

# Agritourism in Mississippi: Effects and Impacts



Agritourism can benefit Mississippi's farmers, landowners, and community members. Specifically, agritourism can positively impact education, agriculture, income, and employment.

## Benefits to Farmers

Agritourism can benefit farmers and landowners because it promotes product diversification, increases visibility, and increases demand for products. Producers and growers reap the benefits of direct sales and value-added production. Agritourism can provide additional income to both the farmer and the employee. Agritourism can help the environment: it allows farmers to generate income on small acreage, which may prevent excessive farming on marginal land. That marginal land can then harbor wildlife and fish, helping conserve Mississippi's rivers and streams.

## Benefits to Agricultural Industry

Agritourism can benefit agriculture by increasing its visibility, educating consumers about the importance of production and rural life, increasing demand for local agricultural products, bringing potential consumers to rural areas, and building support for agriculture.

## Benefits to Communities And State Economy

Agritourism can benefit local economies by drawing consumers to the community, attracting tourists to the region, providing employment opportunities, and increasing visibility and revenues of local businesses. Some studies suggest that communities in rural Mississippi have the

potential to make more money in recreation sales than they are currently making. In Mississippi, agriculture is already supported by a vast network of resources and infrastructure. Agritourism could provide a way for many rural communities to capture tourism dollars, provide jobs, increase local revenue, and allow local farmers to stay in business. According to the Natural Resource Enterprises Program with the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Aquaculture at Mississippi State University, the economic impact of the agritourism industry is at least \$3,583,135 annually. When factoring in other outdoor recreational activities such as hunting, angling, wildlife watching, and horse-trail riding on Mississippi farms, the economic impact is nearly \$2.7 billion annually.

## Benefits to the Public

Agritourism offers participants education and exercise. It promotes a strong work ethic, stewardship, and responsibility. Agritourism can also provide youth and adults with a chance to experience rural life through outdoor activities. These can promote exercise, good health, a sense of well-being, and knowledge of how rural lands serve as a source of food, fiber, and recreation.

Agritourism offers all these benefits at little to no cost to taxpayers. Many states have created recreational use statutes to support the growth of this industry. Current records of the Mississippi Division of Tourism show there are 95 agritourism-related farms and businesses in the state. Mississippi State University Extension Service has provided and continues to provide multiple educational programming efforts to assist this growing industry.

## Resources

For more information about agritourism, see these websites:

<http://extension.msstate.edu>

<http://www.naturalresources.msstate.edu/resources/agritourism.html>

[http://asci.uvm.edu/equine/law/recreate/mi\\_rec.htm](http://asci.uvm.edu/equine/law/recreate/mi_rec.htm)

<http://www.nationalaglawcenter.org/assets/agritourism/louisiana.pdf>

<http://web.utk.edu/~aimag/pubs/research%20report%20visitors%20surveys3.pdf>

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