

# Programming for Veterans in Agriculture: How Maine Does It

Anne Devin  
Veteran Outreach  
Coordinator  
Maine AgrAbility  
[Anne.devin@maine.edu](mailto:Anne.devin@maine.edu)  
207-991-2651

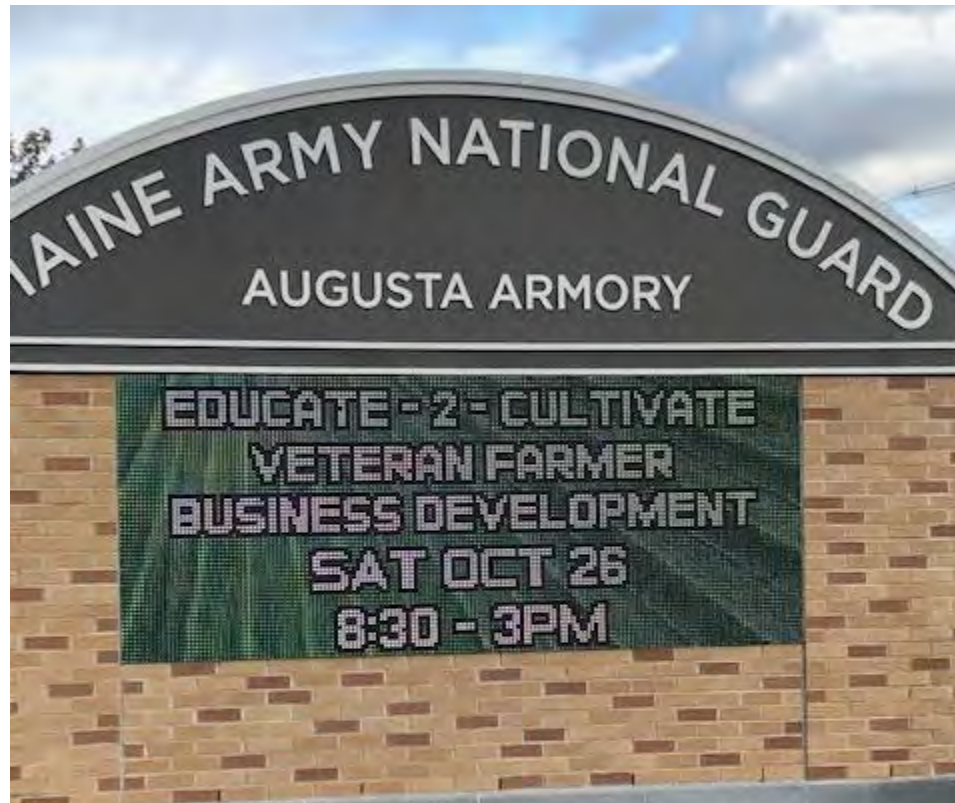
## Identify the Population

- Veterans in Maine: 114K
  - 11% of adult population (Nat'l avg 6.6%)
- Total number of farms in Maine: 7,600 (2017 Ag Census)
- 1,459 farms/producers with military service (2017 Ag Census)
  - United Farmer Veterans of Maine has connected with over 600 veterans either farming or interested in farming since 2015
  - Direct Mailings
  - Social media
    - Primarily Facebook (AgrAbility, Extension, MOFGA, UFVM, other farm specific groups)

# Farmer Veteran Barriers to Success

- **Coming to farming late in life**
  - Few apprenticeship opportunities for older “new” farmers with families and other responsibilities
  - Lack of knowledge and farming experience
- **Brain injury, depression, post-traumatic stress**
  - Vision (similar to New American challenges)
  - Business skills: Organization, Bookkeeping
  - Motivation
  - Mental fatigue
- **Physical limitations**
  - traumatic injuries
  - overuse injuries

# Educate Veterans-2-Cultivate (EV2C): Business Development & Assistive Technology Symposium



## EV2C

- One-on-One business mentors from SCORE (SBDC)
- Farm Financial Planning
- Assistive Technology (memory, universal design)
- Peer networking



## EV2C

- Farm Yoga
- Circle of Support
- Veteran Farmer Showcase

Community Support  
 Neighbors  
 Networking UFVM  
 Info search - products  
 Services  
 Peer Support  
 Voc Rehab / VRVA  
 Church  
 Health / Farm Insurance  
 Town Office  
 Grange

Agencies / NRCS  
 Beginning Farmer  
 Resource Network  
 BFRN  
 Legal Food Hub  
 legal advice  
Ag Mediation  
 Land for Good  
 Maine Farm Bureau  
 Maine Federation of Farmers  
 Markets

ATTWOOD FARM & KITCHEN

Specialty Salsas	12.02	16.02
MAPLE <small>* Made with Evoletta Cheese made of grapes</small>	\$6.50	\$8.00
APPLE <small>* Made with Cauliflower Romes Apples</small>	\$6.50	\$8.00
MILD	\$6.50	\$8.00
DILLY BEANS	\$8.00	
SQUASH PICKLES	\$6.50	

BAKED Goods made weekly taking orders  
 for Holiday pies

GATHERING WINDS FARM & Orchard

Blank Cards \$2.50	1/2 gallon cider \$4
HATS \$15.00	cup cider \$1.00
BAGS \$2.00	
3# Apples \$3.00	

## EV2C

- Resource Fair
- Farmer Panel



EV2C

Make it FUN!

- Swag Bags
- Silent Raffle items
- LOTS OF NETWORKING!
- Survey cohort after the event





## EV2C Outcomes

- 70 participants
  - 27 Veteran farms represented
  - 18 Resource fair participants
- Survey results
  - 80% attended for networking opportunities
  - 80% feel it's important to remain a veteran-only event
  - 53% stated they planned to follow up with their business mentor

**“More time, more vendors, more presenters,  
more Veteran farmers”**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**MAINE**  
Cooperative Extension



**Boots-2-Bushels: Boot Camp for  
Market Gardeners & Farmers  
(B2B)**

## B2B: Competency Based Objectives

- Farmer skill and knowledge for vegetable growers in Maine
  - Long-term productivity and efficiency of soil health
  - Best practices for crop planning
  - Best practices for various vegetable & fruit variety production to include pest management and cultural practices that optimize high-quality harvests
- Business skills required to run a successful farm business
  - Marketing and branding strategies
  - Farm business planning
- Following the 5 F's of Farming Risk
  - farming, family, finances, future, fitness

## B2B: Schedule & Location

- 9 Month program: January – September
- 23 Veteran and veteran family member participants
  - VA certification requires courses to be open to all
- Jan-Apr: Twice monthly classroom instruction
  - Cooperative Extension and MOFGA educators
  - 25 member CSA, 16 weeks of food shares
- Apr-Sep: Field production
  - Field trips to other producers
- VA HOSPITAL (2020)
  - PANDEMIC shuffle
- Community College
  - Personnel shortage shuffle

## B2B: Educational Support & Funding

- UMaine Cooperative Extension and MOFGA educators with Maine AgrAbility - veteran outreach coordinator to facilitate program
- 2020
  - Crowd Funding through UMaine
  - Farm Credit East sponsorship
- 2021
  - Overflow from 2020
  - Extension Risk Management Education Grant through 2022

## B2B: Foster Unit Cohesion

- Private Facebook group
  - Novice to 11+ years farming experience
- Accountability – checking in on each other
  - Passing the word, phone tree
- Share ideas, tips and techniques
- Enable group bulk purchases
- Peer-to-Peer mentoring
- Field work could include workshops & activities
  - Yoga, cooking, mindfulness, tai chi, etc

## FB Comments

*“This program has been very informative and helpful to learn better techniques to farming and business management. The pandemic has been very difficult but the zoom meetings and recordings allowed us to learn new skills. We are looking forward to continuing the program and watching our garden progress following everything we have learned.”* (FB comment, 15 May 2021)

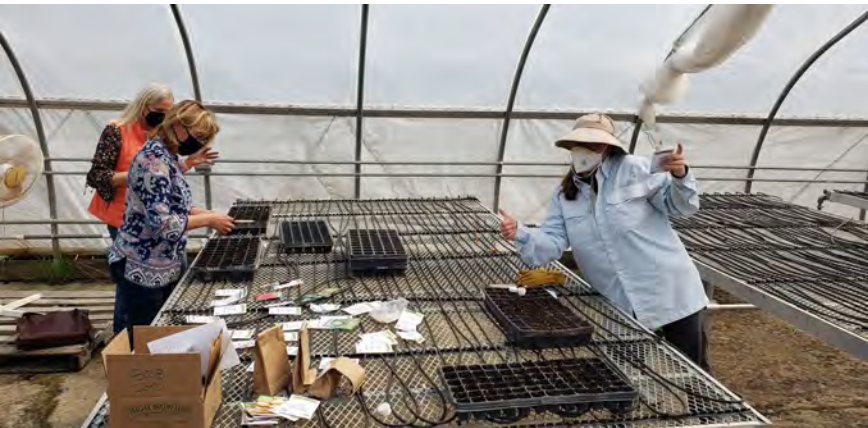
*“We learned a lot from the King Hill Farm visit and were very impressed with their creativity and ingenuity. We are looking forward to visiting different farms to see how each has adapted to their own particular needs and environment.”* (FB comment 6 May 2021)

## My FAVORITE comment thus far:

*“My husband has budgeted for seeds, will be buying them this week, is determining what will probably sell, planning the plots for the greenhouse/high tunnel, and wants to sell CSA's..... Who is this "new man"? Thank you Boots-2-Bushels class, sponsored by AgrAbility”*

*(FB comment 6 February 2020)*





## Lessons Learned thus far...

- Business skills remain top on list of needs
- Geography Matters
- Virtual classrooms make sense
- Life can get in the way of best intentions
- Health considerations - PTSD, Depression
- Re-imagine hands-on opportunities

## Questions?

Anne Devin

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