

KDA Receives Grant to Support SAVE Farm

The Kansas Department of Agriculture has received a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to support the development of the Servicemember Agricultural Vocation Education program, also known as SAVE. The award was one of 36 grants made through the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill, which aims to help address issues associated with the rising age and decrease in the number of U.S. Farmers and Ranchers.

SAVE works to bridge the gap between the need for new farmers in our country and the large population of veterans and transitioning service members looking for new opportunities, a high percentage of whom indicate an interest in farming. The SAVE Farm vision is to provide occupational agricultural training, therapy and engagement to a significant number of veterans, serve members and family members on a training farm in Kansas.

"This grant is central to SAVE's growth and success," said Gary LaGrange, president of SAVE. "As we move toward a mature, comprehensive training model for our service members and veterans, this grant enables us to significantly expand our reach and ability to bring new, younger men and women into farming and agriculture. It is a pleasure to work with KDA and USDA as we seek to address the national challenges facing veterans and farmers."

This grant will support three specific programs as part of the SAVE Farm: a bee keeping training program, farm tours including farm business planning and financial management, and apprenticeships on working farms with potential succession possibilities.

"The SAVE Farm serves a valuable role in providing a bridge between the agriculture community and the service we owe to our veterans as they transition to civilian life," said Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Jackie McClaskey. "The hands-on training and therapy provided through this program open the door for these veterans to a fulfilling future career in agriculture."

The average age of farmers in the U.S. is approaching 60, and farm succession has been an increasingly critical concern. More than 60 percent of veterans come from families that have farmed in the previous generation. NIFA's mission is to invest in and advance agricultural research, education and extension that solve societal challenges, and this \$257,000 grant to Kansas will serve that mission. At the same time, it will further KDA's purpose to serve, promote and grow the state's largest industry: agriculture.

For more information about the SAVE Farm, go to www.thesavefarm.org.