

North America Meeting of the Global Agritourism Network (GAN)

June 15, 2023

The first meeting of the North America region of the Global Agritourism Network (GAN) took place on Thursday, June 15. The goal of the interactive Zoom meeting was to connect with others working in agritourism throughout North America and begin developing a strategy for sharing resources, strengthening networks, and supporting agritourism throughout our region. The Zoom meeting attracted 129 registrants and 65 live participants.

Scottie Jones of Farm Stay USA and Suzi Spahr of NAFDMA International Agritourism Association led the meeting, as co-chairs of the North America region of GAN. Lisa Chase of University of Vermont Extension and Chair of GAN helped facilitate, along with Chadley Hollas of Cultivating Tourism and Secretary of GAN and Claire Whitehouse of the University of Vermont Center for Rural Studies. Three speakers gave overviews of agritourism in their respective countries including:

- Dr. Luis Alberto Morales of the San Quintín School of Engineering and Business of the Autonomous University of Baja California in Mexico;
- Christina Conell, Director of the USDA Agricultural Marketing Services Local and Regional Foods Division in the USA; and
- David Gillespie, Farmer and Chair of the Sustainable and Regenerative Agriculture and Agritourism Committee of the Global Agritourism Network in Quebec, Canada.

After the overviews of Mexico, the US, and Canada, participants answered a series of polls and open-ended questions. The following pages include a summary of the chat after removing identifying information, including responses to open-ended questions asked during the Zoom meeting. The recording and data from the polls are online at [Past Webinars | Vermont Tourism Research Center | The University of Vermont \(uvm.edu\)](#).

The [Global Agritourism Network](#) welcomes everyone including farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural producers; researchers; educators; community planners; government entities; agricultural service providers; development organizations; tour operators; and more. By working together across professions, GAN aims to enhance the capacity of agritourism worldwide. Visit [Global Agritourism Network \(GAN\) Registration \(google.com\)](#) to register and become a part of GAN.

Website where the recording, de-identified chat, and polls are posted:

<https://www.uvm.edu/vtrc/past-webinars>

Find out about future agritourism gatherings at: <https://www.uvm.edu/vtrc/future-agritourism-gatherings>

What are the greatest challenges for agritourism in North America? (Below are comments in response to the poll question.)

- From someone who is in the process of conducting an agritourism economic impact in Oregon, missing data has been a real challenge.
- infrastructure and public services in Mexico
- Challenges: funding and support for entrepreneurs NOT farms - professional services, consulting, and experience and event producers. Territorialism with county based tourism models - no collaboration to market shared ag tourism assets BEYOND the "county" borders
- Access to capital is a problem for Native American Enterprises due in part to land ownership and Tribal management variations.
- Would like to see continued growth of Extension positions to support agritourism and sustainable tourism in general, for those that don't know visit <http://extensiontourism.net>

Side conversation about the US Congressional Agritourism Caucus and Recreation Economy MOU

- Curious if GAN is connected to the US Congressional Agritourism Caucus created by Virginia Rep Jennifer Wexton
 - we just heard about that caucus, but our state is not on it....
 - And also I heard NIFA/Forest/Interior have a new agreement on Outdoor Economy....should we learn more about that?
 - And where the Caucus ACT stands which advanced establishing an agritourism office at the USDA
 - Replying to "Curious if GAN is co..." Perhaps we could get someone from that caucus to present to us at a later meeting.
 - I have been in contact regularly with the staff member managing the Agritourism Caucus. We can have him join and speak in the future, as suggested. If Canada or Mexico has a similar group in their governmental/legislative bodies, we would love to know more.
- State Tourism Offices----do they have an association?
- Does Econ Dev Administration have programs focused on tourism? I know the USDA ones but not the broader Econ ones

How can you contribute to GAN North America and what level of leadership would you like to have?

- Contribute to formative research foundation and recommendations to USDA for policy change
- I'd like to help with events and be on a committee
- To join the global committees, make sure to fill out the official GAN form so we have your information: go.uvm.edu/ganform

Who is missing and how can we invite them to connect?

- State DMOs
- Environmental Protection Agencies.
- Our politicians who make up the policies!
- Local Tourism development, Rural development orgs/agencies
- State DMO's and Travel Writers!
- I work very closely with our provincial (ontario) ministry of ag and tourism. happy to reach out to see if someone would like to join us
- I'd like to see representation from state/regional development organizations (Regional Councils,

Economic Development Regions, etc.). Also, USDA-RD.

- Especially from regions where there are organized efforts to develop trails and such.
- Indigenous knowledge holders
- AIANTA [American Indian and Alaska Native Tourism Association]
 - AIANTA is here. Thank you.
- missing; Indigenous groups, business owners
- I'd like to get the Arkansas Dept of Ag and Arkansas Hospitality included
- Policy makers
- Agencies of Agriculture
- eventually this group could be well served by county level planners, commissioners being aware of the group, its work, data and needs
- Age range of participants?
- Representation from consumers
- Kids! Guys kids! Organizations that bridge farmers and young ppl such as those working with farms and school curriculums
- <https://www.ustravel.org/programs/destinations-council>
- food policy council leaders
- commerce and tourism chambers
- Missing: minority farmers (broadly, ethnic/racial; veterans; people with disabilities)
- Also farmers market organizers, local government officials, land use planners, agricultural land trusts
- Aquaculture, sustainable fisheries
- other people for the group: travel agents
- CalAgTour

Update on GAN Research Committee

- The research committee is planning a survey of GAN members in the near future. Our committee wants to identify and prioritize the major issues whose resolution could be facilitated by research efforts. We have asked committee chairs to work with their committees and to provide us with a list of priority questions they would like for us to consider. We will work with this input to create a final survey instrument that will then be sent out to all GAN members. Be thinking of what you would like to know about GAN members, their activities, their interests, their perspectives, etc. I think Scottie and Suzi will likely be the ones who should receive your input, but they might want to delegate this to someone else.
- We are working through the International Research Network for Agritourism (IRENA) to essentially extend the survey work done in the USA back in 2019 into other countries. We have translations in several languages already and are piloting in Italy and Brazil currently. We have a list of interested countries and I will be engaging with them more deliberately this summer/fall as part of my sabbatical project. We already have some contacts in Canada and I'll be up working with David G. We can likely be ready to deploy in Canada this fall if there is interest and support. We could do similarly for Mexico. This could all be coordinated with the AMS/UVM survey effort in the U.S.

Communication barriers

- We should include preferred language in our survey of GAN members for sure!
- If someone is shy to speak in English and prefer Spanish, I can do my best to translate
- yo sé que muchos de nosotros aquí hablamos y podemos trabajar en español igual que inglés.
- Un cambio de idioma, seria fantastic

Next steps for connecting with GAN North America

- Perhaps include with our next invite some "sample language" we can forward to partners who are less aware of this Network but that we can invite with context of its mission?
- coffee talks!
- Connection ideas, zoom but also travel learning programs for groups to see and experience other agritourism sites, also connection with extensiontourism.net
- FYI see <http://tourism.oregonstate.edu> for a travel learning program in Costa Rica August 30 -sept 6
- Good webinar on Oyster South site on aquaculture and oyster tourism from their March conference on YouTube https://youtu.be/z0_52Acqacw
- Conference in September: <https://extensiontourism.net>
- A reminder to anyone who hasn't to make sure to fill out the GAN form so we have your contact information: [Global Agritourism Network \(GAN\) Registration \(google.com\)](https://extensiontourism.net)