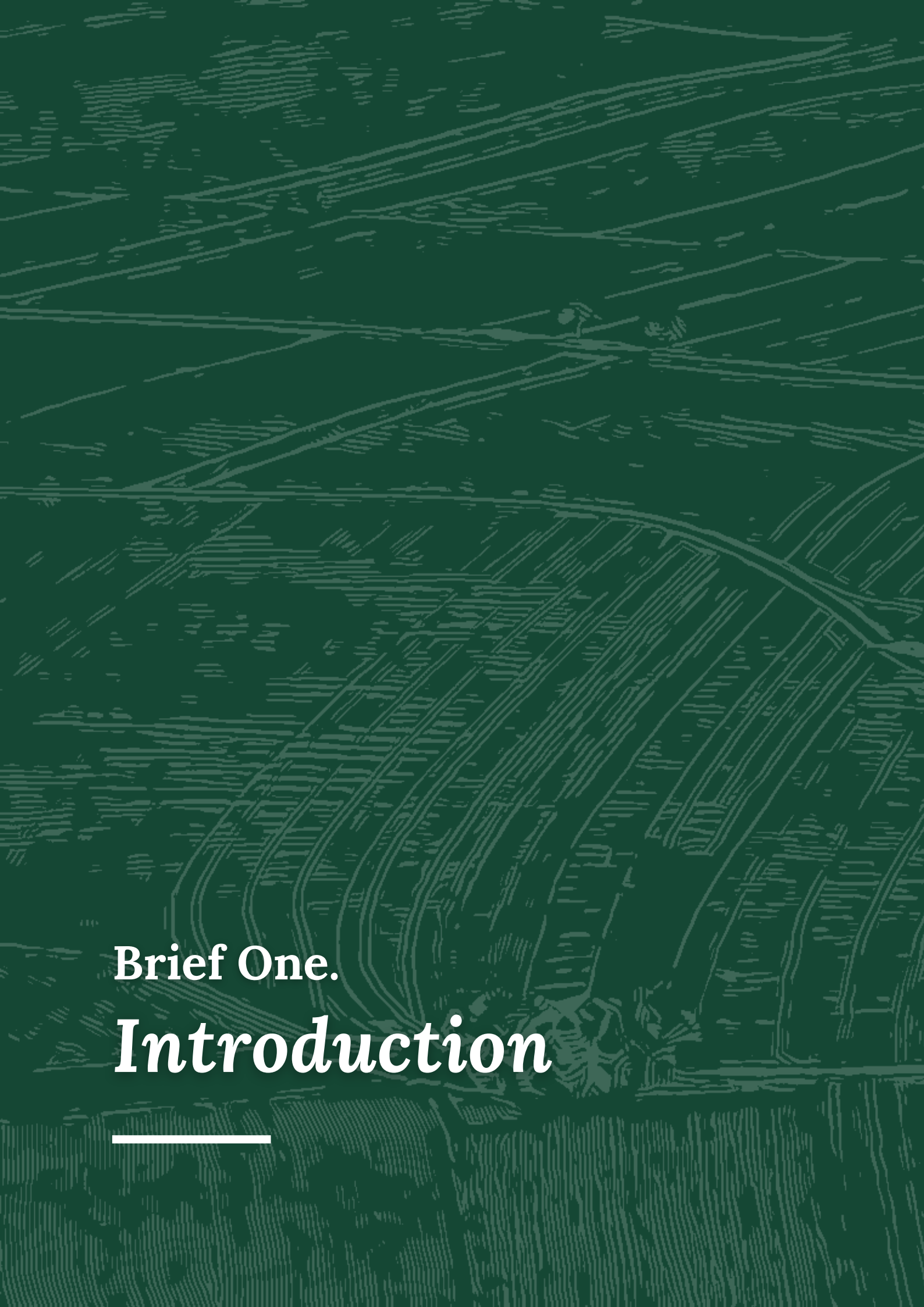


An aerial photograph of a terraced field, likely in a mountainous region. The terraces are arranged in a series of curved, parallel lines, creating a rhythmic pattern across the landscape. A narrow, winding path or road cuts through the terraces, leading towards a small, dark building or structure in the distance. The overall scene is captured in a high-contrast, black and white style, emphasizing the geometric forms of the terraces and the organic flow of the path.

Brief One.

Introduction

1. Introduction

Project Overview

This report summarizes the findings of a national study of agritourism, an umbrella term for activities that welcome visitors onto a working farm, ranch, or other agricultural operation (Chase et al., 2018; Gil Arroyo et al., 2013).

This project, entitled “Agritourism: Understanding Producer Benefits, Challenges and Needs throughout the US,” began in 2023 as a Cooperative Agreement between University of Vermont Extension and the Local and Regional Foods Division of the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, in collaboration with project advisors American Indigenous Tourism Association, Farmstay, NAFDMA International Agritourism Association, and the National Agricultural Law Center. This study builds on two prior national studies of agritourism operators: a 2019 study led by the University of Vermont, and a 2024 study led by Penn State University (Chase et al., 2021; Schmidt et al., 2025).

This report summarizes the key findings from our research for a mixed audience of farmers, tourism professionals, outreach providers, policy makers, scholars, and others. There are 11 briefs in this series that can be read together or stand alone as individual briefs.

This study had four main objectives:

OBJECTIVE ONE.

Identify national and regional patterns contributing to successes and challenges for producers;

OBJECTIVE TWO.

Explore motivations of producers, benefits and challenges of agritourism, and barriers to entry and expansion;

OBJECTIVE THREE.

Populate a national directory of farms and ranches engaging in agritourism;

OBJECTIVE FOUR.

Communicate research findings.



Final Project Report

This report dives deeper into project methodology and summarizes all findings to date.



Story Map

Check out this online story map to hear directly from farmers interviewed for this project and learn about their agritourism offerings and advice.



USDA Local Food Directories

To see the directory built for this project, go to the USDA Local Food Directories site and select “Agritourism.”

Methods by the Numbers

2.5

Years of
Research

10

Farms
Interviewed

11

Hours of
Interviews

2

Nationwide
Surveys

1,353

Farms Added
to Directory

1,065

Valid Research
Survey
Responses

Did you know the US does not have an official definition of agritourism?

This study uses the definition adopted by the AMS Local Food Directory, which includes commercial enterprises that combine agricultural production and/or processing with tourism in order to attract visitors onto a working farm, ranch, agroforestry, or aquaculture operation, and produces supplemental income for the farm operator.



Methods

This project used a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative and qualitative social science research methods. To meet the objectives above, the project team conducted three data collection activities:



Interviews with 10 farms around the US, representing different regions, agricultural products, agritourism activities, and farmer experiences.



Short national survey of agritourism operators, with the primary goal of populating the agritourism directory.



Long national survey of agritourism operators, with the primary goal of addressing research questions.

This report summarizes the results of the interviews and the longer survey. To see the directory built in step #2, visit the USDA Local Food Directory for Agritourism. To read more about our methodology, check out the Final Project Report.

About This Report

“Major Challenges and Necessary Supports for Agritourism” summarizes key findings from interviews with 10 US farmers and survey responses from 1,065 US farmers for a general audience of farmers, tourism professionals, technical assistance providers, and other agritourism practitioners and supporters. It is designed to be used in multiple ways: it can be read through as a contiguous report, and each chapter can also be used as a standalone educational brief. Chapter topics and key findings are summarized in the following page.

Table 1. Chapter Topics and Key Findings

Brief Topic	Key Findings
Brief 2. Respondent Overview Summary of respondents to the long survey, including farm products, agritourism activities, farm business profile, and farmer demographics.	Most farms have direct sales (87%) and educational activities (69%).
	Farms in our sample trended small. Median acreage was 66 acres, and 61% of farms had net profits under \$100k.
Brief 3. Why Agritourism? What motivates farmers to adopt agritourism, and farmer-to-farmer advice for new operators.	Farmers have agritourism for two main reasons: to increase farm revenue, and to educate the public about agriculture.
	Farmers emphasized that agritourism is a people business, and operators must be prepared for the reality of welcoming visitors onto their farms. They also recommended that new operators be proactive about safety, build slowly, and focus on their strengths.
Brief 4. Agritourism Activities Across the US Summaries of different types of agritourism activities and analysis of what activities are happening where.	There was no relationship between state and type of agritourism reported in the survey. There was a significant relationship between agritourism type and the percentage of out-of-town visitors, suggesting that local visitors and out-of-town tourists are interested in different activities.
	This chapter includes a list of questions for farmers to help decide what agritourism activities are right for them.
Brief 5. Profitability in Agritourism Exploration of the role of agritourism in farm revenue and profit.	75% of survey respondents reported success at increasing farm revenue through agritourism.
	Analysis of survey questions on revenue & profit, though limited, suggests that agritourism is important to the farm bottom line and may help absorb losses from agricultural productions. Interviews with farmers corroborate these findings.
Brief 6. Challenges to Agritourism & Suggested Supports Summary of the top challenges to agritourism reported by research participants, and of the most commonly suggested resources to help farmers address these challenges.	The top challenges were all related to the twin restrictions of time and money.
	The top requested type of support was grant funding and other financial resources for agritourism.

Brief Topic	Key Findings
Brief 7. Regulatory Barriers Analysis of challenges to regulation by respondent state, for the 12 states for which we received 30+ survey responses.	Challenges to regulation differed significantly by state. Respondents in Oregon and California experienced the greatest challenges with state and local regulations. The National Agricultural Law Center updated their agritourism regulation resources as part of this project; this chapter also summarizes and links to these resources.
Brief 8. Marketing Agritourism Summary of findings related to marketing, including how farmers market their operations, challenges to marketing, and requested supports.	The most popular marketing tool was social media pages (87%), followed by word of mouth (85%). No other strategy was used by the majority of survey respondents. Most farmers found all aspects of marketing at least somewhat challenging. Farmers expressed a need for free or low-cost marketing assistance from professionals familiar with agriculture to help them direct their limited marketing budget where it is most effective.
Brief 9. Visitor Data Collection Exploration of the need for farm-level data on agritourism visitors in order to provide the marketing expertise suggested in the previous brief.	Most farmers do not actively collect and analyze data on their visitors, which is not surprising given the demands on their time. Research on agritourism customers is likewise limited. We recommend researchers partner with farmers to explore what attracts visitors to agritourism activities.
Brief 10. Financial Support for Agritourism Spotlight on the top requested support from surveyed farmers: grants and other financial resources for agritourism.	Many farmers expressed a common need for funds to construct or improve visitor-facing infrastructure like farmstands, bathrooms, and parking areas.
Brief 11. Proposed Actions and Considerations Review of the top action items resulting from this project.	