

Featured Article

Veteran Farmer Programs: A Win-Win for Agriculture and America's Heroes

Estimates show that by 2050, we will need to [increase our food production by 70%](#) in order to continue feeding Earth's growing population. To do this, we will need an [additional 100,000 farmers](#).

How will we fill this ever-widening gap? Many organizations, including the USDA, are encouraging veterans to consider agriculture.

A significant percentage of veterans return to the United States without immediate job prospects or an easy route to assimilate back into civilian society. Groups like the USDA and the Farmer Veteran Coalition believe that farming can provide a meaningful source of employment for farmers, and an easy way for veterans to make social connections. Not only is this a win-win for farmers and veterans, but some researchers hypothesize that connecting with the earth can be therapeutic, and may alleviate some of the symptoms of PTSD. While there is no conclusive research to support this theory, a [recent study](#) may shed some light on the benefits of farming on mental health.

For many veterans, farming is nothing new. According to [the USDA](#), 45 percent of U.S. Armed Service members are from rural America, and a [Carsey Institute study](#) confirms that those numbers are increasing.

Veterans who have returned to their hometowns may be able to take advantage of the benefits as well. According to the USDA, "As a veteran, you may qualify for increased payment rates of up to 90 percent and receive advance payments of up to 50 percent to purchase materials and services needed to implement conservation practices." Or this benefit: "The microloan program is an important on-ramp to credit for many new farmers and ranchers. The USDA has raised the borrowing limit for this program from \$35,000 to \$50,000 so that small and mid-sized farmers can access an additional \$15,000 in loans."⁶ To find out if you might qualify for these benefits, [visit the USDA webpage dedicated to veterans](#).

This Memorial Day, take a moment to thank the veterans in your community for their service, and honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice in fighting for our freedom. Alaska Farm Bureau would like to thank all military members, veterans and their families for their service.

Alaska Farm Bureau is dedicated to helping veteran and non-veteran farmers alike save money with its member benefits program. Remember you can **save up to \$2,500 on Caterpillar machines** with your Alaska Farm Bureau discount! Go to fbadvantage.com/cat to view the full list of eligible machines and models.

If you would like to know more about the organizations helping veteran farmers, click any of the links below:

- Center for Rural Affairs: www.cfra.org
- Farmer Veteran Coalition: www.farmvetco.org
- USDA New Farmers Program: newfarmers.usda.gov/veterans

- A list of 21 Veteran Farming Programs from Food Tank: foodtank.com/news

Additional Sources:

www.newsweek.com/2014/11/28/farming-could-save-veterans-and-vice-versa-284621.html

www.ruralhealth.va.gov/aboutus/ruralvets.asp