

Manitoba: Producers Can Profit with Agritourism



Agritourism provides an excellent opportunity for urban Manitobans and visitors to experience and connect with the wonders of rural life in our province. Travellers receive a unique, authentic experience when visiting an agritourism destination, and many visitors have a chance to encounter agriculture in a personal way that is no longer available to most people.

In Manitoba agritourism has been around since farmers started selling their produce from roadside stands to people travelling by and offering a week-end country retreat to friends. Today agritourism encompasses a variety of activities that include on-farm entertainment, corn mazes, farmers' markets, tours, fairs and country festivals and the popular Halloween haunts that get people into the country and out to the farms.

In 2007, Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI) created an agritourism development strategy. The strategy laid out a framework to support the development of the agritourism industry in the province.

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Manitoba's agritourism strategy focuses on:

- diversifying and strengthening farm incomes
- responding to experiential tourism demand
- contributing to healthy vibrant rural communities
- building relationships and creating synergies with other tourism businesses

Currently, there are more than 260 sites located in over 130 communities in Manitoba offering an agritourism experience. This provides a huge variety of opportunities for tourists and tourist-oriented businesses in Manitoba. The most common agritourism products in Manitoba are farm-gate sales, hands-on farm experiences, bed-and-breakfast locations at farms, ranches or in small communities, and entertainment at community fairs and events.

Since the completion of the strategy, MAFRI has established a provincial Agritourism Advisory Committee with 12 business and industry representatives from across the province. The committee's

role is to provide guidance and input into policies and strategies for agritourism in the province.

Several industry development workshops have been organized, some featuring Manitoba businesses and others organized by the provincial destination marketing organization, Travel Manitoba. In November 2009, four “Opening Your Gates To Tourism” workshops were held across the province. These were very well attended and helped new and experienced operators witness the potential benefits of offering an agritourism experience, determine what type of operations would work for them and gauge the level of service they could provide.

As an industry, agritourism provides opportunities for community development and diversification by increasing economic activity for producers on the farm. Agritourism supplements family farm income and helps keep farm families on farms. It also provides a venue for tourists and locals to see where their food comes from and how it is produced.



Agritourism is sustainable. It provides a business opportunity for local entrepreneurs to offer rural experiences to tourists. In Manitoba, the majority of visitors come to visit friends and relatives and a large portion of tourists are from within the province. Manitoba is also unique because over half the population lives in the capital city of Winnipeg – a large agritourism market. By offering a variety of great agritourism experiences travellers from the city are enticed to come visit the country. Providing local experiences keeps travellers’ dollars in the province and in rural communities.

While numerous opportunities for agritourism currently exist, there are many more yet to be discovered and the Manitoba strategy offers several suggestions to develop a truly world class experience.

Manitoba will continue to develop opportunities and work with Manitobans to create a sustainable industry that offers exceptional opportunities to experience rural Manitoba lifestyles.

By **Manitoba Agritourism Horizontal Team**

For more information on identifying, launching and growing agritourism business opportunities, contact Manitoba Agritourism online.

<http://www.manitobaagritourism.ca>

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