

Veterans and Careers in Agriculture

This brief aims to provide basic information about the career field associated with agriculture for separating Service members.

Veterans in Agriculture Snapshot

The agriculture community has been a catchment for the recruitment of military Service members throughout the history of the United States. Approximately 2.7 million veterans enrolled in the Veterans Health Administration originate from rural areas (United States Department of Veterans Affairs, 2025). In fact, veterans are overrepresented in the agriculture field, with 9% of farm producers having military service (U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2022), whereas only 6% of the total U.S. population has served in the military (Schaeffer, 2023). These data indicate a strong connection between the individuals who serve the United States and those who are currently feeding it.

Military veterans face various barriers as they transition into civilian careers. An agricultural career can mitigate some of these obstacles as it offers a variety of opportunities for veterans to utilize the skills they developed during military service but may also accommodate for specific limitations such as physical ability, mental trauma, and overall health. The ability to build an agriculture operation allows an individual the chance to explore self-employment, adapt processes to accommodate one's limitations, and create a sustainable livelihood. Producing one's own healthy food may also be a benefit for those who have dietary sensitivities, wish to teach their family about growing, and harvesting food to be self-sustaining.

To support veterans returning from post-9/11 conflicts, veterans-to-farmer (V2F) programs emerged in 2007 (Fleming, 2015). These V2F programs include two forms of programming:

- educational programs that offer experiential learning and classroom instruction and
- informational programs that connect individuals with funding, resources, and employment opportunities (Fleming, 2015).

These programs offer multiple components, such as healing or therapeutic benefits and basic land preparation to food harvest elements, that support veterans through farming immersion as an alternative healing model (Fleming, 2015). The information that follows provides practical, informational, and educational tools for Service members and veterans who are considering a career in agriculture.

Archi's Sustainable Agriculture Training Program - Educational Programming

- Link: <https://archisinstitute.com/>
- Program structure: Accredited online or in-person sustainable agriculture training
- Provides: 6-week or 12-week program, internships, business planning
- Background: Founded in 2007 by Marine Corps veteran Colin Archipley and his wife, Karen, Archi's Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (AiSA) has become a national leader in agricultural education and agri-entrepreneurship. AiSA's comprehensive Agribusiness Program equips transitioning Service members and veterans with advanced training in hydroponics, sustainable farming practices, and farm business management.

National Center for Appropriate Technology's Armed to Farm – Educational and Informational Programming

- Link: <https://www.armedtofarm.org/>
- Program structure: Resource hub and educational programming
- Provides: Free agriculture-education program,
- Background: Armed to Farm is a hands-on and classroom-based sustainable agriculture-training program developed by the National Center for Appropriate Technology. Since 2013, it has offered training for over 1,000 veterans and provided them with essential skills in business planning, marketing, and production while fostering peer networks and supplying ongoing technical support. See the Armed to Farm map. <https://www.armedtofarm.org/map/>

Farmer Veteran Coalition - Informational programming

- Link: <https://farmvetco.org/>
- Program structure: National nonprofit
- Provides: Education, microgrants, state chapters, annual conference
- Background: Founded in 2007, this is the premier veteran farmer organization in the United States. The organization offers programs including the Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund (small grants of \$1,000–\$5,000), the Homegrown By Heroes branding initiative, AgVets apprenticeships, and expansive membership benefits. These programs are supported by a network of over 50,000 members and state chapters. See the Veteran Careers in Agriculture: A Resource Guide (https://www.farmvetco.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/RG_FINAL_web.pdf) for more information about agricultural career opportunities for veterans.

References

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About the VETERANetwork

The VETERAN Evaluation and Research Applications Network (VETERANetwork) acts as an applied research and evaluation unit for philanthropies, foundations, and other veteran-serving non-profit organizations, which grew out of The Veterans Metrics Initiative: Linking Program Components to Post-Military Well-Being Study (TVMI Study). This collaborative study launched with a pilot in April 2015. Then, a multi-year longitudinal study (2016 to 2019) collected data on veterans' transition and reintegration experiences. The Clearinghouse conducted two independent waves (2020 and 2023) of data collection with a research effort known as the Veterans Engaging in Transition Studies (VETS Survey). The VETERANetwork's mission is to promote the use of empirical data to ensure public and private donations are invested in effective programs and services that support the well-being of veterans and their families. The VETERANetwork is hosted by the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State and is represented by an interdisciplinary team of research faculty and staff.

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