



FACT SHEET

# Farm Bill Benefits for Special Audiences

*Addressing the unique circumstances and concerns of socially disadvantaged, veterans, beginning and limited resource farmers.*

March, 2016



The 2014 Farm Bill focuses on equal access to NRCS programs and services for nontraditional audiences and provides for voluntary participation and financial incentives to help landowners pay for conservation practices that improve natural resources. To determine if you are eligible for these programs and services, contact your local District Conservationist located in USDA Service Centers: Find your local center here: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/in/home/>

## LIMITED RESOURCE FARMER

The term "Limited Resource Farmer" means a participant:

- With direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years, and
- Who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years.

A legal entity or joint operation can be a Limited Resource Farmer only if all individual members independently qualify. A Self-Determination Tool is available to the public and may be completed on-line or printed and completed hardcopy at: <http://lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/>

## BEGINNING FARMER

The term "Beginning Farmer" means a participant who:

- Has not operated a farm, or who has operated a farm for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of a legal entity, and
- Who will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm.

In the case of a contract with an individual, individually or with the immediate family, material and substantial participation requires that the individual provide

substantial day-to-day labor and management of the farm, consistent with the practices in the county or State where the farm is located.

In the case of a contract made with a legal entity, all members must materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm. Material and substantial participation requires that the members provide some amount of the management, or labor and management necessary for day-to-day activities, such that if the members did not provide these inputs, operation of the farm would be seriously impaired.

## VETERAN FARMER

The term "Veteran Farmer" means a farmer who:

- Served in the active military, naval, or air service, and
- Who was discharged or released from the service under conditions other than dishonorable, and
- Who has not operated a farm; or has operated a farm for not more than 10 consecutive years.

A legal entity or joint operation can be a veteran farmer only if all individual members independently qualify.

## SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED FARMER

The term "Socially Disadvantaged" means an individual or entity who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. For an entity, at least 50 percent ownership in the farm business must be held by socially

disadvantaged individuals. A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.

These groups consist of the following:

- American Indians or Alaskan Natives
- Asians
- Blacks or African Americans
- Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders
- Hispanics

Note: Gender alone is not a covered group for the purposes of NRCS conservation programs.

## EQIP BENEFITS FOR HU PARTICIPANTS

**Advance Payments:** After a contract is funded, historically underserved (HU) participants may receive 50% of the payment in advance to help purchase necessary materials to begin installing a conservation practice.

**Higher Payment rates:** Participants who self-certify as HU receive payment rates that are higher than general EQIP payment rates. For Indiana that means the rate is generally 15% higher.

**Priority Consideration for Funding:** Participants self-certifying as HU can choose to be considered in ranking pools with separate funds where their application is only ranked against other HU applicants. Veteran farmers receive the highest priority for funding within the beginning farmer and socially disadvantaged ranking pools.

