



FARMER RESOURCE NETWORK  
RESOURCE GUIDE

# VETERAN FARMERS

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**Military veterans are often attracted to farming because the skill set obtained during their military service aligns with the skills needed in agriculture. In addition, the therapeutic benefits of agriculture are helpful to veterans. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, 11% of the 3.2 million farmers and ranchers in the United States are veterans.**

If you are a veteran and have an interest in farming, you may be wondering where to start. Rest assured, you're not alone! A recent survey of veteran farmers revealed a strong need for resources critical to successful farm business management, including funding, marketing, conservation and business planning. A multitude of programs through the military, the USDA, state land-grant universities and nonprofit organizations exist to help veterans achieve success. It is our hope that collecting these vital resources in one place supports you as you begin or continue your farming career.

## GENERAL RESOURCES

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The [Transition Assistance Program \(TAP\) Interagency Website Guide](#) is designed to help you quickly find and access the many online resources discussed throughout TAP and is organized alphabetically by major topic headings.

The USDA wants to ensure that veterans looking to return home or start a new career on a farm or in a rural community have the tools and opportunities they need to succeed.

- The [USDA Veterans](#) website offers an overview of several veteran career transition paths including agriculture.
- [USDA-From Farm to Fork-Veterans in Agriculture and Agribusiness](#) helps veterans transition into farming, ranching and other agricultural opportunities by connecting them with financial, educational and training resources, as well as business planning support. [Farm Answers](#), the USDA beginning farmer and rancher clearinghouse, provides resources to help you get started farming, as well as tools to help more seasoned producers succeed. They maintain a list of many veteran agriculture programs across the country.
- [Get Started! A Guide to USDA Resources for Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers](#) is a new multi-agency publication that provides information on assistance and targeted opportunities available to minority, women, veteran, beginning and limited resource producers. This resource is available in multiple languages.

The [Transition Incentives Program \(TIP\)](#) offers assistance for landowners and operators, as well as opportunities for beginning veteran and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to help them access farmland. It also provides an economic incentive to farmers with existing [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\)](#) contracts.

## EXPERIENCE / EDUCATION / TRAINING

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The NCAT Armed to Farm Program provides the opportunity for veterans to learn how to farm and operate a farm business through mentorship, one-on-one expertise, networking events and virtual courses.

The Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) works with military veterans and active-duty military personnel who are interested in pursuing careers in farming or ranching. They match those who want to farm with mentors and coordinate with many partner organizations across the country. The FVC sponsors educational farming workshops and helps veterans secure farm employment or apprentice opportunities. Their Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund provides direct assistance to beginning farmer veterans for items that the veteran has identified will make a crucial difference in the launch of their farm business.

Veterans to Farmers assists veterans to assimilate effectively, productively and permanently into private citizenry through agricultural training and education. Veteran classmates work alongside each other, learning new skills and experiencing the grounding effects of the farm.

The Rodale Institute's Veteran Farmer Training program is designed to prepare veterans for a successful career in agriculture.

The Center for Rural Affairs provides business and agricultural education through a variety of intensive workshops. Recent examples include "Agritourism through Farm Stores" and "A Year in the Life" of vegetable, pork and poultry farmers.

If you're seeking farming experience, Ranchin' Vets' Operation Hire a Vet program assists veterans through the process of seeking employment or training opportunities within the agricultural industry.

The Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship includes full time employment, training and mentorship over a two-year period. Apprentices who graduate to certified Journey Dairy Grazier status receive additional support services as they advance in their career as Herd Manager/ Pasture Manager/ Feed or Hay Manager/ Heifer or Young Stock Manager. A long-term option is also available for graduates to transition into farm ownership. Veteran benefits are accepted.

The Department of Defense's SkillBridge program is an opportunity for service members to gain valuable civilian work experience through specific industry training, apprenticeships or internships during the last 180 days of service.

Veterans Health Administration-Compensated Work Therapy is a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) clinical vocational rehabilitation program that provides evidence-based and evidence-informed vocational rehabilitation services; partnerships with business, industry and government agencies to provide veteran candidates for employment and veteran labor; and employment supports to veterans and employers.

The Agricultural Marketing Service-Agricultural Commodity Grader Apprenticeship is a 12-month training program offered to train agricultural commodity graders.

All states offer [Cooperative Extension Services](#) through their public land-based university. Their objective is to empower farmers and ranchers of all sizes to meet the challenges they face, adapt to changing technology, improve food safety, prepare for and respond to emergencies and protect our environment. They have local and state Extension Agriculture Specialists, Food Scientists, Environmental Scientists and Farm Management Specialists who can provide technical assistance and direct you to resources to meet specific educational needs you may have. Their services are typically free, and they often have programs specifically designed to assist beginning and veteran farmers. Find your [local County Extension office](#) and ask about available learning opportunities.

## FINANCIAL PLANNING / FUNDING

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Accessing affordable credit and capital to purchase and start a farm is the biggest hurdle for most beginning veteran farmers. It's wise to spend time developing your financial literacy for farm businesses and understand loan options available specifically for veteran farmers. The USDA considers veteran farmers to be "historically underserved," a category that also includes beginning, socially disadvantaged and limited resource farmers and ranchers. In an effort to compensate for decades of discrimination against these agricultural producers, the USDA has created a suite of programs and incentives, described in their [Guide to USDA Resources for Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers](#). You'll learn about loans through the [Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)](#), conservation programs through the [Natural Resource Conservation Service \(NRCS\)](#) and crop insurance through the [Risk Management Agency \(RMA\)](#), among other offerings.

The U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) [Veterans Business Outreach Center \(VBOC\)](#) is designed to provide entrepreneurial development services such as business training, counseling and resource partner referrals to transitioning veterans interested in starting or growing a small business. The SBA has 28 organizations participating in this cooperative agreement and serving as VBOCs around the country. They may also know of SBA loans you may qualify for with veteran status. [Boots to Business](#) is a specific agricultural entrepreneurial education and training program offered by the SBA as part of the Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

Your state [Cooperative Extension Services](#) is also a great place to search for either financial courses or one-on-one support. Search your state land grant Extension website for farm management, farm planning and farm economics resources to locate the programs and professionals available in your state.

SCORE is another great business planning support organization. Whether you own a family farm, ranch or another type of agricultural business, they can connect you to free support and resources — including business planning help, financial guidance, growth strategies and other types of business assistance.

Part of NCAT/ATTRA [Armed to Farm's](#) mission is to prepare farmer veterans to operate a farm business. Topics include marketing, accessing USDA resources, setting business goals and developing meaningful mentorships with seasoned farmers.

The [Center for Agriculture & Food Systems'](#) Farmland Access Legal Toolkit–Veteran Programs site links many resources for veteran farmers including business planning and loan sources.

The VA Home Loan benefit may be used to purchase a farm under certain circumstances. You can learn more [here](#).

## FARM LOAN OPPORTUNITIES

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One of many national lending companies that work with the VA Farm Loan program is the [Farm Loan Center](#). They work with veterans seeking small scale farms and residential homes on rural properties.

The SBA–Veterans Advantage Program is designed to assist veterans of the U.S. armed forces in acquiring capital to start, grow and succeed in their business endeavors.

The [USDA FSA Loan Assistance Tool](#) will help you determine which type of USDA-FSA loan is the best fit for you.

The Farm Credit network is made up of 84 credit associations in all 50 states and Puerto Rico that provide loans to farmers, ranchers, farmer-owned cooperatives and other agribusinesses and rural homebuyers throughout rural America. Many local Farm Credit offices have programs [specifically for veterans](#), including preferential lending terms, fee relief and other opportunities. Some offer grants for beginning farmers as well.

The [Second Service Foundation](#) has a mission to inspire, educate and support military-connected business ownership in America. They provide coaching, resources and capital, as well as an innovative mentorship program, to support entrepreneurs in scaling from startup onward.

You can find a wealth of other funding options in our [Farm Aid Farm Financing Resource Guide](#).

## WELLNESS

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The [Headstrong Project](#) (THP) is a nonprofit mental health organization providing confidential, barrier-free and stigma-free PTSD treatment to our veterans, service members and families connected to their care. THP's trauma treatment program provides 30 no-cost sessions. For extended therapy, sessions include a client copay made to the therapist.

For decades, the [National AgrAbility Project](#) (NAP) has enhanced quality of life for farmers, ranchers and other agricultural workers with disabilities so they continue to succeed in rural America. That might mean access to appropriate assistive technology for work and daily living activities, information related to the treatment and rehabilitation of disabling conditions and/or support for family caregivers. AgrAbility is also a [rich source of technical assistance, training, networking and business information](#) for veteran farmers and

ranchers. Be sure to explore NAP's [extensive list for more veteran agricultural resources](#) as well!

The [Veterans Crisis Line](#) serves veterans, service members, National Guard and Reserve members and those who support them. You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to call. Dial 988, then press 1.

If you'd like to see some of these programs in action, read [one veteran's journey](#) starting his cattle ranch and meat processing facility in this Farm Aid Farmer Hero profile. Many of the organizations suggested here play a role in his success.

Hopefully, this will get you off to a good start as you research veteran-oriented farming resources. If you desire more structured support, the USDA has trained [Military Veteran Agricultural Liaisons](#) to connect you to these programs and more. You can locate them by emailing [veterans@usda.gov](mailto:veterans@usda.gov).

## CONNECT WITH FARM AID

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Not finding what you need? Request one-on-one assistance from our Farmer Services Team by filling out our [Online Request for Assistance form](#) or by calling **1-800-FARM-AID (1-800-327-6243)**. Farm Aid staff are happy to listen and help you however we can.

## FARMER RESOURCE GUIDES

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*Check out our [Farmer Resource Guides](#) for straightforward information created by our Farmer Services Team to help with topics that come up frequently on our 1-800-FARM-AID hotline.*