

**Notes from California Statewide Agritourism Summit small group discussions, November 4, 2011**

Prepared by Penny Leff, November 15, 2011 from notes recorded by small groups at the summit

From 11:30 am to 12:15 p.m, about 120 people attending the summit participated in an Agritourism Café, talking at round tables in groups of eight people for fifteen minutes to answer the first question, and then moving to another table to answer the second question with a different group of eight people. Each group nominated a recorder who wrote important points on big stickies to share with larger group.

**Agritourism Café – Question one: Where would you like to see your agritourism operation (or agritourism support) five years from now?**

(Most participants did not record any notes from this discussion, so the responses below only represent some of the discussions)



*Carol Hogan, Judy Creighton and Vivien Straus during the “Agritourism Café”*

| <b>Individual</b>                                     | <b>Partnership</b>  | <b>Legislation/regulation/permitting</b>  | <b>Marketing/Promotion</b>             |
|---|---|---|--|
| Still alive   | Statewide council for agritourism   | Agritourism limited liability law adopted   | Strong farm map for San Joaquin County |
| More property   | Similar organization to Apple Hill in Capay Valley (with different products)      | Include agricultural element in county general plans statewide                      | Go beyond farmers’ markets             |
| Business able to sustain adding kids – need financing | Economic development at the table   | Streamline agritourism – One-stop shop for permitting                               |  |
| Farm stay agritourism on property                     | State supportive structure and resources – with passionate leadership             | Different levels of regulations based on farm size                                  |  |
| A very popular destination for lots of activities     | Within County: Better understanding of farming and what it takes to be successful | Allow home kitchen to be inspected to allow small farms to make value added product |  |
| A future farm for the next generation                 | More collaboration  | One agency to go through for permits and regulations                                |  |
| Good location   | Agricultural representative in Chamber of Commerce                                | Statewide standardization of policies   |  |
| Lots of product                                       |   | Regulations geared to a specific market   |  |
| Increase product diversity/retail offerings           |   |   |  |

**Agritourism Café – Question two: What do you see as both the obstacles and the opportunities of a more organized statewide organization in helping you reach those goals?** (We are presenting the responses here with two tables; one for opportunities and one for obstacles. Multiple similar responses are shown with the number of similar responses in parenthesis.)

**I. Opportunities of statewide organization**

| <b>Partnerships</b>  | <b>Legislation/permitting/enforcement</b>   | <b>Marketing</b>   | <b>Education</b>  | <b>Organizational benefits</b>                                   |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| Create a statewide advisory council of major stakeholders and farmers              | Help define and regulate agritourism (4)  | Increase tourism by putting agritourism under category of state tourism (2)          | Better link with food system and food policy – educate consumers, producers, policy makers and each other (4) | Staff to work issues   |
| Chance to share and network (political advocacy)                                   | Need statewide law limiting liability (2)   | Events that use commodities promoting local products                                 | Educate insurance companies regarding liabilities   | Clearing-house for information                                   |
| Large organization has more clout, money, attention (4)                            | Agritourism fee schedule that is reasonable                                       | Should a statewide organization be a marketing organization or a trade organization? | Raise support for agriculture in general plan   | Generate more revenue and greater sustainability                 |
| Involve slow money movement and slow food movement                                 | One-stop permit process (3)   | Regional marketing   | History, food culture of urban areas: AgriCULTURE   | Longevity (not just trend) for local food/agritourism            |
| Having Land Trust, California Farm Link help with attracting, training new farmers | “Right to farm” upheld, less complaint-driven enforcement                         | Self-policing organization could help regulate and promote                           | Sharing of regulations, policies that are working – access for all to this information (2)                    | Building relationships   |
| Build upon current CDFA leadership regarding regulations, permits and fees         | Uniformity of inspection, even playing field across counties with regulations (3) | Consumers are interested in food/tourism   | Educate the general public about the value of agricultural land and farmers and ranchers                      | “Shade Fund” in North Carolina is a nonprofit that funds farmers |
| Culinary tourism + learning + chef schools + dining                                | Faster action for producers   |  | A “plug-in to school-children’s education program” standardized   | Shift to preserving and have statewide organization help grow    |
| Help form regional & neighborhood groups and associations                          | Define issues to create a universal catalyst                                      |  |   | Job creation   |
| Collaboration with government agencies and county officers                         | Align regulations federal/state/county  |  |   |  |
| Utilize county economic development departments to support agritourism             | “Cottage Industry” regulation, not commercial regulation (2)                      |  |   |  |

|   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| Networking beyond our region, but keep it in California | Protective regulation with state agency help with barriers |  |  |  |
| Create larger “community” in urban areas                | Less restrictive ADA rules for farms and ranches           |  |  |  |

**II. Obstacles of statewide organization**

| General Agritourism Obstacles   | Obstacles involved in organizational development                                  | Obstacles at state level  | Intra-regional obstacles   | Other obstacles  |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| Use permit expense contradicts promotion of agritourism (2)               | Need to overcome farmers’ independence spirit                                     | Goals of state agencies and success measurements are so different | Planning departments and counties don’t communicate              | Expense of regulations and time  |
| No clear compliance rules (2)   | Getting people to recognize organization’s benefits and value (2)                 | Different rules for schools, churches, non-profits                | Counties want to enforce their own regulations                   | Obstacles in food system:<br>- Corporate control<br>- Cost of fuel             |
| Health department regulations seem excessive, lacking in common sense (2) | Farmers’ time to participate (2)  | Defining “agritourism” in regulatory language                     | Associations and groups don’t talk and share                     | Lack of common sense in policy and regulations – too high tech and complex (2) |
| Right to Farm does not translate into Right to Sell                       | Funding the organization: Who pays, How much are dues, needs to be affordable (4) | Government doesn’t fully understand agritourism                   | What is good for state in general may not be good for local area |  |
| Environmental regulations and zealous environmental groups                | Need a start up group   | Could create another level of regulation                          | Agritourism definition and laws are different in each county (3) |  |
| Cost and difficulty of getting insurance (2)                              | If we grow too much, how do we control??  | Coordination among compliance agencies                            | Most items involve individual counties                           |  |
| Attracting visitors, building awareness                                   |   |   |  |  |
| Limit of what we can sell in terms of food without a certified kitchen    |   |   |  |  |



## **Notes from Regional Breakout Groups**

From 1:45 until 2:30 p.m., summit participants gathered in six regional groups and one group called “statewide” to share and strategize. Some of the groups represented larger geographic regions than others, since not all regions were equally represented at the summit. The group sizes ranged from about eight to about twenty members. Not all counties were listed or represented. Participants were welcome to join the group that they felt most connected to. Each group selected a recorder who wrote notes on large flip-charts. These are those notes.

**Instructions to groups:** Think about the opportunities and obstacles discussed in the morning session and posted on the wall. Discuss what’s important for you and your neighbors back home to work on both individually and collectively in your area.

### **North Coast – San Francisco, Marin, Sonoma, Lake, Napa, Mendocino, Humboldt, Del Norte Counties**

- Education and “messaging” about the value of sustaining farmers on their land
- **A statewide organization** to help with messaging and marketing
- Organize a standard form or business agreement between tour organizers and farmers for a percent of revenues that supports the farm
- Discuss how to divide the pie so that it’s equitable
- Share information from this summit (and Marin Ag Summit?) with North Coast Food Group (Lake, Sonoma, Mendocino, Marin, Napa)
- Make an iPhone application for agritourism operations.

### **Central and South Coast – San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego Counties**

- More collaboration is needed.
- **A statewide organization** would have clout.
- Important issues/needs in the region that a statewide organization could help with:
  - Lack of liability insurance availability and affordability is an obstacle. Statewide limited liability insurance is an important opportunity.
  - Food safety at markets
  - Sustainable funding for organization
  - Defining agritourism as a new industry
  - A clearing-house for information statewide
  - Aggregation of efforts/communication/sharing
  - Networking, sharing new ideas
- Obstacles to agritourism in the region:
  - Lack of affordable and available liability insurance
  - Water and land prices
  - Regulations

- The need for balance in tourism
- Lack of support for farmers

### **Foothills region – Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Mariposa, Placer, Tuolumne Counties**

- A point of contact (i.e. an ombudsman) is needed at each county to help navigate regulations
- Farmers and ranchers need to educate government regulators. Conversations between the two groups would help each learn respect for each other.
  - A PowerPoint presentation about agritourism would be helpful for folks to share in their individual counties
- **A statewide organization** with a voice in county government for leadership
  - A resource center/clearing-house statewide would help different counties advocate
  - Funding source for support
  - Educate insurance companies and insurance commissioner
- Communication within the agricultural community to support diverse operations
- Band together for a purpose to be heard, then go to the leader and discuss how we want it changed. Come with solutions
  - The Calaveras Ag Coalition group is a good example – One voice for agriculture to Board of Supervisors – Group includes wine growers, Farm Bureau, CCA, Calaveras Grown
  - A central person in the county to facilitate discussions among diverse agriculture communities to work with government
  - Possibly build upon existing agricultural advisory committees from land use to support agritourism
  - Foster relationships – Invite speakers from successful programs such as Butte County to share and help clarify what we want
  - Build relationships BEFORE there is a problem
  - Real things happen around real food
  - Outreach to Board of Supervisors groups
  - Build upon the Marin Agricultural Summit idea

### **Delta region – Alameda, Contra Costa, Solano, Sacramento Counties**

- There is difficulty in convincing other agritourism operators to collaborate – We need to prove the benefits
- Seek out others who share your vision to create a farm trail
- Find an intern or MBA student to create a marketing and business plan
- Talk it up, use word of mouth
- Connect with county Farm Bureau
- Bring in young blood
- Seek support from Delta Protection Commission and Delta Conservancy
- Have a fun event to co-opt other farmers

## **San Joaquin Valley – Fresno, Tulare, Kings, Madera, Merced, Stanislaus, San Joaquin Counties**

- Important challenges and opportunities for the region:
  - Clearly defining agritourism is both an opportunity and a challenge
  - Challenge: reducing dependence on fossil fuels and agricultural pesticides
  - Opportunity: Creating a Road Scholar/Elderhostel program
  - Challenge: Liability insurance
  - Challenge: water availability and climate change
- What is important to work on in the region:
  - Regulations tailored to specific areas – local/regional
  - **A statewide agritourism organization** for education, outreach to the public, public relations
  - Organize/Build alliances with RCDs, non-profits, “smart cities”
  - Outreach & education to city & county staff about issues
  - Clarify what we are asking for
  - Hold community meetings with Mayor, policy makers, CAFF, Farm Bureau, Small Farm Program, local agritourism operators
  - Educate local bureaucracy using tools from a statewide organization

## **Sacramento Valley – Butte, Glenn, Tehama, Shasta, Colusa, Sutter, Yuba, Yolo, (Sacramento) Counties**

- Important to work on in the region:
  - **A statewide organization** to help with planning and to share information with planners and with each other
  - Limited liability law similar to North Carolina
  - Regulation consistency
  - Creating more opportunities like the Butte County Unique Agricultural Overlay zoning
  - Schmooze your neighbors
  - Visit each other – trade tours
  - Follow-up after the General Plan on land use, bring in the Farm Bureau
  - Guidance on ADA compliance
  - Sharing agritourism information
  - Permanent staff/funding for agritourism
- A statewide organization could share examples and information and avoid the competition that might block local sharing of information
- What turns us into little groups is that we’re all in different counties with different regulations
- Non-profit exemptions are unfair to farmers

## Statewide

- Form a trade organization with an executive director to organize statewide:
  - Marketing
  - Education
  - Legislative change
- Bring groups together for collaboration
- Brand and market agritourism
  - Signage for marketability and recognition
  - Use social media
  - Connect with celebrity chefs, etc.
- Form partnerships between the fair and festival industry and agritourism
- Organize familiarization (fam) tours for legislators & staff & media
- Economic development needs/opportunities:
  - Grants
  - Funding
  - Growth
- Unify regulations
- Create one-stop shop, working with one agency for all issues
- Insurance legislation
- Recognize need for state unity vs. need for county regulation autonomy