

Multifunctional Farm activities (MFA) are described as activities that exceed the traditional production of food and fiber. These operations include agritourism, direct sales to consumers, value-added product creation, and availability of off-farm income. These activities are thought to aid in economically supporting on-farm enterprises for US farm families. Small-to-medium sized farms are being edged out of their market share due to increasing cost of farm input and decreasing food price. MFA offer supplementary income opportunities for farm families to subsist in the agricultural market.

This paper will present some preliminary results of an on-going study funded by the USDA NIFA program to examine multifunctional operations in New England using survey data conducted in 2011- 2012. Particularly we will present a geospatial analysis of the multifunctional agriculture distribution in Vermont and the rest of the New England region. The spatial analysis serves as the first step to examine the clusters between the multifunctional agricultural activities and supportive/complementary systems such as social networks, areas of high population density, road systems, and areas of particular interests to tourists.

The results of the geospatial analysis should support our first set of the hypotheses that there might be a correlation between social and economic factors in areas of more interest to potential tourists and in closer proximity to populated areas. The use of a spatial interaction model can help support the significance of these relationships. Through examining these existing relationships there is an opportunity to identify underserved and potential areas for supporting MFA in an effort to support the rural economy.