Veterans in USDA programs

Because of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (also known as the 2014 Farm Bill), USDA is ensuring our programs and resources help new and beginning farmers and ranchers, including veterans, who are interested in beginning a farming or ranching career.

As a veteran, you may be eligible for the following preferences, priorities, and incentives in USDA programs.

USDA Loans

The core ingredients to starting a farm include land and capital. USDA can help you if you need to purchase land, farm equipment, and livestock, or other farm and family needs. The microloan program is an important on-ramp to credit for many new farmers and ranchers. USDA has raised the borrowing limit for this program from $35,000 to $50,000 so that small and mid-sized farmers can access an additional $15,000 in loans. We've simplified the lending process, and updated the required “farming experience” for a loan to include other valuable experiences you might have, such as leadership positions while serving in the military. As a veteran, you may be eligible for an exemption from direct term limits for microloans, and limits on the interest rate charged to you for USDA loans.
operating loans. These incentives make it easier for you to acquire capital for your farm operation. Additional benefits may be available to you as a beginning farmer.

**USDA’s New Farmer website provides a brief summary of the different loan and finance programs.**

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### Conservation Reserve Program Transition Incentives Program

The [Transition Incentive Program](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/face) provides for the transfer of expiring Conservation Reserve Program land from a retired or retiring owner or operator to a beginning, veteran, or underserved farmer or rancher.

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### Expanding the Business

The Value-Added Producer Grant can support the development of a business plan and new products, and the marketing activities for the products. Farmers and ranchers are small business owners, and creating value-added products can help them expand their business into new markets. As a veteran, you may be eligible for priority in this competitive grant program. [Click here or visit your nearest USDA Service Center to find out more information on how to apply for this grant.](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/face)

**USDA’s New Farmer website can connect you to more tools** to help grow your business and expand into new markets, including Good Agricultural Practices certification, organic certification, and developing export capacity.

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### Improving the Quality of Your Land

**Environmental Quality Incentives Program**: The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides financial and technical assistance to help agricultural producers plan and implement conservation practices, including developing conservation plans, installing high tunnels (which can extend a farmer’s growing season and conserve resources), transitioning and practicing organic standards, conserving energy, and managing forest lands.
As a veteran, you may qualify for increased payment rates of up to 90 percent and receive advance payments of up to 50 percent to purchase materials and services needed to implement conservation practices. Of the funding for this program, 10 percent is set aside for beginning or socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. Preference will be given to eligible veteran farmers or ranchers applying for several types of conservation financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

**Conservation Stewardship Program**: The Conservation Stewardship Program provides payments to help farmers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities. Participants earn Conservation Stewardship Program payments for conservation performance — the higher the performance, the higher the payment. Preference will be given to eligible veteran farmers or ranchers applying for several types of conservation financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

**USDA’s New Farmers website has more information** on how you can protect and enhance the environment.

### Serve on a County Committee

If you are a veteran farmer, we encourage you to serve on a county committee. Your local county committee can benefit from your perspective on how to connect other veteran farmers to information and the producer community. Committee members are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of USDA’s Farm Service Agency. They help deliver Farm Service Agency farm programs at the local level, and farmers who serve on committees help decide the kind of programs their counties will offer. They work to make Farm Service Agency agricultural programs serve the needs of local producers. [Find more information on county committees.](https://www.nal.usda.gov/veterans-usda-programs)

### Sale of Inventory Farmland Available for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

When available, FSA advertises [USDA-owned inventory farmland property for purchase](https://www.nal.usda.gov/veterans-usda-programs). Beginning farmers are given first priority to purchase these properties at the appraised value.