

Megan L. Bruch
Marketing Specialist
Center for Profitable Agriculture
P.O. Box 1819
Spring Hill, TN 37174

Phone
(931)486-2777

Fax
(931)486-0141

E-mail
mlbruch@utk.edu

Web Site
<http://cpa.utk.edu>



Register Now For January Conference

The third Agritourism Cultivating Farm Revenue Conference will be held January 17-18, 2008 at Paris Landing State Park near Buchanan, Tennessee.

"This year's conference features more sessions than ever before where agritourism entrepreneurs are sharing their personal knowledge and experience," says Megan Bruch, marketing specialist with the Center for Profitable Agriculture. "Donnie Beggs from Beggs Family Farm in Sikeston, Missouri will help kick off the conference by sharing how he has increased revenue on his operation. Carl and Debra Chaney from Chaney's Dairy Barn in Bowling Green, Kentucky will close the conference by telling about their enterprise."

Concurrent sessions will feature four different entrepreneur panels, each with a different theme. The four panels will focus on farm tours and festivals, retail, corn mazes and haunted

attractions, and incorporating farm resources into agritourism.

"Twelve panelists including Michael Pinzl from Uncle Shucks Corn Maze in Dawsonville, Georgia will tell about their enterprise and answer questions from a moderator and the audience," says Bruch.

All entrepreneurs in attendance can share their ideas and experiences through several networking opportunities. Back by popular demand is the special trade show exhibit called "Show Your Stuff." Entrepreneurs can bring photo albums, articles, brochures, etc. to display. Entrepreneurs can also share stories of things that worked and things that didn't in a general session called "What Flew and What Flopped."

Other conference sessions will feature information on activities to educate and entertain on the farm, how to increase revenue through retail and more.

The conference will also include a trade show and the annual meeting of the Tennessee Agritourism Association. Learn more about the association by visiting www.visittnfarms.com

Conference information and registration is available online at the Center for Profitable Agriculture's Web site at <http://cpa.utk.edu> Registration can also be completed by calling 865-974-0280.

There is a registration fee of \$75 if registered by January 4, 2008. Late registration is \$125.

The conference is sponsored by the Tennessee Agritourism Initiative partners including the Tennessee Departments of Agriculture, Tourist Development, Economic and Community Development; USDA Rural Development; UT Extension including the Center for Profitable Agriculture; and the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation.

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Ag Census to Include More on Value-Added Agriculture and Agritourism

The 2007 Census of Agriculture is branching out and adding additional questions about value-added agriculture and agritourism.

"In the 1997 and 2002 Census, respondents were asked about the value of sales from crops, livestock, poultry or agricultural products sold directly to individual consumers for human consumption, excluding processed products," says Megan Bruch, marketing

specialist for the Center for Profitable Agriculture.

"The resulting information on the number of farms selling directly to consumers and the value of those sales has been very valuable," says Bruch. "Knowing what those numbers are and being able to compare them across time allows educators and service providers to determine trends in the industry and helps us to determine how to best serve

our audiences. This information is also valuable in helping us justify requests for resources to develop programs and in reporting impact of those programs."

The direct sales question will appear again on the 2007 Census according to sample reports available on the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Web site.

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Spotlight on Agritourism: ARCY Acres

Art Landrigan ARCY Acres Christmas Tree Farm and Nursery

Cumberland County
www.arcyacres.com

What products or attractions do you offer?

ARCY Acres offers a variety of products for the Christmas season. Customers looking for a Christmas tree can choose one from the field to cut, select a pre-cut tree or opt for a ball and burlap tree to plant later. Container conifers are also sold. Owners, Art and Cyndi Landrigan, will also custom make wreaths and centerpieces to decorate your door or table.

Customers can visit the gift and hobby shop to find ornaments, collectibles and accessories.

Santa visits the operation on the second Saturday of December to visit and take pictures with customers.

ARCY Acres has also begun offering school tours.

Art and Cyndi strive to "provide a family-oriented Christmas experience" to farm visitors.

What is unique about the operation?

ARCY Acres is unique in several ways. It is one of two operations in Tennessee to have a Christmas tree "swimming pool." Pre-cut trees are placed in water immediately after being cut or delivery to the farm to help maintain freshness.

In order to meet a goal of providing the widest selection of conifers in the area, Art grows many varieties of trees, swaps trees with producers in other areas of Tennessee and brings in trees from out-of-state that cannot be grown here at this time. Art is also experimenting with varieties not typically grown in the state to see if they can be adapted for Tennessee's climate. He is having some success with some varieties, even through the hot,

dry summer of 2007.

How long have you been in business?

Art and Cyndi purchased their farm in 1996 and planted their first trees in 1997. They opened for their first retail season in 2002, a year earlier than planned at the urging of their neighbors.

Why did you get into agritourism?

After retiring from successful careers, Art and Cyndi went to work on a lifelong dream. Combining their mutual love for the Christmas season, Art's love for growing things and Cyndi's craft skills, ARCY Acres Christmas Tree Farm and Nursery was born.

What have been your biggest challenges?

Art says his biggest challenge is "finding time and money to do everything we would like to do in order to fulfill customer needs and desires."

Another challenge relates to tree production. The survival of recently planted trees is challenging, especially in a year like this. The Landrigan's hand water each of about 800 newly planted trees to try to increase the potential for survival.

How do you market your operation?

The Landrigan's use several methods to market their enterprise. They maintain a Web site and link it to partner sites such as Pick Tennessee Products, Christmas tree association sites and agritourism association sites. Ads are placed in several local newspapers during the season. Flyers are used in the local area.

Involvement in local organizations also provides marketing opportunities. The

Chamber of Commerce assisted in ARCY Acres obtaining a spot on local public TV that has run throughout the fall and winter. UT Extension reporter Chuck Denny profiled the operation for a TV segment last fall as well. ARCY Acres is also a participant in the "Shop Crossville First" program to encourage customers to shop locally by offering special drawings to participating customers.

To promote the grand opening of the nursery, Art and Cyndi are giving coupons to customers from the Christmas season to redeem in March through June at the nursery.

In addition, Art and Cyndi donate their time to bring Santa to several benefits for local children during the Christmas season and sponsor a coloring contest.

What are your goals for the future?

Art's accounting and financial planning background leads him to lay out his plans for the operation two to three years in advance.

Art and Cyndi are installing greenhouses to grow trees, shrubs and perennials beginning this Spring. ARCY Acres will also be the exclusive Jackson and Perkins rose dealer for the Crossville area. The nursery grand opening will be held March 15, 2008. "The nursery will give people another reason to visit ARCY Acres during the year," says Art.

Art also hopes to expand tours to more schools and to other audiences such as scout troops and senior citizen groups.

More special event activities are planned for the Christmas season as well.

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ARCY Acres (continued from page 2)

What advice do you have for other agritourism operators or farmers interested in agritourism?

Art's advice to other operators is to "learn your customer and their desires. Learn to customize your operation to fit your customers' needs. If you do this repetitively over the years, your customers will take care of you."

He says, "People realize value when they see it. They are willing to pay more for a product that is tailored to them. They are willing to pay more for a quality product

or a quality experience."

This philosophy has worked well for ARCY Acres. Art reports that 90 to 92 percent of his customers are repeat customers. Tree sales have increased every year since the enterprise opened. Last year the number of trees sold increased by almost 70 percent.

"It's hard work," says Art, "but if you love it and have a passion for it like I do, it's very satisfying."



Census (continued from page 1)

In addition, the sample reports show new items to be collected in the coming Census.

"Information resulting from these additional questions will give us the first snapshot of how many Tennessee producers are engaging in value-added agriculture and agritourism," says Bruch.

Section 25 of the Census, titled "Income from Farm-Related Sources," asks respondents to report income from "agritourism and recreational services such as farm or winery tours, hayrides, hunting, fishing, etc." Section 32, titled

"Practices," asks respondents to indicate whether or not they "Produce and sell value added crops, livestock, or products such as beef jerky, fruit jams, jelly, preserves, floral arrangements, etc.?" or "Market products through a community supported agriculture (CSA) arrangement?"

"The fact that information is being collected on the Census about these topics is an indication of increased recognition of and growth of value-added agriculture and agritourism. It is also an indication of the growing

importance of these sectors in agriculture," says Bruch.

NASS will mail the 2007 Census forms to farmers on December 28 to collect data for the 2007 calendar year. Completed forms are due by February 4, 2008. Producers can return responses by mail or fill out the form on-line for the first time. Results will be released beginning in February of 2009. For more information about the Census visit www.agcensus.usda.gov.

Upcoming Events

Tennessee Agritourism Association Meeting

Friday, January 18
8:00 am during the 2008 Tennessee Agritourism Conference at Paris Landing State Park

Contact Vera Ann Myers for more information at veraann@xtn.net

2008 Tennessee Agritourism Conference

January 17-18, 2008
Paris Landing State Park
For more information, visit <http://cpa.utk.edu>

