



New Venture Guide to Ag Tourism

The purpose of this factsheet series is to help producers and processors understand the key elements needed to manage a business. The factsheets also discuss some of the essential components used to develop a business plan and assess the profitability of a business venture.

Diversifying a farm or ranch operation with an ag tourism venture can take many different forms. The opportunities are almost endless and might include attractions, events or services. Regardless of the choice, careful consideration is required to determine the most appropriate venture for the farm, the area and the operator.

Use the following information to help develop a new ag tourism venture for your farm. This guide can also serve as a basis for a business plan for the implementation of a new venture. For a list of potential ag tourism venture ideas consult Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's factsheet, Opportunities in Ag Tourism Ventures, Agdex 888-8.

Current major agricultural activity:

- Estimated per cent of your time to be spent on tourism activities: _____%
- Estimated per cent of employee's/family's time to be spent on tourism: _____%
- Estimated amount of farm income to be derived from tourism: _____%
- Would you consider working with nearby attractions to jointly create a tourist attraction?
 Yes No With whom? _____

Primary goal for the ag tourism venture is:

- educate
- entertain
- increase profit
- farm succession
- diversify farm business
- other: _____

Strongest impression that a visitor should leave with:

"This place is so _____!"

Family support and skills

- Does my family support this initiative?
 yes no
- Do we like to meet all types of people?
 yes no
- Do we like to entertain strangers often?
 yes no
- Do we have good organizational skills?
 yes no
- Do we have the personality for tourism?
 yes no
- Are we successful at managing home and farm expenses?
 yes no

Family member's roles

- production _____
- customer service _____
- event planning _____
- management _____
- marketing _____
- other: _____

Site

- Is the property easy for travellers to find?
 yes no
- Is the property tidy, well kept and appealing to visitors?
 yes no
- Can the roads leading to the farm accommodate buses/RVs?
 yes no

- Can restricted areas be secured or separated from visitors?
 ___ yes ___ no

Resources

- historic buildings
- beautiful/unique landscapes
- visible conservation practices
- new technology
- alternative crops/animals (evaluate soil/water)
- organic production
- food production (produce, meat, eggs)
- food processing (cheese, jams, etc)
- wetlands/wildlife/trails
- other: _____

Which ventures would you consider?

- bed & breakfast
- campsite
- catering
- corn/bale/hedge maze
- country craft/antique store
- farm museum
- fishing
- festivals & events
- tours or demonstrations
- youth camps
- farm/ranch vacation
- rental cabins
- cross country skiing
- hay loft lodging
- group/special functions
- hay/sleigh/train rides
- hiking
- horseback riding
- hunting
- courses
- farm display animals
- u-pick/cut/gather/fish/grow
- picnics
- “rent the farm”
- weddings
- haunted barn/house
- photography, wildlife viewing

- farm direct stand/store
- regional cuisine restaurant
- other: _____

Target audience

(Consider what you will be offering, who you enjoy working with, profit margins by group)

- families
- school children
- senior citizens
- corporate groups
- special interest groups
- other: _____

Customers will come from:

- local area (within one hour’s drive)
- regional
- national and/or international

Tourists are welcome:

- daily
- weekends
- seasonally
 (what seasons: _____)
- specific events and festivals

Food, drink offered

	Already have	Want to have	Don't want
• on-site preparation	_____	_____	_____
• product sampling	_____	_____	_____
• resale of packaged foods	_____	_____	_____

Site facilities

• parking	_____	_____	_____
• # of cars _____	_____	_____	_____
• # of buses _____	_____	_____	_____
• handicap access	_____	_____	_____

Restrooms

• portables (# _____)	_____	_____	_____
• permanent (# _____)	_____	_____	_____

Trash receptacles

• # _____	_____	_____	_____
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Seating areas

- picnic tables _____
 - benches or bleachers _____
 - lawn seating _____
- Other amenities
- barbecue grills _____
 - playground equipment _____
 - stage _____
 - protection from weather _____
 - other: _____

Family members/employees

- guides _____
 - maintenance, cleaning _____
 - customer service _____
 - food preparation _____
 - other: _____
- # of workers from family enterprise: _____
 - # of non-family workers: _____

Marketing tools

	Already have	Want to have	Don't want
• promotional materials	_____	_____	_____
• brochure	_____	_____	_____
• print advertising	_____	_____	_____
• road signs	_____	_____	_____
• press releases	_____	_____	_____
• familiarization tours	_____	_____	_____
• mailing list, newsletters	_____	_____	_____
• radio/TV advertising	_____	_____	_____
• other: _____	_____	_____	_____

Marketing techniques

- door to door _____
- direct mail _____
- partnership marketing _____
- visitor information centres _____
- word of mouth _____
- community & provincial network _____
- website, e-mail newsletter _____
- other: _____

Annual marketing budget: _____

Overall tourism business budget: _____

Competition and community

- How many other ag tourism operators are there in the local area? _____
- Are any similar to what you would like to do?

- Are any compatible for you to market co-operate with? _____
- What other types of events/attractions could you work with? _____

Facilities

Do any of your facilities need to be repaired/expanded/built to accommodate the tourism venture?

Item needed	Estimated cost
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- What can I do to make my property and buildings appealing? _____
- How can I ensure my visitors will have a memorable experience? _____
- How can I ensure my visitor greeting will to add to the experience? _____

Regulations to consider

- building permits
- business licence
- health department inspections
- liability insurance
- signage
- employment and revenues
- tourism levy (4 rooms or more requires taxing)
- industry accreditation (e.g. Alberta Hotel & Lodging Assoc.)
- other local permits: _____

Market base

- Is there a large surrounding market base to support this venture?
- Will the surrounding market base continue to grow in the future?
- Can the surrounding service industry (lodging, meals) support tourists that would visit this place?

Enterprise compatibility

- How does the net profit of ag tourism ventures compare with net profit of other ventures?
- How well would the ag tourism venture utilize existing business resources?
- How well would the ag tourism venture utilize existing labour?
- How long would the products involved in the ag tourism venture stay fresh?
- Could the product/service be used tomorrow, if not today?
- Would an empty room or seat impact cash flow?

Property business plan

- How would the ag tourism venture fit into the overall business financial plan?
- What would be required financially to enter into an ag tourism venture?
- Are the financial and human resource requirements available to support the new venture?

For more information on choosing a specific venture consult the following Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development factsheets:

- Decision Making: Will You Start a New Enterprise? (Agdex 811-5)
- Personal and Family Considerations: Where do You Want to Be?(Agdex 1834-10)
- Identifying Alternatives: What are the Possibilities? (Agdex 811-2)
- Marketing: Will it Sell? (Agdex 848-5)
- Production Requirements: Do You Have the Resources? (Agdex 811-4)
- Financial Feasibility: Can You Afford to Do It? (Agdex 811-3)
- Profitability: Will it Make Money? (Agdex 811-6)

For additional information

For more information on ag tourism development go to: www.agtourism.ca or contact a New Venture Specialist at the Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677.