



## Agritourism: Know the Details

**Learn about the rules and regulations about zoning, health department issues and more when you beginning an agritourism project.**

(From "Cash In On Agritourism," by Barbara Berst Adams, page 5 of 5)

### Know the Details

If agritourism agrees with your farm and you'd like to continue, there are numerous marketing, safety and liability issues you should expand upon. But even for the first time agritourism test event, be sure you're aware of the issues.

All areas are different, so look into rules and regulations for your state, county and town.

Some basics to know include: Zoning: "It may sound a bit odd," says Rich Schell, an agriculture and agritourism attorney from Illinois, "but the first call should be to the local county to check out the zoning.

Zoning is a crucial and often-overlooked area of compliance for agritourism operations. A county that may be fine with five cars parked outside of a roadside stand may have an entirely different take on 55 cars parked along the roadside for a blueberry festival."

The health department: "The second call should be to the local public health department," says Schell. "Case in point, selling raw apples often doesn't require inspection, but once the apple is cut open to offer sample slices, that moves the food safety issues to a new level and may require a temporary food permit."

He points out that bathroom and hand-washing or -sanitizing areas can be crucial for safely and legally operating an agritourism event. Your health department can let you know what, if anything, is necessary for the number of visitors you're expecting and the activities you plan to offer.

Liability: Schell states that last but certainly not least, farmers considering an agritourism test event should talk with an insurance agent and perhaps a lawyer: "The old line about a stitch in time saves nine can indeed be true."

He offers this example: "The homeowners' policy may contain incidental business activity coverage for things like garage sales, and arguably it could cover a (small, one-time agritourism) event. However, this coverage is often capped at a very low sales point. It might provide coverage to the person if they had sales of \$5,000 or under per year.

This might work fine for a one-day test event but wouldn't even be an option for a big agricultural tourism project that might generate over \$5,000 in sales in one day during its busy season."

Also contact your local cooperative extension agent or a local S.C.O.R.E. advisor. Both are government-funded entities that give free business advice customized to your region and situation.

Though all can't be perfect, and great things can and do come from the ashes of disasters, starting a venture like this on a small scale allows most first-time mistakes to be small.

You can better learn from them at this stage. Each time you hold an event, you'll improve, and you can grow with confidence from that very first small test, turning a great first year into a great ongoing agritourism enterprise.