



## Attention Veterans

You know how to work hard, overcome obstacles, and achieve your goals.

You also have the unique skills, training, and perspective needed for a career in farming.

Now is the time to explore your interests, seek out available opportunities, and join the other one percent who help ensure a safe and nutritious food supply for our citizens!

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can help you start strong with planning and practices that can increase productivity while protecting long-term soil health and water quality.

# Supporting our Veteran Farmers of Virginia



After years of soaring above the earth as an Air National Guard pilot, James "Buck" Holsinger decided to plant more than his feet on the ground by moving back to the Virginia farm that had been in his family for over two centuries.

### Opportunity

You don't have to own a large tract of land to start farming. Today, beginning farmers and ranchers have more opportunities than ever to get into agriculture. Many start small and grow as they go.

The field of agriculture is diverse, and it takes all types of products to meet market demands. From livestock and poultry to vegetables and specialty crops, you can choose the right type and size of farm enterprise to match your interests.

### Benefits

Veterans of the U.S. Armed Services receive preference in applying for NRCS programs offered in the 2014 Farm Bill. This preference applies to several types of financial assistance offered through the Environmental Quality



Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as:

- Improved water/air quality
- Conserved surface and ground water
- Reduced soil erosion and sedimentation
- Enhanced or created wildlife habitat

CSP helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional practices to address priority resource concerns.

Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance – the

higher the performance, the higher the payment.

### Eligibility

To qualify for this preference, you must:

- Meet the definition of a Beginning Farmer or Rancher
- Have not operated a farm or ranch or haven't operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 consecutive years
- Have been honorably discharged or released from the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, their reserve components, or the National Guard

For a legal entity or joint operation to be considered a Veteran Farmer or Rancher entity, all members must meet the above definition.

A Veteran Farmer or Rancher may also qualify as Socially Disadvantaged by meeting additional criteria.

### Getting Started

Find and visit your local USDA Service Center (<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/>) to:

- Meet your District Conservationist and request a farm visit
- Provide an overview of your operation
- Register your farm with Farm Service Agency (FSA)

### Next Steps

Schedule a farm visit with your District Conservationist to discuss your vision and goals for your land and farm operation.

Work with him/her to identify natural resource concerns on your farm and determine the right practices to be included in your conservation plan.

Learn more about applying for financial assistance to help implement your plan by visiting [www.nrcs.usda.gov/getstarted](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getstarted) and downloading the 5 Steps to Assistance fact sheet.

### More Information

Get more information about assistance available for veterans through other USDA agencies on these websites:

[www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov), or

[www.outreach.usda.gov/Veterans.htm](http://www.outreach.usda.gov/Veterans.htm)



Tom and Anita Roberson are now on their third careers, growing vegetables and flowers with their son Julian at Botanical Bites and Provisions in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

[www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)  
**Natural Resources Conservation Service**