

## BOOSTING REGIONAL AUSTRALIA THROUGH AGRITOURISM

### PURPOSE

To seek support for the implementation of key recommendations from the “*Boosting Regional Australia through Agritourism*” paper developed and funded by Australia Regional Tourism Ltd (ART).

### KEY ISSUES

ART have delivered a Discussion Paper that outlines the opportunities and barriers for Agritourism that have in turn informed key recommendations for action.

1. LEADERSHIP - Champions are needed for the activation of Australian Agritourism
2. REGULATORY REFORM - Government regulation, infrastructure provision and compliance are seen as significant barriers to the establishment and growth of Agritourism
3. STRATEGY AND POLICY - Strengthening the partnership between tourism and agriculture is critical in driving policy, programs and development ‘on farm’. Activation is needed both in terms of supply and demand to ensure success.
4. REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - Agritourism has the potential to boost economic development in regional localities providing diversification to reduce risk in times of low productivity and in particular drought.
5. COMMUNICATIONS - Agritourism provides value chain links that could enhance Australia’s global national identity through a national brand.

### AGRITOURISM AND DROUGHT

Particularly in times of drought, it is critical to help farmers become more resilient. Through diversification, Agritourism delivers opportunities that empower farming families to maximise the use of their assets in supplementing production income.

Agritourism supports regional and rural revitalisation impacting directly on local retail outlets and positively impacting on the economical sustainable delivery of regional services such as telecommunications and transport infrastructure. The benefits derived from the visitor economy ensure social, economic and community infrastructure in regional communities remain intact.

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Lead the establishment and adoption of Agritourism in national and state- based policy  
*Activity:* Host a National Agritourism Symposium
2. Address issues of regulation in particular land use planning and food safety systems  
*Activity:* Develop an Australian Framework for Agritourism and advocate for change
3. Support a ‘Supply side’ Development Program  
*Activity:* Establish National Funding Package and resources to support new and emerging agritourism
4. Improved Marketing & Communications  
*Activity:* Develop National brand underpinned by Agritourism and investigate accreditation to ensure quality.

**DEFINITION OF AGRITOURISM: “A tourism related experience or product that connects agricultural products, people or places with visitors on a farm or rural land.”**

## BACKGROUND

With over 85% of Australians living in an urban environment and the growing need to focus on accelerating the growth of our food and fibre industries, the value of agritourism in contributing to the success of agriculture has never been so important.

Recent trends in tourism suggest consumers are focusing less on ‘buying things’ and more on ‘doing things’ with tourists continuing to eat the cuisines of their travel destination long after they return home.

## WHY IS AGRITOURISM IMPORTANT?

Agritourism has an important role in creating a direct connection between the primary producers and the end consumer. For primary producers, it provides an opportunity to diversify; supplement their income and market their produce through alternative channels, often attracting a premium price, or capturing margin that would otherwise be captured elsewhere in the food value chain, whilst gathering valuable direct feedback from end consumers about their produce and emerging consumer preferences.

Agritourism:

- Supports a resilient farming community generating a supplementary revenue stream or product for farmers
- Reconnects people with farming and the land – reigniting the connection between city and country
- Contributes to local economies
- Provides the opportunity for additional employment opportunities in rural & regional communities

More broadly, agritourism also allows regional economies to showcase what’s good about the region, its unique growing conditions and natural resources (pristine air, water and soils) and provides a visitor drawcard from which other regional tourism businesses and experiences can benefit.

## WHAT VALUE DOES AGRITOURISM BRING?

Agritourism already makes a vast contribution to the Australian Visitor Economy. Approximately 7.36 million domestic and international visitors visited a farm gate or winery during their trip with a total value of almost \$11 billion dollars to the Australian economy.

Over the last five years the number of agritourists visiting farms or wineries in Australia has grown significantly. According to data collected by Tourism Research Australia, between December 2016 and 2017 the number of Domestic farm gate trips increase by 65% and 81% for International overnight farm gate visits.

The combination of economic necessity and consumer interest suggest the time is right to develop Agritourism in Australia and fully realise the economic and social benefits this sector has the potential to deliver.

## WHAT SUPPORT IS NEEDED NOW TO CHAMPION THIS PROJECT?

1. Seed funding to engage a Project Manager
2. Establish representative working group comprising key tourism, agriculture & regional development stakeholders
3. Support to plan and prepare for a 2019 Agritourism Symposium
4. Funding to develop and manage a pilot program with 7 regions across Australia
5. Support to advocate for a national red-tape review and reform process
6. Resources for a national ‘supply side’ development program for Agritourism business development ‘on farm’
7. Support for a national food and drink Brand for Australia