



For Immediate Release

Media Contact:

Evan Eagan

(530) 756-1395

evan@farmvetco.org

Military, Ag Communities to Come Together at 2016 Farmer Veteran Stakeholders Conference

Largest Farmer Veteran Gathering in Nation to Be Held at Michigan State University

DAVIS, CA — October 17, 2016 — Farmer Veteran Coalition, a national nonprofit organization that assists military veterans to embark on careers in agriculture, will host the third annual Farmer Veteran Stakeholders Conference—United We Farm—November 30 to December 2, 2016 at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan.

For the third consecutive year, farmer veterans from across the nation will come together for the largest gathering of the military and agricultural communities for three days of educational tracks, farm visits, guest panels, distinguished speakers, community and camaraderie building, and much more. Hosted at Michigan State University's spacious Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center, the conference unites farmer veterans with the agricultural, governmental and nonprofit groups that support them.

"Our national conferences have been invaluable to building this important farmer veteran movement," said FVC Executive Director Michael O'Gorman, who started the organization in 2008 out of the back of his pickup truck. "We've seen dialog launched between our federal partners turn into national policy. We've seen important insight into what makes farming healing for veterans turn into valuable research. And we've seen the veterans themselves form a supportive community that has helped them immensely in their individual endeavors."

Back by popular demand is the Successful Farmer Veterans plenary session where attendees will listen as a panel of successful farmer veterans share their story about how they got their start in agriculture, the hardships they faced and how they overcame them to thrive in their agricultural endeavors. Panel members include: viticulture and livestock producer Davon Goodwin (Army|OEF) of O.T.L Farms in Raeford, N.C.; maple syrup producer Sarah Orban (Army|OIF) of Thunder Bay Maple Syrup in Posen, Mich.; livestock producer Damon Helton (Army|OIF & OEF) of The Farm at Barefoot Bend in Lonsdale, Ark.; and row crop and hop producer Jed Welder (Army & Marines|OIF & OEF) of Trinity Farms in Greenville, Mich.

Attendees will also have the chance to listen-in as leaders from the United States Department of Agriculture, Small Business Administration, Veterans Affairs, and Departments of Labor and Defense discuss policies affecting farmer veterans during the Government Partners Panel.

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On the final day of the conference, Karen Besterman-Dahan, Ph.D., R.D., from the Center of Innovation on Disability & Rehabilitation Research will present attendees with an exclusive preview of the findings of a landmark Veterans Affairs study on the impact of veteran-oriented agriculture on transitioning veterans. Earlier this year, Besterman-Dahan and her team worked closely with Farmer Veteran Coalition to administer this study and will deliver the findings that could shape the path forward for veteran-focused agricultural initiatives.

Scheduled speakers at the conference include: Lanon Baccam, USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services and Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison; Lou Anna Simon, President of Michigan State University; Michael O’Gorman, FVC Executive Director; and Besterman-Dahan. Additional speakers, including the keynote, will be announced in coming weeks.

For more information on the agenda, registration and accommodations, please visit:

<http://www.farmvetco.org/fvsc/>

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ABOUT FARMER VETERAN COALITION

Farmer Veteran Coalition is a national nonprofit organization focused on cultivating a new generation of farmers and food leaders by developing viable employment and meaningful careers through the collaboration of the farming and military communities. Farmer Veteran Coalition’s network of more than 8,000 veterans from all 50 states and U.S. Territories are served by mentors in the areas of agricultural production, law, business planning and career counseling, a small grant program, and the nationally recognized Homegrown By Heroes label for veteran-grown products. Learn more at <http://www.farmvetco.org>.