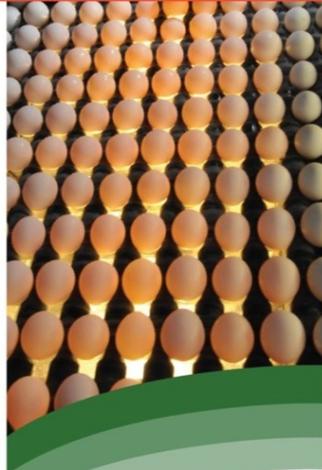




United States Department of Agriculture

# Agricultural Marketing Service

Creating Opportunities for American Farmers and Businesses



## Transitioning From Military to USDA: Growing a Career in Agriculture

A Guide for Transitioning from  
a Military Specialty  
to a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)  
Agricultural Commodity Grader (ACG)



# Agricultural Marketing Service

Creating Opportunities for American Farmers and Businesses

## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Military Specialty</b>	
Overview .....	2
US Air Force AFSC: 4E0X1—Public Health Specialist .....	3
US Army MOS: 68R—Veterinary Food Inspection Specialist .....	4
<b>USDA Agricultural Commodity Grader (ACG)</b>	
Agricultural Commodity Grader .....	5
<b>Resources for Veteran Apprentices</b>	
USDA Benefits .....	6
GI Bill .....	7
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) .....	8
Additional Resources .....	9



# Agricultural Marketing Service

Creating Opportunities for American Farmers and Businesses

## INTRODUCTION

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) Specialty Crops Inspection (SCI) Division supports the global specialty crops market by collaborating with the agricultural community to provide trusted, impartial, prompt, and accurate quality assurance and food safety verification services. Agricultural commodity grading and inspection services establish and certify the quality and/or condition of a product within the marketing channels, with the goal of facilitating trade.

Agricultural commodity graders (ACGs) are our front-line, mission-essential technical experts who deliver inspection, grading, and certification services to those who buy and sell America's fruits, vegetables, and other specialty crops and products. Our grading services, delivered by a team of highly professional, third-party experts, provide U.S. specialty crop traders confidence in their transactions, regardless of whether they take place locally or across the country. A buyer need not personally examine product personally to verify quality; they trust us to do that for them.

The SCI Division provides structured training programs to ensure all of our personnel have the skills and competencies they need to excel professionally. To further strengthen our training program, we are partnering with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to offer an Agricultural Commodity Grader Apprenticeship focused on developing the core skills of our fundamental technical specialist, the ACG. The SCI Division has created DOL-approved National Standards of Apprenticeship for the occupation of Agricultural Commodity Graders (O\*NET-SOC Code: 45-2011.00, RAPIDS Code: ZA004168565). Based on the DOL-approved standard, the SCI Division has established an apprenticeship program that will train America's veterans to ACGs.

As a DOL Registered Apprenticeship program, the ACG Apprenticeship will provide technical training and professional de-velopment to prepare exceptional workers to serve American agriculture. Apprentices who complete the program will have secured two critical career milestones:

- A nationally recognized Department of Labor Apprentice Accreditation, and
- Skills and competencies for professional success.

The SCI Division is proud to offer this unique program to develop America's veterans into the next generation of agricultural technical professionals and leaders, and to help USDA serve those who have served our nation.

# Military and Civilian Occupational Codes

A United States military occupation code, or a Military Occupational Specialty code (MOS code), is a code used in the United States Army and United States Marines to identify a specific job. In the U.S. Air Force, a system of Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSC) is used. In the United States Navy, a system of naval ratings and designators is used along with Navy Enlisted Classification (NEC) system.

**ARMY:** The MOSC is typically a nine-digit code for Army Personnel, and is used for personnel classification above a job specialty. The first three characters: two numbers followed by a letter. Typically the first two numbers give away what field and rank each member has earned.

**MARINES:** The MOS is typically a 3 digit code for Marines, with the first two numbering from 01-99, giving their occupational fields, with the last digit for their specialty.

**NAVY:** Called NEC, Naval Enlistment Classification, by providing ratings by a two or three digit code. Naval Officers use a “Designator”.

**COAST GUARD:** Uses an MOS similar to the Army and Marines. They divide theirs up by groups such as Administration, Aviation, and Scientific.

**AIR FORCE:** Uses a five digit code for AFSC, Armed Forces Specialty Code for enlisted airman, and a four digit code for officers.

These codes and designations describe the various jobs that military personnel carry out.

Likewise, jobs for Federal civilian personnel are categorized by classifications called job series. The USDA Veterans Apprenticeship Program is seeking to hire veterans into the Agricultural Commodity Grader series and develop them into journeyman professionals through training and mentorship.

The following pages describe several military occupations with skills sets similar to those needed by an agricultural commodity grader at USDA. These are not, however, the only occupations from which the Veteran Apprenticeship Program will draw candidates. This program is open to all veterans; we will consider the unique qualifications each candidate offers in selecting program participants.

# U.S. Air Force AFSC: 4E0X1 Public Health Specialist

## Overview

The Public Health Specialist (PHS), USAF AFSC: 4E0X1, manages and performs public health activities and programs including food safety and security inspections; sanitation inspections; medical entomology programs; vector borne, communicable, and occupational disease prevention and control; public health medical readiness activities; and health education and training. This specialist applies medical standards for initial and continued qualification of all Air Force members.



## Basic Skills

The PHS has knowledge, skills, and competencies in the following areas related to food:

- Sourcing
- Inspection
- Safety and security
- Sanitary conditions (container and transport)
- Contamination and deterioration prevention
- Sampling for laboratory analysis
- Investigating complaints
- Initiating recalls (hazardous foods)
- Disposing of deteriorated or damaged foods



## Specific Duties and Responsibilities

- Perform sanitary evaluations of food facilities, public facilities, and military and civilian contract aircraft
- Determine compliance with sanitary standards and reporting discrepancies
- Inspect and recommend approval or disapproval of off-base food processing establishments
- Evaluate and complete inspection records
- Advise on quality assurance provisions
- Evaluate food-handling techniques
- Perform food vulnerability assessments and recommend actions
- Assess risks associated with production, transportation, storage, preparation, and serving of food
- Recommend measures to prevent intentional and unintentional contamination, and deterioration, of food
- Educate food handlers on safety and security
- Investigate foodborne disease outbreaks and reports results to authorities and ensures corrective actions are implemented to prevent recurrence

# U.S. Army MOS: 68R Veterinary Food Inspection Specialist

## Overview

The U.S. Army's Veterinary Food Inspection Specialist, U.S. Army MOS: 68R, inspects or supervises the inspection of meat, poultry, water, foods, eggs, dairy products, operational rations, fresh fruits and vegetables in depots, supply points, and on military installations to ensure a safe, high quality food supply for Department of Defense (DoD) personnel in all environments, with emphasis on the field wartime environment.



## Basic Skills

- Food inspection
- Defect classification and quality determination
- Food sampling
- Packaging evaluation
- Sanitary condition inspections

## Specific Duties and Responsibilities

- Inspect food products on receipt and in storage
- Make sensory evaluations, determine and record food temperatures storage areas



- Operate and maintain inspection equipment
- Classify defects, determine product quality, and prepare inspection reports
- Select food samples using statistical sampling methods, and transmit prepared samples to laboratory for testing
- Review laboratory test results and compare to product requirements
- Evaluate packaging, packing, and marking requirements in accordance with DoD standards and contractual documents
- Conduct sanitary inspections in military and commercial facilities.
- Perform duties in accordance with approved standards of conduct and reports suspected fraud
- Record contractual deficiencies and initiate recommendations for corrective actions
- Prepare and maintain quality history record and product verification record and distributes as required
- Perform pest management, monitoring of packaged water supplies, and field sanitation

# USDA Agricultural Commodity Grader

O\*NET-SOC Code: 45-2011.00

RAPIDS CODE: ZA004168565

## Overview

Agricultural Commodity Graders administer, supervise, or perform examinations and evaluations of specialty crops and related products to determine their official U.S. grade and/or their acceptability in terms of quality or condition in accordance with official standards and related regulations. The work often includes the inspection or monitoring of the conditions under which the product is processed, stored, or transported insofar as these factors affect product quality.

## Basic Skills

- Food inspection
- Knowledge of grade standards
- Familiarity how specialty crops are produced and marketed
- Ability to identify different types and varieties of individual products



## Specific Duties and Responsibilities

- Sample product from such places such as tractor trailers, ship holds, railroad cars, stacked crates or boxes, or moving conveyors
- Identify, describe and evaluate quality characteristics such as color, taste, smell, physical shape, and defects
- Identify damage from transit, storage, or handling
- Handle, test, and evaluate products
- Compare product characteristics with the U.S. grade standard
- Determine grade of product
- Produce consistently accurate grading and inspection results at a pace set by the processing or marketing requirements for the commodity
- Maintain tactful relations with customers



# USDA Benefits

## Overview

As a USDA employee, you are entitled to the wide range of benefits available to Federal employees.

## Pay

The Specialty Crops Inspection Division will hire apprentices into the VAP as agricultural commodity graders. The apprentices will be hired at the GS-5 level and will earn a paycheck throughout the apprenticeship. The apprenticeships are career-ladder positions with promotion potential to the GS-7 level upon completion of VAP.

## Career Opportunities

Apprentices who complete the program are eligible for a position with SCP's Specialty Crops Inspection Division. Job positions and locations are dependent on what is available the time the apprentice completes the program.

## Training and Development Benefits

As an apprentice, you will receive blended technical training on specialty crops inspection, grading, and certification, and developmental training on professional skills, such as interpersonal communications and leadership.

If you are interested, you also can take part in the Specialty Crops Inspection Division's new Affinity Group for Veterans. This nationwide support program for veteran hires provides veteran hires with mentoring, community service opportunities, and other support.

## Health Benefits

- Federal Employee Health Benefits
- Federal Employees Group Life Insurance
- Dental and Vision Benefits
- Long Term Care Insurance

## Retirement Benefits

- Federal Employees Retirement System

## Leave

As a Federal employee, you are entitled to earn annual leave to use for any purpose you want, such as vacations. You'll earn a specified amount of annual leave each pay period of employment that is based on your number of years of Federal employment, including creditable military service.

You'll also earn sick leave to use for your or a family member's medical, dental, or optical examination, treatment, or illness, or for adoption-related activities. There is no limit on how much sick leave you can accumulate.

In addition, the Division may advance up to 240 hours (30 days) of sick leave to a full-time employee for medical, rehabilitative, or psychological treatment.

*Benefits!*



# GI Bill

## What the GI Bill® Offers

The GI Bill® provides financial support for veterans seeking continuing education. For formal classroom instruction, veterans may receive a percentage of tuition and fee payments (paid directly to the school on the Veteran's behalf). Veterans participating in a Veterans Administration-approved apprenticeship program like the USDA Veteran Apprenticeship Program may use their GI Bill® entitlement to receive a Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) and Books & Supplies Stipend. Apprenticeship programs allow veterans to learn a trade or skill through training on the job participation. At the end of a specified training period, the veteran gains job certification or journeyman status.

## Eligibility

If you have at least 90 days of aggregate active duty service after September 10, 2001, and are still on active duty, or if you are an honorably discharged veteran or were discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days, you may be eligible for benefits under the GI Bill.

## Benefits

If you have existing benefits under the GI Bill® and take part in the USDA Veteran Apprenticeship Program, you may qualify for a monthly stipend paid by the Department of Veterans Affairs to help you meet your monthly expenses, in addition to the wages you receive in our program.

- **Monthly Housing Allowance.** As a veteran apprentice, you can use your GI Bill® benefit to receive a tax-free stipend of up to \$1,509 monthly. This Post-9/11 GI Bill® stipend is the

equivalent of the Monthly Housing Allowance of an E-5 with dependents, which is paid in addition to the employer paid wage. Recipients receive 100 percent of the applicable Monthly Housing Allowance during the first 6 months of training. The stipend may be reduced by 20 percent every 6 months thereafter as the veteran's wages increase until the veteran has attained journeyman status and pay. For all other GI Bill® programs, the payment rates are as follows:

- \* 75 percent of the full-time GI Bill® rate for the first 6 months of training
  - \* 55 percent of the full-time GI Bill® rate for the second 6 months of training
  - \* 35 percent of the full-time GI Bill® rate for the remainder of the training program
- **Book and Supplies Stipend.** Post-9/11 GI Bill® recipients may receive up to \$83 per month for books and supplies in addition to their housing stipend



# Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) Apprenticeships

## VR&E Apprenticeships

The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program helps service members and veterans with service-connected disabilities and an employment handicap prepare for, find, and maintain suitable careers. Beneficiaries of the VR&E program may receive vocational rehabilitation and employment services that can help with job training, workplace accommodations, and employment placement services, such as resume development, interview coaching, and direct job development. In addition, the VR&E program may support an on-the-job training (OJT), Special Employer Incentive (SEI), or Non-Paid Work Experience (NPWE) Program for an entitled Veteran.

## Eligibility

Veterans:

- Received a discharge other than dishonorable
- Have a service-connected disability rating of at least 20% from VA
- Apply for VR&E services

Active Duty Service Members:

- Expect to receive a discharge other than dishonorable upon separation from active duty
- Obtain a memorandum rating of 20% or more from the VA
- Apply for VR&E services

Or (until December 31, 2016)

- Are participating in the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) or are certified by the military as having a severe injury or illness that may prevent you from performing your military duties

- Apply for VR&E services, and
- Report for an evaluation with a VR&E counselor before separating from active duty

The basic period of eligibility for VR&E Apprenticeships ends 12 years after the date of notification of: date of separation from active military service, or date the veteran was first notified by VA of a service-connected disability rating. The basic period of eligibility may be extended if a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) determines that a Veteran has a Serious Employment Handicap.

## Benefits

- Comprehensive evaluation to determine abilities, skills, and interests for employment
- Vocational counseling and rehabilitation planning for employment services
- Employment services such as job-training, job-seeking skills, resume development, and other work-readiness assistance
- Help finding and keeping a job, including the use of special employer incentives and job accommodations
- On the Job Training (OJT), apprenticeships like the USDA Veteran Apprenticeship Program, and non-paid work experiences
- Post-secondary training at a college, vocational, technical or business school
- Supportive rehabilitation services including case management, counseling, and medical referrals
- Independent living services for Veterans unable to work due to the severity of their disabilities

## Additional Resources

- **USDA Specialty Crops Inspection Division** <https://www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams/programs-offices/specialty-crops-program>
- **GI Bill® Information.** [www.benefits.va.gov/gibill](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill)
- **GI Bill® Comparison Tool.** VA released an updated version of the GI Bill® Comparison Tool, which provides a personalized estimate of Post-9/11 GI Bill® tuition and fees, housing, and book stipend payments to the student. In addition, the tool displays school level complaint data compiled from the GI Bill® Feedback System, an improved search capability to search for schools and employers, the ability to compare benefits of multiple GI Bill® programs and information for over 30,000 approved programs, including apprenticeships. <https://www.vets.gov/gi-bill-comparison-tool>
- **Veterans Employment Center.** A key resource to support successful Veteran employment. This site helps job seekers translate military skills into plain language and build a profile that can be shared instantly with public and private employers offering real internships, OJT, apprenticeships, and job opportunities. [www.ebenefits.va.gov/jobs](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov/jobs).
- **Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program.** [http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/emp\\_resources.htm](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/emp_resources.htm)
- **Veteran Apprenticeship Programs.** [https://www.doleta.gov/oa/usmap\\_apprenticeship\\_programs\\_veterans.cfm](https://www.doleta.gov/oa/usmap_apprenticeship_programs_veterans.cfm)
- **Guide for Registered Apprenticeship Employers.** Information for employers seeking to help help their Veteran apprentices qualify to receive their GI Bill® benefits. <https://www.doleta.gov/oa/docs/BenefitsVeteransRegisteredApprenticeship.pdf>