



Agritourism: Understanding Benefits, Challenges and Needs throughout the USA

Webinar held October 6, 2026

Photo: Courtesy of Urban Youth Agriculture



**NATIONAL EXTENSION
TOURISM NETWORK**

Agritourism: Understanding Benefits, Challenges and Needs throughout the USA

Presented by

- Americo Vega-Labiosa and Annelise Straw, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
- Claire Whitehouse, University of Vermont
- Rusty Rumley, National Agricultural Law Center
- Scottie Jones, Leaping Lamb Farm in Oregon

Moderated by Lisa Chase, University of Vermont Extension



**NATIONAL EXTENSION
TOURISM NETWORK**



POLL: Describe yourself

- ☐ Farmer / Rancher
- ☐ Service Provider / Extension
- ☐ Non-profit
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Educator
- ☐ Researcher
- ☐ Tourism Professional
- ☐ Business Owner / Manager
- ☐ Other – type into chat



About this project

- Cooperative agreement between USDA AMS and University of Vermont
- Partners: NAFDMA, Farmstay, AITA, NALC
- Goals:
 - Create national directory of agritourism operators and improve agritourism data collection
 - Identify patterns of successes and challenges for agritourism operators
 - Identify targets for technical assistance efforts



Project Outputs

- **Project Website**

- Summary of findings
- Final project report
- Story map

go.uvm.edu/agtourstudy

- **NALC Agritourism Regulations**

go.uvm.edu/nalc



Major Challenges and Necessary Supports for Agritourism

**Findings from a National Study
of Agritourism Operators**

Data Collection

Mixed-methods project with 3 data collection activities:

1. Interviews with 10 farms around the US
2. Short national survey of agritourism operators to populate directory
3. Long national survey of agritourism operators to address research questions

Methods by the Numbers

2.5

Years of Research

2

Nationwide Surveys

10

Farms Interviewed

1,353

Farms Added to Directory

11

Hours of Interviews

1,065

Valid Research Survey Responses

Story Map

<https://go.uvm.edu/agtourstorymap>

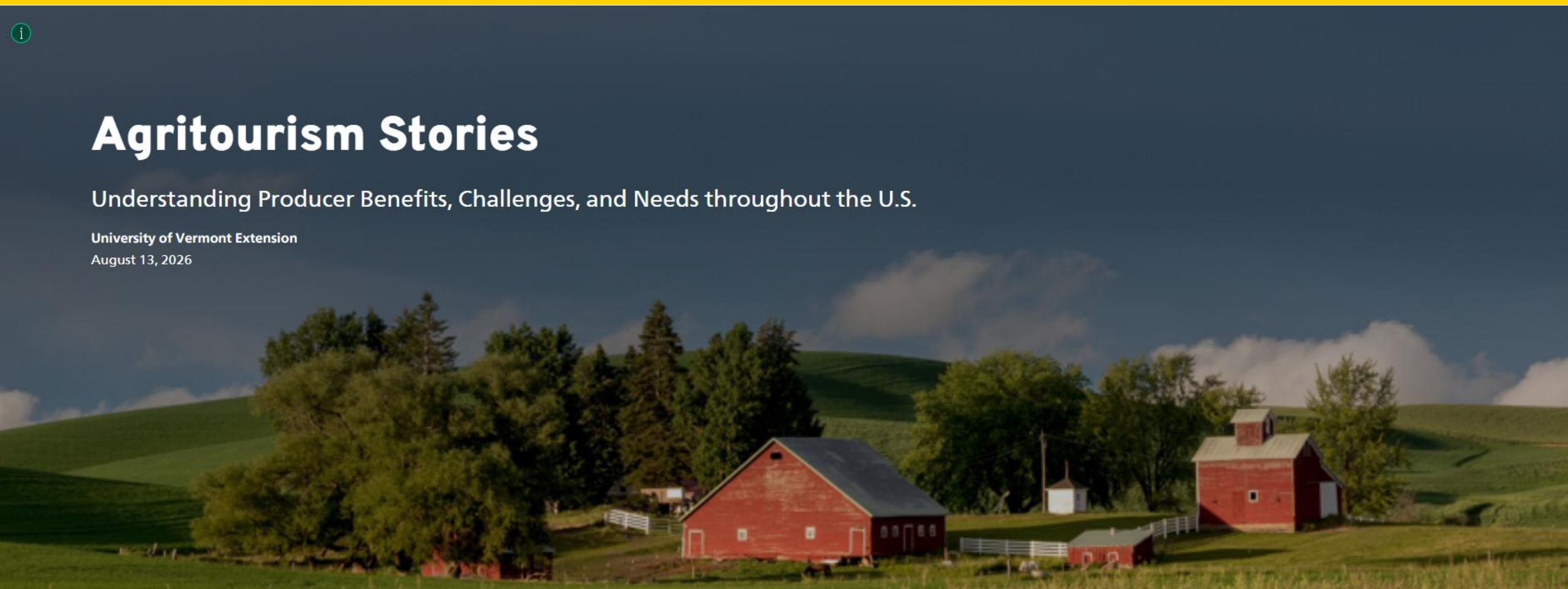


Agritourism Stories

Understanding Producer Benefits, Challenges, and Needs throughout the U.S.

University of Vermont Extension

August 13, 2026





Amasar

Location: Jayuya, Puerto Rico



Pemetic Sea Farms

Location: Ellsworth, Maine



Liberty Hill Farm

Location: Rochester, VT



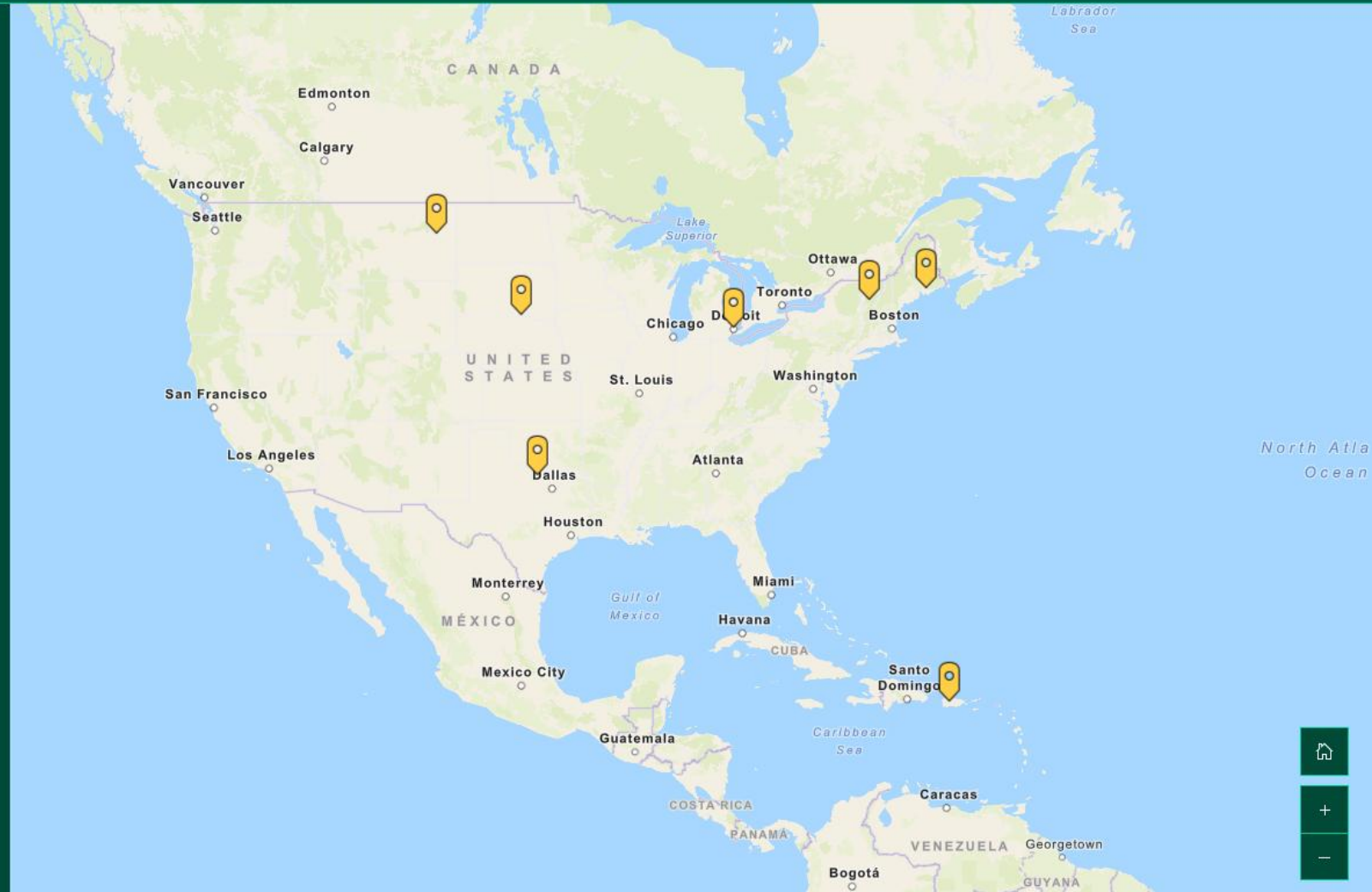
Urban Youth Agriculture

Location: Detroit, MI



Lakota Youth Development

Location: Herrick, South Dakota



Research Results Summary



Photo Courtesy of Caitlin Kelly Photography

Product Types

Product Type	Count	Percent
Animals and animal-related products	517	49%
Crops and forest products	849	80%
Value-added products	471	44%
Other	4	0%

Note. n = 1,065

Top 5 Products

Category	Product	Count	Percent
Crops	Fruit	468	44%
Crops	Vegetables and melons	450	42%
Animals	Poultry and eggs	273	26%
Crops	Greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture production (including Christmas trees)	268	25%
Animals	Sheep and goats	224	21%

Note. n = 1,065

Activity Types

Visitor Activities	Count	Percent
Sales of your products on your operation	925	87%
Overnight stays	298	28%
Education	733	69%
Entertainment/events	478	45%
Outdoor recreation	219	21%
Other	3	0%

Note. n = 1,064

Top 5 Activities

Category	Activity	Count	Percent
Direct sales	Farm stand or farm store	717	67%
Education	Tours	597	56%
Education	Student group and field trip programs	482	45%
Direct sales	U-pick	430	40%
Education	Adult classes and/or workshops	314	29%

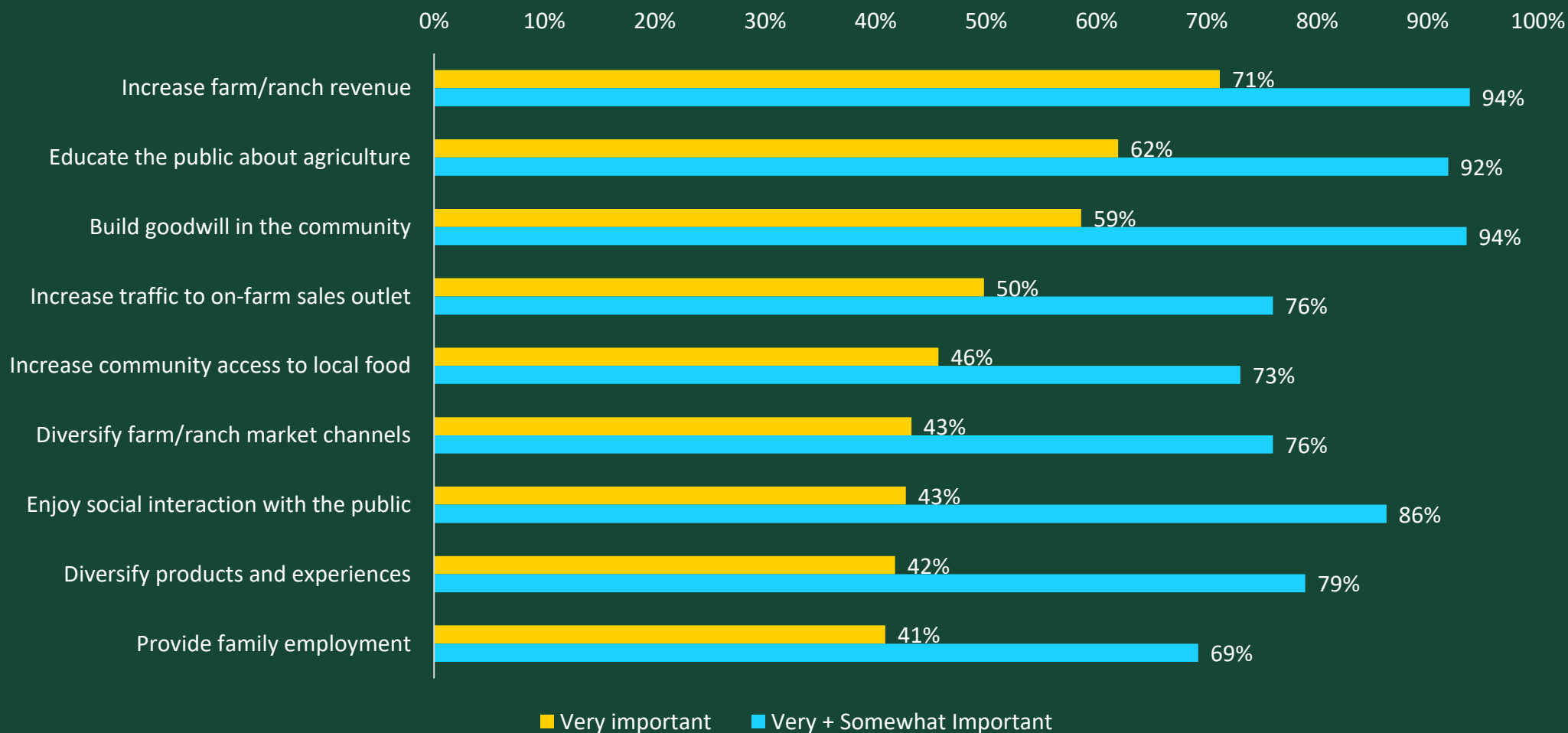
Note. n = 1,065

Agritourism Goals



Photo Courtesy My EIEIO Farm

Importance of Goals for Developing Agritourism



Economic & Social Motivations Go Hand in Hand

"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"

"[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."

"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."

"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."

"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."

Challenges to Agritourism & Requested Supports



Photo Courtesy of Claire Whitehouse

Top Ten Issues Rated “Very Challenging”



Photo Courtesy of Claire Whitehouse



Time & Money

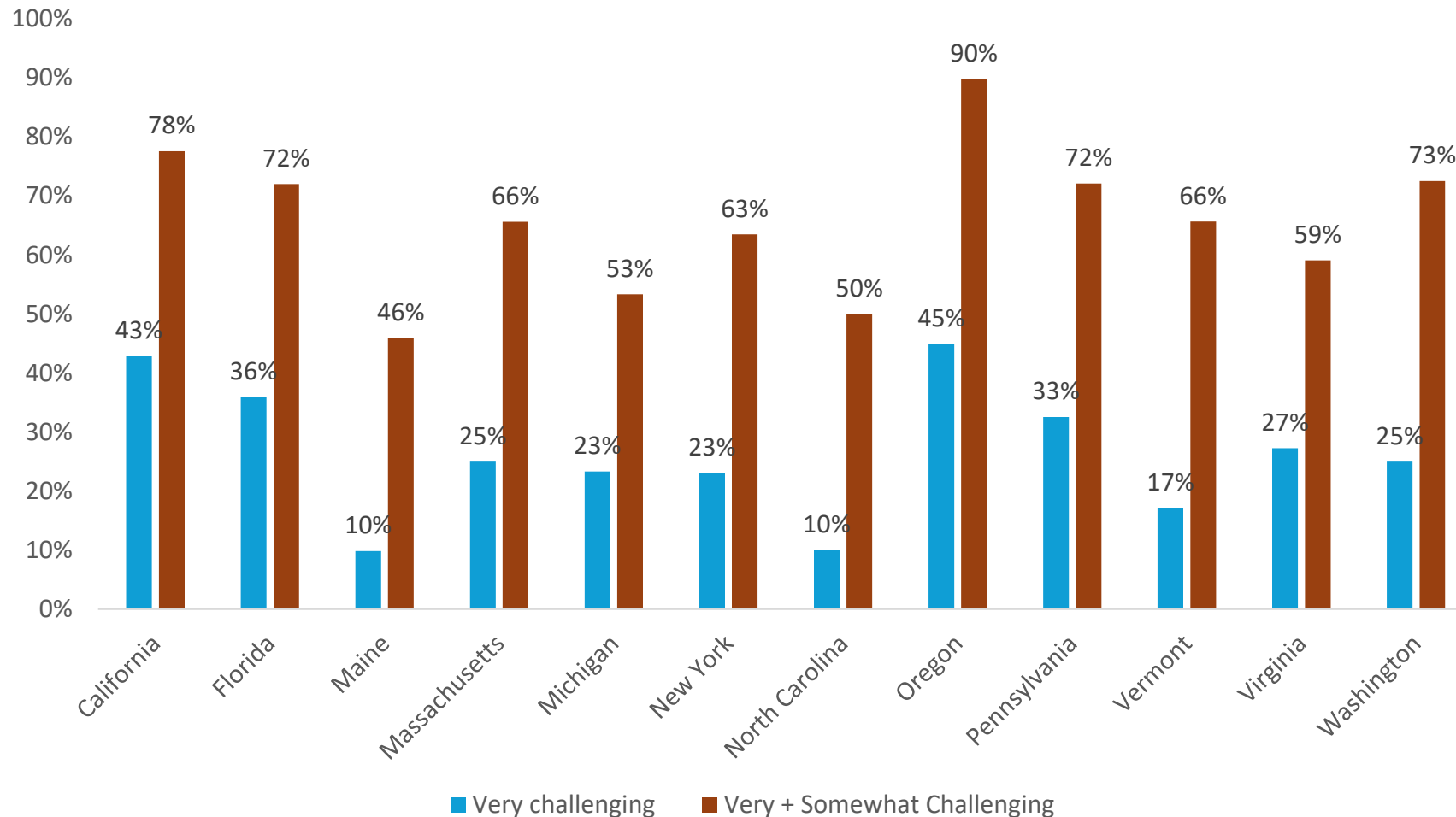
"We're really exhausted. And part of it is because while we're integrating the agritourism, we're struggling to get done all the other ag work that we have done. We need to reduce that workload somehow."

"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...labor is probably our biggest challenge."

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

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

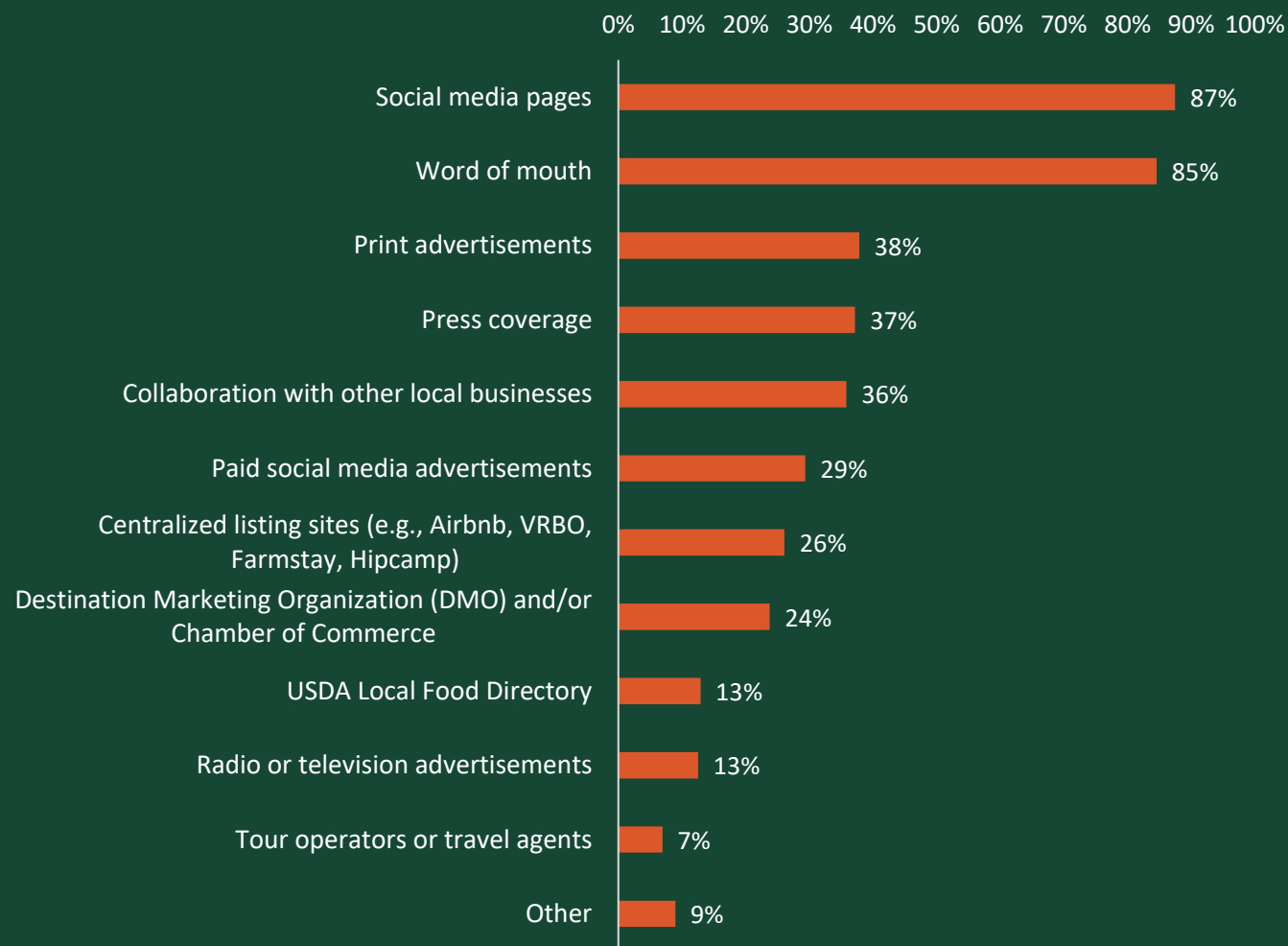
Challenges to State & Local Regulations by State



“Extremely difficult land use laws here in Oregon.”

“[In California] There's not a lot of information and often if there is information it's not accurate about what is and is not allowed. We are rule followers so we want to do what's right. But we can't find the rules anywhere.”

Marketing Outlets Used by Survey Respondents



“Marketing is a big challenge...we are 20 minutes away from a large city and it is hard to know how best to reach that audience and get them to make the drive.”

“We both have marketing backgrounds as well, so we really know what to do. We are in the process of trying to find funding for that, because it just gets so expensive.”

Visitor Data Collection



“The agritourism is growing. It’s slow, and it’ll take us a while... before we get to a profitable position. But I believe we can get there if we have tools like data collection to be able to know what areas we need to work on, what populations are coming in, you know, where’s our best market, that sort of stuff. And then building marketing materials to be able to reach that. I think those are the kind of things that we really need to be able to get to that level.”

Top 10 Requested Supports

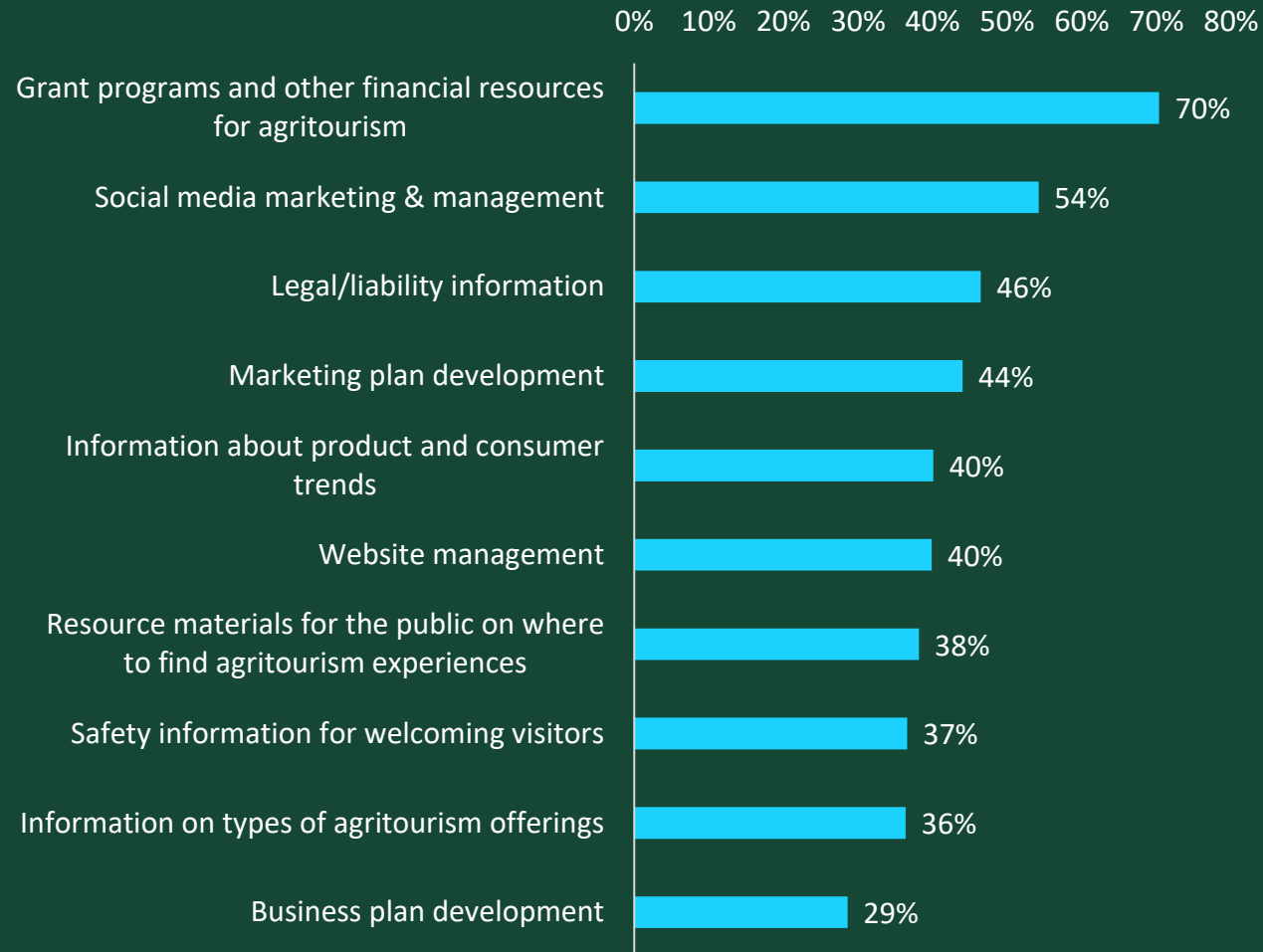


Photo Courtesy of Urban Youth Agriculture

Recommendations

Photo Courtesy of Pemetic Sea Farms



For Farmers

1. Agritourism is a people business.
2. “Don’t do something unless it’s something you really enjoy.”
3. Agritourism can contribute to farm profitability, but making money is not the only motivator.



For Policy

1. Keep in mind the dual restrictions of time and money.
2. Reduce the administrative and financial burdens of regulatory compliance.
3. Farmers need access to free or low-cost marketing expertise literate in both agriculture and tourism.
4. Pilot grant programs for visitor-facing infrastructure like farmstands, farm stores, bathrooms, and parking areas



For Research

1. The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service could rephrase the agritourism and direct sales questions on the Census of Agriculture to match current practice.
2. Local and regional research-outreach projects that work closely with farmers to provide business and marketing assistance and collect essential data.



Agritourism Regulation: National Agricultural Law Center



Photo Courtesy of Claire Whitehouse

About the Center

- The National Agricultural Law Center is the nation's leading source for agricultural and food law research and information.
- Created in 1987, the NALC is a unit of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture
- The Center also works in close partnership with the USDA Agricultural Research Service, National Agricultural Library
- We provide objective, non-partisan research and information regarding laws and regulations affecting agriculture



nationalaglawcenter.org



The National Agricultural Law Center
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Up next in our webinar series:

Landowner Liability: How to Protect Your Operation

Tiffany Dowell Lashmet
Texas A&M Agrilife Extension





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Agritourism

Overview

Agritourism is a field that is growing in popularity as producers try to diversify and increase profits. By combining agriculture and tourism, agritourism offers new sources of revenue while also presenting potential problems and legal complications for agritourism operators. Simply stated, agritourism could be thought of as the crossroads of tourism and agriculture. Stated more technically, agritourism can be defined as a form of commercial enterprise that links agricultural production and/or processing with tourism to attract visitors to a farm, ranch, or other agricultural business for the purposes of entertaining and/or educating the visitors and generating income for the farm, ranch, or business owner. [Read the full overview.](#)

Note: Recently added resources are posted at the top of the applicable sections.



Major Statutes

[Animal Welfare Act](#), 7 U.S.C. §§ 2131-2160

[Americans with Disabilities Act](#), 42 U.S.C. §§ 12101-12213

[Compilation of States' Agritourism Statutes](#)

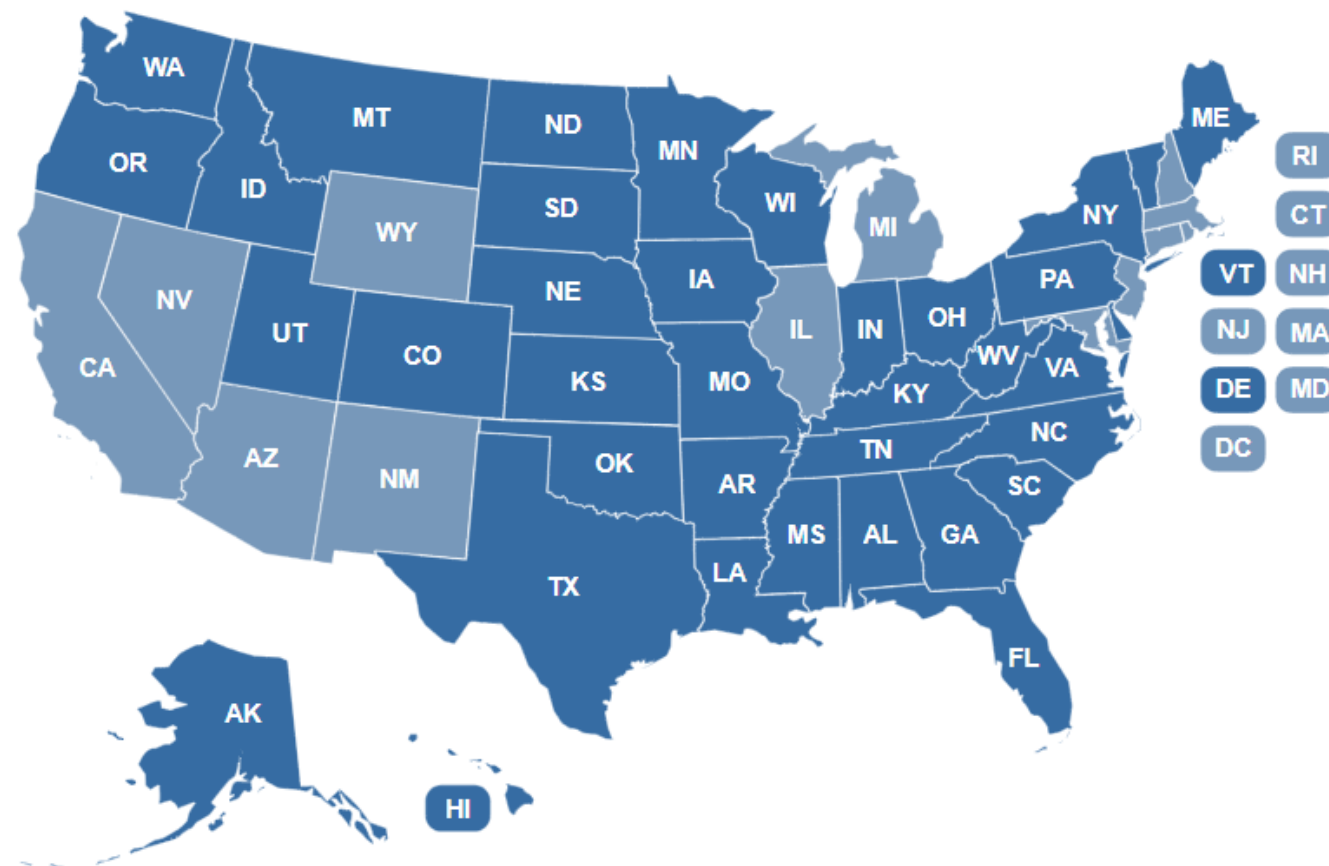
[Compilation of States' Equine Activity Statutes](#)

[Compilation of States' Recreational Use Statutes](#)

Case Law

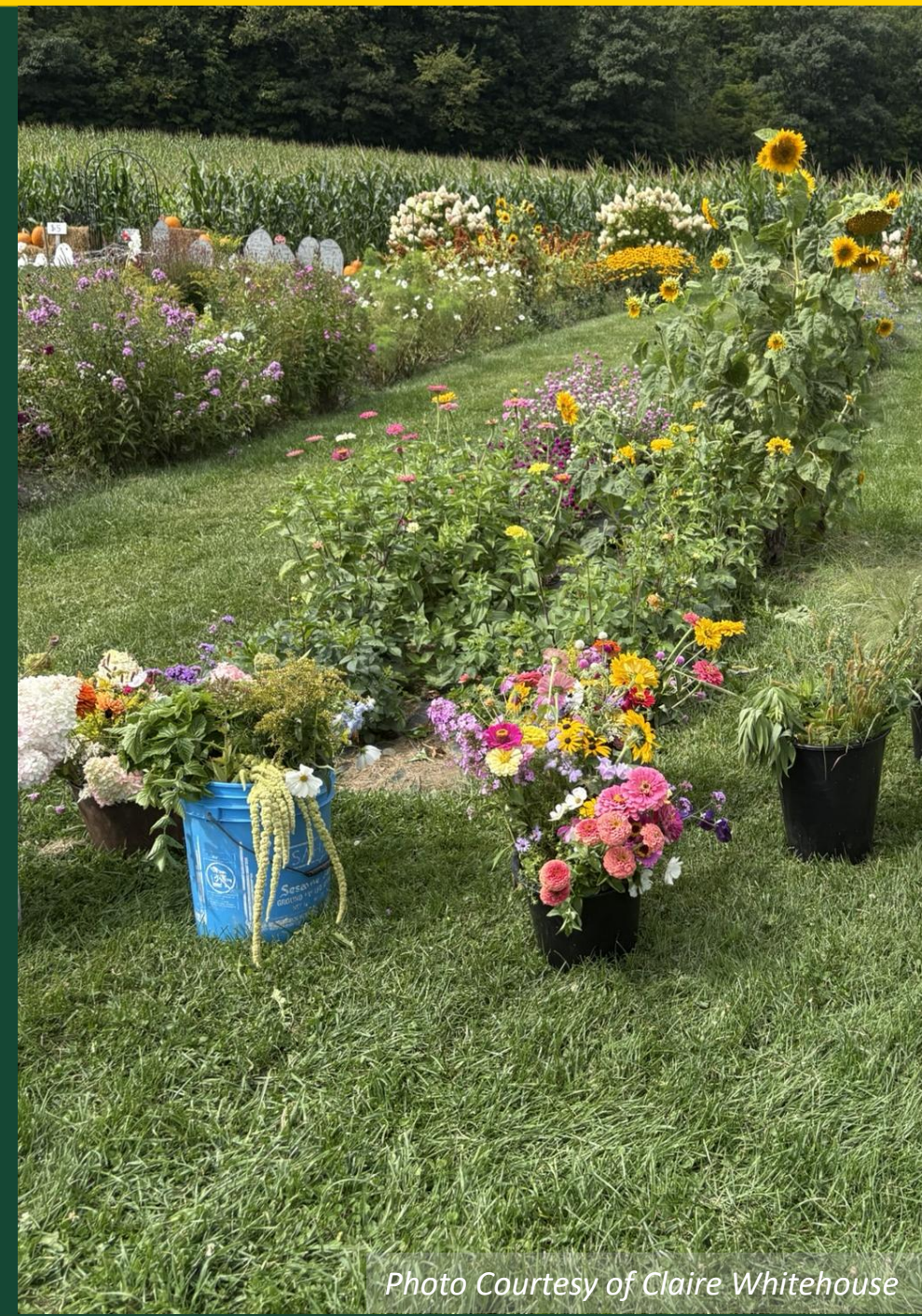
National Agricultural Law Center Research Staff

The primary aim of this compilation is to provide the researcher with easy and free access to a state's statutory language by simply clicking on the state's image in the map below. *This compilation was last updated on 12/18/2025.*



By the Numbers

- Deaths in Agriculture in 2016 – 412 reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics
 - The FBI reported 118 law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty during that same time period.
 - What do you think was the most dangerous occupation?
 - Truck drivers
- Why does this matter for agritourism?
 - How well do their customers understand agriculture?
 - “Chocolate milk” example



Agritourism Statutes

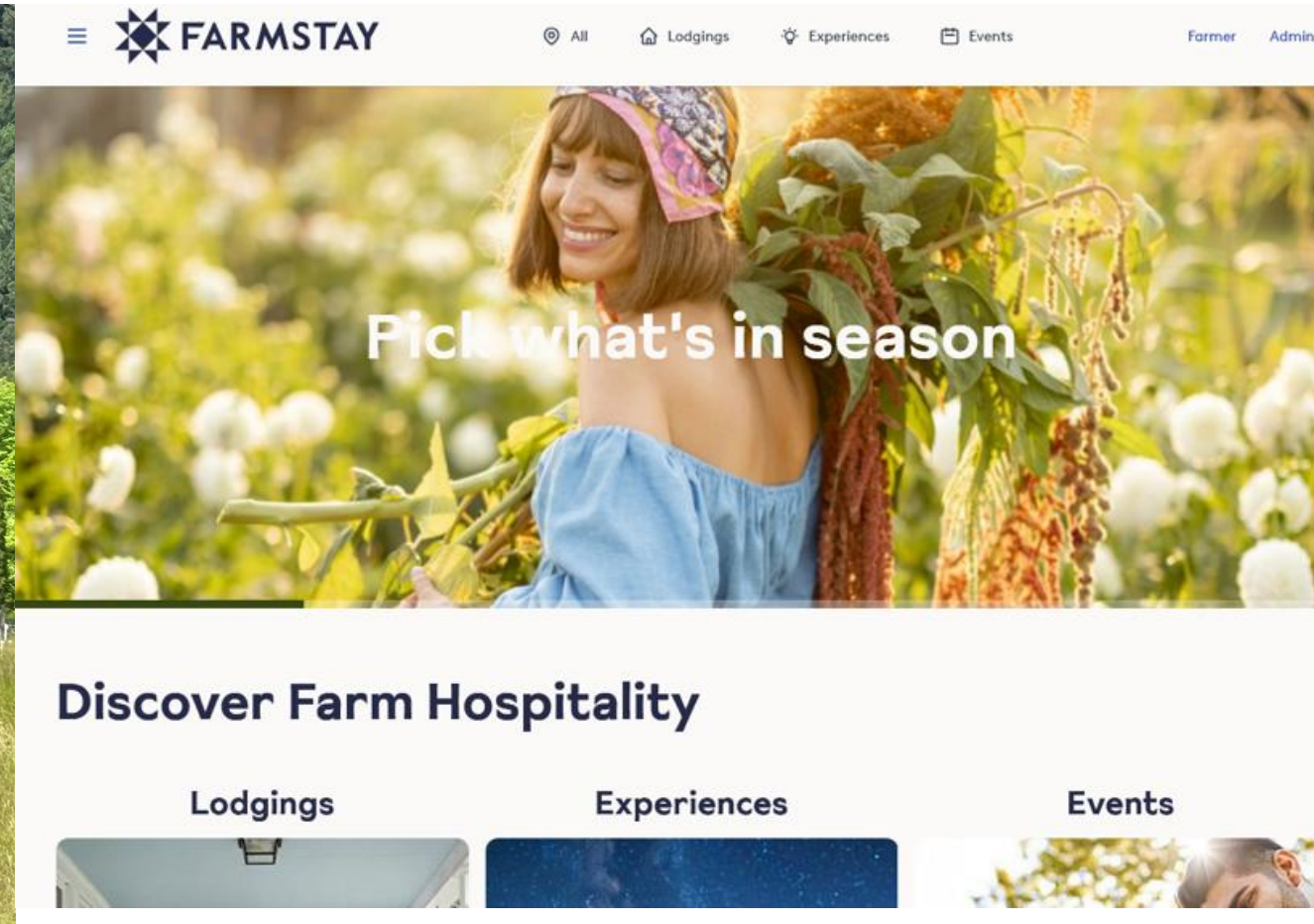
- The purpose behind the agritourism statutes is to address one of the primary concerns many of people wishing to start an agritourism operation...liability protection.
- Because negligence is the main cause of action that they face the agritourism statutes typically work by codifying the “assumption of risk” doctrine.
 - This is a possible defense to the tort of negligence
 - Football vs. Agriculture – What is the difference?
- How dangerous can it be?
 - On 3/10/22 two men (ages 67 and 42) were killed by a camel in a petting zoo in TN.
 - In 2026 we saw an outbreak of rabies in baby goats in a petting zoo



Scottie Jones

Leaping Lamb Farm,
Alsea, OR

Farmstay
(formerly Farm Stay USA)



Using Project Data & Resources

- Agritourism does not fit easily into county, state, or federal codes
- Project briefs and findings can offer baseline information to policy makers
- State agritourism associations and listservs can provide space for dialogue about common challenges
- Ensure you are listed in agritourism databases like the Local Food Directory:
www.usdalocalfoodportal.com



Get Involved

- State legislature: Limited Liability for Agritourism
- Extension: Support and training
- Agritourism Associations: look to AR, CO, NC, and WI for models
- Local and state tourism agencies
- Congressional Agritourism Caucus: are your legislators members?



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DISCOVER WHAT'S COMING NEXT!

<https://www.globalagritourismconference.com/>



Living Roots

WHERE THE LAND BECOMES EXPERIENCE



Venue: Teton Science School ([here](#))

Looking for event updates? [Click here](#).

Questions? Email Taylor Kruger (tkruger@uwyo.edu).

More information is coming soon!

2027 National Extension Tourism Conference



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