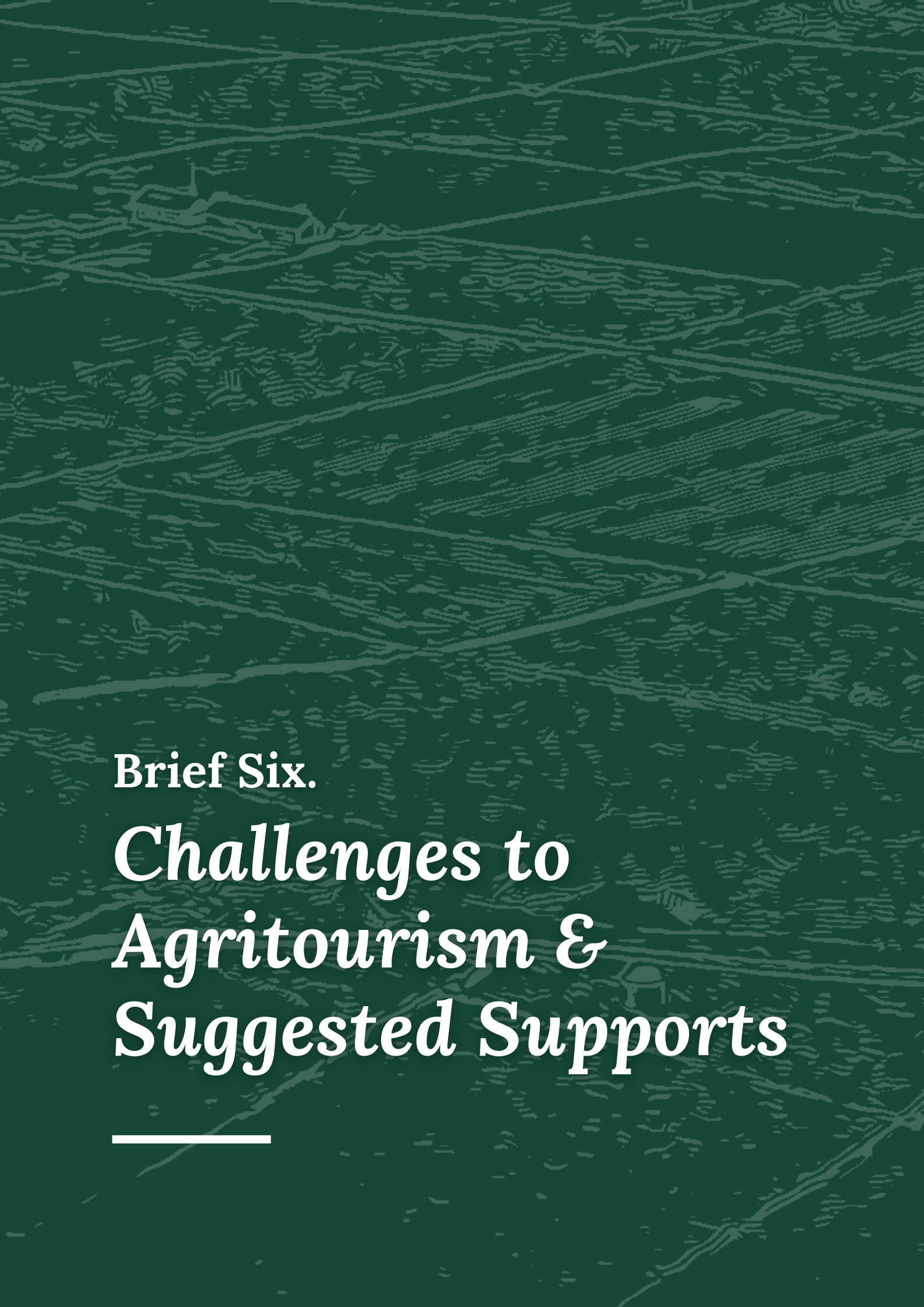


An aerial photograph of a rural landscape, showing a small farmstead with several buildings and a large field. The image is in black and white, with a high-contrast, almost graphic quality. The text is overlaid on the lower portion of the image.

Brief Six.

Challenges to Agritourism & Suggested Supports

6. Challenges to Agritourism & Suggested Supports

A primary goal of this project was to identify the top challenges for agritourism operators nationwide, as well as their suggestions for how governments, Extension offices, and others can support agritourism farmers. This brief offers a summary of the most common challenges and supports named by research participants. The following briefs dive deeper into several issues raised by farmers.

Challenges

Interviewees and survey respondents described the challenges they experienced integrating agritourism into their farm. Interviewees spoke to challenges in their own words. Survey respondents rated 28 proposed challenges as “very challenging,” “somewhat challenging,” and “not at all challenging,” and were invited to elaborate on challenges in an open response question. Across all modes of data collection, one overarching theme rose to the top: the twin restrictions of time and money.

Survey Findings

Figure 4 shows the top 10 issues rated “very challenging” by survey respondents, along with the percentage of respondents who rated these either very or somewhat challenging. The top

Figure 7. Top 10 Issues Rated “Very Challenging”



N = 994

*Including Family Labor

**Including Accessibility of Grants

three challenges rated at least somewhat challenging were all about available person-time: labor (including family labor); time management; and adequate time to work on marketing. Of the top three issues rated “very challenging”, two address money directly—the cost and availability of insurance and the monetary cost of marketing—with the third being labor (Figure 7).

Interview Findings

Time and money were also top themes in interviews with farmers. Farmers expressed that they were spread thin in terms of their own labor and hired labor, and also named high costs for insurance and agricultural inputs.

“We're really exhausted. And part of it is because while we're integrating the agritourism, we're struggling to get done all the other ag work that we have done. We need to reduce that workload somehow.”



Interviewee

“Honestly, we need more staff. You know, we're a small operation. We're a nonprofit organization, and we do youth work at the core. And all of [the agritourism] is extra stuff that don't quite pay a person to do it.”



Interviewee

“Agritourism requires a lot of people...on a weekend we've got to have about 18 to 20 of us to pull off a day, you know, because we'll have several in the play area, several in the pumpkin patch, some people in the orchard, then in our retail, our concessions, our kitchen, our bakery... labor is probably our biggest challenge.”



Interviewee

“Because of the insurance and having to calculate that into the expense, we are not making money.”



Interviewee

“It's just fertilizer, labor, insurance, metal, steel, you know, everything is just is so high, you know, pump repairs have escalated.”



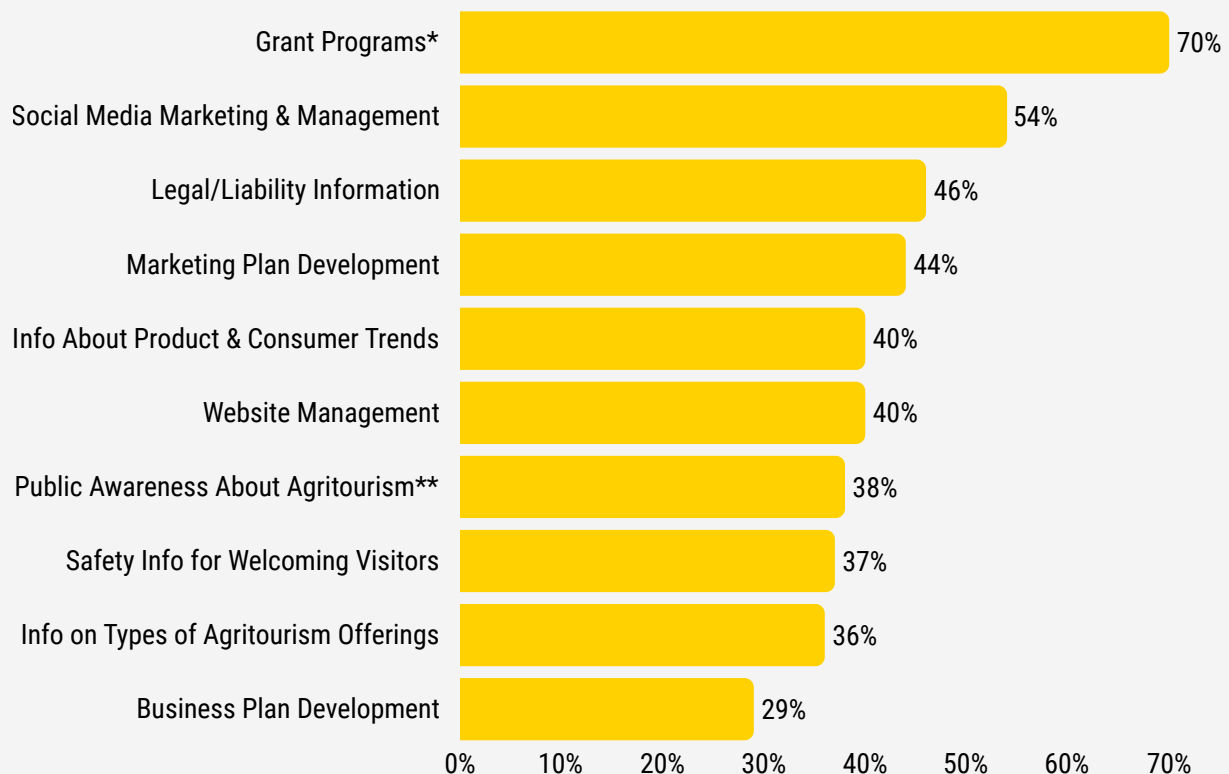
Interviewee

Supports

Survey Findings

Survey respondents selected the kinds of support they believed would help them be more successful with agritourism (Figure 8). Grant programs and other financial support were by far the most popular (70%), and a slight majority (54%) also requested support with social media marketing and management.

Figure 8. Top Ten Requested Supports



N = 941

*And Other Financial Resources for Agritourism
**Resource Materials for the Public on Where to Find Agritourism Experiences

Interview Findings

In interviews and in open responses to the survey, farmers named support needs for marketing, regulations, and grant support. You can explore all three of these themes in the briefs that follow:



Brief #7
Regulatory
Barriers



Brief #8
Marketing
Agritourism



Brief #10
Financial
Support for
Agritourism

The need for support that catered specifically to agritourism operations wove throughout requests for funding and technical assistance. Traditional sources of farmer support, like USDA, state departments of agriculture, and Extension, may not address challenges created by tourism. Several farmers described success stories of working with Extension offices that had adapted to address agritourism concerns, and of working with tourism departments or destination marketing organizations.

“I started working with... a community development specialist [in Extension]... [in] maybe 1990, something like that, and [he] said, ‘you’re doing something that has real importance for agriculture and for community development. We need to put... a framework around this.’ And he then connected with [an Extension agent in another state] and the, the three of us communicated... to kind of put a definition and a framework around this concept of agritourism.”

Interviewee



“The biggest thing is the partnerships that we’ve had with tourism in general. You know, I’ve learned more in the tourism area from, for example, during the pandemic I took [a tourism certification course through a university]. I didn’t know anything about tourism, and when I got done I thought, wow, these are all the things that are possibilities for us.”

Interviewee



Photo Courtesy of Moulton Farms

“At the beginning, the [destination marketing organization] helped me a lot... they highlighted, hey you can do this, you can do that, and maybe you can include the brunch. That was an idea that we shared with them. And how much to charge, that was something we also discussed with them.”

Interviewee

