



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT

Donna Hardwick, ITVS 415-356-8383 donna.hardwick@itvs.org
Mary Lugo 770-623-8190 lugo@negia.net
Cara White 843-881-1480 cara.white@mac.com

For downloadable images, visit pbs.org/pressroom/

***Farmer/Veteran* Premieres on *Independent Lens*
Memorial Day, Monday, May 29, 2017 on PBS**

Online Streaming Begins May 30

**A Combat Veteran's Fragile Struggle to Overcome Trauma and
Transition to Life as a Farmer**



Credit: Jeremy M. Lange

(San Francisco, CA) — Home from three combat tours in Iraq, Alex Sutton forges a new identity as a farmer, hatching chicks and raising goats on 43 acres in rural North Carolina. He dives into life on the farm with his new love Jessica, but cannot shake the lingering traumas of war. The stories he tells about battlefield experiences become unmoored from reality as he cycles between states of heightened awareness and “feeling zombified” from a cocktail of prescriptions meant to keep him stable. For the viewer, as for Alex, what to believe about his past is uncertain. The farm becomes a terrain to unearth what is buried, what it really means to be “the perfect soldier,” and where to find the way forward.

Directed by Alix Blair and Jeremy M. Lange, ***Farmer/Veteran*** premieres on *Independent Lens* Memorial Day, Monday, May 29,

2017, 10:00-11:00 PM ET ([check local listings](#)) on PBS.

The filmmakers originally set out to make a film that explored the therapeutic potential of agriculture for wounded combat veterans, and were excited to tell the story of how Alex Sutton was finding new purpose and healing. But as the seasons changed, it became clear that Alex couldn't keep ahead of the work on the farm — or his own inner demons. The stories he told of his past conflicted with his military records, and with his own physical body. The filmmaker's focus shifted to trying to understand why.

Mental health professionals they consulted cautioned that recovery from trauma is painfully slow and non-linear, and that the stories trauma survivors tell themselves have a powerful place in recovery — for better or worse. “So we made room for Alex's own complicated truth and came to understand far more in return,” said Blair and Lange. “We want this film to call out our social responsibility to Alex, to all veterans returning home, that we must share in the burden of the long after-war. We do this by making time and space to receive their stories, compassionately meeting them wherever they are in their journey.”

Visit the [Farmer/Veteran](#) page on *Independent Lens*, which features more information about the film. *Farmer/Veteran* will be available for online viewing on the site beginning May 30, 2017.



1435 Folsom Street
San Francisco CA 94103
T. 415 356 8383
F. 415 356 8391
pbs.org/independentlens

About the Subjects

Born in Iowa in 1979, **Alexander Sutton** enlisted in the U.S. Army at age 17. He served for 13 years and completed three tours of duty in the Iraq War (Operation Iraqi Freedom), earning several commendations including a Combat Action Badge and Purple Heart. Sergeant Sutton was honorably discharged with a 100% disability rating in 2011. He now lives on a farm in rural North Carolina with his wife Jessica and their two children, Clara Lee and James.

Jessica Sutton, daughter of Ed and Diane Silberhorn, was born in 1985 and graduated from the University of North Carolina Pembroke in 2012 with a BS in Business with a concentration in Management. She met Alex Sutton in 2010 as he was retiring from the Army and together they run Sutton Heritage Farm.

About the Filmmakers

Alix Blair (Director / Cinematographer / Associate Producer) is responsible for a diverse body of work exploring human rights and environmental issues through photography, film, and radio production. A recent graduate of the Master's program at the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University and recipient of multiple fellowships, including one from the Duke Center for Human Rights, Blair documented the lives of women in southwestern Uganda for her Master's work. Her audio story, *The Last Morning Was a Sweet One*, won a 2013 ShortDoc award from the Third Coast International Audio Festival. *Farmer/Veteran* is her first feature-length documentary.

Jeremy M. Lange (Director / Cinematographer) is a documentary and editorial still photographer whose past projects have focused on kidnapers for hire as well as on returning veterans and the profound effects of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan upon their families. Past film and video work includes the Peabody Award winning television show *A Chef's Life* and the documentary film *Private Violence*, which won the Award for Human Rights at the 2014 Full Frame Documentary Film Festival. *Farmer/Veteran* is the first feature film for Lange.

D.L. Anderson (Producer / Editor / Co-Director) is a partner and raconteur at Vittles, a small Southern consortium producing character-driven stories that explore complex social issues through the lens of food. An award-winning editorial still photographer, Anderson pivoted into film as a student at the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University. Past work includes *Mr. Percy's Run*, a profile of moonshine kingpin and avid foxhunter Percy Flowers and *Cook School*, a behind-the-bars look at the only culinary program for prisoners in North Carolina.

Mikel Barton (Producer), a partner and producer at Vittles, has made a career of helping productions meet their ambitious goals as a producer and assistant director for commercial brands like ESPN, Suntrust, and Nationwide and organizations such as the SPCA, Witness for Peace, and FairVote. His strong affinity for the documentary form found a home at Vittles in 2012. Recent productions include *Un Buen Carnicero*, about the complicated realities of immigrant life at the corner butcher shop.



CREDITS

Directed by	Alix Blair Jeremy M. Lange
Co-Directed by	D. L. Anderson
Cinematography by	Alix Blair Jeremy M. Lange
Edited by	D. L. Anderson Nyneve Laura Minnear
Produced by	D. L. Anderson Mikel Barton
Executive Producers	Sally Jo Fifer Lois Vossen
Supervising Producer for ITVS	Shana Swanson
Consulting Producer for ITVS	N'Jeri Eaton
Music by	Phil Cook
Music Editor/Additional Music by	Ari Picker

Farmer/Veteran is a co-production of Hissing Duck LLC and the Independent Television Service (ITVS), with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: [facebook.com/independentlens](https://www.facebook.com/independentlens) and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

###



1435 Folsom Street
San Francisco CA 94103
T. 415 356 8383
F. 415 356 8391
pbs.org/independentlens