

MEDIA CONTACT:
Tia Christopher
Farmer Veteran Coalition
(530) 756-1395
info@farmvetco.org
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Veterans Big Winners in Senate Farm Bill

The Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act passed the Senate this week after months of debate and compromise. One big victor in the 2012 Farm Bill as it goes onto the House is an important new segment of American farmers – those returning home from military service. Even the definition of a “veteran farmer” - someone who served their country honorably in the US Armed Forces and is taking up farming or ranching – will be written into law.

“We saw support for veteran farmers from both sides of the aisle”, said Michael O’Gorman, Director of the Farmer-Veteran Coalition. “These are the longest wars in American history. The veterans we work with are not looking for a hand-out when they come home, but the opportunity to continue serving their country through the production of food”.



Some of the proposals written into the Senate Bill:

- Establishing a **Veterans Agricultural Liaison** to help connect veterans with beginning farmer training and/or agricultural vocational and rehabilitation programs.
- Amending the **Outreach and Assistance Program for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers**, known as Section 2501, to include veteran farmers and ranchers.
- Setting aside a percentage of funding in the **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP)** for groups to help veterans transition into agriculture.
- Amending the **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**, to give the same increased cost share to veterans as other socially disadvantaged groups
- Refunding the **National AgrAbility Project**. AgrAbility is the nation’s leading group assisting disabled farmers. There is a new focus in the group on assisting combat injured veterans that want to begin farming.

“Funding is still critical,” said O’Gorman. “Many of the projects supported by BFRDP and 2501 have already been helping our veteran farmers. They need continued support to give the one-on-one assistance the new veteran farmers will need. But this bill is a huge victory for our veterans, especially those returning in such large numbers to our rural communities.”

Photograph of Will Fellers and his family. Will is an OIF Army veteran who farms corn and soybeans in Nebraska.

The Farmer Veteran Coalition seeks to mobilize our food and farming community to create healthy and viable futures for veterans on America’s farms.

###

Farmer Veteran Coalition, 508 2nd Street, Suite 206, Davis, CA 95616