

Diversifying Revenue through Agritourism

Presented by

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Agenda

- ❖ Introduction to UC SAREP Agritourism
- ❖ Definition and role of agritourism
- ❖ California agritourism snapshot
- ❖ Expanding your agritourism business:
opportunities, examples, & considerations
- ❖ Q & A



UC SAREP Agritourism

UC SAREP works with UCCE and external partners to provide resources and information for those involved in California agritourism.

Resources & trainings

Research & data collection

Capacity building

Target audience includes:

Agricultural producers

Agricultural service providers

Policy & decision makers

Marketing & tourism professionals

Economic development entities

RESEARCH ARTICLE

How agritourism helped farmers during the pandemic

California farmers mitigated some of the losses they suffered during the pandemic through direct-to-consumer sales and agritourism.

by Rachael Callahan

Online: <https://doi.org/10.3733/ca.2023a0007>

The closure of restaurants and institutional purchasers during COVID-19 due to shelter-in-place orders had a drastic impact on California's small farmers and ranchers, who relied on these outlets to buy large quantities of their products (Sparling 2020). At the same time, public demand to purchase farm products directly from their local farmers skyrocketed, as seen in the unprecedented boom in community supported agriculture (CSA) subscriptions (Westervelt 2020). When making decisions about how to stay in business during the pandemic, farmers faced uncertainty about rising costs, the longevity of shelter-in-place orders, the permanence of consumer demand for direct sales, and the challenges of making last-minute adjustments to business plans (Sparling 2020). While farmers' business decisions in response to the pandemic varied widely, this project explores how California's agritourism operators responded and seeks to better understand the relationship between participation in agritourism and the resiliency of small farms and local food systems.

Agritourism, including direct-to-consumer sales, is an increasingly popular strategy for small-scale farmers to increase and diversify revenue and connect

Abstract

During COVID-19, California small farmers and ranchers suffered significant disruptions and shifts in the marketplace, marked by a loss in wholesale outlets and an increase in demand for direct-to-consumer sales. This study examines how agritourism operators responded to the challenges and opportunities created by the pandemic. In 2021 and 2022, in the midst of the pandemic, the UC ANR Agritourism Program held a series of trainings for California farmers interested in starting or expanding agritourism enterprises. Some of the key themes that emerged from the trainings were that farmers had to shift their operations to ensure social distancing and reduced crowd sizes, while at the same time, they experienced an unprecedented demand for direct-to-consumer sales and on-farm visits. Agritourism, in varying degrees, contributed to the resiliency of most of the participants in our study. Moving forward, it would be worthwhile for researchers, agricultural professionals, and decision-makers to examine equity in agritourism and agritourism's role as a risk-management strategy to help mitigate other types of disruptions in the future. Our findings also point to the need to provide farmers with technical assistance around e-commerce and sustainable business planning.

Agritourism operators were able to stay afloat during the COVID-19 pandemic by providing farm products, on-farm recreation, and educational opportunities to the public. Photo: Elena Zhukova.



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UC SAREP Agritourism - Findings

- Findings by UC SAREP Agritourism research:
 - Lead motivation was **increasing farm revenue**. This was closely followed by **educate public about agriculture** and **build goodwill in the community**.
 - Challenges reported: Labor (90%), time management (90%), liability & insurance (87%), state/local regulations (84%), marketing (82%), county zoning and permitting (79%)
 - Plans: 72% plan on expanding, 53% plan on investing in more buildings/equipment, 38% plan on hiring more employees.



What is Agritourism?

A commercial enterprise at a working farm or ranch conducted for the enjoyment and education of visitors, and that generates supplemental income for the owner or operator. (University of California definition)



Why Agritourism?

Agritourism is a **risk management strategy** for agricultural producers

- Increase/diversify revenue – contributes to resiliency
- Market outlet & brand awareness

Other benefits include:

- Agricultural & environmental education
- Access to the outdoors
- Community connectedness
- Community & economic development



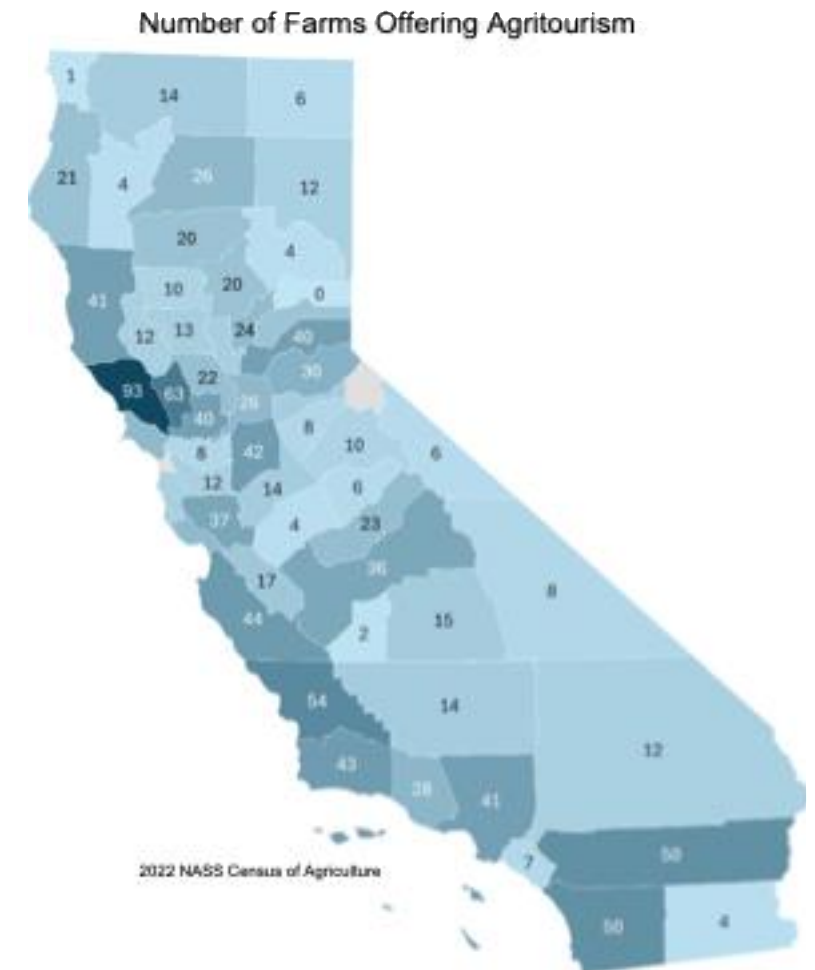
Agritourism in California Snapshot

Number of farms offering agritourism*

- 2% of CA farms offer agritourism (1,245 farms)
- 8% of CA have direct-to-consumer sales outlets (5,131 farms)

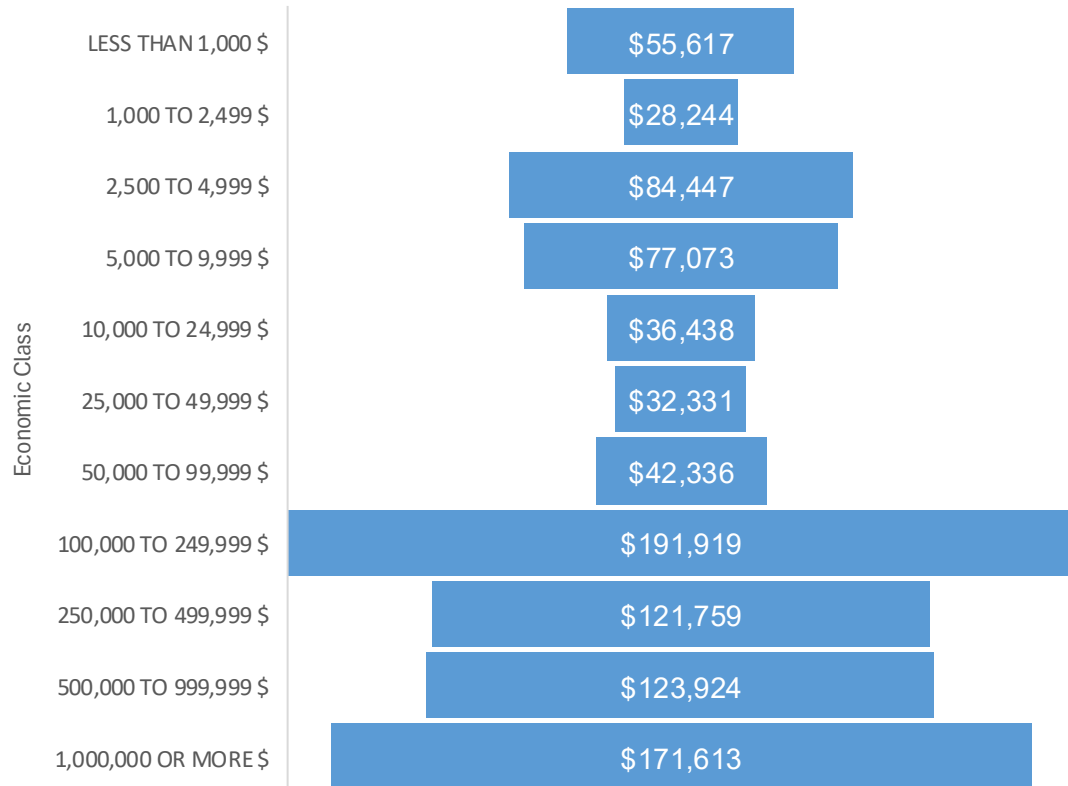
Revenue generated from agritourism activities (excluding product sales)*

- \$99,102,000 total revenue
- \$79,600 average per farm revenue

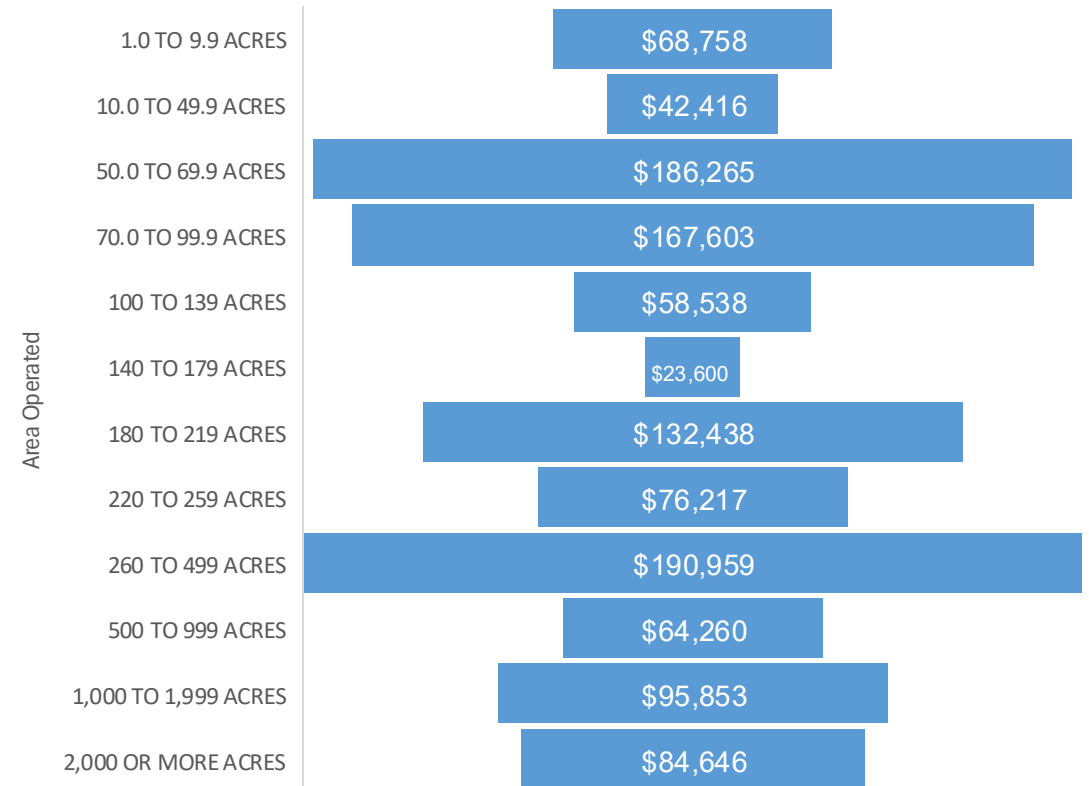


California Agritourism: Average Revenue by Scale

Average per Farm Agritourism Revenue by Economic Class



Average per Farm Agritourism Revenue by Area Operated



Source: 2022 NASS Census of Agriculture

Agritourism can be implemented and successful at different farm sizes and scales.



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Diversifying your agritourism business

Opportunities & considerations



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Regional Tourism Outlook

[Visit California Regional Strategic Tourism Plan](#): Gold Country

Demand drivers:

- Experiences (including culinary experiences)
- Culture, heritage, & history
- Outdoor recreation

Opportunities:

- Arts & culture
- Lodging & accommodations (farm stays & glamping)
- “Alternative experiences” (agricultural life, conservation activities, etc.)



Example: Outdoor Recreation

Six Sigma Ranch & Winery, Lake County

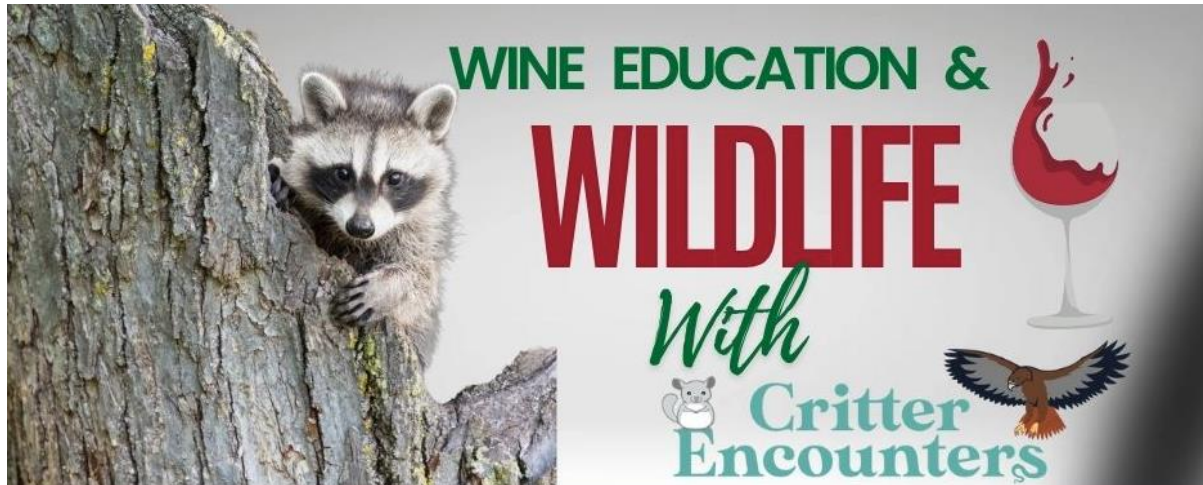
- After 2015 fire displaced local high school's training course, built out 12 miles of trails
- Now host endurance cycling events
- Individuals can regularly access trails if a student/coach or a wine club member



Example: Conservation Education

Ramona Ranch Winery, San Diego County

- Certified Sustainable Vineyard & Winery
- Host monthly wildlife education classes



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Example: Arts & Culture

Yolo Art & Ag Project



Sierra Valley Art & Ag Trail



New Opportunity: Low-Impact Camping

Assembly Bill 518: The Low-Impact Camping Areas Act

- Defines and creates standards for “low-impact camping areas” and removes state permit requirements
- “Low-impact camping areas” are:
 - Max number of sites: 9 or fewer
 - Acreage minimum: 2 acres
 - Density limit: 1 campsite/acre
- AB 518 sets the floor, not the ceiling
- Counties must opt in



[Webinar: Understanding California's New Legislation on Low-Impact Camping on Agricultural Land](#)



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Agritourism Policy Considerations

Local jurisdictions are primarily responsible for agritourism-related regulations

What to know:

- Regulations depend upon your zoning
- Related policy typically not called “agritourism”, look for activity-specific regulations (i.e. events, farm stand)
- Likely to interact with multiple departments: Planning, Environmental Health, etc.

Key Considerations include:

- Building codes
- Septic requirements
- Food safety
- Parking
- ADA Compliance

What are you allowed to do & what are the costs?



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Agritourism Safety, Liability, & Risk Management

Insurance: Bringing the public onto your farm may not be covered by your current farm policy. *Contact your agent!*

Safety: Having a safety plan and reducing hazards will help manage your risk

Accessibility: The owner operator may be responsible for complying with [Accessibility Standards](#).

Checklists can be found at
www.safeagritourism.org/resources



Partnerships & Collaboration

Ecosystem of Agritourism Stakeholders

- Producer Organizations
- Tourism bureaus
- Chambers of Commerce
- Economic development agencies
- UC Cooperative Extension



AMADOR
WINE COUNTRY



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Get Connected

California Agritourism News: Quarterly E-newsletter

California Agritourism Listserv: Community Discussion Group

[Click HERE to sign up for the e-newsletter and/or the Listserv](#)

Get Informed

California Agritourism: Website with resources, research, etc.

<https://ucanr.edu/sites/agritourism/>

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