



# Best Management Practices in Agritourism

Best Management Practices for an agritourism business include: 1) providing an authentic farm or ranch experience, 2) providing an educational experience, 3) providing excellent customer service, 4) providing adequate public facilities, 5) maintaining a safe and accessible environment, 6) creating good community relations, and 7) planning for your financial future.

When starting an agritourism business or assessing your existing operation, consult the available resources (see backside) and consider the following best management practices:

## **Authentic Farm or Ranch Experience**

An agritourism business can be defined as any person, farm, or corporation actively engaged in the operation, management, or promotion of an agriculturally-related tourism business open to the public. This business provides visitors with an educational experience aside from one that is solely commercial. It is important to keep in mind that your farm/ranch is often the “face of farming and ranching” in your community, region, or state. A product you offer to visitors may be the experience of farm or ranch living. It is also important to understand what aspects of agriculture your local associations (agricultural, tourism, and marketing) emphasize in your region so that you can develop your own niche in coordination with other farms and attractions nearby.

## **Educational Experience**

Farms and ranches can offer an agriculturally-oriented educational experience suitable for different ages. Food and fiber production, land stewardship, and history of agriculture are common topics that visitors enjoy learning about. Another way to diversify your operation and educate guests maybe on-property recreational activities (e.g., fishing, hunting, trail riding, cross-country skiing, or hiking).

## **Customer Service**

This should be an integral part of your business planning. Training your staff to interact with customers in an appropriate way will ensure a safe and high quality experience for customers. It also ensures these customers will return and tell other potential customers about your business.

## **Adequate Public Facilities**

Your farm/ranch needs to have sufficient capacity (staff and infrastructure) to provide basic services such as parking, transportation, signage, customer assistance, education, and roads. In order to maintain a safe and customer friendly business, provision of services and facilities like restrooms becomes necessary.

## **Safe and Accessible Environment**

You should ensure that your property and facilities are maintained and in compliance with zoning, health and environmental regulations. It is useful as well to create a risk management plan for your farm/ranch. In addition, depending on your type of business, consider compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, which mandates equal customer access to certain facilities (entrances, exits, and bathrooms).

## **Community Relations**

To create good community relations, it is important to regularly provide opportunities for organized groups and individuals in your community to visit your property (e.g., schools and business associations).

## **Planning for your Financial Future**

Regularly review your business plan and appropriately add value (price) to all farm/ranch services, products, and experiences in order to provide for the long-term sustainability of your business.

## Resources

The following is a listing of available resources related to best management practices in agritourism:

### State Resources

Your State's: Department or Agency of Agriculture, State Agritourism Organization, Department of Marketing or Tourism, University Cooperative Extension Service, and directories from the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils (<http://www.rcdnet.org/>), and Natural Resources Conservation Service <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/RESS/altenterprise> (2004 Alternative Enterprises and Agritourism Liaisons Directory and Economic and Rural Community Development Directory).

### Authentic Experience

#### National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations

1145 17th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036  
202-828-8045, [sustourism@ngs.org](mailto:sustourism@ngs.org)  
[http://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable/about\\_geotourism.html](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable/about_geotourism.html)

### On-Farm/Ranch Education

#### Agriculture in the Classroom

Tom Tate, National Program Leader  
USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue S.W.  
Stop 2251 Washington D.C. 20250-2251  
Phone: 202-720-2727, Fax: 202-720-2030  
E-mail: [ttate@csrees.usda.gov](mailto:ttate@csrees.usda.gov)  
<http://www.agclassroom.org/>

#### Farm-Based Education Association

Minuteman National Historic Park  
174 Liberty Street, Concord, MA 10742  
Phone: 978-318-7827  
[info@farmbasededucation.org](mailto:info@farmbasededucation.org),  
<http://www.farmbasededucation.org/>

**A Farmer's Guide to Hosting Farm Visits for Children**, Univ. California Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program, UC Davis <http://www.sarep.ucdavis.edu/Grants/Reports/Kraus/97-36FarmersGuide.htm>

**Farm Tours: A Marketing and Education Tool** - planning and implementing your own local farm tour. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County, <http://www.smallfarms.cornell.edu/pages/resources/pdfs/pschafer02.htm>

### Customer Service

**Agritourism in Focus a Guide for Tennessee Farmers**-chapter on 'Customer Service'  
<http://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/pbfiles/PB1754.pdf>

### Health and Safety Guidelines

#### National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (NIOSH)

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/agriculture/>  
Toll-Free: 800-35-NIOSH 800-356-4674

#### NIOSH Agricultural Research Centers

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/agctrhom.html>

#### National Safety Council

Farm safety & workplace fact sheets  
<http://www.nsc.org/library/facts.htm>  
630-285-1121

#### The National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety

Under Resources  
<http://www.marshfieldclinic.org/nfmc/>  
Toll-free 800-662-6900

#### "Farm Animals & Visitors Public Health & Safety Tips for Animal/People Interaction" Vermont Department of Health

<http://www.healthvermont.net/family/animals/farmanimals.pdf>

### Accessibility

#### Information and Technical Assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act

800-514-0301 (voice)  
800-514-0383 (TTY)  
<http://www.ada.gov>

#### Agri-Business Council of Oregon and Agriculture Council Northwest: Agri-Tourism Workbook

-Section on "Barriers and Access Considerations" <http://www.aglink.org/agbook/agritourismworkbook.php>

### Financial Planning

#### Recreation Finance program

This program prints out reports of gross income, net income, visitation, cash flow and overhead.  
<http://www.rpts.tamu.edu/tce/NT/business%20planning.html>



**Agricultural Marketing Resource Center**  
1111 NSRIC, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011-3310  
866-277-5567, [AgMRC@iastate.edu](mailto:AgMRC@iastate.edu), <http://www.agmrc.org>