

Agritourism in Focus

A Guide for Tennessee Farmers





This publication has been developed as part of the Tennessee Agritourism Initiative under agreement with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and funded in part by USDA Rural Development.





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September 2005

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Foreword

Agriculture, like every endeavor of man, changes with time, technology, opportunity and constantly shifting human needs and circumstances. Tennessee's agricultural industry has been on a continuum of progress and adaptation since the first settlers crossed the Appalachian Mountains into the Tennessee territory. Today this change continues. Some Tennessee farmers choose to grow increased acreages of traditional row crops in order to maximize profits; others strive to improve the genetics and management of their livestock to increase returns. Some producers explore alternative or specialty crops, and still others seek direct marketing opportunities to keep their farms viable and successful.

For some, agritourism has become another pathway to success in an increasingly urban world where many people crave farm experiences and a connection to their rural heritage. Agritourism can be any experience or business enterprise that brings visitors to the farm, stimulating economic activity on farms and in rural communities.

The Tennessee Departments of Agriculture, Tourist Development, and Economic and Community Development, in association with USDA Rural Development, the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation, and the University of Tennessee Center for Profitable Agriculture are primary partners in the Tennessee Agritourism Initiative. The goal of this initiative is to increase farm income for interested Tennessee farmers through agritourism and direct marketing opportunities. Farmers who already have direct marketing operations may seek to make them more profitable and to enhance their customers' experiences. Others farmers may be looking for new ways to generate farm income.

As one product of the initiative's efforts, this guide is designed to help farmers operate profitable agritourism enterprises. The initiative partners recognize that some of the information contained in the guide is dynamic and will need to be updated as experience and time dictate. Please feel free to contact the Tennessee Department of Agriculture or the University of Tennessee Center for Profitable Agriculture for additional information concerning agritourism or direct marketing of farm products.

Joe Gaines

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Photo Credits

University of Tennessee Extension Center for Profitable Agriculture, inside back cover
Rippavilla, page 58 and front cover (aerial photos)
Celeste Blackburn, Columbia Daily Herald, page 58 (field damage)
Ken Hammond, USDA, page 49, front cover (quilt, flowers), back cover (kids in barn, apple picking)
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Introduction

This guide has been developed to assist Tennessee farmers and agri-entrepreneurs in evaluating agritourism enterprise opportunities, planning agritourism enterprises, and dealing with issues and obstacles faced by existing agritourism enterprises. It also serves as a resource for professionals working with existing or potential agritourism entrepreneurs. While this guide cannot guarantee success in planning and managing an agritourism enterprise, the concepts it contains are important in enhancing the potential for success.

This guide contains 10 chapters and an appendix dealing with topics critical to the success of agritourism operations. It is designed to be interactive, allowing users to work through exercises and relate the material presented to their specific situations. The order in which topics are presented is not intended to imply the relative importance of one topic over another. All of the topics discussed are important, and many topics are interrelated.

Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is deemed correct and accurate to the best of the ability of the authors, based on information utilized at the time of writing. This publication is for educational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice or an interpretation of the law.