Trends in US agritourism: Exploring Traveler Behavior and Producer Strategies

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The Project: Place Based Innovation: An Integrated Approach to Agritourism Development in the Western US

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Funding of this research project by USDA/AFRI Project #2014-68006-21842 is gratefully acknowledged.
We explore what factors influence the growth of agritourism activity in the Western US, including:

- Explore the behavior and preferences of agritourism travelers in the Western US, with comparisons to a broader set of US tourists.

- A spatial analysis across Western state analyzing what factors may influence agritourism activity because of differences in place-based factors (natural amenities, proximity to urban areas, byways and interstates).

- Develop case studies of agritourism operations to help better understand how innovations by operators encourages first-time, local and destination agritourists.

- Building on identified opportunities to cultivate profitable agritourism enterprises.
Project Overview - Research

1. Multi-institutional interdisciplinary research group leading 3 year USDA grant

2. Agritourism Producer Surveys conducted in both Colorado and California – completed June 2015

3. Survey of Western region (1000) and all US travelers (500) on travel behavior, preferences and planning - Spring 2015

4. Spatial data collection and analysis - underway

5. Regional case studies (2016 – 2017)
As of 2012, 33,000 farms integrated agritourism and recreational services such as farm or winery tours, hayrides, hunting, and fishing into their operations.

On-farm agritourism activities represent $704 million in direct tourism revenues for US farms, and likely more significant benefits for their surrounding communities and their tourism support businesses.

Agritourism Revenue per County, Thsd $ (2012)
Western Researchers, Extension, Educators and Community Development Specialists

Dawn Thilmany McFadden is a Professor of Agribusiness and Agribusiness Extension Economist with Colorado State University and specializes in analyzing markets and consumer behavior surrounding local, organic and other value-added food market segments. She has worked in support of Colorado agribusiness development and industry-based development (Colorado Wine Industry Development Board) since 2005.

Rebecca Hill is the coordinator of community and economic development in the Department of Agricultural and Natural Resource Economics at Colorado State University. She received her Ph.D. in agricultural and resource economics in 2012; her dissertation was entitled, *Spatial Dimensions of Natural Resource Decisions: Private Responses to Public Resource Decisions*. Her work since has focused on outdoor recreation, AgriTourism, local foods, economic impact analysis, and water. Rebecca also teaches such classes as Agricultural Economics, Agricultural Marketing, and Agricultural Law at Colorado State University.

Sherrin Ray is an Extension Economist in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of California – Davis, she also serves as leader of the University of California’s Small Farm Program. She is responsible for research, education and outreach programs related to food systems, cooperatives, small farms and regulations. Dr. Hardisty is a co-author of the book, *Comparing the Structure, Size, and Performance of Local and Mainstream Food Supply Chains*. After earning her Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from UC Davis, she served as a faculty member at Michigan State University, worked at a rice marketing cooperative and also consulted for farmers and growers associations.

Anders Van Sandt: I received my bachelor’s in Economics at Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon, and am currently in the second year of my Ph.D. at Colorado State University. When I was admitted to CSU, I was lucky enough to receive a research assistantship to work alongside my advisor, Dr. Dawn Thilmany and an assistant professor, working on a three-year grant studying “AgriTourism in the West.” This grant has honed my skills as a researcher, allowed me to meet inspiring professionals all over the nation, and allowed me to survey many different topics that have long been of interest to me. Growing up in rural Oregon, I have always been interested in the development of rural communities and most other topics that lie at the intersection of agricultural and natural resource economics. While I have always had an affinity for maps, it was until graduate school that I discovered my passion for regional economics and spatial econometrics, and decided to make it an integral part of my research. On my spare time, I enjoy exploring Colorado’s mountains, playing ultimate frisbee, reading in coffee shops, and exploring the local craft beer scene.

Penny Leff has been state-wide AgriTourism Coordinator for the University of California Small Farm Program since April 2009. In this position, she works with UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisors to develop resources and connections for everyone involved in California agriTourism, including farmers and ranchers, tourism and economic development professionals, government staff and officials, and the millions of people who love to visit farms and ranches. She maintains the UC AgriTourism Directory and Calendar (www.calagtour.org) to help visitors find farms and ranches to visit, produces an email newsletter for the California agriTourism community, organizes workshops and classes throughout California to assist farmers and ranchers in planning, developing and promoting their agriTourism operations, and participates in research projects relating to agriTourism development.

Penny has more than 18 years experience working with small and mid-scale farmers, including 8 years as program manager for the Berkeley Farmers’ Markets and several years working with farmers’ market managers statewide to set up EBT access for SNAP recipients at farmers’ markets. She received a B.S in Managerial Economics from UC Davis. She is excited to learn and share the diversity of innovative ways California farmers and ranchers add value to their production operations and host the public on their land.

Diana B. Guadé is an Associate Professor of Recreation, Tourism and Hospitality at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, CO. She received her Ph.D. degree in Colorado State University in Natural Resource Recreation and Tourism and currently teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in tourism and recreation.

Sarah A. Low is an Economist within the Rural Economy Branch of Economic Research Service, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. Sarah’s research interests revolve around rural economic development in the Central Valley of California.
These linkages have led us to develop partnerships and compile resource lists that may be valuable to those considering agritourism in their business or community, including:

**Farm and Food Tourism: Exploring Opportunities**

- **Colorado Agritourism Association**
- **Colorado Department of Agriculture**
- **Department of agricultural and natural resource economics Colorado State University**
- **UC Small Farm Program**
- **California Agricultural Tourism Directory**
- **UC Davis Agricultural and resource Economics**
- **University of Northern Colorado Recreation, Tourism and Hospitality Department**
- **USDA Economic Resources Services**
Agritourism activities include...

- **On-farm Direct Sales** (U-pick, farm stands, dairy, wine, beer, farm products, etc.).

- **Accommodations/Lodging** (farm stays, guest ranch, B&Bs, camping, cabins, etc.).

- **Entertainment/Special Events** (harvest festivals, corn mazes, farm dinners, weddings, parties, etc.).

- **Outdoor Recreation** (picnicking, swimming, hunting, fishing, photography, horseback riding, snowmobiling, biking, etc.)

- **Educational Activities** (farm or ranch work experience, camps, classes, tours, tastings, demonstrations, petting zoos, egg gathering, etc.).
Spatial Analysis

Agritourism Revenue per County, Thsd $ (2012)
Percent of Farms with Agritourism Revenue – LISA Analysis – 2012

Red: Hot Spot
Blue: Cold Spot
Light Blue: Low adjacent to High
Pink: High adjacent to Low
Agritourism in California

Census vs. Surveyed California Agritourism (2012/15)

Count of AgTrsm Farms/Ranches
- Surveyed Agritourism Farms (2015)

Census Agritourism Farms (2012)
- 1-10
- 11-25
- 26-50
- 51-100
- 101-135
- Undefined / Withheld
Agritourism in Colorado

Census vs Surveyed Colorado Agritourism (2012/2015)

<table>
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<th>Number farms, 2012 Census of Ag</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>11 - 20 (16)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 30 (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 40 (6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>41+ (4)</td>
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Agritourism sites, 2015 producer survey (674)
A Few of our Findings
Appendices
Survey of Likely Agritourism Operators

Conducted online and through US mail: February 2 – May 19, 2015

150 Colorado Producer Survey respondents total
- 141 non-duplicated complete surveys
  - 71.6% (101) said Yes, they did offer agritourism products/services
  - 28.4% (40) said No, they did not offer agritourism products/services

243 California Producer Survey respondents total
- 231 non-duplicated complete surveys from producers
  - 81.3% (187) said Yes, they did offer agritourism products/services
  - 18.7% (44) said No, they did not offer agritourism products/services
Agritourism in California