



Agritourism in North Carolina

The necessity to diversify and innovate in agriculture today.

The Benefits, Critical Success Factors & Marketing
Value-Added Dairy Conference | Asheville, NC

#VisitNCFarms

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NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & CONSUMER SERVICES
Steve Troxler, Commissioner of Agriculture





Cleve Greer was my grandfather, born and raised in Ashe County, on land that is now Hart T Christmas Tree Farm.

Cool Spring Creamery was his first farm in Maryland. He served on the US Dairy Board in the 1930's to help determine the safe bacterial count for transported milk.

My dad, now 85, recalls icing down the milk cans on the trucks before Grandfather shifted to refrigerated trucks, transporting milk from Harford County Maryland into Baltimore and Washington, DC from a collection of individually owned and operated creameries in the region.



Cool Spring Creamery
1913



Welcoming guests on farms.

AGRITOURISM on working farms

Any activity carried out on a farm or ranch that allows members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes, to view or enjoy rural activities, including farming, ranching, historic, cultural, harvest-your-own activities, or natural activities and attractions. An activity is an agritourism activity whether or not the participant paid to participate in the activity.

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION LAW 2005-236 | HOUSE BILL 329**





Position North Carolina as THE destination for farm visits and connectivity to local food IN THE WORLD

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Agribusiness is the state's
top industry at \$87 billion.

Tourism at \$29.5 billion.

Source: Mike Walden, Reynolds Distinguished Professor and Extension Economist,
NC State's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
February, 2018

US Travel Association. NC Total tourism demand tallied \$29.5 billion in 2016

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*“Agritourism is the bridge
between urban and rural.”*

-Steve Troxler, Commissioner, N. C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
May 9, 2017 | NC Rural Day

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THE BIG WHY?

To create success-based opportunities for farms through visitor experiences to ultimately...

Preserve the farmland.

Inspire the next generation to farm.

Develop community vibrancy.

Increase your farm's bottom line.

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U.S. Census of Agriculture:

An increasingly popular and growing
opportunity for agricultural producers
is Agritourism.

Rural United States is a popular tourist destination!

-<https://www.agmrc.org/commodities-products/agritourism/agritourism-profile>



AGRITOURISM GROWTH

North Carolina is a leader as compared to nationwide data.*

1) Number of farms reported Agritourism-related revenues in 2012:

- US: 1.6%
- NC: 2.3%

2) Change from 2007 to 2012 in the **US** of Agritourism-related income:

- Number of farms: increased from 23,350 to 33,161 **(42% increase)**
- Revenues: from \$566,834,000 to \$704,038,000 **(24%)**

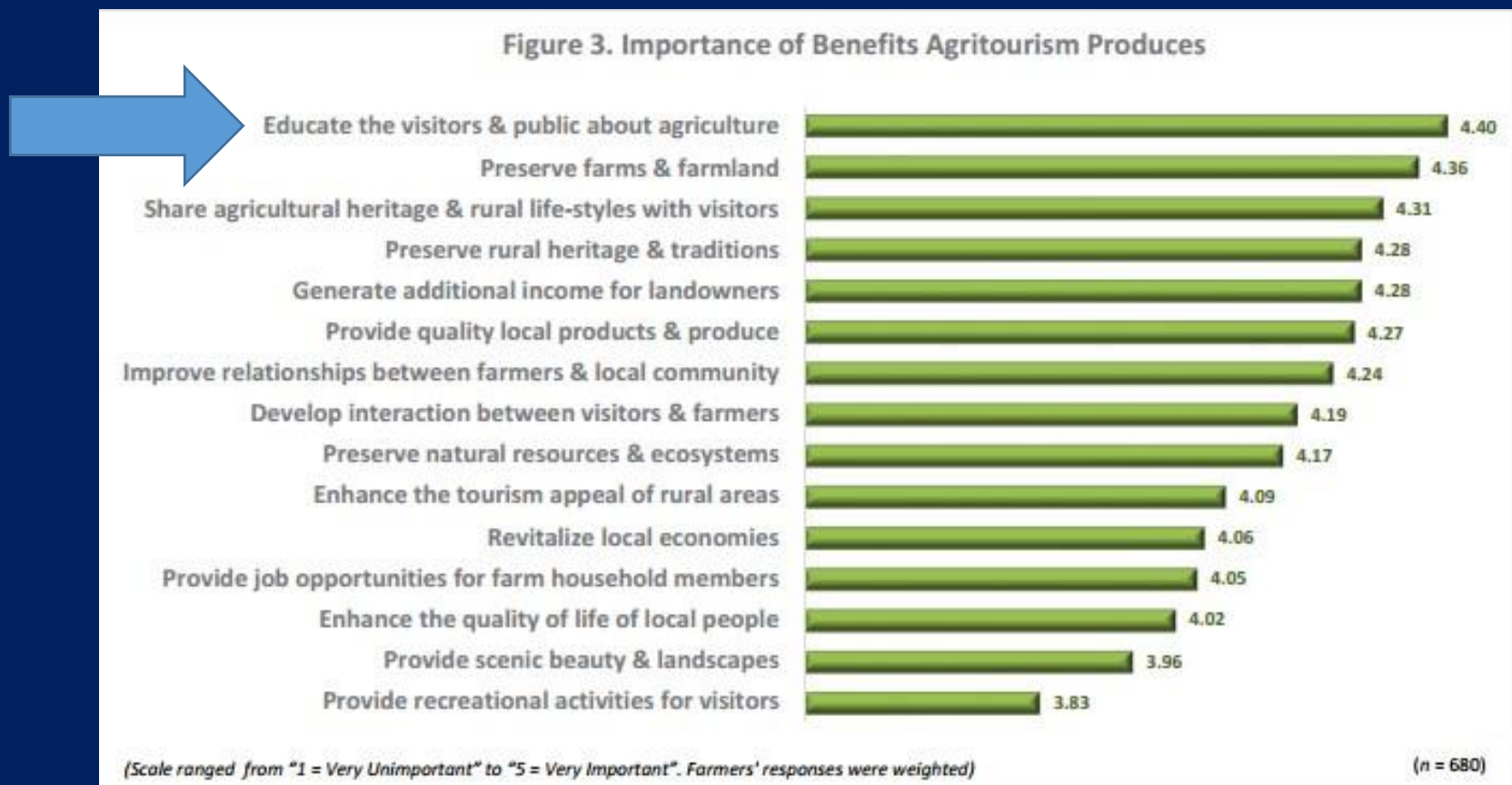
3) Change from 2007 to 2012 in **NC** of Agritourism-related income:

- Number of farms: increased from 602 to 1,135 **(89% increase)**
- Revenues: from \$12,661,000 to \$17,625,000 **(39%)**

*From the last two census reports, from 2012 & 2007.



WHY AGRITOURISM?

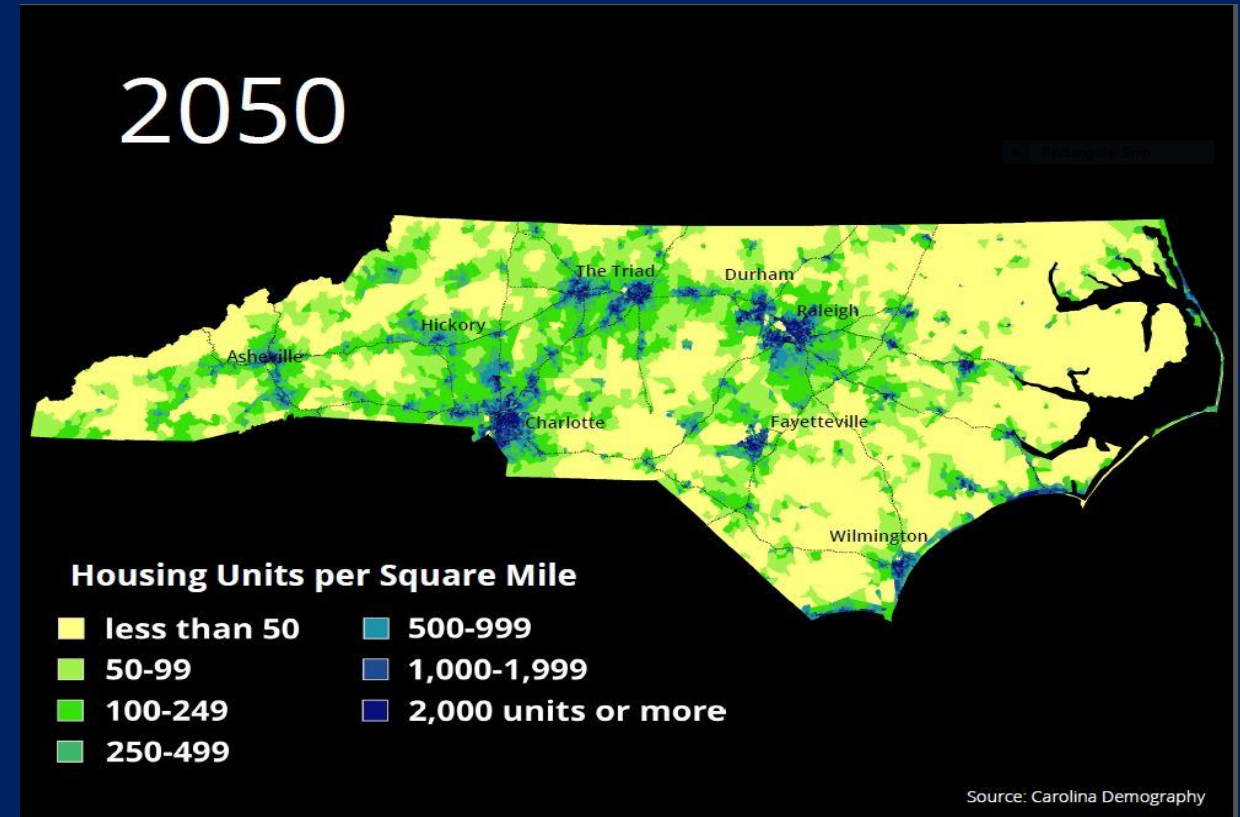
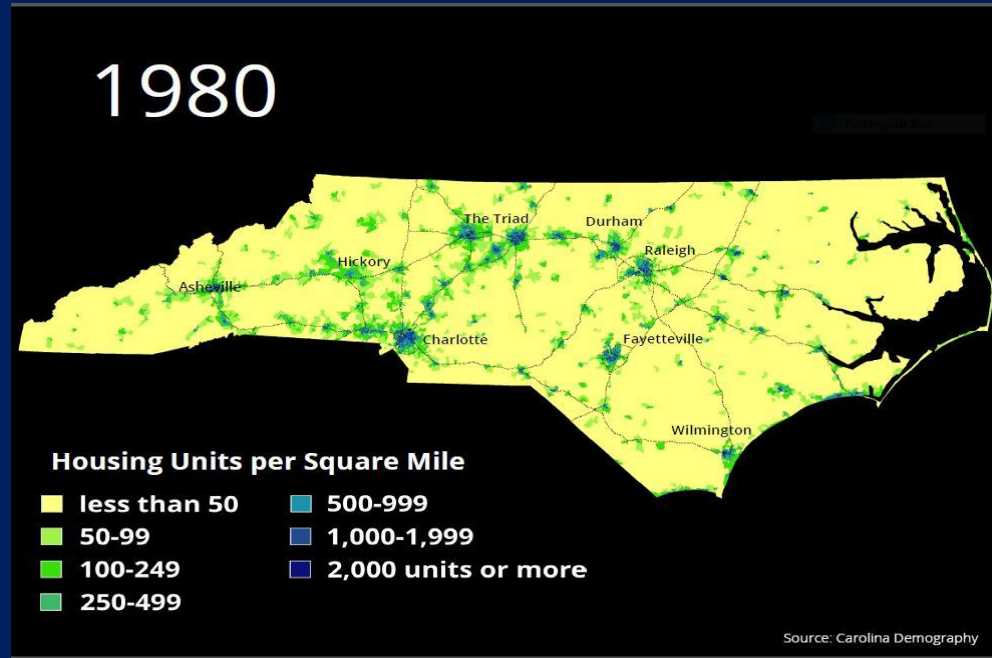


HOW BENEFICIAL IS AGRITOURISM? North Carolina Farmers and Residents Respond
Prepared by Tourism Extension, Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism Management College of Natural Resources, North Carolina State University. Published by North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service.



Who is the audience?

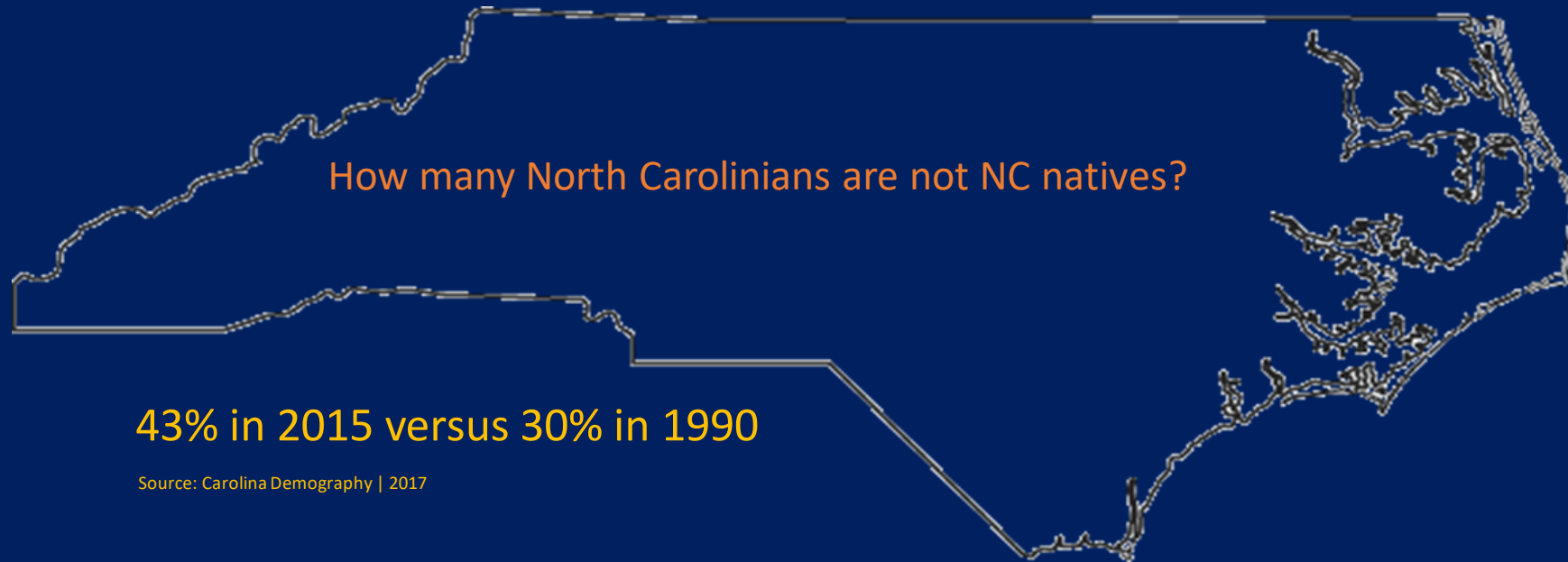
Population Growth:



While urban areas, like Mecklenburg and Wake counties continue to grow, rural counties are depopulating. 80 of the state's 100 counties are rural. Did you know that Orange County, home of UNC-CH, is 70% rural?



Population Shift:



Source: Carolina Demography | 2017

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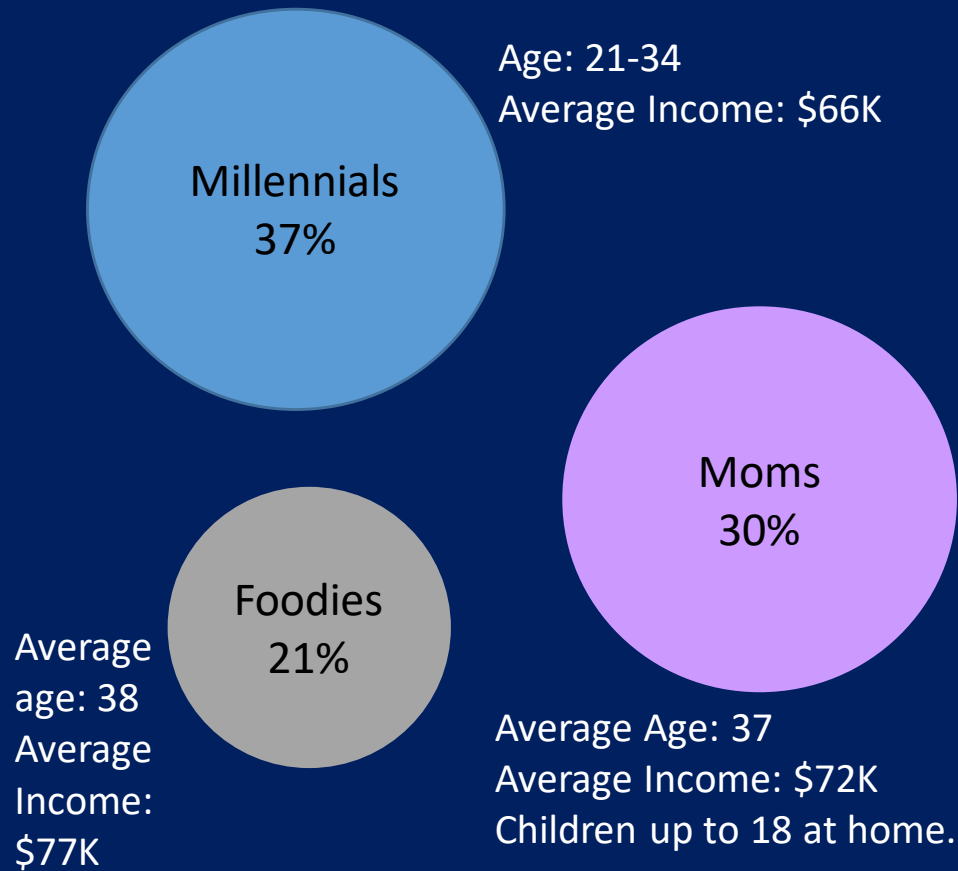
Population Trends:

- More than nine-in-ten **Millennials** (92%) own smartphones.
- Compared with 85% of Gen Xers (those who turn ages 38 to 53 this year)
- 67% of Baby Boomers (ages **54** to 72)
- 30% of the Silent Generation (ages **73** to 90)

Pew Research Center. May 2, 2018

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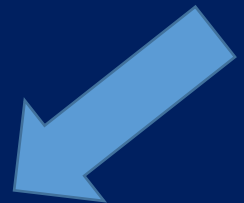
Millennial families prefer:

1. Digital connectivity
2. Humor, creativity & pop culture
3. Minimalism
4. Open-ended coupons
5. Social Media
6. You being cool

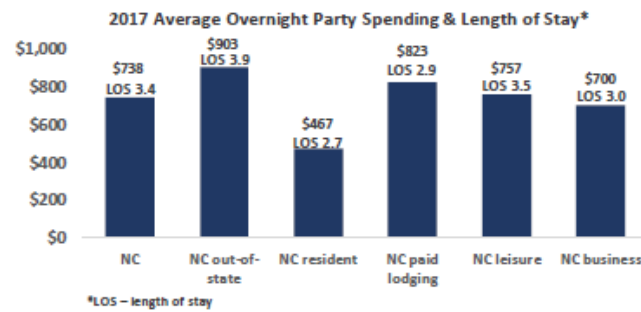
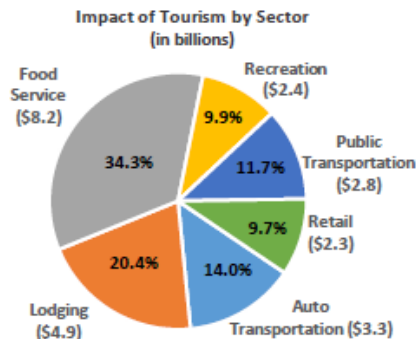
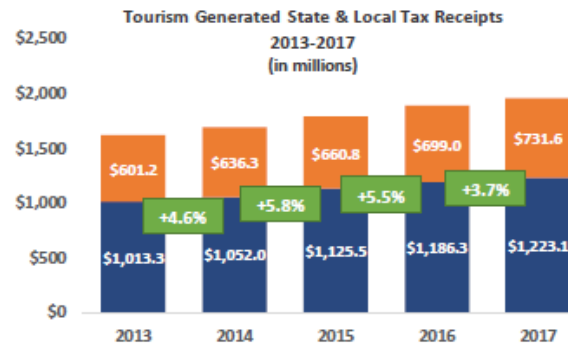
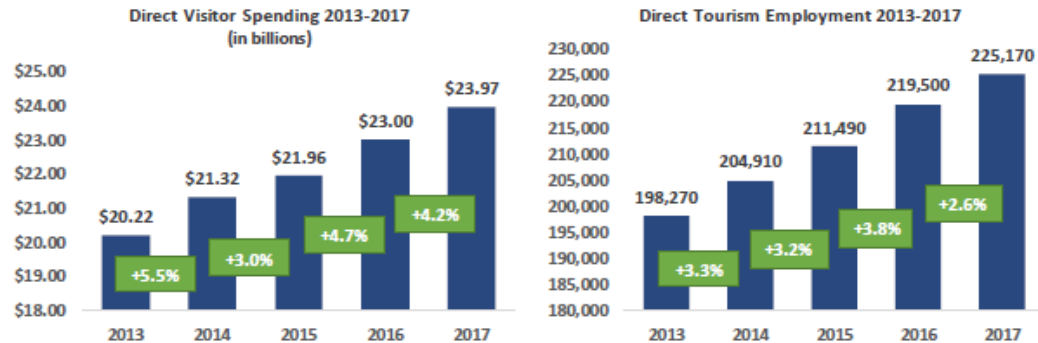
CUSTOMERS

92% of Millennials use smartphones

- Who?
Families! Moms. Children.
Folks with little time and \$ to spend at on farms.
- Did you know that **women** influence 85% of family decision-making?
- Create activities and messages relevant to them.
- How this generation **connects** navigates and buys.



TOURISM ECONOMIC FAST FACTS - 2017



\$65 million
Visitor spending per day

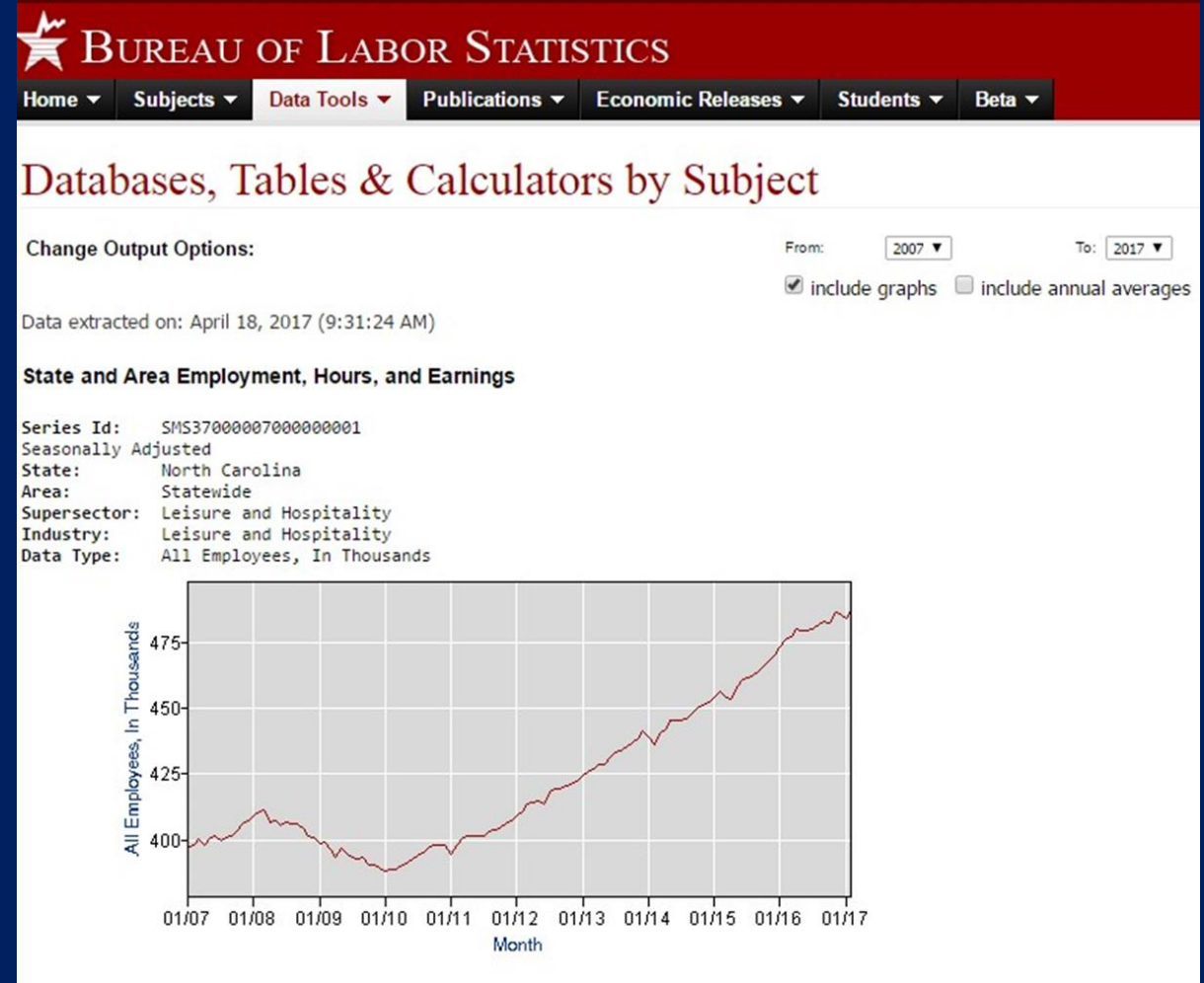
\$5.4 million
Visitor related taxes generated per day

\$512
Annual household tax savings

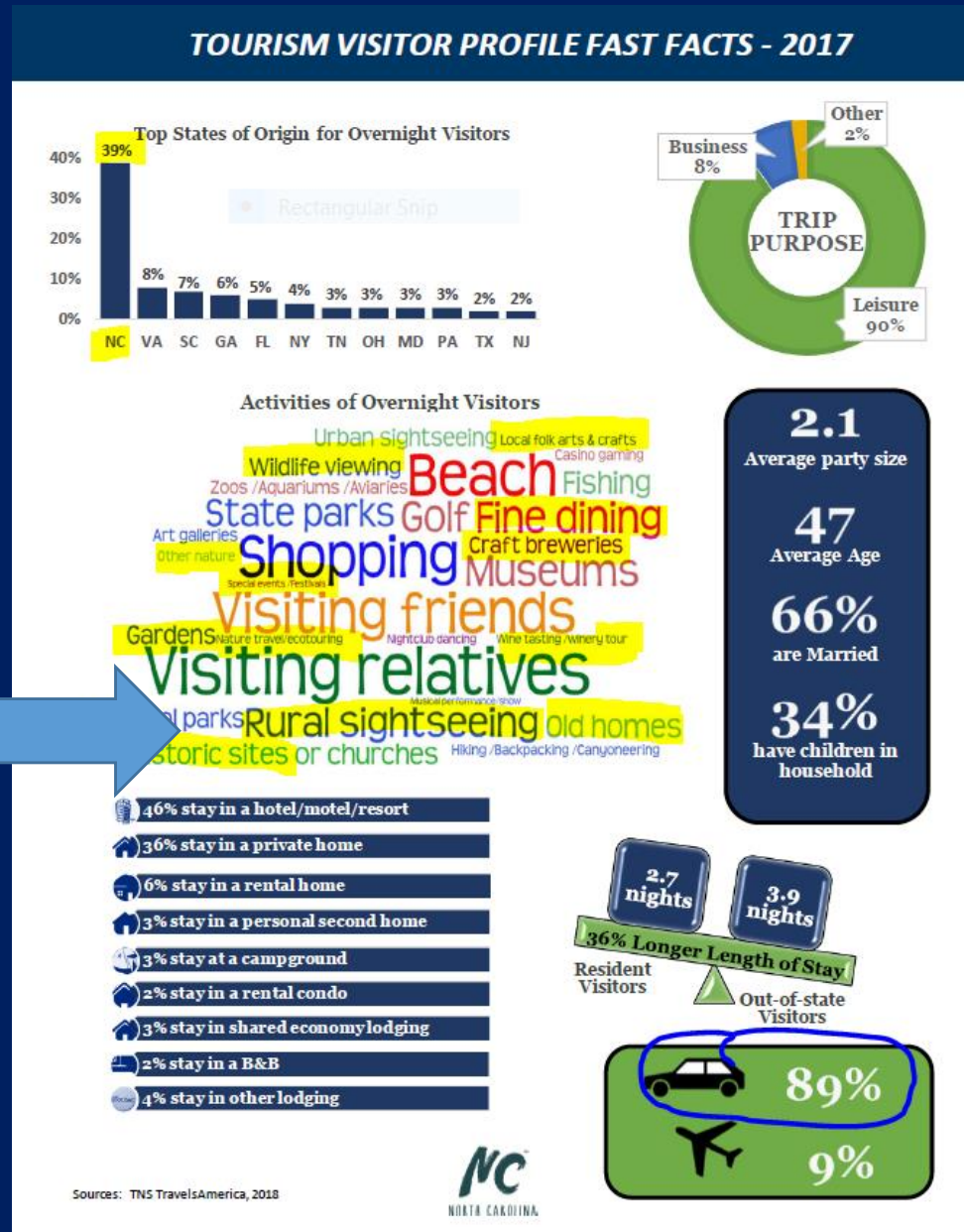
1/50

NC residents directly employed by tourism

IMPACTS. Jobs. ↑ Farm resilience.



What people do while visiting NC:



In 2017, approximately 37 million overnight person-trips were taken in North Carolina.

NC ranked #7 in the US in terms of domestic overnight visitation.

In 2016, 12% of overnight visitors indicated that they participated in **rural sightseeing**.

12% = 4.6 million+ visitors

Other Agritourism-related activities: fishing (6%), wildlife viewing (6%), hiking (6%), nature travel (2%), bird watching (2%) and **farms** (2%).

Farms at 2% = 780,000 visitors

Source: Visit North Carolina, 2018
Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina

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Is welcoming guests right for you?

What's your WHY?

The farm family's WHY?

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How do you and your farm family define success in Agritourism?

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Goals give direction and vision to help guide decision-making.

Develop an Agritourism Business & Marketing Plan.

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Assessing your and each member of the farm family's personalities, character traits, work habits and more importantly, discussion to establish---

Goals and a clear vision of the farm's future.

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WHO?

Is the face of the farm?

Host?

Storyteller?

Educator?

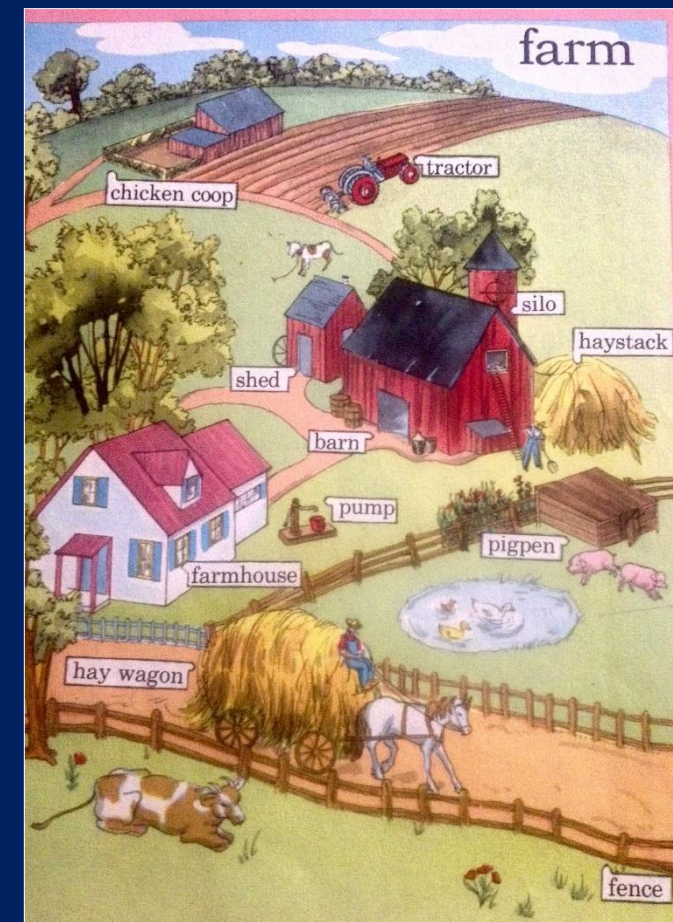
Farm value enhances by developing
hospitality skills.





SUCCESS IN AGRITOURISM REQUIRES: Your unique compelling farm story.

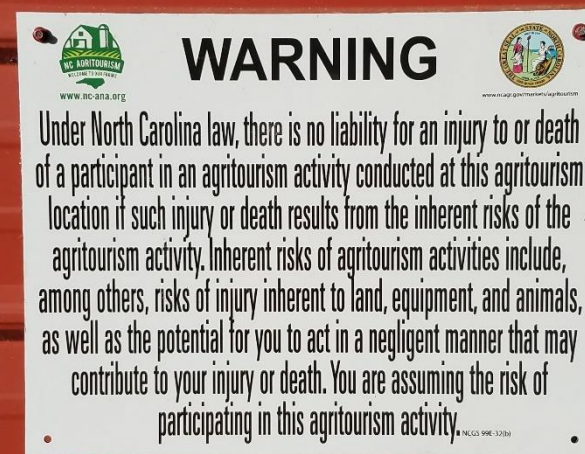
- Value of your farm as **destination** (vs. location)
- Worthwhile visitor **activities**
- Follow **regulations**
- **Neighborhood** relationships & communication
- **Focus locally** to boost community
- Provide **experiences of a lifetime** to visitors
- Excellent **staff**
- **Profit** for farm
- Management of the **realities of farming**





AGRITOURISM BUSINESS MANAGEMENT:

- Financial Responsibility
- Insurance
- Labor
- Marketing & Public Relations
- Regulations
- Safety & Liability
- Taxes
- Realities of farming





How? Farmers use what they have & what they know.

Barnyard Animals . Fiber Animals . Farm Riding Trails . Walking Trails . Crafts . Camping . Bird Watching . Fishing . Hunting . Farm Stays or Bed & Breakfast . Country Cabins . Retreats . Hay Rides . Crop Mazes . Pumpkin Patches . Historic Farms . Quilt Barns & Trails . Reunions . Museums . Workshops . Festivals . Holiday Events . Christmas Trees . Pick Your Own Produce . Roadside Stands . Nurseries . Flowers . Picnics . Parties . Weddings & Reception . School Field Trips . Summer Camps . Farm Vacations . Slow Food Dining or Farm to Table Dining . Vineyards . Wineries

Families WILL invest in farms.





THE FARM STORY

- Each farm is different and every family has a story.
- Visitors are poised for listening.
- Varied farms and unique activities = interesting statewide inventory of visitor destinations.

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Ask farmers to TEACH



- Experts in agriculture.
- Compelling, authentic stories.
- Audience is ripe for learning.
- What is in it for **the customer**?
- “What this means to you is ...”
(state benefit here!)

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Beyond the growing season, what do farms offer?

Farmers can turn what they are passionate about and assets that already exist into opportunities to host guests, diversifying the income stream.

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EDUCATION-BASED WORKSHOPS | Tours

Farmers are agriculture experts.

Education is marketing.
Marketing is education.

All year long!





FRESH FOOD

You-Pick.

Produce Stand

Farm to Table

Did you know that when food is available to customers on farms, they stay longer and spend more?

Imagine the possibilities.

- Pick-your-own fruit
- Produce stands
- Concessions to elegant dinners

Work with Cooperative Extension, the local health department, caterers or civic groups, local chefs and the community colleges to bring ideas to life.





CAR SHOW

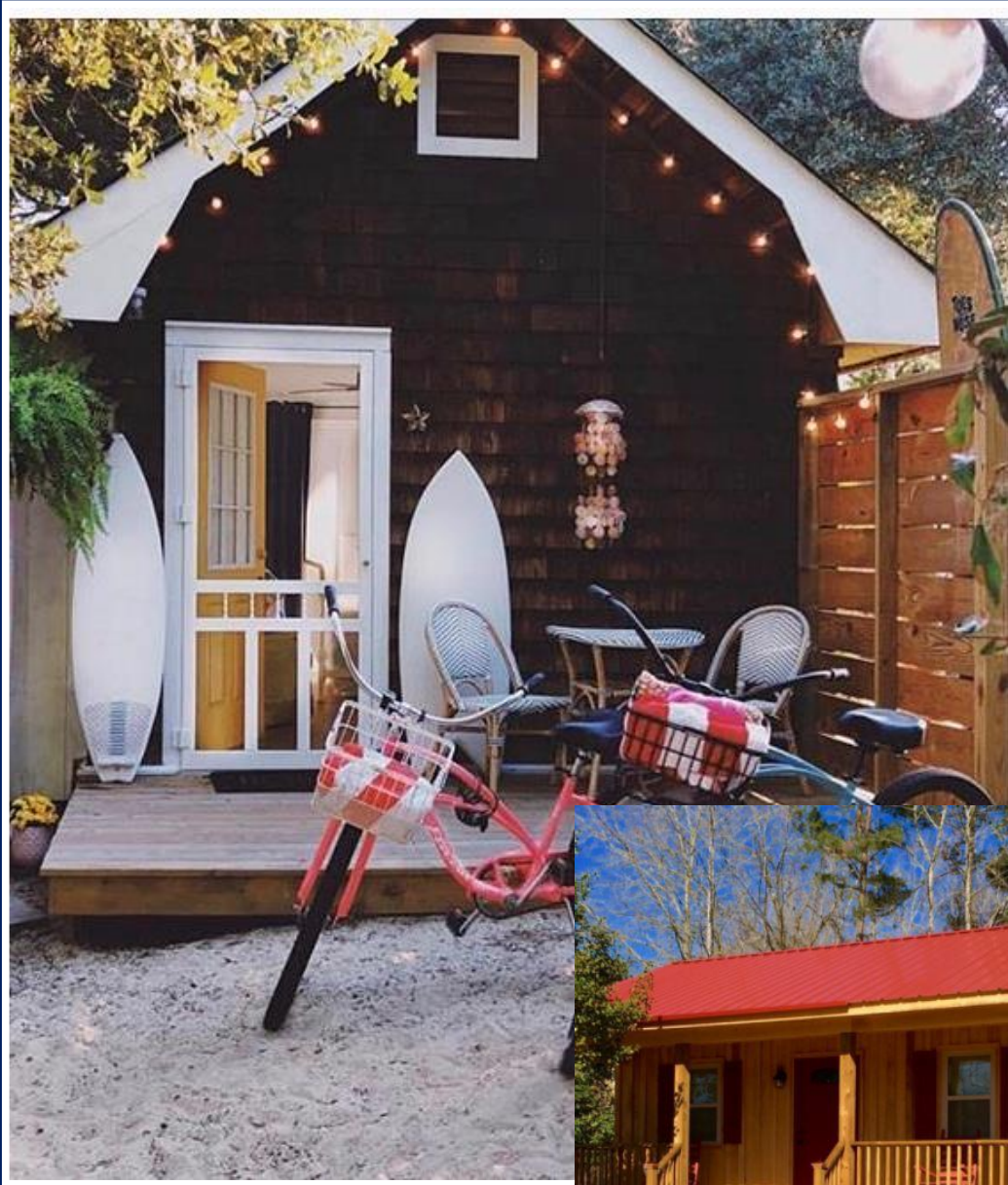
Be Creative!

Develop an experience package and price for profitability.

A full day.

- Farm tour
- Engaging activity
- Food & beverage
- FUN. A lot of bragging about cars!





FARM STAYS

- Bed & Breakfast
- Cabin Rental
- Camping

Imagine guests staying overnight.

Many farms are using Airbnb or VRBO to list and promote their accommodations.

“Heads in beds” add to the community tax base.





FESTIVALS

Celebrate farm heritage or claim and create unique events.





FARM STORES

Selling value added items produced by the farm and items stocked by other agriculture producers and community partners is another potential revenue stream.

A farm can maximize profitability when selling direct to the consumer.



SPECIAL EVENTS

Weddings. Reunions.
Corporate. What else?

One-of-a-kind venue with the potential to offer unique experiences matched with top notch hospitality and customer service.





ALL YEAR LONG!

Kids of all ages will enjoy the farm where memories are made during the holidays -- and all year long.

Farms have the potential to fill the calendar with educational and private events, diversifying the revenue stream beyond farm production.



SAMPLE ON-FARM GUEST EXPERIENCE ANNUAL PLAN

January – Community outreach. Survey existing customers.

February – Strawberry is for lovers Valentine's Day event.

March – We're lucky to have you as farm friends St. Patrick's Day event.

April – Spring bloom tours. (From birth to death audiences!)

May – Expansion of U-pick/markets/retail.

June – Consider hosting wedding events.

July – Family reunions, birthday parties, corporate events.

August – It's Farmer Sue's Birthday! Come celebrate on the farm.

September – Farm to Table harvest dinner.

October – Strawberry Planting Festival.

November – Grateful for our customers open farm day.

December – Jam with Santa.





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WHO?

Is your customer?

- Develop a **patron profile**. Name her. Age? Children? Education? Career? Interests?
- Create activities and messages relevant to your **target audience**.





WHAT?

What exists on the farm today that could grow into a vibrant Agritourism activity that translates into a **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME?**

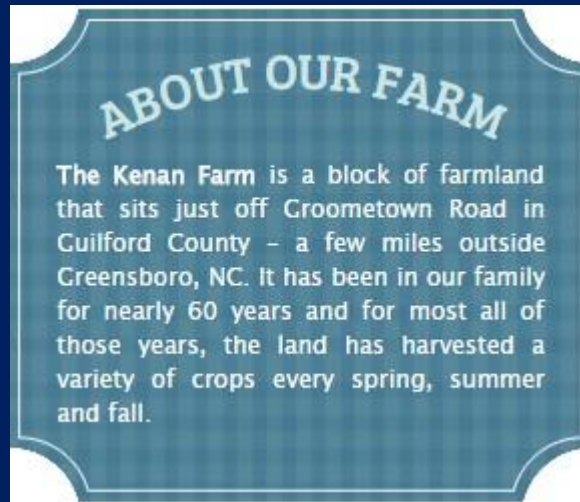
What makes the farm special?

Turn farm features into benefits.

In 2017, farm gate admission rates for tours and experiences range from \$8 - \$15 per person.

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BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

Brand

- Your Story
- Logo
- Mission Statement and Tag Line
- **Why** your farm?
- What is the **purpose** of your farm?
- What is your farm's **unique benefit**?
- **Call-to-Action**
- Right down to the **nitty gritty details** of how you interact with your (potential) **customers every day.**

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BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

What do Millennials, Moms & Foodies want?

- Experiences
- Services
- Products

Millennial: *I'm not my parents or grandparents. I hate clutter and extra stuff. Remember, I really like experiences and stories. Set up a creative display on your farm and I will show up just to take pictures. Advertise smaller items to me because I'm living in a smaller space. Less really is more.*





Millennial: *My friends spend more time telling me about where they bought something and who they bought it from rather than describing the product itself. It's all about the experience and the story they get out of it.*

BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

DESTINATION VS. LOCATION

- Create experiences that are worth the trip.
- Folks will travel to the most remote of places if you give them a compelling reason to visit.

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Consider packages geared to specific customers.

Full day experience.

Half a day on the farm.

Tour.

Food.

Retail.

Fun. Creative. New.

BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

WORTHWHILE ACTIVITIES

- Create interesting activities.
- Appropriate for the audience?
- Test the ideas on your top patrons.

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BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

MOBILE CUSTOMERS

- 92% of Millennials own Smartphones.
- Decisions are being made through mobile devices.
- Travel
- Experiences
- Shopping

Is your website mobile flexible?

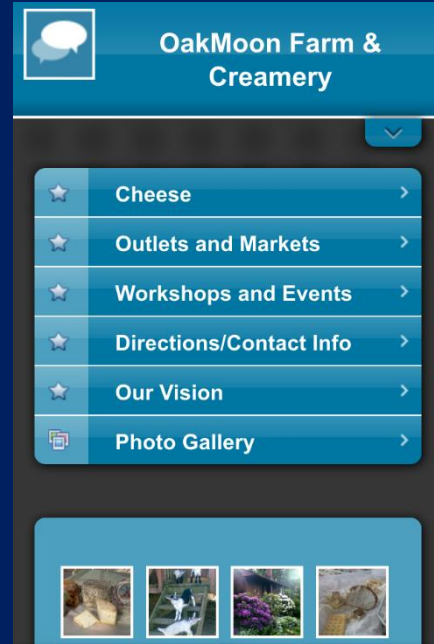
Millennial: *If you aren't online, I don't know that your business exists. Seasonal? It's still important to have a permanent website and spend a little money to design a nice one. First impression! If your website is cheesy, I will bypass your business and spend time elsewhere.*

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Millennial: *Go ahead and play to stereotypes. Be the farmer who always wears a plaid shirt and bib overalls. I love that. Tell me about something daring or adventurous you did when you were young and even irrelevant to your business.*



BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

BE VISIBLE TO CUSTOMERS

- Do you have a mobile flexible website?
- Active in social media?
- Register your farm's Agritourism activities with ncagr.gov/markets/agritourism/

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BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

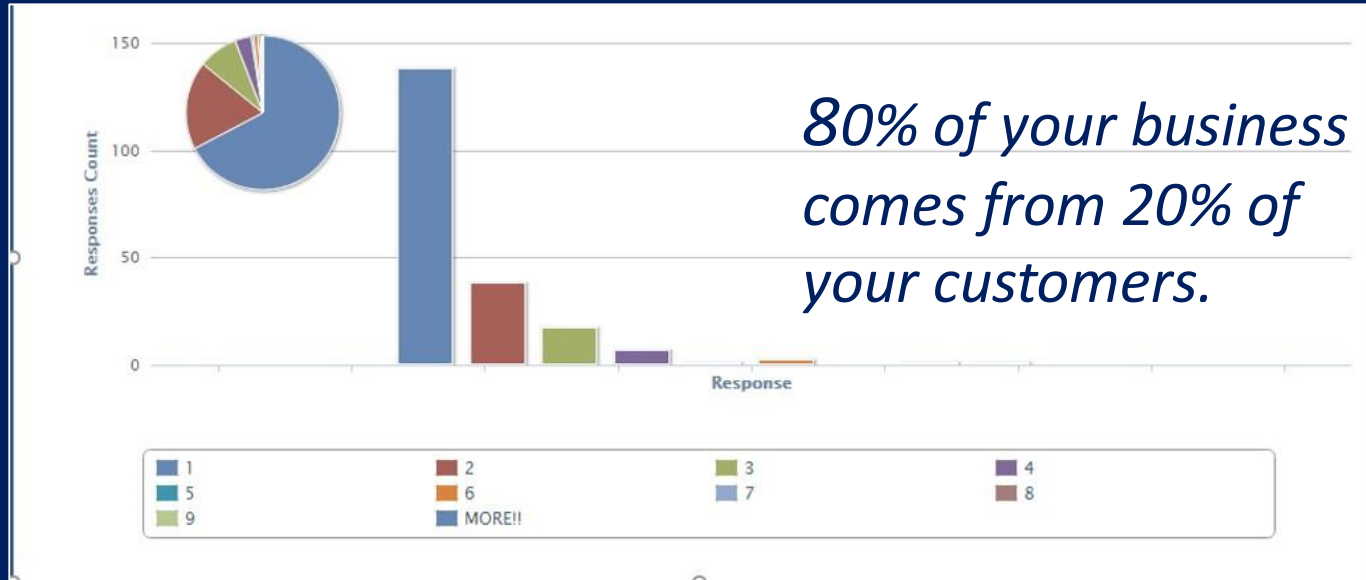
BUILD A CUSTOMER BASE

ONE farm customer at a time.

- Customer Service ~ Hospitality
- Outreach. How to find like-minded farm patrons?
- What is your farm **already doing**? Farmers markets? CSA's? Special events, both on and off of the farm?
- Start with a sign-up sheet with your brand and logo. Place sign-up opportunities **everywhere** and **every time**! (Be consistent and cohesive.)



BEST PRACTICES MARKETING



SURVEY TOP CUSTOMERS.

- Start with your **goals**.
- Use **customer survey tools** to establish your strategic guidelines so that you already know that your customers are ripe and ready to further support your farm's efforts.



BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

EARNING PUBLICITY - Relationships and Communication

Create a media contact list to include:

- Local, State & National journalists
- Bloggers
- Your customers who are online.

Send a compelling photo, details about your farm's agritourism activities.

- 6 months in advance,
- 3 months,
- 1 month,
- 2 weeks and up to the event
using all communication vehicles – website,
social media & public relations.
- Host a Media Day
- Top Customer Appreciation Event



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Millennial: *Post funny jokes or short, sentimental stories or photos of something cool that happened to your family recently. This cultivates loyalty and respect. Let's have a laid-back virtual friendship and you will have my patronage for life.*

BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

MOBILE MARKETING

- It's about the **pictures**. Use your **visual** assets.
- Social media. **Facebook**, **Instagram**, **Pinterest**
- Friends, Endorsers & Ambassadors – **Twitter** too.
- Unified efforts with #hashtags.
#yourfunfarmtag
#VisitNCFarms #GotToBeNC



BEST PRACTICES MARKETING

Be proactive. Have a consistent look and feel to your messages. Develop a cohesive brand appeal over time.

Keep the cycle going!



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Marketing is the top need of every small business –
farmer-entrepreneurs included.

How does NCDA&CS support farms that welcome guests?

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Monday Marketing Message

N. C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services

Helping farmers achieve results through proven promotional tools to gain new visitors, enhance farm experiences, and increase sales and overall farm value.



*Planning spring Agritourism events on your farm?
Need marketing help? Get the word out, for FREE.*

Opening your farm for a spring event, an educational workshop
or a local food gathering?

Please complete the [QUICK FORM](#) to send the details about your farm's spring Agritourism activities by 11 p.m. on Monday, January 15. The [N. C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services](#) will help spread the good news to thousands of media contacts and farm stakeholders statewide.

Mark your calendar! With your farm's 2018 business and marketing plans top of mind, we will request your event information sooner to better promote your on-farm experiences. Look for reminders through future Monday Marketing Messages. Information will need to be submitted through the seasonal online form and by the following dates:

Spring Events (First Day of Spring-Mother's Day) - Due January 15
Summer Events (Memorial Day-Labor Day) - Due March 15
Fall Events (Labor Day-Thanksgiving) - Due July 4
Winter Events (Thanksgiving-Valentine's Day) - Due October 1

By submitting your farm's seasonal events, you increase the potential for visitors to capture experiences of a lifetime on your farm!

[Click here to complete the spring Agritourism events form for FREE publicity now.](#)

REGISTER NOW!

12th Annual N. C. Agritourism Farm Tour & Conference in Winston-Salem on February 12-13.
www.nc-ana.org

Sign up for the Monday Marketing Message

Farmers are busy! **Every Monday at 2:17 pm** get
weekly tools & tactics to:

- Drive more visitors to your farm.
- Learn about programs, services and funding opportunities.
- Earn FREE media, and more!
- **RESULTS!** More customers, enhanced support, increased sales & farm value.
- Sign up at
www.ncagr.gov/markets/agritourism

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2018 & 2019 Farm Tour feature of Agritourism in Our State magazine.

Family owned and operated farms that are growing, raising and making agricultural products with diversified offerings to include welcoming visitors in 2018:

January – Goat Lady Dairy (The first NC-ANA member!)

February – Rising Meadow Farm, Sheep

March – Hardscrabble Hollow Farm, Blueberries

April - Carolina Farmhouse Dairy, Jersey Cows

May - Flying Cloud Farm, Flowers

June - Wehrloom Honey & Meadery

July -TC Smith Produce Farms, Cantaloupes

August - Indigo Farm, Peppers

September - Justus Orchard, Apples

October - Galloway Farm, Livestock & Corn Maze

November - Pine Knot Farm, Sweet Potatoes

December - Justice Farms, Eastern NC Christmas Trees





Alma Wade Galloway shared a post.

October 6 at 2:52 PM · 📷

Wow did not realize the publicity this way going to give us, couldn't be at a better time either. Been flooded with phone calls!



Our State Magazine

October 6 at 2:00 PM · 🌐

This 13-acre corn maze is ready to be conquered! Add Hallsboro's **Galloway Farm** to your fall trip list.



Our State Magazine Farm Tour Feature

October, 2018, post Hurricane Florence and Tropical Storm Michael.

Galloway Farm Results!



Alma Wade Galloway

7 hrs · 📷

Been working on numbers and books these past few days, our 1st weekend we were down 34% from last season, our second weekend we were up 29%. Cant complain about that, just hoping we are up the rest of the season. The worst part is field trips are down by almost 90%.. 😞 Still blessed and thankful.

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\$100,000 Agritourism marketing cost share

2015-2017: \$50K in marketing projects for 30 farms offering Agritourism activities.

2018-2019: 40 farms sharing \$100K.

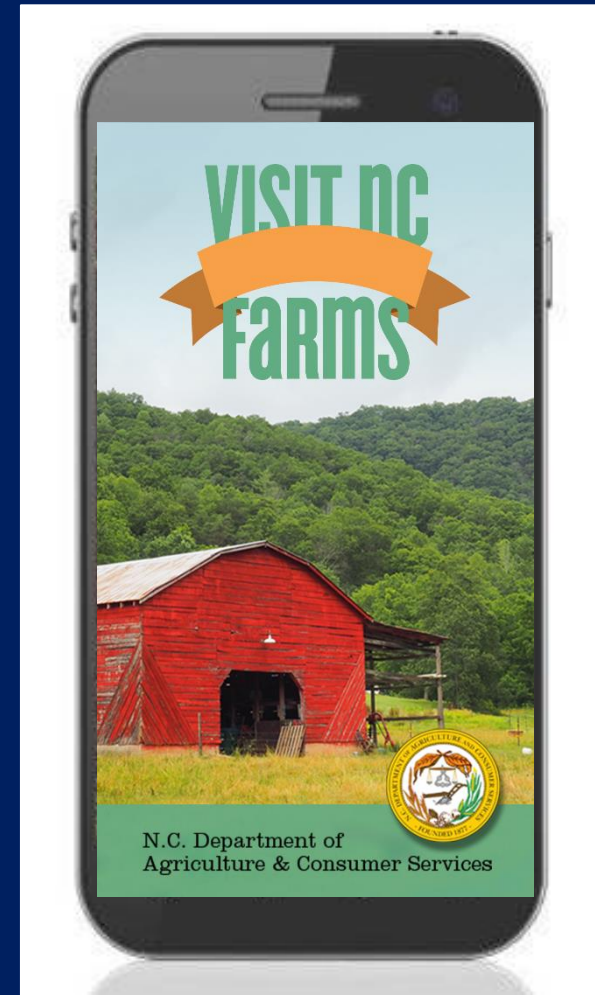
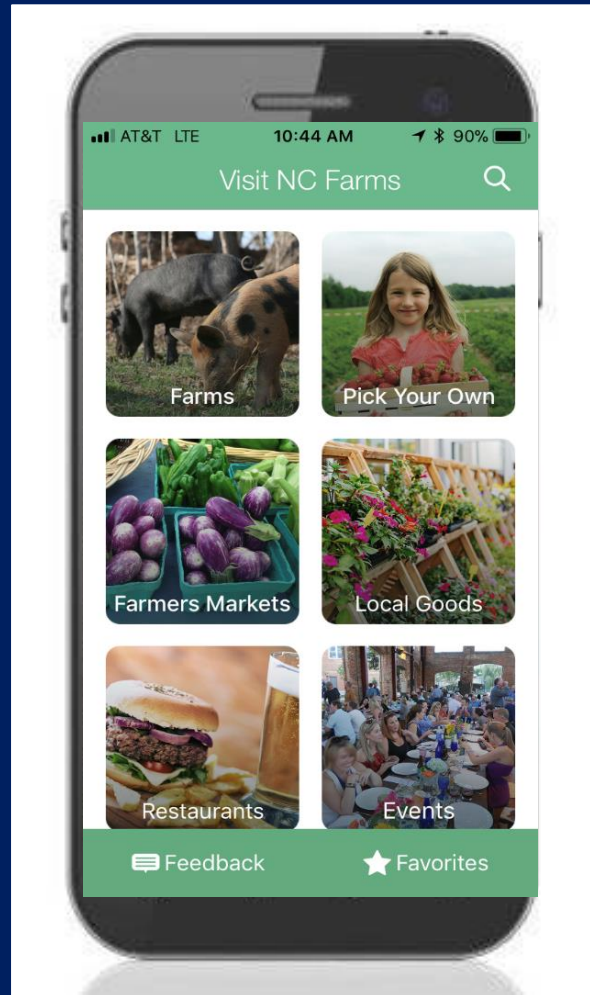


Innovation in North Carolina: Visit NC Farms phone app

Categories reflect farm revenue stream opportunities and match up with the community's priorities, assets and destinations.

Farms participate where, when and how they do business with 24 hour update and marketing push notification opportunities.

*VisitNCFarmsToday.com to
get your community involved.*



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Marketing: Local, Regional & Statewide



Deliverables for cohesiveness of look, feel and message:

- Digital badges
- Buttons
- Stickers
- Posters
- Participating on-farm signage
- Banner for tourism office and other public gathering places, like the libraries.
- Window clings for shops and restaurants

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Marketing:
VisitNCFarmsToday.com to learn more.



Poster



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The N.C. Agritourism Networking Association is a nonprofit led by farmers. The organization hosts a winter Annual Farm Tour & Conference and a regional Summer Farm Tour.

MISSION: North Carolina Agritourism Networking Association will serve as a statewide proactive advocate for agritourism farmers and as a liaison between and among state-level organizations, field organizations, nonprofits and rural landowners to support and facilitate agritourism. www.nc-ana.org

N.C. Agritourism Networking Association

13th Annual Farm Tour & Conference
February 11-12, 2019 in Winston-Salem

Membership includes creative entrepreneur-farmers dedicated to welcoming guests.

The NC-ANA provides opportunities for farmers in the Agritourism industry to:

- Share best practices
- Network with peers
- Discuss and find answers to challenges
- Celebrate successes
- Advocate for needed resources
- Works to find solutions in priority areas that are important to membership



You will find success in Agritourism when you ...

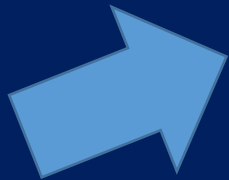
... have a passion for welcoming visitors.

... offer a clear and unique benefit for potential guests.

... carve out your niche in the marketplace. Who are your customers?

... are your authentic self.

(Every farm and farmer is different and has a story to tell!)



Be inspired! Respect other farmers, please. **You will NOT FIND SUCCESS** by copying another farm's business model. To grow this creative industry, to excite and sustain the long term interest of visitors, develop YOUR farm's unique approach to educating and entertaining guests.





Together, North Carolina
will be THE destination for
farm visits and connectivity
to local food IN THE WORLD!

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NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & CONSUMER SERVICES
Steve Troxler, Commissioner of Agriculture





Agritourism in North Carolina

The necessity to diversify and innovate in agriculture today.

Thank you!

#VisitNCFarms

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