



AgriBusiness Guidebook Starting an Agri-Tourism Operation

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Are You Considering Starting an Agri-Tourism Operation?

What is Agri-tourism?

Agri-tourism is anything and anywhere that agriculture and visitors can come together. Out of state visitor and resident alike. Agri-tourism can be a farm tour (in real life or virtual), a farm to table meal at a local restaurant or food truck, supporting a farmer's market, or a website selling value-added products made on the farm.

Local and global studies show that agri-tourism/rural tourism, outdoor/adventure activities, eco-travel and hands-on educational experiences are key to sustainable business models in isolated island locations, like Hawai'i. Especially when it comes to agriculture.

In this section of the guidebook, you will have an opportunity to explore the different considerations, challenges, levels of compliance, and market opportunities that agri-tourism can provide.

We begin by taking a look at our **Farm Tour Readiness Checklist** to get an idea if your business is on track, needs some work, or exceeds expectations. Then we'll take a look at the **Hawai'i Farm Trails Agri-Tourism App** to get a glimpse into what other agri-tourism venues are doing across the state and how your operation will fit into the mix.

Farm Tour Readiness Checklist

Are You “Farm Tour” Ready?

Below is a checklist that we use to identify areas that need to be modified, created, changed, added or addressed when looking at whether or not your farm or agri-location is ready for visitors and is a county-compliant place for guests to explore.

Every County has its own Compliance Guidelines

Agri-tourism locations are assessed on a case by case basis, based on what the farm wants to do, the location of the venue and the scale & scope of traffic, revenue and safety. Currently, there is no one way, one rule, or one method to being compliant. Each County has its own set of rules and regulations so if you are looking to get into the industry prepare yourself for that. Below is a link to the most recent Statewide Agri-Tourism Planning and Compliance Workshop (Summer 2020):<https://youtu.be/QbpRYmGahdM>

Here is a link to the [Planning Contacts in Each County](https://gofarmhawaii.org/agritourism-resources/) (https://gofarmhawaii.org/agritourism-resources/)

Understand that agri-tourism is not production or commodity farming

Once in the agri-tourism industry, you now cross over to a specialty service agri-location. Even if you have both components included in your business model, these are 2 very different types of agri-business. Commonly, farm owners see the value of diversifying into the agri-tourism industry to generate revenue that comes from value added product and service but do not fully realize the capital, skill set, and commitment required to make this change.

When consulting for farms that are diversifying their business templates to include a customer service and/or value added component to generate commerce, we use the following specifications below to help prepare locations for agri-tourism.

Have a look through and see if your farm can answer/address these areas. Be aware that these items are essential to the visitor/guest experience and visitor safety is generally not the same as farm safety in a manner of speaking. Farmers tend to have a stronger wherewithal than the average everyday person and often do not notice just how much stronger and resilient they are in comparison to folks who don't farm or are not accustomed to being on a farm day to day. We need to prepare our locations for first time farm goers as well as long time farm lovers.

Farm Tour Readiness Checklist:

This checklist helps guide farms who are navigating compliance and readiness for agri-tourism.

1. Your layout and location set up is important to your success. You need to have a game plan before visitors arrive. Understandably, most farmers like to farm not lead tours. However, farming mindsets are changing and many farmers enjoy educating guests just as much as they like farming. Take into consideration the following items to ensure you have everything in place prior to launching a tour.

- Physical Layout
 - What's the plan for your tour? The actual walking and/or driving route that guests are going to be using while on your property.
 - Where can they go, where can they not go?
 - What can they touch?
 - What can they not touch?

This is an important part of compliance and often gets overlooked because farm owners have never looked at their layout in relation to having visitors walk through it.

- Every location will require signage that indicates every little thing. Visitors need lots of guidance. i.e. parking, restrooms, turn here arrows, shop, demonstration area etc.
- ADA compliance for parking and restrooms is also required.
- Map of the property (that can be shown to visitors. Not blueprints)

- Vehicle & Walking Accessibility (in specific areas)
- Walking Route
- Driving Route
- Self-Guided Options
- Guided Tours (how long will the tour take?)
- Does your tour layout provide points of interest: Touch, Taste, Smell components?

2. Price Point & Labor needs to be taken into consideration at the beginning of your planning. Labor is often overlooked and gets lumped into the task list of someone who already has a lot of tasks. This is common, but don't bite off more than you can chew. The farm tour experience will be compromised if the person who is leading the tour isn't ready, willing or prioritizing the guests.

- What is the price point you are looking for?
- Who will do the farm tour?
- Does this person like people?
- Labor Hours for tour, setup, breakdown
- What's the cost/value (to you & guest) & ROI? (social & revenue)

Some tours can be used for marketing and community outreach. Assess where complimentary tours make sense and can provide your business with good standing and opportunity in the various communities or groups.

3. Safety & Comfort are paramount to the guest experience. Ensuring that your location is set up properly to meet health and safety guidelines is essential. Safety is different for people who are not farmers. These little things tend to get overlooked by a farmer but can be a danger for visitors.

- Assess dips in walking areas, steep hills, ungraveled, uneven pathways, exposed machinery & tools etc.
- Get fresh eyes on your property all the time. This will help you catch things that you are used to looking at every day that could be an eye sore or risk for injury.
- Follow and adhere to all CDC guidelines and local mandates to ensure you are following proper health protocol.

- Restrooms- If you are doing agri-tourism on your property, restrooms are a good idea but may not be a deal breaker if there is access to a bathroom break location(s) nearby. Guests will want/need to use the restroom, guaranteed.
 - Rest Stops- do not become a rest stop unless guests are prompted or have access to buy product. You do not want to be just a bathroom break.
- Parking- This is a safety concern. Parking will need to be clearly identified and safe. Flat, graveled or paved, clear turnarounds, signage and enough stalls that accommodate how many visitors you anticipate or can maximize. An open field or grass on the side of the road, generally is a no go.

4. Added Value options are important. Many operations use the farm tour as the “hook” to get visitors to the property and make their higher revenues from onsite product purchases. For example, a tour can cost \$10 but a visitor can spend \$25-\$100 on your products, if available and ready for sale.

- Product Offerings- Many farms miss the opportunity to sell product. Generally speaking, farm products that have 50% of their ingredients sourced on the farm are considered compliant in all counties. Merchandise such as t-shirts, mugs, key chains or any other products that are not made with farm ingredients may face some scrutiny. Be sure to check with your county planning and zoning departments on what you are able to legally sell from your location. Historically, there have been no issues with online sales.
- Food Service- make sure you have the proper food permits before serving, processing or selling food.

5. What are you going to tell people on the tour? There is an interesting paradox with farmers sometimes, they either have nothing to say or they have a hard time telling their story in less than 2-3 hours. We recommend you organize your farm tour script by Past, Present, Future (of the business/farm). This way there is some type of formula to help keep whoever is doing the tour on track.

- Past: Year you started your business and why you saw a demand.
- Present: The goals of your business now & what you see ahead.

- Future: Plans for succession?
- Visitor Perception- What do you want the guest to “take away” from their experience?
 - What are the values of your brand?
 - What makes you different from everyone’s brand/farm?
 - Our Specialty is
 - What did they purchase from you?
 - How can they find you again? website, social media?

6. Being a good neighbor. As far as compliance goes, this is the most important tip. Be a good neighbor.

- Be respectful of each other’s property line and traffic access.
- Create good communication with one another from the beginning. Be as transparent and collaborative as possible.
- If your neighbors complain about your business, County officials will come knocking. If your neighbors are in support of what you do, hassles will be far less.

7. Marketing Strategies that work for you. Often, business owners think that if you build it, they will come. More accurately, if you build it and market it, they will come. There are many ways and means to marketing. Word of mouth & social media are the most popular methods many small or beginning farmers are using.

- “Word of Mouth”- This is a common way people “hear or see” about businesses. The method is great because it usually comes from an authentic source like a friend or family member, but be mindful that the return on this method could take a long time.
- Social Media- This method is inexpensive but also time consuming. Be prepared to post content, gather photos and write captions if you are planning to market this way. Social media “boosts” have proven to be helpful and affordable if you are promoting something specific and want to target a specific audience.
- Supporting community & commerce is a good business & marketing tool. Collaborations & partnerships across business sectors are vital to business success in today’s local and global economy. Having friends and

allies who are leaders in the community will strengthen your brand and provide additional exposure through various networks.

Remember that this checklist is a guide and every location and business will have its own set of challenges and opportunities. Keep yourself involved in what is happening in your county leadership and do your research before making any big investments or changes to your business model. Take the initiative to make contact with your planning & zoning departments and make adjustments to your plan to help you scale slowly with the proper support.

Hawai'i Farm Trails Agri-Tourism App

Here in our Hawaiian Islands we have many unique, well rooted, and beautiful things to see, experience and share. Many are off the beaten path, on the open ocean or in the inner city and it is our network of local friends and leaders that have assisted us in creating this collective of agri-tourism venues.

The Hawai'i Farm Trails Agri-Tourism App is offered free, online and on all mobile smart devices. It is featured on the following websites to be used as a resource for travelers and a place to list Hawai'i's agri-tourism venues.

- [Hawai'i Tourism Authority](https://www.hawaiitourismauthority.org/) (https://www.hawaiitourismauthority.org/)
- [GoHawaii](http://www.gohawaii.com/) (http://www.gohawaii.com/)
- [Hawai'i Agritourism Association](http://hiagtourism.org/) (http://hiagtourism.org/)
- [Oahu Research & Conservation Development](https://oahurcd.org/) (https://oahurcd.org/)

If you have an agri-tourism venue and would like to feature it on the app, please review the following [criteria](https://bit.ly/3tbuD8m) (https://bit.ly/3tbuD8m)

Here you will find a video overview from our most recent agri-tourism workshop series on the app development and partnerships that have made this possible: [Hi Farm Trails](https://youtu.be/LLvsQenFFz8) (https://youtu.be/LLvsQenFFz8)

Visit the [Hi Farm Trails](https://www.hawaiifarmtrails.com/) website (https://www.hawaiifarmtrails.com/) to get the ball rolling.. Be ready to share information about your operation, photos and contact info.



Relevant Training Tools:

Hawai'i Agri-Tourism Webinars- Summer Series 2020:

In the Summer of 2020 a series of agri-tourism webinars were conducted to provide an overview of the market place and covid considerations that have affected commerce in our communities and Hawai'i's economy overall. The focus of the series was to take a look at how agri-tourism businesses are surviving and innovating during these uncertain times and the leadership it takes to keep businesses afloat. We also cover the planning & compliance process by County and give you some refreshers on marketing and finance.

Below are the agri-tourism venues featured in the series. Please consider following them on social media, supporting their online store, or making contact to visit if/where applicable/possible:

- [Big Island Bees](http://www.bigislandbees.com/) (http://www.bigislandbees.com/)
- [Hawaii Eco & O.K Farms](http://www.hawaii-eco-com/) (http://www.hawaii-eco-com/)
- [Lydgate Farms](http://www.lydgatefarms.shop/) (http://www.lydgatefarms.shop/)
- [Maui Pineapple](http://www.maupineappletour.com/) (http://www.maupineappletour.com/)
- [Maui Kui'a Estate Chocolate](http://www.mauichocolate.com/) (http://www.mauichocolate.com/)
- [Keiki & Plow](http://www.keikiandplow.com/) (http://www.keikiandplow.com/)
- [Ko Hana Distillers](http://www.kohanmarum.com/) (http://www.kohanmarum.com/)
- [Kualoa Ranch](http://www.kualoa.com/) (http://www.kualoa.com/)

Webinar Links:

Below are the video links to the Summer Series Webinars and additional resources provided by presenters.

- [7/21/2020 – Hawai'i Island Market Opportunity Panel](https://youtu.be/ilfJ2jCcNY) (https://youtu.be/ilfJ2jCcNY)
- [7/23/2020 – Kaua'i Market Opportunity Panel](https://youtu.be/cXYb0rgIP_U) (https://youtu.be/cXYb0rgIP_U)
- [7/28/2020 – Maui Market Opportunity Panel](https://youtu.be/G_cHvETFz0w) (https://youtu.be/G_cHvETFz0w)

- [7/31/2020 – Oahu Market Opportunity Panel](https://youtu.be/XU8QvoWKwz8) (<https://youtu.be/XU8QvoWKwz8>)
- [8/4/2020 – Compliance and Planning](https://youtu.be/QbpRYmGahdM) (<https://youtu.be/QbpRYmGahdM>)

Slide Decks:

- [Hawaii Tourism Authority, Caroline Anderson](https://bit.ly/3pqMLbw) (<https://bit.ly/3pqMLbw>)
- [Lydgate Farms, Will Lydgate](https://bit.ly/3pCk63X) (<https://bit.ly/3pCk63X>)
- [Keiki & Plow Pivoting from u-pick to curbside pickup, Heather Mohr](https://bit.ly/3r8sskk) (<https://bit.ly/3r8sskk>)
- [Kualoa Ranch Adapting AgriTourism, Stephanie Mock](https://bit.ly/36vFOz5) (<https://bit.ly/36vFOz5>)
- [Agriculture with Tourism, Pomai Weigert, GoFarm Hawaii](https://bit.ly/3tftTPU) (<https://bit.ly/3tftTPU>)
- [Financials Template \(Google Sheets\)](https://bit.ly/3ouMPGA) (<https://bit.ly/3ouMPGA>)

To view the entire Hawaii AgriBusiness Guidebook, please visit www.gofarmhawaii.org.