

Agritourism

MASTER FARMER SERIES

Oahu Resource Conservation & Development Council

Agricultural tourism – Agritourism – allows farmers and other agricultural professionals to broaden their income base by offering visitors and locals a genuine experience in an agricultural setting.

Many small farms have begun to diversify in an effort to make their farms sustainable and are embracing agritourism. Essentially, farmers invite visitors to experience some type(s) of farm activities. This can be anything from sampling products of the farm to taking part in actual farming operations. In Hawai'i, tourism is the largest industry and it is therefore logical for agricultural operations to seek added revenues by tapping into this industry. The tourism industry benefits through the opportunity to engage tourists in authentic experiences that are off the beaten path.

Agritourism Activities:

Birthday parties
Café serving farm-fresh food
Coconut husking/tasting
Cooking demo's/classes
Farming demonstrations
Farm tours
Festivals
Hiking/biking
Horseback riding
Lei-making
Mazes (corn, straw bale, bamboo)
Nature tours
Petting pens/zoos
Picnics/picnic areas
Pumpkin patch
School group tours/farm-based educational programs
"Talk story" (storytelling)
U-pick fruit
Retail store featuring value-added products
Wagon/hay rides

Farmer Profile

Kylie Matsuda - Kahuku Farms

Kahuku Farms on O'ahu's North Shore launched an agritourism venture in October 2010. The farm operates a lunchtime café and offers tractor-pulled wagon tours through the farm where visitors learn about the farm's history, people, and crops. At the café, visitors can purchase farm products, including a variety of value-added merchandise like culinary and bath and body products.

The goals of Kahuku Farms' agritourism operation are: 1) Educate the public about farming, 2) Promote local agriculture, and 3) Create opportunities for direct sales.

It took six years to open their operation due to a complicated and lengthy permit process. Kylie Matsuda explains that the process will be different for each farm based on county rules and lease or zoning requirements. Kahuku Farms is still experiencing growing pains and the farm has not yet realized a return on investment, but the trend is positive. Kylie reports: "The interest is there; and we are very excited about the future".

Kahuku Farms website www.kahukufarms.com



Farm tour at Kahuku Farms. Photo courtesy of www.kahukufarms.com

Important Considerations:

Marketing: For farms that are off-the-beaten-path, a well-thought out marketing plan is key. Some examples of marketing techniques that may be helpful include: strategically placed signs, website/news media, developing relationships with tour operators, and word of mouth (often the most important).

Business/ Financial Management: A business plan should carefully consider anticipated expenses.



Farm café at Kahuku Farms. Photo courtesy of www.kahukufarms.com

Regulations: The State of Hawai'i allows for agritourism on agricultural land so long as the county has adopted an ordinance, and it is secondary to the principal agricultural use (H.B. Bill 2145, 2006.) The City and County of Honolulu has yet to adopt such an ordinance. Thus on O'ahu, agritourism requires a Special Use Permit (see *Oahu Agritourism Guidebook* for more information). There may be additional restrictions from property easements or lease agreements.

Liability & Insurance: Opening a farm up to visitors increases liability, which may require additional liability insurance.

RESOURCES:

O'ahu Agritourism Guidebook, O'ahu Resource Conservation & Development Council, 2011
www.oahurcd.org

Hawaii Agritourism Association, www.hiagtourism.org

Hawaii Ecotourism Association, www.hawaiiecotourism.org

Hawai'i Farm Bureau Federation, www.hfbf.org

Hawai'i Farmers Union, www.hawaiifarmersunion.org

Hawai'i Tourism Authority, www.hawaiitourismauthority.org

City and County of Honolulu Department of Planning and Permitting:

Website: <http://www.honolulu.gov/PermitInfo/>

For information regarding how to apply for a Special Use Permit visit:

<http://www.honolulu.gov/downloadpdf/planning/SUPAPP.pdf>

Land Use Ordinance: http://www.honolulu.gov/refs/roh/21_990.pdf



Oahu Resource Conservation & Development Council
PO Box 209 / 92-1770 Kunia Road, Kunia, HI 96759 / P 808-622-9026
www.oahurcd.org

Generously supported by USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program