

STARTING YOUR AGRITOURISM VENTURE

An agritourism farm is a value-added farm or ranch that provides pleasure as well as recreation, information, education or other experiences or services for which the public may or may not pay admission to participate in and/or purchase an agricultural product or activity.

The following questions provide a starting place for farmers interested in developing agritourism farms.

First Steps

1. What do **you** want to do? Do you have a firm idea of your goal(s) for your agritourism farm?
 - Have you made a list of the activities you want to provide?
 - Have you made a list of the resources, both natural and man-made, that you have available on the farm and which are attractive to agritourism venues?
2. Who do you want to serve? Ages, size of groups, how often?
3. How much do you have to invest?
 - Time
 - Money
 - Other resources
4. How ready are you? How far along are you?
5. When do you want to open for business? Do you have a timetable or schedule?
6. Do you want to provide an educational program?
7. Do you have historical or cultural information to provide?

Beginning a Business

8. Do you have a business plan? A strategic plan?
9. Do you know your land use rights?
10. Do you want to charge for your services? Do you know how much money you need or want to make?
11. Have you talked with your insurance agent about the probable need to increase liability coverage? Do you need or want to provide health insurance for employees?

Other Support Agencies

12. Have you talked to the NCDA&CS Food and Drug staff, the Marketing Division, or the NCSU Food Science staff to see what resources are available to help you with value-added processes, such as processing a commodity before it is marketed or changing the way a product is packaged?

Local Issues and Regulations

13. How much of your current land holdings do you plan to use? Are you planning to buy more land? Is the use of any of your land prohibited for agritourism activities? Have you talked to the local planning board?
14. Are there other agritourism farms nearby that could compete with you?
15. Are there land, water or wildlife issues that might impact your plans?
16. Have you researched local legal and liability considerations or regulations such as planning and zoning, health, environmental quality through your local agricultural extension offices, business and economic development offices, Secretary of State, and tax offices? Does your county have zoning ordinances which are helpful to agritourism?

17. Have you talked to your neighbors about your plans? Will they be receptive and supportive, or irritated? Do you have a plan to overcome negative feedback?
18. Is there adequate parking for large groups? Do you have turn-around areas for school buses?
19. Do you have restrooms and handwashing facilities adaptable for 'special needs' persons?
20. Do you have a list of emergency phone numbers next to a visitor-accessible telephone?

Marketing Your New Agritourism Farm

21. Do you have a marketing plan? Do you know your potential visitor population?
22. Have you researched organizations to join to promote your farm, such as the Chamber of Commerce or the local Convention and Visitors Bureau, or other farm organizations that promote agritourism? Do you know about the Agritourism Networking Association?
23. Have you researched other nearby crafts and rural entertainment resources to partner with?
24. Have you thought about off-site signage to offer advertising and directions to your farm?
25. Have you planned for on-site signage for highlighting activities and/or educational experiences?
26. Have you thought about hospitality services, such as who will welcome your visitors and who will show them around the farm? Will you have guides for guided tours?
27. Will you have a gift shop and/or sell souvenirs? Do you plan to sell homemade foods?
28. Will you have a plan for tracking your visitors to know where to increase or decrease marketing efforts? Guest books for sign in with email addresses?
29. Will you give away coupons for future visits? Discounts for large groups? Special incentives for school groups?
30. Do you want to advertise on the internet? Have you checked out the General Store in the DA&CS' Agritourism page at www.visitncfarms.com? Did you know you can market other items you produce through the General Store's categories at www.ncagr.com/ncproducts?
31. Do you have access to email? Do you have or plan to have a webpage? An online newsletter? Mailing newsletters to customers?
32. Do you want to send out press releases or develop a media kit?

Networking with Other Agritourism Farmers

- North American Farmers Direct Marketing & Agritourism Association – www.nafdma.com
- NC Agritourism Networking Association – visit the Agritourism Office at www.ncagr.com/agritourism

This information is designed to help potential agritourism farmers do their research and gather information about developing an agritourism farm. It is published as the first of three documents in the series: Suggestions for Helping You Start an Agritourism Venture and Business Resources for Agritourism Farmers, published by the Agritourism Office of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. All documents are available by request, are online, can be emailed or mailed.

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NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Rev. August 2008