

The Farm Bureau Resource Guide to Assist Veterans in Agriculture




**Farm Bureau and
Farmer Veteran Coalition Partnership**





Introduction

Service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have become the latest group of veterans in need of employment and who, by some measures, may be the most likely young people to enter into agriculture and other rural-based businesses.

As service members return from active duty, they tend to return to their rural communities and they sometimes have difficulties finding long-term employment. Veterans often need additional assistance in finding resources to start farm businesses.

Recently, Farm Bureau has increased its collaboration with the Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC), an organization aimed at mobilizing veterans to enter agriculture and help feed America while rebuilding rural communities. Farm Bureau and the FVC are working together to train beginning farmers, make equipment available to farmer veterans and help find farm ownership or employment opportunities for members of the military transitioning into the civilian workforce.

“Farm Bureau is proud to be involved in this extraordinary partnership on empowering returning veterans.”

Bob Stallman,
President,
American Farm
Bureau Federation



< **Sufyan Bunch,**
Army, CA



< **Vonita Murray,**
Navy, CA



Terrell Spencer,
Army, AR >



< **Jeremiah Butler,** Army,
CT

Meet our cover veterans and other farmer veterans pictured in this document at
<http://www.farmvetco.org/farmer-veterans>



Kelly Carlisle,
Navy, CA >



Mark and Denise Beyers,
Marines, NY >



“We cultivate a new generation of farmers and food leaders, and develop viable employment and meaningful careers through the collaboration of the farming and military communities,” said Michael O’Gorman, Executive Director of the FVC. “We believe that veterans possess the unique skills and character needed to strengthen rural communities and create sustainable food systems for all. We believe that food production offers purpose and opportunity, as well as physical and psychological benefits.”

The vision for the partnership is to connect the talent and experience that Farm Bureau members have in leadership skills and agricultural expertise with farmer veterans whom the FVC has identified as potentially needing such assistance. As the partnership progresses, the opportunities are limitless for state and county Farm Bureaus to get involved. Farm Bureau staff and leaders will be able to help returning warriors with such things as public speaking training, advocacy opportunities, production and best management practices, mentoring or supporting a used equipment exchange.

“The special bond of service to our nation between farmers and veterans runs deep,” said Bob Stallman, president, American Farm Bureau Federation. “Rural Americans make up 44 percent of the men and women who serve in uniform. Veterans are not only the backbone of our country, but of our farmlands and rural communities. Through this partnership, I am optimistic returning veterans will learn how to continue their service to our country by helping feed its citizens, nourish its land and make its rural communities more viable through the many entrepreneurial opportunities agriculture has to offer.”

It is interesting that 44 percent of military recruits come from rural America, considering only 17 percent of the U.S. population calls rural communities home.

WHAT’S INSIDE

As the Farm Bureau/Farmer Veteran Coalition partnership grows, we hope every Farm Bureau will work to introduce veterans and our military communities to the business opportunities agriculture can offer.

This packet includes:

- > Get started
- > Get involved
- > Communicate
 - Sample news release
 - Communication to board and stakeholders
 - Sample outreach letter to military employment centers
- > About Farm Bureau
- > Resources and contact information
- > Publicity nomination form
- > Action checklist

This publication was created in cooperation with the Farm Credit Council and the Farmer Veteran Coalition.



In addition, veterans have been shown to be exceptional entrepreneurs. In 2010, the Small Business Administration reported that the success rate of veteran-owned businesses is higher than that of the general population.

We hope that the materials included in this brochure will provide Farm Bureaus with a simple framework outlining the many different ways to participate in this new partnership and assist returning veterans interested in staking their futures on agriculture and rural America.

“The Farmer Veteran Coalition provides education, risk management training, funding and technical assistance to prepare veterans to become farmers. It offers assistance for internships, particularly for disabled veterans, to obtain the necessary training to run their own businesses as they heal from war-related injuries in a productive environment,” said Sabrina Matteson, director of rural affairs for the American Farm Bureau Federation.

“I am designing Mariposa Valley Farm to be a center of activity, where my community can come and learn what it feels like to be intimately involved with nature. Where children can break away from their televisions, hold a tiny seed in their hands and experience the wonder of watching that tiny seed grow into the food they eat. Where I have the honor of teaching my community what I have learned along the way. And where my community, on the farm and off, grows and becomes richer.”

Vonita Murray,
Navy veteran,
on her farm in
Woodland, CA

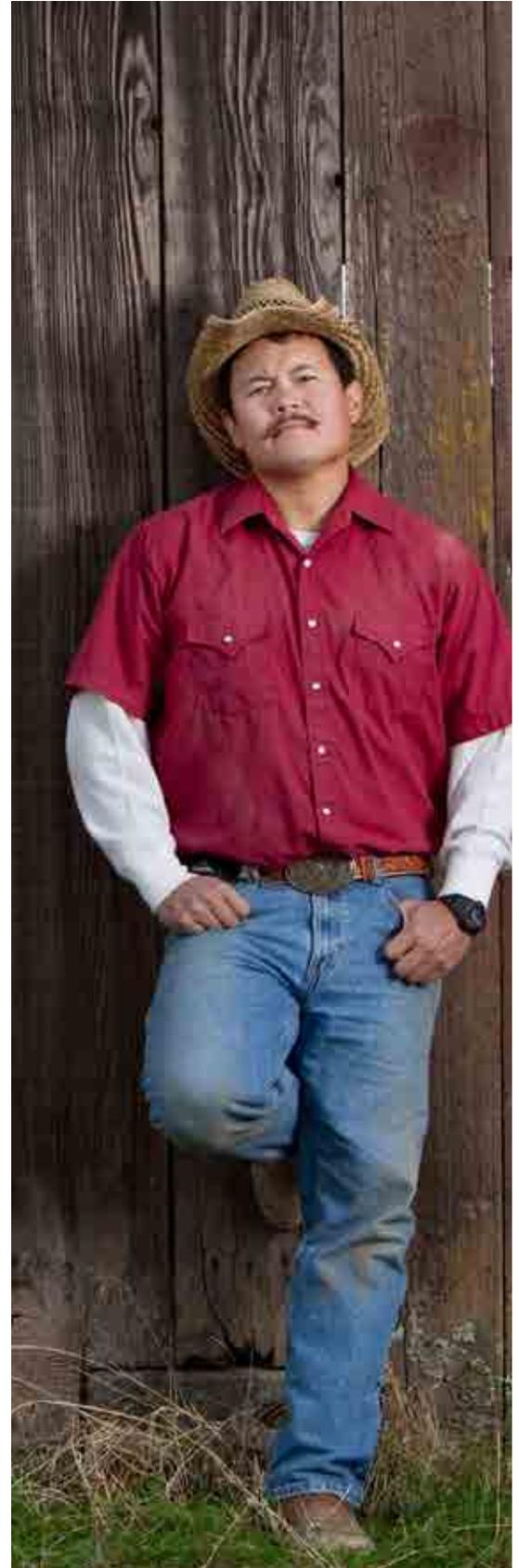
www.mariposavalleyfarm.com

“Let’s count our blessings that there is an organization working to transition our veterans, who have already sacrificed so much for us, into a life for which many of them are so perfectly suited. Farm Bureau honors the noble similarities between farmers and veterans, and we welcome more veterans to a different way of serving our nation. Farm Bureau can play a great role in their successes.”

Get Started

A main function of the Farm Bureau/FVC partnership is to help farmer veterans connect with resources that can provide specific assistance to farmers. To do this, the FVC will refer potential farmer veterans to their local Farm Bureau as a resource. To prepare for these potential contacts, below is a list of actions a Farm Bureau may consider taking to ensure these calls are serving both veterans and the Farm Bureau.

- > Designate a specific individual within the state and county Farm Bureau as the farmer veteran contact person. Either a Farm Bureau staff member or a Farm Bureau volunteer could serve in this position.
- > Ensure all county and state Farm Bureau staff are aware of who the designated farmer veteran contact person is or how to refer farmer veteran calls.
- > Create a plan to align your Farm Bureau's Young Farmers & Ranchers (YF&R) program with the needs of young veterans and more established farmer veterans.
- > Work with established and experienced veterans to pinpoint areas of need and build their potential network.
- > If there is a military base in the area, make contact with the employment liaison for active duty members getting ready to transition to civilian employment to better understand the information future farmer veterans already have.
- > Create an internal working group to decide how to best serve future farmer veterans.
- > Create a list of "micro-volunteering" activities where veterans could easily be included in Farm Bureau activities, such as inviting a veteran to participate in the YF&R Discussion Meet, attend a county annual meeting, work on a county event, speak to the county Farm Bureau board or at a county annual meeting, etc.
- > Invite veterans to participate in Farm Bureau leadership training opportunities such as state conferences for YF&R, Women's Leadership, Health & Safety, and Promotion & Education.
- > Fund an outstanding veteran farmer from your state to attend a state or national Farm Bureau meeting.



Phil Northcutt, Marines, CA



Mike Walgrave, Marines, CA

Get Involved

Get to know your farmer veteran neighbors better

Many Farm Bureaus already have farmer veterans in their leadership ranks. These may be veterans from past wars or recently returned veterans who are assimilating back into their family-owned businesses. The best way to understand the unique challenges and needs of future generations of farmer veterans is to go right to the source.

A Farm Bureau may want to consider creating an advisory committee of existing farmer veteran leaders. The advisory committee can help Farm Bureau create materials that will speak directly to potential veteran members. The committee can also help Farm Bureau get a better handle on what veterans are looking for when they seek resources. Finally, the committee can serve as ambassadors to returning veterans by helping to spread the word that Farm Bureau is willing and able to address the needs of veterans looking into agriculture as a career.

Another way to get to know farmer veterans is to hold a coffee hour or breakfast at a Farm Bureau office or another convenient location, during which the local Farm Bureau invites both existing farmer veterans and veterans interested in agriculture to come meet one another and get to know Farm Bureau better.

Your state and county Farm Bureau may want to consider creating a presentation geared specifically to future farmer veterans or may want to keep the conversation informal and utilize the meeting as an information gathering opportunity to find ways to better tailor Farm Bureau materials to the needs of veterans.

Please remember that many times it just takes a personal invitation for someone to become involved in Farm Bureau activities.

Make sure everyone at your Farm Bureau, from board members to county staff, understands the unique circumstances of returning veterans

Ensuring Farm Bureau staff is educated about farmer veterans is a good way to prepare for effective engagement assisting farmer veterans. Farm Bureaus can create staff workshops to ensure everyone has a better understanding of the unique challenges facing our returning military veterans. Farm Bureaus may also want to invite a working farmer veteran to speak to staff about his or her experiences as both a farmer and a veteran. Inviting a farmer veteran to speak at a Farm Bureau board meeting is another way to make certain the entire organization is engaged in helping returning veterans have successful agricultural careers.

Create a branded farmer veteran welcome packet

The state or county Farm Bureau may want to consider creating an information packet specifically designed to meet the needs of farmer veterans. This packet could include general information about Farm Bureau; any existing programs that are specific to veterans; general information about Farm Bureau committees; and information about YF&R, Women's Leadership, Promotion & Education, and Safety & Health programs.

Help farmer veterans understand agricultural opportunities

Despite ongoing efforts, many veterans are not aware of benefits available to them or how to apply for them. A Farm Bureau may want to consider creating a veteran resource guide to help identify state and local agriculture resources and programs specific to veterans. Or a Farm Bureau may consider re-branding and editing the existing *Veteran Careers in Agriculture* on page 14 to better meet the needs of both the Farm Bureau and its regional scope.





“When I left active duty, I found gardening had a cathartic effect on me. It was a huge transition for me to go from military life to civilian life and growing food helped me transfer my sense of duty from my country to my vegetables that I share with my family and neighbors.”

Kelly Carlisle,
Navy veteran, on her urban
nonprofit farm in Oakland, CA

www.anvfarm.org

Nominate a farmer veteran to be highlighted on the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) Rural Community Building Blog

A great way to celebrate your farmer veterans is to nominate one to be featured on the AFBF Rural Community Building Blog (<http://ruralcommunitybuilding.fb.org/>). Included in this brochure, you will find the nominating form and instructions for nominating a farmer veteran. This story can then be used on your own state Farm Bureau website.

Nominate a farmer veteran to be highlighted on the Start2Farm.gov website

The same nomination form used to nominate a farmer veteran to be highlighted on the AFBF Rural Community Building blog can also be used for Start2Farm Success Stories, <http://start2farm.gov/success-stories>.

Create an adopt-a-farmer veteran mentoring program

Who better to help a farmer veteran learn how to create a successful agricultural business than an existing Farm Bureau staff or volunteer member, particularly one who may be a veteran? An adopt-a-farmer veteran program will help to engage current staff and members to support farmer veterans and assist in getting new farmer veterans the best agricultural advice available. Mentors should be individuals who are established in their respective fields and are willing to volunteer to help farmer veterans with questions about their businesses. County and state Farm Bureaus can help to make these mentorship introductions, as well as advertise the opportunity to current members and new farmer veterans.

Support a farmers' market at a local military base

A great way to support the important connection between farmers and consumers is to offer an opportunity for people to connect. Linking consumers with the source of their food and linking producers with the people who eat what they grow provides a valuable experience for both that is

unavailable to consumers when food is purchased at the grocery checkout counter. Supporting a farmers' market at a military base allows the veterans on that base the opportunity to meet farmers and ask important questions that may fan the flame of their interest in farming or ranching.

Support a FVC equipment exchange

Many times returning veterans have access to land through family members and friends with experience in agriculture, but they might need the equipment to get started. Farm Bureaus can help create bridges between existing members and farmer veterans by supporting a FVC farm equipment exchange. Used equipment exchanges are being established by the FVC in various states that might be suitable for assistance by Farm Bureaus. By utilizing an online platform or a bulletin board within the state, Farm Bureaus can help match used farm equipment with farmer veterans who need just a little extra help to get started.

Engage and teach your members of Congress

Many members of Congress are from urban and suburban regions of the country. They may not understand the connection between urban and rural places and the pathway through farmers' fields and pastures that brings food to their table. But many legislators have veterans as constituents, some of whom may be interested in developing a career in agriculture. Farm Bureau's support for soldiers who wish to find long-term employment, as well as its assistance in finding resources to start farm businesses, is a great message to be able to share.



Will Fellers, Army, NE



Jeremy Lopez, Marines, MD

Communicate

Communication to board and stakeholders

Below are talking points that can be used in building support among your board and stakeholder groups for your Farm Bureau's outreach efforts to veterans.

- > Farm Bureau takes pride in serving diverse farm businesses and making the community a better place to live.
- > Farm Bureau is the leading voice of agriculture, providing leadership and advocacy training to all farmers and ranchers, with specialized programs for women and young and beginning farmers and ranchers.
- > It is estimated that 44 percent of military recruits come from rural America. Among these returning veterans are the next generation of farmers and agricultural business leaders.
- > Recently, Farm Bureau increased its collaboration with the Farmer Veteran Coalition with the appointment of Charlie Kruse (Missouri Farm Bureau past-president) as vice-chair of the Farmer Veteran Coalition board of directors.
- > The Farmer Veteran Coalition is an organization aimed at mobilizing veterans to enter agriculture.
- > The Farmer Veteran Coalition seeks to develop viable employment and meaningful careers for returning veterans through the collaboration of the agriculture and military communities.
- > Farm Bureau and the Farmer Veteran Coalition can successfully partner to help find farm ownership or employment opportunities for members of the military transitioning into the civilian workforce.
- > The vision for this partnership is to connect the talent and experience that Farm Bureaus have in leadership and business skills with farmer veterans whom the Farmer Veteran Coalition has identified as needing such assistance.
- > Farm Bureau can reach out to existing and future farmer veterans with programs to help them to succeed.

Sample News

Release: This sample news release can be customized with your Farm Bureau's information to communicate your efforts to engage with farmer veterans.

FARM BUREAU NAME Supports Returning Veterans Entering Agriculture

STATE, Date - (____) Farm Bureau, the unified voice of agriculture, has joined a national effort to support returning servicemen and women in creating viable agricultural businesses.

The American Farm Bureau Federation (<http://www.fb.org/>) has partnered with the Farmer Veteran Coalition (<http://www.farmvetco.org/>), an organization aimed at mobilizing veterans to enter agriculture and help feed America while rebuilding rural communities. Forty-four percent of military recruits come from rural America and many are expected to rejoin these communities.

(____) Farm Bureau will be working with local participating farmer veterans, providing spokesperson training, advocacy opportunities, production and best management practice resources, mentoring and access to Farm Bureau programs. [Customize list as appropriate.]

"This is an ideal opportunity for us to help our returning veterans get established for long-term success in agriculture," says (____) Farm Bureau President. "Through their service to our country, they've proven that they have the work ethic and dedication that agriculture demands and we have the expertise to help them learn about the business of farming."

ENTER QUOTE FROM LOCAL VETERAN EXCITED ABOUT THIS OPPORTUNITY

Farm Bureau's national efforts are being coordinated through the American Farm Bureau Federation. Farm Bureau works through its grassroots organizations to enhance and strengthen the lives of rural Americans and to build strong, prosperous agricultural communities.

(____) Farm Bureau has the following farmer veteran programs:

[List]

Sample outreach letter to military employment centers

This sample letter may be customized with your Farm Bureau's information to communicate to military and veteran employment centers.

To Whom It May Concern:

Farm Bureau has joined a national effort to support returning servicemen and women in creating viable agricultural businesses.

(_____) Farm Bureau has partnered with the Farmer Veteran Coalition (<http://www.farmvetco.org/>), an organization aimed at mobilizing veterans to enter agriculture and help feed America while rebuilding rural communities. Forty-four percent of military recruits come from rural America and many are expected to rejoin the rural communities from which they came.

Staff at (_____) Farm Bureau are continually assessing ways in which we can better serve farmers, ranchers and rural America. That is why we have recently increased our collaboration with the Farmer Veteran Coalition. The goal of our partnership is to help find farm ownership or employment opportunities for members of the military transitioning into the civilian workforce. The vision for the partnership is to connect the talent and experience of our state and county staff, insurance agents and Farm Bureau leaders who have agricultural expertise with business knowledge and resources with veterans interested in careers related to agriculture.

With the guidance of the Farmer Veteran Coalition, we have developed the following programs specifically tailored to meet the needs of veterans. Whether a veteran is interested in beginning a farm, joining or transitioning an existing farming business, or interested in growing his/her current farming business, we at (_____) Farm Bureau would like to help. It is our hope that you will share this information with those personnel transitioning out of military service or those already considered veterans who are looking for agricultural opportunities. We are happy to speak with individuals interested in Farm Bureau programs or individuals who are simply seeking additional information.

We look forward to serving as a resource to our veterans and look forward to working with you in this endeavor. Thank you for your service and dedication to our nation.

Sincerely,

(_____) Farm Bureau staff or leader

Resources

About Farm Bureau: The Voice of Agriculture

Farm Bureau is an independent, non-governmental, voluntary organization governed by and representing farm and ranch families united for the purpose of analyzing their problems and formulating action to achieve educational improvement, economic opportunity and social advancement and, thereby, to promote the national well-being.

Farm Bureau is local, county, state, national and international in its scope and influence and is non-partisan, non-sectarian and non-secret in character. Farm Bureau is the voice of agricultural producers.

In 1919, a small group of farmers from 30 states gathered in Chicago and founded the American Farm Bureau Federation. Their goal was to speak for themselves through their own national organization. Farm Bureau soon became the voice of agriculture at the national level.

“The purpose of Farm Bureau is to make the business of farming more profitable, and the community a better place to live. Farm Bureau should provide an organization in which members may secure the benefits of unified efforts in a way which could never be accomplished through individual effort.” – Statement originally approved by Farm Bureau members in 1920.

While issues and challenges have changed for America’s farmers and ranchers over the past nine decades, the mission and goals of Farm

Bureau have remained true to that spirit. Farm Bureau members have become more vocal in speaking out on issues of concern for the nation’s farmers and ranchers. For more information about the American Farm Bureau Federation visit www.fb.org.

State Farm Bureau websites

All 50 state Farm Bureaus, plus Puerto Rico Farm Bureau, have websites that offer local programs and resources. A complete list of these websites is available at <http://www.fb.org/index.php?action=statefbs>.

American Farm Bureau Federation Website

Additional materials you can use, including photos and graphics, and success stories will be available on the American Farm Bureau Federation’s website at <http://www.fb.org/>.

American Farm Bureau Federation Staff

As your Farm Bureau implements its outreach to servicemen and women, please feel free to contact American Farm Bureau Federation staff designated to assist states with farmer veteran relations:

- > Director, Rural Development and Beginning Farmer programs, ruraldevelopment@fb.org, (202) 406-3685
- > **Elaine Bristol**, Director, Women’s Leadership and Promotion & Education programs, elaineb@fb.org, (202) 406-3629
- > **Marty Tatman**, Director, Young Farmers & Ranchers and Safety & Health programs, martyt@fb.org, (202) 406-3682

Start2Farm website

Start2Farm is a partnership between the National Ag Library and American Farm Bureau Federation. It is a special project of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program of the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).* <http://start2farm.gov/>

AgSafetyNow website

The AgSafetyNow website is part of the Farm Bureau Safety and Health Network. The mission is to provide leadership and assistance to local and state Farm Bureaus promoting safety and health in agricultural and rural communities. The website is broken down into four main themes (youth safety, occupational wellness and health, farmstead, and equipment and traffic) and has tip sheets, resources, websites, papers and curriculum under each. <http://agsafetynow.fb.org/>

Farm Credit

The Farm Credit Council and the FVC have recently partnered to help find farm ownership or employment opportunities for members of the military transitioning into the civilian workforce. The vision for the partnership is to connect the talent and experience that Farm Credit System institutions have in financial and business skills, with farmer veterans whom the FVC has identified as potentially needing such assistance. <http://fccouncil.com/ybs/fvc/>

National AgrAbility Project

Returning veterans, just like farmers injured in agricultural accidents, face challenges that may include disabilities and non-physical injuries. The vision of AgrAbility is to enable a high-quality lifestyle for farmers, ranchers and other agricultural workers with disabilities. While the term “disability” often brings to mind conditions

such as spinal cord injuries and amputations, AgrAbility addresses not only these but also many other conditions, such as arthritis, back impairments and behavioral health issues. Through education and assistance, AgrAbility helps to eliminate (or at least minimize) obstacles that inhibit success in production agriculture or agriculture-related occupations. <http://www.agrability.org/>

Farmer Veteran Coalition

You may visit the Farmer Veteran Coalition’s website at www.farmvetco.org to find additional resources and information on the coalition’s other programs. There are also frequent updates on the FVC’s Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/farmerveterancoalition?ref=br_tf.

Veteran Careers in Agriculture: A Resource Guide

This comprehensive FVC guide provides a wealth of information geared toward recently returned service members, including training opportunities and business planning. It is available at: http://www.farmvetco.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/RG_FINAL_web.pdf.

Farm Equipment and Exchange Program

FVC’s FEED program accepts donations of used farm equipment from farmers and dealers. For each match made with a deserving farmer veteran, a receipt is given that can be used for a tax deduction. Contact info@farmvetco.org

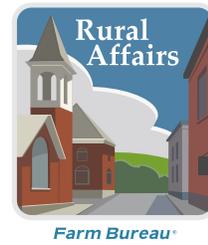
Homegrown by Heroes

This label for veteran-grown products was developed by Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA). FVC is working with KDA so that farm or food businesses 50% or more owned by farmer veterans can use the label on their products nationally.

*The goals of Start2Farm are to create a clearinghouse of available trainings and services for beginning farmers and ranchers at www.Start2Farm.gov, and to provide a national forum for beginning farmer and rancher trainers and resource providers. Grant# 2009-49400-05879.

Farmer Veteran Nomination Form

For the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF)
Rural Community Building Blog and Start2Farm.gov



A great way to celebrate farmer veterans is to share their stories. Please complete this form to nominate a farmer veteran to be featured on the AFBF Rural Community Building Blog or the Start2Farm.gov website. If you would like AFBF to write the story, please fill out the following form. This story can then be used on your own state Farm Bureau website. If you already have a story written, please submit the story with author information and a couple of pictures with captions.

Farmer Veteran Nominee

Name

Branch of service

Address

Phone Email

Reason for the nomination (describe the farm/service of the veteran)

Nominator Information

Name

Address

Phone Email

Please send form to ruraldevelopment@fb.org or fax to 202-406-3756. Thanks for your contribution!

FARM BUREAU® ACTION LIST

Get Started

- Designate a specific individual within the state and county Farm Bureau as the farmer veteran contact person and make sure all county and state Farm Bureau staff know how to refer farmer veteran calls.
- Create a branded farmer veteran welcome packet.
- Work with established and experienced veterans to create an advisory committee to decide how best to serve future farmer veterans, pinpoint areas of need and build a potential network.
- Create a plan to align your Farm Bureau's Young Farmers & Ranchers program with the needs of young veterans and older, more established farmer veterans.

Communicate

- Build support among your board and stakeholders by creating staff workshops to ensure everyone has a better understanding of the unique challenges facing our returning military veterans.
- Communicate with military and veteran employment centers to better understand the information future farmer veterans already have.

- Hold a coffee hour or breakfast and invite both existing farmer veterans and veterans interested in agriculture to network and get to know more about Farm Bureau.
- Use news releases and other publicity tools to communicate to the public about your efforts to engage with farmer veterans.
- Engage and teach your members of Congress about the opportunities for veterans to develop a career in agriculture.

Get Involved

- Create a list of "micro-volunteering" activities where veterans could easily be included in Farm Bureau activities.
- Invite veterans to participate in Farm Bureau leadership training opportunities.
- Fund an outstanding veteran farmer from your state to attend a national AFBF meeting.
- Nominate a farmer veteran to be highlighted on the AFBF Rural Community Building Blog and/or Start2Farm.gov website.
- Start an adopt-a-farmer veteran mentoring program.
- Support a farmers' market at a local military base.
- Support a FVC equipment exchange.