ISU). She has a 75% (Teaching)/25%(Research) appointment. Aslihan teaches Strategic Agribusiness Sales, Food Industry Marketing & Strategic Management, Computer Applications in Agriculture, and Agriculture & the Environment classes. In addition, she is the Graduate Program Coordinator, Study Abroad Coordinator, and the Agriculture Career Fair organizer for the Department of Agriculture. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Economics at Bogazici University in Istanbul, Turkey, M.S. in Economics, M.S. in Agricultural Economics, and Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics degrees at the University of Kentucky.

Aslihan has been an active member of AAEA since 1998. She served as a member of the Membership Committee, Professional Activities/New Products Committee, Employment Services Committee, Nominations Committee for Executive & Foundation

Boards, Agribusiness Economics Section, Teaching, Learning & Communications Section, Graduate Student Section, and CWAE. She also served as the first Chair/Elect and then Chair of the Graduate Student Section and Secretary/Treasurer, Chair-Elect, Chair, Past-Chair of the Agribusiness Economics and Management Section.

Aslihan's research examines consumer/farmer/student behavior utilizing survey methodology. She is currently engaged in several research projects, including USDA funded project “#DiverseCornBelt: Resilient Intensification through Diversity in Midwestern Agriculture”; European Union - Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Areas (PRIMA) funded project “Governing the agri-food supply chain: How to improve smallholders' competitiveness”; and a project on “Farmer disparity in Illinois agriculture.”

Her awards include the 2021 ISU Outstanding University Researcher Award, 2020 ISU Outstanding University Service Award, 2019 ISU Living Our Values Award, 2017 ISU Registered Student Organization Advisor of the Year, John. B. Riley Outstanding Faculty National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA) Advisor Award, and McLean County Emerging Leader in Agriculture Award.

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### **1. What is the biggest concern/problem facing AAEA?**

Ask yourself. Why did you join AAEA? Why do you stay as a member? Do you feel welcome at the annual meetings? Do we have opportunities to cater to all members' needs? How do we keep our connections and conversations alive throughout the year? Do you feel your perspective is well represented at the leadership level? How do we attract, engage, and retain the new generation of members?

These are the questions that guide my interest in the Director position. I would like us to focus on membership recruitment and retention through active engagement and inclusion.

AAEA has made some strides in recent years with respect to diversity and inclusion. Implementation of anti-harassment and code of conduct policy was a good step. Mentorship programs are valuable. However, moving forward, I would like us to focus on improving our diversity, inclusion, and sense of belonging.

From a perspective of an international faculty member employed in a non-land grant institution and who started her journey in AAEA as a graduate student, I have faced challenges with inclusion and a sense of belonging. I hope to contribute to moving our Association forward with respect to diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging.

**2. What actions would you initiate to improve the situation described in your response to the previous question?**

I would like to see more frequent engagement of the members in the Association, improve the diversity, inclusion, and retention of members (academic, industry, government, NGO), especially from non-land grant and international institutions and NGOs, and provide opportunities for all members to have a leadership and active membership roles. Some of my recommendations include the following:

- Providing incentives for members in leadership/volunteer roles in sections and committees (such as discounted rate on membership or conference registration fee). Reduced rates would be helpful to members who have a limited travel budget.
- Giving preference to graduate students and young professionals' paper presentation submission. Perhaps additional points in the scoring system for applications from grad students and young professionals or those who have never presented at the AAEA meetings before. Since the networking and presentation requirements are the top two reasons for members to join AAEA, we should make it more accessible to the next generation to be actively involved in the organization.
- Providing professional development workshops to members at various stages of their careers. Students, early career, mid-career, and late-career professionals have different needs and goals. We need to cater to them by first understanding their needs (utilizing membership surveys more effectively) and offering programs based on their feedback.
- Sharing members' publications, not just "members in the news," via email newsletter and social media. Many of us do not necessarily talk to the news outlets/popular press, and not everyone publishes in AJAE or Choices. However, we can easily share what our members are working on and publishing. This would be an additional benefit to members sharing their work with a larger audience, and it may create more collaboration opportunities among members.
- Restructuring the NAAEA Section membership. The section is exclusive to department heads from Land Grant universities. The section should be expanded to include leaders from each university/institution represented in the AAEA membership roster. Many of us carry leadership responsibilities without the department head title, and we would be a valuable addition to the section's mission if we had a seat at the table.

**3. At the end of your three-year term, what changes/new initiatives would you have helped create?**

I would like to see the ideas I have shared earlier implemented by the end of a three-year term. I wish to make it easier for the members to share their updates with other members and create leadership and collaboration opportunities for all. The membership database could be expanded into mentor matching. We could host a reception for new members and continue to host webinars throughout the year on a variety of topics (research, teaching, extension, ag econ outlook, policy, current issues, grants, mentorship, career and professional development, hands-on activities, etc.). We also need to utilize social media more effectively to reach members and non-member colleagues, encourage

participation in the Association, and celebrate members' successes. We could offer social media internships to students from member institutions. Students are very creative and can create content that would be of interest to members on a frequent basis.

Thank you for the opportunity to run for the Director position. I look forward to seeing everyone in Anaheim, California!