Survey of Agritourism including On-Farm Direct Sales in California

Overview

Online Survey
Between November 2019 and February 2020, farmers and ranchers throughout California completed an online survey about agritourism including on-farm sales. The goal of the survey was to better understand the types of experiences and products offered, the economic viability of agritourism enterprises, and ways to support a healthy future for producers and their communities.

What is Agritourism?
For the purpose of this survey, agritourism was defined as experiences and product sales taking place on farms, ranches, or vineyards. Examples include farm stands, u-pick, overnight farm stays, tastings, events, tours, horseback riding, farm walks, and hunting.

Agritourism Experiences Offered

- On-Farm Direct Sales: 73%
- Education: 59%
- Events: 55%
- Lodging: 27%
- Outdoor Recreation: 25%

Who Answered the Survey?
Results were received from 131 California agritourism operators. On average, survey respondents:

- were female (63%)
- were 60 years old (average age)
- had a college degree (77%)
- farmed 37 acres (median farm size)
- had 10+ years of experience (50%)
Findings California agritourism operators demonstrated success in attracting visitors and generating revenue. Earning extra income was the leading motivator for farmers and ranchers to develop agritourism enterprises, although social motivators were also important. Operators also face many challenges including labor, liability concerns, regulatory barriers, and 31% are not generating a profit from their agritourism enterprise. The majority of operators plan to invest in their agritourism enterprise over the next 5 years, showing a commitment to the benefits and opportunities of agritourism in California.

California Agritourism by the Numbers
- Farms & ranches host an average of **300 visitors annually** (median), 40% of visitors **traveled over 50 miles** (median)
- Most businesses generate **$5,000-$100,000 in agritourism sales** (gross annual revenue)
- **31% did not earn a profit** from agritourism activities in 2018 (net agritourism income)

Motivations to offer agritourism experiences
- Increase farm revenue (91%)
- Educate public about agriculture (89%)
- Build goodwill in community (89%)
- Enjoy social interaction with public (77%)

Challenges experienced by agritourism operators
- Labor (90%)
- Time Management (90%)
- Liability & Insurance (87%)
- State/Local Regulations (84%)
- Marketing (82%)
- County Zoning & Permitting (79%)

Plans for the future of agritourism businesses
- The majority of respondents are planning to increase the investment in their agritourism enterprises over the next 5 years.
- Expand offerings (72%)
- Invest in more buildings/equipment (53%)
- Hire more employees (38%)

This work is supported by Critical Agriculture Research and Extension (CARE) grant no. VTN32556 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Agriculture Marketing Resource Center (AgMRC), located at Iowa State University, www.agmrc.org. AgMRC is a national website dedicated to providing information to producers and service providers on value-added agriculture businesses. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.