



## **YOUR SUCCESS | Welcoming Visitors to the Farm**

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**NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & CONSUMER SERVICES**

**Steve Troxler, Commissioner of Agriculture**

# AGRITOURISM on working farms

Any activity carried out on a farm or ranch that allows members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes, to view or enjoy rural activities, including farming, ranching, historic, cultural, harvest-your-own activities, or natural activities and attractions. An activity is an agritourism activity whether or not the participant paid to participate in the activity.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA | SESSION 2005

SESSION LAW 2005-236  
HOUSE BILL 329

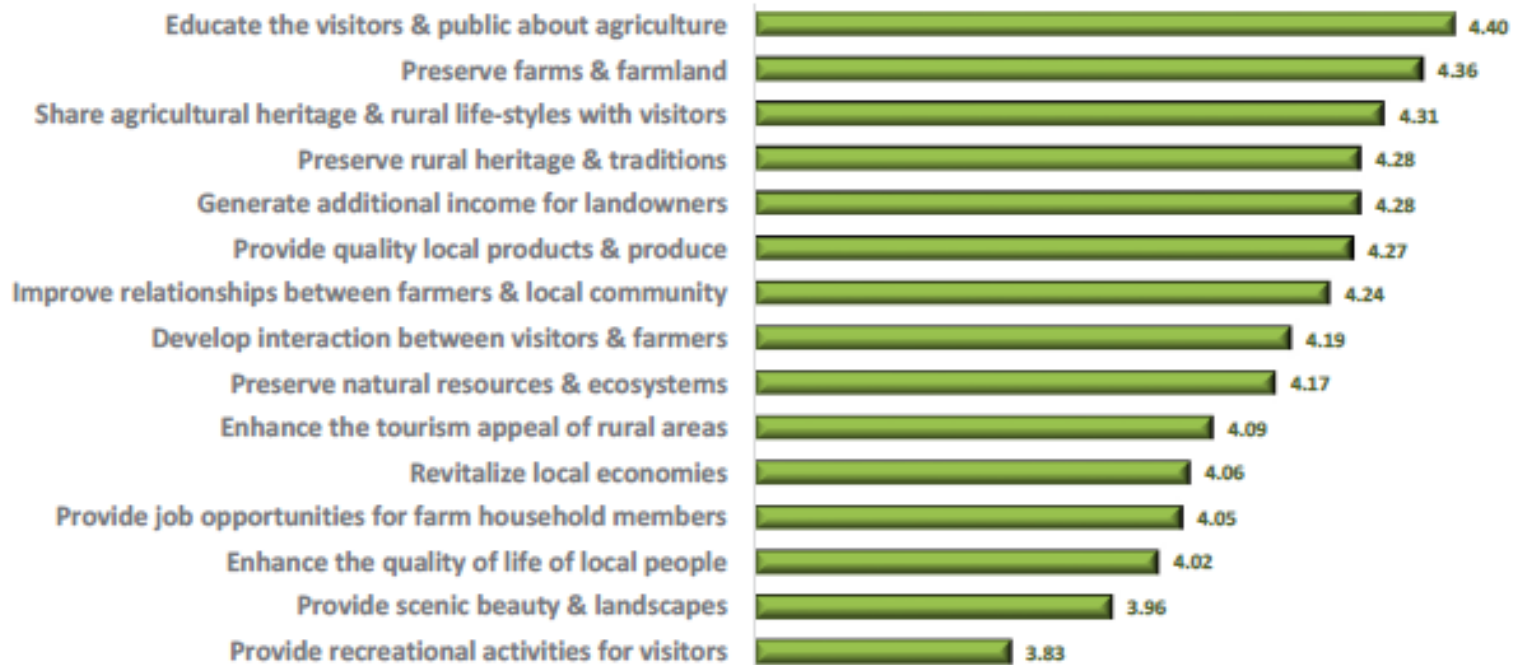




HOW BENEFICIAL IS  
AGRITOURISM?

# BENEFITS OF AGRITOURISM

Figure 3. Importance of Benefits Agritourism Produces



(Scale ranged from "1 = Very Unimportant" to "5 = Very Important". Farmers' responses were weighted)

(n = 680)

HOW BENEFICIAL IS AGRITOURISM? North Carolina Farmers and Residents Respond

Prepared by Tourism Extension, Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism Management College of Natural Resources, North Carolina State University. Published by North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service.

**WHY** IS IT IMPORTANT TO  
UNDERSTAND THE BENEFITS  
OF AGRITOURISM?

# BENEFITS OF AGRITOURISM

**Figure 5. The Environmental Benefits of Agritourism**

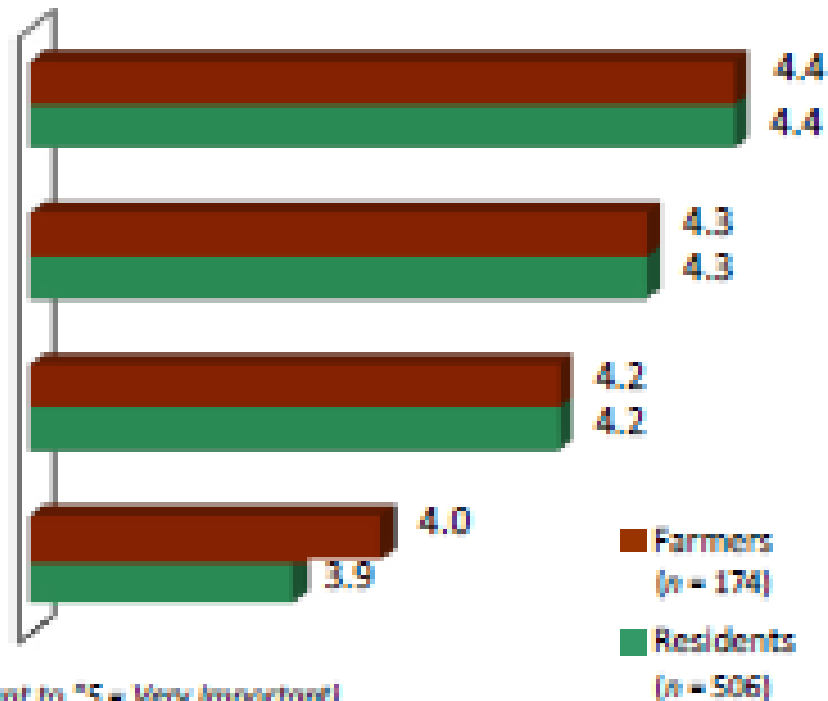
**Rank:**

1 - Preserve farms & farmland

2 - Provide quality local products & produce

3 - Preserve natural resources & ecosystems

4 - Provide scenic beauty & landscape



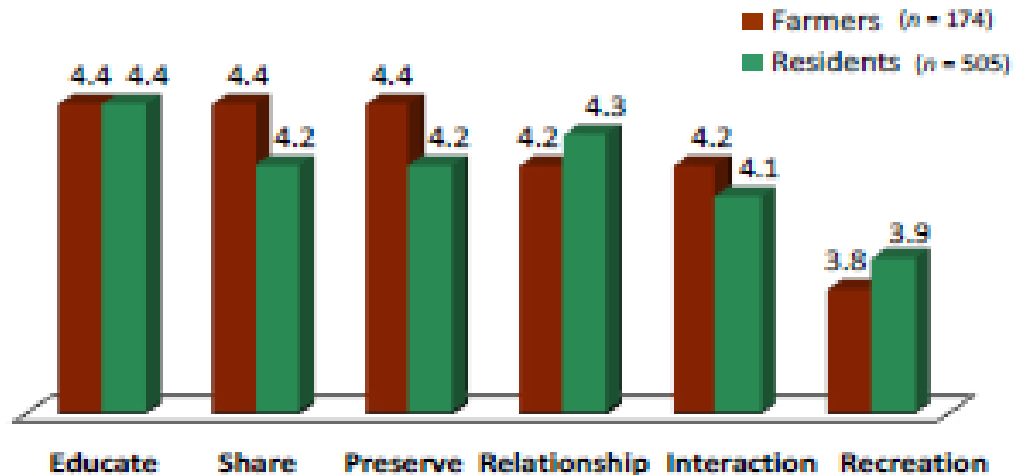
(Scale ranged from "1 = Very Unimportant to "5 = Very Important)

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# BENEFITS OF AGRITOURISM

Figure 4. The Socio-cultural Benefits of Agritourism



Rank:

- 1 - Educate the visitors and public about agriculture
- 2 - Share agricultural heritage and rural life-styles with visitors
- 2 - Preserve rural heritage and traditions
- 3 - Improve relationships between farmers and local community
- 4 - Develop interactions between visitors and farmers
- 5 - Provide recreational activities for visitors

(Scale ranged from "1 = Very Unimportant" to "5 = Very Important")

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# BENEFITS OF AGRITOURISM

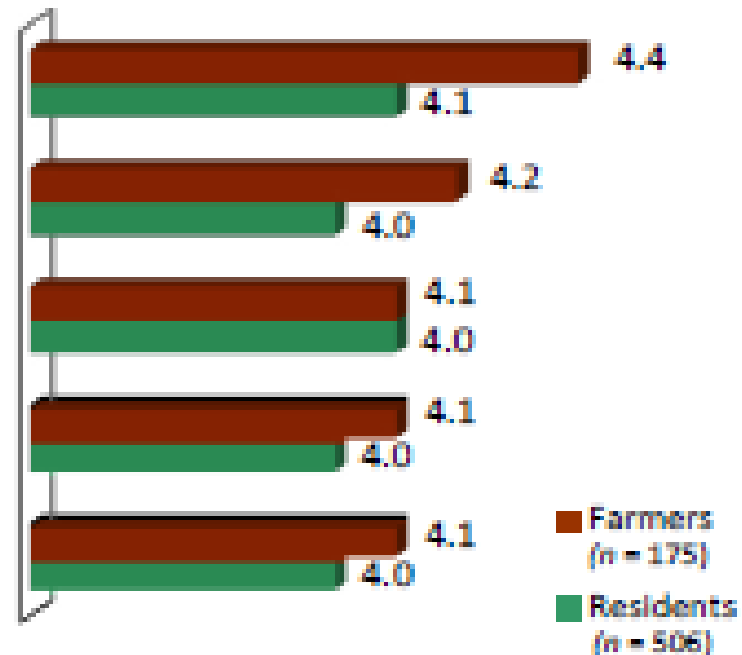
Figure 6. The Economic Benefits of Agritourism

**Rank:**

- 1 - Generating additional income for farmers and land owners\*
- 2 - Enhance the tourism appeal of rural areas\*
- 2 - Revitalize local economies
- 2 - Provide job opportunities for farm household members
- 3 - Enhance the quality of life of local people

\* Indicates statistical difference

(Scale ranged from "1 = Very Unimportant" to "5 = Very Important")



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# WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THE BENEFITS OF AGRITOURISM?

## PROFITABILITY

- Even farm revenue stream
- Meet \$ obligations
- Maximize farm resources
- Post harvest revenue
- Diminish catastrophic event impact

THE BOTTOM LINE IS THE BOTTOM LINE

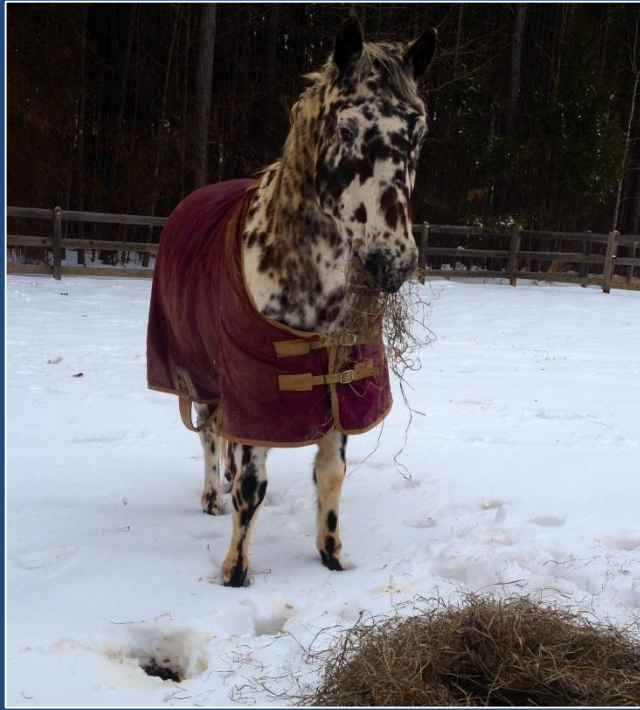


# WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THE BENEFITS OF AGRITOURISM?

## THE FAMILY FARM & YOUR WAY OF LIFE

- Employ family members
- Keep the family farm
- Enhance family quality of life

THE BOTTOM LINE IS THE BOTTOM LINE



# WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THE BENEFITS OF AGRITOURISM?

## MARKETING (Is like a hungry animal!)

- Increase sales of farm products directly to the consumer, maximizing profitability (value-added too)
- Enhance service to current customers (80/20 rule)
- Gain new customers (43% word-of-mouth)
- Educate the public about the benefits of agriculture

THE BOTTOM LINE IS THE BOTTOM LINE



## THE BIG WHY?

To create revenue-producing opportunities for farms through visitor experiences to ultimately...

Preserve the farmland.

Inspire our children and grandchildren to farm.

Develop community vibrancy.



## SUCCESS IN AGRITOURISM REQUIRES: Your compelling farm story.

- Value of your farm as **destination** (vs. location)
- Worthwhile visitor **activities**
- Follow **regulations** and **focus locally to boost community**
- Provide **experiences of a lifetime** to visitors
- Excellent **staff**
- **Profit** for farm





## HOW? USE WHAT YOU HAVE & WHAT YOU KNOW

Barnyard Animals . Fiber Animals . Farm Riding Trails . Walking Trails . Crafts . Camping . Bird Watching . Fishing . Hunting . Farm Stays or Bed & Breakfast . Country Cabins . Retreats . Hay Rides . Crop Mazes . Pumpkin Patches . Historic Farms . Quilt Barns & Trails . Reunions . Museums . Workshops . Festivals . Holiday Events . Christmas Trees . Pick Your Own Produce . Roadside Stands . Nurseries . Flowers . Picnics . Parties . Weddings & Reception . School Field Trips . Summer Camps . Farm Vacations . Slow Food Dining or Farm to Table Dining . Vineyards . Wineries

**Your idea! Families WILL invest in your farm.**



# WHO?

Is the face of the farm?

Is the audience?



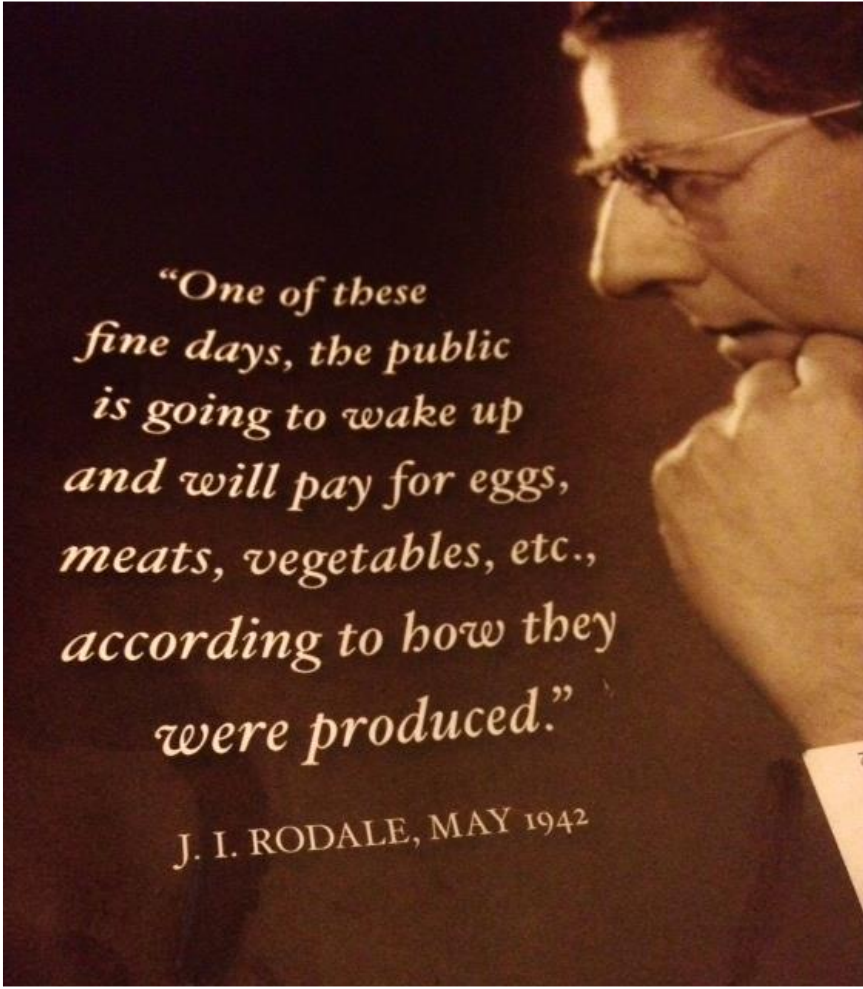
## WHAT?

What exists on your farm today that could grow into a vibrant Agritourism activity that you can translate into a **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME?**

What makes your farm special?

Turn farm features into benefits.





*"One of these  
fine days, the public  
is going to wake up  
and will pay for eggs,  
meats, vegetables, etc.,  
according to how they  
were produced."*

J. I. RODALE, MAY 1942

## WHAT?

- Farms are exciting!
- Farm Fresh Sells
- Valuing Agriculture

**Farms + Creative Collaboration =  
Community Vibrancy**

Schools & Universities | Restaurants & Businesses  
Hotels & Conventions | Heritage & Preservation



## HOW?

Does your farm meet the requirements of a **bona fide farm and present use value program for agricultural, horticultural or forest land use** under the General Statutes? NCGS 153A-340 b1 & NCGS 105-277.3. **Agritourism is an additional way for working farms to expand operations to even the revenue stream and preserve the farm.**

Gather with your farm family, neighbors and your local Agriculture resources and officials to include Planning offices, Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development and Tourism contacts to discuss the possibilities and the first steps of your Agritourism plan. **Support at the local level is key to success.**



# AGRITOURISM FARMER BEST PRACTICES



## KEY AGRITOURISM FARMER QUESTIONS:

- 1) Will opening my farm to the public make money?
- 2) Are there customers to support my tourism ideas?
- 3) Is opening my farm to the public really a fit for me?



## BEST PRACTICES BASED ON THE TOP NEEDS OF AGRITOURISM FARMERS:

- 1) The Bottom Line
- 2) Marketing
- 3) Safety & Liability





Will opening my farm to the public make money?

## BUSINESS PLANNING

Budget – Sales to Expenses | Cash flow projections

Farm Solvency | Strategic Marketing Plan & Calendar



<b>AGRITOURISM START UP Expense Items</b>	<b>Investment Estimate</b>
Barn Re-do	\$500
Picnic Shelter	\$1500
Picnic Tables	\$500
Fence Expansion	\$1000
Parking Area	\$1000
Tour Trails	\$500
Labor	\$2500
<b>TOTAL START UP INVESTMENT:</b>	<b>\$7500</b>



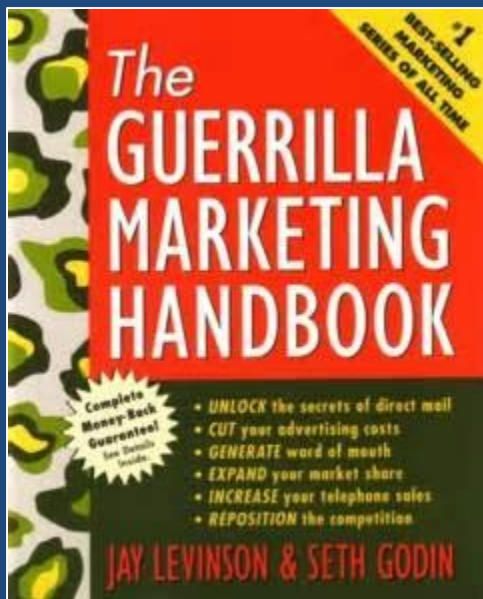
<b>OPERATIONAL COSTS Expense Items</b>	<b>Cost Estimate</b>
Annual start-up payment	\$2777
Utilities	\$1200
Portable Restrooms	\$2000
Liability Insurance	\$2000
Equipment, machinery	\$1616
Licenses, advertising	\$500
Maintenance	\$1000
Labor	\$1800
<b>TOTAL OPERATIONAL COSTS:</b>	<b>\$12,893</b>





Costs Per Visitor Expense Items	Cost Estimate
Guided Tour	\$1.00
Wagon Ride	\$0.20
Farm Produce	\$2.00
Educational/Craft Activity	\$0.27
Washable Paint	\$0.25
Photo/Frame Premium	\$0.50
<b>TOTAL VARIABLE COST PER VISITOR:</b>	<b>\$4.22</b>

VISITOR BREAK EVEN Sample Numbers:	
Variable Costs (Per Visitor Cost) \$4.22	
Fixed Costs (Cost of Doing Business) \$12,893	
Fixed Costs \$12,893 / Attendance Ticket Price \$8 - Variable Cost \$4.22 (\$8 - \$4.22 = \$3.78)	
-----	
# of Visitors needed to BREAK EVEN	
$\$12,893 / \$3.78 = 3,410$ Visitors	
Plan for efforts to take longer than expected and to cost more than anticipated.	
Saving adds to the bottom line and reduces the number of visitors required to hit breakeven.	
It is easier to price high and adjust down than it is to price low and increase the value.	



# BEST PRACTICES FOR AGRITOURISM FARMERS

- A Low-Cost, High Impact Marketing **Philosophy**
- Real applications.  
A farmer since 2000.

Goals & Strategy | Assess & Plan | Outreach & Promote |  
The “Wow!” Experience & Inspire Customers to Tell Friends



## BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

- Brand
- Logo
- Mission Statement
- **Why** your farm?
- What is your farm's **unique benefit**?
- **Call-to-Action**

*Our vision for our farm and creamery is pretty simple. We want to create a nurturing space for ourselves, our family, and our animals by making our way in a sustainable manner. We try to contribute something positive to every realm we enter, and trust that by being giddily hopeful we can spread our good humor to others.*

BE CONSISTENT & COHESIVE.



# BEST PRACTICES FOR AGRITOURISM FARMERS

## MARKETING

Are there customers to  
support my tourism ideas?



# BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

## YOUR CUSTOMER

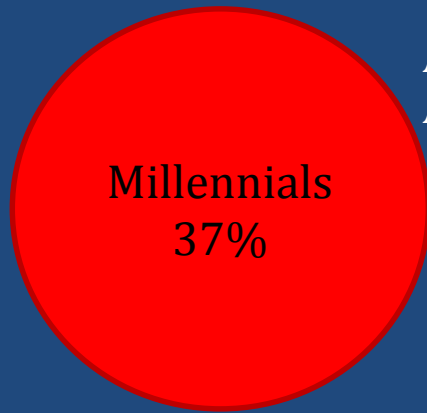
- Who?
- Develop a **patron profile**. Name her. Age? Children? Education? Career? Interests?
- Create activities and messages relevant to your **target audience**.



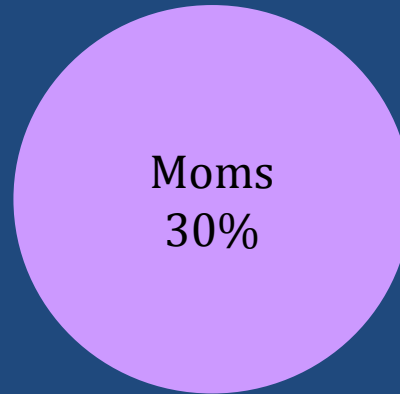
# BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

**YOUR CUSTOMER** is online.

- Who?  
**Families! Moms. Children. Folks with little time and \$ to spend at your farm.**
- Did you know that **women** influence 85% of decisions?
- Create activities and messages relevant to them.



Age: 21-34  
Average Income: \$66K



Average Age: 37  
Average Income: \$72K  
Children up to 18 at home.



Average  
age: 38  
Average  
Income:  
\$77K

**Millennial families prefer:**

1. Internet
2. Humor, creativity & pop culture
3. Minimalism
4. Open-ended coupons
5. Social Media
6. You being cool



# BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

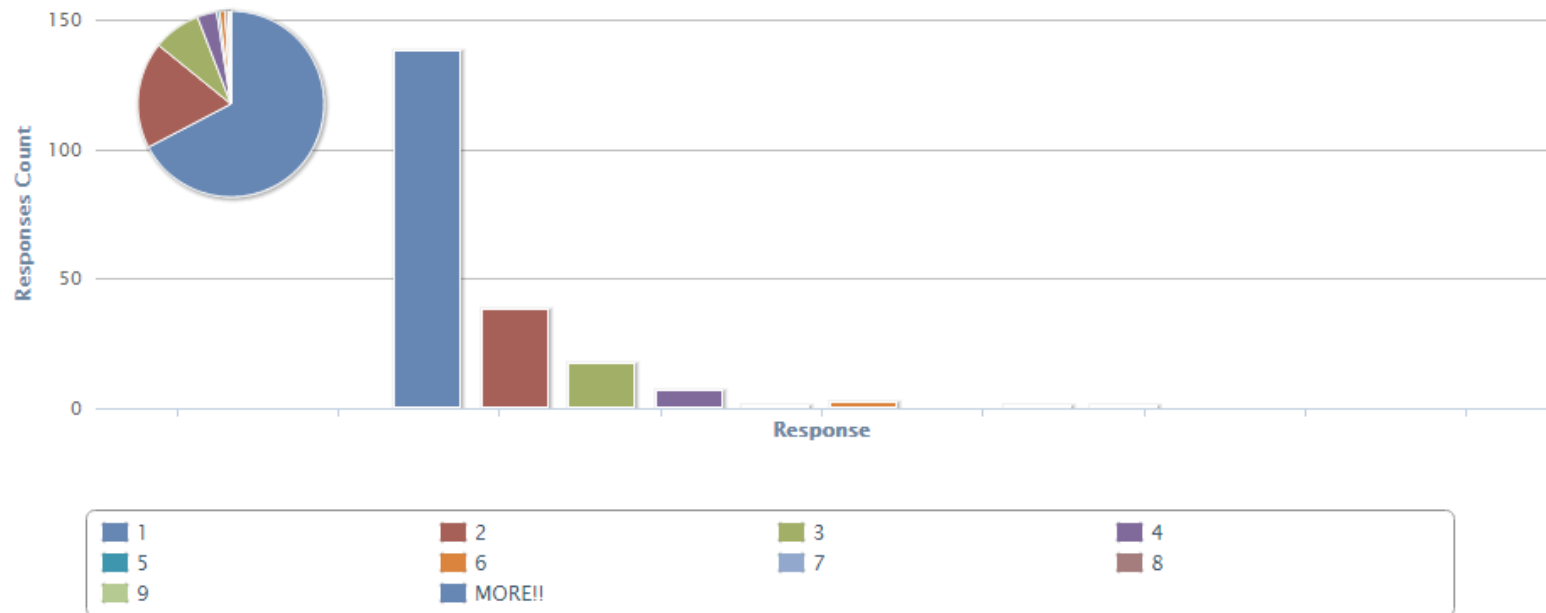
## BUILDING A CUSTOMER BASE *ONE farm customer at a time.*

- Customer Service ~ Hospitality
- Outreach. How to find like-minded farm patrons?
- What is your farm **already doing**? Farmers markets? CSA's? Special events, both on and off of the farm?
- Start with a sign-up sheet with your brand and logo. Place sign-up opportunities **everywhere** and **every time**! (Be consistent and cohesive.)



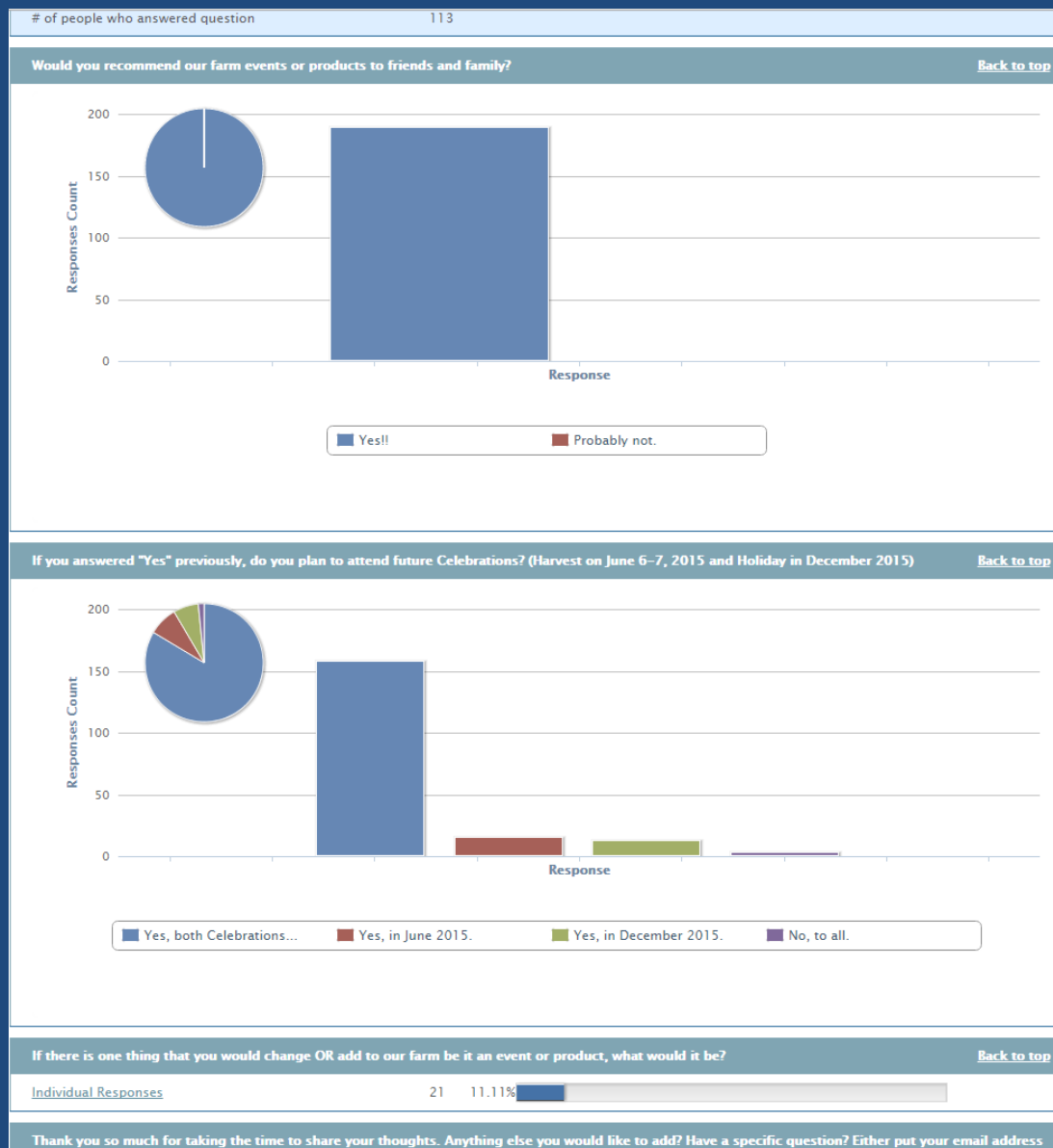
# BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

Yes, some in our group would like to participate in the fresh lavender crafts, like the wand or a basket. A volunteer will be available to teach you how. The craft fee is \$5 per item, paid at the Lavender Garden Shed. About how many craft items does your group plan to create? [Back to top](#)



## ASSESS & PLAN

- What are your **goals**?
- Use **customer survey tools** to establish your strategic guidelines FOR **DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING AND RESULTS**.



# BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

## ASK KEY QUESTIONS:

- Would you recommend our farm events or products to friends & family?*

## RESULTS:

- Look how many customers plan to attend the next event.
- Do you think EXISTING PATRONS will tell friends?

# BEST PRACTICES MARKETING



## PLAN & PROMOTE – Early!

- **DATA:** What did you learn? On average, 50% of visitors are NEW to each event.
- **TO OBTAIN RESULTS:** Save the date magnets were shared during an event – 6 months prior.

# BEST PRACTICES MARKETING



## EARNING PUBLICITY

### Relationships and Communication

#### Create a media contact list to include:

- Local, State & National journalists
  - Bloggers
  - Your customers who are online.
- 
- **Marketing calendar** – 6 months out, 3 months out, 1 month, 2 weeks and up to event prior using all communication vehicles – website, social media & public relations.
  - **Media Day**
  - **Top Customer Appreciation Event**



**Millennial:** *My friends spend more time telling me about where they bought something and who they bought it from rather than describing the product itself. It's all about the experience and the story they get out of it.*

# BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

## DESTINATION VS. LOCATION

- Create experiences that are worth the trip.
- Folks will travel to the most remote of places if you give them a compelling reason to visit.

# BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

## TEACH

- You are an expert.
- Your story is interesting.
- Your audience is ripe for learning.
- What is in it for **your customer**?
- “What this means to you is ...”





## OakMoon Farm & Creamery

Rustic Aged Goat Cheeses and Unique Fresh Goat Cheese Specialties



Home

Cheese

Outlets and Markets

Workshops and Events

More ▾



### Why GMO-

In late May 2014, we began to feed a gmo-free grain mix to all the animals on the farm. We did this for a couple of good reasons, including our personal objection to being used as nonconsenting guinea pigs for agricultural chemical corporations. What have we seen since changing to the gmo-free feed? Better condition in our animals on not just less feed, but MUCH less feed. They are healthier, their coats are shiny and thick, and they are more productive. Again, while we can't claim to know whether genetically modified grains or other foods are actually detrimental to the critters consuming them as food—humans included—we do believe there is plenty of evidence that the excessive use of glyphosate (the active ingredient in many commonly used weedkillers) is harmful to plants, animals, and the planet Earth.

### What the hay is a

GMO stands for genetically modified organism. Most of the corn, soybeans and many other crops grown in the U.S. at this time are grown from seeds modified so that the plants grown from them can withstand increased spraying with herbicides. Banned in many

### Our vision and philosophy for the farm

Our vision for our farm and creamery is pretty simple. We want to create a nurturing space for ourselves, our family, and our animals by making our way in a sustainable manner. We try to contribute something positive to every realm we enter, and trust that by being giddily hopeful we can spread our good humor to others.



We want folks to understand the dynamics at work in our relationship with our animals. We came to this work out of love of the goats, our desire to make a sustainable effort so that we can stay on the farm and work with our animals. The relationship with one of our goats begins when she is born; we always try to be present when the doe kids, and we bond with the mother and the babies. The babies come to see us as their parent, and so will follow us and want to be with us. They allow themselves to be directed



so that they are not being forced into our routine but become a natural part of it. The does bond with us and we become their "babies" too, so that we don't TAKE the milk from them, rather they freely give it. This is something that is

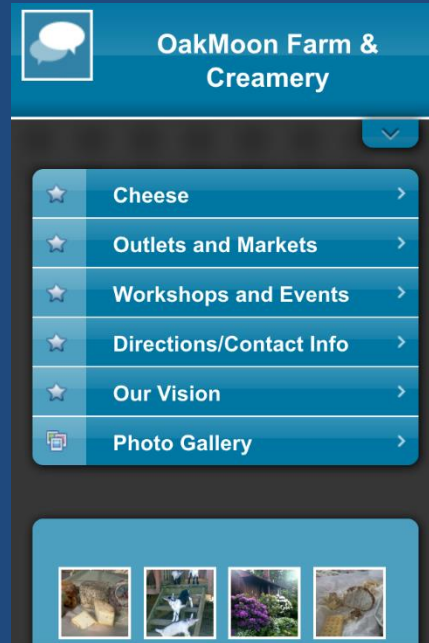
# BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

## MOBILE CUSTOMERS

- 47% with Smartphones.
- Decisions are being made through mobile devices.
- Travel
- Experiences
- Shopping is 50.3% mobile

Is your website mobile flexible?

**Millennial:** *If you aren't online, I don't know that your business exists. Seasonal? It's still important to have a permanent website and spend a little money to design a nice one. First impression! If your website is cheesy, I will bypass your business and spend time elsewhere.*



**Millennial:** *Go ahead and play to stereotypes. Be the farmer who always wears a plaid shirt and bib overalls. I love that. Tell me about something daring or adventurous you did when you were young and even irrelevant to your business.*

# BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

## BE VISIBLE TO CUSTOMERS

- Do you have a mobile flexible website?
- Active in social media?
- Use [ncagr.gov](http://ncagr.gov) FREE web page and get noticed.
- Top of the Google search. Go to [VisitNCFarms.com](http://VisitNCFarms.com) today to create your page!





**Millennial:** *Post funny jokes or short, sentimental stories or photos of something cool that happened to your family recently. This cultivates loyalty and respect. Let's have a laid-back virtual friendship and you will have my patronage for life.*

# BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

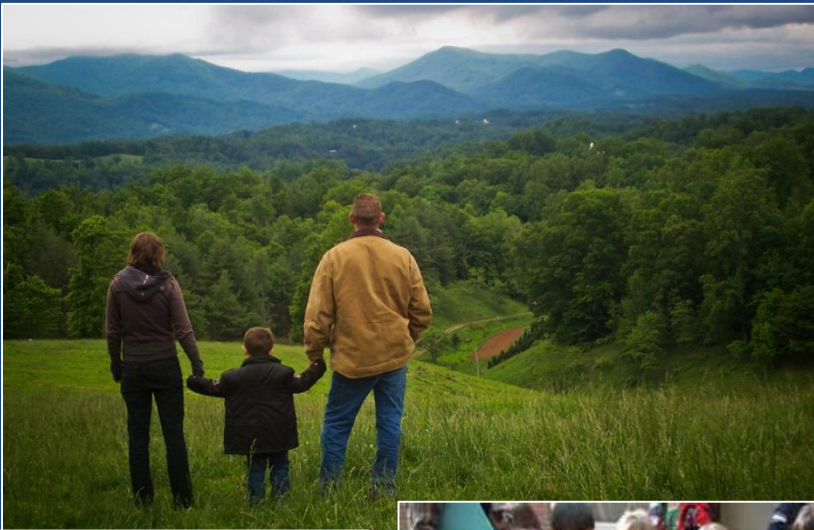
## MOBILE MARKETING

- It's about the **pictures**. Use your **visual** assets.
- Social media. **Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest**
- Friends, Endorsers & Ambassadors – **Twitter** too.
- Unified efforts with #hashtags. **#yourfunfarmtag #VisitNCFarms #GotToBeNC**

# BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

What do Millennials,  
Moms & Foodies want?

- Experiences
- Services
- Products



*Millennial: I'm not my parents or grandparents. I hate clutter and extra stuff. Remember, I really like experiences and stories. Set up a creative display on your farm and I will show up just to take pictures. Advertise smaller items to me because I'm living in a smaller space. Less really is more.*



# BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

## WORTHWHILE ACTIVITIES

- Create interesting activities.
- Appropriate for the audience?
- Test the ideas on your top patrons.

Consider packages geared to specific customers.

Full day experience.

Half a day on the farm.

Tour.

Food.

Retail.

Fun. Creative. New.





**Millennial:** *Sell yourself, like your pledge to the community, as much as your product. I feel obligated to support whatever is cool. And, if I think that you're cool, then I'll buy stuff I don't even want simply to support you.*

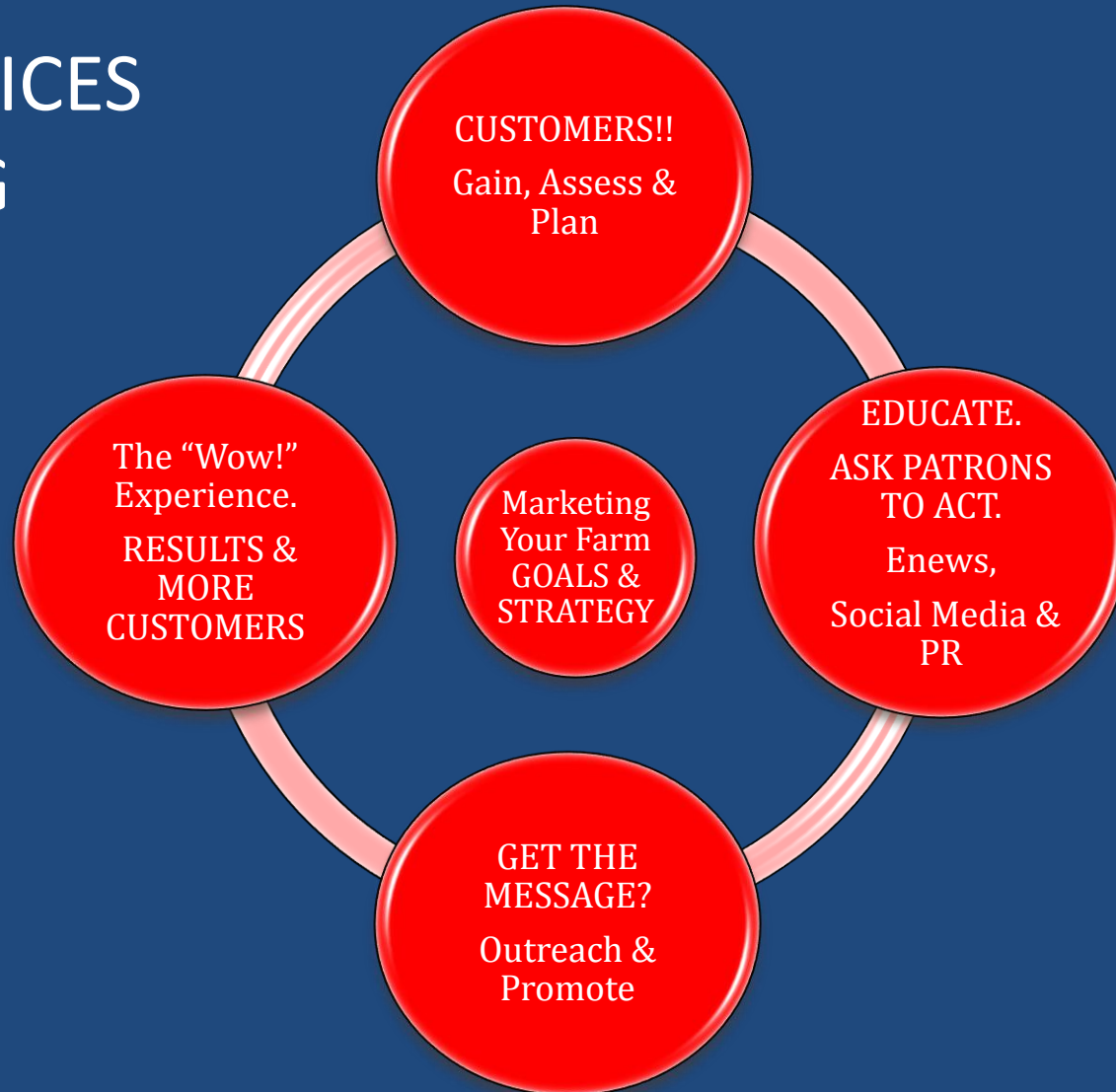
## BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

### BOOST COMMUNITY SPIRIT

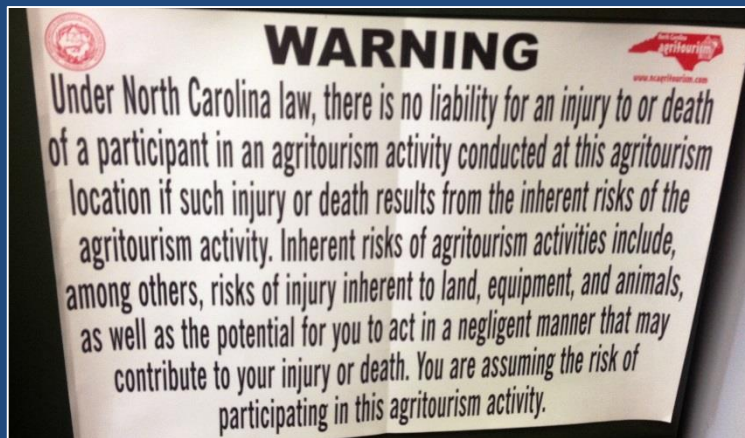
- Create local excitement to gain ambassadors.
- Engage local partners.
- Follow local rules & regulations.



# BEST PRACTICES MARKETING



Be proactive. Have a consistent look and feel to your messages.  
Develop a cohesive brand appeal over time. Keep the cycle going!



GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA | SESSION 2005  
SESSION LAW 2005-236  
HOUSE BILL 329  
NCGS 99E-32(b) WARNING

## BEST PRACTICES SAFETY & LIABILITY

**Keep farm visitors safe.**

- Proactivity
- Signage
- Education

**Protecting your farm.**

- Insurance coverage



# BEST PRACTICES BECOME A MEMBER



Collective voice & energy.  
160 members & growing.  
Consider membership today.  
[www.nc-ana.org](http://www.nc-ana.org)

Join the January 14-15, 2016  
Conference in Winston-Salem

Networking, Farm Tour &  
Workshops:

Social Media 101 & 202  
Website Design 101 & 202  
Farm Safety & Liability  
Grant Funding & Business Plans



## SUCCESS IN AGRITOURISM REQUIRES: Your compelling farm story.

- Value of your farm as **destination** (vs. location)
- Worthwhile visitor **activities**
- Follow **regulations** and **focus locally to boost community**
- Provide **experiences of a lifetime** to visitors
- Excellent **staff**
- **Profit** for farm



## AGRITOURISM BUSINESS MANAGEMENT:

- Regulations
- Taxes
- Insurance
- Labor
- Safety & Liability
- Financial Responsibility
- Marketing & Public Relations



LET'S EXPLORE  
VISITOR EXPERIENCE  
POSSIBILTIES!





## FESTIVALS

Historic events or create your farm's very own celebration.

## EDUCATION-BASED WORKSHOPS

You are an expert.  
Teach.  
All year long!







## INDOOR CLASS

for all ages!

Your Plan B when weather  
disrupts Plan A



## FARM TO TABLE

Did you know that when food is available to your customers, they stay longer and spend more?

Imagine the possibilities, from breakfasts to lunch concessions to elegant dinners on your farm. Work with caterers or community groups, local chefs and your Community College.



## CAR SHOW

### Be Creative!

A full day could be planned to include a tour, croquet, lunch and a lot of bragging about cars.



## ENGAGEMENT to WEDDINGS

A one-of-a-kind venue offering experiences that are truly beyond expectations.







## BEYOND SANTA!

Children will enjoy your farm where memories are made during the holidays -- and all year long.

Your farm has the potential to fill the calendar with educational and private events through every season.



## 200 YEAR OLD BARN

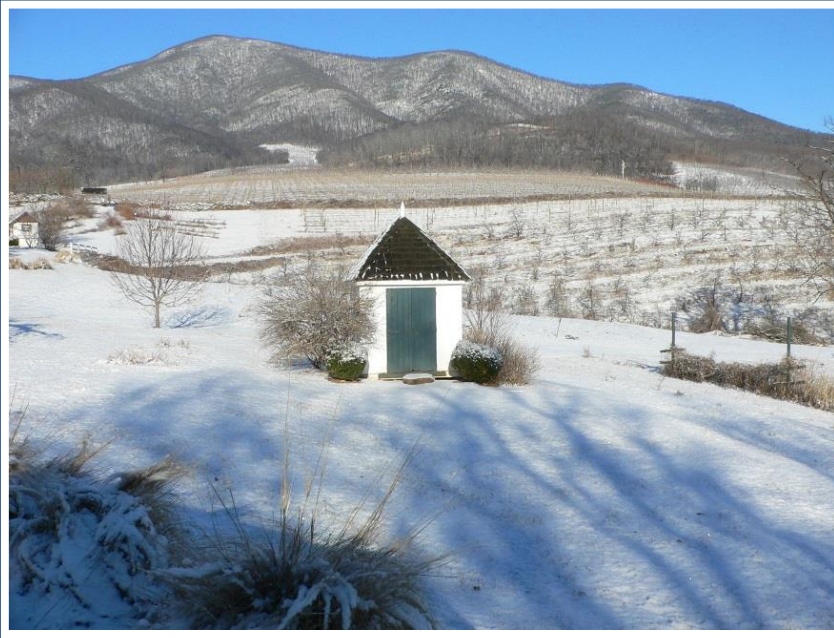
Beautifully restored buildings can be transformed into unique backdrops based on a client's need or a special event.





## BEAUTIFUL FACILITIES.

Gathering places, retail space and restrooms are key to successful visitor experiences.



## THE VIEW

Turn the value of your rural landscape into benefits.

- Natural beauty
- Peace & quiet
- A working farm



Wagon ride through  
the farm for a  
family reunion.



## SUCCESS IN AGRITOURISM REQUIRES:

Your compelling farm story.

- Value of your farm as **destination** (vs. location)
- Worthwhile visitor **activities**
- Follow **regulations** and **focus locally to boost community**
- Provide **experiences of a lifetime** to visitors
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# WHY DO SOME AGRITOURISM FARMS FAIL?

## The top Marketing 101 reasons:

1. Lack of commitment or passion for welcoming visitors.
2. No clear benefit perceived by the potential guests.
3. Poor positioning in the marketplace. (Carve out your niche. Again, why would someone want to visit your farm?)
4. Lack of authenticity by attempting to copy another farm's business model. (Every farm and farmer is different and has a story to tell!)



STATE-WIDE  
MARKETING  
EFFORTS BENEFIT  
MY FARM? HOW?



# WELCOME CENTERS



Visitors desire two items.  
1) Recipes 2) Post Cards.

Over 7 million tourists visit North Carolina's Welcome Centers annually. The 7' x 3' banner and coordinating post card pictured is part of the **VisitNCFarms.com** Welcome Center project. Agritourism is visually front and center at the nine Centers across the state.




# MOUNTAIN STATE & RALEIGH STATE FAIRS

Elevate the awareness of [www.VisitNCFarms.com](http://www.VisitNCFarms.com) while expanding the **Got To Be NC** brand message at the North Carolina Fairs with the aim to promote all Agritourism farms state-wide.

*Agritourism*  
North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services

**Monday Marketing Message**

Helping farmers achieve results through proven promotional tools to gain new visitors, enhance farm experiences, and increase sales and overall farm value.



*What is the unique benefit of your Agritourism farm?*

How will your farm stand above the crowd? Be different. **Zero in on a unique benefit point, or the "what's in it for me" value that your target audience will connect to.**

Let's explore this further. Being different isn't just about being different, it's about having a value-added differentiator that truly makes your farm special. In other words, you need a unique selling or benefit point.

**How does your farm develop a unique selling point?**

## MONDAY MARKETING MESSAGES

What do Agritourism farmers ask for the most? **MARKETING.**

- Farmers are busy. Soil | Production | Consumer
- Collectively, adopt these weekly tools.
- RESULTS! More customers, enhanced support, increased sales & farm value.
- **Ask me how to sign up!**





Got to Be NC | Goodness Grows in North Carolina is the official marketing brand for agriculture in the state.

If your farm is not already a member, please join by going to [www.GottoBeNC.com](http://www.GottoBeNC.com) today.

Create a **FREE** web page for your farm promoting Agritourism.

[www.VisitNCFarms.com](http://www.VisitNCFarms.com)



# LET'S CLUCK ... CHAT!

## Q & A



North Carolina prepares for highly pathogenic avian influenza

### Know the warning signs of avian influenza

*Call your veterinarian or the Office of the State Veterinarian if you notice any of these signs.*

- ▶ Lack of energy and poor appetite
- ▶ Drop in egg production or soft- or thin-shelled misshapen eggs
- ▶ Swelling around the eyes, neck and head
- ▶ Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs and legs
- ▶ Stumbling, falling down, diarrhea
- ▶ Sudden increase in bird deaths in your flock



[www.ncagr.gov/avianflu](http://www.ncagr.gov/avianflu)





## **YOUR SUCCESS | Welcoming Visitors to the Farm**

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NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & CONSUMER SERVICES

Steve Troxler, Commissioner of Agriculture

**Thank you!**