



January 2012

California AgTour Connections

Agritourism News & Notes

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Greetings!

Happy New Year!

I hope you're enjoying some rain as you read this, and maybe even a well-earned break from long hard-working days.

It's been good to meet some of you at our [agritourism planning classes](#) in Orland and Fresno, developing new businesses and new networks of partners. Many of you took part in the first California statewide agritourism summit in Stockton in November, helping plan strategies for supporting agritourism. Some of you will be attending NAFDMA or MAIZE conferences next month, or attending local workshops to trade ideas with new collaborators. Some of you are spending hours at county committee meetings and public hearings, trying to negotiate plans, ordinances and procedures that allow agritourism enterprises to flourish. Some of you are planning new activities and new promotions with your neighbors.

All of this together is helping grow our communities, our networks and our industry. We have movement in some counties to ease the regulatory barriers. We see the beginnings of some state-level partnerships. New wine trails, cheese trails and farm trails are organizing, and old ones are re-energizing. Together we'll grow a good 2012.

Thanks for doing what you do. Please stay in touch.

Sincerely,
Penny Leff, [UC Small Farm Program](#) agritourism coordinator

Report from Statewide Agritourism Summit

California agritourism leaders met in Stockton Nov. 4

Great turnout

More than 120 agritourism operators, association leaders, agricultural and tourism professionals, state and county staff and officials and others involved in California agritourism met in Stockton on November 4, 2011 for the first ever [California statewide agritourism summit](#) to network and plan the future for California agritourism support.

Inspiring speakers

Summit participants heard from CDFA Secretary Karen Ross, the leaders of the Apple Hill Growers Association, Martha Glass of the North Carolina Agritourism Networking Association and from several innovative agritourism operators. The presenters inspired



everyone with the potential for profitable agricultural tourism in California. Farm advisors and UC staff shared strategies for changing county regulations, online marketing, and teaching agritourism skills.

Planning for the future



Summit participants met in [small groups](#), and later in regional breakout groups, to talk about their visions and to discuss the challenges and opportunities of a California-wide agritourism organization. The group consensus was that a statewide organization of some kind would be a great support to our growing industry.

The event organizers are working on a proposal for the next steps in organizing statewide agritourism support, and will circulate this proposal to all of you within the next couple of months. Thank you for your patience with this process, and please stay in touch.



Notes from the group discussions, as well as some of the **handouts and presentations** from the summit are [available here](#).

This project was partially funded by Western SARE's Professional Development Program for California, with additional support from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the Delta Conservancy.

County agritourism regulations easing

Sacramento passes new rules; Santa Clara proposals discussed



Sacramento County

Months of meetings and negotiations between agritourism operators, winery owners, the Sacramento Farm Bureau and county staff paid off with good news for Sacramento agritourism and winery operators. On Dec. 14, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors approved new [winery, farm stay and farm stand ordinances](#) that appear to significantly reduce the permitting and regulatory barriers for operators of these enterprises within the county. The new rules:

- allow small wineries "by right" in agricultural zones, provided they have tasting rooms of less than 1,500 square feet
- allow small wineries to host an unlimited number of special events without a conditional use permit, subject to a community event permit from the Environmental Management Department
- allow farm stays with five or fewer rooms in agricultural zones "by right"
- limit the need for historical review to buildings more than 100 years old
- allow four different categories of farm stands on agricultural property to sell agricultural and food preparation items and to host unlimited numbers of community events, subject to a community event permit from the Environmental Management Department. (Community events can allow additional booths, including the sale of local produce not grown by the farm stand owner.)
- Community event permit and multi-event permit info is [here](#)

Santa Clara County

A dozen local winery owners, the Santa Clara County Farm Bureau, and staff from the county departments of Planning and Development, Agriculture, Environmental Health, the Fire Marshal's Office and the Gilroy Welcome Center have been meeting since September as the Winery Working Group. The gatherings were initiated by County Supervisor Mike Wasserman with the goal of helping the burgeoning wine industry in Southern Santa Clara County grow. The WWG put together policy recommendations that will be reviewed at a Planning Commission workshop on Feb. 2 as a first step toward a public hearing before the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.



The WWG recommends that:

- winery events be allowed "by right," with the number of guests allowed determined by the size in acreage of the winery
- that wineries be allowed to install a commercial kitchen without a use permit to support winery events
- that wineries be allowed, with a special permit, to have bed and breakfast, hostels, cottages, yurts and RV accommodations onsite
- wineries be allowed to utilize short-term agricultural worker housing as guest accommodations during limited time periods when not in use by workers.



Read the [Winery Working Group Recommendations](#) and [an article](#) in the Gilroy Dispatch about the process. For more information about the group's recommendations, contact Santa Clara County Farm Bureau Executive Director [Jennifer Williams](#), 408-776-1684

Website resource update - We need your help! Please tell us what is going on with general plans and agritourism ordinances in YOUR county so we can keep our [website planning and regulating section](#) up to date with the latest best language and policies. Contact [Penny](#), 530-752-7779.

Sonoma Marin Cheese Trail wows visitors



At about 30 artisan dairies and creameries from Point Reyes to Petaluma to Nicasio, visitors can taste some of the best cheese in the world. Sonoma and Marin cheesemakers have teamed up to create the latest farm trail, this one dedicated to sharing with the public the process of making cheese, along with tastings and dairy tours.

The [Sonoma Marin Cheese Trail](#), a project of the Marin Economic Forum, was put together by Vivien Straus, of a Marin farming family. Many local tourism and agricultural organizations lent support to the project. The map has been hugely successful for the

cheese-makers, says Straus, with the initial printing of 50,000 copies distributed in less than six months and generating worldwide interest in

the region's products. She will print another 100,000 copies this year, and plans to expand the concept into other regions of California. For more information, contact [Vivien Straus](#), (213) 304-7371

Many of the cheesemakers are also participating in [California's Artisan Cheese Festival](#), which takes place March 23-25 in Petaluma.

CalAgTour.org directory & free event listings

Your customers are looking for you here!

Now that the directory is linked to the Cal Ag Almanac, more people than ever are searching for California farms and ranches to visit using [CalAgTour.org](#). Listings and event postings are free.

If you are a working farmer or rancher operating an agritourism business or organizing agritourism events, we invite you to complete the [directory application](#) or the [event listing application](#) online so we can include your business and events in the directory. If you're already listed, please [check your listing](#) and update it if needed. You can use the [directory application](#) form for updates. We'll contact you if we have any questions.



Let's fill up that [events calendar](#)!

Join our Facebook page & listserv to connect

Let's stay in touch



We're on [Facebook](#) as "AgTour Connections." This is your page; please feel free to use it to share your activities, events, pictures and thoughts! Don't forget to "like" the page.

Also, please join the conversation on the Agtour-connect listserv, hosted by the UC Small Farm Program. This is an email discussion group for everyone involved in the business of California agritourism. [Sign up here](#) to share your thoughts, questions, news, or updates with other list members.

Customer service survey



Jane Eckert, CEO
Eckert AgriMarketing

Would you like to know how other farm businesses are handling their employee hiring and training in order to give their customers the best possible service? Agritourism marketing expert [Jane Eckert](#) is conducting a [short survey](#) of agritourism operators about their employee training and guest relations practices, and will share the results with those who complete her survey.

California Small Farm Conference March 4 - 6

Agritourism field course/tour and workshop on the program

Join us March 4 - 6 in Valencia for the California Small Farm Conference!

The [California Small Farm Conference](#) is the state's premier gathering of



small farmers, agricultural students, farmers market managers and others involved in the small farm industry. The three day educational conference includes day-long short courses and on-farm tours (one of the short courses is an agritourism tour); 24 focused workshops; engaging keynote addresses and numerous networking opportunities.

- **Silent auction and raffle prizes needed**

- Here's a chance to promote your farm stay, passport weekend, class, tour or other agritourism activity and help support the Small Farm Conference at the same time! Your donation of an overnight stay or event ticket or other item will be happily accepted. For more information, contact [Vince Scalise](#) 925-825-9090,

- **Pedro Ilic Awards** - Know an outstanding farmer or agricultural educator? Nominations are open for the [2012 Pedro Ilic Awards](#), which honor dedication to small-scale farming. The 2012 Pedro Ilic Awards will be presented at the California Small Farm Conference. Anyone can nominate a farmer and/or an educator, though a successful nomination must have a minimum of two nominators. The deadline for [nominations](#) is Jan. 31.

Other great conferences and workshops

Educational opportunities in California and beyond

- **The 2012 North American Farm Direct Marketing (NAFDMA) Annual Convention** will be held in



Williamsburg, Virginia Feb. 10 - 16. The convention involves a three-day bus tour, multiple full-day workshops, a day of conference concurrent sessions and a trade show. [Learn more.](#)

- **12th Annual [National MAiZE Conference](#)** comes to Sacramento February 14 - 18. [The MAiZE](#), designers and promoters of corn mazes for farmers, is holding its national conference for corn maze clients in California this year. The "Corn Party" includes a mix of speakers, tours, workshops and networking opportunities. If you are a farmer interested in learning more about this company and the conference, fill out the [request form](#) or email brett@themaize.com



- **Growing Agritourism in Sonoma County** - UC Cooperative Extension Sonoma County and Sonoma County Farm Trails present a day-long workshop for farmers and ranchers and current agritourism operators. This workshop will feature success stories, networking and discussions with tourism professionals about growing agritourism in the North Bay.



Date and time: Thursday, Feb. 16, 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Location: 6445 Commerce Blvd, Rohnert Park

Registration fee: \$25, includes lunch by Chloe's French Cafe

Registration: <http://ucanr.org/feb-16-agritourism>

More info: Lisa Bell, 707-565-2050

- **PlacerGROWN Food and Farming Conference** is Saturday, Feb. 4 at Lincoln High School. The conference typically features 25-30 workshops, speakers and a trade show, with lunch prepared by the Lincoln Future Farmers of America. The opportunity to meet and network with other farmers/ranchers and related agricultural organizations is as valuable as the educational content. This year's keynote speaker will be Dr. J. Scott Vernon, professor of agricultural communication at Cal Poly State University in San Luis Obispo and leader of the grassroots campaign, "I Love Farmers, They Feed My Soul!"
- **Marin Inspired Business Plan Series - [Entrepreneur's Showcase](#)**
Date and time: Jan. 20, 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.
Location; [Veterans Memorial Hall](#), 1094 Petaluma Blvd. South
The owner/entrepreneurs of Cowgirl Creamery, Marin Sun Farms, Three Twins Ice Cream, and Point Reyes Compost Company will share their experiences, insights and lessons learned while starting, growing and managing their businesses. Co-sponsored by West Marin Free Skool and UC Cooperative Extension Marin County. Free for the public. [RSVP preferred.](#)

Thanks for reading. Please forward this newsletter to anyone who might find it useful (Click on "forward email" below).

Sincerely,

Penny Leff
UC Small Farm Program
(530) 752-7779
paleff@ucdavis.edu

