

NATIONAL AGRABILITY PROJECT
ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT WORKING WITH
SPECIAL POPULATIONS IN AGRICULTURE
2013-14

Introduction

During the National AgrAbility Training Workshop held in 2013 in Minneapolis, MN, a discussion was held on the lack of diversity among the 225 participants. At that meeting, both by appearance and affiliation, it became apparent that the National AgrAbility Project (NAP) needed to be more aggressive in reaching out to underserved populations, including migrant/seasonal farm workers, Black and other socially disadvantaged farmers, and returning veterans with disabilities who desired to be engaged in agricultural production and related occupations.

Through conversations with USDA's AgrAbility project leader, supplemental funding was added to the 2013/14 NAP budget to address the need to strengthen outreach efforts to these populations. In the fall of 2013, the CHS Foundation of Minneapolis, MN, also approached the NAP and requested a plan for enhanced AgrAbility efforts in working with Black farmers in the South and returning veterans with disabilities. Utilizing these two sources of funding, an initiative was undertaken to address the need for greater inclusiveness in the AgrAbility mission.

The initiative began with the recruitment of a new staff person with the title of NAP Special Populations Outreach Coordinator. "Special Populations" was chosen as a term that includes not only traditionally defined minorities such as African-Americans and Hispanics, but also such specialized groups as farmer veterans. Chuck Baldwin began work in December of 2013 and was charged with expanding AgrAbility outreach to the populations identified above. At the same time a search was initiated to identify a person who could coordinate NAP outreach specifically to returning veterans with disabilities who desired to remain engaged in some aspect of agriculture. This position was filled by Cindy Chastain on September 1, 2014. This report is a summary of efforts that have been carried out during the period from September 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014. It is done to provide accountability for the supplemental support provided by both USDA/NIFA and the CHS Foundation and as a means to communicate how additional resources will be spent during the coming year.

Report Summary

Since its establishment by the 1990 Farm Bill, the AgrAbility Program has had as its mission the success of farmers, ranchers, and their families impacted by disability. This mission was carried out in full compliance of the equal opportunity provisions mandated for all federally funded programs. A commitment was made to ensure that services were accessible to all those who could benefit from them. It became apparent, however, that our outreach efforts, especially, the National Training Workshop (NTW) was less diverse in its participant make up than what should be expected.

The National AgrAbility Project (NAP) followed five steps to move from having little formal contact within special populations to having members of those populations actively involved in working with AgrAbility, either as clients or as partners. These steps were:

1. Locate contacts
2. Communicate with contacts
3. Educate contacts about helping agricultural workers with disabilities through AgrAbility services
4. Motivate contacts toward application
5. Activate contacts in furthering the work of AgrAbility

During the past year, the NAP has significantly expanded its emphasis on several “special populations”:

- African American farmers through the 1890 Land Grant Institutions
- Farmer veterans in collaboration with the Farmer Veteran Coalition
- Native Americans through the 1994 land-grants
- Hispanic populations that are primarily migrant or seasonal farm workers

Notable Achievements

1890s – African-Americans

- Participation in: Rural Life Conference, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff; MANRRS-Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences Conference; Florida Small Farms & Alternative Enterprises Conference
- Participated in AgroMedicine Training at University of Alabama Medical School
- 17 representatives of 1890s attended the 2014 National Training Workshop, March 2014, that included a panel of 1890 staff on working with 1890 Extension programs
- 1890 AgrAbility workshop held in August at UMES-University of Maryland Eastern Shore; five 1890s represented
- Eight 1890s representatives currently serving on 2015 NTW-National AgrAbility Training Workshop planning committee
- Contacts identified at each 1890 Land Grant Institution
- Packets of AgrAbility materials mailed by request to five different 1890s

Farmer Veterans

- Coordinated a Veteran track at 2014 NTW
- Cindy Chastain hired as the NAP Veteran Coordinator September 1, 2014

- AgrAbility webinar “Suicide Awareness with a Focus on Veterans and Rural Americans” had 47 in attendance
- Paul Jones shared at Midwest Regional Farmer Veteran Coalition Conference
- NAP Director Bill Field became a member of the Farmer Veteran Coalition’s (FVC) board of directors, and FVC Executive Director Michael O’Gorman is a member of the NAP Advisory Team
- Participation in USDA Returning Veterans to Agriculture Project
- More than 27 veterans were either visited or provided AgrAbility information through the NAP

1994 Land grant institutions – Native Americans

- A register of agricultural leadership and librarians at 1994s was developed
- 94 packets of AgrAbility materials sent to 1994 libraries and agricultural Extension personnel

Hispanics

- Amber Wolfe, NAP staff, presented on arthritis at the 2013 Midwest Stream Farmworker Health Forum
- AgrAbility regional workshop conducted in Yuma, AZ, with a component on working with migrant and seasonal farm workers
- Copies of Spanish publication on farming with arthritis widely distributed

Additional information, achievements, and details are included in the full report below, along with a list on the last page of goals for 2014-2015.

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September 2013 – September 2014

At a recent AgrAbility workshop in Princess Anne, Maryland, a panel of four farmers with disabilities stated that the primary benefit imparted to them by AgrAbility, in a word, was

HOPE.

The spread of hope to the growing number of clients AgrAbility serves comes, in a word, from

CONTACTS.



This arrow indicates the implicit progression the National AgrAbility Project (NAP) has taken with contacts among the special populations/underserved agricultural groups between September 2013 and September 2014 to elevate awareness of AgrAbility and disseminate hope to the workers with disabilities among them. It also highlights the direction this report will take in presenting the advancement AgrAbility has made in reaching the special populations with disabilities in agriculture. Because each stage in the progression builds on the previous steps, some redundancy in the report will be observed; for instance, participation in a given conference may be a means to locate contacts, to communicate with contacts, to educate, and/or to motivate those contacts, necessitating mention of the same conference(s) under each applicable phase of the succession.

Please note that the NAP's special outreach to the special populations in agriculture was, for the first six months, focused on the African-American agricultural population through developing more effective relationships with all of the 1890 Land Grant Institutions. Following some notable success with this first group, and at the encouragement of Aida Balsano, AgrAbility Project Leader at USDA/NIFA, the NAP has since broadened its outreach, following the same basic progression of making contacts with the farmer veterans with disabilities, Native American (Indian) and migrant/seasonal Hispanic populations.



The National AgrAbility Project's goal of seeking a greater impact among special populations began with a focus on locating good contacts through the 1890 land-grant institutions (historically Black) and the 1994 land-grant institutions (Native American). Four methods were taken:

- Use contacts already gained by State and Regional AgrAbility Projects (SRAPs).
- Research contacts at land-grant institutions via Internet.
- Attend conferences/workshops of organizations that serve special population agricultural workers, or where those agricultural workers are likely to be present, to discover new contacts.
- Direct contact with leaders at each institution.

In addition, in order to reach farmer veterans and seasonal workers, the NAP has made contacts by attending conferences of other organizations that serve those populations.

Achievements:

African-American

- AgrAbility now has a working list of 1890s agricultural deans, Extension administrators, and interested staff from all 19 (including Tuskegee University, AL) 1890 institutions who are now receiving AgrAbility mailings.
- An ongoing calendar of 1890s-related conferences in which AgrAbility could participate to increase their visibility among minorities in agriculture was created.
- Chuck Baldwin, NAP's special populations outreach coordinator, represented AgrAbility at the Rural Life Conference in Pine Bluff, AR. (February, 2014).
- Chuck Baldwin staffed the AgrAbility booth at the MANRRS conference in Birmingham, AL (March, 2014).
- Bill Field and Chuck Baldwin gained new contacts at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore AgrAbility Workshop for the 1890s (August, 2014).
- Bill Field presented at the Agro Medicine training at the University of Alabama (August, 2014).

Farmer Veteran

- An ongoing calendar of veteran-related conferences in which AgrAbility could participate was created.
- A list of veterans organizations with which AgrAbility could most likely partner was compiled and contacts have been made with most of them via email and telephone.
- Other AgrAbility projects were contacted to determine what others are doing with respect to veterans and to determine what measures were used successfully to draw veterans to AgrAbility.
- The NAP hosted two meetings of the USDA Returning Veterans to Agriculture Task Force.
- Enhanced dialogue began with the Farmer Veteran Coalition on areas of collaboration.

Native American

- A list of current librarians from all 34 of the 1994 land-grant institutions has been made.

- A register of agricultural deans, land-grant directors and/or Extension directors from all 34 of the 1994 land-grant institutions was created and is being used to send AgrAbility mailings.
- An ongoing calendar of 1994-related conferences in which AgrAbility could participate was created.

Hispanic

- Amber Wolfe staffed a display at the 2013 Midwest Stream Farmworker Health Forum, sponsored by the National Center for Farmworker Health, in November, 2013.
- Chuck Baldwin had an AgrAbility display at the National Farmworkers Health Conference in May, 2014 (conference of Community Health Center personnel that are the medical providers for most migrant workers in the USA).
- An ongoing calendar of conferences and events related to seasonal/migrant workers was made.

Communicate

With Contacts

Having located the contacts, communications were commenced via email and followed up by phone calls or mailings.

Achievements:

African-American, Native American, Hispanic

- At first, about 40 phone calls, 50 emails, and 100 mailings were completed to initiate contact. All-important personal bi-directional relationships were begun.
- Mutual aspirations for serving agricultural personnel with disabilities were discovered setting the foundation for collaboration with AgrAbility.
- Trust between the special populations and AgrAbility developed with repeated communications.

Educate

Contacts about Helping Agricultural Workers with Disabilities/AgrAbility

Educating contacts about the need to enhance quality of life for farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers with disabilities, and how AgrAbility can help them do that, is paramount. AgrAbility begins this process with the very first communications and maintains it as an ongoing mission as new opportunities, up-to-date information, as fresh methods become available. Among the ways the NAP has been educating the special populations on the need and the how-to of helping agricultural workers with disabilities, and the benefits of participation with AgrAbility in that effort, are these:

Achievements:

African-American

- Introductory emails/letters to all 1890s contacts briefly explaining the purpose and goals of AgrAbility.
- Personal phone calls to 1890s contacts to underscore AgrAbility's objectives and answer contacts' questions.
- AgrAbility brochures, DVDs, and oral information passed to 1890s contacts at the following conferences:
 - Florida Small Farm & Alternative Enterprises Conference, Kissimmee, FL (August, 2014)
 - AgrAbility National Training Workshop (NTW) in April, 2014, in Lexington, KY, where 17 representatives of the 1890s attended
 - The Rural Life and MANRRS conferences previously mentioned under "Locate Contacts"
 - 13 contacts from five 1890s received training about AgrAbility and how to enhance quality of life for agricultural workers with disabilities at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore AgrAbility Workshop (under "Locate Contacts" above)
- NAP staff agreed to assist in the development of new AgrAbility proposals.
- Packets of AgrAbility information sent to AR, TX, and SC 1890s contacts by request.
- 1890s contacts advised via email/listserv of AgrAbility webinars, opportunities to submit RFAs for various projects, and other opportunities for helping agricultural workers with disabilities.

Farmer Veteran

- Printed materials dealing with veterans in agriculture have been a standard part of the AgrAbility booth display at all conferences and workshops.
- A webinar entitled "Suicide Awareness with a Focus on Veterans and Rural Americans" was presented in June, 2014, and attended by a total of 47 persons.
- Paul Jones represented AgrAbility and shared during a session at the Midwest Regional Farmer Veteran Coalition Conference in July, 2014, at Drake University, De Moines, Iowa.
- Chuck Baldwin spoke by phone with representatives of the following organizations to educate them on the vision of AgrAbility and to request participation with them in the vision to help agricultural workers with disabilities:
 - Farmer Veteran Coalition
 - Veterans of Foreign Wars
 - Disabled American Veterans
 - Paralyzed Veterans of America
- Resources were shared with USDA staff responsible for enhancing services to veterans.

- Bill Field made a personal visit to the Offices of the Disabled American Veterans to hand deliver a package of AgrAbility resources and identify contacts.

One positive outcome of these contacts was the invitation to AgrAbility by several of these organizations to attend their national conventions and workshops.

Native American

- Librarians at all 34 of the 1994 land-grant institutions received a packet of AgrAbility printed materials and a DVD, along with a letter of introduction to AgrAbility, as educational resources for their libraries.
- 60 packets of AgrAbility printed materials (including an invitation to the 2015 NTW), a DVD, and an introductory letter from AgrAbility were mailed to the agricultural deans, land-grant directors and/or Extension directors at all 34 Native American land-grant institutions.

Hispanic

- An AgrAbility regional workshop was conducted, in collaboration with our Goodwill partner, in Yuma, AZ, December 2013, with a component on working with migrant and seasonal farm workers.
- Relevant sessions were conducted at the 2014 NTW in Lexington, KY.
- AgrAbility brochures, DVDs, and oral information were passed by Chuck Baldwin to Hispanic contacts and contacts working with Hispanics at the following conferences:
 - National Farmworkers Health Conference, Delray Beach, FL (May, 2014)
 - Small Farms & Alternative Enterprises Conference, Kissimmee, FL (Mentioned under “Educate Contacts/African-American” above because this conference draws many participants from both the Hispanic and the African-American populations)

NOTE: The NAP, as part of their commitment to provide services to increasingly diverse populations, has seen the need to develop awareness of cultural differences and understanding among both the AgrAbility staff and the partners/clientele concerning how to best meet unique needs so that together we can be better providers and advocates for those we serve.

To that end, in September 2014, the first in a series of webinars on cultural competency was held with a total of 60 persons attending. Beginning with an overview, the webinars are planned to move forward to cover specific cultures and populations.



Motivate

Contacts Toward Application

Motivation toward the application of acquired information must follow the process of education if the knowledge gained is to become practical. The NAP has successfully motivated special population contacts in several ways.

Achievements:

African-American

- Pre-announced phone calls to 1890 representatives have, according to such individuals, been an effective motivation in getting them to recognize and participate in AgrAbility and AgrAbility-associated events because the organizations that regularly ask for some type of personal accountability (such as answering the phone) are the ones that generally have a better rate of response.
- The NAP used personal invitations and the offer of limited stipends as motivation to draw 1890s to the NTW and to the UMES 1890 Regional AgrAbility Workshop, resulting in good attendance by minority representatives at these events.
- The NAP gave strategic opportunity to minority representatives at the NTW and 1890 Land-Grant AgrAbility Workshop (UMES) to share their history and their desires/terms regarding how they would like to be included in AgrAbility as partners and co-workers. Their sharing in turn motivated them to become more participative in future AgrAbility work/events as evidenced by the statistics under “Activate” below.

Farmer Veteran

- The keynote speaker at the 2014 NTW as a disabled veteran.
- In addition to offering pertinent education during the Farmer Veteran Coalition regional conference at Drake University mentioned above, Paul Jones continued collaborative efforts with Farmer Veteran Coalition staff members, other professionals, and farmer veterans to encourage the empowerment of veterans with disabilities interested in agriculture.
- The NAP has hired a farmer veteran AgrAbility coordinator, Cindy Chastain, for AgrAbility as of September 1, 2014, and she has been working to contact and motivate various leaders of veterans’ organizations to adopt the vision of enhancing the quality of life for farmer veterans with disabilities, in partnership with AgrAbility.

Native American, Hispanic

- NOTE: Because the NAP’s special outreach to the Native American and Hispanic populations did not begin until July of 2014, only the steps to Locate, Communicate, and Educate have been inaugurated, and the further processes to Motivate and Activate are yet to come.



Contacts in the work of AgrAbility

The NAP has invited or challenged contacts that have been educated in AgrAbility and that are motivated to serve, to be activated in the work of AgrAbility in a variety of ways.

- To disseminate AgrAbility information via Extension agents, radio, TV, Internet, personal contacts, presentations and exhibits at conferences/shows/workshops.

- To serve on AgrAbility committees (NTW, advisory, workshops, etc.).
- To submit proposals for AgrAbility Projects.
- To host an AgrAbility event.

Please Note: The aim of everything heretofore mentioned in this report has been to garner a higher level of participation among the special populations in responding to the needs of agricultural workers with disabilities. Therefore, perhaps the greatest measure of success in the NAP's work among the special populations is mirrored in the achievements below; NOT in the achievements of NAP personnel, but in the personal participation by the special populations themselves in the flow of AgrAbility's ongoing vision and work.

Achievements:

African-American

- 1890 representatives that volunteered to serve on the 2015 NTW Committee
 - Florida – 1
 - Kentucky – 2
 - Missouri – 2
 - North Carolina – 1
 - Oklahoma – 1
 - West Virginia – 1
- 1890s that planned to or did apply for AgrAbility project grants, or that partnered with an 1862 land-grant university in an AgrAbility grant proposal in response to the 2014 RFA
 - Arkansas
 - Florida
 - Mississippi
 - Oklahoma
 - Tennessee
 - West Virginia
- 1890s that extended an invitation to the NAP to hold an 1890 land-grant AgrAbility workshop on their campus
 - Alabama – Tuskegee University
 - Arkansas – University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
 - Kentucky – Kentucky State University
 - Maryland – University of Maryland Eastern Shore
 - Tennessee – Tennessee State University
 - Texas – Prairie View A&M University
- An 1890 representative from Kentucky State University attended and helped to lead a session at the NAP's Advisory Team meeting in April, 2014.

- Tuskegee University invited the NAP to give a presentation and to have a display at the 2014 Professional Agricultural Workers Conference in December.
- The University of Maryland Eastern Shore showed great initiative in helping to both plan and host the AgrAbility Workshop for the 1890s in August, 2014. Twenty-seven people registered for the event, including representatives from five 1890s and three 1862s. PLEASE SEE ATTACHED WORKSHOP REPORT.

Farmer Veteran

- NAP Project Director Bill Field is a member of the Farmer Veteran Coalition's board of directors, and Farmer Veteran Coalition Executive Director Michael O'Gorman is a member of the NAP Advisory Team.
- NAP agreed to be a sponsor for the first national meeting of the Farmer Veteran Coalition in Des Moines, IA.

GOALS 2014-2015

With continued supplemental support from both USDA/NIFA and The CHS Foundation, the NAP has developed a series of specific strategies to continue enhancing AgrAbility services to the populations being served. These include:

1. Ensure representation from each of the special populations (African-American, farmer veterans, Native American, Hispanic) on various NAP committees, especially the 2015 NTW planning committee.
2. Hold at least two one or two-day AgrAbility Workshops on the campuses of two 1890 institutions by August 2015. Invite at least one representative from every 1890 that has not heretofore attended one of these workshops.
3. Have NAP's special populations outreach coordinator attend at least one conference for each of the three minorities (Hispanic, Native American, African-American) prior to October, 2015 [East Coast Migrant Stream Forum, First Americans Land Grant Consortium (FALCON), Professional Agricultural Workers Conference (PAWC)].
4. Have at least ten representatives from the 1890s attend the 2015 NTW in Rochester, NY.
5. Develop a veteran-specific training track for the 2015 NTW and have at least 10 veteran farmers attend.
6. See that every 1890 institution has at least one representative familiar with AgrAbility and working to promote AgrAbility to their respective constituencies.
7. Develop appropriate state and national resource lists for Veterans in agriculture.
8. Work closely with the Farmer Veteran Coalition, Veteran Service organizations, the Veteran's Administration, state veteran service officers, etc., to encourage disabled veterans in agricultural endeavors.
9. Have AgrAbility staff attend national Veteran Service Organization (VFW, DAV, American Legion, etc.) conferences to represent and promote AgrAbility.
10. Develop a video and an AgrAbility pamphlet specifically for Veterans.
11. Organize and host a bi-monthly AgrAbility Veterans Community of Interest conference call.
12. Aid SRAPs with veteran projects.
13. Collaborate with the Farmer Veteran Coalition to conduct an educational event for veterans.