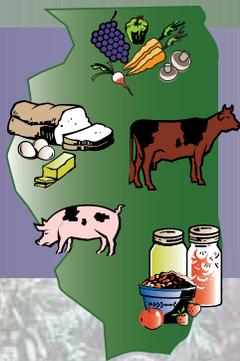


IDEA

Summer 2005
NEWS & VIEWS

Initiative for the Development of Entrepreneurs in Agriculture

Agritourism: An Economic Opportunity for Illinois



"Agritourism Wish you were here". An alternative or value-added farm product. Is there an opportunity for you? The following four points are excerpts from a Rural Research Report prepared by Associate Professors Bruce Wicks and Christopher Merrett respectively from the University of Illinois and Western Illinois University.

- 1. Agritourism** is a hybrid concept that merges elements of two complex industries—agriculture and travel/tourism—to open up new profitable markets for farm products and services and provide travel experiences for a large regional market.
- 2. Although a single definition of agritourism is not widely recognized**, it is at the intersection of a number of important marketing and economic development concepts that are circulating today.
- 3. Agritourism is unlikely to be the dominant sector of agriculture in most areas of Illinois**, but it may play a significant support role for many agricultural enterprises.
- 4. It might surprise those with a product orientation that, in many cases, the cost of the product sold to the traveler is almost irrelevant.** A family going to a fall pumpkin patch is likely to buy a jack-o-lantern or gourd but **what they really purchased was a family experience.** And the real value of that experience may far exceed the cost of the pumpkins. Bruce and Chris's complete report can be viewed at (http://www.iira.org/pubsnew/publications/IIRA_RRR_577.pdf). It also addresses *"The Tourism Perspective, Marketing your product, Potential Activities and Keys to Success"*.

In this issue of News & Views we look at farm families that have incorporated agritourism into their farm operations.

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Dollinger Family Farm

Story by Debra Kinsella U of I Extension

John and Noreen Dollinger operate the Dollinger Family Farm which has been in the family since 1852 and at one time served as a stop on the stagecoach line. The farm is located on the I & M canal just south of Minooka, in Will County Illinois and is a wonderful example of an ever-growing agritourism business in Illinois.

This working crop and livestock farm added an element of agritourism sixteen years ago. Noreen and her five children (Heidi, Nicholas, Tyson, Theresa and Anna), have worked together, watching things grow and learning how to manage a business from beginning to end. "Each of the kids has developed their own special expertise in the business, we're very proud of them." The Dollinger's started this part of their enterprise with a half acre of pumpkins in 1989. It has been an

Please turn to page 2



Experience historical reenactments.

educational endeavor for all involved. In the early years they relied on extension specialists Bill Whiteside and Bill Shoemaker for advice on cultivation and pest control. The farm has a goal of not just selling pumpkins, but providing an experience of being on a historic working farm in the country and where visitors can participate in the activities. Noreen also created a teaching situation where her children and other teens in the community learn about commerce, hard work and being vested in a working venture.



They have hosted activities for schools, church groups, junior colleges and chambers of commerce. The farm setting has been very conducive to achieving the goals of each organization. Over time they have added various farm animals, horse drawn hayrides, a corn maze and haunted mule barn. The newest addition is the steam train ride. These additions make for new memories for families who return to visit the farm every year.

The philosophy that the Dollinger's promote is one of providing a fun, interesting place for families to come and spend the day, run, play, and learn something while having a good time.

The Dollinger's have developed the following (in conjunction with others in their community) annual events that bring families to the farm to learn about the history of the area and agriculture. The Civil War Reenactment and the Antique Steam and Tractor show allows the community to learn about the rich history of the area. They create a new corn maze every year to challenge the family visitors thus providing new experience every year.

Please visit their web site to get a better understanding of what they are providing as an Agritourism experiences ...
<http://www.dollingerfarms.com/index.htm>

Pumpkin Works

Paul and Sherry Staley, owners and operators of the Pumpkin Works, have used creativity and perseverance to change the focus of their seven-generation family farm located about twenty miles southeast of Paris in Edgar County on the Indiana state line. Their focus is no longer corn and soybeans (although they still raise them), and the hogs are long gone. In their place are pumpkins, squash, sunflowers – a new endeavor this year – and lots of straw bales. The corn's still there, but now acres are devoted to creativity: mazes ranging from last year's army truck (a tribute to the local 1544th National Guard troop) to 2005's Stagecoach Inn outline. The old Stagecoach Inn used to stand in a grove on the farm and Abe Lincoln was reputed to have stayed there during a trip from Paris to Vincennes, Indiana.

Begun in 1993, Pumpkin Works centers around the Staleys' farmstead. Grain bins have been painted orange with jack o'lantern faces, the farmhouse was converted to a general store and an old barn's hayloft has been made into to a series of mazes. The hog houses are still in use – but now used as a petting zoo. The Staleys decided early not to target just one age group. They decided to design a variety of activities that would appeal to families with young children and also for older youth and young adults.

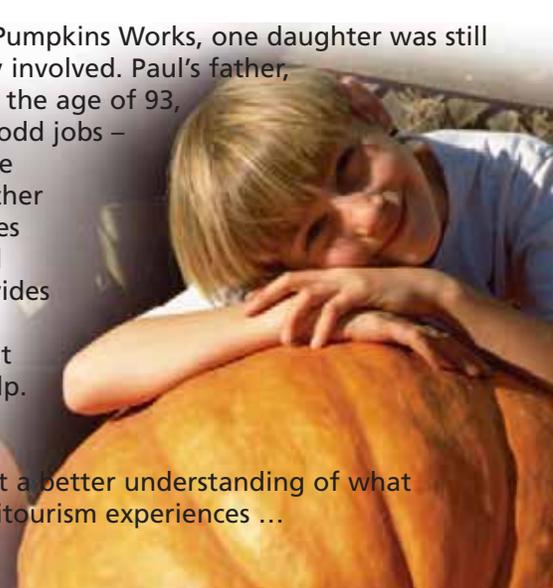
A U-pick pumpkin patch will be supplemented by a U-pick sunflowers this year. Another enhancement in the works is adding a spring hayride with nature walk and bonfire. Sherry states, "The nature hayrides and spook hayrides have grown during the past two years". Paul adds, "It took about 300 tons of creek gravel to pave the five mile trail", but it's definitely been worth it. School children and adults enjoy the educational tour through woods and beside the creek. Wildlife, trees and native plants are pointed out.

The Staleys participate in a number of Illinois and national agritourism organizations and activities, both as attendees and as presenters. They're strong supporters of North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association (nafdma.com) and encourage all agritourism providers to utilize their website and attend annual meetings. It is from such events that they share ideas, learn management tips and get revitalized after a fall season that keeps them busy from 6:00 a.m. (trash detail) until after midnight (bonfire extinguishing).

When Paul and Sherry started Pumpkins Works, one daughter was still living at home and was actively involved. Paul's father, who passed away last spring at the age of 93, helped park cars and do other odd jobs – anything that he could do while riding his lawn mower. Their other two daughters and their families are still involved. One designed the website and the other provides tours on weekends. However, Sherry states, "we're dependent upon the neighborhood for help. They're dedicated to us and we're dedicated to them."

Please visit their web site to get a better understanding of what they are providing as their Agritourism experiences ...

www.pumpkinworks.com



Liability Issues for Agritourism

Liability is an issue that is usually at the forefront of concerns identified in agritourism development. While the recognition of liability is generally a “good thing”, it is often misunderstood through false assumptions or a lack of understanding about how the insurance industry works.

As agritourism enterprises are often started as a sideline business to an existing farming operation, it is often assumed that liability issues related to the new business should be covered through the existing farm liability policy. While this may be the case, the entrepreneur should always check with his/her insurance agent prior to conducting any new business activity to be sure. Generally, farm liability insurance only covers activities involved with “traditional” farming practices.

Recognizing that the activities involved in an agritourism business are frequently not covered by customary farm liability policies can uncover a number of hurdles to secure adequate coverage. Since no two agritourism attractions

are alike it is difficult for the insurance industry to assess the true risk associated with these ventures. In order to compensate for the unknown, the companies will often have to charge very high rates or refuse to provide coverage at all. It is important to keep this in mind when discussing insurance issues with other agritourism entrepreneurs as the rates quoted from these sources will probably not be comparable to YOUR situation.

The best advice for securing liability coverage for YOUR agritourism enterprise is to allow plenty of time for planning and investigation. Start with your current insurance agent as the first source of advice. Get several quotes if possible and network with others in the agritourism industry to learn from their experiences. In most cases it is possible to find affordable liability coverage for the majority of proposed agritourism ventures but it might take significant effort to identify the best solution for YOUR situation.

Please Note: The Farm Progress Show will observe its 52nd anniversary in Decatur, IL, on August 30, 31, and Sept. 1

Plan to attend one of the many informational seminars presented by Extension Specialists and Educators from the University of Illinois and Purdue University. Times and locations follow the seminar descriptions.

All seminars will be in Richland Community College, most in the South Wing, which will be accessible by tram, which will load at the southwest gate. Below is a partial listing of some of the offered seminars related to Agrentrepreneurship / Agritourism: The seminars will repeat on all three days. Below are four of the seminars that might interest someone considering an agritourim venture:

Agricultural Entrepreneurship: All the efforts to discover and develop new value-added agricultural enterprises have no economic benefit without access to markets. This presentation will highlight available tools for giving producers greater access to new food markets. The discussion will showcase tools for developing a marketing plan as well as new web-based resources to help farmers target consumers and identify potential supply chain partners. You will see live, Internet-based demonstrations of these marketing tools. 9AM South Wing, Rm 137

Taking the First Step: Farm and Ranch Alternative Enterprise and Agritourism Resource Evaluation--will provide you with the tools that you need to identify alternative enterprises and agritourism opportunities that can work for you. 10AM South Wing Rm 177

Developing Agritourism as a Marketing Tool: Will help you explore the possibilities for agritourism. 11AM Developing Agritourism as a Marketing Tool –South Wing, Rm 177

Market What you Sow: Will provide you with an opportunity to learn from farmers who have been successful in marketing fruits, vegetables and grains. 12 Noon Market What you Sow – South Wing, Rm 177

(The Seminars are Co-sponsored by the Central Illinois Farm Fresh Network, University of Illinois Agro-Ecology Sustainable Agriculture Program, University of Illinois Extension IDEA Program, Macon County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Illinois Department of Agriculture.)

For a complete listing of all the seminars go to ... <http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/macon/factsheets/fps221.html>

Questions
and
Answers

How do I learn more about Illinois Agritourism?

Below are a few sources to find out more about Illinois Agritourism:

1. Local University of Illinois Extension office and local area Visitors and Convention Bureau
2. Southern Illinois Tourism <http://www.adventureillinois.com>
3. Central Illinois Tourism <http://www.visitcentralillinois.com/aspapps/default.asp>
4. Northern Illinois Tourism <http://www.visitnorthernillinois.com>
5. Illinois Farm Direct http://www.illinoisfarmdirect.org/Learn_More/agritourism.html

COOL LINKS

Beginning August 30, 2005, Decatur will host the Farm Progress Show in odd-numbered years. Known as the "Superbowl of Agriculture" or "The World's Fair of Agriculture," this event will bring a quarter million people and the world of production agriculture to the Agribusiness Capital of the World.

http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/macon/fps_about.html

Agritourism: Selling an Experience. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences ...

<http://www.aces.uiuc.edu/~asap/news/v10n3/index.html>

Agriculture & Tourism Partners of Illinois (ATPI) <http://www.visitcentralillinois.com/aspapps/default.asp>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service: Alternative and agritourism enterprises allow farmers and ranchers to earn higher profits by replacing or supplementing traditional farm operations with innovative on-farm or on-ranch ventures. <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/RESS/altenterprise>