

# Agritourism: Considerations for Success

**Presenter:**

**Cora Gnegy**

**Tourism and Marketing Director  
Giles County, Virginia**





[www.FarmCreditKnowledgeCenter.com](http://www.FarmCreditKnowledgeCenter.com)

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# A little about me...

- Native Virginian
  - Degrees from JMU & VT
- Experiential Education & Marketing
- Agritourism Consultant in addition to Tourism Marketing & Development
  - Clients from MN to GA

[cgnegy@gilescounty.org](mailto:cgnegy@gilescounty.org)







**We're talking  
Agritourism!**

# Virginia Defines...

- "Agritourism activity" means any activity carried out on a **farm or ranch** that allows members of the general public, for **recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes**, to view or enjoy **rural activities, including farming, wineries, ranching, historical, cultural, harvest-your-own activities, or natural activities and attractions**. An activity is an agritourism activity whether or not the participant paid to participate in the activity.
- "Agritourism professional" means any person who is engaged in the business of providing one or more agritourism activities, whether or not for compensation.
- *Insurance definition can be different, but we'll get to that...*

# Impact of Agritourism in Virginia

- **2017 Study** | <https://www.vatc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/The-Economic-and-Fiscal-Impacts-of-Agritourism-In-Virginia.pdf>
- There are approximately **1,400** establishments in Virginia that classify into the agritourism sector. Roughly 56% of these venues are open to the public throughout the year.
- While visitation levels vary widely among venues, on average **5,356** visitors patronize each establishment per year.
- In 2015 visitors to Virginia's agritourism farm businesses spent an estimated **\$1.5B** throughout the state. Approximately, **17%** of this total was spent at the agritourism venues; the remaining 83% was spent outside the venues (e.g. hotels, restaurants), but inside the Commonwealth.
- The total economic activity stimulated by Virginia's agritourism sector during 2015 was approximately **\$2.2B**.
- Economic activity created by the agritourism sector was associated with approximately \$1.2B in value-added effects in 2015 which is a measure of the sector's contribution to the gross domestic product of the state.
- Regarding employment, the economic activity attributed to Virginia's agritourism sector supported approximately **22,151** full-time equivalent jobs in the state in 2015.
- In terms of wages and income, the economic activity spawned by Virginia's agritourism sector was responsible for roughly \$839.1M in wage and salary income in 2015.

# Why Agritourism?

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- Stand Alone Business Operation (created with agritourism in mind)
  - Expanded Operations (building on what you have)
  - Diversification & new revenue stream for agricultural operation (have a need – fill a gap)
  - Education/Awareness
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*Agritourism Experiences*



**Bee Berry Farm**  
<http://beeberryfarm.net>  
(540) 544-6833  
Newport

**Bob Pond Blueberry Farm**  
bpondberries@yahoo.com  
(540) 726-3084  
Rich Creek

**Doe Creek Farm & Orchard**  
[www.doe creek farm.com](http://www.doe creek farm.com)  
(540) 922-2705  
Pembroke

**Narrows Farmers Market**  
<http://townofnarrows.org>  
(540) 726-2423  
Narrows

**Newport Agricultural Fair**  
newportfair@pencol.net  
Newport

**Pearisburg Community Market**  
[www.pearisburg.org](http://www.pearisburg.org)  
(540) 921-0340

**Rolling Hills Farm**  
[www.rollinghillfarmllc.com](http://www.rollinghillfarmllc.com)  
(540) 251-4430  
Newport

**Smith Valley Meats**  
<http://www.pottrust.org/SmithValleyMeats>  
(540) 726-3992  
Rich Creek

**Spruce Ridge Tree Farm**  
[spruce ridge tree farm.com](http://spruce ridge tree farm.com)  
(540) 544-7700  
Newport

**Stonecrop Farm**  
<http://stonecropfarmers.com>  
(540) 599-0839  
Newport

**The Green Market**  
(540) 599-4125  
Pembroke

**Walker Valley Market**  
(540) 921-1381  
Pearisburg

**Windrush Farm**  
[www.windrushfarm.com](http://www.windrushfarm.com)  
(540) 544-7088  
Newport

# Business Development- things to consider

1. Are you...
  - Attraction
  - Experience
  - Destination

*Let's look at some examples... but don't get to hung up on classifying your idea/operation.*



# Agritourism Attractions

- You-pick operations
- Field Trips
- Seasonal
- A “thing” people come to see, do, buy





# Agritourism Experiences

- Guests/visitors *touch, feel, do*
- Farm Stays
- Working Farm Visits
- Live Music/Shows
- Weddings
- Seasonal or full time





# Agritourism Destinations

- Combinations & multifaceted operations
- Permanent Year Round Farm Stands
- Wineries/Breweries (tasting room)
- Hay rides, youth activities
- Lodging+



# From the *Economic and Fiscal Impacts of Agritourism in Virginia* 2017 Study

ON-FARM ACTIVITIES	% OF VENUES OFFERING
Tour / field trip	52.7%
Festival / event	38.2%
Wedding / reunion / social gathering / concert	34.5%
Retail goods purchased on the farm	32.4%
Beer, cider, spirits, or wine tasting	26.4%
Educational workshop	24.3%
Produce, meat, dairy, or honey purchased on the farm	23.7%
Animal observation / petting	23.3%
On-farm lodging or camping	17.6%
Hayride	15.2%
Food tasting	14.5%
Farm immersion experience	14.2%
U-pick vegetables or fruit	13.9%
Art / painting experience	13.2%
On-farm dining	13.2%
Christmas tree farm / cut your own	10.8%
On-farm stargazing	10.8%
Pumpkin patch	10.5%
On-farm horseback riding	8.5%
On-farm hiking	8.1%
Cooking class	7.8%
On-farm fishing	7.1%
Youth camp	6.8%
Wildlife study	6.4%
Corn maze	5.1%



# Business Development- things to consider

## 2. Zoning or other local regulations

- Build your team & network
- Do you know Zoning Administrator for your area?
- Do you have legal counsel to review forms/waivers?
- Does your locality have meals, admissions, lodging taxes to consider?
- Being an agricultural operation there may be different paths to permits/license then other business types.

*Agritourism Development is Economic Development- you are creating value to your land, community, and area.*

## 3. Seasonal verses full-time

# Best Management Practices for an agritourism business include

- 1) providing an authentic farm or ranch experience,
- 2) providing an educational experience,
- 3) providing excellent customer service,
- 4) providing adequate public facilities,
- 5) maintaining a safe and accessible environment,
- 6) creating good community relations, and
- 7) planning for your financial future.

*From [Agricultural Resource Marketing Center](#)*

# Economic Impact- Customer Dollars

<b>FARM PATRON SEGMENT</b>	<b>ON-FARM SPENDING AMOUNT</b>
Local Visitors to Farm Businesses (excluding wineries, vineyards, breweries or distilleries)	\$72.4M
Non-Local Visitors to Farm Businesses (excluding wineries, vineyards, breweries or distilleries)	\$84.1M
Local Visitors to On-Farm Wineries, Vineyards, Breweries or Distilleries	\$25.7M
Non-Local Visitors to On-Farm Wineries, Vineyards, Breweries or Distilleries	\$34.1M

# Operations

- Operations model is based on Attraction-Experience-Destination
  - Staff
    - Family, Self, Part time, Full time, FTE, Seasonal...
  - Customer Service
    - How will guests/visitors move through your operation? Check in, parking, greeter, ticketed- thinking of every opportunity the guests has to develop a perception of you...
  - Interaction
    - Social, website, phone; cashiers, servers, maintenance; Animals & products
    - What level of interaction with visitors have with your operation
  - Cash flow/accounting
    - Farm based, business based; future investments; product- think through an annual cycle, all business has cycles- Agritourism Operators feel this more
  - Insurance
    - Be open and honest- protect your business, your staff, as well as visitors and guests
    - *There are some wonky “rules” out there- but there’s more than one insurance company and more than one way to do things*



# Operations

- COVID-19 World
  - It's worth noting that many agritourism operators have found creative ways to maintain all guidelines for ongoing health situation
  - Large events/festivals/experiences may look very different in the future
  - Use this as an opportunity to think how/why your agritourism operation does things-
    - Is there a new technology I can incorporate?
    - Are there new partners I can bring into my network?
    - How can I be of service to my customers, differently than my competition/previously?

# Marketing & Public Relations



Building your plan | Adapting your plan



Growing your operation



How to make the sale/close the deal



*Get people to spend their money*

# Marketing Plan

Customer Profile- what does your customer “look like”

Target Customer- who does your ideal customer “look like”

Message- What do you want your customers to know

# Marketing Strategy

Paid- Advertisements

Partnerships

Reward

Word of Mouth

Social

Cooperative Advertising

Collaboratives

Sponsorships/Events

Creative





# Creative Marketing

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# Resources

- <https://agritourismworld.com/>
- <https://www.virginia.org/agritourism/> | <https://www.vatc.org/pam/resources/>
- <https://ext.vt.edu/agriculture/agritourism.html>
- Local Tourism Offices
- Program Specific- Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- Small Business Development Centers
- SCORE Offices
- Knowledge Center
- CA Agritourism Services | <http://www.calagtour.org/>
- LSU Ag Center | [https://www.lsuagcenter.com/topics/community/community\\_dev/agritourism](https://www.lsuagcenter.com/topics/community/community_dev/agritourism)

*This is a business- work it daily...*

# Other links for interesting examples & worksheets

- <https://www.agdaily.com/lifestyle/top-agritourism-destinations-united-states/>
- [https://industry.traveloregon.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/01\\_Types\\_of\\_Agritourism\\_Activities.pdf](https://industry.traveloregon.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/01_Types_of_Agritourism_Activities.pdf)
- Farm Lodging Listings:
  - <https://farmstayus.com/>
  - <https://harvesthosts.com/>
  - STR (Airbnb, VRBO) < again check with local regulations.

**Questions?**



# Knowledge Center

[www.FarmCreditKnowledgeCenter.com](http://www.FarmCreditKnowledgeCenter.com)

Email: [knowledgecenter@fcvirginias.com](mailto:knowledgecenter@fcvirginias.com)

