



July 2010

# California AgTour Connections

## Agritourism News & Notes

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### Greetings!

Here we are already at the end of July, planning for fall and winter while farm and ranch visitors enjoy their summer agricultural experience. I know many of you are organizing late-summer tours, farm days, harvest festivals and other events. Please consider listing your events in the new free [www.calagtour.org](http://www.calagtour.org) calendar, and include a picture too. Our readership is growing every week since we updated the look and added the calendar and the [UC Food Blog](#) to keep the directory looking fresh for visitors searching for adventure and education.

This issue shares some pointers for group visits, an idea for farm stays without the stay, a new photo--based marketing site, and some thoughts about exactly who is a farmer from a guest writer. At the [Small Farm Program](#) we're getting ready for fall too. We hope some of you can help us plan our upcoming professional development workshops in different regions of California, and that many of you will join us as participants this winter. Some of you are involved in updating [county plans and regulations](#), and we'd love to hear more about how that's going in your county to share in the next issue.

Happy summertime. Thanks for opening this newsletter, and please do stay in touch.

Sincerely,  
Penny Leff, UC Small Farm Program agritourism coordinator

### CalAgTour.org directory new look & features

#### Add your agritourism operation and public events today

Check out the directory's [new look!](#) The UC Small Farm Program hosts a searchable online directory of California's agricultural tourism operations, for use by visitors looking for a farm or ranch to visit. The directory is located at [www.CalAgTour.org](http://www.CalAgTour.org).

If you are a working farmer or rancher operating an agritourism business or organizing agritourism events, we invite you to complete the [directory application](#) or the [event listing application](#) online so we can include your business and



events in the directory. The listings and event postings are free. If you're already listed, please [check your listing](#) and update it if needed. You can use the [directory application](#) form for updates. We'll contact you if we have any questions.

Please take a look and tell us what else you'd like to see as part of the new CalAgTour.org. Let's fill up that [events calendar!](#)

## Help plan regional workshops?

### Professional development coming soon in six regions



The [Small Farm Program](#) invites you to be part of a regional workshop planning team in your region. We have been funded by USDA's Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) to offer workshops in six different regions of California this winter to teach agricultural professionals, experienced agritourism operators and others to work with farmers

and ranchers in developing their agritourism operations and agritourism associations. We also hope to help grow stronger regional networks for agritourism in each region through this project.

Your help would be greatly appreciated to plan for the best speakers, date, location and outreach plan for your region. Just below are the regions and counties we will be working in. If you are in any of these counties and are interested in being on a planning committee, we would love to hear from you. Please contact [Penny](#) at 530.752.7779.

**North Coast:** Humboldt, Trinity, Mendocino, Lake, Sonoma, Napa

**North Valley & Mountains:** Glenn, Tehama, Butte, Colusa, Plumas, Sierra

**Delta:** Yolo, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Contra Costa, Solano

**South Valley & Foothills:** Madera, Merced, Mariposa, Tuolumne, Stanislaus, Fresno

**Central Coast:** Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Monterey, San Benito

**Southern:** San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange, San Diego, Imperial

## Sacramento River Delta Grown group forming

### Delta growers plan collaborative efforts



Farmers, ranchers and others involved in agritourism in the Sacramento River Delta are forming a group with the mission to "promote the concept of the Sacramento River Delta as a 'Place' and the concept of 'Delta Grown'"

The group aims to promote agricultural sustainability and profitability

of local farmers in the Sacramento River Delta area through Agri-tourism, Agri-education and direct marketing, and to provide accessibility to local farms to enhance the general public's awareness of agricultural production and the enjoyment of the rural farming experience.

For more information about this new group, contact pear grower [Tim Neuharth](#) of Steamboat Acres at 916.775.4869

## Talk, taste and tour

### Sacramento Delta farmer builds his business with group visits



It started with a friend of farm owner Ron Kelley bringing some kids from the Sacramento Parks and Recreation summer program out to visit [R. Kelley Farms](#), which is just about 20 minutes outside the center of town but a universe away for many of the young visitors.

Kelley started his U-pick farm and farm stand as a hobby. It currently includes 50 acres of summer vegetables, safflower and seed onions, just over the levee from the Sacramento River, with about 60 percent of the farm income coming from retail sales at the farm stand. He has a day job as a seed company manager, is an experienced pest control advisor, and has recently been appointed Chairperson to USDA's Farm Service Agency State Committee in California. The farm now has tractors, a pea sheller, wagons, insurance, and about 9 employees picking and running the farm stand in peak season. Kelley says, "There's too much investment to be a hobby anymore. I have to pay attention."

This summer many groups, including youth and church groups, women's groups and teens from a homeless shelter, will visit R. Kelley Farm to learn more about where their food comes from, tour the farm in a wagon, taste some fresh-picked samples, and enjoy a picnic on the shady grass before shopping at the farm stand for fresh produce. Kelley is happy to host the groups and share his enthusiasm, and he makes sure that visitors pay for the expenses of their visit. The fee covers the costs of the liability insurance, the clean bathrooms with running water, Kelley's time talking with the group and driving them around in the wagon, and maybe a little extra to pay for the time it takes to promote the facility to health-conscious groups and arrange the visits. He goes to health fairs and meetings, is always passing out fliers and building his mailing list, but word of mouth has been the best promotion so far.

Each visiting group signs a memorandum of understanding that Kelley sends them before the visit, detailing the timing of the visit, the required number of chaperones for youth groups, and noting that the picnic area will be reserved for the group's exclusive use. He also provides the group with a list of some things to look for during their visit, including creatures like rabbits, owls and killdeer. Most groups bring picnic lunches, but Kelley is willing to make a barbecue pit available or to arrange catering if desired.

Ron Kelley is a mentor to youth and a member of the group, *One Hundred Black Men*. He believes that kids will be more apt to eat vegetables if they taste fresh vegetables the way they should be. He also would like someday to have a working ranch where youth could spend a week living and experiencing agricultural work. "Agriculture is a good place to teach youth discipline," he says. "You have to do the work. You can't put it off, and you can't wait for someone else to do it."

The summer farm stand is now open, the U-pick fields are bustling, and there's still room for groups to reserve their talk, taste, tour and picnic. For more information, contact Ron Kelley at 916-665-1191.

## "Farm Stay" without the stay...

### Alpaca ranchers partner with local hotels and B&Bs

Sandra Wallace, owner of [Alpacas at Crossroads Ranch](#) in Paso Robles, writes: We're trying a new idea here - "Farm Stay", without the overnight lodging included in the original concept. We're networking with local hotels and B&B's, offering for fee day long activities for their guests.



We also market this concept directly on our web site and in turn refer people to recommended local lodging. We design the day specifically to the interests of our guests. For example, we have four young women friends coming in a few weeks who go on adventures together as a group. They want to enjoy our visitors garden with a picnic lunch (which they are bringing) and get involved with our daily ranch chores (feeding, cleaning, weighing new babies) and also taking a walk with haltered alpacas and learning about our ongoing herd maintenance.

We have a fiber barn here which we use as a classroom demonstrating all aspects of fiber production on a cottage industry scale, so we add fiber arts activities to the day if guests are interested. For more information, contact [Sandra Wallace](#) at 805-237-9640

## I just play one on TV

A recent post from [Suzie's Farm blog](#), by Lucila

I can't tell you how many people want to Meet the Farmer. They call wanting to speak directly to me like I have some secret. My in-box bursts with email; questions, requests, favors. During tours and interviews I give descriptions of the farm; its history and ideals. I talk and talk and talk. This leaves me feeling more like a figure and less like a farmer.



The real farmers are in the field. They are indefatigable. They don't

speak much English. They arrive at 6 am and leave at 4 pm, Sunday through Friday. They toil these fields morning and afternoon, in the wind and dust, the sun and sweat, in the rain and cold. They analyze crop health every time they harvest. As they weed, they inspect the water lines on every row and adjust accordingly. They transplant and direct seed. They gather bunches and cut heads. They trellis and hoe and weed. And weed. And weed.

I talk about the farm a lot. But this does not make me a farmer. When we first started I had my hands dirty every day. I dug holes for trees and laid awkward drip lines. I decided what we would plant and when. My back curved over the plug tables and my hands clawed at weeds. I harvested and packed. I sweated and ached. Now, my role is to effectively communicate the vision of the farm, to get people to believe in us and our product, and then hopefully buy it. I work with our employees and their schedules. I make first contact with many of our customers. Occasionally, I order seed and consult with Robin about planting dates. I do research. I go to meetings. I expand the vision. Does that make me The Farmer?

When people request presentations, I'm the one they want. They don't want Don Julio or Esmeralda. I don't think they even want the idea of them....They like it when I introduce myself - Lucilia De Alejandro - trilling my Rs with a Spanish accent. They can't believe that I was born there. They like that I look and speak like them. It's safe.

But so do the farmers. I'm the one they want. They don't want Beth or Jenny. They wave to me shyly, and greet me with bright smiles when they see me in my field clothes. [Read more...](#)

Suzie's Farm is an organic farm in San Diego owned and operated by Robin Taylor and [Lucila De Alejandro](#). They sell at farmers' markets, operate a CSA, and host farm tours and events. For more info: 619-662-1780 or [www.suziesfarm.com](http://www.suziesfarm.com).

## USDA agritourism funding available

### Program funds public access to private farms & ranches

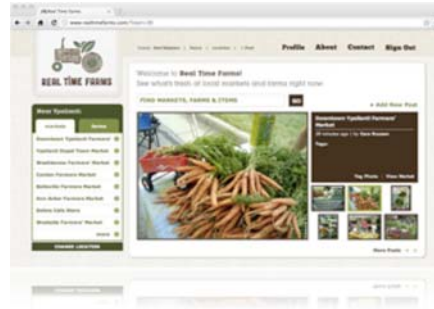
USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced a new grant program, the [Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program](#) (VPA-HIP). The program is aimed at providing access to private farm and ranch land for public use, on a voluntary basis by landowners, for agritourism activities including hunting, fishing, and bird-watching.



The closing date for applications is August 23, 2010. Individual landowners cannot apply for grants; this one is for states and tribal governments. To learn more about how to connect with this program in California, contact California Department of Fish and Game representatives Tony Chappelle at 916.445.8448 or Tom Blankenship at 916.445.3615.

## Real Time Farms - new free marketing site

## Post pictures of your farm stand or your farm



[Real Time Farms](#) is a crowd-sourced, live, local food guide designed to excite, engage, and educate people about where they can find fresh, local sources of food. Everyone can contribute by adding and/or editing information and pictures to share their excitement and enthusiasm for their local

market, farm, farm stand and/or vendor.

You can join by simply posting 5 photos of your local farm stand, market or a local farm.

Why [Real Time Farms](#)?

- It's the only LIVE, real time marketing site for farms and markets (it's always FRESH)
- Anyone can edit and/or add information or pictures to a farm and/or farmers' market page
- It's the only marketing tool that uses images as its base; celebrating the life, color, and seasonality of fresh, local food
- It's totally free for all farmers' markets, **farm stands, and farms** across the country

Once you add photos, you can embed a live slideshow of all of the pictures being uploaded to your farm or farm stand's page on Real Time Farms onto your own website or blog (so now, the whole community can take pics of your farm or farm stand and see them on RTF and on your website)! To contact the organizers, [click here](#).

Thanks for reading and doing what you do. Please forward this newsletter to anyone who might find it useful (Click on "forward email" below).

**Sincerely,**

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Email Marketing by

