



AGRITOURISM IN MARYLAND

Challenges & Solutions

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WHAT IS AGRITOURISM?

- **American Farm Bureau:** Agritourism refers to 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 of the farm or operation that also adds to the economic viability of the site.
- **Maryland Farm Bureau:** Activities conducted on a farm and offered to the public or to invited groups for the purpose of education, recreation, or active involvement in the farm operation.

EXAMPLES INCLUDE...

(But are certainly not limited to...)

- Roadside stands
- Farm markets
- Christmas tree farms/cut your own
- U-pick operations
- Agricultural crafts
- Corporate events/company picnics
- Weddings/special events
- Breweries, wineries, distilleries, creameries, dairies
- School tours
- Farm-related museums
- Garden/nursery tours
- Agricultural exhibits/tours
- School tours
- Farm-related museums
- Garden/nursery tours
- Agricultural exhibits/tour
- Crop identification programs
- Rodeos
- Agricultural fairs/festivals/shows
- Children's activities
- Petting zoos
- Horseback riding
- Corn mazes
- Haunted houses/hayrides
- Wagon rides
- Sleigh rides
- Outdoor recreation
- Dude ranches...
- And so on...

OUR PRIMARY RESEARCH:

Grow & Fortify's listening sessions & BMC study

- G&F held a number of listening sessions throughout the state to hear from agritourism and value-added agricultural operators in 2015/2016 to learn about challenges and successes. In 2016, G&F conducted the first ever study of the region's agritourism and value-added agriculture for the Baltimore Metropolitan Council.
- G&F is moving to form non-profit organization—Grow Maryland—to educate industry members and policymakers about the benefits of—and challenges faced by—the agritourism and value-added agricultural industry.

WHICH LEADS TO SOME CONTEMPLATIONS...

- Define “farming”...
- Quantify “farming”...
- What’s the “product” being offered?



CHALLENGE: County Planning / Definitions and Qualifications as a “Use”

- Counties control allowable uses.
- Primary or secondary use?
- If secondary use, to what? Farming?
Back to “What’s a farm?”
- “Agritourism” isn’t common as a use.
Specific activity (winery, farm stand) is likely defined.
- Uses can be allowed by right, conditional or special exception.



CHALLENGE: *Permitting – Building, Environmental Health & Food Safety*

- Maryland has a building code. The state exempts certain agricultural/agritourism businesses from building permit requirements (though not the code) in certain jurisdictions if occupancy is <50.
- Some counties go further and exempt ag/agtour from building permits entirely.
- Environmental Health = bathrooms, wells, septic, wastewater. Exemptions not common. Little appreciation for compromises that typically accompany ag/agtourism (lack of water, septic, etc.).
- Food Safety = food service. Any prep/service of food requires commercial kitchen. Which requires hot/cold water, drains, new septic, grease trap.

CHALLENGE: *Fire & Life Safety*

- Any “assembly” of people triggers life safety considerations.
- Think exit signs, seamless exits, fire extinguishers, fire escapes, sprinklers.
- Exemptions can include manufacturing areas, transient areas.
- Triggers include tables/chairs, meeting rooms, food service, tents.
- *What if no water? What if land doesn't perc for septic? What if in critical area?*



CHALLENGE: *Liability*

- Through common underwriters, you can insure homes, autos, businesses, farming... but often not the complexities of the many-mixed activities of an agritourism enterprise.
- So, it's additive. We've heard of 4, 6, 10 policies to cover one farm's activities.
- VA protects agritourism, while MD is contributory negligence state.



CHALLENGE: *Private and Special Events*

- Can. Of. Worms.
- What's the definition of a “special event” and “private event?”
- Many jurisdictions set limitations per business, or require per-event permit.
- It goes back to “Use”: Is the event directly related—and necessary—to promote the “product”...?





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