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An Agricultural Law Research Article

**Planting the Seeds for a New Industry
in Arkansas: Agritourism**

by

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Executive Summary

The tourism and agriculture industries are vital components of Arkansas' economy. According to the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, more than 20 million travelers to Arkansas spend in excess of \$4 billion annually.¹ In 2005, tourists' expenditures exceeded \$4.6 billion, representing "the best year of growth" for Arkansas tourism since 1980.² The University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture reports that agriculture is Arkansas' single largest industry in Arkansas, accounting for approximately 20% of the Gross State Product.³ Approximately 48,000 farms in the state combine to generate more than \$6.6 billion in annual farm income.⁴ Arkansas farms produce more than two dozen commodities, ranging from poultry and rice, to grapes, peaches, and pecans. Arkansas is the 13th largest agricultural state in the United States in terms of farm income and is a national leader in the production of several commodities. For example, Arkansas ranks first in rice production, second in the production of broilers and catfish, twelfth in timber and grape production, and thirteenth in the production of peaches and pecans. Nearly one-half of land in the state is devoted to some form of agricultural production.⁵

The prominent role that the tourism and agriculture industries play in Arkansas' economy presents a unique opportunity for producers, citizens, civic leaders, state officials, and others to plant the seeds of a new industry in Arkansas, "agritourism." "Agritourism" can be briefly defined as a form of commercial enterprise that merges tourism and agriculture by selling the experience of being on a farm, attracting visitors to a farm in order to sell farm products, or a combination of these concepts.

¹ Arkansas Dept. of Parks and Tourism, 2004 ECONOMIC REPORT, http://www.arkansas.com/economic_report04/default.asp; Arkansas Dept. Of Parks and Tourism, 2005 ECONOMIC REPORT, http://www.arkansas.com/economic_report04/default.asp.

² Arkansas Dept. of Parks and Tourism, 2005 ECONOMIC REPORT.

³ University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture, ARKANSAS COUNTS ON AGRICULTURE, 2004 ANNUAL REPORT.

⁴ USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2002 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE, STATE PROFILE, ARKANSAS, <http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/census02/profiles/ar/cp99005.PDF>; Arkansas Farm Bureau, Commodity & Marketing, Summary, http://www.arfb.com/commodity/ark_ag/stats.asp.

⁵ Arkansas Farm Bureau, Commodity & Marketing, http://www.arfb.com/commodity/ark_ag/stats.asp (providing data and statistics, including those listed in this paragraph, about Arkansas agriculture).

Agritourism operations exist in every state, and in many states, organizations, state officials, citizens, and others have undertaken some type of effort to enhance agritourism. Several states have undertaken some type of agritourism promotion effort, including Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri, Utah, North Carolina, Kansas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. The types of efforts and the degree to which they are undertaken in these and other states vary substantially. For example, efforts made in some states involve the state government, while others are conducted by non-governmental associations or through university systems. Some states merely provide a web site where producers can “register” their operations so that potential visitors can learn about various agritourism enterprises, while other states have provided such a web site along with other agritourism enhancement efforts.

A small but growing number of states— including Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, Kansas, and Vermont— have undertaken comprehensive efforts to not only promote agritourism but to recognize agritourism as an *industry* that can provide significant economic benefits to producers, communities, and states. For example, Kentucky and Indiana have created formal organizational structures whose function is to create and implement plans to develop a statewide agritourism industry, enact pro-agritourism legislation, and create state-level positions designed to significantly enhance the role that agritourism plays in the state’s economy. Arkansas has not yet undertaken a similar effort, though it possesses the human, land, government, organizational, and academic resources to do so.

The purpose of this article is to provide a context from which producers, state officials, private organizations, citizens, and other relevant stakeholders can initiate a discussion regarding the potential development of a program to promote an agritourism industry in Arkansas. In particular, the article is intended to be a resource for those who will attend “Agritourism in Arkansas: A Strategic Conversation” hosted at the Winthrop Rockefeller Center on July 27-28, 2006.

To discuss the development of a statewide program to promote agritourism as an industry, one must first understand what is meant by the term “agritourism.” This article explores the concept of agritourism and in so doing discusses definitions of agritourism, examines several examples of agritourism operations, and briefly discusses the importance of agritourism.

Next, the article examines several states’ agritourism promotion efforts. The first part of this examination focuses on three states— Indiana, Tennessee, and Kentucky— that have undertaken efforts in recent years to promote agritourism as a statewide industry. The second part of this examination briefly discusses several other states’ efforts, many of which are not as extensive as those undertaken by Indiana, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Examining these states’ efforts should provide background and perspective on how to develop and implement a statewide program to promote an agritourism industry in Arkansas. Links to relevant web sites and other literature relevant to each state are provided for research purposes.

After examining states’ agritourism promotion efforts, the article highlights some of the problems commonly associated with agritourism operations and some issues associated with developing a statewide agritourism promotion program. In addition, the article lists several concepts and ideas that could be employed as part of Arkansas’ agritourism program.

A few comments regarding the scope of this article are in order. This article is intended only to provide a context from which a discussion about the development of an agritourism industry in Arkansas can evolve. Thus, the information set forth in this article is not intended to dictate or

predetermine any specific issues discussed, process followed, or conclusions reached during “Agritourism in Arkansas: A Strategic Conversation.”⁶

Discussion

In order to discuss the development of an agritourism industry in Arkansas, one must first have a solid understanding of the concept of agritourism. The discussion below defines agritourism, lists common examples of agritourism, examines several agritourism operations currently operating throughout the United States, and discusses the significance of agritourism.

“Agritourism” Defined

“Agritourism” has been defined in various ways. Simply stated, agritourism could be thought of as the crossroads of tourism and agriculture. Stated more technically, “agritourism” can be defined as any business conducted by a farmer or processor for the enjoyment or education of the public to promote the products of the farm and to generate additional farm income.

The term could be similarly defined as a form of commercial enterprise that links agricultural production and/or processing with tourism in order to attract visitors onto a farm, ranch, or other agricultural business for the purposes of entertaining and/or educating the visitors and generating income for the farm, ranch, or business owner. One scholar defines “agritourism” as “agricultural activities that feature educational and recreational activities in addition to the traditional role as commodity production.”⁷

The American Farm Bureau Federation has defined agritourism as:

an enterprise at a working farm, ranch or agricultural plant conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates income for the owner. Agricultural tourism refers to the act of visiting a working farm or any horticultural or agricultural operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education or active involvement in the activities at the farm or operation that also adds to the economic viability of the site.⁸

Members of the Tennessee Agritourism Initiative, which is described in detail below, defined agritourism as “an activity, enterprise or business that combines primary elements and characteristics of Tennessee agriculture and tourism and provides an experience for visitors that stimulates economic activity and impacts both farm and community income.”⁹ Agritourism is occasionally referred to as “agri-tourism,” “agrotourism,” “farm tourism,” “agricultural tourism,” or “agritainment.”

⁶ This article was prepared in conjunction with “Agritourism in Arkansas: A Strategic Conversation,” a collaborative effort of the Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism and the Winthrop Rockefeller Center of the University of Arkansas System.

⁷ Chuck Culver, GLOSSARY OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, PROGRAMS, AND POLICY (4th ed.), available at <http://www.nationalaglawcenter.org>.

⁸ See Susan Ryan, et al, *Agritourism in Pennsylvania: An Industry Assessment*, 7 (Mar. 2006), available at <http://www.ruralpa.org/agritourism20006.pdf> (stating that it adopted the American Farm Bureau’s definition of agritourism for purposes of its industry assessment).

⁹ Megan L. Bruch, *The Tennessee Agritourism Initiative: A Summary of Activities and Accomplishments*, 2 (June 2006), available at <http://www.cpa.utk.edu/level2/agritourism/TNAAgriTourInitiative-06.pdf>.

Regardless of the exact definition or terminology one applies, this article operates on the assumption that the definition should include the following four factors:

- combines the essential elements of the tourism and agriculture industries;
- attracts members of the public to visit agricultural operations;
- designed to increase farm income; and
- provides recreation, entertainment, and/or educational experiences to visitors.

Agritourism operations exist throughout the United States and in many parts of the world. These operations range from small operations that operate on a seasonal basis and offer limited consumer services to large operations that operate throughout the year and provide numerous consumer services. Jane Eckert, founder of Eckert AgriMarketing, a business enterprise that provides marketing services to farms, orchards, and ranch operators engaged in agritourism, opines that there are basically three levels of agritourism operations.¹⁰ According to Eckert,

Level I simply involves selling what you grow from a farm stand, tent or small store. A Level II operation creates an authentic farm experience that can be simple or involved and may include an expanded retail area in a permanent building and activities that offer a variety of options such as play areas, pick-your-own produce, corn mazes, workshops, petting zoos, concessions, etc. A Level III operation graduates to a large retail shopping destination/facility that is open year-round with a restaurant, permanent restrooms, paved parking and major special events.¹¹

Agritourism Examples

There are a multitude of examples of enterprises that fall within the definitions offered above. Pumpkin picking patches, corn mazes, U-Pick operations, feeding zoos, hay rides, and any combination of these examples are perhaps the most common. Other examples include the following:

- Christmas tree farms/cut your own;
- fee hunting and fishing;
- nature trails;
- birdwatching;
- dude ranches;
- rural bed & breakfasts;
- garden tours;
- demonstration farms;
- agricultural museums;
- living history farms;
- winery tours/wine tasting;
- breweries;
- country stores;
- aquaculture tours;
- shrimp/crawfish farm tours;
- on-farm farmers' markets;
- agricultural festivals and fairs;
- haunted barns;
- scarecrow making;
- farm-stay vacations;
- pony rides;
- cider presses;
- horse demonstrations;
- horse drawn farm equipment rides;
- or any combination of any of these examples.

¹⁰ The web site address for Eckert AgriMarketing is <http://www.eckertagrimarketing.com>.

¹¹ Christa Hartsook, Agricultural Marketing Resource Center, University of Iowa, CULTIVATING AGRITOURISM (July 2004), <http://www.agmrc.org>.

Several agritourism enterprises operating throughout the United States are briefly examined below. The purpose of this examination is to help provide a better perspective and understanding of the concept of agritourism. Each description is followed by the web site address for that operation so that each operation can be further explored if the reader so desires.

Conners A-Maize-ing Acres

Eddie Conner is a fifth generation farmer located in Nassau County, Florida. In December of 2002, Eddie learned that his poultry growing operation was apparently coming to an unexpected end. Searching for a way to replace lost income, Mr. Conner and his family eventually launched an agritourism operation that featured two corn mazes. The first year brought in approximately 12,000 visitors. According to the web site, Conners A-Maize-ing Acres “was created to provide a wholesome environment where families can come together and enjoy good, clean fun.” It also strives “to educate the public on the importance of agriculture and the American Farmer through various programs, events, and activities.” The web site address for Conners A-Maize-ing Acres is <http://www.connerscornfieldmaze.com>.

Lane Packing Company

Lane Packing Company is a fourth generation family farm dating back to 1904 that specializes in growing and shipping Georgia peaches and pecans. Through the years the operation has grown and expanded in significant ways. In particular, Lane Packing has evolved to include a Roadside Market that provides seasonal produce, the Peachtree Café, the Just Peachy Gift Shop, and a full service mail order department to facilitate the selling of its products.

Lane Packing offers three types of farm tours: the Orchard Tour, the Packing Line Tour, and the Strawberry Field Trip. The Orchard Tour consists of a tram ride through the pecan and peach orchards, during which visitors learn about the history of pecan and peach production as well as how the crops are grown and harvested. The Packing Line Tour allows visitors to view the entire packing process from an elevated platform. The Strawberry Field Trip is geared towards entertainment for children and students. Children on this tour will learn how strawberries are grown, pick berries, and enjoy a cup of fresh strawberry ice cream. Children that come in school groups will be provided a class photo that can be displayed back in the classroom.

In a Georgia Farm Bureau news article that focused on Lane Packing Company’s agritourism activities, it was reported that the President of Lane Packing stated, “We see agritourism being a bigger part of agriculture. We started our venture with one ice cream churn and six rocking chairs never dreaming it would get this big, but it’s been driven by the general public who want to get out and see what’s going on at the farm.”

The operation is open throughout the year. The web site address for Lane Packing Company is <http://www.lanepacking.com>.

Hunter’s Honey Farm

Hunter’s Honey Farm is located in Martinsville, Indiana, a community located in south-central Indiana comprised of approximately 11,000 inhabitants. Hunter’s Honey Farm is a family-owned and operated farm that describes itself as “a third generation of beekeepers who have been producing honey and honey related products in Indiana for over 90 years.” The farm offers tours of its operations to visitors of all ages and groups of any size. The farm also maintains a gift shop for its visitors. A typical tour allows visitors to sample several kinds of honey, watch the honey extraction process and how honey is bottled, learn how candles are made, walk through the honey house, and listen to a presentation about honey bees and products derived from the beehive. The farm also provides online shopping, selling products that range from beeswax, to skin care products, to candy and books. The web site address for Hunter’s Honey Farm is <http://www.huntershoneyfarm.com>.

Adam's Family Farm

Adam's Family Farm is a working sixth-generation farm in southern Vermont that has operated since 1865. Adam's Family Farm provides visitors with numerous agritourism opportunities, including sleigh rides (which, according to the farm's web site, is ranked as one of USA Today's top ten great sleigh rides), a livestock barn, and bus tours. Adam's Family Farm also provides bonfire parties, Halloween bonfire parties, knitting circles, and spinning bees, among other services. The web address for the Adam's Family Farm is <http://www.adamsfamilyfarm.com>.

Burton Cotton Gin & Museum

The mission of the Burton Cotton Gin & Museum is "to create an interpretive museum complex that will preserve the era when Burton was a farm town and the Burton Farmer's Gin was a central part of community life." Its vision is "to operate a fully accredited museum program that interprets life in an historic Texas cotton town in ways that build local pride and ownership." The Gin & Museum hosts an annual Cotton Gin Festival, with the 18th Annual Cotton Gin Festival scheduled for April 20-22, 2007. The web site address for the Burton Cotton Gin & Museum is <http://www.cottonginmuseum.org>.

Sequoia View Bed & Breakfast

Sequoia View Bed & Breakfast is a California-based operation that offers bed and breakfast lodging on a 20-acre vineyard. The operation provides a full breakfast with foods that are either grown on the operation or are locally grown. It offers a wine-tasting room and handcrafted wines made on the site by the innkeepers. Sequoia View promotes itself as an ideal place for visitors to stay in a quiet, relaxed environment and still be within a short driving distance of several tourism sites, including river rafting on the nearby Kings River, two national parks, trout fishing streams, golf courses, and another agritourism operation that features an extensive herb garden and demonstrations on how to use the herbs. The web site address for Sequoia View Bed & Breakfast is <http://www.svbnb.com>.

Ellms' Christmas Trees

Ellms Christmas Trees is a family-operated Christmas tree farm located in Upstate New York that has been in operation for nearly twenty years. The operation consists of approximately 200 acres of ponds, forests, and Christmas tree fields. Ellms' Christmas Trees advertises itself as a family-friendly operation and invites visitors "to come and enjoy the picturesque scenery" on their farm. Upon arriving, visitors are provided a map and price list. Also, visitors are invited to walk through an exhibit that describes various types of Christmas trees in order to help the visitors make their decisions. Visitors then ride a trolley that takes them to the Christmas tree fields where they are provided saws and carts. Once the tree is chosen, it is placed in the trolley and taken back to the main area to be measured, shaken, and wrapped for easier transport. Ellms' Christmas Trees also sells hand-made wreaths at the operation. The web site address for Ellms' Christmas Trees is <http://www.ellmstrees.com>.

Fair Oaks Dairy Adventure

Fair Oaks Farms is a Illinois dairy operation located approximately 75 miles from downtown Chicago. Fair Oaks's web site states that "the art of dairy is what we do, and on the extraordinary Fair Oaks Farms, our family is honored to make the freshest milk, award winning cheeses and fine ice cream, everyday, for you." The operation offers a dairy store that sells a variety of products derived from Fair Oaks Farms, tours and trips for school children as well as adult groups. In addition, the operation is equipped to handle corporate outings. Fair Oaks also markets and sells its products on-line, particularly its wide range of speciality cheeses. The web site address for Fair Oaks Farms is <http://www.fofarms.com>.

Joe Huber Family Farm & Restaurant

Located in Starlight, Indiana, the Joe Huber Family Farm & Restaurant is an elaborate 200-acre agritourism operation that offers tourists a wide range of year-round activities. The enterprise is

located in Starlight, Indiana The Joe Huber Family Farm & Restaurant is designed to serve families, corporate outings, tour buses, fundraisers, conventions, church groups, and gatherings of all other kinds such as family reunions and birthday parties.

The family inadvertently entered the agritourism business in 1976 when the owners advertised that people could come out and pick their own green beans. Enough people answered the advertisement that the operation expanded to allow for picking other fruits and vegetables. Later, the family added in a Farm Market that remains in operation today. The operation continued to evolve to the point that it opened a restaurant that also remains a part of the family's operation.

In addition to a restaurant and farm market, Joe Huber Family Farm & Restaurant offers a variety of barnyard activities and field trips, volleyball and basketball courts, fishing, paint ball shooting, and guided tractor rides through strawberry and pumpkin fields, apple orchards, and elaborate flower gardens. Visitors can pick their own fruits, vegetables, and flowers. The operation also the "Little Farmer Country Motor-Cross" and Team Building sessions for groups of all sizes and ages. Joe Huber Family Farm & Restaurant also offers a barnyard, petting zoo, the "Billy Goat Walk," giant Koi fish, and catfishing.

The operation hosts various events such as comedy shows, a dinner theater, musical concerts, and a Christmas show. These events generate income and help attract visitors onto the operation so that they can participate in other activities offered by Joe Huber Family Farm & Restaurant. The web site address for Joe Huber Family Farm & Restaurant is <http://www.joehubers.com>.

* * *

A person interested in exploring additional agritourism operations can find any number of operations by conducting a routine Internet search. Also, there are at least two national databases of agritourism operations one can visit to examine additional agritourism operations:

- <http://www.agritourismworld.com>
- <http://www.farmstop.com>

Importance of Agritourism

As note earlier in this article, agritourism represents the crossroads of tourism and agriculture. Consequently, agritourism presents a unique opportunity to combine Arkansas' diverse tourism and agriculture industries in order to provide a number of financial, educational, and social benefits to tourists, producers, and communities throughout the state. Thus agritourism is important for a number of reasons, including:

- Provides producers opportunities to generate additional income, particularly through the direct marketing of their products to consumers. For example, a honey producer who sells honey to various retail outlets could modify her operation by providing tours that describe the practice of raising bees and honey, as well as demonstrating other aspects of the farming operation to visitors. At the end of tour, the producer could offer honey and other related products for sale.
- Is an economic development concept that can assist communities throughout the state by increasing the local tax base and employment opportunities.
- Provides the public, particularly children, the opportunity to learn about agriculture and food production. Most Americans are not connected to agriculture and, therefore, are disconnected to agriculture and the production of various types of food and other

agricultural products. Agritourism can help bridge this gap by telling the story of agriculture and demonstrating how certain products are produced.

- Helps preserve agricultural lands that otherwise might be converted to residential or commercial uses. The “urbanization” of traditionally agricultural lands is a significant problem in many communities. Agritourism provides an alternative use for agricultural land that can help maintain the viability of the operation so that it remains under agricultural use. In addition, agritourism is a vehicle by which urbanites can gain appreciation for the value of rural areas.
- Provides communities throughout the state opportunities to develop business enterprises that cannot be later “outsourced” to other countries. In today’s global economy, states’ and communities’ competition to attract and maintain jobs is fierce. Because agritourism depends upon resources already located in a particular area, its success does not depend upon attracting outside employers and is not threatened by the prospect of being “outsourced” overseas.
- Provides an affordable and easily accessible family outing that individuals and families can participate in without much planning.
- Agritourism provides local tourism officials new flexibility to enhance existing tourism attractions. For example, a community that hosted some type of annual festival could work with its local producers to develop agritourism opportunities to attract visitors to spend additional dollars and prolong their stay.
- Helps achieve the tourism goal of increasing the volume of visitors into an area and the length of time that they stay in the area.

States’ Efforts to Promote Agritourism

Citizens, organizations, officials, and/or others in a few states have undertaken activities to promote agritourism, while some in other states appear not to have promoted agritourism in any substantial way. Individuals, organizations, officials and others in a small but growing number of states have gone as far as to promote agritourism as an industry in their state through the development and implementation of a comprehensive statewide program. Examples of states that have been at the forefront of developing an agritourism industry are Vermont, Kentucky, Indiana, Kansas, and Tennessee.

The discussion below examines the efforts made in several states to enhance agritourism. The discussion begins with a focus on the efforts made by Indiana, Tennessee, and Kentucky. The examination of these states is followed by a summarization of the efforts made in several other states.

This discussion represents only few states. It is intended to provide a background for discussion, rather than a comprehensive recitation of the efforts made in all 50 states, or even for those states that are discussed. The review is helpful in that it demonstrates the types of things that could be considered as part of Arkansas’ ultimate promotional efforts.

Indiana

On March 7, 2005, a white paper titled “Indiana Agri-tourism: Maximizing Opportunities for Development & Future Success” was issued by the Indiana Agritourism Working Group. The white paper detailed the efforts that had been made in Indiana up to that point regarding how to develop a

statewide agritourism industry and discussed future plans. The discussion below is based on the Indiana white paper, the full text of which is available on the Internet at <http://www.cfs.purdue.edu/htm/cai/INAgri-Tourism.pdf>.

In 2003, Indiana state officials created the “Indiana Agri-Tourism Working Group” in order to capitalize on consumer demand for agritourism. The Working Group initially consisted of representatives of the following:

- Indiana Department of Commerce’s Office of Tourism;
- Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture;
- Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service;
- Purdue Tourism Hospitality Research Center;
- Indiana Rural Development Council; and
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

The Working Group subsequently included a Legislative Outreach committee, an Education & Outreach committee, a Marketing & Product Development committee, a funding committee, and several individual producers, tourism professionals, and economic development professionals.

The Working Group’s first action was to identify and dialogue with agricultural and tourism related organizations. This helped the Working Group garner further interest in the project and to assess the level of support for developing a statewide agritourism program. The Working Group sought input from the agriculture community at large, agricultural educators, local and regional tourism organizations, local economic development organizations, and chambers of commerce.

The Working Group also commissioned a survey of existing agritourism operations in Indiana. The survey was conducted through the Office of Commissioner of Agriculture and the Indiana Department of Commerce’s Tourism Division. The primary purpose of the survey was to gather information from operators that would ultimately help establish the foundation upon which future agritourism plans could be made.

The survey provided important information on matters such as where agritourism operations were located, their proximity to interstates and population centers, and the average driving distance from the surveyed operations to the nearest welcome center or visitors’ bureau. The survey also provided information such as where visitors traveled from, characteristics of agritourism visitors (married versus single, children or no children), and the numbers of individuals that visit different operations.

The survey also helped identify the types of challenges agritourism operators confronted. The survey revealed twelve challenges, the most important of which were identifying new markets for products and services, undertaking marketing and promotional activities, finding qualified employees, and addressing legal liability concerns. Other challenges identified in the course of the survey included obtaining operating capital and navigating state and local zoning and permit laws.

Building on these efforts, the Working Group developed a Mission Statement:

The mission of the Indiana Agri-Tourism Working Group is to develop and present Indiana agricultural resources as unique selling propositions of rural tourism to the travel market.

The Working Group also identified seven broad goals for carrying out the Mission Statement. These goals were as follows:

Goal #1

Create a statewide Master Plan for agritourism, based on the recommendations of the Indiana Agritourism Working Group and Indiana Tourism Council.

Goal #2

Develop an agritourism web site to aggressively market the industry sector in the state, nationally, and internationally.

Goal #3

Form an agritourism Education & Outreach Program to develop and promote an agritourism training and certification program.

Goal #4

Assign responsibility for implementation of the Master Plan.

Goal #5

Identify strategies to strengthen state-sponsored support for future development of the agritourism industry.

Goal #6

Work closely with the Indiana General Assembly to identify and resolve impediments to agritourism development as well as explore incentives to spur additional investment in agritourism related venues.

Goal #7

Form an agritourism cooperative.

Building on this process, the Working Group in 2004 began working with the Indiana Legislature to enact legislation designed to promote the development of an agritourism industry. The legislation created two state government-level agritourism positions to be added into the Indiana Tourism Council. The legislation also set forth a comprehensive strategy for developing an agritourism industry in Indiana. The legislation mandated that:

- A statewide master plan for agritourism be created. This plan was to be based on recommendations submitted by the Indiana Agritourism Working Group and the Indiana Tourism Council (which, as noted above, would be comprised of two positions focused on agritourism).
- The master plan would assign responsibility for implementation of the plan.
- A web site be developed that marketed Indiana agritourism to local, national, and international audiences.
- An inventory of agritourism opportunities be created and included on the web site.
- Permanent resources be provided to sustain agritourism promotion efforts long-term.
- The “Made in Indiana” brand be developed and marketed.
- An agritourism marketing and public relations plan be created.
- Regional agritourism initiatives be created through local tourism commissions.

- Matching grant funds through local, state, and federal programs be identified and pursued.
- Possible products and venues for development be identified.
- An “Agri-Tourism Education & Outreach” program be created for the purpose of developing and promoting agritourism training and certification programs.
- Challenges to agritourism development such as liability and insurance be addressed.
- Mutually-beneficial partnerships with public and private organizations be explored.
- Regional partnerships through tourism bureaus, county extension offices, and other relevant organizations be created.

Tennessee

Since 2003, Tennessee has undertaken a number of activities to promote a statewide agritourism industry. In June of 2006, the University of Tennessee Extension provided a report to the Tennessee Department of Agriculture titled, “The Tennessee Agritourism Initiative: A Summary of Activities and Accomplishments.” The discussion below synthesizes key components of the efforts made by Tennessee through the Tennessee Agritourism Initiative. The discussion below is based on the publication, which can be obtained at <http://www.cpa.utk.edu/level2/agritourism/TNAgriTourInitiative-06.pdf>.

In 2003, the Tennessee Agritourism Initiative was established as a partnership between the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, the Tourist Development, the Economic and Community Development and Transportation, the University of Tennessee Extension (including the Extension’s Center for Profitable Agriculture), and the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation. The initial efforts of the Initiative were funded primarily through a \$225,000 USDA Rural Development grant.

The Initiative’s primary goal was “to increase farm income and make a positive impact on rural communities in Tennessee.” The Initiative set a timeline of June of 2003 through June of 2006 to achieve the goal. It also established a four-pronged strategy:

- To develop an inventory of the agritourism industry and agritourism visitors in Tennessee;
- To undertake training and education efforts;
- To conduct marketing and promotional efforts; and
- To continue oversight and promotion by the project steering committee.

The first action the Initiative undertook was to study agritourism and state-sponsored agritourism programs in other states. In particular, the Tennessee Initiative focused on Vermont and its promotion efforts. In 2003, nine leaders representing four state agencies traveled to Vermont for several days “to learn about successful agritourism efforts in the state and to develop a plan to assist in building income for farms and rural communities through agritourism in Tennessee.” The following year, several Initiative partners traveled to Virginia and Kentucky to study those states’ efforts and gain a better perspective regarding organizational structure, funding strategies, and other related matters.

The second action the Initiative undertook was to develop a working definition of agritourism that was specific to Tennessee. Ultimately, the Initiative agreed to define “agritourism” in the following way:

An agritourism attraction is an activity, enterprise or business which combines primary elements and characteristics of Tennessee agriculture and tourism and provides an experience for visitors which stimulates economic activity and impacts both farm and community income.

The Initiative also conducted two agritourism studies as part of its efforts to understand the agritourism industry and its customers. The purpose of the first study “was to identify characteristics of the agritourism industry in Tennessee and to identify issues and obstacles faced by agritourism enterprises that may be addressed through research, teaching and outreach.” The operators that participated in the survey provided information on the types of attractions and services they offered, characteristics of the operations, visitor information, revenue information, promotional efforts they may have undertaken, challenges they faced, and their outlook on the future of the industry. Some of the survey results were used as part of the Initiative’s promotional efforts, including on the Tennessee Department of Agriculture’s Pick Tennessee Products Web site, <http://www.picktnproducts.org>, and on the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development’s Web site, <http://www.tnvacation.com>.

The results of the first study were published by the University of Tennessee Extension Publication titled “*A Snapshot of Tennessee Agritourism: Results from the 2003 Enterprise Inventory.*” The publication was widely distributed and is available on the Internet at <http://cpa.utk.edu/pdf/files/PB1747.pdf>.

The main purpose of the second study was to continue compiling a detailed inventory of the number and types of agritourism enterprises in Tennessee. The results of the second study have been published as a report to the Tennessee Agritourism Initiative in a document titled “*Agritourism in Tennessee: Current Status and Future Growth, 2003-2004.*” The full text of this document is available on the Internet at <http://web.utk.edu/%7Eaimag/pubs/agritour.pdf>. The study also surveyed agritourism enterprise customers, though the results regarding this aspect of the study were not available as of June of 2006.

As part of its educational and outreach efforts, the Initiative also held coordinated regional workshops, a three-day agritourism conference, and several smaller seminars. In all, more than 69 events were held for nearly 3,500 participants. The workshops, conference, and seminars addressed a number of issues, including web site development and marketing training, legal liability and insurance issues, farm safety. The conference was a three-day conference titled “Agritourism: Cultivating Farm Revenue.” It focused on how to build farm income in Tennessee through agritourism and was one of the Initiative’s major accomplishments with respect to its educational and outreach efforts. Another major accomplishment was the publication of a ten chapter agritourism operating guide titled “*Agritourism in Focus: A Guide for Tennessee Farmers,*” a copy of which is available at <http://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/pbfiles/PB1754.pdf>.

In early 2006, the Initiative also began publishing an electronic newsletter, Tennessee Agritourism Today. The purpose of the newsletter is “to educate and inform agritourism operators and professionals who work toward enhancing the industry” and includes, among other items, information on market trends and fundamental business concepts. In addition, the University of Tennessee Extension, through its Center for Profitable Agriculture, has recognized agritourism as a major educational purpose for which it will provide educational materials.

The Initiative undertook several marketing and promotional efforts. The efforts included “listing of agritourism venues on the Pick Tennessee Products and Tennessee tourism Web sites; press releases; advertisements and sponsorships; and regional agritourism brochures.” The Initiative

partners also assisted in the development of a statewide association for agritourism operators that is designed to maintain an agritourism effort throughout the state. The association has held several organizational meetings, developed bylaws, and expects to continue to grow in the months ahead.

“*The Tennessee Agritourism Initiative: A Summary of Activities and Accomplishments*” concludes that

The Tennessee Agritourism Initiative proved to be successful in positively impacting rural communities and increasing farm income in the state. The impact of the initiative has potential to grow into the future as agritourism entrepreneurs continue to implement knowledge learned through educational programs and use tools developed, customers first introduced to agritourism enterprises through initiative promotions become lifetime customers and spread the word about their experiences to others, and the agritourism operators association begins its work.

Kentucky

Kentucky has also undertaken significant efforts to promote the development of an agritourism industry in the state. In fact, Kentucky’s efforts predated the efforts of Indiana and Tennessee.

In 2000, officials at the Kentucky Department of Agriculture began receiving a large volume of inquiries regarding agritourism opportunities. A large number of these calls derived from producers who sought assistance in developing and marketing their agritourism operations. As a result, the Department created the Kentucky Agritourism Working Group to begin exploring ways “to improve and promote the viability of a state-wide agritourism industry sector.” Several months later, the Working Group issued a white paper titled, “*Establishment of an Agritourism Industry in Kentucky.*” The entire white paper “Establishment of an Agritourism Industry in Kentucky” can be accessed from http://www.kyagr.com/mkt_promo/agritourism/, which is a part of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture web site.

The white paper established five main goals and six recommendations. The goals set forth in the white paper were as follows:

Goal #1

To address the insurance and infrastructure needs of the agritourism industry sector.

Goal #2

To provide new and expanded tourism-based economic opportunities for displaced tobacco farmers and farm families including: job development, new markets, networks and product development.

Goal #3

To market agricultural tourism in Kentucky, nationally, and internationally as a new and unique visitor experience.

Goal #4

To provide education and support to farmers and agribusiness regarding agritourism opportunities, networks, and entrepreneurship; and

Goal #5

To provide capital and business assistance for farmers and agritourism to increase viability, sustainability and growth of agricultural tourism businesses and services.

The recommendations set forth in the white paper were are follows:

Recommendation #1

Create a statewide Master Plan for Agritourism, based on the recommendations of the Kentucky Agritourism Working Group.

Recommendation #2

Assign responsibility for implementation of the Master Plan.

Recommendation #3

Develop an agritourism website to aggressively market the industry sector in state, nationally, and internationally.

Recommendation #4

Develop Regional Agritourism initiatives through local tourist commissions, regional matching fund areas, and the state.

Recommendation #5

Form an Agritourism Education Task Force to develop and promote agritourism training and certification programs.

Recommendation #6

Establishment permanent resources for the continued development of a statewide Agritourism Opportunity Outreach Program and aggressive marketing plan addressing impediment issues such as insurance and capital access.

In 2002, the Kentucky General Assembly enacted legislation that created the Office of Agritourism to serve as an interagency office between the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and Kentucky Tourism Department. The General Assembly also created the Kentucky Agritourism Advisory Council to operate within the Kentucky Department of Agriculture “to advise and assist the Office of Agritourism.”¹² The Council is comprised of nine regional representatives who represent the agritourism industry and 16 additional state agency representatives.

The Office of Agritourism is required by law to carry out the following duties:

- Develop a statewide master plan;
- Report to the Agritourism Advisory Council about the plan at the request of the Council;
- Develop a unified marketing strategy between the Department of Agriculture and the Commerce Cabinet to promote Kentucky Agritourism, including the development of an agritourism web site and advertising through media outlets;
- Educate the general public about Kentucky’s agriculture industry;
- Develop regional plans for each of the state’s nine tourism regions;

¹² Information about the Kentucky Office of Agritourism can be found at http://www.kyagr.com/mkt_promo/agritourism/office.htm. Information about the Kentucky Agritourism Advisory Council can be found at http://www.kyagr.com/mkt_promo/agritourism/advisorycouncil.htm.

- Provide support, education, and resource materials for existing and potential Kentucky agritourism businesses, including education, funding opportunities, insurance, and infrastructure concerns; and
- Work and partner with federal, state, and local organizations.

Kansas

The Kansas Department of Commerce, through its Travel & Tourism Development and Agricultural Marketing divisions, is spearheading the development of an agritourism industry in Kansas through an effort referred to as the Kansas Agritourism Initiative. The Department of Commerce works in conjunction with the Kansas Agritourism Advisory Council, which is comprised of 18 members who represent various USDA, tourism, and producer interests. A list of the Advisory Council's members is available at http://www.kansasagritourism.org/AgT_AdvisoryCouncil.htm. The state government has contracted with Jane Eckert of Eckert AgriMarketing (<http://www.eckertagrimarketing.com>) to assist with the Agritourism Initiative.

The Kansas Agritourism Initiative was launched in February of 2004. The goals of the Agritourism Initiative are “to generate more tourism revenue for the state, and to help Kansas farmers and ranchers boost their income and preserve their enterprises by tapping into the emerging market for agritourism.”¹³

Additional information about the agritourism promotion efforts made in Kansas can be found at <http://www.kansasagritourism.org>.

Alabama

In Alabama, four agencies and organizations combined efforts to form the “Alabama Agri-Tourism Partnership.” The agencies and organizations involved are the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel, Alabama Farmers Federation, and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. The stated purpose of the “Alabama Agri-Tourism Partnership” is “to develop and market a statewide agri-tourism database and directory, the Alabama Agri-Tourism Trail.” To learn more about the Alabama Agritourism Partnership and its efforts, including the Agri-Tourism Trail, visit <http://www.alabamagritourism.com>.

California

California promotes agritourism statewide through the efforts of the Small Farm Center at the University of California–Davis. The Small Farm Center promotes agritourism in California as an “alternative for improving the incomes and potential economic viability of small farms and rural communities.” The Center hosts the “California Agri-tourism Database” and provides other educational materials designed to assist producers and others to engage in and advance their agricultural interests.

According to its web site, the Center is participating in a project titled, “Adding Value to Agriculture: A Collaborative Approach Based on Agricultural Tourism.” The goal of the project is to assist individuals, organizations, and others “to formulate visions, develop strategies, and begin to develop agritourism enterprises to add value to agriculture and rural products, and to create markets for them.” The project is funded by a grant from the USDA’s Fund for Rural America. The Small Farm Center web site address is <http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu>.

¹³ See “Kansas Launches Agritourism Initiative”, available at <http://www.eckertagrimarketing.com/articles/kansascommerce.shtml>.

Under the index heading titled “Program Areas” one can access the Small Farm Center’s information pertaining to “Agricultural Tourism.”

Colorado

The Colorado Department of Agriculture promotes agritourism in the state by providing an agritourism database divided into approximately twenty categories of agritourism operations. Farmers and ranchers can have their agritourism operations listed in the publicly available database, free of charge. Categories include agricultural festivals, dude ranches, private fishing opportunities, wineries, corn mazes, and pumpkin patches. The Department also provides a Colorado Agritourism Survey that farmers and ranchers can complete on-line.

The Colorado Department of Agriculture web site address is <http://www.ag.state.co.us>. The web address for the Department’s “Colorado Agritourism” page is <http://www.ag.state.co.us/mkt/agritourism/agritourism.html>.

Connecticut

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture is the lead entity for promoting agritourism throughout the state. The Department works in conjunction with the Connecticut Department of Transportation, the Connecticut Farm Bureau, and the University of Connecticut College of Agriculture and Natural Resources to publish the “Connecticut Farm Map,” which is a “colored, full-scale road map that lists by category 222 farm businesses with detailed directions to their establishments and brief descriptions of their business.” The map includes agritourism, farmers’ markets, pick-your-own operations, among other categories.

The USDA Rural Business Service supported the development of the farm map. In addition, funding for printing the map was provided by a Rural Business Enterprise grant. The Department also provides on its web site a loosely-constructed on-line database of agritourism operations throughout the state.

The web site address for the Connecticut Department of Agriculture is <http://www.ct.gov/doag>. The Department’s information regarding agritourism is difficult to locate on the site. Consequently, the best method for locating the information is to go to the Department home page and enter a word search for “agri-tourism.”

Delaware

The Delaware Department of Agriculture and the Delaware Tourism Office have combined efforts to create the “Delaware Agritourism Association”. While not entirely clear, it appears that the Association is a private association that is backed by the state’s Department of Agriculture and Tourism Office.

The mission of the Delaware Agritourism Association is “to increase potential farm incomes, improve the economic viability of our farms and communities, and promote the benefits and value of agriculture to our State’s quality of life.” The Association’s web site offers a membership application, provides a database of agritourism operations along the operations’ respective web sites, and offers a list of self-guided tours throughout the state. The web site address for the Association is <http://www.defunonthefarm.org>.

Georgia

Georgia has undertaken a statewide agritourism initiative titled, “Growing up in Georgia.” “Growing up in Georgia” is a partnership between the Georgia Department of Agriculture, Georgia

Department of Economic Development, Georgia Rural Development Council, and the Governor's Agricultural Advisory Committee. While these efforts have been made, it is not clear how far Georgia's agritourism efforts have progressed. The web site designed to highlight Georgia's agritourism efforts, <http://www.georgiaonmymind.org>, does not yet seem to up and running.

Illinois

In 2004, the Agriculture & Tourism Partners of Illinois (ATPI) was formed "with the primary mission of supporting the development of Agritourism in Illinois through educational programs and other means to promote the development of new Agritourism businesses and to insure the economic viability of existing Agritourism businesses." The core beliefs of ATPI are that

- the agritourism industry in Illinois has great potential;
- farm owners and operators should have better enterprise alternatives to generate income and employment opportunities;
- a partnership between tourism and agriculture industries will be mutually beneficial;
- agritourism is an economic development tool that will benefit multiple interests in Illinois; and
- agritourism will help the Illinois tourism industry to expand and become more profitable.

ATPI's mission is "to encourage, foster, support, and stimulate tourism development, especially Agritourism, in Illinois through support of existing business and development of new business." ATPI also publishes a Farm Activity Guidebook that is made available upon request. The web site address for ATPI is <http://agritourismillinois.com>.

Louisiana

Louisiana promotes agritourism through the "Louisiana Agri-Tourism Poster Series," which is undertaken through a cooperative effort of the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry and the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism. The Poster Series not only promotes Louisiana's agricultural products but also the state's unique musical styles. Additional information about the Poster Series, including images of several agritourism posters, can be found at <http://www.ldaf.state.la.us/divisions/marketing/posters/default.asp>.

Pulling It All Together

In summary, this article has examined the concept of agritourism through descriptions, definitions, examples, and developmental efforts in other states to build agritourism as a viable economic development tool. The review of Indiana, Tennessee, and Kentucky and other states demonstrated focused efforts on at least on of the following broad categories: (1) Inventory; (2) Research; (3) Structure; (4) Marketing/Promotion; (5) Education/Training; (6) Legislation; and (7) Funding. In all likelihood, discussions regarding the development of a statewide agritourism industry in Arkansas will revolve around aspects of these categories.

The information set forth in this article will provide a context from which producers, state officials, private organizations, citizens, and other relevant stakeholders can initiate a discussion regarding the development of a program to promote an agritourism industry in Arkansas.

“Planting the Seeds for a New Industry in Arkansas. Agritourism is providing Arkansas with a natural way to retail and promote what we currently have in our state. Also, agritourism is realizing its potential to provide significant benefits to people in rural Arkansas – higher local incomes and the creation of new jobs, most notably.” The University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture reports that agriculture is Arkansas’s single largest industry, accounting for approximately 20% of the Gross State Product.⁴ Approximately 48,000 farms combine to generate more than \$6.6 billion in annual farm income.⁵

1 Planting the Seeds for a New Industry in Arkansas: Agritourism.