



Agritourism in Arkansas

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The Winthrop Rockefeller Center Receives Grant to Study Agritourism

According to the Arkansas Agricultural Statistical Service, economic losses to Arkansas agricultural producers in 2005 were estimated to be \$923 million. While these losses have different causes, the results for many rural farming communities are the same – a downward trend in income, population and public services. For many other states, agritourism



Agritourism in Action. Examining cotton at the farmstead of The Winthrop Rockefeller Center are (from left), Buddy Hoelzeman, Arkansas River Valley Tri-Peaks board member; David G. Davies, executive director of The Center; and Joe Foster, program coordinator at The Center.

- any activity which is designed to increase farm and community income through combining the elements of the tourism and agriculture industries - has begun to turn these conditions around. David G. Davies, executive director of the University of Arkansas System's Winthrop Rockefeller Center said it was this potential of agritourism that led The Center to apply for a \$50,000 Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG).

According to Davies, staff at The Center will use the \$50,000 grant to help communities in the six counties surrounding Petit Jean Mountain - Conway, Johnson, Logan, Pope, Perry and Yell counties - explore how agritourism can serve as an economic catalyst.

Agriculture and tourism related entities in the state that will be providing assistance on this project, include: the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service; Arkansas

Department of Parks and Tourism; the National Agricultural Law Center; Arkansas Farm Bureau; Arkansas Game & Fish Commission; Arkansas Department of Heritage; Arkansas River Valley Tri-Peaks Region; the National Center for Appropriate Technology; and, the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The Arkansas River Valley Pilot Project for Agritourism Development, the project's formal name, will assist the rural population from the six county area in developing, implementing and evaluating an initial plan for agricultural tourism by private, public and nonprofit entities. Additionally, the project will organize and coordinate conferences and workshops to identify, train, and provide technical assistance to existing and prospective producers within the defined project area, with future workshops extending to participants across the state.

VISIT THE AGRITOURISM READING ROOM!

LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION ON AGRITOURISM?

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS' SCHOOL OF LAW NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LAW CENTER PROVIDES THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE UP-TO-DATE SOURCE. THE "READING ROOM" SUPPLIES RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS DETAILING ISSUES RELATED TO AGRITOURISM IN BOTH ARKANSAS AND ACROSS THE NATION. AMONG THE MANY TOPICS COVERED, YOU WILL FIND ARTICLES ON LEGAL/LIABILITY ISSUES, INSURANCE, MARKETING STRATEGIES, AND RESOURCE GUIDES. THIS VALUABLE RESOURCE IS AVAILABLE ON THE WEB AT:

WWW.NATIONALAGLAWCENTER.ORG/READINGROOMS/AGRITOURISM/

Action Plan Developed for Arkansas Agritourism

A report detailing the initial action plan for Agritourism in Arkansas has been released by The Winthrop Rockefeller Center. On July 27th and 28th, at a strategic conversation

sponsored by The Center along with the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, Harrison Pittman, co-director of the National Agricultural Law Center in Fayetteville, said,

Components of The Action Plan:

- Inventory current and potential agritourism providers
- Research organizational structure and legislation
- Conduct a resource survey and compile information on what services are available to agritourism operators

"Agritourism is a rapidly expanding phenomenon throughout the United States. Arkansas has all of the human, land, government, and academic resources to develop a strong agritourism industry in

the state and stands to rapidly become a national leader in developing agritourism."

The purpose of the strategic conversation was to begin a

discussion on the potential of agritourism in Arkansas, with focus placed on the idea of developing a more formal organizational structure.

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Harrison Pittman, co-director of the National Agriculture Law Center, delivers the keynote address at the Agritourism in Arkansas Strategic Conversation on July 27, 2006.

Do you have news about Agritourism taking place in Arkansas?

If so, please contact Joe Foster at The Winthrop Rockefeller Center at (501) 727-6219 or fosterj@uawrc.net



Examples of Agritourism

- ◆ Pumpkin Picking Patches
- ◆ Corn Mazes
- ◆ Christmas Tree Farms
- ◆ Winery Tours
- ◆ Fee Hunting and Fishing
- ◆ Country Stores
- ◆ Agricultural Festivals
- ◆ Demonstration Farms
- ◆ Rural Bed & Breakfasts
- ◆ Agricultural Museums
- ◆ Petting Zoos
- ◆ U-Pick Operations

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Definition of Agritourism In Arkansas

Agritourism in Arkansas is any activity, enterprise or business designed to increase farm and community income by attracting the public to visit agricultural operations and outlets that provide educational and/or recreational experiences that help sustain and build awareness of the rural quality of life.

This definition was developed by participants at meetings held at The Winthrop Rockefeller Center in July and October.

Plan (continued)

The thirty-eight participants that took part in the conversation agreed that agritourism offers substantial economic development opportunities and that action should be taken.

The participants formed two committees charged with conducting further analysis. The inventory committee is identifying and compiling a list of existing agritourism operations. A research committee is exploring how other states and countries have tried to develop agritourism including the

advantages and disadvantages of various structure options.

Additionally, The Center will coordinate an effort to gather information about resources currently available for potential agritourism operators. The Center will then compile this information and create a resource directory.

A copy of this report and additional information about the strategic conversation can be directly accessed at www.wrcenter.net/pressroom/full_article.aspx?newsID=39

Agritourism Factoids

- A recent Georgia study shows people want to visit farms. 60% said they are "very likely" to visit a pick-your-own, 64% "would likely" visit a farm for the enjoyment it would provide and 73% indicated they would utilize a guide or outfitter service to access rural Georgia.
- It took nearly 20 years before a radical agricultural concept that played out in the movie "Field of Dreams" found its way into this year's edition of Merriam-Webster's dictionary. "Agritourism" was not in use at the time, but the concept is described in the 1989 film plot: Fictional character Ray Kinsella hears a voice commanding him to build a baseball diamond in his cornfield and lets bills slide while he's clearing out his crop for the park. People end up coming to his Iowa farm to relive their childhood baseball days - and they pay top dollar for that experience.

Agritourism in Arkansas Presented to House and Senate Committees

(Lakeview) Harrison Pittman, co-director of the National Agricultural Law Center, gave a presentation about the potential of the agritourism industry in Arkansas to the House and Senate Interim Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Economic Development on October 18th at Gaston's White River Resort. The Committee, chaired by Representative Monty Davenport, listened as Pittman talked about the economic impact agritourism could have on the state, as well as what other states across the country are doing in regard to a formalized agritourism industry.

After the conclusion of the presentation, the Committee agreed that agritourism presents an intriguing and exciting opportunity for all of Arkansas and that the work currently being conducted should be furthered in order for this project to continue to move down a progressive path.