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For Immediate Release  
October 22, 2019

## **Agricenter International Receives an Investment from US Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture to support Veterans in the Region**

MEMPHIS, TN --- Agricenter International announced today that it will lead a new initiative for veterans to work in the agricultural service sector. The \$897,627 grant for the three-year project was received from the US Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). Over three years, veterans from around the region will have the opportunity to participate in the program and learn from industry partners.

**John Butler, President of Agricenter, stated, "Agricultural businesses are clamoring to hire individuals who have a strong work ethic and hands-on experience. We want to provide veterans with specialized training so they can be qualified for these jobs."**

Agricenter International in Memphis is joined by these supporting partners: CNH Industrial, CropLife America, CropLife Foundation, Farm Credit Mid-America, FarmSpace Systems, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, Operation Stand Down Tennessee, Tennessee Farmer's Co-op, Tennessee AgrAbility Program, Tennessee State University, University of Tennessee at Martin, and University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture.

The program, called Veterans Employed in Technology and Service in Agriculture (VETSA) will help meet the demand of a shrinking agriculture workforce by bringing veterans' leadership and technological skills to the agriculture space and finding new "missions" at home. Differing from other programs that encourage veterans to start a farming operation, this program will prepare veterans for a variety of careers related to the agriculture industry. With an



emphasis on technical skills, the veterans can also earn several certifications within the program such as: Mechanical Technician certification, Remote Pilot in Command training with FAA certification, land surveying/GIS/GPS, and Young Beginning Farmer Education.

The VETSA program is scheduled to start in the first quarter of 2020 and is designed as both a three- and 12-month intensive experience with coursework, hands-on participation in active farming, and certification programs that provide marketable professional skills with a shorter time commitment. The project team will work with several local state and federal agencies to ensure that training programs offered to veterans meet the needs of these agencies and yield graduates well qualified for successful transition to the agricultural sector. To sign up for updates on the program, please visit [www.agricenter.org/agvets](http://www.agricenter.org/agvets).

*Agricenter International, a 1,000-acre farm, is a non-profit dedicated to advancing knowledge and understanding of agriculture. It has a \$524 million annual economic impact on the region, hosts over 1.3 million visitors annually, and educates 10,000 students a year. For more information visit [www.agricenter.org](http://www.agricenter.org) or call 901-757-7777.*

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