

Agritourism : The Future For New Jersey Farms

Please consider these important findings from the Rutgers Study:

- Of farmers doing agritourism, 94% considered themselves full time farmers. Conversely, only 52% of all NJ farm operators reported farming as primary occupation (p13)
- Nearly half of agritourism farms visited reported gross farm income of \$500,000 or higher. Only 3% of all NJ farms produce this sales volume. (p13)
- NJ farms more threatened than other states due to heavy urbanization, extremely high farmland costs, growing demand for development. (p16)
- Many of the traditional row crops and livestock operations have been largely supplanted with high valued horticultural production, which can be profitable on relatively small parcels. (p.17)
- State level farm policy has evolved from a primary focus on preservation of the land base to a broader view of preservation of agricultural businesses. (p.21)
- New Jersey farmers rely disproportionately more on direct-to-consumer marketing of farm products than their counterparts in many other parts of the country, an outcome driven by both need (e.g., loss of wholesale channels) and opportunity (e.g., market access). (p.27)
- 2/3 of farmers reported earning 50% or more of their farm income from agritourism activities. (p.27)
- 90% of farmers believed agritourism is very important to the economic viability of NJ farms (p32)
- 92% of agritourism farmers stated that increased revenue opportunities were “very important” in their decision to develop agritourism activities. The revenue impacts of agritourism among the farms participating in this study are substantial. (p.36)
- Respondents also viewed agritourism as an important opportunity for building more positive interactions with the non-farm public...Similarly, 85% of farmers view agritourism as an important opportunity to educate the public about their operation in particular and agriculture in general. (p.38)
- 67% of farmers interviewed plan on expanding their agritourism operations in the future. (p.44)
- Many farmers expanded into agritourism as a means of keeping family members involved in the farming operation. 82% of farmers interview considered continued family involvement this very important. (p.60)
- Municipal regulation was significant for 36% of those interviewed. Many farmers qualified their responses, stating that regulation of their agritourism activities has become more of an issue as their enterprises evolved and grew in scale. (p.64)
- A number of farmers that have not enrolled land in the farmland preservation program voiced concerns about the program’s potential impact on their businesses...Many believed that the deed of easement would restrict future farm uses, uses that at this time are difficult to predict and therefore except out or built into a deed of easement. (p.66)
- Several farmers said that their municipalities show their support by “leaving them alone”. (p.67)
- A shared sentiment among many farmers is that their townships will become more restrictive in the future as agritourism operators establish new and creative activities that do not conform with municipalities’ views of “acceptable” agricultural activities. (p.73)
- Farmers also indicated that compliance with other regulations such as fire, parking, noise, and health provisions was sometimes burdensome and increased costs. (p.73)
- Several farmers indicated that if they had to obtain a special use permit for more regular agritourism activities that it could affect the activities they provided and become quite costly. (p.74)

