
Learning Module 1

Agritourism



EQF Definition

Knowledge

- Defining basic terms related to rural tourism and agritourism;
- Knowing about developing agritourism products;
- Knowing about marketing tourist services in the countryside.

Skills

- Being able to develop an innovative agritourism product;
- Being able to apply appropriate marketing tools in the field of introduction, promotion and distribution of innovative agritourism products.

Competences

- Being aware of the importance of developing agritourism for rural areas.

Introduction (1)

Agritourism or **agro-tourism** is a form of alternative to mass tourism based on sustainability, preservation of culture, heritage, and traditions in rural areas. It comprises all forms of tourism in which tourists visit farms, stay on farms, and experience various forms of farming. Agritourism aims at bringing the visitor in touch with the natural environment, agricultural activities, local products, and a community's lifestyle, while, at the same time, contributing to the host area economic stability.

Agritourism is gaining worldwide relevance as tourists increasingly demand unspoiled destinations and personalized services in a natural environment; it is not an exclusively European phenomenon, since it is growing in many parts of the world.

Actually, as we will see, there is not a consensus definition because of the different approaches and visions about it.



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Introduction (2)

We can say that agritourism refers to any activity, enterprise or business that links agriculture with products, services and experiences in tourism, and that there are a couple of constant characteristics: the contact with agricultural activity and the search for authenticity by the tourists.

Its relevance is recognized as an activity supported by the European Commission in different ways. Across this course, it will be possible to understand that agritourism has many dimensions: education, accommodation, heritage, food, health, trade, recreation, etc.

Also, many related topics will be addressed such as legislation, management, skills needed, key points and much more, to provide a good overview of what is needed to know in order to initiate agritourism activities.



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Definitions (1)

Tourism:

"Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which imply tourism expenditure."

Sustainable tourism:

"Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities".



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Definitions (2)

"Rural tourism regards the activities of a person travelling and staying in rural areas (without mass tourism) other than those of their usual environment for less than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes (excluding the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited)". (*Eurostat. 1998. Community Methodology on Tourism Statistics. European Commission. Luxembourg*)



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Definitions (3)

Agritourism or **Agro-tourism**:

There is not a consensus definition: for some people, it involves any agriculturally based operation or activity that brings visitors to a farm, but it can be specifically a farm stay, or it may include a wide variety of activities, including buying produce direct from a farm stand, picking fruit, feeding animals, etc.

Agritourism is a subset of rural tourism that includes resorts, off-site farmers' markets, non-profit agricultural tours, and other leisure and hospitality businesses that attract visitors to the countryside.

It refers to any activity, enterprise or business that links agriculture with products, services and experiences in tourism.



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Legislation

EU Legislation on Agritourism

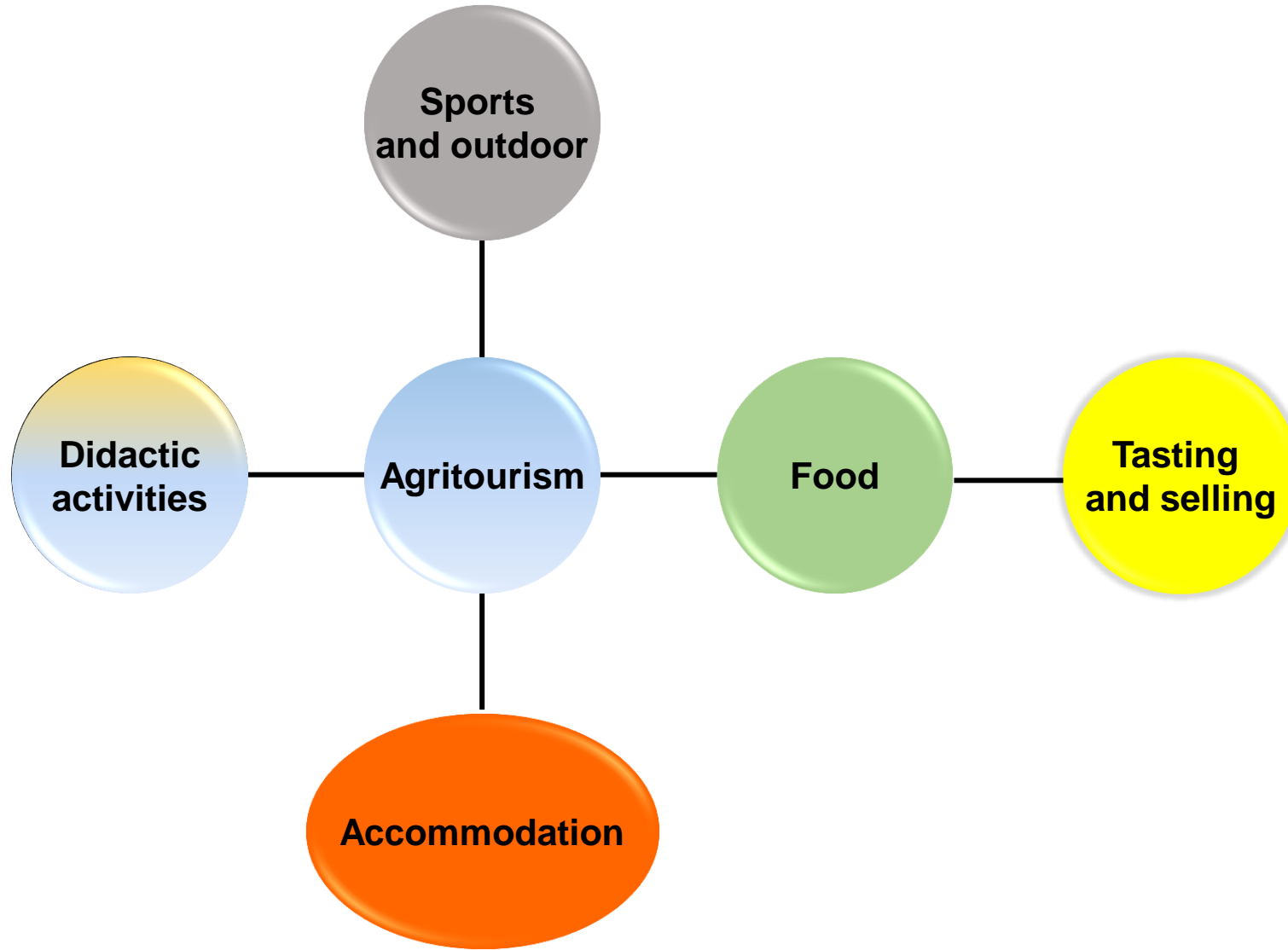
There is no unique legislation on Agritourism and Rural Tourism in Europe: it depends on the States and, in cases like Spain, on their regions. Therefore, there is no specific European regulation on Agritourism.

However, special references in the legislation of European Union can be found:

- Quality and origin of products, with several regulations on certification of processes and origin, food safety, guarantee for consumers;
- Promotion of diversification of farmers' activities, especially through the funds of the Rural Development Program launched by the 2nd Pillar of the CAP;
- Protection of landscape and nature, with special regulation on protected areas, such as the sites included in the "Nature 2000 network".

Activities in Agritourism (1)

Going through Agritourism Activities



Activities in Agritourism (2)

Sports and outdoor

Landscape and territory are the main resources of rural areas. It is important that farmers offer the opportunity to their guests to make the most of them.

Many activities can be organized by the farmer or within a small network of close farmers; the most common are:

- Pool swimming;
- Horse riding and horse riding;
- Other local activities (for example mini-golf, tennis, games for children);
- Trekking, climbing, rafting, and other sports;
- Agricultural theme itineraries;
- Guided tours of towns, museums, and other cultural sites.

In some cases, it is necessary to provide for a qualified staff with adequate professional skills (like for activities such as horse riding or swimming).

Also, many activities should be provided by external and specialized companies.



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Activities in Agritourism (3)

Food

Many guests consider breakfast as having the most important impact in agritourism. The following are recommended for breakfast:

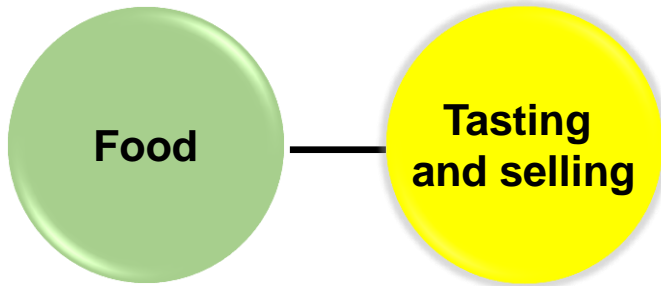
- The use of handmade or local products is essential;
- Offering savoury and sweet breakfasts;
- In case of camping or apartment, guests would like to have access to breakfast in a common area, or to some local products to consume in their own space.

Other options are ***restoration, catering and cooking.*** In any case, is important to base any of them on the use of own and local products and receipes, since that makes the difference.



Pic. M. Dymacz

Activities in Agritourism (4)



Pic. M. Dymacz

Another way to promote the farmer's products is through tasting and direct selling.

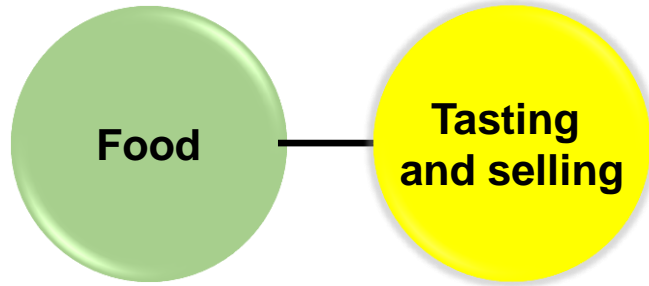
Many farmers, especially in the wine sector, provide special tasting rooms on the farm.

The tasting rooms must be equipped with all comforts for guests, space for exhibition, preparation of tasting, washing space for supplies.

The tasting activity can be organized :

- As a daily activity for guests, linked with a shop;
- As an independent business for groups of visitors;
- Creating special tasting events.

Activities in Agritourism (5)



Many farmers set point-of-purchase displays on their farms to promote their products and eventually sell them, alone or with products from other farmers.

Also, to increase the offer for food service and sales, many farmers begin to process raw materials, producing pasta, jam, sauces, and other homemade products.

A good marketing strategy is essential for a successful point-of-purchase, and it is convenient to:

- Ensure traceability and certified quality of products;
- Offer a wide variety of products;
- Present the products directly or through brochures and other informative means;
- Offer the opportunity to taste the products.



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Activities in Agritourism (6)

Didactic activities

One of the aims of agritourism is to provide the opportunity to acquire knowledge about the traditions by approaching them practically.

Many farmers involved in agritourism organize laboratories and short training sessions for guests, both children and adults, related to their activity, for example:

- Wine, honey, etc. tasting;
- Cooking traditional meals or baking bread;
- Handcrafting processes for food products;
- Acquiring knowledge about nature and plants.



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Activities in Agritourism (7)

Accommodation

The **types of accommodation** might depend on available space, type of building or the farm itself.

The main types are:

- Rooms rented within the farmer house;
- Apartments rented in separate buildings;
- Agri-camping in equipped areas;
- Thematic hotels.



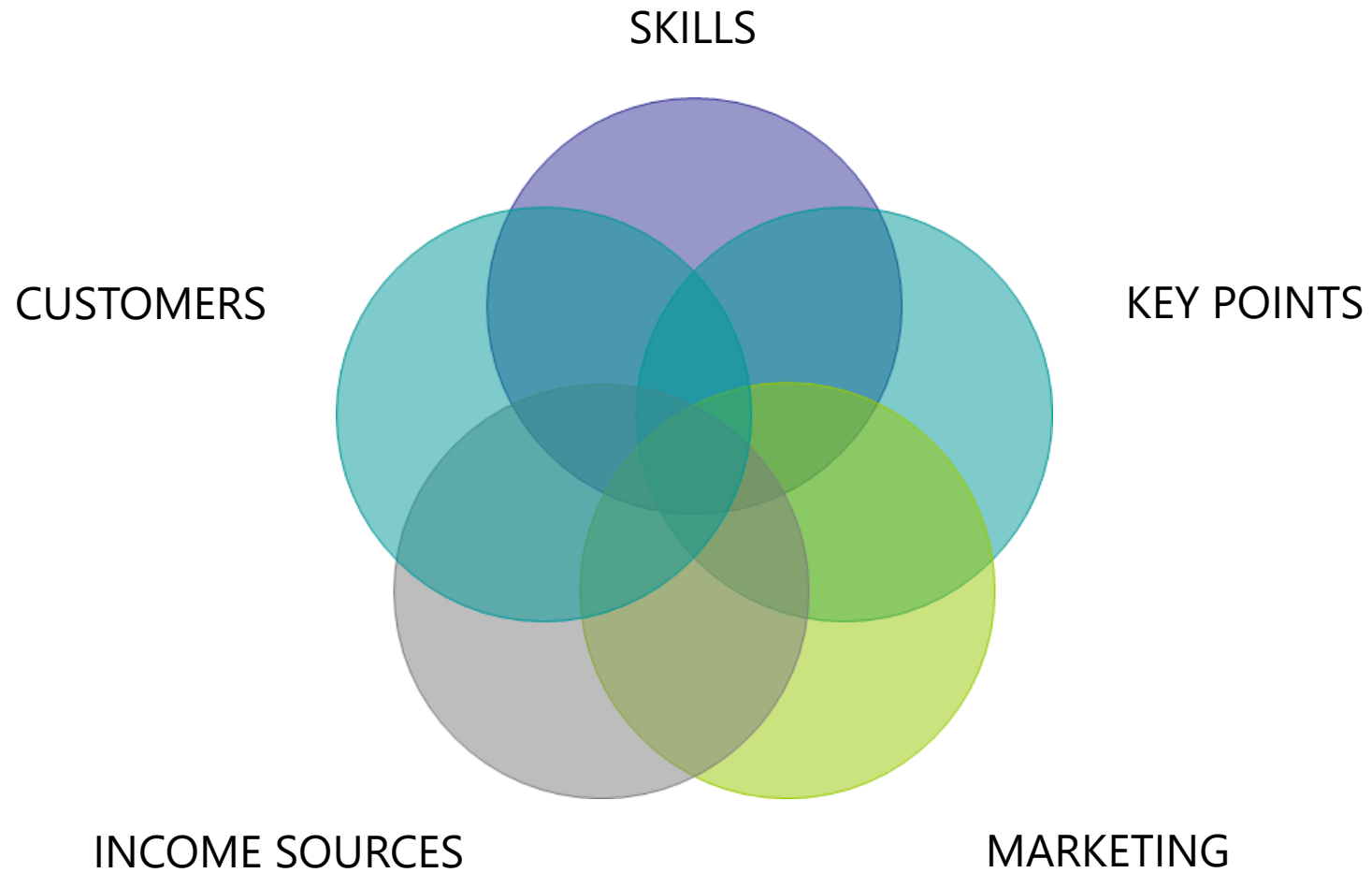
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Key points:

The **style of buildings and furniture** should be simple and **match with the environment**.

The **interaction with the guests** related to the farm's activity: the farmer should provide for breakfast based on local products or, in case of rented apartment or camping, offer the guests some homemade products.

Managing Agritourism (1)



Managing Agritourism (2)



SKILLS

Main skills

Agritourism, as described, can be carried out in a very basic way or it can combine many different activities.

Therefore, the definition of the needs in terms of professional skills of the farmer depends on the type of activity provided.

Three different levels of skills related to agritourism can be identified:

- **Basic level:** the farmer is involved only in accommodation activities;
- **Advanced level:** the farmer is involved in a multi-service activity;
- **Specialized level:** the farmer is involved in special activities (didactic, social help, horse riding, etc.).



Managing Agritourism (3)



SKILLS

Advanced skills

For the management of a basic multi-services activity, four important additional skills are needed:

- 1. *Management of food service***, including management of structures and supplies, hygienic rules, cooking, knowledge of local traditions;
- 2. *Advanced communication***: advanced knowledge of Internet use, of social networks, and of other applications useful for managing marketing activities;
- 3. *Commercial marketing***: the staff should be able to organize tasting events and/or direct sales of their products;
- 4. *Territorial marketing***: the staff should provide the guests information on their territory and on possible itineraries.

MARKETING
STRATEGY



MANAGEMENT



Managing Agritourism (4)



KEY POINTS

Internal key points

Seasonality of demand: there are two main ways to solve this problem:

- Provide the guests with offers and activities during the whole year;
- Diversify the target, offering other services (for example, didactic farms) during autumn and winter or from Monday to Friday.

Management of multi-service activity: developing a multi-service activity can surely be a way to diversify the offer, but it is necessary to have a multi-tasking staff with several professional skills. Many farmers got over this issue involving their families and diversifying skills and functions.

Time management: the seasonality of demand causes issues in time management. In case of family run agritourism, the solution is easy; in other cases, it is necessary to employ seasonal staff.

Managing Agritourism (5)



KEY POINTS

External key points

If the farm is located in an isolated area, this could be one of the major problems for agritourism. Therefore, for this type of activity, some additional key points might show up:

- **Marketing:** good marketing strategies are crucial to meet guests. Fortunately, the development of ICT helps promoting agritourism, but it is necessary for farmers to promote their activity within network;
- **Territorial marketing:** in many areas, agritourism remains isolated also because of improper territorial promotion. Farmers should involve the local institutions and other businesses to put in place a joined territorial promotion.

Managing Agritourism (6)



MARKETING

Marketing Milestones

1. Identify your target audiences. For each group, list the places and ways you can reach them.
2. Define your target area for promotion. An agritourism experience provides an excellent opportunity for day-trippers so start by focusing media outreach in communities within one hour's drive of the farm. Target major population centres.
3. Press releases and calendar announcements. Don't pay for advertising if you can get free coverage.
4. Advertise selectively to get your name out. Advertising can be expensive so be selective with how you spend your money.
5. Contact your local/county tourism agency.

Managing Agritourism (7)



MARKETING

Marketing Milestones

6. Build your marketing image and presence. This includes developing a logo and unifying marketing theme that captures your standards and what you have to offer.
7. Other free outlets to list your farm: tourist services directories, local webs, etc.
8. Participate in community events.
9. Signage is a great investment to promote your business.
10. Putting it all together in a plan.

All of the strategies you plan to use to promote yourself should be organized into a marketing plan that includes: who your target market is, where and how you will reach them, your promotion and advertising plan for the year, and a list of the connections you need to make to get your name in front of the public.

Take time to plan out the whole year in the fall and winter prior to the next season.

Managing Agritourism (8)



MARKETING

Territorial marketing: private strategies

Implemented by farmers creating entrepreneurial partnerships

- ***Aggregation of the offer***: creating networks for promotion or common thematic itineraries, taking part in associations or service centres based on the new ICT.
- ***Exchange of products and services***: often, single farms cannot have an offer covering all clients' needs. To solve this problem, they can create special networks to offer a complete range of products and services to the guests.

Managing Agritourism (9)



MARKETING

Territorial marketing: public-private strategies

Involving local administrations, tourism offices and other subjects involved

It is important for the guests to feel they belong to the community proud of its own traditions. The players based on the territory could cooperate in realizing many actions aiming to help territorial marketing, such as:

- **Promotion of the territory:** creating handbooks, guides, web sites and other tools crucial for the enhancement of the areas;
- **Creation of itineraries:** creation of paths for trekking, itineraries through nature and traditions, local museums, and so on.
- **Organization of social and cultural events:** festivals, fairs, concerts, exhibitions, etc.

Managing Agritourism (10)



INCOME SOURCES

Income Sources

1. Admission Fee

An admission fee is charged to participate in events and activities, or tour special areas of a farm operation, in the same way you pay to enter an amusement park, a museum, or to attend a sports event.

2. Tour Fee

A tour fee provides the visitor access to the services of a knowledgeable guide or at least a guidebook for self-directed tours. A tourist paying this fee desires information about and access to farm areas restricted to other visitors. In return for their fee, the farm would provide a ticket or badge indicating their status as a paying participant in the tour.

Self-guided tours are generally free, however, group tours often involve significant staff time to prepare and host the tours.

3. Sale of Fresh Farm Products

4. Sale of Processed Farm Products

5. Sale of Souvenirs

Managing Agritourism (11)



INCOME SOURCES

Income Sources

6. Activity Fee

Following are examples of activity fees farms can charge:

- 1 € for a handful of crackers to feed the goats;
- 15 € for a short horse riding session;
- Etc.

7. Class/Skill-Building Fee

- Clinics for families buying a horse for the first time, bread-baking;
- Class for jam, jelly or fruit syrup making, class of wine making, cheese making, etc.

8. Tasting Fee

9. Facility/Grounds Rental

Renting out the farm setting for dances, classes, country weddings, family reunions, birthday parties, and other special events.

10. Show Fee

Depending on the sophistication of the show, expense of equipment and materials provided by the farm, and going rates in similar venues.

11. Farm Lodging

12. Food Service

Managing Agritourism (12)



CUSTOMERS

Agritourism is a people business

Standard practices need to be established to make sure customers will have a good experience.

Cater to Visitor Interests

- It is very important to identify the type of the customers to attract;
- It is fundamental to know whom to attract and then develop the enterprise to cater to their interests;
- Be selective about advertising in order to reach the group wanted;
- Each audience has different needs and expectations and you will need to use audience-specific strategies to attract them.

Before opening:

- Make sure road signs and parking signs are easy to see;
- Check bathroom supplies;
- Sweep up any debris in visitor areas;
- Check inventory of refreshments and sales items (if applicable).

Managing Agritourism (13)



CUSTOMERS

Agritourism is a people business

Standard practices need to be established to make sure customers will have a good experience.

During open hours:

- Every customer is greeted with a smile;
- Make clear who is part of the staff at the farm;
- Let each customer know you will help them with any questions about the farm or the tourism activities they have come for;
- Customers will usually wait for instructions, yet some will assume they know where to go and what to do for fun on your farm;
- Stick to the opening and closing hours you have posted;
- Pay attention to constructive comments from visitors.

Start with the Plan

Once you have identified some agritourism activities that seem doable, that fit your goals and your farm resources, and that you have time for:

- **List all the tasks** or steps to get started;
- Have **someone else review** it with you – call the extension or tourism office for input, or enlist the help of a business counsellor or event planner;
- Develop a **launch date** for the activity, then work backwards and list all the resources you will need and the tasks that need to be performed; make sure publicity figures prominently into your plans as it takes a lot of promotion to get the attention you will need for launching a new enterprise;
- **Plan a soft opening:** a way to get started without a big launch is to plan a small activity targeted at a select group to test your ideas;
- Take time to get **feedback from visitors** about what else they might like to see, do, learn, or buy at your farm.

Grow the enterprise by taking small steps, but don't forget to plan with the big picture in mind. It is important to set income goals that you would like to reach.

References

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