



Keys to Agritourism Success

“Agritourism activities are dramatically different than most traditional farming activities. Customers who visit you may want to participate in various activities, such as harvesting crops, hiking, hay rides, feeding animals and many others. These customers often do not come from a farming background, and will ask many questions about daily farm activities that may seem trivial.” (Assessing your Farm for Agritourism, Vermont Farms! Association, 2014). You’ll have to be patient!

Agritourism is, above all, a people business that fosters genuine and beneficial connections between agricultural producers and visitors. As the Vermont document referenced above notes, “the ideal agritourism host requires many of the same personality traits that make a good host at any tourist attraction or any kind of service industry.” If you don’t have the personality traits to make customers feel welcome, and their questions valued, you’ll want to have someone on your team (a family member or employee) who can fill this role. Alternatively, you can choose an agritourism enterprise that doesn’t require you to interact with the public beyond your comfort level.



A BAKER'S DOZEN KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Choose something you love to do, as this will give you energy to persevere.
- Offer a high-quality product or service that delivers on what visitors are seeking: fun, education and/or relaxation.
- Start small and grow naturally.
- Be responsive to what customers want.
- Nurture a loyal customer base.
- Provide an experience, not just a product.
- Don't go it alone. Involve family members, partners and trusted advisors to tap different skills and talents. Look for opportunities to connect with your community.
- Track relevant trends affecting your business, and network with your peers.
- Create a realistic business plan for the future, but also stay open to exploring unanticipated opportunities that emerge as you move forward.
- Keep good records (production, financial, regulatory, marketing).
- Continually monitor and evaluate your business against your goals, and make adjustments as you learn.
- Secure adequate capitalization, either through your cash reserves or by creating a business that uses assets you already have without much additional investment.
- Don't give up — ideas take a long time to become reality.

This material is adapted from Oklahoma Agritourism Resource Manual and Assessing your Farm for Agritourism, Vermont Farms! Association.

TOP PHOTO: CHRISTIAN HEEB

