



United States Department of Agriculture

VETERANS

**Careers in Agriculture for
Transitioning Service Members,
Veterans, and Military Spouses**



Why Veterans?

There are approximately 17 million veterans in the U.S.

- These veterans make up around 8% of non-metropolitan residents, compared to around 6% of U.S. residents overall.
- Over 192,000 to 250,000 service members transition out of DoD annually, and there are over 17 million veterans in America. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, 370,619 veterans are farmers. That accounts for 11% of the 3.2 million farmers in America. The 11% of farms operated by veteran producers sold \$41 billion in agricultural products in 2017, of which \$22 billion were crop sales and \$19 billion were sales of livestock and livestock products.
- The U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 Annual Business Survey reports that there are over 1.9 million veteran-owned businesses (including around 484,000 employer firms and 1.5 million nonemployee firms) with an estimated \$1.2 trillion in revenue, approximately 5.2 million employees, and about \$232.6 billion in annual payroll.
 - ✓ 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



VETERANS



Navy Veteran Carlina Williams 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 USDA Forest Service apprenticeships.



Air Force Veteran Rupert Richards is USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service Specialty Crops Inspection/Training Branch Chief in Washington, D.C.

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



Air Force Veteran Angela Mulder learns about agriculture and farming by volunteering with Vets on the Farm.



VETERANS



Jesse McCarty, US Navy veteran and military spouse, supports 2018 Canada Lynx threatened species preservation research for forest preservation planning.



Erin Kesler, active-duty Marine Corps spouse, at Rappahannock County Public Schools District in Virginia.



Randall Sutton, army veteran and veteran spouse, now works as a wildlife biologist with the US Forest Service restoring and protecting wildlife habitat.



Candace E. Hall, veteran and retired military spouse, works as a management and program analyst assisting with operations and administrative activities.



Liz Colby, P.E., active-duty spouse, works as a state hydrologic and hydraulic engineering technical lead with USDA's Natural Resource and Conservation Service in California.

We serve those who serve us

- Veterans don't know what veterans don't know!
- Oath of an enlisted service member or officer has no expiration. Veterans want to continue to serve their communities.
- Institute for Veterans and Military Families V-Start: State report:
[V-START Dashboards - D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families \(syracuse.edu\)](#)
- Veteran Entrepreneurship:
[Veteran Entrepreneurship Across Urban & Rural Places \(2022\) - D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families \(syracuse.edu\)](#)
- **Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988, then press 1**
- Know where your DD 214 certificate of release or discharge from active duty is, and make sure a family member has a copy.



VETERANS

Opportunities in the 3Es

EMPLOYMENT



EDUCATION



ENTREPRENEURSHIP



VETERANS

EMPLOYMENT



Employment

USDA's Employment Opportunities for transitioning service members, veterans, and military spouses:

- 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
- Firefighter
- Finance
- Economists



USDA MVAL Monshi Ramdass (right) with TAP Manager Troy Johnson at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida.



Employment

On-the-Job Training:

- **Paid Apprenticeships**
 - **Agricultural Commodity Graders** - 12-month training program through USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, starting at grades GS-5/7
 - **Food Inspector's Apprenticeship Program** - USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service offers a two-phased approach to a career in the federal civilian workforce through its 4-week Pre-Apprenticeship Program for transitioning Service members and a 12-month paid Apprenticeship Program designed exclusively for veterans.
 - **Wildland Firefighters** - 3,000-hour on-the-job learning program through USDA's Forest Service, with positions starting at grades GS-3, 4/5, and 5.
 - **Dairy Grazers*** - Includes full-time employment, training and mentorship over a 2-year period. **Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship is an independent non-profit organization with a National Apprenticeship under the U.S. Department of Labor-Employment and Training Administration.*
- **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.





Employment Resources

- Contact USDA's Veterans Employment Program by emailing:
veterans@usda.gov
- Department of Labor Apprenticeships:
[Apprenticeship | U.S. Department of Labor \(dol.gov\)](#)
- Agricultural Commodity Grader Apprenticeship:
[Agricultural Commodity Grader \(GS-1980\) | Agricultural Marketing Service \(usda.gov\)](#)
- Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship:
[Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship Program | US Forest Service \(usda.gov\)](#)
- Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship:
[Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship \(dga-national.org\)](#)
- DoD SkillsBridge:
[DOD SkillBridge Program \(osd.mil\)](#)
- Army Career Skills Program:
[Career Skills Program \(CSP\) :: U.S. Army Installation Management Command](#)
- Special Hiring Authorities for Military Spouses:
[Special Hiring Authorities for Military Spouses & Family Members \(opm.gov\)](#)



VETERANS

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



U.S. Army Veteran Matt McCue is working on his graduate degree in international agricultural development at the University of California, Davis.
(Photo Courtesy: Farmer Veteran Coalition)

- **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.

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 for military veterans provides trainings including conference presentations, two-day workshops, and week-long training events.
 - **Farmer Veteran Coalition** provides direct assistance to veterans in their beginning years of farming or ranching.
 - **Boots to Business Reboot with Agriculture Focus** provides training to veterans interested in beginning farming and ranching.
 - **USDA Beginning Ranching and Farming Webinar** provides training to veterans interested in beginning farming and 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.



Army/OIF Matt Smiley, left, explains blossom-end rot to USMC/OEF/OIF Marquise Rhym, right. 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

- **2501 Grant Program:**

The objective of the 2501 Program is to show USDA's commitment to ensuring that underserved and veteran farmers, ranchers and foresters can equitably participate in USDA programs.

[Underserved and Veteran Farmers, Ranchers, and Foresters | USDA](#)

- **Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans (AgVets):**

The program encourages the development of training opportunities specifically designed for military veterans. AgVets projects will offer onsite, hands-on training and classroom education leading to a comprehensive understanding of successful farm and ranch operations and management practices.

[Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans \(AgVets\) | National Institute of Food and Agriculture \(usda.gov\)](#)

- **Beginning Farming and Ranching Development Program Grant (BFRDP):**

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program provides grants to organizations for education, mentoring and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers and ranchers.

[Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program \(BFRDP\) | National Institute of Food and Agriculture \(usda.gov\)](#)





Education Resources

- National Institute of Food and Agriculture:
<https://www.purdue.edu/usda/employment/>
- ATTRA Armed to Farm:
[Armed to Farm – Sustainable Agriculture Training For Military Veterans](#)
- Farmer Veteran Coalition:
[Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund - FARMER VETERAN COALITION \(farmvetco.org\)](#)
- National Institute of Food and Agriculture Extension:
[Extension | National Institute of Food and Agriculture \(usda.gov\)](#)



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ENTREPRENEURSHIP



[Army Veteran Brings Brewing Back to Butte - YouTube](#)

[Fridays on the Farm: From Veteran to Beginning Farmer | Farmers.gov](#)

[From Army to Agriculture: USDA Supports Military Veteran's Transition to Farming | Farmers.gov](#)



Entrepreneurship – From Farm to Fork

USDA can help agriculture entrepreneurs get access to capital and manage risk.

Loans

- Microloans
- Operating Loans
- Farm Ownership Loans

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, where he served three 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 – careers in farming.



- 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.

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

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



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

Rural is closer than you think!

[Eligibility \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov)

See if your area is eligible by visiting our Eligibility Map



Loans to include Farm Service Loans, Single Family Home loans, Rural Business Loans, and Environmental Quality Incentives Program reimbursement

Farm Service Direct and Guaranteed Loans

FY-2023, \$82.3 Million in Direct Loans and \$36.2 Million in Guaranteed Loans

Rural Development Single Family Home Loans-

FY-2023, \$17.1 Million in Direct Loans and \$156.2 Million in Guaranteed Loans

Rural Development Business Loans

FY-2023, \$24.4 Million in Guaranteed Loans

Value Added Producers Grant

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

FY-2023, \$28.7 Million funded.



Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is a lack of access to enough food for a healthy lifestyle. In 2018, about 11 percent of US households were food insecure at least some time during the year. Food insecurity tends to be higher in households relying on social assistance, single-parent homes, ethnic minorities and people who are homeless or house insecure. The number of food insecure Veterans is also high among those who served in the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. These Veterans are almost twice as likely to be food insecure compared to the general population.

SNAP

To get SNAP benefits, you must apply in the state in which you currently live and you must meet certain requirements, including resource and income limits, which are described on this page. SNAP income and resource limits are updated annually.

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility>

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-directory>

SNAP Toll-free 1-800-221-5689





Entrepreneurship Resources

- How to Start a Farm: Beginning Farmers and Ranchers: <https://newfarmers.usda.gov/veterans>
- Loan Tool: [USDA Farm Loan Discovery Tool | Farmers.gov](#)
- Farm Answers: [Farm Answers](#)
- USDA and SCORE: <https://www.score.org/usda>
- Rural Development programs: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs>
- Eligibility Map: [Eligibility \(usda.gov\)](#)
- U.S. Small Business Administration
 - USDA Rural Small Business information to soon be included in Boots to Business course (TAP): www.sba.gov/bootstobusiness
 - Get help with your business plan by visiting your local Veteran Business Outreach Center: www.sba.gov/vboc
- [Conservation Reserve Program: crp transition incentive program-fact sheet.pdf \(usda.gov\)](#)
- USDA Get Started Guide: [Get Started! A Guide to USDA Resources for Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers | Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)





THANK YOU!

Questions / Comments

Contact Us:

Veterans@usda.gov

Visit Us:

USDA Service Centers: <https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>

Learn More:

www.usda.gov/veterans

