

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the 2014 Farm Bill

Enhancing the viability and economic livelihood of America's beginning farmers is one of NRCS' top priorities. Many beginning farmers use NRCS' programs and services that are critical to their quality of life and sustaining their diverse operations.

The Conservation Title of the 2014 Farm Bill builds on the 2008 Conservation Title to address the unique circumstances and concerns of historically underserved individuals and groups that encompass socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, as well as beginning and limited resource farmers and ranchers. It provides for voluntary participation, offers incentives, and improved access to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs and services.

Four Major Programs

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Available Assistance

The 2014 Farm Bill authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to:

- Use 5 percent of available Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds to assist beginning farmers or ranchers and 5 percent to assist socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers; and
- Use 5 percent of available Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) acres to assist beginning farmers or ranchers and 5 percent to assist socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers.
- Provide up to 90 percent of the costs associated with planning and implementing conservation measures for socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers or ranchers.
- Provide up to 50 percent of such payments in advance for purchasing materials or contracting.

Additions to Special Emphasis Applicants: Veterans become eligible for the same benefits available to beginning, socially disadvantaged and limited resource farmers and ranchers.

Veteran Farmer or Rancher: The term veteran farmer or rancher (VFR) means a person who served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard, including the reserve components thereof, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable and who also meets the definition of beginning farmer or rancher (BFR). The VFR must: a) not have operated a farm or ranch; or b) not have operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 **consecutive** years. For a legal entity or joint operation to be considered a VFR entity, all members must meet the definition of VFR.

Additional information regarding programs and services for beginning farmers and ranchers can be found at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/>