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2008 Agritourism in Action Educational Bus Tour Evaluation Summary

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The 2008 Agritourism in Action Educational Bus Tour was held November 11-13, 2008. The 54 participants included 48 agritourism operators and farmers interested in agritourism and six representatives from UT Extension, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation. The group visited 11 agritourism operations in Tennessee, Kentucky and Indiana.

The operations visited on the tour included Honeysuckle Hill Farm in Springfield, TN; Jackson's Orchard and Chaney's Dairy Barn in Bowling Green, KY; Montgomery Farms in Underwood, IN; Stream Cliff Herb Farm in Commiskey, IN; Huber's Orchard Winery and Vineyards and Joe Huber Family Farm and Restaurant in Starlight, IN; Hinton's Orchard and Farm Market in Hodgenville, KY; Dennison's Roadside Market in Horse Cave, KY; The Berry Patch and Garden Center in Austin, KY; and Habegger's Amish Market in Scottsville, KY.



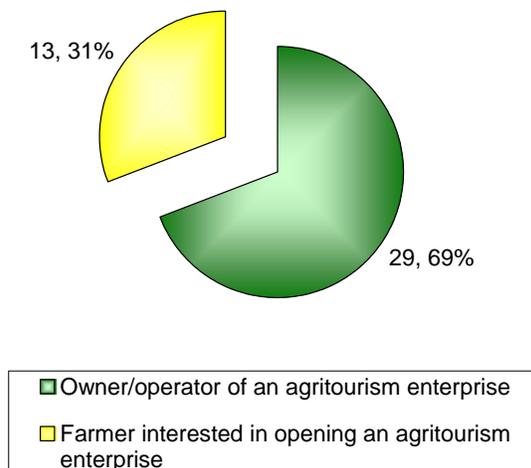
Tour participants gather around the "Monster Slide" at the first stop on the tour, Honeysuckle Hill Farm in Springfield, TN.

The tour was funded in part by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. Participants paid registration fees of \$200 per person.

Tour participants were asked to complete an evaluation form (Appendix A) at the close of the three-day event. Forty-two forms were returned for a response rate among agritourism operators and farmers interested in agritourism of 87.5 percent.

Participants were asked to indicate whether they were an owner/operator of an agritourism enterprise or a farmer interested in opening an agritourism enterprise. As shown in Figure 1, 29 participants or 69 percent of respondents were owner/operators and 13 respondents or 31 percent were farmers interested in opening an enterprise.

Figure 1. Role and Interest in Agritourism (Number and Percent of Respondents)



Participants were asked to rate five statements related to potential impacts of the tour on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Average ratings ranged from a high of 5.00 for the tour being “worth my investment of time and financial resources” to a low of 4.61 for gaining “knowledge and/or ideas to help me market my operation more effectively.” Gaining “ideas about new or different products, services or attractions that I could offer at my enterprise” earned an average rating of 4.83. Making “contacts among bus tour participants that I plan to continue after the tour” received an average rating of 4.81, and gaining “knowledge that will help me manage my agritourism operation more effectively” earned a rating of 4.67. Statements and corresponding average ratings are shown in Table 1.



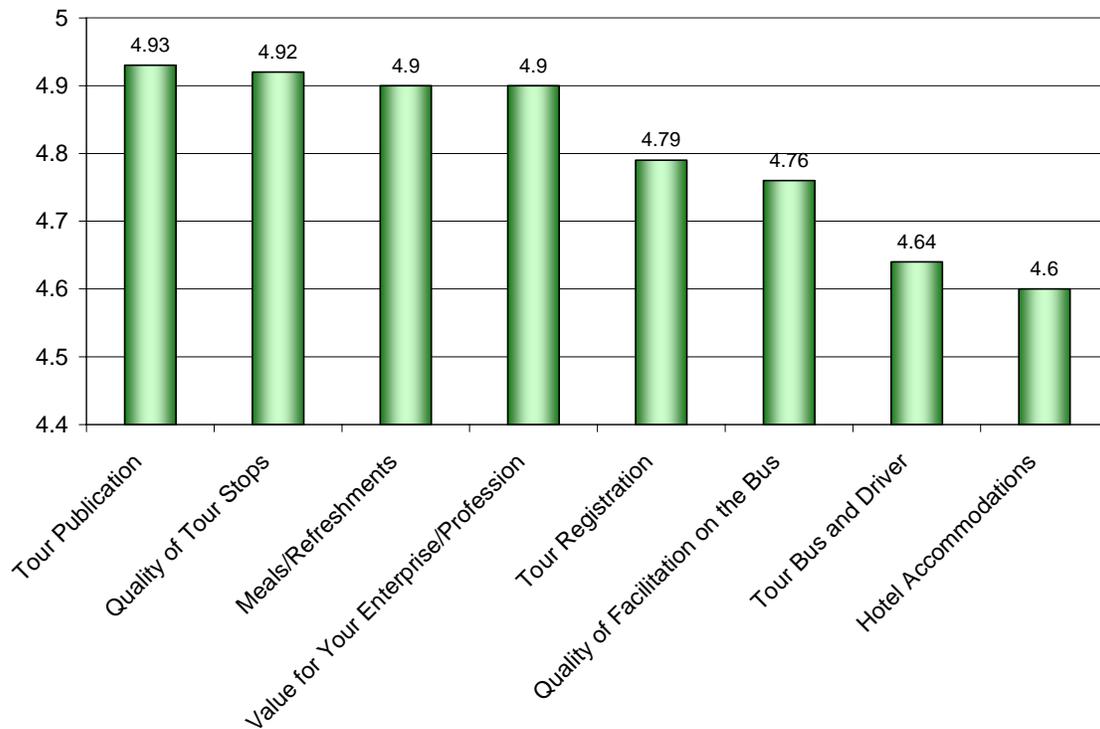
Tour participants gather for a presentation by Carl and Debra Chaney in Bowling Green, KY on their school tour program before dinner and ice cream at Chaney’s Dairy Barn.

Table 1. Average Ratings Given by Respondents to Impact Statements on a Scale of 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree

Statements	Average Rating
The Agritourism in Action Educational Bus Tour was worth my investment of finances and time.	5.00
I gained ideas about new or different products, services or attractions that I could offer at my enterprise.	4.83
I made contacts among bus tour participants that I plan to continue after the tour.	4.81
I gained knowledge that will help me manage my agritourism operation more effectively.	4.67
I gained knowledge and/or ideas to help me market my operation more effectively.	4.61

Participants were asked to rate various aspects of the tour on a scale of 1=Poor, 2=Fair, 3=Average, 4=Good or 5=Excellent. Average ratings ranged from a high of 4.93 for the tour publication to a low of 4.60 for hotel accommodations. The quality of tour stops received the second highest rating at 4.92. Meals and refreshments received an average rating of 4.90. Tour registration received a 4.79, and quality of facilitation on the bus received a 4.76. The tour bus and driver received an average rating of 4.64. Average ratings for various aspects of the tour are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Average Ratings for Various Aspects of the Tour on a Scale of 1=Poor to 5=Excellent



Participants were asked to write a statement which described the most valuable part of the tour. Most of the comments were related to networking and enterprises visited (tour stops).

The most valuable part of the tour was described by some participants as follows:

- ◆ Interaction with others on the bus and seeing other operations and talking with owner. I enjoyed the smaller operations better, related to them.
- ◆ Networking, visiting stops, getting ideas, taking photos, review on bus, booklet with tour description.
- ◆ Seeing how others displayed items for sale. What they chose to sell - how the different businesses grew and changed - hydroponic system - how they advertised.
- ◆ Seeing a wide variety of operations to make decisions what will work for us.
- ◆ Info businesses were willing to share.
- ◆ Ideas of things to add to my ag op, marketable items, contacts, networking.
- ◆ Visualizing other layouts.
- ◆ The journey made clearer what we see as our goals and what we don't want.
- ◆ Seeing how people do things in other states.
- ◆ Visiting the wineries and hydro gardening.
- ◆ Seeing all the different businesses. Having the owners verbalize how much work goes into the business. That it does not happen overnight. The positive attitude from everyone the last 3 days.
- ◆ Getting to talk to owners and see behind the front of the operations. People at the stops were very helpful and open.
- ◆ Getting to see how each operation works.
- ◆ Seeing the smaller farm (agritourism) operators.
- ◆ Getting to see so many different operations.



Tour participants listen as Betty Manning discusses aspects of Stream Cliff Herb Farm in Commiskey, Indiana.



Participants admire the product displays and do some shopping at Dennison's Roadside Market in Horse Cave, KY.

- ◆ Getting to see the layout of the operations and hear what works.
- ◆ Knowledge gained from people I met on the tour group.
- ◆ Networking/ tour stops with operators.
- ◆ Networking opportunities! Meeting faces behind the names of state employees.
- ◆ Hearing about everyone's experience, networking.
- ◆ Connecting with those who are doing what we want to do.
- ◆ Marketing ideas.
- ◆ How important rest room facilities are.
- ◆ Learning about other sources of revenue.

Participants were asked to provide suggestions on how the tour could be improved. Comments covered a variety of topics from length of days on the trip, types of enterprises visited (stops), methods to improve networking, directions to stops and shopping opportunities.

Suggestions for improvement are listed below:

- ◆ At times the comments and questions of participants were not repeated over the sound system, so people in the back heard only one side of the discussion.
- ◆ A knowledgeable person to ride on the bus with us from one stop to another who told about farming in the area, trends, history, etc. Maybe just one between tour stops.
- ◆ On these dates, tour participants were tired from the end of their season yet this date was beneficial in that enterprises visited were not completely closed.
- ◆ The days were long.
- ◆ More sleep.
- ◆ A little more rest time.
- ◆ Longer trip and longer stops sometimes.
- ◆ More time brainstorming in groups, shorter time on the bus riding, more down time to share ideas with each other, more variety in venues.
- ◆ Educational videos on the bus. Animal farm or livestock operation would be nice to see.
- ◆ Include an animal farm (other than dairy and petting zoo).
- ◆ Aim for smaller operations - Mom and Pop - yearly sales under \$20,000-\$25,000.
- ◆ Maybe seating everyone according to which region they are located for just one period/day/ride. Maybe "partnering" people according to experience level ie: Vera Ann (lots of experience) with 3 operators with no experience for one meal/ride/day.
- ◆ A bit longer time allowed for shopping at some locations. That also gives us a way to support those enterprises for hosting us.
- ◆ Better driver.
- ◆ Better GPS.
- ◆ Better map for driver.
- ◆ Better directions for driver.
- ◆ Could've offered car shuttle to get batteries, film, necessities or something we forgot.
- ◆ It would have been nice if the motel had been in walking distance of [a place to purchase] supplies such as batteries, film, meds, etc.



Bill Jackson shares knowledge gained from more than 40 years of experience at Jackson's Orchard and Nursery in Bowling Green, KY.

Participants also included some additional comments on their evaluation forms.

Examples of those comments include the following:

- ◆ I have never done anything like this, but I can not imagine it being any better. Everything went smoothly; we were well received at all the businesses. It was obvious there was a lot of planning and work that went into this project.
- ◆ Best one I have been on.
- ◆ This was excellent. I honestly could not think of a way to improve on the trip. You even provided GREAT weather considering the forecast!

- ◆ The tour was very well organized and well conducted - all were very polite and interested.
- ◆ It was fantastic! Thank you!
- ◆ I can't think of a thing – it was awesome!
- ◆ I think you did a great job of choosing stops that gave a good variety of ideas and different stages of their business. Thank you - you did a great job!
- ◆ I think you did a great job of choosing stops that gave a good variety of ideas and different stages of their business. Thank you - you did a great job!
- ◆ It was a wonderful experience. Well thought out and planned all the way down to candy as a snack. Thanks for all your hard work.
- ◆ We had a wonderful time! Thank you Megan, Pam and Dan. This has been a great learning experience for us. We so appreciate all your hard work in putting this together. This isn't an easy undertaking and we know how hard you have worked to bring us this memorable experience. We look forward to the next one!
- ◆ Excellent, excellent, excellent!
- ◆ A great, great price for all that was offered especially new people.
- ◆ Top notch and very well done! Thank you for the opportunity - it has given me a wealth of information.
- ◆ Overall an excellent tour. Great job. Great job of picking our destinations.

Summary

The 2008 Agritourism in Action Educational Bus Tour was held November 11-13, 2008. A total of 54 participants visited 11 agritourism operations in Tennessee, Kentucky and Indiana. The tour allowed participants to network with agritourism operators who participated on the tour or served as hosts, gain ideas about new products and attractions and learn how to better manage and market their operations. Several suggestions were received to assist in planning and implementing future events, and many positive comments about the tour were provided by evaluation form respondents.

APPENDIX A
2008 Agritourism in Action Educational Bus Tour
Evaluation Form

Please help us to evaluate this tour and plan for future events by completing this evaluation form.

1. Which of the following terms best describes your role and interest in agritourism? (Please check only one.)

- Owner/operator of an agritourism enterprise
 Farmer interested in opening an agritourism enterprise

2. On a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), please rate the following statements.

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>				<i>Strongly Agree</i>
a. I gained knowledge that will help me manage my agritourism operation more effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
b. I gained ideas about new or different products, services or attractions that I could offer at my enterprise.	1	2	3	4	5
c. I gained knowledge and/or ideas to help me market my operation more effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
d. I made contacts among bus tour participants that I plan to continue after the tour.	1	2	3	4	5
e. The Agritourism in Action Educational Bus Tour was worth my investment of finances and time.	1	2	3	4	5

3. Please rate the following by circling the number corresponding to the applicable rating:

	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
Tour Registration	1	2	3	4	5
Tour Publication	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of Tour Stops	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of Facilitation on the Bus	1	2	3	4	5
Hotel Accommodations	1	2	3	4	5
Tour Bus and Driver	1	2	3	4	5
Meals/Refreshments	1	2	3	4	5
Value for Your Enterprise/Profession	1	2	3	4	5

4. What was the most valuable part of the Agritourism in Action Educational Bus Tour for you?

5. How could the Agritourism in Action Educational Bus Tour have been improved?

6. Please write any additional comments or suggestions on the back of this form.

Thank you for your participation.