



# Opportunities for Transitioning Service Members and Veterans

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and Monshi Ramdass, USDA**

**AgrAbility Virtual National Training Workshop  
Wednesday, January 24, 2018  
11:00 a.m. ET**



United States Department of Agriculture

## Basic Webinar Instructions

Audio available through computer or phone.  
Check sound via Communicate menu at top left  
Closed captions: use arrow to expand or contact the Media Viewer window. You may have to enter some log-in information.

Expand/contract any of the windows in the right-hand column with the arrows. May need to do this to see video of presenter.

Expand/contract the size of the right-hand column.

## Basic Webinar Instructions

Questions and comments

Click Chat icon at top right of screen (it should turn blue). Enter message in box, choose who to send it to, and click send. You may enter questions about the presentation at any time. Please send to “All Panelists”.

In addition, during the Q & A period, if you have a web microphone, click the “Raise Hand” icon to indicate that you have a question. We will enable your microphone or phone connection.

## Basic Webinar Instructions

4 quick survey questions + opportunity  
to share comments

Session recorded and archived with  
PowerPoint files at

[www.agrability.org/Online-Training](http://www.agrability.org/Online-Training)

Problems: use chat window or email

[jonesp@purdue.edu](mailto:jonesp@purdue.edu)

# VETERANS



**AgrAbility:** USDA–sponsored program that assists farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers with disabilities.

Partners land–grant universities with disability services organizations. Currently 20 state projects.

National AgrAbility Project: Led by Purdue’s Breaking New Ground Resource Center.

Partners include:

- Goodwill of the Finger Lakes
- APRIL (Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living)
- Colorado State University
- Washington State University

More information available at [www.agrability.org](http://www.agrability.org)



# VETERANS

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# VETERANS



Carlina Williams, USN Veteran, started a mobile juice business, Communion Juice, which serves locally-sourced, cold-pressed fresh juice and herbal shots. She hopes to eventually franchise her business.



Veterans can learn to fight wildfires through the USDA Forest Service's apprenticeship



Rupert Richards, USAF Veteran, is the Agricultural Marketing Service Specialty Crops Inspection/Training Branch Chief, USDA Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

Calvin Riggleman, USMC Veteran, took the products from his family farm and transformed them into a wide range of condiments



Angela Mulder, USAF Veteran, learns about agriculture and farming by volunteering with Vets on the Farm





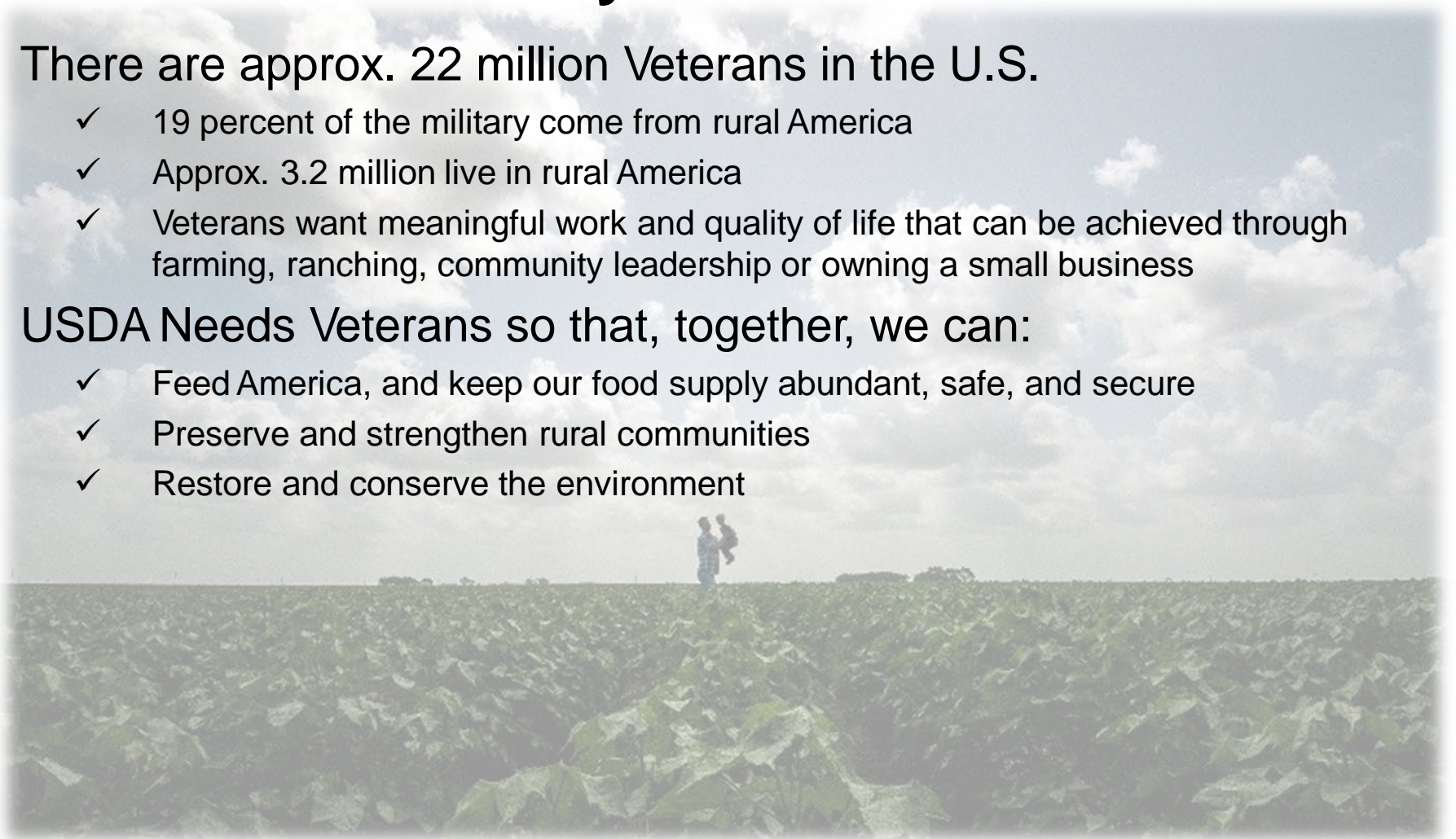
## Why Veterans?

There are approx. 22 million Veterans in the U.S.

- ✓ 19 percent of the military come from rural America
- ✓ Approx. 3.2 million live in rural America
- ✓ Veterans want meaningful work and quality of life that can be achieved through farming, ranching, community leadership or owning a small business

USDA Needs Veterans so that, together, we can:

- ✓ Feed America, and keep our food supply abundant, safe, and secure
- ✓ Preserve and strengthen rural communities
- ✓ Restore and conserve the environment







## Opportunities in the 3Es

**EMPLOYMENT**



**EDUCATION**



**ENTREPRENEURSHIP**



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# VETERANS

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EMPLOYMENT



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## Employment

USDA's Veterans Employment Program Office can:

- Match skills / qualifications to careers at USDA
- Review resumes; provide feedback
- Explain the Federal hiring process (USA JOBS, special hiring authorities, category rating)

Your military experience can be directly translatable to jobs at USDA, such as:

- Criminal Justice
- Soil Conservationist Technician
- Contracting and Procurement
- Information Technology
- Food Inspection and Public Health
- Smoke Jumper
- Finance
- Economists



Monshi Ramdass (right), USDA Veterans Employment Program Officer, often attends hiring events and employers panels.

## Employment

### On-the-Job Training:

- Paid Apprenticeships
  - **Agricultural Commodity Graders** – 12-month training program through USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, starting at GS-5/7
  - **Wildland Firefighters** – 3,000 hour on-the-job learning program through USDA's Forest Service, available positions include GS-3, 4/5, and 5
  - **Dairy Graziers\*** - Includes full-time employment, training and mentorship over a period of two years

### DoD SkillBridge / Career Skills Program:

- Eligible service members can participate in industry training instead of performing military duties during the closing months of their career



Austin Looney uses drip torches to conduct backburns



## Employment Resources

- USDA's Veterans Employment Program Office:  
<https://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/vepo/>
- Department of Labor Apprenticeships:  
<https://www.dol.gov/apprenticeship/index.htm>
- Agricultural Commodity Grader Apprenticeship:  
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams/careers/apprenticeship-program>
- Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship: <https://www.nafri.gov/wfap/>
- Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship: <https://www.dga-national.org/Participate>
- DoD SkillBridge: <https://dodskillbridge.com/>
- Army Career Skills Program:  
<https://www.imcom.army.mil/Organization/G1Personnel/CareerSkillsProgram.aspx>





# VETERANS

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## EDUCATION



## Education

Ag experts are in high demand

- **Higher Education** – A recent Purdue University research study indicates that about 60,000 agriculture-related jobs are available annually but many can't be filled due to lack of graduates

Veterans can fill this need by getting a degree in

- Plant science
  - Food science
  - Environmental science
  - Sustainable biomaterials
  - Water resources science and engineering
  - Precision agriculture
  - Veterinary medicine
- 
- **Certificates** – Many U.S institutions and organizations offer certificates in sustainable agriculture
  - **Student Farms** – Offer practical, hands-on education through courses, internships, special projects, and research projects



Matt McCue (U.S. Army Veteran) is working on his graduate degree in International Agricultural Development at University of California, Davis. (Photo Courtesy: Farmer Veteran Coalition)

## Education

- **Farm Training and Apprenticeships** – Equip Veterans with the right tools and skills to gain experience and qualifications needed to participate in USDA programs
  - **ATTRA's** Armed to Farm program is for military Veterans and provides trainings from conference presentations to two-day workshops to week-long training events
  - **Farmer Veteran Coalition** provides direct assistance to Veterans in their beginning years of farming or ranching
- **Extension** – USDA works with universities to provide non-formal education and learning activities directly to ag producers, small business owners, consumers and families throughout the country



Matt Smiley, left, (Army/OIF) explains blossom-end rot to Marquise Rhym, right, (USMC/OEF/OIF). Marquise was placed on R Kelley Farms outside Sacramento, CA, for a 4-month internship. Once his internship is over, Marquise will be hired full-time to help manage the farm.



## Education Resources

- Purdue University Study: <https://www.purdue.edu/usda/employment/>
- Sustainable Agriculture Education and Training Directory (Degrees, Certificates, Student Farms):  
<https://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/edtr/sustainable-agriculture-education-directory>
- [Farm Training and Apprenticeships](https://www.nal.usda.gov/veteran-programs-and-resources): <https://www.nal.usda.gov/veteran-programs-and-resources>
- ATTRA Armed to Farm: <https://www.ncat.org/armedtofarm/>
- [Farmer Veteran Coalition](https://www.farmvetco.org/about-us/our-programs/farming-fellowship/): <https://www.farmvetco.org/about-us/our-programs/farming-fellowship/>
- Extension: <https://nifa.usda.gov/extension>



# VETERANS

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ENTREPRENEURSHIP



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## Entrepreneurship – From Farm to Fork

USDA can help agriculture entrepreneurs get access to capital and land, and help you manage your risk

### Loans

- Microloans
- Operating Loans
- Farm Ownership Loans

### Land

- Transition Incentives Program

### Enhancing Land Quality

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Agricultural Easement Program
- Conservation Stewardship Program

### Crop Insurance

### Technical Assistance / Conservation Technical Assistance



Mannah Gbeh, pictured with his son, grew up in Liberia before coming to the U.S. and enlisting in the Navy, serving 3 deployments in support of OIF and OEF. Today, Mannah owns and operates Bee Valley Farm in Jamul, CA where he produces garlic, honey, olives and almonds.

## Entrepreneurship – From Farm to Fork

Veterans who are part of the community of New and Beginning Farmers are eligible for USDA programs to help start – and continue – a career in farming



Josh Eilers, a former Army Ranger, now owns a cattle ranch in Texas and specializes in high-quality FullBlood Wagyu.

- Access to ag resources, such as capital, land, business development, marketing, insurance, etc.
- Find information tailored to you by using the New Farmer Discovery Tool
- Connect with a mentor, attend workshops, and receive online resources through USDA's partnership with SCORE



## Entrepreneurship – Rural Business

Veterans can help strengthen and develop rural communities by starting or expanding a rural business. USDA can help with:

- Loans and Loan Guarantees
- Processing and Marketing of Products
- Energy Efficiency Improvements



Torrance Hart, a USAF Veteran, now runs a successful e-commerce business called Tweak & Twine

**Rural is closer than you think!**

See if your area is eligible by visiting our Eligibility Map





## Entrepreneurship Resources

- New Farmers: <https://newfarmers.usda.gov/veterans>
- Discovery Tool: <https://newfarmers.usda.gov/discovery/>
- USDA and SCORE: <https://www.score.org/usda>
- Rural Development programs:  
<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs>
- Eligibility Map:  
<https://eligibility.sc.egov.usda.gov/eligibility/welcomeAction.do>
- U.S. Small Business Administration:
  - USDA Rural Small Business information to soon be included in Boots to Business course (TAP): [www.sba.gov/bootstobusiness](http://www.sba.gov/bootstobusiness)
  - Get help with your business plan by visiting your local Veteran Business Outreach Center: [www.sba.gov/vboc](http://www.sba.gov/vboc)





**THANK YOU!**

**Questions / Comments**

**Contact Us:**

**[Veterans@osec.usda.gov](mailto:Veterans@osec.usda.gov)**

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