

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”

Individual	Partnership	Legislation/regulation/permitting	Marketing/Promotion
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

Partnerships	Legislation/permitting/enforcement	Marketing	Education	Organizational benefits
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: - Corporate control - 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