

Fact Sheet

What is Agritourism? Starting an Agritourism Operation

DEFINITION



The definition of agritourism is different from country, state, and county. Agritourism focuses on activities that attract customers to the farm which will lead to farm product sales. There are many activities that are considered agritourism including u-pick, hayrides, petting zoo, educational tours, farm stay, workshops, and more.

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INCOME SOURCES AGRITOURISM OPERATION

There are many different income sources available for an agritourism operation such as u-pick, hay-rides, corn maze, farm stay, workshops, llama walks, culinary tastings, and more. The most important part is making sure that these experience tie back to product sales on the farm.



AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT

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ZONING

Every municipality has different zoning requirements which makes it important to speak with your local zoning office. They will help you determine if your property would be eligible to operate an agritourism operation. Some municipalities may require permits when hosting events, putting up tents, etc.



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NEIGHBORS

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Being located in an agricultural district does help to be eligible to operate an agritourism operation but it is not always a definite. It is important that the farm is first for farming product sales.

Starting an agritourism operation can be stressful to the person starting the operation but also for neighbors. Neighbors don't know what to expect and may draw their own conclusions (increase traffic, noise, more people near their homes, etc.). It may help to have an open conversation and provide an open dialogue if this occurs.



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EMPLOYEES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

Working in agritourism is not for the faint hearted. It takes patience and dedication. Employees should understand that this is an experience for the customer and if it goes well the customer will return and spread the word. Employees should be well dressed with an easily identifiable uniform. The employee should feel comfortable speaking with customers and letting the owner know when issues arise. As we all know the customer is not always right but how does your operation handle a situation. It is ok to have an individual or individuals that handles difficult situations on the farm.



FARM APPEARANCE AND LAYOUT

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- It is important to have a clean and organized farm. The public is not used to being on a working farm, hide the old equipment, dumpsters, etc. out of sight of the public.
- The layout of the farm should allow for a good flow of traffic. A farm map and directional signage may be required depending on the farm layout.

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SIGNAGE AND PARKING

- Signage should be readable and easy to understand. Customers may not read the first sign they see, so having multiple signs maybe required. Examples of signage including no trespassing, operational hours, parking, restrooms, food safety, and NY Safety Act (more info on NY Safety Act located in resources).
- Having adequate parking is a must for an agritourism operation. Parking along the road maybe in violation of municipality and is a liability.

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SAFETY AND INSURANCE

Inviting the public onto a farm increases the chance of liability. The farm should be reviewed to determine potential risk and walked daily when the public will be visiting the farm (you never know if a hole or wasp nest might develop). Signage and barriers to keep individuals out of unsafe areas can help reduce risk.

- Insurance is important to obtain before opening an agritourism operation. Having the public on a farm increases liability and the possibility for accidents to occur. It is important to update your insurance company on any changes to your operation when changes occur. Make sure to look over the insurance policy and ask questions especially if there is questionability to your policy coverage. Not all insurance companies have experience in working with agritourism operations.



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MARKETING



There are many ways to market an agritourism operation. The most common are social media (Facebook and Instagram), google listing, website, newspaper, magazine, TV, community calendar of event, tourism office, and more. Information should be up to date and enough notification for customers. One of the biggest forms of marketing is word of mouth.

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PAYMENT

The reason to run an agritourism operation is to increase revenue. This requires the farm to offer varies forms of payment cash, credit, check, and other forms of electric payment. It is not a must to accept varies forms of payment but if the operation is only able to take one form of payment then it needs to be clearly posted so customers are aware.

Additional Resources:

- Cornell Cooperative Extension Agritourism Program: <https://cals.cornell.edu/cornell-cooperative-extension/work-teams/agritourism>
- Cornell Cooperative Extension Agritourism YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@cceagritourism>