



# Cultivating Independence

*For Farmers and Other Rural Residents with Disabilities*



Indiana AgrAbility Project  
[www.IndianaAgrAbility.org](http://www.IndianaAgrAbility.org)

## Indiana AgrAbility Project

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[www.IndianaAgrAbility.org](http://www.IndianaAgrAbility.org)

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*In Partnership with:*



## Who are we?

In 1979, a farmer with severe disabilities asked Purdue's Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering for help with modifying his tractor so he could continue farming. His request ultimately led to the establishment of the Breaking New Ground (BNG) Resource Center, now an internationally recognized source of information on assistive technology for agricultural worksites.

Soon after it started, the BNG Resource Center established the Breaking New Ground Outreach Program to serve rural Indiana residents affected by disabilities. The BNG Outreach Program, a part of Purdue Extension, became a model for the USDA AgrAbility Program that now supports similar projects in more than 20 states, including Indiana. The Indiana AgrAbility Project serves farmers and other rural residents with disabilities through a collaborative effort between the USDA, the BNG Outreach Program, and several disability- and agriculture-related organizations, including Easterseals Crossroads and Hoosier Uplands Economic Development Corporation.



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## Whom do we serve?

### The Need

Agricultural production ranks as one of the most hazardous occupations in the nation. For example:

- Farming has one of the highest disabling injury rates of any industry.
- Chronic health conditions, like arthritis and back problems, affect a large number of agricultural workers.
- With the average age of Indiana farmers being over 55 years, problems with mobility, hearing, and vision are common.
- Stress-related issues can impact agriculture in many ways.

### The Scope of Our Services

Indiana AgrAbility serves people with many types of disabilities, including:

- spinal cord injury
- amputation
- back injury
- visual impairment
- arthritis
- hearing impairment
- stroke
- head injury
- respiratory impairment
- disabilities due to disease
- stress-related issues
- PTSD

## How can we help?

### Resources

The BNG Resource Center produces top-quality, research-based print, electronic, and audiovisual resources related to disability in agriculture and rural life. Topics include:

- worksite modifications
- rural assistive technology
- improving access to FFA and 4-H programs



- rural business accessibility
- reducing stress-related impairments
- alternative enterprises

For a complete listing of resources, visit the program website at: [www.IndianaAgrAbility.org](http://www.IndianaAgrAbility.org)

### Outreach to Veterans

Indiana AgrAbility provides specialized services to veterans, whether they are beginning farmers or experienced ones. Assistance includes educational opportunities, one-on-one mentoring, resources, and referrals to other agencies.

### On-Site Visits

To help make Indiana farm worksites, homes, and rural businesses more accessible, staff members offer:

- agricultural worksite assessments
- consultations related to self-employment and alternative enterprise options
- recommendations for home modifications
- relevant resource materials
- referrals to other sources of information and assistance
- advocacy when needed

## Specialized Training

Indiana AgrAbility conducts specialized educational initiatives that focus on such groups as migrant and seasonal farmworkers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and Master Gardeners.

Staff members also have provided state and national training on such topics as:

- farming with a disability
- assistive technology for agricultural workers
- community accessibility
- getting youth with disabilities involved in agriculture
- emergency preparedness for people with disabilities in cooperation with Indiana PREPared (INPREPared.org)



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## How do we operate?

As part of Purdue Extension, the Indiana AgrAbility Project has access to Extension's statewide resources and services.

In addition, the program forms collaborative relationships with many other groups and functions as a coalition of partnerships with organizations such as: Easterseals Crossroads, INDATA, MESA, Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Hoosier Uplands Economic Development Corporation, Indiana Farm Bureau, Indiana FFA, Rehabilitation Hospital of Indiana, Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs, NRCS, and FSA. The program also has targeted outreach efforts to underserved populations, such as veterans, African American farmers, Latino agricultural workers, and Amish/Old Order Anabaptist communities.

