



Brief Three.

Why Agritourism?

3. Why Agritourism?

The project team asked interviewees and survey respondents why they had agritourism on their farms. One interviewee put it best when she said:

The dual importance of educating the public about agriculture and growing and diversifying farm revenue came up throughout the interviews and the survey. This is consistent with past studies that also found that farmers were motivated to practice agritourism both to expand farm business opportunities and to share their knowledge and appreciation for agriculture (Barbieri & Mahoney, 2009; Quella et al., 2021, 2023; Tew & Barbieri, 2012).

“The education is key. The income is needed.”

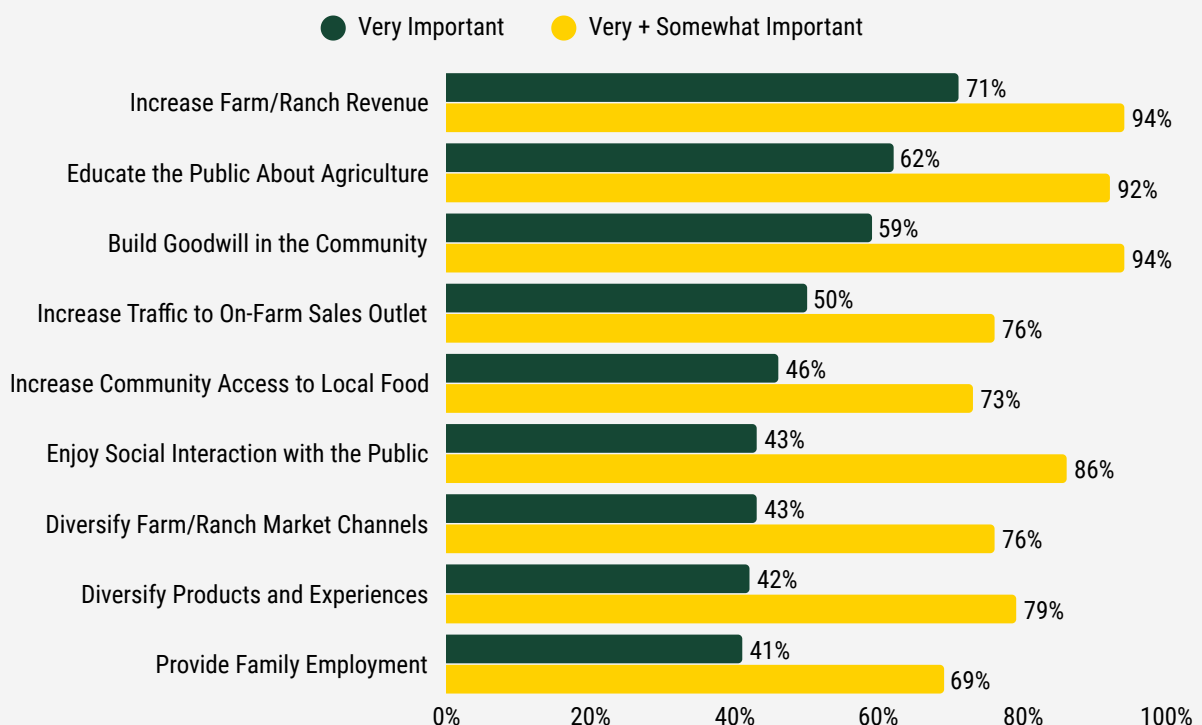
Interviewee



Survey Findings

Farmers rated 9 different goal statements for developing agritourism as either “very important,” “somewhat important” or “not at all important.” Results are shown in Figure 4, ranked from most to least “very important.” The top goal for surveyed farmers was to increase farm or ranch revenue, followed by educating the public about agriculture and building goodwill in the community.

Figure 4. Importance of Goals for Developing Agritourism



Interview Findings

When we asked the ten farms we interviewed why they had agritourism, their responses also balanced social and fiscal motivations. Some farmers were driven to agritourism to provide agricultural education:

“When I started the organization, I made the choice that I would accept my calling for what it was, and my calling was to teach and feed children.”

Interviewee



Others emphasized agritourism’s importance to the farm bottom line:

“[Agritourism is] a way to promote what we're doing... it's a way for us to find donors, to find supplemental income for our programming.... to help keep the lights on, to help pay the livestock bills, and those kinds of things that just aren't covered anywhere else.”

Interviewee



Several farmers expressed that social and economic motivations went hand-in-hand:

“The first one would be that I do enjoy sharing with people... and then, secondly, it really is the link that lets the farm be sustainable.”

Interviewee



“The primary reason to start was economics. It was an opportunity for me to diversify our income, to keep the farm going, and still be able to work on the farm and take care of my family. And so that was the initial push, and that really has not changed... But creating the relationships within, that is number one. So the economics falls below relationships.”

Interviewee



“One is that [it's] something that [my spouse] and I really enjoyed doing and the other was because there was this just dawning realization that we were never going to actually break even if we were reliant on the product alone... and so it was a way of actually trying to break even, rather than scaling with the production.”

Interviewee



Farmer-to-Farmer Agritourism Advice

The farmers we interviewed had the following advice for others looking to get into agritourism.

Agritourism is a People Business

Farmers emphasized that agritourism requires dealing with people: visitors, neighbors, other farmers, and family. They advised farmers to think carefully about these intersecting personal dynamics before adopting agritourism.

“You have to have a skill in working with people. If you don't have those kinds of outgoing people that can talk to groups, that can talk to people... It's another endeavor that you're taking on. It's not just some extra money. That will come, you know, but it's something that you have to grow, like anything else.”

Interviewee



“The first thing I would say to people is go and talk to other farmers that are doing it... then it's really important in aquaculture to do a lot of social license to operate work, you know, make sure that you're not treading on somebody's toes.”

Interviewee



“[Do] as much community engagement as you can before you actually start inviting folks out. Let your community know that that's your plan and let your community know when you'll be doing that so you all can be on the same page. I would always invite community out to your space prior to agritourism.”

Interviewee



“Make sure that your family is on board and that you have really strong relationships within your family that can endure the scrutiny of the public... of not only your farming methods and agricultural practices, but the rationale behind it and behind your family.”

Interviewee



“I think, one, they've got to do a real gut check. Do they like people, and are they willing to accommodate people?”

Interviewee



Safety First!

Several interviewees advised new farmers to think through potential safety and liability issues before welcoming visitors.

“Look around your farm and see if you can make it safe.”

Interviewee



Move Slowly and Play to Your Strengths

When choosing what agritourism activities to offer, farmers should consider what makes their farms special as well as what they personally enjoy, and invest slowly as the agritourism part of the business grows.

Read on to **Brief #4: Agritourism Activities Across the United States** for more.

“Spend your money wisely in terms of what you do, and then gradually work into it.”

Interviewee



“If you're not enjoying yourself, everyone else is going to be miserable, too. So don't do something unless it's something that you really enjoy.”

Interviewee



“Before you invite folks to your farm, make sure you have a couple things set up. One thing, your insurance is first, right? Make sure you have some type of insurance so you aren't liable... Get your documentation together. Two, make people sign a waiver, or whatever it is, whatever that looks like, when they register to come on your farm, make sure that you're covered, right? Number three is make sure you have a tracking system set up already... Do not invite people on your farm willy-nilly because you will lose track.”

Interviewee



“What you should do is what you're good at. So if you look around, what do you love about your place? And when you even have relatives come there, what do they enjoy doing on your place? And then how can you expand that to be something that you still love doing, that you can share with other people, because your story has to be your story.”

Interviewee

