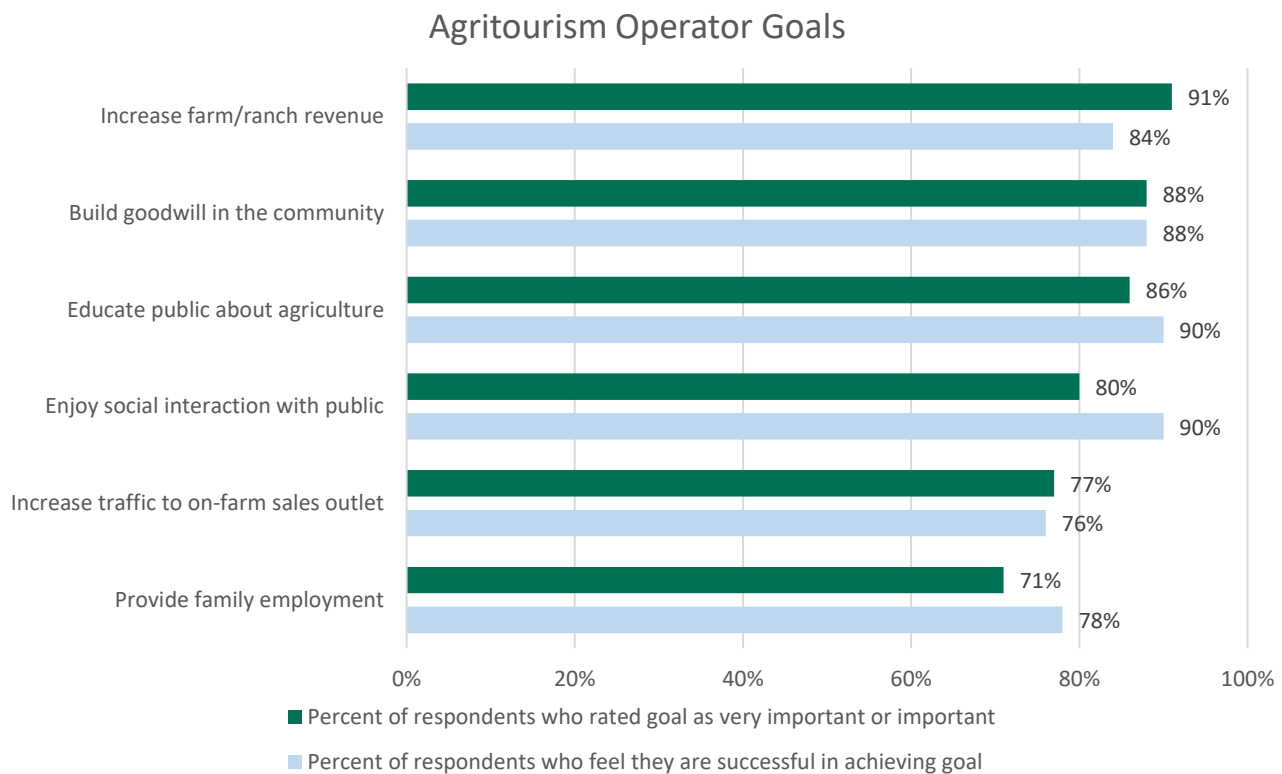


# Survey of Agritourism including On-Farm Direct Sales in the United States

## Motivations and Goals

Between November 2019 and February 2020, 1834 farmers, ranchers, and vineyard operators representing all 50 states in the U.S. completed an online survey about agritourism including on-farm sales. For more information and other summaries, visit <https://www.uvm.edu/vtrc/agritourism-survey>.

This summary highlights themes related to goals and motivations for engaging in agritourism as reported by operators. Survey results were combined with 23 semi-structured interviews of farmers and ranchers in California, Minnesota, Oregon, West Virginia and Vermont.



### How Successful are Agritourism Operators in Meeting Their Goals?

Most agritourism operators are successful in achieving their goals. However, the most important goal—increasing farm/ranch revenue—is the least successful. Operators are finding great success with important community goals, such as enjoying social interaction with the public, educating public about agriculture, and building goodwill in the community.



#### Financial Goals

Financial goals vary widely among agritourism operators. For some, agritourism is a main source of income. Most at least want their enterprises to pay for themselves, but some are willing to sacrifice income for other non-economic benefits.

*“Success can come in many different forms, but if someone is losing money, they’re not going to be able to sustain it.”*

*- livestock farmer, West Virginia*



## Personal and Family Goals

Farmers want to minimize burnout, spend time with and find employment for family members, and enjoy what they do. They make strategic decisions about what enterprises to engage in and enter into partnerships wherever possible to share responsibility. For many, having visitors to their farms breaks up rural isolation and provides positive encouragement.

*“It’s rewarding to just have people come and see the farm. And it is both, of course, fiscally rewarding because they give you money for it. But to see the way they interact and hear the positive things that they say about the farm is nice because it just kind of reinvigorates your purpose. It’s affirming, and it’s an ego boost.”*

*- berry grower, Vermont*

## Community-related Goals

Many farmers define success via their roles as educators. They see themselves as direct intermediaries between consumers and their food sources.

As public figures, they consider themselves advocates for and teachers of their version agriculture. They also see themselves as community leaders both for the public and for other farmers.

*“It is more than just profits. It’s really important today, if you have the attitude to do it, to open your door to people who aren’t in farming and ranching, to help them see the truth about the good work farmers and ranchers do. It’s really important that the voice of the ranchers and farmers, the real people that do the work, be heard by the majority of people who don’t.”*

*- livestock farmer, Oregon*

## Conclusions

Our results suggest that agritourism provides a level of transparency that allows operators to better control narratives regarding their businesses and allows community members to participate in the agricultural process. Agritourism also aids in building community culture around food, the natural environment, and cultural heritage.

Support for agritourism operators should be focused on goals that are the most difficult for operators to achieve, such as increasing revenue, increasing traffic to on-farm sales outlets, and diversifying farm/ranch market channels.