



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 12, 2023

Agriculture Secretary Announces First Recipients of Farmer Veteran Grants Through the Wolf Administration's Historic PA Farm Bill

Harrisburg, PA – Today, during Military Appreciation Day at the 107th Pennsylvania Farm Show, Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding joined MG Mark Schindler, Pennsylvania's adjutant general and head of the DMVA, PA Veteran Farming Network, and farmer veterans to announce the first recipients of the PA Farm Bill's Farmer Veteran Grant program.

"I can't think of a better time or place to announce these first ever PA Farm Bill Farmer Veteran Grant awards to help our veterans enhance and improve their farms and agricultural operations," said Redding. "More than 7,000 Pennsylvanians are veterans who continue to serve their communities through agriculture. We honor these heroes and thank them for their choice to join our strong and diverse agricultural workforce."

This Farmer Veteran Grant program is available through the [Agriculture Business Development Center](#) which was created by the [PA Farm Bill](#). Through the PA Farm Bill, the Department of Agriculture awarded \$200,000 to two veterans' service organizations, which are offering the farmer veteran grants. Grants of up to \$10,000 have been awarded for various agricultural business needs ranging from food safety and biosecurity planning, to equipment, marketing, or working capital.

The farmer veteran grants are available through the following veterans' service organizations:

- Community Partnership Inc., Butler, Butler County
- Pennsylvania Veteran Farming Network, Greensburg, Westmoreland County

The Pennsylvania Veteran Farming Network announced its 11 recipients today for a total of \$93,525.

"We'd like to express our deep appreciation to Secretary Redding for his leadership in working with the General Assembly to fund these grants. This tangible financial support will make an immediate impact for our awardees; it's a very visible investment that makes sense," said PA Veteran Farming Network Director Mimi Thomas-Brooker. "Just as worthy of acknowledgement is the investment of time and road miles that he and the PA Department of Agriculture staff have logged visiting veteran farms across Pennsylvania, celebrating successes, listening thoughtfully, and gaining an understanding of the challenges veteran farmers face in order to inform programming – including this grant program."

The recipients of the grants are:

- Dustin Butler, U.S. Army veteran, Butler Hill Beef, Knoxville: \$9,000

- Grant to purchase materials for a stress-free cattle handling area adjacent to existing paddocks, designed for cattle comfort.
- James Cornwell, U.S. Navy veteran, Nine Pines Farm, York: \$10,000
 - Grant to purchase and install chicken de-boning equipment for thighs and drumsticks, allowing for the addition of chicken sausage to their arsenal of poultry products and reducing waste.
- Donald Flagle, U.S. Army veteran, Ewe View Farm, Needmore: \$9,275
 - Grant to build a sheep run-in and hay storage facility for the recently purchased farm. This project will provide comfort and shelter for sheep and secure storage for organic hay.
- William Hopkins, U.S. Army veteran, Hopkins Farm, Falls: \$10,000
 - Grant to build a new greenhouse. The project will allow for starting seeds early in the season for timely germination, controlling conditions for the early growth phase for crops and bedding plants, and enhancing profitability.
- Harold Keiner, U.S. Army veteran, Keiner's Apiary, Wapwallopen: \$4,000
 - Grant to purchase ten sets of hive woodenware and a wax dipper for use with the Bee Bootcamp hands-on hive management class for veterans in northeast Pennsylvania.
- Charles Lafferty, PA National Guard, Skyline Pastures, Mohrsville: \$5,000
 - Grant to install a livestock watering system for the grass-fed beef, forest-raised pork, and pastured broilers and turkeys on this family farm. Frost-free water hydrants hooked to troughs on float valves will comprise the system, reducing mud and increasing efficiency.
- Shane Lee, DBPL Farm, U.S. Air Force veteran, Westfield: \$6,800
 - Grant to purchase a woodlander sawmill to mill wood on the land and construct shelter for his livestock, and eventually, a poultry processing facility on the family farm where they raise meat goats, rabbits, pigs, and cows.
- Joseph O'Hara, U.S. Navy veteran, HF Orchard LLC, Bloomsburg: \$9,650
 - Grant to construct a small farm store building with generator and cooler to display and sell cider and donuts along with other local products, as well as housing a new pick-your-own apple operation.
- Frederick Tiffany, U.S. Army veteran, Bullard Creek Cattle, Athens: \$10,000
 - Grant to purchase a new bud box style system which will channel cattle into an alley connected to a squeeze chute. This equipment will be the last piece required to complete his new facility and further develop a herd of genetically advanced registered angus cattle.
- Marcy Tudor, U.S. Air Force veteran, Weatherbury Farms, Avella: \$9,800
 - Grant to purchase kitchen equipment to be used with their wood-fired oven to provide value-added baked goods made from the grain they grow.
- Giana VanNice, US Navy veteran, Blue Dog Farms, New Freedom: \$10,000
 - Grant to install a livestock watering system, which will capture groundwater and store it in underground tanks, then pump it to the highest point of the property. The project will allow Blue Dog Farms to rotationally graze effectively, drastically reduce the time required to haul water uphill, and expand their herd.

“Congratulations to today’s 11 recipients of the Force Multiplier Grants for veteran farmers. You are outstanding examples of dual service – serving our country in uniform and now serving Pennsylvania communities as farmers,” said MG Mark Schindler. “We are thankful to Secretary Redding and the Department of Agriculture for recognizing and honoring veterans not only for

their service to our country, but also for their hard work in the agricultural industry in service to all Pennsylvanians.”

The Wolf Administration supports veterans engaged in farming through this and other grant programs, marketing initiatives, and other efforts.

Since taking office, Gov. Wolf has prioritized agriculture and invested at \$100 million in grants, loans, and tax credits to help Pennsylvania farmers both start and expand operations, upgrade equipment, fund conservation practices, and preserve their farms, through the historic [PA Farm Bill](#).

The PA Farm Bill also increased support for the PA Preferred® Homegrown By Heroes program, which helps farmer-veterans market their locally grown products to feed consumer demand.

The department has actively supported veterans engaged in farming through the [Homegrown by Heroes program](#), in collaboration with the [Farmer Veteran Coalition](#), and managed through the [PA Preferred program](#). The program currently has more than 60 members, and the department is encouraging more farmer veterans to join to take advantage of marketing and other opportunities, which provide a tangible way for consumers to support and connect with Pennsylvania veterans.

Since 2015, the Wolf Administration has invested more than \$15 million to grow PA Preferred brand recognition, helping consumers identify agricultural products grown, produced, and processed in Pennsylvania, including products carrying the Homegrown by Heroes labeling and resources to support farmer veterans.

To support the increased demand for direct connection between farmers, including farmer veterans, and consumers, the department recently launched a new website for the PA Preferred brand at papreferred.com. Pennsylvanians can search for Pennsylvania products and connect with Pennsylvania farmers.

In addition to serving consumers, the website provides an opportunity for PA Preferred members to expand their reach and grow their businesses.

To learn more about veterans in agriculture and the department’s programs, visit the Department of Agriculture’s [website](#).

MEDIA CONTACT: Shannon Powers, shpowers@pa.gov

###