



Agritourism: Expansion Tips

If you've completed a test run of agritourism--and want to expand--here are some agritourim expansion tips.

(From "Cash In On Agritourism," by Barbara Berst Adams)

Once you've done an agritourism test run, assess your strengths and weaknesses. Then decide how you'd like to expand. Here are expansion tips to consider: Improve the event rather than growing larger. For example, if the one-time food-preservation workshop went especially well but the breeze was a little distracting, invest in a low-cost tent, then charge a higher fee.

Invite a few more people to the same workshop, such as inviting both the garden club and your church members next time.

Keep the participant numbers the same, but hold ongoing events. For example, once you've experienced giving a tour to a single classroom, network with more teachers, and open up your farm for once-weekly single-classroom tours through the fall.

Add to the variety of events you offer, such as a composting workshop in spring and a tomato-tasting event in late summer.

Expand your u-pick by opening up more acreage of the same crop and hosting a few more shared-interest groups as described above. Or, if your crop is like Chris Pinto's blueberries, you won't need to plant more acreage because the crops themselves will produce more as they mature.

Keep the u-pick participant numbers just as low, but plant more u-pick varieties to expand the season, such as adding u-pick sunflowers for summer cash-flow along with your autumn pumpkin u-pick.

As you grow, remember to expand your liability coverage and compliance to regulations that apply to larger or more regular events.

"Zoning officials may have very specific thoughts on how the business needs to comply if it grows into a permanent store or facility—as in toilets, lights, and paved parking lots," says attorney Rich Schell.