

Agritourism

Agritourism is commonly defined as the offer of recreational, leisure or educational activities on working agricultural facilities, notably farms (Gil Arroyo, Barbieri and Rozier-Rich, 2013), although some also recognize non-working facilities as a possible setting (Phillip, Hunter and Blackstock, 2010). Agritourism is one form of farm enterprise diversification in which farmers combine their resources (land, labour, capital) to increase their firm value or revenues, either directly (e.g., charging entrance fees) or indirectly (e.g., direct sale of farm products). Although commonly referred to as the offspring of the agricultural and tourism industries, agritourism has carved its own identity in two notable ways. First, its agricultural centrality makes the offer of agritourism very varied as farmers infuse their creativity into their existing resources (e.g., crops, old equipment) to reduce initial investments. As such, agritourism is composed of a mosaic of unique activities ranging from leisurely contemplation (e.g., orchard walks) to hands-on education (e.g., cheese making). This agriculture centrality has also enabled distinct regional developments worldwide, such as *oleoturismo* (themed around olive oil production) in Spain, farm stays in Greece, u-pick, or pick-your-own, operations in the USA and UK, respectively, and farming villages in China. Second, despite the fact that agritourism falls within the tourism spectrum, neither a minimum travel distance nor overnight stay are definitional elements. As such, agritourism caters to tourists (e.g., farm stays) and to nearby visitors (e.g., u-pick operations) alike.

The global relevance of agritourism has steadily gained strength over the last four decades due to parallel forces affecting its supply and demand. On the one hand, trends in the production (e.g., specialized, industrialized) and commercialization (e.g., trade agreements, economies of scale) of 'food-and-fibre' (i.e., all economic activities linked to agricultural production) have increased the economic distress of farmers, especially within small and medium-size family holdings, who have been pressured to boost and diversify their means of making an income to remain afloat. On the other hand, changes in society (e.g., pronounced urban-rural divide) have instilled nostalgia for the lifestyles of yesteryear and

the need to (re)connect with the agrarian system. Agritourism provides the space where both needs are fulfilled. Specifically, farmers develop agritourism seeking to strengthen their farm's economic standing (e.g., boost their profits, generate off-season revenues), expand market opportunities (e.g., educate the public, stimulate direct sales) and maintain their farming lifestyle (Tew and Barbieri, 2012). In turn, a mixture of motivations for agricultural experiences (e.g., to learn about agriculture, engage in farming tasks, access to farm produce) and general travel pursuits (e.g., scenery, local eateries and attractions) drive agritourists' motivations, which aligns with the type of amenities and activities farms have to offer (Flanigan, Blackstock and Hunter, 2015).

The agriculture-tourism intersectionality of agritourism as well as the impact of both industries in local communities and society at large, call for recognizing the mosaic of benefits that agritourism offers across different stakeholders, mainly providers, destinations and agritourists (McGehee, 2007). At the providers' level, agritourism delivers several economic (e.g., increased sales, paid job for family members) and non-economic (e.g., heritage preservation, ease of farm succession) to farmers and their families. The most notable gains for agritourists are an increased knowledge of agricultural production and appreciation of the often-romanticized farming lifestyle. These gains carry major implications for maintaining local agricultural systems, as customers' mindfulness of the agrarian reality has a positive effect on their willingness to purchase and advocate for local products. In addition, the above benefits have a positive impact on surrounding communities and wider society in further ways (Barbieri, 2013). Small farm holdings conserve natural (e.g., wildflowers), agricultural (e.g., heirloom varieties) and cultural (e.g., historic barns) heritage that industrialized operations cannot maintain while seeking profit maximization. A cluster of farms, especially on the outskirts of towns, can maintain native habitats supporting wildlife, conserve natural resources (e.g., water, soil) and promote farmscape beautification. Finally, agritourism farms, especially when clustered, stimulate the economic vibrancy of rural towns, which can help youth retention.

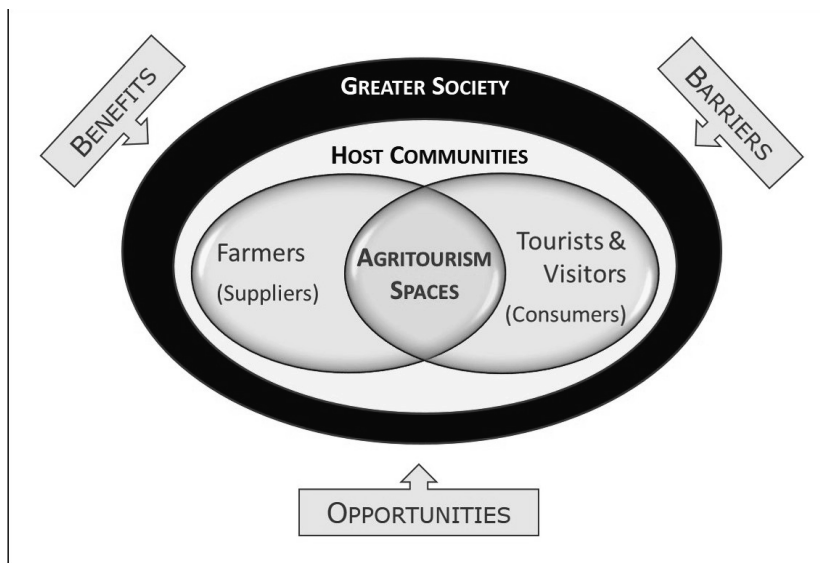
Yet, the full realization of these benefits in a sustainable way requires several managerial adjustments at the business and entrepreneurial levels, especially at start-up stage (Phelan and

Sharpley, 2012). Bringing visitors to the farm requires careful programming of agricultural tasks to avoid conflict with farm visit schedules, especially when the peak seasonality of both activities overlap (e.g., harvesting during a major holiday). Such adjustments are critical to avoid unintended clashes of worldview (e.g., required pest control in view of visitors' romanticized farming image) and to ensure visitors' safety. Farmers transitioning into 'agripreneurs' need to attain or refine a mix of business skills and competencies (e.g., innovative mindset, being customer oriented) that are essential for the success of service industries. For example, a major mindset change for farmers is investing time and money into farmscape design (e.g., displaying old tools, arranging flowerbeds), which does not have a tangible agricultural output. Yet, the greatest challenge for emerging agripreneurs is building social capital and networks beyond their agricultural community that are essential to filling technical gaps and accessing a variety of untapped resources conducive to their success (Ainley and Kline, 2014).

Agritourism viability also requires restructuring marketing efforts at the micro (farm) and macro (organization) levels to attract visitors to the farm. Farmers need to shift their pricing and promotional mindset from passive (e.g., price taker) to active (e.g., price fixer). A

major challenge that agritourism farmers may confront is acknowledging that their products sold on the premises (e.g., berries) have an additional experiential and recreational (e.g., self-harvest) or educational (e.g., demonstration) value that the final price tag should incorporate. Agritourism farmers also need to invest in advertising to reach their desired market segment (e.g., educational seeker, recreationist), building on their offerings. In doing so, farmers should strategically promote their location to match visitors' desires, such as positioning secluded locations for nostalgia seekers and accessible farms for short-term recreational visitors. Although innovative marketing efforts contribute to agritourism success, their implementation requires a financial investment that might be a development constraint. Supporting agencies at the macro level (e.g., agritourism association, government agriculture bureau) can coordinate efforts and pool resources to alleviate marketing constraints either by providing technical (e.g., price setting) or financial (e.g., destination advertisement) assistance. In doing so, it is essential that agencies communicate a cohesive (e.g., consistent use of the agritourism brand name) and clear (e.g., imagery visualization of the offerings) message.

A portrayal of global agritourism should recognize the pivotal role that women farmers



A holistic advocacy model to increase agritourism success

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have in its development, daily management and steady innovation. Yet, an amalgam of personal (e.g., values), family (e.g., likelihood of passing the farm to the next generation) and societal (e.g., changes in the social fabric) factors influence the success of women in agritourism either as a barrier or opportunity (Savage, Barbieri and Jakes, 2020). Structural barriers embedded in social norms appear to be the most challenging as they permeate from the public to the private spheres of women's lives. That is, the development of agritourism adds to, rather than substitutes, the set of farm and household responsibilities women are expected to perform. The agricultural patriarchal norms still prevailing in some communities are a major barrier limiting women's access to human (e.g., professional networks) and financial (e.g., loans, subsidies) resources and relevant information that determine entrepreneurial success. They also reduce women's recognition as an agripreneur by customers and other farmers, weakening their sense of self-fulfilment. At the same time, some changes occurring in society are unfolding as opportunities that women are capitalizing on, such as the increasing acceptance of agriculture entrepreneurship and the invigoration of local food initiatives.

The breadth of benefits that agritourism can deliver to family farms, visitors, rural communities and wider society calls for holistic advocacy efforts that can bring together stakeholders from multiple sectors (e.g., government agricultural and tourism offices, destination marketing organizations, boards of education, non-governmental organizations) to remove personal and structural barriers that reduce the chances of entrepreneurial success. Centred on the tourism–agriculture intersectionality of agritourism spaces, holistic advocacy efforts should intervene based on the interaction of desired benefits, opportunities and barriers across providers (food-and-fibre system), consumers (tourism system), surrounding communities and overall society (see figure). For example, efforts could focus on stimulating women's access to agritourism networks (barrier), such as farmer-to-farmer associations, which can ease their access to resources and increase their chances of success (benefit). These efforts could be paired with social justice programmes (opportunity) seeking to reduce the gender gap by removing structural gender biases (e.g., small business loans for women in agritourism). Considering the positive

impact of agritourism on agricultural literacy, which translates into intentions to purchase local foods (benefit), a joint agriculture–education programme could capitalize on the increase of local-food initiatives (opportunity) to remove economic barriers by subsidizing entrance fees for selected families.

In brief, the realization and maximization of the benefits that the farmer–tourist interaction in agritourism spaces produces requires holistic advocacy efforts directed to stimulate and support managerial and marketing innovations. Moving forward, these efforts should incorporate ongoing societal changes (e.g., urban expansion) and agricultural trends (dichotomization of large-factory and small-heritage farmlands) that will distinguish between agritourists seeking meaningful agricultural experiences and those favouring any sort of agricultural staged recreation, and so redefine future agritourism offerings (Barbieri, 2020).

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