

## Curriculum for online/in-person “Agritourism Intensive” class – Mendocino Co. & region

### Course Overview

This course will introduce the student to a range of opportunities for diversifying a working farm or ranch by providing enjoyment and education to visitors for profit. Local experts will guide participants as they assess their own farms or ranches for agritourism potential and start creating business, risk management and marketing plans for their own agritourism operations. Local experienced agritourism operators will share their own experiences and will be part of a supportive network of advisors as class participants plan and start new enterprises.

Students will participate in individual exercises and will share their work during class discussions, and will have homework assignments to complete between the class sessions. The homework will include completing several assessment worksheets in cooperation with family or business partners, as well as writing first drafts of parts of their own business plans. Class instructors will provide each participant with individual feedback on all assignments turned in. No educational credit will be given for this course.

The participants will be encouraged to (but not required to) participate in online group discussions about the classes, readings and individual planning work.

**The Mendocino region Agritourism Intensive classes will be open to farmers, ranchers and others involved in or planning for agritourism in Mendocino, Lake and Sonoma Counties. The format of the class is a series of 4 participatory 2-hour zoom meetings, the first 4 Wednesdays in March 2021, from 10 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., followed by a final in-person, socially distanced outdoor session on Wednesday, March 31, if allowed by local health department authorities.**

### Session #1, Wednesday March 3, 2021:

- 10:00 a.m. Overview of the class series and zoom logistics
- 10:10– 10:30 Short introductions by all participants
- **10:30- 11:15 Successes in agritourism – Two experienced local agritourism operators tell their stories, successes and start-up challenges, followed by Q&A**
- **11:15– 11:35 Assessing your farm or ranch and community for agritourism potential –**
  - presentation giving overview of the individual farm/ranch assessment process by Penny Leff. Assessment worksheets shared for participants to download and complete with family or partners as homework.
- 11:35 – 11:55 **Breakout rooms for small group discussions** among participants to share preliminary ideas, assessments and challenges
- 11:55 Homework discussion, Online evaluation poll, offer to review and return with feedback any completed assignments that participants want to email to class organizer.

### Session #2, Wednesday March 10 :

- 10:00 – 10:10 Welcome, brief overview of class series, zoom format, offer to review homework
- **10:10 – 11:00 Navigating the permitting and regulatory process – local county planner, environmental health dept., and other staff present about permits and regulations for common agritourism activities, followed by Q&A**

- 11:00 – 11:30 Introduction to business planning – concentration on defining mission, objectives, target customers, business concept – led by local Small Business Development Center trainer or counselor.
- 11:30 – 11:50 Facilitated full group interactive discussion – participants share goals and objectives, ideas for activities – what do you want to achieve with agritourism?
- 11:50 – 12:00 Wrap up, online evaluation poll, homework discussion, offer to review and return with feedback any completed assignments that participants want to email to class organizer.

**Homework** – to be completed by beginning of next class:

- ❖ reading in text and supplemental reading
- ❖ Complete assessment worksheets of participant’s own farm or ranch for agritourism potential, involving family members and partners in the process.
- ❖ Begin evaluation of the potential for several current or possible agritourism activities on participant’s farm or ranch, including who would be partners/collaborators.

**Session #3, Wednesday March 17:**

- 10:00 – 10:10 Welcome, brief overview of class series, zoom format, offer to review homework
- 10:10 – 11:00 **Breakout rooms by agritourism activity planned, with experienced lead for each group** – categories for rooms to be decided by planning team. - examples:
  - *U-Pick, farm stand, farm shop*
  - *Winery activities, tasting rooms*
  - *Farm tours, education programs*
  - *Farm stay, guest ranch, camping*
  - *Events, festivals, dinners*
  - *Ranch and rangeland activities, outdoor recreation, hunting, etc.*
- **11:00 – 11:50 Legal liability and risk management strategies**
  - Introduction to land-owner liability, risk management strategies – *Penny Leff, UC SAREP*
  - Insurance for agritourism – *Local insurance agent experienced with agritourism*
  - Share handouts, checklists and web site for safety & risk management ([safe agritourism](#))
- 11:50 – 12:00 Wrap up, online evaluation poll, homework discussion, offer to review and return with feedback any completed assignments that participants want to email to class organizer.

**Homework** – can be turned in to instructor by email for review and feedback:

- ❖ Complete first draft of “one page business plan”: mission statement, business concept, goals and objectives.
- ❖ Complete risk assessment checklists for farm, ranch or agritourism operation
- ❖ Consult with insurance agent, county planning department, and/or experienced agritourism operator about business concept

**Session #4, Wednesday March 24**

- 10:00 – 10:10 Welcome, brief overview of class series, zoom format, offer to review homework
- **10:10 – 10:30 Breakout rooms w/small groups – Emergency preparedness planning exercise:**

- 10:30 – 11:00 Full group report back from small groups, with instructor sharing emergency preparedness planning resources ([Agritourismready](#))
- **11:00 – 11:30 Budgeting & cash flow** – discussion and exercise led by local SBDC trainer – handouts/worksheets to be downloaded before class.
- **11:30 -11:50 Overview of financing options** – SBDC or SBA or FSA representative, other?
- 11:50 – 12:00 Wrap up, online evaluation poll, homework discussion, offer to review and return with feedback any completed assignments that participants want to email to class organizer.

**Session #5, Wednesday March 31: (in person if possible, outdoors, hosted by experienced agritourism operator as a 6 hour session with box lunch – if not allowed, this will be done in 2 online sessions)**

- 10:00 – 10:10 Welcome, brief overview of class series, (zoom format)
- **10:10 – 11:00 Field trip!** –walk around a successful local agritourism operation (or show recorded video from, with narration from agritourism operator) talk about facilities, infrastructure needs, staffing, etc. followed by Q&A with that agritourism operator in real time
- **11:00 – 11:45 Effective websites, social media and marketing strategies for agritourism** – presentation by local marketing professional
- 11:45 – 12:15 Facilitated full group discussion, Q&A on planning so far and challenges encountered.
- 12:15 – 1:00 Networking lunch (provided)
- **1:00 – 1:30 Introduction to the tourism community, Q&A** – presentation & discussion led by local Visitors' Bureau leader or staff
- **1:30 – 2:00 Creating a marketing plan** – local marketing professional discussing process of marketing planning
  - Share exercise/downloadable handout for creating a marketing plan
- 2:00 – 2:20 Individual exercise – create 6-month action plan (Penny facilitates)
- **2:20 – 2:50 Marketing the community/agritourism associations and other collaborations** – local agritourism or winery association leader sharing about how association works & benefits members.
- 2:50 – 3:00 Wrap up, live evaluation form or online evaluation poll, thanks to team, funder