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Register Now for the Agritourism Conference

The 2007 Agritourism: Cultivating Farm Revenue Conference is rapidly approaching, and now is the time to register to receive the early registration rate.

The conference will be held January 22-23 in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee at the Music Road Hotel and Convention Center. The program is packed with educators and entrepreneurs who will share their knowledge and experience on marketing, risk management, growing your enterprise, hospitality and more.

Eric Barrett, agritourism operator and Ohio State University Extension Educator, will once again be featured on the program. He will offer a general session on branding

your enterprise and two concurrent sessions on advertising, marketing and public relations.

Maria Marshall from Purdue University will provide insight into pricing and growing your enterprise.

Tennessee agritourism entrepreneurs will share their experiences in several ways. Owners of *The Apple Barn* and *Flippens Fruit Farm* will discuss their enterprises during special general sessions. Entrepreneur panels will discuss a variety of topics during concurrent sessions.

You can get in on the action by bringing materials to share for the

“Agritourism in Action: Show Your Stuff” trade show exhibit and participating in networking topic tables during lunches.

Register by December 15 to take advantage of the early registration fee of \$75. Registration after this date will be \$125.

Lodging for the conference is available at the Music Road Hotel for \$69 per night.

A detailed agenda, session descriptions, lodging reservation details and link to on-line conference registration may be found at <http://cpa.utk.edu>. Look for the conference listing in the “CPA Spotlight” section on the right side of the screen.

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Seeds for Successful Sponsorships

Sponsorships are attractive to some agritourism operators as a method of gaining cash, products or services, but many operators have questions about the possibilities and how to get started. Here are nine questions you should be asking about sponsorships and answers to help you get started.

1. What does my agritourism enterprise have to offer potential sponsors?

While this question may not be the first one on the minds of agritourism operators, it will be one of the first things a potential sponsor will consider when approached with a sponsorship proposal.

Therefore, it is important for agritourism operators to think about what their operation has to offer potential sponsors and then be able to communicate those attributes to potential sponsors.

You should be able to:

- Describe your operation and mission
- Identify activities and special events
- Describe visitors (type of visitors and where they come from)
- Estimate number of visitors

2. What should I expect to provide a sponsor?

Potential sponsors may be looking to:

- Get their business name, logo, marketing materials and/or product in front of an audience
- Associate themselves with a well-respected business, good cause or positive message
- Support businesses that use or sell their product or service

To help sponsors meet their goals, you may provide the sponsor with any number of opportunities including:

- Display name and logo (signs, banners, cut into corn maze, etc.)

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Seeds for Successful Sponsorships (Continued from Page 1)

- Display, demonstrate or sample product
- Distribute brochures, coupons and other marketing materials
- Include name and/or logo in marketing materials such as brochures, advertisements, press releases, Web site, newsletters, interviews, etc.
- Link sponsors' Web site to your Web Site
- Provide naming rights to an activity or event
- Provide the sponsor with tickets that they can distribute to employees or customers
- Provide special employee or customer party or day at the operation

3. Who are potential sponsors?

Potential sponsors are all types of businesses that are interested in reaching the same people who visit your operation. Consider that the businesses who sponsor your operation reflect upon you and your mission. Be sure that businesses you pursue as potential sponsors are well-respected by consumers and are appropriate for your target audience.

Potential sponsors include:

- Media (Newspapers, Radio, TV)
- Beverage or snack food companies
- Equipment and vehicle dealers, hardware stores, seed companies, feed stores and other suppliers
- Banks, grocery stores, restaurants, real estate agencies and other local businesses
- Large companies located in your area

4. What could I expect to receive from a sponsor?

Sponsors may be willing to provide a number of items of value to agritourism venues including:

- Cash payment
- Products (beverages; food

items; radio, newspaper or TV ads or mentions: seed, feed or fertilizer; etc.)

- Cooperative promotion through their marketing efforts (Link on Web site, advertising, publicity, etc.)
- Distribution of your marketing materials (brochures, coupons, etc.)
- Prizes for a contest
- Ticket sales at their locations
- Distribution of samples or promotional items at the farm
- Special appearances (radio or TV personality visits the farm to judge a contest, emcee an event or award contest prizes; the news helicopter is brought to the farm to be shown to visitors; etc.)

5. How do I value the sponsorship?

This may vary significantly based on what the sponsor is receiving from your operation and the number of visitors to your operation. If an event or activity is sponsored, the sponsorship(s) should cover the cost of the event or activity. The sponsorship should also cover the costs you will incur in recognizing the sponsor or in services you provide (costs of banners, cost to host company party at your farm, etc.). You should try to determine what other businesses receive in sponsorships and what the sponsor gets in return.

6. What do I do to prepare for a meeting with potential sponsors?

It may be helpful to prepare a sponsorship proposal to share with potential sponsors. The written proposal may include:

- Overview of the agritourism operation
- History of the operation
- Description of visitors (number and demographics)
- Schedule of operation events
- Summary of benefits you will provide to sponsor

- Summary of what sponsor will provide for your operation
- Summary of proposal
- Deadline for answer

7. How do I contact potential sponsors?

- Look on the company Web site or call to find out who is in charge of handling sponsorships at the company.
- Send a brief letter or e-mail to the person responsible. Include a short introduction to your enterprise (including the type and estimated number of visitors) and the potential for sponsorship. Also include a date and time that you will call the contact to discuss a potential sponsorship.
- Call at the indicated time and ask to meet in person to discuss the potential sponsorship and details of the agreement. Be persistent in trying to reach the person.

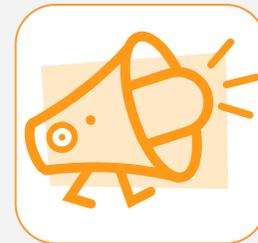
8. When do I contact potential sponsors?

Contact potential sponsors as soon as you have put your sponsorship material together. Companies often develop budgets once a year so it is important that you get your sponsorship opportunity on their radar.

9. What do I do once I receive a sponsorship?

It is very important to deliver at least everything you promised your sponsor in the sponsorship agreement. Exceeding the sponsor's expectations in some way, however, will help foster a lasting relationship.

At the end of the season, follow up with the sponsor. Take or send them a thank you gift. Provide them with a summary of the benefits they received as a sponsor and give them some ideas about future sponsorship opportunities.



Sources

Eckert, Jane. "Farm Sponsorships: Increase Income and Visibility." Available online at <http://www.kansasagritourism.org/articles/Sponsorships.htm>.

Schmall, Darren. "Creating Strategic Alliances that Pay." *Tennessee Agritourism: Cultivating Farm Revenue Conference Proceedings*. November 2005.

Market Minute

Consumers' definitions of "quality" and "value" in food and tourism preferences are moving targets, according to Brent Warner and Ed Mahoney in a presentation to the 2006 North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association. These preferences have changed considerably over the past decades and will continue to evolve over time.

It is important for agritourism operators to understand the needs and preferences of their target audience (consumers who are likely to visit their operation). A recent study of visitors to agritourism enterprises in Tennessee sheds some light on visitor

preferences, demographics and expenditures in the state.

The study, its results and implications for operators will be the topic of two breakout sessions being offered at the 2007 Agritourism: Cultivating Farm Revenue Conference. Results of the study are also available in a publication on-line at <http://web.utk.edu/%7Eaim/ag/pubs/research%20report%20visitors%20surveys3.pdf>.

This information may be helpful to operators as they determine products and services to offer and amenities to provide. It may also be helpful in developing a marketing plan and marketing

materials.

Changing consumer preferences mean that direct farm marketers and agritourism operators must try to anticipate changes in preferences and provide products and services to meet these new needs. It is important for operators to focus on their target audience and try to assess their changing attitudes and lifestyles and influence preferences.

Operators can learn about changing attitudes and lifestyles by observing and interacting with customers, reading industry publications and research, and observing trends in other tourism businesses.



Resource Review

The Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (AgMRC) is an electronic, national information resource for producers interested in value-added agriculture, including agritourism.

The Web site, found at <http://www.agmrc.org>, includes information on products, markets, business development, resource directories and more. The site lists links to resource materials from across the nation. The site also links to

some interesting agritourism enterprise Web sites and provides case studies of some operations.

AgMRC staff produce a newsletter, the *AgMRC Action*, to which you can subscribe by submitting your e-mail address on the site.

Upcoming Events

Tennessee Fruit and Vegetable Association Convention

December 10-12, 2006
Nashville Airport Marriot
http://www.tfva.org/convention_index.html

2007 Tennessee Agritourism Conference

January 22-23, 2007
Pigeon Forge, TN

Southeast Region Agritourism Council Meeting

January 22-24, 2007
Pigeon Forge, TN

Tennessee Viticultural & Oenological Society Annual Meeting

February 16-17, 2007
Clarksville Riverview Inn
<http://tvos.org>

Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.