

Texas AgrAbility Project

<http://txagrability.tamu.edu/>

The Texas AgrAbility Project's focus is on connecting, assisting, and empowering agricultural producers, their family members, and employees with disabilities and chronic health conditions to stay engaged in production agriculture.

Relevance

Farm and ranch work is considered one of the most dangerous occupations in the United States, with an estimated 50,000 disabled farmers and ranchers in Texas. Their disabilities are often the result of this dangerous work environment. In addition to their daily physical labor, farmers and farm workers often work in conditions that contribute to or increase their risk of health problems. For example, risks associated with farm equipment operation, handling of livestock, exposure to excessive vibration and motion, potential for increased falls, respiratory hazards, and exposure to extreme temperatures all contribute to the overall risk for farmers, ranchers, employees, and family members. Disabilities have also been known to contribute to several other secondary conditions.

Each year, a disabling injury related to work in agriculture occurs on one in every 117 farms. Physical disabilities not related to agriculture increase the rate to one disabling injury for every 24 Texas farms.

Response

Many Texas farmers, ranchers, and their family members are challenged by disabling conditions (i.e., arthritis, amputation, back injuries, heart conditions, traumatic brain injury, and others). Further amplifying these challenges is the fact that Texas is a large state with scattered resources. The Texas AgrAbility Project assists individuals to overcome these barriers that might otherwise impair their ability to remain in production agriculture.

Texas AgrAbility was funded to assist farmers, ranchers, and their family members through individualized consultation regarding:

- farm assessment,
- ranch assessment,
- home environment assessment, and
- financial business analysis.

This project also connects farmers, ranchers, their family members, and/or farm and ranch workers to:

- resources,
- each other, and
- business professionals.

Texas AgrAbility empowers farmers, ranchers, their family members, and/or farm and ranch workers to remain in production agriculture through:

- education and

- resources.

Results

AgrAbility came into existence through the 1990 Farm Bill. Currently, 21 states operate AgrAbility projects funded by USDA.

Texas AgrAbility is in its first year of a four-year grant project. While Texas AgrAbility is in its infancy, preliminary groundwork has built the necessary underlying structures by establishing partnerships with agencies supporting the health and disability communities.

Achievements to date include:

- established a website,
- established a project advisory committee,
- established a relationship with the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services,
- established a relationship with the Center on Disability and Development,
- established a marketing campaign,
- developed a disability awareness online course, and
- developed an intake system for clients.

The Texas AgrAbility Project will continue to move forward with its priority goals, which include:

- Education
 - Provide education to individuals with disabilities and their families engaged in production agriculture, as well as to the health, farm, and government service providers who work with them to increase knowledge about accommodating disabilities, improving function, and avoiding secondary injuries.
- Priority Networking
 - Build the capacity of the Texas AgrAbility Project to deliver services through the development of networking activities such as sharing program ideas, marketing, knowledge, early identification of clients, delivery of services, and linkages to disability and health resources within the broader disability stakeholder community.
- Priority Assistance
 - Provide individualized consultative information, education, service, and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses. The goals of such consultations are to increase the likelihood that these agriculture producers will remain in production agriculture.
- Marketing
 - Increase awareness and enhance the outreach and market of Texas AgrAbility services, resources, and educational opportunities through the Texas AgrAbility Community Network and other forms of outreach including advertisements, web pages, newsletters, displays, and/or electronic notices.