

VETERAN CAREERS IN AGRICULTURE: A RESOURCE GUIDE



CREDITS

Contact Information

ADDRESS:

508 2nd Street, Suite 206
Davis, CA 95616

PHONE:

530.756.1395

EMAIL:

info@farmvetco.org

VISIT US AT:

www.farmvetco.org
www.facebook.com/farmerveterancoalition

The mission of the Farmer Veteran Coalition is to mobilize veterans to feed America. 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.

AUTHOR:

Jennifer Mull, Sasha Klein

ASSISTANCE FROM:

Michael O’Gorman, Tia Christopher, Karen Van Epen

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS WHO MADE THIS RESOURCE GUIDE POSSIBLE:



VETERAN CAREERS IN AGRICULTURE

Glossary

AGRICULTURE

(Noun) /agrikəlCHər/

The science, art, or practice of cultivating the soil, producing crops, and raising livestock and the preparation and marketing of the resulting products.

CAREER

(Noun) /kəri(ə)r/

A profession for which one trains and which is undertaken as a permanent calling.

VETERAN

(Noun) /vetərən/

A former member of the armed forces.

INTRODUCTORY LETTER FROM SECRETARY TOM VILSACK

U.S. Department Of Agriculture

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about the tremendous opportunity our agriculture sector holds for America’s returned service members. The informational materials on the following pages are the result of a commendable effort by our nation’s agriculture leaders to bring more veterans into the business of farming and ranching. They know that the skills and work ethic our veterans bring from military service are valuable assets when it comes to providing the food, fiber and fuel we need to keep America going strong.

Today, more than 6 million American veterans live in rural America, a higher concentration than any other part of the country. That is not a surprise to me. Our veterans embody the values that stand at the heart of rural America: hard work, a love of their country, and a sense of duty to give back to a nation that has done so much for us all.

I want you to know that the **U.S. Department of Agriculture** is behind you 100 percent. In the past year, USDA has stood up a dedicated task force charged with strengthening and coordinating our support for veterans in agriculture. We’ve participated in a wide variety of veterans’ hiring efforts coordinated by the **Department of Veterans Affairs** and the **Department of Defense**. Finally, we have created a **USDA Veterans Employment Program** office, through which any veteran who contacts us has access to counseling, career help, and consideration for employment. You can learn more about these efforts in this helpful guide.

Should you decide to begin a new career in agriculture, USDA provides resources for new and beginning farmers through our **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program** and a new microloan program that could be helpful to you. I truly hope that USDA and agricultural groups such as those who contributed to this guide can provide the help you need to get started and keep growing. For returned veterans, agriculture provides a unique chance to continue serving our country – ensuring that our food supply is secure, protecting our natural resources and giving us the tools we need to continue leading the world.

Thank you once again for your interest in agriculture and above all, thank you for your service to our great nation.

Sincerely,

Tom Vilsack



MEET THE SECRETARY OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Tom Vilsack was appointed by President Barack Obama as the 30th Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and was sworn into office on January 21, 2009.

Secretary Vilsack is working hard to strengthen the American agricultural economy, revitalize rural communities, protect and conserve our natural resources, and provide a safe, sufficient and nutritious food supply.

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“ I do not have a lot of agricultural experience, but I do have the ambition and the willingness to learn. I believe in the American Small Farm and think it has a crucial part to play in the local economy and the community. I consider myself a patriot of this country and believe this is the best way I can continue to support and help her grow. ”

→ Jeremiah Butler
OEF ARMY VETERAN

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AGRICULTURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Unprecedented Change & Opportunity

A LETTER FROM THE FARMER VETERAN COALITION'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR → MICHAEL O'GORMAN

When I began farming in 1970, two million farmers were feeding 200 million people; now 960,000 farmers are feeding 310 million mouths. For a century our numbers have shrunk and our age has gone up. Our nation is in need of new farmers to feed our people, protect our land, rebuild our economy, bring back our rural communities, keep us healthy, and make our nation secure.

Support for healthy eating, diversity in our diet and food that travels fewer miles from the field to the plate has made farming on smaller acreage a viable option. It has also allowed for the return of high value crops to communities that have long abandoned them.

Farming takes more physical and mental effort, perseverance, and sacrifice than almost any type of work. Yet its rewards go far beyond financial success. Farmers find inspiration through working outside with nature, creating life, and providing services vitally needed by society.

Veterans make excellent farmers. They are not afraid of difficult tasks, they stand up when they are knocked down, they understand the need to be acutely aware of everything around them, and most of all, they are driven by doing what is right for their country.

Farming, like the military, is one of our last great meritocracies; one is judged based on actions, not words. We at the **Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC)** believe in the opportunities that American agriculture has to offer. We each

have the opportunity and ability to produce good food, and to create a positive influence on our society.

Not all agriculture means self-employment. Our largest farms offer a wide range of well-paying jobs. My own profession, farm management, gave me the satisfaction of farming on a scale that I never could have achieved on my own. I was able to focus on the part of the job that I loved - being out in the field growing the crop - while my colleagues handled the sales and business. There are many different types of jobs and ways of getting involved in the agriculture industry.

Whatever your path is into agriculture, it will be your knowledge and training - not money, land or markets - that will serve as your greatest asset. In a world that will see 9 to 10 billion people in the lifespan of a career, farmers will never be unemployed or outsourced, and their value and compensation can only go up.

FVC was started to help veterans, like yourself find the path that works for them, and help them down the road towards a viable and rewarding career. We have been joined by many organizations, including the entire staff of the United States Department of Agriculture. These partnerships allow FVC to better serve you, the Farmer Veteran.

When our country needed young men and women to put themselves in harm's way, you were there. America needs new farmers, who better to heed that call than our veterans?

FARMER VETERAN COALITION

Who We Are And What We Do

The mission of the **Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC)** is to mobilize veterans to feed America. 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. We believe that veterans possess the unique skills and character needed to strengthen rural communities and create sustainable food systems for all.

We also believe that food production offers purpose, opportunity, and physical and psychological benefits. FVC was started in 2008 by Michael O’Gorman, a pioneer in America’s organic farm movement. Michael’s experience and knowledge of farming is an invaluable resource for FVC’s Farmer Veterans.

OVERVIEW

The Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) provides a wide variety of services designed to assist veterans in making a successful transition into an agricultural career.

FELLOWSHIP FUND

Is designed to assist veterans beginning a career in food and farming, and assist current Farmer Veterans with business expansion.

CONFERENCES/RETREAT/WORKSHOPS

Provides veterans an opportunity to meet face to face with agricultural and business experts, as well as veteran service providers.

MENTORS

Are individuals who are established in their respective field and have volunteered to help Farmer Veterans with questions about their operations.

LIBRARY

Books are distributed based on the area of agriculture pursuit and veteran needs.

INTERNSHIP/APPRENTICESHIP PLACEMENT

Allows veterans with little or no agricultural background to grow their knowledge and experience, outside of an academic (4 year University) setting, and focus on the practical application of everyday farm operations.

JOB PLACEMENT

Matches employers and employees.

WORKSHEETS

Are designed to function as an assessment tool, in order to better determine appropriate resources for a specific veteran. In some cases, the worksheets function as an opportunity for an aspiring Farmer Veteran to do a self-check and answer questions that they may not have thought were important.

FARM SUPPORT

FVC staff performs on-site visits in order to get an in-person assessment of a Farmer Veteran’s specific needs.

ADVOCACY

FVC realizes its unique position as an organization to help spread knowledge to the general population about the unique needs and challenges facing veteran farmers.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE FARMER VETERAN COALITION

WE GUIDE the passion of our veterans so that they may earn for themselves a meaningful, financially sustainable place in the agricultural community. This could entail full-time or part-time employment, or a critical supplement to disability-related income.

WE BELIEVE in the meritocracy of American agriculture, where personal responsibility for one’s actions and individual initiative in pursuit of one’s goals can create personal success. We believe in the fundamental dignity of physical work.

WE ACKNOWLEDGE the plurality of agricultural crops, practices, scale and markets available to our veterans. We honor, guide, and support the practical farming path chosen by each veteran.

WE ARE COMMITTED to leveraging our work through a network of partnerships. This allows us to more effectively help a larger number of veterans, particularly those in the onset of their civilian careers.

WE SUPPORT all valid national, regional, or crop-specific efforts to connect veterans with agriculture and encourage collaboration instead of competition with other groups providing services to our nation’s veterans.

WE SPONSOR and encourage both employment and self-employment in agriculture, and equally value the contributions made by all members of the agricultural industry who feed America. We recognize the range of opportunities for employment throughout the agricultural economy.

WE RESPECT the privacy of our veterans, and we will assist when we can to get them the support that will help make them stronger farmers. We support and treat the whole veteran. We are aware of the high number of veterans that return with both visible and invisible wounds.

WE RECOGNIZE the geographic and psychological isolation common to both farmers and veterans. Creating contact between our farmer veterans, and a sense of community amongst them, is an important part of our mission.



MEET A VETERAN FARMER



Kelly Carlisle

**YOUTH URBAN FARM →
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA**

After serving as an operations specialist in the Navy and serving in the Navy Reserve, Kelly returned home to East Oakland, CA. In August of 2010, Kelly established Acta Non Verba: Youth Urban Farm Project, a non-profit whose name means “Deeds not Words.” Their mission is to utilize urban farming as a catalyst to increase the standard of living for inner city youth. As a mother, Kelly feels very strongly in creating a healthier future for East Oakland youth. Kelly plans to start a CSA for the local community, establish a farmers market onsite and begin community classes on composting, cooking, basic gardening and other topics. Kelly explains that she can “feed a certain number of families, but more importantly, the amount of people who will be soothed and inspired by the process is a far reaching goal that has a much larger impact on our society.”

Matt McCue

**SHOOTING STAR CSA →
FAIRFIELD, CALIFORNIA**

Matt served in the Army, including a deployment to Iraq where he became interested in Iraqi farmers. Upon returning home Matt attended CASFS – Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems at the University of California, Santa Cruz. FVC assisted Matt in obtaining his first farm management job in 2008. In 2009, he began Shooting Star CSA, in Northern California, with fellow CASFS graduate Lily Schnieder. They now raise 15 acres of organic vegetables and have over 250 CSA subscribers. “I realize that in order to succeed I don’t need to travel endlessly. Like the plants, I can become a part of the environment and create a more meaningful bond with my world.”



Will Fellers

**FELLER’S FARM →
LEXINGTON, NEBRASKA**

Will Fellers is an Army veteran who served for six years. Will graduated basic training the day the war in Iraq began. It wasn’t long after he returned home from basic training, that his unit was put on alert and then deployed to Iraq. During Will’s time in Iraq, he watched Iraqi farmers struggled in desolate conditions to harvest a crop. He developed a deep appreciation for the green fertile landscape he had left at home in Nebraska. After his deployment, Will returned to Nebraska to continue in his family’s tradition of farming. He now farms 600 acres of soybeans and corn on rented ground, using only one tractor and an eight-row planter.

Jeremy Lopez

**AMERIPACA →
WEST RIVER, MARYLAND**

Jeremy served in the United States Marine Corps for five years including unique tours of duty as an Embassy Guard. After his service, Jeremy spent several years interning and working on organic farms and vineyards throughout California. With help from FVC, Jeremy attended the Rudolf Steiner College, one of the most prestigious schools in the world for biodynamic farming. After he completed his work at the Rudolf Steiner College, he accepted a farm manager position at the Ameripaca Farm in Maryland, where he is tasked with designing and implementing an educational biodynamic farm.



FARMER VETERAN FELLOWSHIP FUND

The Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund is designed to assist veterans beginning a career in food and farming, and assist current Farmer Veterans with business expansion. All veterans are eligible to apply, however there is a focus on those who served post 9-11 and are at the beginning of their careers, as well as the disabled veteran population. Since the Fellowship Fund's inception in 2011.

There are two branches of the Fellowship Fund, the Business Branch and the Education & Training Branch. The Business Branch provides a boost to Farmer Veterans through the purchase of equipment, assistance with certifications, building materials and labor. The Education & Training Branch targets veterans who are interested in pursuing an agriculture-focused education or training program, which will enable future employment. Examples of education and training programs that FVC has worked with in the past include the Orange County Great Park, Veterans to Farmers, the Center for Land Based Learning California Farm Academy, and the Rudolf Steiner College.

Fellowship Fund grantees are awarded grants, as well as in-kind supplies and equipment. Outside of monetary assistance FVC provides grantees with personal one-on-one farm advice, and business and financial mentorships. FVC equips all grantees with textbooks and peer mentors, with the goal of supplying a complete toolbox for these Farmers Veterans. The grantees are also connected to each other – forming an ever-growing community of Farmer Veterans that help and support one another.

The Fellowship Fund is overseen by the Fellowship Fund Advisory Panel, which is made up of experts and business leaders in America's agricultural community. The panel not only oversees the granting process, but also mentors the grantees. This exchange of knowledge and support is what makes the Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund unique, and contributes to sustainable futures for our Farmer Veteran grantees'.



MEET A FELLOWSHIP FUND GRANTEE

Mickey joined the Army and served in support of OIF. Mickey was severely injured while serving in-country, resulting in a permanent leg injury and medical discharge from the service. Mickey spent a portion of her childhood on a reservation in South Dakota in what she calls "big sheep country". After her service she decided to pursue raising sheep as a full-time enterprise, and purchased Dot Ranch from a WWII Navy Longshoreman.

Mickey is one of a few farmers raising Navajo Churro Sheep, an American heritage breed. She also raises Muscovy ducks, Mottled Java and Black Copper Maran chickens, as well as Dexter cattle. With Mickey's Bob Woodruff Farming Fellowship she was able to purchase a specialized sheep squeeze handling system and a freezer for her ODA/FDA certified meat.

Currently, Mickey is a student at OSU in the Natural Resource Management program, the founder of a Doberman pinscher rescue, the sole proprietor of Dot Ranch, and a single mother. Mickey embodies the spirit of veterans returning home not only to farm but give back to their communities.

→ Mickey Clayton

**ARMY NATIONAL AWARD VETERAN
SCIO, OREGON**

MEET A FARMER VETERAN FELLOWSHIP FUND GRANTEE

Anna Mann

**CHESTNUT RIDGE FARM →
MOUNT AIRY, NORTH
CAROLINA**

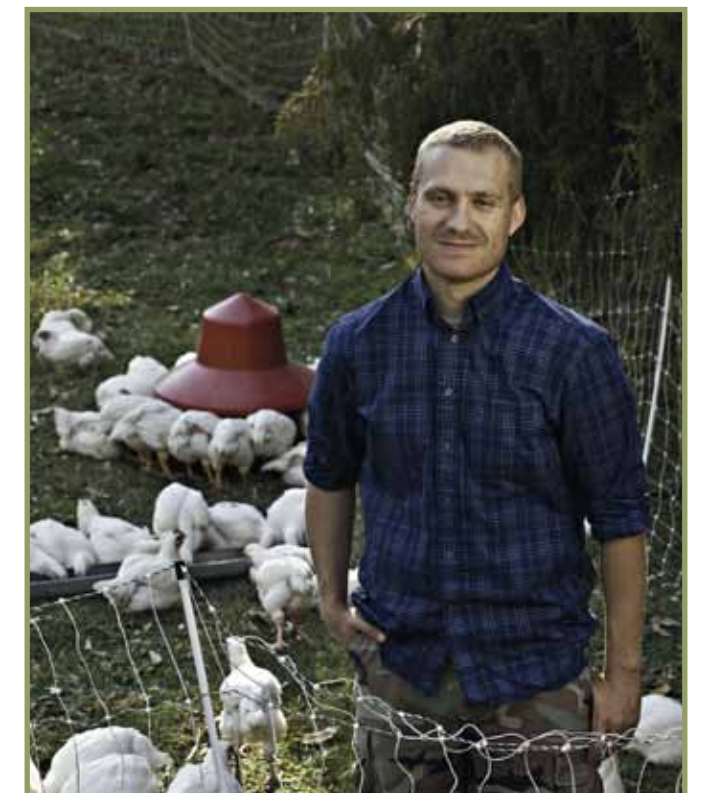
Anna Mann served eight years in the Army before starting Chestnut Ridge Farm in North Carolina. Her family farm is located on 100-acres and consists of a fruit and nut orchard, pork, chicken and turkey production. Anna was FVC's first female Bob Woodruff Farming Fellow of 2012, which assists OIF and OEF veterans with disabilities transition into agriculture. Anna's fellowship allowed her to purchase fencing for her orchard and finance a water management project.



Terrell Spencer

**ACROSS THE CREEK FARM →
WEST FORK, ARKANSAS**

"Spence" spent 9 years in the Army Reserve, including a deployment in support of OIF. With the help of the Bob Woodruff Farming Fellowship, the Fellowship Fund purchased Spence a used tractor, front-end loader and brush hog. Across the Creek Farm raises meat goats and chickens on pasture. They are the sole provider of pasture poultry to the Ozarks Natural Foods store. In their summer newsletter, Spence explains, "I was watching the meat chickens the other day, and noticed, as they preened and ran around, how clean and content our birds are... I thought to myself how proud I am of the quality of the meat we put out there." Spence is always the first to offer advice and help to his fellow grantees. Spence has made an extremely successful transition from military life to a farming career.



AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

If you're interested in agriculture, but are not sure you want to become a farmer or rancher, you will be glad to know that agriculture offers a wide variety of work. The vast array of job opportunities in farming and ranching will allow you to become an instrumental part in feeding our country.

AGRICULTURAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES

- Accounting
- Administration
- Agricultural Engineering
- Agritourism
- Agroforestry
- Aquaculture, Aquaponics
- Beekeeping
- Brokering, Buying
- Dairy Production- Cow, Goat, or Sheep
- Equipment Development
- Flower Production
- Herb Production- Medicinal and Culinary
- Horticulture, Plant Science
- Import/Export
- Farm Education
- Farm Building Design & Construction
- Food Safety
- Food Science
- Flood Protection
- Fruit and Nut Orchards
- Grain and Legume Production, Processing
- Greenhouse Vegetable & Flower Production
- Human Resources
- Hydroponics
- Irrigation, Water Science
- Information Technology
- Land and Water Restoration
- Livestock, Range Management
- Logistics
- Management
- Marketing
- Mushroom Production
- Nursery Production
- Poultry & Egg Production
- Ranching
- Packing and Distribution
- Pest Management
- Quality Control
- Renewable Energy
- Retail/Direct Marketing
- Rural Community Development
- Sales
- School Gardens
- Seed Production
- Soil Science, Composting
- Specialty Crops
- Food Service
- Transportation
- Urban Agriculture
- Veterinarians, Animal Technicians
- Vegetable Crop Production
- Warehouse

WHAT IS A FARMER / RANCHER?

FARMER

(noun) /färmər/

Someone whose primary source of income is derived from the production and sale of farm products.

HOBBY FARMER

(noun) /häbē//färmər/

The USDA classifies a hobby farmer as someone for whom production and sale of food is a secondary income. In reality, farm production could be a substantial part of your income. Many hobby farmers eventually go into farming full-time.

RANCHER

(noun) /ranCHər/

One who owns or manages a ranch, or extensive piece of farmland.

FARM WORKER

(noun) /färm//wærkər/

While much of the hand labor on large farms is seasonal, there are many well-paying year-round jobs, particularly in large fruit, vegetable, and nut companies. Farm work can be a precursor to starting one's own farm business.

FARM MANAGER

(noun) /färm//manijər/

Farm managers are responsible for the production of a large portion of the nation's food. These positions are often well paying and can lead to profit sharing, and other participation in farm growth. There are 300,000 farm managers across the country, according to the USDA census.

FINDING EMPLOYMENT IN AGRICULTURE

For many a well-paying job in agriculture is a satisfying career; for others it is a chance to gain valuable experience and knowledge before farming on your own. When you begin to look for employment, talk to experienced farmers in your area, they may know of someone who is looking for labor. They can also share insight as to the best time to apply for work, and what jobs you may be qualified for. It is important to do initial research on the region where you wish to work, because some areas are employment-rich, while in other places self-employment may be more feasible. When looking for seasonal employment such as spring time agricultural jobs, you should begin looking in the fall in order to be hired for the season. If you are attending school and cannot work year-round, summer employment is a great way to explore different options in agriculture, while earning a paycheck.

You can directly contact a farm and ask if they will take you on for training or for an entry-level position. Be prepared to provide prospective employers with a résumé and cover letter, and present yourself in a professional matter. As a veteran, you should emphasize your hard-working, dependable nature. These strengths are important and will distinguish you from other applicants, even if the position is simply entry level. A farmer will often hire an employee at an entry-level position for a trial period. If the employee does well, the employer might test him or her out at a higher level of responsibility. Mechanical skills are a major plus for many farm jobs. Computer and language skills, especially Spanish, can help you to obtain middle management work on larger farms.

Your local State **Workforce Agency** office can assist you in your job search and placement. They can also help you find training for your desired field. You will find contact information for these offices in the State Government pages of your local phonebook under Labor Department.

The **U.S. Department of Labor's "CareerOneStop"** program operates the **Key to Career Success** campaign. This campaign is designed to assist veterans or transitioning service members with finding a job. They provide job placement assistance, résumé help, and licensing and certification. There are also resources for veterans who are disabled or injured and are looking for work. www.careeronestop.org/militarytransition.

USAJOBS is a federal government employment website. There you can find jobs pertaining to all branches of the government, including those in the **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)**. This is a great way to become involved in agriculture without being hands-on in the fields. www.usajobs.gov.

BlueSkySearch.com is an online database for jobs in sales, marketing and management level jobs in all agriculture-related fields. The **Farmer Veteran Coalition** also maintains job listings, including some that specifically combine training of veterans and employment.



EMPLOYMENT AT THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The United States Department of Agriculture's **Veterans' Employment Program** was established in 2009 by the President's Executive Order 13518, Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government. This initiative directs the federal government to promote veterans' employment within its agencies and departments.

The Veterans' Employment Program provides services to transitioning service members, veterans, and family members. Program staff can provide you with information about the USDA and its 17 sub-agencies. They can review and give feedback on résumés, help match your skills and qualifications with USDA jobs, and explain the



federal application process, special hiring authority eligibility, and category rating. Program staff will refer eligible veterans to the personnel in the sub-agencies who are responsible for veteran recruiting.

The Veterans' Employment Program collaborates with other federal and state agencies, as well as veteran service organizations to provide training and education for transitioning service members, veterans and family members. The trainings are designed to improve the employment-seeking skills of participants.

For information about job opportunities, visit **USDA's Careers and Jobs** link, www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/content?navid=CAREERS.

If you have any questions, contact the **USDA Veterans' Employment Program**, VeteransEmploymentProgram@dm.usda.gov or by phone at **202-690-3420**.

For more information and assistance with applying for USDA jobs, contact the Farmer Veteran Coalition, www.farmvetco.org.



EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR FARMER VETERANS

Land-Grant Universities were created by the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 to provide education in agriculture, mechanical arts, and military tactics. With the development of Land-Grant Universities, people interested in agriculture and technical fields could receive a formal education in their chosen area. Many of the finest educational institutions across the United States are Land-Grant Universities. There is at least one Land-Grant institution in every U.S. state and territory, and these universities are wonderful places for people seeking an education in agriculture.

TWO-YEAR SCHOOLS are generally community colleges and vocational programs. The courses are career-focused, ideal for people looking to enter the workforce quickly. As a student at a two-year college, you will be working toward your Associate Degree or a professional certificate. This will allow you to specialize in a field of your choice; however it may not offer you as many job opportunities as a broader agriculture degree from a four-year institution.

FOUR-YEAR SCHOOLS are colleges and universities that offer Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees. While the programs at a two-year institution are more specific and offer you training in a particular field, four-year institutions present a more broad view of agriculture. Colleges and universities offer degrees in agriculture, agribusiness, agricultural engineering, animal science, dairy science, horticulture, plant and soil science, food science, viticulture and enology, and many other topics.

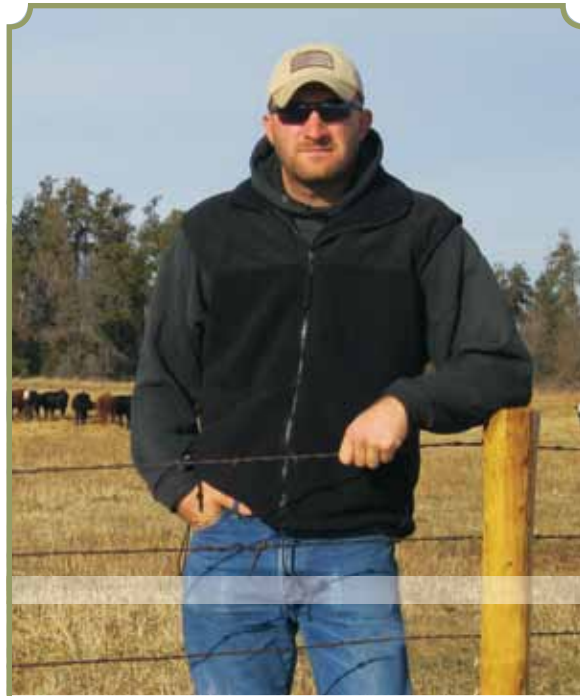
HOW TO USE THE GI BILL

In order to use the GI Bill to fund your education, you must first find out which bill you are eligible for — the **Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB)** or the **POST 9/11 GI BILL**. If you served in the Reserve or National Guard, you may be eligible for the **Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP)**. REAP makes certain that Reservists and National Guard who were activated for at least 90 days after September 11, 2001 are eligible for benefits of some kind.

Veterans eligible for more than one educational benefit should consider their career goals when selecting either GI Bill or REAP. The VA offers an online service called the **"Road Map for Success."** This website can help you determine what program will provide you with the greatest benefits. The site offers a benefits calculator to help you estimate the amount that you could receive under the Post 9/11 GI Bill. The website is useful for everything from researching the GI Bill to learning about institutions you might want to attend. www.gibill.va.gov/apply-for-benefits/road-map.

In addition, the non-profit **Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)** has informational and current resources about veteran benefits. Their website, www.newgibill.org provides information specifically for the Post 9/11 GI Bill.





Garrett Dwyer grew up in Nebraska on his family's ranch. He joined the United States Marine Corps in 2004, serving as an infantryman in Ramadi, Iraq in 2006-2007. After his service, he attended NCTA and graduated with a degree in Agriculture Production. NCTA helped Garrett get a leg up in his ranching business, by helping him develop his business plan and access a low interest rate loan through the FSA. Garrett is currently running approximately 100 cow-calf pairs and has been updating equipment on his family ranch.

“ NCTA has given me a great opportunity to be able to return home with a better understanding of the latest technology and business skills that are constantly changing in the agriculture industry. ”

→ Garrett Dwyer
OIF ARMY VETERAN

NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

Located 45 miles southeast of North Platte, Nebraska and Interstate 80, Curtis is home to the **Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA)**. NCTA is on a 72-acre campus with a 562-acre farm, which serves as a field laboratory. The farm includes grain storage facilities, cattle growing and finishing facilities, and a diversified dry land and irrigated farming operation

NCTA was established in 1965 as a land-grant institution - known at the time as UNSTA. The campus is rich in history, with many of the original buildings, including Ag Hall, still in use. NCTA blends its history with the latest innovations as it continues to improve and add new facilities to its campus.

NCTA provides a two-year degree in a range of agriculture-related programs. Its **100 Beef Cow Ownership Advantage, 100 Acre Farm, and Business Builder** programs stress entrepreneurship and business ownership, while directing students to qualify for USDA operating loans and business partnership on graduation. **The Combat Boots to Cowboy Boots** program assists veterans in becoming owners of farms, ranches and businesses. NCTA teaches entrepreneurship across its entire curriculum to encourage graduates to be the next generation of farm, ranch, and business owners.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
WEB: www.ncta.unl.edu
PHONE: 1-800 3-CURTIS



TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES OUTSIDE OF TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

INTERNSHIPS/APPRENTICESHIPS are on-the-job training opportunities. Some pay hourly wages or stipends, while others simply provide room and board for your commitment. Internships/apprenticeships are great ways to get your foot in the door, and to begin to understand what a career in agriculture would be like. There are many ways to access internship/apprenticeship opportunities including, contacting farms in your area to inquire whether they are looking for an intern. Local land-grant universities can be useful resources for locating and securing an internship/apprenticeship. The ATTRA website has up-to-date sustainable agriculture internships/apprenticeship opportunities nationwide. The Farmer Veteran Coalition also has an up-to-date database of internship/apprenticeship opportunities, including opportunities specifically for Farmer Veterans.

INCUBATOR FARMS focus on bringing beginning farmers into the production agriculture industry. Many of the people who come to incubator farms have no experience in agriculture. In many cases, participants are provided a small plot of land on a larger farm, where they have access to farm equipment and materials, as well as the opportunity to observe techniques used by others to yield a successful crop. Incubator farms foster a community where new farmers learn from each other. Programs will often assist participants in finding local markets to sell their product. Incubator farms offer a chance to start your own farm without a large amount of capital and begin recording and filing farm income — a process that is crucial to securing loans. Please contact The Farmer Veteran Coalition for farm incubator opportunities in your area.

TRAINING PROGRAMS are formalized programs centered on a curriculum, which typically provides both classroom and hands-on education. Some training programs are accredited and others provide certifications for specific skills. Training programs can vary in length and meeting time. Some programs are full time commitments; while others are scheduled as evening classes for those with day-time employment. Training programs provide a mixture of in class and in field education to create well-rounded farmers of tomorrow. For up-to date training programs, please contact The Farmer Veteran Coalition for opportunities.

QUICK DEFINITIONS

INCUBATOR PROGRAMS

Farm incubator programs offer a combination of farming education, hands on training, and low cost land and infrastructure to help farmers launch new agricultural businesses.

TRAINING PROGRAMS

Training programs provide a curriculum based on in-class and/or hands on training for beginning farmers. These programs can last anywhere from a day to several months and do not necessarily require the participant to live on site.

APPRENTICESHIPS/ INTERNSHIPS

Apprenticeships and internships are hands-on opportunities to live and work on a farm, ranch or other agricultural environment to gain the knowledge needed to have a career in agriculture.



TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES: *California Farm Academy*

Operated by the **Center for Land-Based Learning**, this innovative program and farm business incubator teaches and mentors new farmers in agricultural production, business planning and marketing of specialty crops. Limited dairy, poultry and livestock classes will be offered in 2013.

The California Farm Academy's (CFA) nine-month program takes place on a part-time basis, with classes held on evenings and weekends, 2-3 days per week. The CFA training program consists of classes, hands-on experience, farm visits and other field trips.

CFA students develop farm business plans, which are suitable to present to a loan officer and help guide farm setup, operations and management decisions. Each student also has an independent study project that focuses on specific farming and marketing goals. Classes are led by the program staff, farmers, college and university instructors, and agricultural, natural resource and agriculture business professionals.

TOPICS INCLUDE

- **Crop planning**
 - **Soil science**
 - **Pest management**
 - **Organic agriculture**
 - **Tractor driving and farm machinery**
 - **Irrigation and water management**
 - **Direct and wholesale marketing**
 - **Ecology and conservation**
 - **Goal setting and farm**
 - **enterprise analysis**
 - **Obtaining loans, insurance and permits**
 - **Farm financials and record-keeping**
 - **Farm safety**
 - **Regulatory compliance**
 - **Decision-making and problem-solving**
- The **CFA farm business**

incubator consists of farmland for lease to qualified graduates of the training program. Plots of land (some organic) will be available at the Center for Land-Based Learning or at other sites. Farmer mentors and program staff will continue to train and guide CFA incubator farmers as they grow and market their own product.

CFA is dedicated to training, mentoring and providing access to land for motivated, hard-working farm entrepreneurs. Please call or check the website, CaliforniaFarmAcademy.org for additional details or an application.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
WEB: www.landbasedlearning.org
PHONE: 530-795-4146

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES: *Veterans to Farmers*



Veterans to Farmers (VTF), is a Colorado based non-profit that focuses on teaching veterans organic, controlled-environment agriculture.

VTF's mission is to provide American veterans with pride, education and fulfillment

through a permanent source of sustainable income, community and contribution.

The training center is located in Wheat Ridge, Colorado. There, veterans learn the core skills of becoming successful organic hydroponic farmers in a 9- to 12-month on-the-job training program. The curriculum includes: Systems Construction; Greenhouse Maintenance and Operations; Plant Propagation; and Business Management Skills.

To ensure a comprehensive education and training program that includes both agricultural and business training elements, VTF has developed an innovative education partnership with Red Rocks Community College (RRCC), the Controlled Environment Agriculture Center (CEAC), Colorado State University (CSU), and Rodale Institute.

VTF is also leading a team of education experts to develop a nine-month community college accredited certificate program that will qualify veterans to receive GI Bill support. This program will integrate courses by the Controlled Environment Agriculture Center's staff, small business training by RRCC, and on-the-job training and apprenticeships through Circle Fresh Farms.

At the completion of the program, each student will have completed a business plan that can be used in applying for funding, specifically the USDA beginning farmer program and SBA Patriot Express loan.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
WEB: www.veteranstofarmers.org
PHONE: 720-446-9355



A MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER

As a Marine, I understand the challenges of adjusting to civilian life after a tour of duty. I served my country proudly and I want to continue my service now that I am state-side. This sense of honor and service, combined with my passion for healthy, natural, local growing pushed me to start Veterans to Farmers.

Our vision at Veterans to Farmers is to build new types of sustainable growing practices while training our service men and women in a new, rewarding and therapeutic way. We can accomplish this goal through growing fresh food and feedstock's for biofuel. In this way, we can truly create food and fuel security for our country.

Help us begin the cycle of change.

→ *Buck Adams*

USMC 89-93

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES: VALOR

The **Veteran's Agricultural Learning – Opportunities & Resources (VALOR)** Program provides a well-rounded education and hands-on experience for veterans in preparation for employment in the agriculture industry.

VALOR is located at the Orange County Great Park in Irvine, CA. The program is 8 months long, including 800 hours as a paid intern with the City of Irvine, 480 hours as a paid employee of the Irvine Ranch Conservancy, fieldwork at the 105-acre Great Park Farm and the 3-acre VALOR Farm, and 30 continuing education units and a Certificate of Completion from Brandman University.

The VALOR curriculum provides the skills and knowledge needed to have a successful farming career. AG Kawamura, the Former Secretary of the Department of Food & Agriculture, will be the main instructor for the VALOR Program. Under Mr. Kawamura's leadership, industry professionals and the staff at Orange County Produce will be the primary instructors for the VALOR Program. The curriculum includes topics on:

- California Agriculture
- Soil Conservation
- Water & Irrigation
- Pest Management
- Hothouse Hydroponics
- Algae Farming Systems
- Agriculture Machinery
- Technology
- Field Preparation Harvest
- Post Harvest Handling
- Shipping
- Fresh Market
- Processing
- Farm Organizations
- Business Model Development

VALOR PROGRAM PARTNERS

- Orange County Great Park
- City of Irvine
- Orange County Produce
- Orange County Farm Bureau
- Irvine Ranch Conservancy
- Farmer-Veteran Coalition
- Orange County Harvest
- Brandman University

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

WEB: www.octp.org

PHONE: 530-756-1395*

*Farmer Veteran Coalition Office

AG KAWAMURA

AG Kawamura was the Secretary for the California Department of Food and Agriculture from 2003 – 2010. His 30+ years of experience as a produce grower and shipper in Orange County, and his long history of public service to California agriculture, greatly enhances the level of education the VALOR Program provides to America's veterans.



TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES: Veterans Farm

Veterans Farm was founded by Adam Burke, an OIF combat veteran. The farm is located in Jacksonville, Florida where they grow blueberries and peppers in containers; which allows the farm to be wheel chair accessible.

Currently, the average age of a farmer is between 60-65 years. For every 3 farmers retiring there is only 1 farmer taking their place. Veterans Farm believes that our returning veterans can help fill this gap in the farming industry. With an approximate suicide rate of 18 veteran deaths per day, as well as a lack of successful reintegration programs, Veterans Farm also recognizes the need for new ways of treating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injuries. In 2012, Veterans Farm started a fellowship program to assist Post 9/11 disabled veterans start a career in agriculture. Veterans Farm fellows were once soldiers on the battlefield with a mission to protect our country from harm. Now, they stand ready for a new mission here at home. Instead of being armed with tanks, these veterans need tractors. Instead of being armed with an M-16, they need plows.

Veterans Farm uses a "Prescription without Medication" approach through a horticulture therapy program. During the 6 month fellowship program, veterans will learn to harness their military leadership skills, and apply them to becoming successful entrepreneurs. Each veteran is expected to work hard and to challenge themselves. Through hard work, strengths are refined, and weaknesses are tested. Veterans will learn everything from executing a business and marketing plan, to learning how to farm organic fruits and vegetables.

Each veteran who graduates from the fellowship program is expected to start a farming program in their own respective community. Using the Veterans Farm model, these veterans will hire additional veterans in their own state and community, to teach what they have learned from the Veterans Farm fellowship program. The goal of the Veterans Farm fellowship program is to create a domino effect throughout the country, and to equip veterans with the agricultural skills they need to be successful farmers.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

WEB: www.veteransfarm.com

PHONE: 904-214-5720

STARTING A FARM: *Things to Consider*

THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT OPTIONS WITHIN AGRICULTURE

PRODUCT CHOICES: Grains, meat, fruit, vegetables, dairy, herbs, or flowers. It is important to choose crops that will be able to thrive on your farm.

PRODUCTION PRACTICES: Certified Organic, biodynamic, sustainable, Animal-Welfare Approved, pesticide-free, Naturally Grown, conventional methods, etc... There are many types of production practices; you will need to choose what is right for you, your crops and your business.

ONCE YOU HAVE FOUND LAND THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN LEASING OR PURCHASING, YOU MUST:

DETERMINE SOIL TYPE. The National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) **Web Soil Survey** has soil maps from across the US. This is a good resource to determine your property's soil type(s).

DETERMINE CROP PROFITABILITY. Your local county agriculture department maintains records of the current economic value of specific crops grown in your area. These records may help you decide what crops will be most profitable in your area. It is vital that in choosing what to farm, you consider your market. You must think strategically about where and how you will sell your products. You should consider your proximity to available markets, as well as the availability of resources that you may need in your area.

DETERMINE WATER QUALITY, source and amount. Conducting a water test analysis will tell you the quality of your water. If there is a pump on the property, testing the gallons/minute will help determine how much water you can pump at one time. Determining your source of water, be it groundwater, district irrigation water, a river, a lake, etc. will provide information on water availability.

DETERMINE CLIMATE. Assessing historical weather data will give you a better understanding of climate and long-term weather fluctuations. **The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Climatic Data Center** has an easy to use online database system with national and international climate information.

BELOW ARE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- Where will I sell my products?
- Who are my customers?
- What is the size of the potential customer base?
- Where do my customers live and how will their location influence my selling to them?
- What are the customers' needs and desires?
- Am I going to sell directly to consumers or, will I contract farm or sell wholesale?
- What seasonal price fluctuations can I expect?
- What are the quality standards I must meet for different markets?



STARTING A FARM: *Finding Land*

Before you begin to look for land, you must consider what you can afford and what type of situation is most realistic for you. Many young farmers may not be able to purchase land for their first venture, and will have greater profitability renting or leasing land from another farmer or landowner. You should always consider where you need to be in order to produce your chosen product. You should also consider which region you would like to be in, how much you are able to pay, and if you are going to live on your farm. All of these factors will affect where you go to find your farmland.

FARM LINK programs are offered in many states across America. These programs connect beginning farmers who are searching for land and experienced farmers who are ready to retire. Some Farm Link programs provide information for farmers who wish to ensure that their land will be passed down to family members or friends, as well as information about job opportunities for new farmers. **The National Farm Transition Network** offers a list of farm-linking organizations all over the country: www.farmtransition.org.

THE CENTER FOR RURAL AFFAIRS offers a service to new farmers called **Land Link**. This program helps beginning farmers and ranchers gain access to the land, financing, knowledge, and skills they need to make a successful start. This service matches retiring farmers with beginning farmers, and others who desire to farm or ranch. **Website:** www.cfra.org.

USDA FARM SERVICE AGENCY'S REAL ESTATE FOR SALE website lets you search by state or county to find farmland that has been foreclosed or acquired by the FSA. **Website:** www.fsa.usda.gov.

CLASSIFIED ADS and various agricultural real estate search engines can also prove useful in the search for farm land. In order to find farmland, you may go the traditional route of searching through classifieds in farming newsletters and rural newspapers. The Internet offers endless search engines and websites that advertise rural and agricultural real estate. These sites can give you an idea of what kind of farm you would like and in what location. It is best to search for land that has been farmed before. Such land may have been well cared for, with irrigation systems and other necessities already in place.





FUNDING YOUR FARM BUSINESS

There are a number of opportunities for veterans searching for funding or loans to help purchase land and start a career in agriculture. It is very important to have all your finances documented and your paperwork in order. When you are looking for funding, do not get discouraged. If at first glance you think you might not qualify for a certain loan or funding program, you can still contact the organization and talk to a representative about your financial plans. Even if you are turned down, talking to the lenders will help you learn how you can improve your application for the next time around.

LOANS SPECIFICALLY FOR VETERANS

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS does not provide farm loans, however they do provide **home loans** to eligible veterans. If the farm that you intend to purchase has a residence where you intend to live, then you may qualify for VA home loans to help with the purchase of the home and property.

THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION offers the **Patriot Express Loan** for active duty military, veterans or their spouses who are seeking to open or expand a small business. A small business in agriculture is considered one with less than \$500,000 in annual sales. Patriot Express Loans can range from small (less than \$25,000) up to \$500,000 and can be used for working capital, machinery and equipment, or

land and buildings. Loans are available through SBA's list of preferred lenders. **For more information go to www.sba.gov**



In addition, the SBA offers a loan and grant search page that can help you find funding from various organizations, based on your individual background and needs.

STATE FARM AND HOME LOANS

Many states make loans to veterans for farms, as well as homes. Each state needs to be researched for its particular programs and benefits.

California is an example of one state that helps veterans with farmland purchase. Any veteran who honorably served a minimum of 90 days or is currently serving under honorable conditions in the Armed Forces of the United States, and resides in California, may qualify to purchase a home or farm through the **CalVet Home Loan program**. Direct loans from the State of California have competitive rates, quick processing, and earthquake and disaster coverage. **For more information visit: www.calvet.ca.gov/HomeLoans.**

AGGIE BOND PROGRAMS are available in several states. These special loan programs for beginning farmers and ranchers can assist first-time farmers and ranchers to purchase land, farm equipment, farm buildings, and breeding livestock through reduced-interest loans. The bonds also allow lenders to earn federally tax-exempt interest income on loans to eligible beginning farmers and ranchers. Aggie bond programs are federal/state, public/private partnership programs that provide a cost-effective way for states to assist beginning farmers.

FUNDING YOUR FARM BUSINESS:

U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency

The **USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)** makes direct loans, provides loan guarantees, and offers credit counseling to farmers and ranchers who are unable to obtain private commercial credit. The FSA has set aside funding for **Beginning and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers**, this funding is now available to all veterans. **Emergency Loans** are also available for those who have suffered financial setbacks from declared natural disasters.

FSA DIRECT LOAN PROGRAMS

FSA's lending programs are designed to serve as a temporary source of credit and technical support for agricultural enterprises, until individuals are able to qualify for commercial credit.

- The Farm Ownership Loan offers financing with farm purchases.
- The Operating Loan provides financing for operating expenses.
- Emergency Loans offer capital in times of disaster.

FSA LOANS FOR BEGINNING FARMERS AND RANCHERS

A portion of FSA's direct and guaranteed funds are specifically for beginning farmers and ranchers who:

- Have not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years
- Meet the loan eligibility requirements Substantially participate in the farm or ranch operation
- Do not own a farm or ranch greater than 30% of the median size farm or ranch in the county

*(Specifically for farm ownership loans)

Note that applicants for direct farm-ownership loans must have participated in the farm or ranch operation for at least three years. Beginning Farmer and Rancher applicants may use three years of experience while working on a family operation, as an employee, or as an operator of a farm.

FSA'S NEW MICROLOAN PROGRAM

In May, 2012 the FSA announced a new **Microloan program** with the intended effect of making the Operating Loan program more widely available and attractive to smaller operators. This new Microloan program has reduced application requirements, created more timely application processing, and added flexibility in meeting managerial ability eligibility requirements. This program offers loans of up to \$35,000 and requires only one year of farming experience. This experience can be as an employee, an apprentice or on a family farm. It does require a sound business plan and collateral, so preparation in advance to applying for this or any loan is critical.

To find out more about FSA loan programs visit: **www.fsa.usda.gov**. If you would like to discuss details such as loan criteria and qualifications, call your local FSA office to make an appointment with a farm loan manager or farm loan officer. You can also find the nearest local FSA office in your state by using the "State Offices" tab on the FSA website.





FUNDING YOUR FARM BUSINESS:

Farm Credit

America's farmers and ranchers take pride in providing the food and fiber to feed and clothe people of the United States and the world. The Farm Credit System takes pride in serving the diversity of farm businesses as a sound, dependable, and farmer-owned source of credit. They lend money to America's agricultural producers, their cooperatives, and the farm-related businesses they rely on.

Farm Credit was created by Congress 95 years ago to ensure that America's farmers and ranchers would always have access to a source of credit that the farmers and ranchers themselves would own and that would remain steadfastly focused on a mission of serving the financial needs of agriculture and rural America.

They also have a specific mission of service to furnish sound, constructive credit and related services to young, beginning and small farmers and ranchers. Each of the local Farm Credit lending institutions around the country has its own programs specifically focused on meeting the needs of young, beginning and small farmers and ranchers.

One reason Farm Credit is able to effectively serve young and beginning farmers and ranchers is because each Farm Credit institution is a cooperative. Farm Credit institutions are cooperatively owned by the customers who borrow from them. Customer-owners vote to elect the board members who direct their institution's operations. Through its cooperative structure, Farm Credit is constantly responsive to the changing needs of its membership and the marketplace.

It's important to remember that Farm Credit is not a "lender of last resort" for farmers, nor is it a federal government program. To borrow from Farm Credit, someone must meet eligibility requirements (for example, be a farmer, rancher, farm-service provider, rural home buyer, etc.) and must be creditworthy.

There are 84 local Farm Credit associations, covering all 50 states and Puerto Rico, which lend directly to farmers, ranchers, producers and harvesters of aquatic products, as well as rural homeowners. Each has a specific geographic territory that it serves and has locally tailored programs to address the needs of young, beginning and small farmers and ranchers.

To find your local Farm Credit lender visit: www.farmcredit.com.

BUILDING A BUSINESS PLAN

WHAT IS A BUSINESS PLAN?

A business plan defines what your business does, where you want your business to grow and how you plan to get there. A business plan is a written document describing the nature of your business, your sales and marketing strategy, financial background, and a projected profit and loss statement. The process of creating a business plan is useful in understanding and articulating your farm enterprise. It is important to build a farm business plan that is economically viable and sustainable over time. A business plan is as important for starting a business as blueprints are for building your house.

Your business plan will be essential for obtaining loans from lending institutions, investors, or grant funding agencies to purchase land, equipment, and other necessary resources. The time you spend making your business plan complete, accurate, and up-to-date will pay big dividends in the long run. When starting a new enterprise, writing a business plan is an important first step.

WHO CAN HELP ME WITH MY BUSINESS PLAN?

THE VETERANS' BUSINESS OUTREACH CENTER (VBOC) helps create, develop and retain veteran-owned small business enterprises. The VBOC provides entrepreneurial training, counseling, and technical assistance to veterans, service-disabled veterans, Reservists, National Guard members, and Active Duty business owners and start-up entrepreneurs. www.vboc.org

BEGINNINGFARMERS.ORG is an effort to develop a comprehensive and up-to-date compilation of resources for new, experienced and potential farmers, as well as educators, activists and policy makers interested in the development of new farm enterprises. Beginningfarmers.org offers links to resources and organizations that can assist you in building an effective business plan for your farm. www.beginningfarmers.org

U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (SBA) offers a range of valuable resources that can help you build your business plan and get your farm off the ground. They provide mentoring, resources, templates, and advice that will make your business plan stand out against the rest. www.sba.gov

USDA FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA) offers local activities such as workshops, presentations, conferences, trainings, and seminars that are designed for underserved groups of farmers and ranchers. www.fsa.usda.gov

NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE INFORMATION SERVICE (ATTRA) is a project of the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) and provides farmers and ranchers with technical assistance in sustainable agriculture. www.attra.ncat.org/index.php

NORTHEAST BEGINNING FARMERS PROJECT is a project of Cornell University, which works to support and educate beginning farmers. They offer online courses, on-farm courses, tutorials and training. www.nebeginningfarmers.org

LOCAL EXTENSION AGENTS are located across the US. Extension agents provide technical support for all farmers and can assist with farm business strategies, production practices, pest and disease control, marketing, etc. www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension




FARM CREDIT

YOU MAY QUALIFY FOR FARM CREDIT'S YOUNG, BEGINNING, AND SMALL FARMER PROGRAM IF YOU ARE:

YOUNG: Age 35 or younger

BEGINNING: 10 or fewer years of experience in farming or ranching

SMALL: Under \$250,000 annual gross income from farming operations

BUILDING A LEGAL PLAN

Advice from Jason Foscolo, Founder of Jason Foscolo LLC



Jason Foscolo is the founding attorney of Jason Foscolo LLC, one of the few law firms in the United States dedicated to the special legal needs of small-scale farmers and food entrepreneurs. He provides expert counsel on a wide array of subjects. Jason writes regularly on his website, jasonfoscolo.com about how laws can affect the business of farming and making great food. Call for a free consultation - new and beginning farmers welcome.

→ Jason Foscolo

USMC
JASON FOSCOLO LLC

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
WEB: www.foodlawfirm.com
PHONE: 631-903-5055

The best piece of professional advice I can give you is to treat your farm like a business. Every business should have its own accountant, its own specialized consultants and especially its own legal counsel. As a business entity, every agricultural enterprise needs a dedicated legal advisor to provide reliable counsel on the areas of law that would apply to any other business. **THESE AREAS WOULD INCLUDE:**

CORPORATE FORMATION

Choosing the appropriate business form is fundamentally critical to your future success.

ESTATE PLANNING

Passing land through generations requires long-range testamentary planning.

TAXATION

Farm expenses and losses have unique tax treatments.

CONTRACTS AND LEASES

Get every agreement in writing, no exceptions.

COMMERCIAL LENDING

Legal terms in lending agreements can have far-reaching

ESTATE PLANNING

Passing land through generations requires long-range testamentary planning. consequences.

Seeking legal advice in these core subjects will be the fundamental basis for a successful farming operation. In the eyes of the law, however, agriculture is often treated as a special industry. There are federal, state and local laws that apply only to agricultural producers. Some of these special laws give unique benefits to farmers. Others impose unique burdens. Understanding how these laws apply to your business can affect the way you profit from your land.

If you produce livestock under contract with another business, you may qualify for some of the protection afforded by the **Packers and Stockyards Act**. If you sell more than 2,000 lbs. of produce to a wholesaler, you may benefit from certain provisions of the **Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act**. If you have become insolvent, you may qualify for a **Chapter 12 Agricultural Bankruptcy**. If you operate a consolidated animal feeding operation (CAFO), you will need to obey the applicable provisions of the **Clean Water Act**. If you need a short term loan for agricultural activity, you may be able to use the **Uniform Commercial Code** to secure your transaction. If you wish to begin selling raw milk, each state has different laws which regulate the sale of this very special agricultural product.

Understanding the unique legal landscape of the business of farming will give you a competitive advantage in the marketplace. A good rule of thumb is to thoroughly research the legal realm for information on any new activity you are contemplating on the farm. You may also consider making inquiries with your local chapter of the Farm Bureau, your local agriculture extension or other agricultural organization in your area for help finding the right kind of legal guidance.

As a business leader, it is your job to gather the material, financial, and professional resources you need in order to make your farm profitable. Ask questions, solicit guidance and always be curious. Helpful advice on running a successful farm can come from all quarters, including from a lawyer.

BUILDING A MARKETING PLAN

A good marketing plan is the key to a profitable farm. Effective marketing requires careful thought and planning. You must determine who your consumers are and how you will effectively reach them. You must weigh how much time you, your partner(s) and your staff will have to spend away from the farm on marketing-specific activities. Individual temperament is also important when deciding what type of marketing strategy fits your agricultural enterprise. Some people enjoy the public interaction involved in direct sales, while others prefer to spend their day focused on production.

WHICH MARKET STRATEGY IS BEST FOR ME?

DIRECT MARKETING entails selling your product directly to the consumer. You can sell at farmers' markets, to restaurants, at a roadside stand, online, through Community Support Agriculture (CSA) and U-Picks. Consumers are willing to pay a premium price for small-scale, high quality and locally grown products. By marketing directly, you can gain the recognition and loyalty of customers in your community. **Agri-tourism** and **U-Pick** brings customers onto the farm for festivals, farm work weekends, product tasting, etc..., and provides them with the opportunity to experience the farm first-hand. U-Pick strategies allow customers to pick their own produce, and also provides an activity that draws consumers onto the farm. Farmers interested in U-Pick strategies must have U-Pick insurance, maintain public bathrooms, and keep the farm clean and visually appealing. **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)** is a popular marketing strategy for small-scale farmers. Customers purchase a share (weekly, monthly or seasonally) in a farm's CSA, and receive a weekly, bimonthly or monthly basket of what is seasonally available. CSAs allow farmers to receive consistent up-front payment, which provides protection from unforeseen circumstances that could affect the farms income. Consumers agree to support the farm and share some of the risk when losses occur. Consumers find CSAs appealing because the arrangement allows them to know exactly where their food is coming from and support local agriculture.

VALUE-ADDED MARKETING is the process of changing the physical state or the manner of production, such as making your milk into cheese, drying your fruit, or grinding and packaging your grain. Certifications such as, grass-fed, certified organic or locally grown, are another method of adding value to your product, as well opening up unique market opportunities.

WHOLESALE MARKETING is selling to a grocery store or distributor. Wholesale marketing requires that farmers supply a large volume of uniform product harvested at one time. Wholesale prices are lower than direct market prices, and wholesale prices have the tendency to fluctuate. With that said, wholesale marketing can make it easier to move a large amount of product quickly. Proper packaging, cooling and Good Agricultural Practices must all be in place to consider wholesale markets.

CONTRACT FARMING involves entering into a contract with a company, to grow and sell a specific product to them. This type of contract can elicit a secure and mutually beneficial relationship. The buyer will set standards regarding quality, quantity, price and a time frame for the product. Farmers grow and produce their crops knowing that they have a secure market and a pre-determined price. Contracting with a company can provide small farms with access to larger markets, technical support, and in some cases, assistance with production costs.





BUILDING A CROP PLAN

WHAT IS A CROP PLAN?

All farms, whether small or large-scale establish crop plans to organize their production seasons. Crop plans are used to assist farmers in projecting the timing and needs of their desired crops, as well as the desired harvest outcomes. Crop plans vary depending on the type of crops grown, the number of crop varieties, location, climate and timing of harvest. Crop plans are necessary in order to adequately prepare farmers for their upcoming seasons. Although crop plans can vary greatly, they all should include a similar number of steps.

EXAMPLE OUTLINE

- Establish what crop(s) is being grown.
- Conditions needed for each crop
- Crop(s) grown from seed or transplant?

DETERMINE HARVEST OUTCOME GOALS FOR EACH CROP

- Quantity of crop needed
- Frequency of harvest
- Timeframe of harvest

DETERMINE DATES FOR SOWING TO REACH HARVEST GOALS

- Determine number of sowings needed per season to meet harvest goals
- Calculate number of plants (per sowing if planting dates are continuous) needed to meet harvest goals.
- Determine yield per plant
- Calculate cost of seed and/or transplants

OTHER

- Equipment needed for tillage, sowing, cultivation, harvest and post-harvest
- Crop spacing requirements
- Fertility requirements
- Harvest requirements
- Post-harvest requirements
- Land needs
- Irrigation needs

ASSISTANCE IN DEVELOPING A CROP PLAN

There are numerous crop plan spreadsheet templates and various other resources that can help you to create your own crop plan.

FARM ORGANIZATIONS:

AgrAbility

AgrAbility is a program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that provides assistance to farmers, ranchers, other agricultural workers, and farm family members impacted by disability. It consists of a National Project and State/Regional Projects (currently serving 25 states), each involving collaborative partnerships between Land-Grant Universities and various nonprofit disability services organizations. Support, funding, and oversight for AgrAbility comes from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

AGRABILITY OFFERS A VARIETY OF SERVICES, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING, AT NO COST TO CUSTOMERS:

- On-site assessments to identify barriers to completing tasks.
- Recommending appropriate assistive technologies (equipment/tools/devices), modified work practices, and/or other possible solutions to overcoming disability-related limitations.
- Education/training opportunities.
- Referring customers to other service providers for potential assistance.
- Arranging for peer support opportunities.

AgrAbility does not provide direct funding or equipment. However, AgrAbility Projects often work with state Vocational Rehabilitation Departments and other funding sources to help customers obtain needed assistive technologies and modifications.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

WEB: www.agrability.org

PHONE: 1-800-825-4264



Mark (USMC) and Denise Beyers (USMC) own and operate Beyers Maple Farm in East Aurora, New York. Both served in the US Marine Corp for 8 years, until Mark was injured by IED blast during a deployment in support of OIF. Mark and Denise both grew up farming and harvesting maple syrup with their families.

They decided to start a maple syrup business as a hobby; soon the demand for their product far outweighed the couple's capacity to produce. Their company has continued to grow and they now produce both maple syrup and maple cream. Despite Mark's injuries, they have both utilized the healing nature of farming to create a sustainable livelihood for their family.

→ Mark & Denise Beyers

US MARINE CORPS

RESOURCES:

Templates

NORTHEAST ORGANIC NETWORK

www.neon.cornell.edu/croprotation/

SUNSEED FARM

www.farmsunseed.com/crop-planning-spreadsheets.php#/sunseed-crop-plan-forum-2/

BEGINNINGFARMERS.ORG

www.beginningfarmers.org/free-excel-based-crop-planning-tool-for-farmers/

PENN STATE EXTENSION

www.extension.psu.edu/start-farming/vegetables/



FARM ORGANIZATIONS: NCAT/ATTRA

The National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service—ATTRA— provides practical, reliable information about organic and sustainable production and marketing. We work with farmers, ranchers, market gardeners, extension agents, researchers, educators, and others involved in commercial agriculture, especially those who are economically disadvantaged or belong to underserved communities.

We are proud to partner with the Farmer Veteran Coalition to provide training and resources to veterans who want to become farmers. We look forward to continuing to work with FVC and Farmer Veterans around the country.

The ATTRA website, www.attra.ncat.org, is a great resource for beginning and experienced farmers. You will find more than 350 publications on all aspects of organic and sustainable agriculture. The website offers

newsletters, webinars, calendars of events, and links to information on good farming practices and renewable energy. In addition, ATTRA provides free online directories about:

- Ecological Pest Management
- Local Food
- Small Poultry Processing Plants Services
- Energy Alternatives
- Organic Seed Suppliers
- Farm Internships
- Apprenticeships



Over the past 20 years, our agriculture specialists have answered hundreds of thousands of questions on how to build soil, save water, improve farm finances, explore new marketing options, incorporate value-added products, curb the use of costly commercial inputs, and diversify farm operations with new crop and livestock enterprises.

Spanish speakers will find a wealth of information on ATTRA's Spanish-language website, www.attra.ncat.org/espanol. In addition to our original publications, the website provides links to hundreds of Spanish-language resources for sustainable agriculture and renewable energy. We also publish some information in the Hmong language.

A project of the National Center for Appropriate Technology, ATTRA is staffed by NCAT agricultural specialists with diverse backgrounds in livestock, horticulture, soils, organic farming, integrated pest management, and other sustainable ag fields. Founded in 1976, NCAT is a private nonprofit organization whose projects promote self-reliance through appropriate technology. Its programs deal with energy conservation, resource-efficient housing, sustainable community development, and sustainable agriculture. NCAT has offices in Montana, Arkansas, California, Iowa, and Pennsylvania.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

WEB: www.attra.ncat.org
ENGLISH TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE: 800-346-9140
SPANISH TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE: 800-411-3222

FARM ORGANIZATIONS: The Center For Rural Affairs

The Center for Rural Affairs (CFRA) works on behalf of rural communities, family farms and ranches. Its broad programs address small businesses, new farmers, rural health care, renewable energy, minority populations, environmental care, and community revitalization. Its website contains news and resources for rural residents; its free newsletter reaches 30,000 readers each month. From its base in Lyons NE, population 851, CFRA works through supporters across the country with its policy education and advocacy, direct service programs, hands-on demonstrations, and analysis of rural issues.

CFRA assists new farmers/ranchers and small business owners directly. Its online information clearinghouse contains advice and resources for farm startup, estate planning, beginner financing, sustainable production practices and alternative marketing. Its **Land Link** matching program brings beginning and retiring farmers and landowners together for farming experience, farm/ranch transfer and partnerships. Its **Farm Bill Help-Line** advises farmers on accessing financial and conservation programs from the USDA.

CFRA also co-sponsors the **Farm Beginnings Nebraska Business Planning courses** run by **Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society**. Staff can give beginners across the country individual advice and contacts for local resources by phone and email. Additional small business assistance is available through the **Rural Enterprise Assistance Project's** business specialists. This project provides business plan training and advising, direct loans and loan packaging, as well as REAP services for storefront and value-added agriculture businesses in Nebraska. CFRA also sponsors the annual **MarketPlace entrepreneurship conference** for business education and networking.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

WEB: www.cfra.org
PHONE: 402-687-2100



CENTER for RURAL AFFAIRS



After serving 24 years in the US Army, Cal and Desiree Wineland, along with their boys Calvin and Austin, moved to rural Nebraska. They planted grapevines and started Veterans Vineyard and Winery (VWV). They have also revitalized an old locker, and established a USDA certified meat processing business called American Butchers. American Butchers, "proudly supporting farming/ranching family partnerships that delivers delicious family grown meats to doorsteps across America." As Cal and Desiree have said:

“ We have brought economic growth and development, energizing our rural community while still serving others. ”

→ Cal and Desiree Wineland

US ARMY



FARM ORGANIZATIONS:

National Farmers Union

National Farmers Union (NFU) was founded in 1902 in Point, Texas, to help the family farmer address profitability issues and monopolistic practices. NFU has been working since 1902 to protect and enhance the economic well-being and quality of life for family farmers, ranchers and rural communities through advocating grassroots-driven policy positions adopted by its membership.

NFU represents farmers and ranchers in all states, with organized divisions in 33 states. The key to the success and credibility of the organization has been its grassroots structure in which policy positions are initiated locally. The policy process includes the presentation of resolutions by individuals, followed by possible adoption of the resolutions at the local, state and national levels. Members and staff of the Farmers Union advocate these policy positions nationwide.

NFU believes that good opportunities in production agriculture are the foundation of strong farm and ranch families, and strong farm and ranch families are the basis for thriving rural communities. Vibrant rural communities, in turn, are vital to the health, security and economic well-being of our entire national economy.

The Kansas Farmers Union (KFU) is a division of the National Farmers Union in McPherson, Kansas. Its primary goal is to sustain and strengthen the family farm and ranch

structure. KFU, in partnership with the Center for Rural Affairs is involved in the **Veterans Farms Project**. Through this program KFU provides veterans with access to:

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services (KAMS), K-State Farm Analyst Program, Kansas Rural Center (KRC), Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops (KCSAAC), Kansas AgrAbility Project, Kansas Assistive Technology Cooperative (KATCO)

EDUCATION: Kansas State University & Fort Hays State University, Kansas Community Colleges and Vocational/ Technical Schools

FINANCING: USDA Farm Service Agency, Farm Credit Services of America, Kansas Development Finance Authority.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
WEB: www.nfu.org
PHONE: 202-554-1654

FARM ORGANIZATIONS:

FamilyFarmed.org



FamilyFarmed.org expands the production, marketing and distribution of locally grown and responsibly produced food, in order to enhance the social, economic and environmental health of our communities. Working directly with consumers, family farmers as well as local and national organizations, FamilyFarmed.org advocates for sustainable local food and the farmers that grow it. We do this through the following projects:

MARKET DEVELOPMENT

FamilyFarmed.org works to build the overall supply chain of local food by providing technical assistance to farmers, connecting wholesale buyers with producers, and helping to create infrastructure that supports the growth of these systems. This includes the publication of 'Wholesale Success: A Farmer's Guide to Selling, Postharvest Handling and Packing Produce'.

FARM TO SCHOOL

FamilyFarmed.org assists with procurement relationships that have resulted in multi-million dollar increases in local food purchasing for schools in Chicago.

FOOD HUB DEVELOPMENT

FamilyFarmed.org has become a national leader in developing food hubs which aggregate, cool, pack, sell, and efficiently transport locally grown produce.

ON-FARM FOOD SAFETY

FamilyFarmed.org has launched a nationally significant tool to help small to mid-scale fruit and vegetable growers create their own plan customized food safety plan at no cost. www.onfarmfoodsafety.org.

GOOD FOOD FESTIVAL AND CONFERENCE

Through trade focused workshops and networking, farmers and family-owned producers of food and farm products connect with the public, trade buyers and leaders in the field to foster relationships that facilitate the growth of local food systems.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

WEB: www.familyfarmed.org
PHONE: 708-963-9920





FARM ORGANIZATIONS: Growing Power

Growing Power is one of America's leading urban agricultural non-profit organizations. With a staff of over 100 people based in Madison and Milwaukee, WI and Chicago, IL, Growing Power serves local, regional, national, and international communities in achieving healthier and more just community food systems that meet the social, health, and economic needs of our world's most under-resourced communities with particular interest in young children and youth. The mission of Growing Power is to support people from diverse backgrounds, and the environments in which they live, by helping to provide equal access to healthy, high-quality, safe and affordable food for people in all communities. Growing Power implements this mission by providing hands-on training, on-the-ground demonstration, and outreach and technical assistance through the development of Community Food Systems that help people grow, process, market and distribute food in a sustainable manner. The current organizational infrastructure includes:

- 3-acre urban sustainable farm and community food center in Milwaukee (15 greenhouses, year-round production of food, 100,000+ fish, billions of worms, compost systems, mushroom production, beehives, chickens, goats, and training/demonstration areas)
- 20 farms totaling over 200+ acres of hoop-house production in Southeastern WI in urban and rural communities, and metro-Milwaukee with annual harvests of over one million pounds of food
- 7-acre Iron Street Urban Farm Community Food Center based in a warehouse in Chicago
- Agricultural charter school in partnership with the Center for Resilient Cities in Madison, WI
- 15 Regional Training Centers in partnership with locally-based organizations in 14 states
- 2 mixed development projects on Milwaukee's North and South sides fostering healthy food access
- Dozens of school and community gardens in Milwaukee, Madison, and Chicago
- 10+ farm stands throughout the City of Milwaukee



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
 WEB: www.growingpower.org
 PHONE: 414-527-1546

FARM ORGANIZATIONS:

American Farm Bureau Federation

American Farm Bureau Federation is the unified national voice of agriculture, working through its grassroots organizations to enhance and strengthen the lives of rural Americans and build strong, prosperous agricultural communities. 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 at all levels. While issues and challenges have changed for America's farmers and ranchers over the past eight 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:
 WEB: www.fb.org
 PHONE: (202) 406-3600



FARM ORGANIZATIONS: Start 2 Farm

Start2Farm website and program are projects of the **National Agricultural Library**, in partnership with the **American Farm Bureau Federation**. Start2Farm is funded by the **USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture** and the **Beginning Farming and Ranching Development Program** grant. Start2Farm has two primary mandates: one to develop a curriculum and training clearinghouse for beginning farmers; two to organize a national **Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Conference**. This conference provides opportunities for beginning farmers and ranchers to learn from industry experts, and network with one another. The Start2Farm clearinghouse is an online database with information and resources to enable beginning farmers to succeed in their farming endeavor.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
 WEB: www.start2farm.gov
 PHONE: 301-504-6020



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Where do I go for the answers to my questions?

When you first begin your venture into farming, it is crucial that you seek guidance from experienced farmers. Whether this means talking to someone you already know or contacting a resource organization (like FVC), this important step will help you create contacts in the agriculture industry. Building relationships with others in the industry will give you the support system you need as a beginning farmer, and may help you market and sell your products.

FARM ORGANIZATIONS

ATTRA—NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE INFORMATION SERVICE
www.attra.ncat.org

ALTERNATIVE FARMING SYSTEMS INFORMATION CENTER
www.nal.usda.gov/afsic
(301) 504-6927

APPALACHIAN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROJECT
www.asapconnections.org

CAROLINA FARM STEWARDSHIP ASSOCIATION
www.carolinafarmstewards.org
(919) 451-9804

CULTIVATING SUCCESS, ID AND WA
www.cultivatinguccess.org

IOWA BEGINNING FARMER CENTER
www.extension.iastate.edu/bfc
(877) 232-1999

LAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT FARM BEGINNINGS
www.landstewardshipproject.org
(651) 653-0618

MIDWEST ORGANIC AND SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION SERVICE
www.mosesorganic.org

NEW ENGLAND SMALL FARM INSTITUTE
www.smallfarm.org

NORTHEAST BEGINNING FARMERS PROJECT
www.nebeginningfarmers.org

RODALE INSTITUTE'S FARMING FOR CREDIT DIRECTORY
www.rodaleinstitute.org

SARE
www.sare.org

PASA
www.pasafarming.org

MENTOR PROGRAMS

ALABAMA SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE NETWORK
www.asanonline.org/mentorprogram
(256) 520-2400

FOOD TO BANK ON
www.sustainableconnections.org/foodfarming/FTBO

GEORGIA ORGANICS' FARMER MENTORING & MARKETING PROGRAM
WWW.GEORGIAORGANICS.ORG
(678) 702-0400

MAINE ORGANIC FARMERS AND GARDENERS ASSOCIATION'S JOURNEYPerson PROGRAM
www.mofga.org
(207) 568-4142

NEW ENTRY SUSTAINABLE FARMING PROJECT
www.nesfp.org

RESOURCES FOR BEGINNING FARMERS AND RANCHERS

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS: GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A BUSINESS PLAN FOR FARMS AND RURAL BUSINESSES, MINNESOTA INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE
www.agmarketing.extension.psu.edu/Business/PDFs/build_sust_business.pdf

CASH-FLOW SPREADSHEETS, FROM ATTRA/NCAT
www.attra.ncat.org

GREENHORNS GUIDE FOR BEGINNING FARMERS
www.thegreenhorns.net/greenhorns_guide_sept2010_web.pdf

PRIMER FOR SELECTING NEW ENTERPRISES FOR YOUR FARM, UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY
www.uky.edu/Ag/AgEcon/pubs/ext-aec/ext2000-13.pdf

RESOURCES FOR BEGINNING FARMERS, MINNESOTA INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

www.misa.umn.edu/vd/bfarmers.html

STARTING AN AG BUSINESS: A PRE-PLANNING GUIDE. STEVE RICHARDS, CORNELL UNIVERSITY, 2004
www.nyfarmviability.org/aic/preplanning_guide.htm

MARKETING

EAT WILD
www.eatwild.com

LOCAL HARVEST
www.localharvest.org

TO MARKET, TO MARKET: A WORKBOOK FOR SELECTING MARKET OPTIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS. ROBIN BRUMFIELD, RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION 2005
www.nebeginningfarmers.org/unit2/To%20Market%20To%20Market.pdf

FOOD SAFETY

CORNELL UNIVERSITY. NATIONAL GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES (GAPS)
www.gaps.cornell.edu

UC DAVIS GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES (GAPS)
<http://ucgaps.ucdavis.edu>

WOMEN IN FARMING

PENNSYLVANIA WOMEN'S AGRICULTURAL NETWORK
www.personal.psu.edu/lsmg/blogs/pa_womens_ag_network_farmer-to-farmer_education

WOMEN, FOOD AND AGRICULTURE NETWORK
www.wfan.org

ANNIE'S PROJECT
www.extension.iastate.edu/annie

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ADDRESS
508 2ND STREET
SUITE 206
DAVIS, CA 95616

PHONE
(530) 756-1395
FAX
(530) 756-1612

THE MISSION OF THE FARMER VETERAN COALITION IS TO MOBILIZE VETERANS TO FEED AMERICA.