

CONSIDERATIONS FOR AGRITOURISM DEVELOPMENT

February 1998
Reprinted November 2000

by
Diane Kuehn
Coastal Tourism Specialist
New York Sea Grant

Duncan Hilchey
Agriculture Development Specialist
Farming Alternatives Program
Cornell University

Douglas Ververs
Small Business Program Leader
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oswego County

Kara Lynn Dunn
Director of Communications
Seaway Trail, Inc.

Paul Lehman
Extension Educator
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County

Produced by:

NY Sea Grant
62B Mackin Hall
SUNY Oswego
Oswego, NY 13126

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction (D. Kuehn)	3
II. Agritourism Businesses: the Backbone of the Agritourism Industry (D. Ververs)	4
Introduction.....	4
Advice for New Entrepreneurs.....	4
Developing a Business Plan.....	5
Creating a Marketing Plan.....	6
Regulations, Permits, and Insurance.....	6
Case study: Trees Abound at Hemlock Haven (D. Ververs).....	7
Case study: Farm Stands Galore in Orleans County (K. Dunn).....	8
Case study: Vinewood Acres Sugar Shack and Bed & Breakfast (K. Dunn).....	9
Case study: Historic Alasa Farms (D. Kuehn).....	10
III. Organizing Agricultural Events: Festivals and Farmers' Markets (D. Hilchey)	11
Introduction.....	11
Festivals: a Creative Expression of the Local Community.....	11
Farmers' Markets: a Tourist's Window into the Local Community.....	13
Case study: Niagara County's Apple Country Festival (P. Lehman).....	16
Case study: Watertown Farm and Craft Market (D. Hilchey).....	17
IV. Bringing It All Together: Planning a Regional Agritourism Program (D. Kuehn)	18
Introduction.....	18
Regional Planning Considerations.....	18
Holding a Planning Session.....	18
Planning Steps.....	19
Case study: Agritourism Along New York's Seaway Trail (K. Dunn).....	23
V. Conclusion (D. Kuehn)	24
VI. Acknowledgments	24
VII. Agritourism Publication and Agency Resources	25

INTRODUCTION

For many farm owners today, making a profit depends on diversifying farm operations to include services and products designed for visitors. Farm stands, u-pick operations, and farm bed and breakfasts are examples of this growing trend towards agritourism. Agritourism basically combines agriculture with New York's second largest industry — tourism. Agritourism works to expand existing businesses, create new festivals and farm markets, and tie this all together regionally to attract visitors.

This publication is designed for community leaders, rural economic development and tourism professionals, and agritourism entrepreneurs. It focuses on the three main components of agritourism development: small businesses, agricultural events, and regional agritourism initiatives. Considerations for each of these components are discussed. The case studies included in this publication expand on these considerations.

Check List of Agritourism Development Considerations

Agritourism businesses

- Personal evaluation
- Market evaluation
- Project feasibility evaluation
- Financial evaluation
- Business plan development
- Marketing plan development
- Insurance needs
- Regulations and permits

Farmers' markets

- Market coordinator
- Planning meetings
- Advisory committee
- Organizational structure
- Visitor market groups
- Location of market
- Vendor fees
- Promotional campaign
- Insurance needs
- Appearance of market
- Customer amenities
- Vendor support and policies
- Coupon programs
- Evaluation

Farm festivals

- Planning Committee
- Festival mission
- Location of festival
- Licenses and permits
- Attractions, entertainment, food
- Budget strategy
- Promotional campaign
- Insurance needs
- Management considerations
- Public safety plan
- Evaluation

Regional agritourism planning

- Region identification
- Community involvement
- Concerns about development
- Visitor market groups
- Planning sessions
- Goals and objectives
- Resource and attraction inventory
- Theme
- Action plan
- Promotional plan
- Evaluation

AGRITOURISM BUSINESSES: THE BACKBONE OF THE AGRITOURISM INDUSTRY

Introduction

Expanding farm businesses to include agritourism opportunities can provide a mechanism for keeping farms financially sound. Besides benefiting farm owners, agritourism businesses benefit visitors by offering a diversity of agricultural experiences. This section focuses on the evaluation and planning steps that need to be considered when starting or expanding agritourism businesses. Case studies about roadside stands, Christmas tree plantations, fruit orchards, farm bed and breakfasts, and other diversified businesses help identify what makes an agritourism business successful.

Advice for New Entrepreneurs

Starting any new enterprise can be risky from both a financial and personal viewpoint. Before investing money, time, and energy into a new venture in special agricultural products and services, new entrepreneurs should complete personal, market, project feasibility, and financial evaluations. Technical and managerial assistance in these evaluations is available from a wide variety of public sources committed to an area's rural economic development, agriculture, and small business development. Examples of these sources include county extension educators, local and regional economic development organizations, small business development centers, state departments of agriculture and economic development, banks, tourism promotion agencies, state universities, and local community colleges.

Personal evaluation. This type of evaluation helps a potential entrepreneur determine why he or she is considering starting an agritourism business. It is important to clearly identify and prioritize the entrepreneur's goals for the new venture, as well as the special resources and skills of the entrepreneur. Prioritizing goals is necessary because an individual may be expecting more from the new enterprise than can probably occur. For example, if a certain level of supplemental income is the most important goal, the economic feasibility of certain products may simply be too low to meet that goal and the individual may be better off seeking extra income from other employment. On the other hand, an inventory of resources and skills may indicate underutilized human resources such as family members whose labor could effectively subsidize a small enterprise that would otherwise not be cost competitive.

Market evaluation. Potential entrepreneurs need to identify their potential market, or buyers, through a number of approaches. This is often made difficult by the fact that agritourism marketing is frequently targeted to specific visitor niches. Because of this, market information is more difficult to obtain. Unlike traditional agriculture products, agritourism products may include a service or experience as well as merchandise. Nonetheless, questions to be answered about the market include who will buy the product, what exactly will be sold, and when will the harvest and/or sale occur. Specialty magazines, local newspapers, trade associations newsletters, or trade shows may be useful since special product buyers often advertise through them. Examining other types of local recreational activities and industries in the area might also help identify potential customers.

After identifying your customer market, it is very important to clearly document what requirements or specifications visitors will have for your products. Examples of product specifications include the quantity and quality of products, product characteristics (size, color, etc.), prices, flaws (i.e., insect or other damages) that are allowable, interest in and

price reductions for lower quality material, and packaging and shipping requirements. For many agritourism products, it is critical to coordinate the timing of the harvest with the requirements of the buyers. This is especially important when dealing with products that have a limited shelf life, such as berries or cut flowers, and seasonal products, such as Christmas trees or pumpkins.

It is also important to find out what types of businesses already exist in your region. If there are other agritourism businesses already, what niche can your business fill so that competition with the other businesses is reduced or eliminated? This involves providing services and products not available from competing businesses. The case study "Farm Stands Galore in Orleans County" on page 6 is an excellent example of how agritourism businesses can co-exist in close proximity to each other without driving each other out of business.

Project feasibility evaluation. This addresses the technical and the financial feasibility concerns of the potential enterprise. Technical concerns include where and how products will be grown or acquired, harvested, packaged, and distributed. The location of harvest sites varies with the product and land resources available in a region. Many successful special product agritourism entrepreneurs do not themselves own production farmland.

Financial evaluation. A budget needs to be carefully developed, preferably with the assistance of a production specialist and a business planning specialist. At a minimum, the budget should itemize fixed and variable costs (including interest), and expected gross and net revenues. A careful inventory of resources already owned and time requirements for starting and running the business (i.e., how much time is available and when) is needed. When all is finished, a clear accounting of the hourly wage realistically expected by the business owner for the potential operation is needed. Ask yourself the following questions: "Could I make more money at other available jobs or enterprises?" and "Do other advantages, such as being my own boss or spending time at home, compensate for lower wages?"

Developing a Business Plan

A clear business plan is the single most important document needed by any individual approaching a banker with a request for a loan. More than a tool used to generate financial participation by banks and private investors, it is the blueprint to be followed in developing and operating an enterprise. The business plan should include detailed information on the personal, market, project feasibility, and financial evaluations discussed above.

Although the process of developing a business plan is not a fast one, the amount of time and effort you invest in the production of your business plan will be readily visible to banking and investment professionals who see hundreds of these documents each year. The steps to be followed include gathering data, reviewing, updating, and confirming it for accuracy, and then summarizing it in a clear and concise manner. Financial projections, income statements, and a balance sheet are needed, but generally best completed by financial advisors and/or accountants. The plan should be reviewed for completeness and accuracy by both family members and external advisors prior to submission to potential lending sources. Numerous business plan formats are available from Cooperative Extensions, Small Business Development Centers, continuing education programs, and private consultants.

Creating a Marketing Plan

Marketing plans can be included in your business plan, but are usually kept separate since they need to be updated annually. Where a business plan is used by your business to obtain outside financial support, marketing plans are mainly used internally by your business. Your marketing plan should detail as precisely as possible what you wish to accomplish, factors that may affect your efforts, resources available in your local community, and specific groups or potential customers most likely to be interested in your agritourism enterprise and its products. The importance of image, name, and word-of-mouth cannot be over stressed.

The personal image that you and your property project can make the difference between success and failure. Word-of-mouth plaudits by satisfied customers will be the most beneficial and least expensive form of advertising you will ever encounter.

Other low cost but crucial promotional opportunities include:

1. becoming a member of the local chamber of commerce and other business organizations;
2. volunteering to give presentations as a guest speaker to local community and civic clubs;
3. offering your business as a meeting place or local tour site;
4. providing a community open house with tours and special promotions;
5. networking with local and state tourism promotion agencies;
6. cooperating with local businesses (especially restaurants, hotel, motel and lodging facilities, service stations, and bus and motor-coach companies) and attractions. This cooperation can include providing other businesses and attractions with ample brochures containing accurate and easy instructions on how to reach your business, providing a clean orderly place to display the promotional materials of other businesses, and packaging recreational opportunities at your business with those of other businesses; and
7. developing a logo that is distinctive and clearly communicates the essence of your business to customers.

Regulations, Permits, and Insurance

Different regulations and permits are required for different businesses. Those that generally affect agritourism enterprises include zoning, fire and building codes, health regulations, and agricultural food and safety laws. Gathering as much local information as possible is a great place to start. Fire and building code officials, health departments, zoning officers and New York State Agriculture and Markets representatives are typically the first points of contact. Close attention must be paid to all applicable local, county, state and federal regulations, particularly regarding edible products, the potential introduction of exotic insect pests or weeds, and products to be shipped out of state.

Be certain to work with an insurance professional to review all aspects of the enterprise. This is critical to safeguard the enterprise from perils you may not foresee and will also help you understand what the potential responsibility of your enterprise could be.

If you are unsure of which regulations and permits apply to your business, seek competent professional assistance from an appropriate professional. Every business should have a BAIL team. This includes a Banker, Accountant, Insurance agent, and Lawyer.

Trees Abound at Hemlock Haven

- Family commitment
- Incremental growth
- Seasonal focus
- Business diversification
- Trade association linkages



Northern Oswego County is famous for its "white gold" seasonal snowfall! Climatically it also provides a nurturing site for the production of high quality, diverse species of Christmas trees. In 1979, Wendell and Madelaine Rowell and their family tapped into the potential of this area by establishing Hemlock Haven, a Christmas tree farm located on County Route 22A just north of Sandy Creek, New York.

An early evaluation of their rural property investigated the potential of establishing a family campground. Following a careful review of all factors and related costs, the decision was reached to instead pursue a Christmas tree plantation. Today more than 140 acres are devoted to tree production with species including fir, spruce, and a variety of pines.

The farm is open for business from November 1 to December 24. Christmas trees are sold both wholesale to other local businesses for resale and retail to on-site customers. Customers can either pick out the tree that they want cut or choose from the many beautifully shaped, pre-cut trees displayed at the farm.

The Rowells diversified their Christmas tree farm in 1981 by adding a gift shop and wreath-making building. Handmade wreaths and a host of other seasonal hand crafted items made on the premises are available.

At one point, the Rowell's operated a seasonal satellite retail operation with over 150 crafters involved on a consignment basis. They found the stress and additional costs involved with

employees were more effort and expense than warranted by the return they generated.

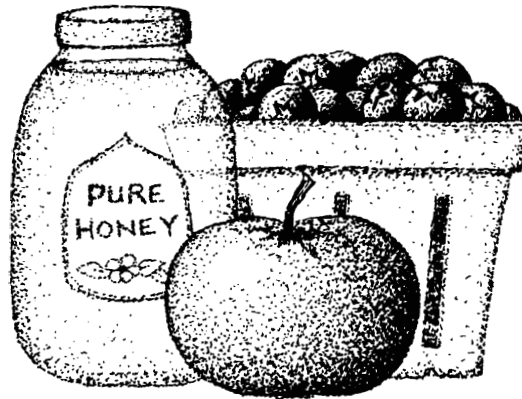
Both Wendell and Madelaine have been active in the New York Christmas Tree Growers Association (NYCTGA). Wendell served on the board of directors and was president from 1988 to 1992. Madelaine is currently on the board of directors and is their treasurer. Wendell and Madelaine have also staffed numerous trade booths on behalf of the NYCTGA, including the 1995 National Direct Farm Marketing Association meeting in Saratoga Springs, NY.

Participation at both the Oswego County and New York State Fairs has been important to the growth of Hemlock Haven. At the Oswego County Fair in Sandy Creek, Madelaine has served as fair superintendent for the horticulture building for two years. The Rowells annually donate bedding plants to help beautify the fairgrounds and its numerous planters and flower boxes. They have also donated their time for many years to help staff the NYCTGA display at the New York State Fair. They have had numerous prize winning trees at the fair and won the 1994, 1995, and 1996 Mat Reynolds Award, the highest award that can be won in competition at the New York State Fair.

The proximity of Hemlock Haven to the Oswego County fairgrounds has enabled the Rowells to maximize the farm's potential and serve as the central host site and camping area for conventions. The Rowells hosted the NYCTGA summer annual convention in 1991 with the largest attendance ever.

Farm Stands Galore in Orleans County

- Farm and family heritage
- Business diversification
- Hospitality
- Recreational activities for visitors
- Unique specialty items
- Direct product marketing
- Community involvement



Orleans County is one of the ten counties comprising New York's Great Lakes Region. With a rich farming heritage and many festivals and roadside farm stands to explore, Orleans County offers a tremendous diversity of agritourism opportunities to visitors.

Four businesses that showcase this rural lifestyle are Brown's Berry Patch in Waterport, Smith's Family Farm Market in Medina, Watt Fruit Company in Albion, and Hurd Orchards in Holley. These sites do a successful multi-month business, all within a 20-mile circle. All have been successful because they offer a diversity of products, unique specialty items, and special activities (e.g., farm tours, educational classes, and farm festivals) for visitors.

Brown's Berry Patch has been a family farm since 1804. After adding a farm market, country gift shop, deli, bakery, ice cream shop, playground, u-pick operation, and festivals to their production farm business, Bob Brown says "the tail started wagging the dog." Brown's now employs 25 full- and part-time workers April through November. Their specialty product is homemade waffle ice cream cones. Quince is still grown here for jams and jellies. An annual Columbus Day Weekend Apple and Pumpkin Harvest Festival draws visitors of all ages.

The Watt Fruit Company began as "growers of quality fruit" in Albion. Among their tourism-oriented offerings are a farm market, greenhouse, u-pick fruit operation, gift shop, bakery, ice cream shop, historic cemetery walks, playground, educational clinics, fall farm tours, and hay rides. Their specialty item is fudge,

which they offer in thirty flavors, including no-sugar types. Watt's is open mid-April to Christmas Eve and has 20 employees. They are active with community fund-raising events.

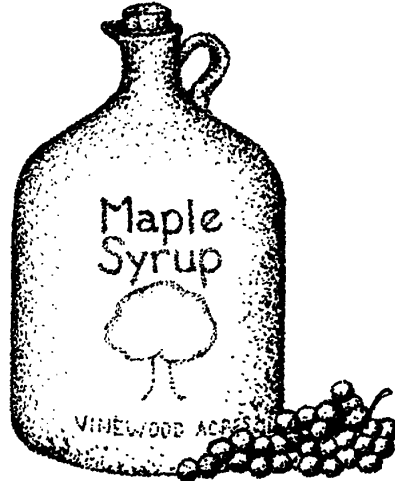
The fifth generation of Smiths operates Smith's Family Farm Market in Medina, New York. This market offers fresh produce in season, cider, jam, honey, maple syrup, homemade pies and donuts, ice cream, flowers and plants, gift boxes, giant pumpkins and Halloween hay rides, Christmas trees, and farm tours (by request) from mid-May to mid-December. They grow and sell 15 varieties of apples. In addition to eight family members working, Smith's employs ten other workers.

"A Farm - A Family - A Tradition" is what travelers experience at the nearly 200-year-old Hurd Orchards. "Each day we renew excitement about our beautiful, wholesome products fresh from the oven, kettle, or field," says Sue Hurd. Homemade preserves, brandied fruits, and vinegars in lovely bottles are a specialty, along with a diversity of "how-to" classes and Family Barn Dance fun. Hurd's employs 30 seasonally. Open to visitors from May 1 through December 24, Hurd's handles mail orders year-round.

All of these businesses work closely with the Orleans County Tourism office and Seaway Trail, Inc. for promoting their businesses. Offering specialty items unique to their farm stands has diversified their product lines and services, and has been important to the success of each.

Vinewood Acres Sugar Shack and Bed & Breakfast

- Scenic location
- Business diversification
- Hospitality
- Educational activities for visitors
- Outdoor recreation opportunities
- Direct product marketing
- Regional information
- Community involvement



Maple syrup bubbles over a wood fire at Vinewood Acres Sugar Shack, 7904 Route 5 (East Lake Road), Westfield, New York, in western New York's Chautauqua County. A cabin was built there in 1820 amidst undeveloped forest land. Thirty years later the land became a farm site with apple orchards. Today Vinewood Acres provides a scenic vista of grape vineyards and a maple sugar bush, perfect for attracting visitors. This scenic location is only one of the factors that has made Vinewood Acres a success.

Gail Black, Vinewood's owner, began developing the production farm into a tourist site in 1993 with the opening of the Vinewood Acres Sugar Shack. This direct outlet store enables Gail to directly market her maple syrup and all-natural, home-made fruit syrups, which are made primarily from fruits she grows on her farm. Gail received an educational background in food preparation from a college specializing in food processing.

In the spring of 1997, a bed and breakfast was added at Vinewood Acres, further diversifying the business. Breakfast at the B&B offers Gail the opportunity to serve the syrups and grape juice produced on her farm. A nature trail has also been constructed at Vinewood leading through a deciduous beech-maple forest to high bluffs overlooking Lake Erie. The trail is used by hikers in the spring, summer, and fall, and by cross-country skiers during the winter.

Hospitality and education are intertwined at Vinewood. Guests are invited to sample the products sold in the Sugar Shack or take an educational farm tour. Historic Erie Indian artifacts

found on the farm are on display in the Sugar Shack. Gail also makes it easy for visitors to find out more about the area by providing regional information on touring, fishing in Lake Erie, the local climate, history, and other attractions.

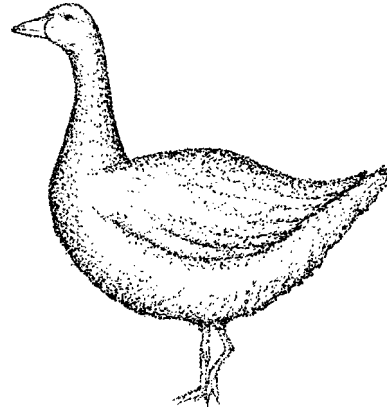
Active in the tourism interests of the surrounding community, Gail was recognized for her efforts with a 1996 Seaway Trail National Trails Day Award, which she shared with Vinewood Acres Farm Manager Don Jagow. "Gail Black has contributed substantially to the enhancement of resources of the western Seaway Trail region," says former Chautauqua County Chairman Richard E. Davies, "and to community involvement in a new tourist information center at Barcelona Harbor and a new agritourism market in Westfield."

To attract tourists Gail markets throughout a radius of 300 miles, attending craft shows as far away as Pittsburgh and Cleveland with her products and brochures. "I do well with my products at the shows, but the brochures do even better. I get feedback for a year to three years after."

Gail coordinates her promotions with the Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau and Seaway Trail, Inc., and has an internet site. She welcomes bus tours as well as individuals and smaller groups. "I have a lot of bus tours which come generally based on the word of mouth recommendation from other bus tour drivers." Gail has also been lucky at getting editorial coverage in newspapers. One article entitled "Chautauqua Woman" focused on Gail's distinction as one of the few female sole proprietor grape farmers in the area.

Historic Alasa Farms

- Historic location
- Business diversification
- Hospitality
- Educational activities for visitors
- Special events
- Community involvement
- Motorcoach and other group tours



In 1826, a religious sect known as the Shakers purchased over 1300 acres near Sodus Bay, New York. The Shakers believed in the complete separation of men and women, and designed their buildings to maintain this separation. Although they only lived in the area till 1838, their simple style of living is still visible in the buildings found today at Alasa Farms, located at 6450 Shaker Road in Alton, New York.

Alasa Farms was purchased in 1924 by Alvah Strong and his partner, Asa McBride. Today, the farm is a corporation with a board of directors that includes Alvah Strong's daughter, Nancy Mangan, and her son and daughter-in-law, Griff and Joni Mangan. The business was incorporated in 1977 by Nancy.

Alasa Farms covers 700 acres of scenic apple and peach orchards, crop and hay fields, woodlands, open space, and wetlands. Four of the original Shaker buildings still exist, along with other buildings constructed in the early 1900s. Griff enjoys touring visitors around the farm and pointing out the interesting features of the Shaker buildings such as the main house's separate entrances for men and women. Families and school groups enjoy visiting the goats, horses, sheep, and geese housed in the barns. Griff has also produced a guidebook for visitors who want to tour the farm by themselves. Visitors pay a small admission fee for touring the farm, and additional fees for hayrides and apple picking. Because most of the visitors that come are with school or tour groups, no specific visiting hours have been set.

Besides offering tours for visitors, the farm's apple orchard is open as a U-pick operation in the fall. Hayrides are also available. Nancy and Joni operate a gift shop that features handmade crafts, traditional Shaker items, and books on Shaker history. They have also organized Alasa Center, an organization separate from the farm business, which offers craft and art classes at the farm for children and adults. The teachers of these classes

are paid through enrollment fees. Events such as antique shows and a Shaker Festival are also held on the farm. A special liability rider to the farm's insurance policy was purchased to cover these events and hayrides.

Griff opened his farm to visitors after deciding that the farm's orchards, crop fields, and timber were not extensive enough to make the farm profitable. After leasing the crop fields and peach and apple orchards out to local farmers, Griff began spending most of his time giving tours to visitors. "When I first came here, I figured that anybody from Wayne County knew what farm animals looked like. Well, they don't anymore. So I thought I'd invite the Sodus school down. The kids loved it! And then it dawned on me that adults might want to come down. So we started to gear towards motorcoaches."

The Mangans opened the gift shop because they realized that visitors on motorcoach tours like to visit gift shops. "We have a few local people that give us items on consignment. We keep it full that way. My wife likes to make wreaths and things like that. We're on the mailing lists of a lot of these wholesale catalogs. You give up a little something, but if you need volume, you have to use them."

Most of the promotion for the farm is done through newspaper advertisements, articles, and word-of-mouth. Griff frequently writes articles about the farm and sends them to local newspapers. He has also used direct mailings to attract motorcoach business from tour companies. Alasa Farms is listed in Wayne County's tourism promotion brochure and Seaway Trail's *Journey* magazine.

Griff is very involved in countywide tourism efforts. He is an active member of the Wayne County Tourism Planning Committee and the Seaway Trail Agritourism Theme Team (see page 21). His plans for the future include hosting parties and receptions at the farm, attracting international motorcoach tour groups, and constructing self-guided trails through the farm's woodlands.

ORGANIZING AGRICULTURAL EVENTS: FESTIVALS AND FARMERS MARKETS

Introduction

Organizing festivals and farmers' markets are increasingly popular community revitalization strategies. For the communities that sponsor markets or host festivals, these events promote the community and bring consumers to downtown areas or small villages for additional shopping. They are also a means of educating the public about issues affecting the community such as support for local farmers, open space, and the quality of life in rural communities.

Festivals and farmers' markets also provide tourists with a unique window into the heart of a local community. The sights, smells, and sounds which can be enjoyed at a farmers' market or festival are different in each community. While malls reflect the homogenization of American culture, farmers' markets and festivals provide the opportunity to celebrate what is special or unique. For example, in one community you might find snickerdoodles and shoofly pie, while at another you might sample wines and grape pies. Likewise you might see vendors in Renaissance costumes, leatherstockings, or just simple farm garb. The different foods, crafts, and entertainment reflect interesting cultural and historical differences between communities. Tourists (and even local folks) want to immerse themselves in something they can't find at home. Such a strategy is essential to increasing community self-identity and local pride, and drawing dollars from outside the community.

Organizing a festival or farmers' market is always much more work than you think. Achieving memorable results requires a significant effort. Below are some tips on organizing these events to provide maximum benefit to the sponsors and the community, and minimize possible headaches. Consider only those ideas appropriate to the scale and theme of the festival or market that you want and the resources available.

Festivals: a Creative Expression of the Local Community

Festivals are public, themed celebrations. They can be single events or serial events taking place each year at roughly the same time. Here are some tips for organizing a festival.

1. Form a festival planning committee. Organize a volunteer, multi-sponsor working group or management team with a diverse set of people, skills, and resources. It is not advisable to have a single organization do all the work. Find multiple co-sponsors to share not only the responsibility for the event but also the glory. This kind of sharing is good for the community. Members of the working group should have media and funding contacts, business acumen, experience working with volunteers, and a sense of the big picture. Try co-chairs to share the responsibilities of overseeing the organization. Have one individual serve as the financial controller responsible for budgets, the other as a public relations person. Consider chairpersons for numerous subcommittees: entertainment, food, hospitality, operations, sponsorship, volunteers, etc. If the festival is to be a recurrent one, consider incorporating (to provide liability protection to sponsors and make it easier to obtain grants) and hiring temporary paid staff. Obviously, this is not possible for small festivals or in communities with limited resources.

2. Clearly identify the purpose or mission of the festival. Use brainstorming to choose an interesting and exciting theme that captures the spirit of the community. Themes can be expressed through the name of the event, logos, mascots, settings, design, activities and attractions, food and beverages, merchandise, and

advertising. Do your research and try out several things which are unique. Get ideas from other festivals but don't copy too much. Balance what is tried and true with novelty and innovation. Remember that the key objective is to showcase what is special about your community.

3. Choose a location. Choose a place or location with the right atmosphere and essential services (parking, hotels, restaurants, etc.). Keep the neighbors in mind and involve them in decision making.

4. Obtain needed licenses and permits. Licenses and permits may be required in your community. Confer with the local health department and the appropriate municipal jurisdiction about what local ordinances and permit fees are needed.

5. Organize attractions, entertainment, and food. Find the right combination of these to meet the needs and expectations of participants. Showcase local talent when possible, but also consider offering a portion of the "gate" to professional entertainers who have broad appeal. Encourage local groups to set up fundraising activities. Balance the level of kitsch (which tends to homogenize the community in the eyes of the tourist) with high quality and meaningful activities. Develop a sense of belonging and sharing through traditional activities, competitions, and entertainment. Screen potential vendors or concessionaires to ensure quality.

6. Develop a budget strategy. Explore additional sources of funding for the festival: local companies and financial institutions, larger statewide corporations, individuals, and foundations. Furthermore, consider some entrepreneurial funding approaches including charging an admission fee, selling food or souvenirs, having a lottery or raffle, and renting space. Charge a flat rate and/or percentage of sales of vendors and concessionaires.

7. Develop a comprehensive promotional campaign that includes media and local government agency relations. Identify specific target markets and develop a campaign that will reach these markets. Different types of markets include local folks, tourists, city dwellers, seniors, families, etc. Use newspapers, radio, posters, brochures, television, and road signs. Local government agencies such as tourism promotion agencies can also help with promoting festivals.

8. Investigate insurance needs. Adequate liability insurance coverage has become a make or break issue for special events in recent years. Festivals typically require at least "day-of-event" coverage to provide adequate protection to sponsors and employees against liability suits.

9. Manage your budget. Develop a budget that identifies funding sources and projected expenses, and a tracking system that evaluates your results. The controller or treasurer will need to keep track of and regularly report all financial transactions. Typical expense categories include facilities/infrastructure, entertainment, production expenses (rentals, sound systems, etc.), signage systems, parking, on-site transportation, food services, utilities, promotional costs, waste management system, event rentals, committee expenses, and consultants. A general rule of thumb is to add a 10% buffer to the budget. Develop a plan for allocating surplus revenue (e.g., to the festival for next year, to the sponsoring organizations, to special projects in the community, etc.).

10. Develop a public safety plan. This will ensure a secure and pleasant event. Include first aid/medical services, security, crowd

management, alcoholic beverage policy, refuse, communications, and handicap accessibility. Meet with the local police and fire departments to get their input on meeting local ordinances and optimizing public comfort and safety.

11. Create excitement! Launch a series of articles in the local paper building up toward the opening day. Hold opening ceremonies to set the tone for the event.

12. Conduct an evaluation. Evaluate the festival in terms of organizational, social/cultural, economic, tourism, and environmental goals. Include a visitor survey which asks about likes and dislikes, problems experienced, suggestions for improvement, expectations, interest in visiting again, and other issues pertinent to festival goals. Indicators of success include: budget surplus, numbers of tourists and volunteers, impact on local businesses, changes in consumer attitudes, money raised for projects, and number of co-sponsors.

Farmers' Markets: a Tourist's Window Into the Local Community

In the last few years we have seen an explosion in the number of retail farmers' markets. The U.S. now has more farmers' markets than ever before — over 2,000 by the latest U. S. Department of Agriculture estimates. The number of retail farmers' markets (also called public markets) in the Northeast has risen from perhaps a dozen or so in the mid-1960s to lead the country with over 500 (29% of the total) in 1994. New York State is one of the leading states with over 180 farmers' markets. California and Iowa are also in the top three.

What's behind this dramatic revival? Surveys of direct market consumers provide at least part of the answer. Results show that freshness is by far the leading reason consumers patronize direct markets. Other important factors include the quality and variety of produce sold. The social atmosphere at farmers' markets is also attractive to busy consumers who wish to combine shopping with leisure. Additionally, concerns about food safety (e.g., pesticide residues) and support for local farmers are mentioned by some consumers. Farmers' markets can draw consumers and tourists to central business districts, where they potentially patronize adjacent businesses. Many communities have discovered this "magnetic" effect, of farmers' markets and are using them as centerpieces in downtown revitalization projects. Furthermore, a growing number of communities have recognized the role farmers' markets play in incubating microenterprises such as bakeries and other food businesses, market gardens, and craft businesses. Farmers' markets do this by providing a rich entrepreneurial environment for start-up businesses that include low rent and overhead, vendor support, and instant cash flow.

Some factors to consider for organizing farmers' markets include:

- 1. Identifying a market coordinator.** The market coordinator or manager needs to have strong administrative, fiscal, and public relations skills. Because the coordinator has many responsibilities, including coordinating vendors and acting as a liaison between the community and market, establishing a committee to support the activities of the coordinator is important.
- 2. Holding planning meetings.** Conduct a series of planning meetings to discuss the mission, goals, and organizational structure.
- 3. Creating an advisory committee.** Community support can be fostered through the creation of an advisory/booster committee which meets formally at least once per year. Individual members

should be welcome to attend regular farmers' market working group meetings. The advisors should be able to provide legal, insurance, public relations, and business assistance.

4. Structuring your organization. Design and implement an organizational structure which meets the needs of members. There is no cookie-cutter approach to forming a farmers' market. Farmers' markets may be informal, with little organizational structure other than a contact person or unpaid coordinator, they can be legally incorporated with a paid market manager, or they may be something in between these ends of the spectrum. If you choose to incorporate (e.g., as a corporation or cooperative), select your incorporators, and recruit an attorney to assist in the preparation of bylaws and Articles of Incorporation. Many successful farmers' markets have a sponsoring organization such as the local chamber of commerce, Cooperative Extension Association, or a church or business association. The benefits of a sponsor include financial and organizational assistance, access to a downtown location, and general help with public relations.

5. Choosing a market location. Place the market in a location that has excellent visibility, easy access, and adequate parking nearby. Ideally, the market will be located in an urban or village setting where many patrons may simply walk. Successful markets in non-urban settings rely on adequate parking, superlative products and activities, and a bucolic atmosphere, which has a strong customer draw.

6. Setting vendor fees. Calculate what the fees should be for the market. Most markets are able to charge weekly stall fees (e.g., \$10 to \$20). However, other markets have more complex membership levels, each with different fees such as annual and lifetime memberships. Flat fees are generally preferable to sales-based fees simply because of the proprietary nature of sales and income of the vendors. However, consider special circumstances of some limited resource vendors who are just getting started.

7. Promoting the market. Plan and implement an innovative promotional campaign which maximizes the use of free publicity. However, be prepared to spend a large portion of your budget on commercial advertising. Lack of advertising causes a low turnout of customers — one of the biggest complaints from farmers' market vendors.

8. Obtaining adequate insurance. It is important to have adequate insurance coverage for the market and its vendors. Public land may already be insured and may cover the market. However, don't make any assumptions about this — check to make sure. If the market is not already insured, contact several insurance companies for advice and quotes.

9. Creating a market appearance. A unique atmosphere that reflects the cultural, social, and historical aspects of the community is important to the success of a farmers' market. If the market has a permanent location, find the financial resources to construct a market pavilion. If the market is on a temporary site, work with the vendors to coordinate the appearance and spacing of their stalls so that there is a cohesive visual affect which is festive and appealing. Consider a group purchase of color-coordinated canopies or umbrellas.

10. Adding customer amenities. Rest rooms, water fountains/coolers, phones, shaded areas, trash receptacles, and picnic areas all need to be considered. Often these little things make a big difference to customers and to the overall impression customers have of the market.

11. Offering vendor support. Optimize the small business incubation role the market plays in the community. Where feasible include such services and amenities as a revolving micro loan fund, cooperative purchases and sales, water and/or electrical hookup, all-weather facilities, and a licensed food processing center. By working with local agencies such as the Cooperative Extension, Senior Corps of Retired Executives, and Small Business Development Center, the market can provide business counseling services to start-up and expanding vendors in the market as well as vendors leaving the market to establish their successful business elsewhere in the community.

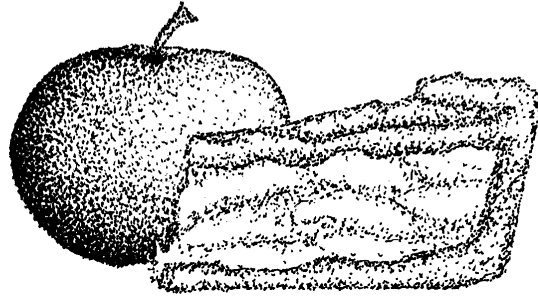
12. Review vendor policies. Should food and craft products be juried (formally evaluated) before allowing them in the market? Should the market be a farmer-only market that excludes non-farm vendors who buy-in and resell produce? Should farm vendors be allowed to buy-in a certain percentage of their products (e.g., a 50% rule)? What about flea market items? These and other issues should be addressed early on by both the market manager and advisory committee, and reviewed annually during the first couple of years of the market.

13. Participating in coupon programs. Consider participating in the Women's Infants and Children's (WIC) Farmers' Market Coupon Program. WIC recipients receive coupons for the purchase of farm products at farmers' markets. Although not every vendor at the market must accept WIC coupons, the market as a whole must agree to administer the program.

14. Evaluate the market. Conduct a year-end evaluation that uses customer and vendor surveys to gauge the satisfaction of all parties. Keep in mind that the success of the first year of a farmers' market is not necessarily an indication of its potential. Many successful markets have had rocky starts. Perseverance and identifying ways to improve the market (especially through promotion and advertising) are the keys to its success.

Niagara County's Apple Country Festival

- County promotion
- Themed food and activities
- Educational activities and exhibits
- Tremendous volunteer support
- Coordination of vendors and events



Niagara County's Apple Country Festival was first held the second week of October in 1994 after two years of planning and groundwork. Within three years, this two-day event, sponsored by the Eastern Niagara Chamber of Commerce and Mayer Brothers Apple Products, was attracting between 30,000 and 40,000 people to its Lockport, NY festival site. Festival goers come mainly from the five-county area of Niagara, Erie, Orleans, Genesee, and Wyoming counties in Western New York. According to David Kenyon, President of the Eastern Niagara Chamber of Commerce, "the festival is used primarily to encourage visitors to return to Niagara County by providing a sampling of products from around the county."

The event is held at the Niagara County Fairgrounds, a rural setting with ample parking. Bluegrass music, apple-related food and country crafts, face painting, storytelling, singing, dancing, hayrides, pony rides, country games, a petting zoo, apple mosaic art, demonstrations, and farm-fresh produce for sale are included in the festival. About 80 arts and craft vendors participate, all of whom are encouraged to provide merchandise related to the festival's apple theme. Approximately 12 farm vendors participate.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County hosts a large exhibit at the festival every year. One year, some 50 nostalgic apple varieties, courtesy of the U. S. Department of Agriculture repository in Geneva, New York, were displayed. Varieties such as Ben Davis and Wolf River drew tremendous interest from festival goers. Educational exhibits on the science of propagation and nutritious snacks have also been displayed. Over 60 loaves of

bread were used to create apple-cinnamon toast snacks for festival participants one year.

Tremendous amounts of volunteer and staff time go into making the festival the success that it is. Over 100 volunteers provide assistance with festival details such as parking and festival setup. Most of the volunteers are chamber of commerce members and county residents.

Like any other October event, the Niagara County Apple Country Festival is somewhat dependent on the weather. Rainy days can lower the number of people attending. Existing indoor space at the fairgrounds coupled with the popularity of the festival are expected to sustain the event in case of poor weather.

The festival is mainly marketed through newspaper and radio advertisements. Radio advertisements have been particularly effective at attracting people. A festival brochure is also sent out by Niagara County Tourism and Seaway Trail, Inc. to individuals requesting tourism information from them. This year the chamber will be holding a familiarization tour of the county for tour operators designed to attract motorcoach tours to the festival.

As with any festival, certain regulations and insurance considerations apply. Because tremendous amounts of food such as apple sausage and apple turnovers are sold at the festival, food vendors are inspected annually by the Niagara County Department of Health. Arts and crafts vendors are also inspected for compliance with state sales tax regulations every year. The Eastern Niagara Chamber of Commerce's standard liability package covers all activities at the festival. Attention to details such as these make this festival a success.

Watertown Farm and Craft Market



- Community spirit
- Events & attractions
- Educational activities for visitors
- Support for vendor businesses
- Coordination of vendors and events

The Watertown Farm and Craft Market was established in 1977 by the Watertown Chamber of Commerce. The original purpose of the market was to provide a public event to help businesses in the failing downtown area of the city. It began with five vendors. Growth of the market was increasing slowly until a local grocery store expanded its produce section, causing the market to almost end that year. The market responded aggressively by hosting a series of community events. "We hosted a 4-H Day before the Jefferson County Fair. There were sheep and calves for the children, and the dairy princesses visited," says Nelson Eddy of the Watertown Chamber of Commerce. With three live, exotic animal shows (including macaws, snakes, cougars) the Watertown Farm and Craft Market also helped raise funds for the local zoo. Over the years, the market has also supported local civic efforts including voter registration and church bake sales.

Educational events are an important part of the market. The Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County provides cooking and food processing demonstrations, a master gardening booth, and recycling and composting information. "We have a baby show where the children are dressed as farmers and farmerettes. We also have local talent programs who provide their local talent free including folk singers, a karate group, and horse shoeing demonstrations," says Nelson. One of their biggest attractions is Sweetness, a 16 1/2-foot-long Burmese python that visits with the exotic animal show. Many local schools attend. Daycare centers are weekly visitors, since they know something interesting for the kids is going to happen at the market. Residents from nearby senior citizens centers frequent the market, as do participants in a local program for developmentally challenged people.

The Watertown Farm and Craft Market has a volunteer coordinator, Kay Plante, whose expenses are paid by the Chamber. Kay advertises every week in the local newspaper, spotlighting the local talent program. She stays in touch with the customers and tries to fill needs by recruiting vendors. "This year," says Kay, "we had a young woman from Korea call. She hand makes cards — the most beautiful art I've ever seen — and I encouraged her to sell in our market. I introduced her to experienced vendors that go to other shows to help her expand her market." Kay also helps new vendors in making other important connections such as getting sales tax numbers from the state or plant licenses. The Watertown Farm and Craft Market does not allow retailers except to expand the range of fruit and vegetables offered (e.g., citrus).

There are 65 vendors in the Watertown Farm and Craft Market. Total sales are approximately \$20,000 to \$30,000 per week. Several dairy farmers supplement their income through the sale of baked goods and produce. The market has incubated numerous vendors who have outgrown it and established their businesses elsewhere in the community. For example, a picnic table maker and a local crafter have opened their own stores. On the plus side, their leaving makes room for other vendors.

The Watertown Farm and Craft Market simultaneously caters to the needs of vendors, customers, and the larger business community. "And now, how does this help the farmer?" asks Nelson. "Hundreds and hundreds of people are there to buy, you see? Without the Chamber, without the community events, without having all of these things together, the farmer would not be helped. It has to be a circle, and if there's any breaks in the circle, then that's when the effort breaks down."

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: PLANNING A REGIONAL AGRITOURISM PROGRAM

Introduction

Regional planning is important for all types of tourism programs — agritourism programs included — since it prevents duplication between different tourism programs within a region, combines the financial resources of the different groups involved for cost-effective cooperative development and promotion, and promotes a greater diversity of attractions to visitors. Regional planning combines the resources of agritourism businesses, farm festivals, farm markets, and other agricultural resources, and packages them together for visitors. These packages can take the form of self-guided tours for visitors (e.g., guidebooks, directories, and other facilities that enable visitors to tour the region on their own), motorcoach (bus) tours, lists of festivals and events, and other activities that promote the region as a whole to visitors. Regional planning also provides a mechanism for developing promotional, marketing, and evaluation strategies for agritourism programs.

Regional Planning Considerations

Certain factors need to be considered before moving ahead with any planning effort. These are:

1. What region is being considered for planning? To be the most effective for planning purposes, regions should have similar characteristics throughout that are unique from neighboring regions. These characteristics can be either agritourism-related (e.g., the attractions of the region are mainly dairy farms) or related to some other resource (e.g., the agricultural resources are all found in a coastal area).

2. What individuals and organizations need to be involved? Before any planning can begin, a planning committee comprised of individuals and organizations involved in agriculture and tourism needs to be organized. Individuals such as the owners of farms and agritourism businesses are an integral part of any agritourism planning committee. Organizations such as Cooperative Extensions, tourism promotion agencies, chambers of commerce, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, farm protection boards, and Resource Conservation and Development Districts should also be included.

3. What are the concerns of local residents and business owners with regard to agritourism development? Liability insurance coverage at agritourism attractions, maintenance of local rural character, and safety concerns for visitors on farms are some of the concerns that local residents and business owners may have for agritourism programs. These concerns need to be discussed before implementing any agritourism program.

4. What type of visitors are you trying to attract? The market groups you want to attract need to be identified before any planning begins to ensure that goals, objectives, and promotional strategies are identified with these groups in mind. Market groups can be broken down by where visitors live, activities they like to participate in, how they will travel to your area (e.g., motorcoach, car, bicycle), and their age, education, and special interests. Market groups frequently targeted for agritourism purposes are school groups, families, and other tour groups (e.g., senior citizens groups).

Holding a Planning Session

Facilitated planning workshops are usually the best way to promote cooperation with the different groups involved in agritourism, identify goals and objectives, create a program theme, develop an action plan, and identify strategies for promotion and evaluation. Because of the large amount of discussion that results from these planning

sessions, at least one day for the workshop should be allowed. Local residents, business owners, and organization representatives interested in agritourism development should be invited to participate. Planning sessions should be developed utilizing the planning steps below.

Planning steps

Goal development. Goals, the end results of your planning efforts, are the first topics discussed at most planning workshops. Rather than identifying the specific projects that will result from planning efforts, goals identify the broad outcomes that you want to occur. These are important to identify early in the planning stage because they guide the entire planning process. Some examples of goals are included in Figure 1.

Conducting an inventory. An inventory is a list of the agriculture-related attractions and resources in your region. This is usually compiled before the facilitated planning session because of the extensive amount of time it takes to complete. Resources such as scenic vistas and different crop lands (e.g., muck farms or orchards) should be included, as well as specific attractions such as farms that are open to visitors, historic farm sites, farm stands, farmers' markets, and agriculture-related festivals. Safety considerations, environmental factors, and facility construction, improvement, or expansion needs should be identified for each attraction in the inventory. Facilities such as parking areas, rest rooms, roads, and access for individuals with disabilities should be considered. If you are planning on attracting motorcoach tours, make sure that access roads are wide enough to accommodate motorcoaches and that adequate rest stops exist. All resources and attractions on the inventory should be plotted on a map of the area for use during the planning session.

Creating a theme. A theme is the concept or idea that unifies the resources and attractions of a region. Themes create a consistent agritourism program and give visitors a clear sense of what is important about it. Studying the attractions and resources identified on the inventory will help determine the theme for your program. The region that your program is being planned for will also help determine the theme. Questions that should be considered when developing a theme are:

1. For what region are you planning your agritourism program?
2. What concept unifies the attractions and resources listed on the inventory of your region (e.g., the diversity of crops grown, the history behind local farms)?
3. Are there any important factors that presently influence the agricultural resources and attractions of your region or have influenced them in the past (e.g., cultures, climate, geology)?

Combining the answers to these questions into a single sentence will provide your theme. Often a logo is developed to convey this theme. Logos can be used on directional signs for visitors as well as publications. To be effective, logos should be simple in appearance yet still clearly communicate the theme.

Developing objectives. While goals are the broad end results of planning efforts, objectives are the specific strategies that are used to achieve these goals. Objectives should be clearly defined and achievable. They are developed by examining each goal separately, and deciding how best to accomplish it. Some examples of goals and the objectives used to accomplish them are included in Figure 1.

Developing an action plan. Creating an action plan involves taking each objective and breaking it down into the actual steps involved in accomplishing it. For each step, the person(s) responsible for completing it and the date of completion are listed. Figure 2 shows how an objective is broken down into its action plan components. A planning committee member should be chosen to follow up with the people responsible for completing each step to keep program development on time and ensure its implementation.

Promoting an agritourism program. How an agritourism program is promoted is determined by several factors: who your visitors are, where they live, the type of program you are promoting, and the budget. The types of promotion that can be used include listings in newspapers, development of world wide web sites, production of brochures for the program, advertisements in tourism guidebooks, paid advertisements in magazines, radio announcements, promotional videos for use on television, and promotions through travel agencies and organizations (e.g., AAA).

Knowing your visitors is the key to effective promotion. When a program is just starting out, it is often difficult to know where your potential visitors will come from. Consult with local tourism promotion agencies, chambers of commerce, public relations departments, and existing businesses and attractions to find out where visitors presently come from. Carefully evaluating the effectiveness of specific promotional strategies will give you even more insight into where the program should be marketed and which promotional strategies work best.

Analyzing the types of attractions and resources listed on your inventory will also help. If the agritourism attractions in your area are largely dairy farms and petting zoos, generally the visitors you will be trying to attract will be families and school groups. If the attractions are of an historical nature, your visitors will probably include families, school groups, and senior citizens. Farm market customers often include local residents and visitors who are in the region for some other recreational purpose (e.g., many of the customers of farm markets in New York's Great Lakes Region are visitors who have come to the area to fish).

Figure 1. Examples of goals and objectives.

Goal #1	To increase the number of visitors to our region.
Objective #1	To develop a self-guided tour guidebook to the agritourism facilities within our region that promotes our region to visitors and educates them about our agricultural resources.
Objective #2	To develop motorcoach tour itineraries designed to attract motorcoach tours to our region.
Goal #2	To increase visitor expenditures at agritourism facilities in our region.
Objective #1	To create directories of agritourism businesses and install them at visitor information centers and in villages.
Objective #2	To encourage farm operators to provide visitor tours at their farms and/or to sell their products to visitors.

Figure 2. Developing an action plan.

Objective #1	To develop a self-guided tour guidebook to agritourism facilities that promotes our region to visitors and educates them about our agricultural resources.	
Step	Person(s) responsible	Completion date
Identify a travel route for visitors.	Entire committee	January 1
Collect information about farm attractions	Committee Member #1	May 31
Take photographs of facilities	Committee Member #2	May 31
Write text	Committee Member #3	July 31
Design publication	Committee Member #4	September 30
Obtain printing cost estimates	Committee Member #5	October 31
Print publication	Committee Member #4	November 30
Distribute publication to local attractions	Committee Member #4	December 15

Budget factors also need to be considered. Obviously certain types of promotion will be much more expensive than others. Generally, the most cost-effective promotions are done through county, regional, and state tourism promotion agencies. The tourism guidebooks produced by these agencies reach diverse markets throughout the year. Being listed in the "calendar of events" section of newspapers is usually free and effective for specific agritourism events and festivals. Magazine advertisements are usually effective for reaching specific markets, but may be expensive. The best form of promotion is word-of-mouth, which is free but often takes a while to develop and depends a great deal on the quality of agritourism experiences that visitors receive.

Evaluating agritourism programs. Evaluation is crucial to determining if your program is accomplishing its goals. Because of this, the evaluation strategies that you choose will be determined by your goals. Types of evaluation include conducting visitor surveys, analyzing existing socioeconomic data, and compiling attendance figures at agritourism businesses and attractions. It is important to implement your evaluation strategies at the beginning of your planning efforts; this will enable you to compare changes in your program over time. An example of how evaluation strategies are identified for specific goals is given in Figure 3.

Besides determining if your program is accomplishing its goals, evaluations should also focus on the cost effectiveness of any types of promotion used to attract visitors. This can be done by tallying the number of people that call or write for agritourism information and asking them how they found out about the agritourism program. The cost of each type of promotion divided by the number of inquiries for information generated by that promotion will give you an indication of how cost effective each type of promotion is for attracting the attention of visitors. Comparing several different types of promotion will identify the best ones to use for your program. Address and phone lists (which can be used for surveying visitors) can also be generated as people call for information.

Figure 3. Developing evaluation strategies targeted to your information needs.

Goal #1 To increase the number of visitors to our region.

Evaluation techniques:

1. Obtain and analyze socioeconomic data. One type to consider is annual average employment figures recorded by county for different types of businesses by the New York State Department of Economic Development.
2. Have agritourism businesses and attractions record the number of visitors they receive. To identify trends in these data, they have to be collected for several years.
3. Keep track of the number of inquiries that tourism promoters in your area receive for agritourism information. If possible, follow up these inquiries with a phone call to see if the person requesting the information actually came to your region.

Goal #2 To increase visitor expenditures at agritourism facilities in our region.

Evaluation techniques:

1. Compile sales data from agritourism businesses and attractions in your region. These will have to be compiled for several years to identify any changes in sales. This also requires a great deal of cooperation from the agritourism businesses.
2. Conduct a survey of visitors as they leave agritourism businesses and attractions. This survey can focus on both visitor expenditures at that specific attraction and expenditures at other facilities in the region. This survey can also be used to identify where visitors come from, who they are traveling with, and how they found out about the region.

Agritourism Along New York's Seaway Trail

- Diversity of attractions and resources
- Regional tourism planning
- Community involvement
- Educational activities for visitors
- Outdoor recreation opportunities
- Coordinated marketing and promotion
- Providing regional information
- Themed tourism development
- National Scenic Byway Designation



New York State's Seaway Trail became America's longest National Scenic Byway by federal designation in September 1996. This 454-mile scenic road system parallels the St. Lawrence River, Lake Ontario, Niagara River, and Lake Erie. Fifty additional miles of the trail along Pennsylvania's Lake Erie shoreline make the Seaway Trail the longest National Recreation Trail recognized for multi-modal (multiple forms of transportation) usage.

Coastal agriculture is one of eight resource themes for tourism development used by Seaway Trail, Inc., a not-for-profit organization that promotes travel and economic development along the byway. The trail's agricultural diversity offers a unique coastal agritourism experience with farmers' markets, recreational sites, museums, and festivals. The scenic landscapes include vineyards, orchards, vegetable farms, mucklands, dairy and beef cattle farms, and maple sugar bushes. Festivals celebrate spring flowers, summertime fruits, pumpkins in the fall, and folk-life skills such as butter churning and cheese making. Travelers enjoy everything from apple muffins and pickles to cheese curd, country crafts, quilts, Christmas pines, and pony rides. In wintertime, cross-country skiers glide between grape-free vines and warm up with a wine tasting.

A *tourism development plan for New York's Seaway Trail* was developed for the trail in 1988. The plan recognized coastal agriculture as having strong tourism potential. Subsequent planning documents that include agritourism recommendations were produced for the City of Dunkirk (1989), Oswego/Eastern Shore area (1990), Monroe County (1992), Wayne and Cayuga counties (1996), and Orleans County (1996). A Seaway Trail Agritourism Theme Team

was developed in 1996 and produced a working agritourism action plan. Funding for some of the plans has come from federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act grants to Seaway Trail, Inc., through New York State's Department of Transportation, and from corporate sponsorships.

Action planning steps implemented as of fall 1997 include placement of agricultural information panels in some of the trail's 60 sign kiosks. These panels educate travelers about the diversity of the agricultural landscape and products along the trail. Seaway Trail's *Journey Magazine* (annual distribution of 200,000) featured editorial coverage of agritourism attractions and events in 1993 and 1997. Seasonal press releases inform travelers of the four seasons of agricultural interests to be found. A *Seaway Trail Agri-sampler* brochure listing agritourism businesses and attractions trailwide is in production for late 1997. This brochure will link these sites, giving visitors a comprehensive view of discovering the Seaway Trail agritourism experience.

Seaway Trail's future goals will diversify the recreational experiences of visitors in the region. Plans include coordinating the development of Seaway Trail culinary interests using produce grown in the Seaway Trail region, developing a guidebook to agricultural attractions and resources along the Seaway Trail, and developing a Seaway Trail reservation service which will package agritourism sites with other trailwide attractions and resources for visitors.

For more information, contact: Seaway Trail, Inc., 109 Barracks Drive, Sackets Harbor, NY 13685; Phone: 1 (800) SEAWAY-T; Fax: (315) 646-1004.

CONCLUSION

Agritourism offers vast potential for tourism development in states with large rural areas such as New York. It not only provides recreational opportunities for both visitors and residents, but provides farm owners with the opportunity of expanding the profitability of their businesses. In many cases, this is what makes the difference in whether a business survives or not.

Successful agritourism programs do take a lot of effort, though. The careful coordination of events, promotional materials, and farm businesses through regional planning is essential. Working together, farm owners and tourism promoters and planners can create a successful agritourism program out of existing resources and attractions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to the following individuals for the information that they provided for this publication: Chris Schnepf, University of Idaho Cooperative Extension Service; Griff Mangan, Alasa Farms; Gail Black, Vinewood Acres Sugar Shack and B&B; Bob Brown, Brown's Berry Patch; Sue Hurd, Hurd Orchards; Jeff Smith, Smith's Family Farm Market; Karen Watt, Watt Fruit Company; Nelson Eddy and Kay Plante, Watertown Chamber of Commerce; and David Kenyon, Eastern Niagara Chamber of Commerce.

We also appreciate the comments of the following reviewers: Peter Spadora, Black River/St. Lawrence Resource Conservation and Development Office; Judith Belt, Oswego Central Business District; David White, NY Sea Grant; David Reville, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Wayne County; Judy Wright, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cayuga County; Monica Roth, Cornell University; and Tommy Brown, Cornell University.

AGRITOURISM PUBLICATION AND AGENCY RESOURCES

Festivals

Organizations:

New York Festivals and Events Association
c/o IFEA (International Festivals and Events Association), Port
Angeles, Washington 98362
*They offer an excellent series of publications on all aspects of festival and
event management including public safety, promotion, and fundraising.*

Publications:

Donald Getz. *Festivals, special events, and tourism*. 1991. Van
Nostrand Reinhold: New York, NY. 374 pp.

Festival management and event tourism (magazine). Cognizant
Communication Corporation: Elmsford, NY.

Managing festivals and tourism events. Michigan State University:
East Lansing, MI. Publication No. E2303. 32 pp.

*For copies contact: MSU Bulletin Office, 10-B Agriculture Hall,
Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1039; Phone:
(517) 353-6740.*

Wasserman, P., and E. L. Applebaum, eds. *Festivals sourcebook*.
Detroit: Gale Research Co. 1984.

Wiersma, E. *Creative event development: a guide to strategic
success in the world of special events*. Indianapolis, IN.
For copies contact: Elizabeth Wiersma; Phone: (972) 720-8793.

Farmers' Market Resources

Organizations:

Cornell Cooperative Extension
*Check your phone book for your county association's address and
phone number.*

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
*Contact Bob Lewis, 55 Hanson Place, Brooklyn, NY 11217; Phone: (718)
722-2830 for information on the WIC Farmers' Market Coupon Program.*

New York State Farmers' Direct Marketing Association
*Contact Diane Eggert, Executive Secretary, 7350 Collamer Road,
East Syracuse, NY 13057; Phone: (315) 656-9977.*

Publications:

Hilchey, D. 1995. *Farmers' markets and rural economic develop-
ment, entrepreneurship, business incubation, and job creation in
the Northeast*. Farming Alternatives Program, Cornell University:
Ithaca, NY. 12 pp.

*For copies contact the Media Services Resource Center, 7 Business
and Technology Park, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14850; Phone:
(607) 255-2080.*

Patten, J. *Starting and strengthening farmers' markets in Pennsylva-
nia*. Center for Rural Pennsylvania and Penn State Cooperative
Extension: Harrisburg, PA. 80 pp.

*For copies contact the Center For Rural Pennsylvania, 212 Locust
Street, Suit 604, Harrisburg, PA 17101; Phone: (717)787-9555.*

Produce handling for direct markets. 1992. Cornell Cooperative
Extension, Cornell University: Ithaca, NY. 26 pp.

*For copies contact the Media Services Resource Center, 7 Business
and Technology Park, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14850; Phone:
(607) 255-2080.*

Sustainable Food Center. *Farmers' market workbook: how to start a farmers' market in your community*. Sustainable Food Center: Austin, TX. 13 pp.

For copies contact the Sustainable Food Center, 1715 East 6th Street, Suite 200, Austin, TX 78702; Phone: (512) 472-2073.

Agritourism businesses

Organizations:

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Check your phone book for your county association's address and phone number.

Small Business Development Center

Check your phone book for the address and phone number of the nearest SBDC.

Publications:

Buchanan, R., and R. Espeseth. 1991. *Developing a bed & breakfast business plan*. North Central Extension Region: Illinois. 94 pp.

Dawson, C., S. Brown, T. Brown. 1996. *Bed and breakfast lodging operations: a business planning guide for New York State*. New York State Small Business Development Center: Watertown, NY. 60 pp.

For copies contact: The NYS Small Business Development Center, Jefferson Community College, Watertown, NY 13601.

Facilities for roadside markets. 1992. Cornell Cooperative Extension, Cornell University: Ithaca, NY. 32 pp.

For copies contact the Media Services Resource Center, 7 Business and Technology Park, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14850; Phone: (607) 255-2080.

Grudens-Shuck, N., and J. Green. 1991. *Farming alternatives: a guide to evaluating the feasibility of new farm based enterprises*. Farming Alternatives Program, Cornell University: Ithaca, NY. 88 pp.

For copies contact the Media Services Resource Center, 7 Business and Technology Park, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14850; Phone: (607) 255-2080.

Income opportunities in special forest products: self-help suggestions for rural entrepreneurs. United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. Agriculture Information Bulletin 666. 206 pp.

For copies contact: Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402-9325; Phone: (202) 783-3238. Include stock number 001-001-653-0.

Macher, R. 1997. "More than a farm." *Journey magazine and directory to New York State's Seaway Trail*. Seaway Trail, Inc.: Sackets Harbor, NY. p. 74.

For copies contact: Seaway Trail, Inc., 109 Barracks Drive, Sackets Harbor, NY 13685; Phone: (315) 646-1000.

Olson, W., H. Alexander, B. Koth, C. Parliament. 1989. *Starting a bed and breakfast or vacation farm business*. Minnesota Extension Service Tourism Center: St. Paul, MN. 11 pp.

For copies contact: The Tourism Center, 116 Classroom Office Building, University of Minnesota Extension Service, 1994 Buford Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108; Phone: (612) 624-4947.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office for Small-Scale Agriculture publishes fact sheets on mushrooms, beekeeping, herbs, woodlots,

and a number of other small-scale rural enterprises, as well as a quarterly newsletter, a directory, and video on small-scale agriculture. *For copies contact: Office for Small-Scale Agriculture, Room 342-D, Aerospace Building, Washington, DC 20250-2200. Phone: (202) 401-4640 or Fax: (202) 401-5179*

Agritourism in general

Organizations:

Farming Alternatives Program
Department of Rural Sociology, Warren Hall, Cornell University,
Ithaca, NY 14850; Phone: (607) 255-9832.
Provides assistance with agritourism planning and development.

New York Sea Grant
101 Rich Hall; SUNY; Oswego, NY 13126; Phone (315) 341-3042.
Technical assistance provided with tourism planning.

Seaway Trail, Inc.
101 Barracks Drive; Sackets Harbor, NY 13685. Phone: (315) 646-1000.
Provides networking opportunities for member businesses and tourism links between businesses and attractions along New York's Seaway Trail.

Soil and Water Conservation District
Check your phone book for the address and phone number of your county's S&WCD.

Resource Conservation and Development Council
Check your phone book for the address and phone number of your region's RC&D.

Publications:

Dunn, K. L. 1997. "Seaway Trail agri-touring: our diversity is delicious." *Journey magazine and directory to New York State's Seaway Trail*. Seaway Trail, Inc.: Sackets Harbor, NY. pp. 68-71, 74-75.
For copies contact: Seaway Trail, Inc., 109 Barracks Drive, Sackets Harbor, NY 13685; Phone: (315) 646-1000.

Dunn, K. L. 1993. "Farm fresh foods, festivals, and fun." *Journey magazine and directory to New York State's Seaway Trail*. Seaway Trail, Inc.: Sackets Harbor, NY. pp. 50-51, 53, 58.
For copies contact: Seaway Trail, Inc., 109 Barracks Drive, Sackets Harbor, NY 13685; Phone: (315) 646-1000.

Hilchey, D. 1993. *Agritourism in New York State*. Farming Alternatives Program, Cornell University: Ithaca, NY. 102 pp.
For copies contact the Media Services Resource Center, 7 Business and Technology Park, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14850; Phone: (607) 255-2080.

Newsletters:

Rural Futures. NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, Legislative Office Building, Albany, NY 12247.

Farming Alternatives. Farming Alternatives Program, Dept. of Rural Sociology, Warren Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14850; Phone: (607) 255-9832.

Copies of this publication are available from:

New York Sea Grant
62B Mackin Hall
SUNY College at Oswego
Oswego, NY 13126
(315) 312-3042

Illustrations by Diane Kuehn

*First printing March, 1998
Reprinted November, 2000*



This paper is a result of research funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Award #431-S006Q to the Research Foundation of the State University of New York of the New York Sea Grant Institute. The U. S. Government is authorized to produce and distribute reprints for governmental purposes notwithstanding any copyright notation that may appear hereon. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of NOAA or any of its sub-agencies.