

United States Senate Committee on
**AGRICULTURE
NUTRITION
& FORESTRY**

U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman

Opportunities for Veterans

Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012

The Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012, commonly called the Farm Bill, makes landmark strides in creating economic opportunities for veterans in agriculture.

Veterans are given new opportunities in the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, and the bill also creates a Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison at the Department of Agriculture to reach out to veterans interested in farming. These new initiatives would set aside funds for veterans in conservation programs and dedicate funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to assist veterans who want to own and operate farms or work in agriculture.

Assistance for Beginning Veteran Farmers and Ranchers

The bill dedicates \$50 million to the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program and, for the first time, requires the Department of Agriculture to make veterans a priority. This is a competitive grant program that funds education, extension, outreach, and technical assistance initiatives for individuals who are new to farming. It also facilitates apprenticeship programs and "land link" programs that connect retiring farmers with new farmers.

Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison

The bill creates a Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison within the Department of Agriculture's Office of Advocacy and Outreach to educate returning veterans about farming and connect them with beginning farmer training programs. This individual will help veterans understand the eligibility requirements for participation in farm programs and will be an advocate for veterans at the Department of Agriculture.

Outreach and Technical Assistance for Veteran Farmers

The bill adds veterans to Section 2501 of the Farm Bill, which assists targeted groups of farmers with farm ownership and operation. This program supports a range of outreach and assistance activities, including: farm management, financial management, marketing, application and bidding procedures.

Conservation Program Opportunities for Veterans

The bill gives priority to producers who are veterans and eligible to participate in the set-aside for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), administered by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Producers eligible for EQIP, including veteran farmers and ranchers, can also receive advance payments for up to 90 days to implement conservation practices on their farms.