



Supporting Our Veteran Farmers

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2014 Farm Bill Conservation Programs

OVERVIEW

Authorized through the 2014 Farm Bill, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has added an application preference for Veterans of the U.S. Armed Services. This preference applies to those who have served in the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, its reserve components, and the National Guard.

This preference became effective on Feb. 7, 2014, the day the 2014 Farm Bill was signed into law by the President.

ELIGIBILITY

An eligible Veteran Farmer or Rancher (VFR) must have been discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable and must also meet the definition of beginning farmer or rancher (BFR).

The VFR must:

- Not have operated a farm or ranch; or
- Not have operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 consecutive years.

VFR may also qualify as a Socially Disadvantaged (SDA) farmer by meeting additional criteria. For a legal entity or joint operation to be considered a VFR entity, all members must meet the definition of VFR.

APPLICATION PREFERENCE

An application preference will be given to eligible applicants applying for several types of conservation financial assistance through the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

The preference will grant eligible VFR applicants a "High Priority" status in the BFR and SDA funding pools during the application screening process.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers in order to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits. These include improved water and air quality, conserved surface and ground water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, and improved or created wildlife habitat.

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM (CSP)

CSP helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resources concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance -- the higher the performance, the higher the payment.

MORE INFORMATION

For application assistance and to learn more about BFR and SDA eligibility, please contact your closest NRCS office. Applications for NRCS Farm Bill programs are accepted on a continuous basis but each fiscal year has funding cutoff dates.

For more information on NRCS Farm Bill conservation programs, visit:
www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ca/programs/

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