Charleston W.Va. -- The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) has launched a new training series for 2020. The Veteran Education Training Series (V.E.T.S) will host its first session “Boots to Business” at the West Virginia Small Farm Conference on Thursday, February 20. More classes will be hosted around the state covering topics such as beekeeping, mushroom production and high tunnel management.

“Every economist recognizes the growing age gap in our trade industries as few people pursue careers in welding or agriculture. To combat this, we must put more emphasis on vocational education,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt. “V.E.T.S. hopes to connect the next generation of farmers with the training they need.”

The goal of V.E.T.S is to make agriculture training accessible to veterans, new and beginning farmers, hobbyists and budding professionals, by offering introductory courses in flexible, abbreviated segments around West Virginia. Courses will be taught by industry experts and will include a mix of classroom and hands-on activities, as well as farm tours. Certificates will be awarded for each full course completed and may be recognized for college credit.

“One benefit from this training series is an opportunity to connect veterans, farmers, and industry experts together,” said Dane Gaiser, WVDA Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture Coordinator. “The Department has found a lot of success when we are able to link entrepreneurs to one another who can then collaborate on projects. Networking also provides an opportunity for mentorship and the passing of knowledge.”
All courses will be free of charge for veterans.

To register for the West Virginia Small Farms Conference or the V.E.T.S. “Boots to Business” course, contact Dane Gaiser at 304-558-2210 or vetstoag@wvda.us.

*The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials who sits on the Board of Public Works.*