



The Louisiana Agritourism Connection

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A quarterly e-newsletter providing information to start, grow or sustain your agritourism venture



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Agritourism is a business venture on a working farm, ranch or agricultural enterprise that offers educational and fun experiences for visitors while generating supplemental income for the owner. Visitors participate in friendly “discovery” and learning activities in natural or agricultural settings. Because it blends entertainment and education, agritourism is also known as “agrientertainment,” “agritainment” or “agrotourism.”

Travel Trends Suggest Future for Agritourism

The Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) reports that tourists are traveling in increasing numbers by car, taking shorter trips, spending minimal time planning and looking for new and different experiences they can share with their families.

A study conducted in 2006 by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries reported that hunting, fishing and boating had a \$6.75 billion impact on the state economy and created 77,000 jobs.

A year later in 2007 a study conducted by the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism revealed that 1 in 4 visitors to Louisiana or 4.7 million visitors enjoyed outdoor activities. Those visitors were generally middle aged and spent 1-3 days touring the state.

Forms

of

Agritourism:

Horseback riding
Wildlife viewing &
photography
Fee fishing
Camping/picnicking
Fee hunting
Wagon rides
School tours
Garden/nursery
tours
Winery tours
Agricultural exhibits
Game preserve
Skeet shooting
Exotic farm animals
On-farm sales
Roadside stands
Agricultural crafts
U-pick operations
Petting zoo
Hunting/working dog
trials/training
Farm/ranch
vacations
Bed and breakfasts
Guest ranch
Youth camp
Farmers markets
Bird watching
Christmas tree
farms
Guided crop tours
Hay bale maze
Corn maze
Pony rides
Hiking trails
Packing trips
Pumpkin patch
Agricultural fairs and
festivals

(All activities not included
in La. R.S. 9:2795)

2007 Agriculture Census

Total farms reported in the US: 2,204,799 - an increase of 4 percent since 2002. Approximately 136,817 farms engaged in direct sales to consumers, roadside stands, farmers' markets, or pick-your-own enterprises. Another 23,350 farmers reported they were engaged in agritourism.

What do these figures mean? It means that more farmers are engaging in agritourism or agritourism-related activities. These new farmers earn income off the farm to sustain their farming pursuits, while existing farmers sustain their farms by offering agritourism activities.

Benefits of Agritourism

It's no wonder that farmers are considering agritourism. Its benefits to the agricultural producer include:

- Cash flow during the off-season
- Opportunity to sell the "experience" of your agricultural venue
- Opportunity to sell products grown and harvested in your agricultural operation
- Opportunity to share your passion of agriculture with others

New Agritourism Law Limits Liability

In 2008, the Louisiana Legislature expanded the limitation of liability found in La. R.S. 9:2795 et seq to include certain agritourism activities. The legislation authored by Rep. Andy Anders and Sens. Francis Thompson and Mike Walsworth provides that the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) will develop a set of rules and regulations and that the LSU AgCenter will define a "plan of operation" for an agritourism venture and review those plans.

A plan of operation is a planning document that assists agritourism

Follow these steps to develop an agritourism venture:

- Assess your personality
- Identify your goals
- Do a market analysis
- Evaluate your land resources
- Assess your financial resources
- Estimate your time and labor needs
- Identify safety issues and comply with state laws
- Seek legal assistance
- Explore insurance options
- Market your venture
- Develop a business plan

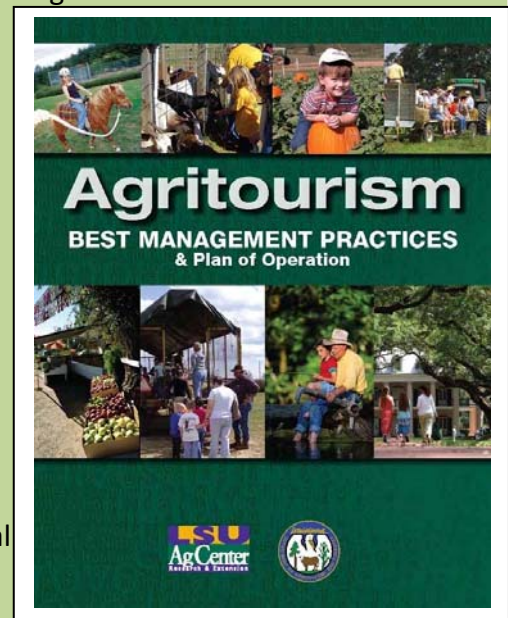
professionals in identifying and addressing possible inherent risks on their operations through recommended best management practices.

Components of the plan include listing activities, their risks, suggestions for minimizing those risks and a plan for the location of warning signs.

Under La. R.S. 9:2795.5, LDAF has the sole authority to develop rules and regulations defining approved agritourism activities.

To comply with the new legislation, an agritourism professional should take these steps:

- 1- Read the rules and regulations provided by LDAF to determine eligibility. These rules may be found either on the LSU AgCenter's Web site at www.lsuagcenter.com/agritourism or on the blog site at <http://www.louisianaagritourism.blogspot.com>
- 2- Log on to: www.lsuagcenter.com/agritourism and click on "plan of operation." Download the document and complete online.
- 2- Complete the plan of operation using as a guide the new LSU AgCenter publication, "Agritourism Best Management Practices and Plan of Operation," publication AC-6, which can be found on the same Web site under publications.
- 3- Send the completed plan of operation to the LSU AgCenter using the address provided on the form.
- 4- Wait 4-6 weeks for plan approval from the LSU AgCenter.
- 5- LSU AgCenter will forward approved plans to LDAF.
- 6- LDAF will contact the agritourism professional for a site visit before certifying.
- 7- After certification, it is the responsibility of the agritourism



Blog with us at:

<http://www.louisianaagritourism.blogspot.com/>

professional to continually update his plan as stated in the guidelines. If a new activity is added, the agritourism professional must resubmit the “approved plan of operation, “add the new activity to his plan of operation, and re-submit to the LSU AgCenter for approval.

Louisiana Agritourism Blog

The Louisiana Agritourism Blog can be found at <http://www.louisianaagritourism.blogspot.com> The purpose of the blog is to begin a conversation about agritourism in our state. The blog is open for comment. You can post a question or respond to a question that has already been posed on the blog.

The LSU AgCenter wants to hear from you. Some examples of what you can share on the blog include:

- In what forms of agritourism are you participating in?
- How did you get started in agritourism?

The blog will also be a place where you can pose questions, for example:

- Is my agritourism venture covered under the new agritourism limited liability law?
- What steps should I take to become certified?

For more information contact: Dora Ann Hatch, LSU AgCenter Extension Agritourism Coordinator and area community rural development agent, at (318) 927-9654 Ext. 229, or dhatch@agcenter.lsu.edu, or post your question to the blog at: <http://www.louisianaagritourism.blogspot.com>

