

United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS Participates in Farming Workshop for Veterans Held in Sullivan County NH Aug 11-13, 2017

By Heidi Konesko, NRCS Soil Conservationist,

Agriculture can be a great career choice for veterans. There are endless possibilities in the type of farming to get into depending on your interests and resources, and there are a wide variety of agricultural service and support roles to fill as well, ranging from farm equipment and machinery repair to pest scouting, and much more. Any level of education and skill set can find a matching place in the industry of food production.

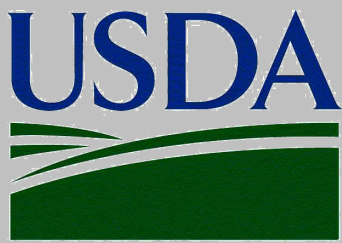
Recently an event for veterans interested in agriculture was held at Abdali Farm in Langdon, NH. Hosted by Richard and Jessica Briggs and their hard working teenage daughter Charlotte, the target audience was Veterans and their families interested in, or new to farming. University of New Hampshire Extension Educators and USDA NRCS staff spoke about growing vegetables, raising livestock, managing land for farming, high tunnels, grazing management, wetlands compliance, financial assistance, career opportunities with USDA, and accessing assistance available from these organizations. Also speaking were a local farmer on egg production and representatives from NH Farm Bureau and the United Farmer Veterans of Maine.



Richard Briggs kicking off the event inside his hoop barn, which was Crowd Funded by the Kiva Project Kiva.org. Photo by Chelsie Loves

The event was well attended, with online registration handled through the NH Farm Bureau website. Twenty Veterans and their family members pre-registered for the event. Thirteen Veterans attended. A hearty lunch highlighting the farm's pork products was served during the workshop. Some veterans and families camped overnight at the farm and had a good evening getting to know each other around the campfire.

The idea for the event came out of a conversation that Richard Briggs had with another veteran about Veterans groups. After retiring from the Army in the fall of 2016, Richard heard about an Armed to Farm intensive in Hamilton, NY. Armed to Farm is training in sustainable agriculture for military veterans and is a program of the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) and funded by ATTRA, several USDA agencies, and the University of Arkansas and Cornell University. Richard was not able to attend, since he was not a NY resident, so he looked for other opportunities and found that the NH Farm Bureau was starting to explore forming



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Some of the Shetland and Katahdin sheep grazing reclaimed pasture at Abdali farm. Photo by Chelsie Loves

a veterans group. Next thing he knew, Richard was planning an event and asking agency people and other farmers to become involved. He knew that he wanted information and knowledge to get to the veterans, and he also wanted to give the attendees plenty of time to get comfortable at the farm and get to know each other so that hopefully some support and networking would develop afterwards. Opening up their farm and home for the weekend was the way to do it.

Financial support for the event was provided by ATTRA through a matching grant obtained by UNH Extension. The grant covered a stipend to the farm, and meal, registration and advertising costs. UNH Staff time made up the match for the grant. Food donations came in from several local farms who wanted to support the effort.

Look for future Veterans events to continue to grow the network.

For more information:

NH Farm Bureau Federation (603) 224-1934 nhfarmbureau.org

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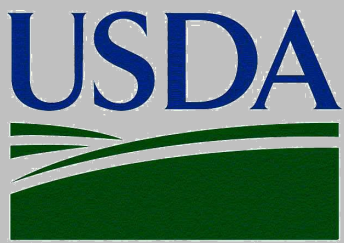
National Farmer Veteran Coalition
(FarmVetCo.org)

United Farmer Veterans of Maine
(ufvme.org)

Armed to Farm: www.ncat.org/armedtofarm

Newly constructed High Tunnel for vegetable production built with financial support from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service EQIP program. Photo by Chelsie Loves





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Workshop on egg quality. Photo by Chelsie Loves.



Fresh Produce and milk donated by local farms to help support the effort. Photo by Chelsie Loves.



Heidi Konesko, NRCS Soil Conservationist speaks about soils and converting low quality forestland to pasture. Photo by