AUSTRALIAN REGIONAL TOURISM LTD

Enabling Agritourism

Paving the Way for Successful Development Applications

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Forward

This guide has been made possible by Australian Regional Tourism's National Agritourism Project, funded by an Australian Government **Building Better Regions Fund** grant. Created primarily for local government with an interest in agritourism growth for their region, the guide is produce and destination neutral.

It is a guide that summarises the feedback and experiences of more than 200 existing farmers and Agritourism stakeholders to provide insights to those beginning the Agritourism journey. It's not a how to guide designed to guarantee success.

Each producer, farm, local council region and tourism destination is unique, but the journey from farmer to tourism operator was striking in its similarity across the country.

This guide is intended to be complementary to the wealth of small business resources available in each State and Territory and build on the catalogue of work that exists for Agritourism operators globally.

This document will be updated regularly. If you'd like to see additional content or have an amendment please email agritourism@artn.com.au or eo@regionaltourism.com.au

Acknowledgement of Country

Australian Regional Tourism acknowledges and pays respects to the Traditional Owners of Country as the sovereign people of the lands and waters on which we live, work and play.

We acknowledge Elders – past and present and their ongoing connection with Country.

(Front Cover Image) Credit: Tourism and Events Queensland

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1.0 Introduction

In this section you will:

- **Be introduced to the farmer journey to agritourism**
- **Consider what local government can do to support farmers on their journey**

INTRODUCTION TO FARM DIVERSIFICATION

The development of the National Agritourism Strategy Framework provided the opportunity to engage with nearly 200 stakeholders across Australia unearthing interesting insights related to farmer diversification into tourism.

In doing so, we found that entry into tourism (or agritourism) can be accidental. In planning a farm investment, business product expansion, technology improvement a visitor experience emerges. The development of a processing plan includes the addition of a farm shop; the resurrection of a heritage breed brings a realisation what they do is rare or unusual.

Economic, environmental and social reasons are the key drivers of diversification. They are also provide excellent touchpoints for a farmer to evaluate whether tourism is right for them (see the companion toolkit for farmers in this series).

From our engagement, we have mapped a typical farmer journey to agritourism:

The Farmer to Agritourism Journey

Despite the steps involved in developing a new stream of the business, many farmers did not know or realise they were in tourism until step 6. Their advisors in step 1 and 2 are often agriculture specialists, accountants, lawyers or planning experts and the possibility of their diversification including tourism is not top of mind.

Almost all the farmers interviewed had a touchpoint with their local council on their journey to Agritourism. For this reason, local councils play a unique role in the future development of Agritourism experiences.

Local government can:

- Upskill teams in the importance and contribution of the broader tourism and visitor economy to your region, ensuring agritourism is seen in the context of a thriving tourism sector
- Understand what is and isn't Agritourism, making sure you have plans in place to know what you do and don't want to encourage
- Proactively identify your agriculturalists and their advisors, supporting them with information that makes Agritourism a viable diversification choice that is on the table early in their journey
- Ensure your strategy and statutory planning are aligned on what you are trying to encourage
- Provide supportive processes for farmers for planning permits. Often permit applications are complex due to land use overlays and the inclusion of food service businesses and applicants are not always experienced in the ways of local government
- Support farmers to map their stakeholders and engage early and often. Planning applications can have mixed reviews and in regional and rural communities - it's important there trust between communities, councils and applicants that ideas are aligned with plans.

2.0 The opportunity of the visitor economy

In this section you will:

- **Understand the industry of tourism and the larger visitor economy**
- **Consider local government's role in creating a supportive environment for the visitor economy**
- **An introduction to the structure and stakeholders in the visitor economy**

INTRODUCTION – THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE VISITOR ECONOMY

Agriculture and tourism represent two of Australia's major industries. Both support economic growth and employment in regional economies. The Agriculture sector has supported farm diversification for decades, embracing new technologies, crop diversification, sustainable and regenerative farming practices as well as embracing the land management practices of First Nations people.

Agriculture consultants, government departments and financial advisors have often been the go-to for advice to support a business case for diversification. Tourism is not often the primary business case, but adding a visitor experience is at times the by-product of a different value add.

Tourism is now often referred to as the Visitor Economy. The Visitor Economy is made up of anyone who provides or promotes services to Australia's domestic and international visitors[1]. Those visitors include leisure and business travellers, events travellers, those visiting friends and relatives, students and people travelling on working holiday visas.

The visitor economy encompasses the direct and indirect impact of these visitors travelling and spending in cities and towns across Australia.

Due to the impacts of COVID-19 and border closures due to the resultant pandemic, the Tourism Industry uses 2019 as its most recent fully viable operable year of reference. To put the Australian Visitor Economy in 2019 into context:

- The Visitor Economy earned over $39.6 billion[2] in exports making it Australia's fourth largest export earner behind iron ore, coal and natural gas and ahead of the beef, petroleum and wool industries
- The total value was $138 billion[3] in visitor expenditure, which grew 80% in 10 years
- The visitor economy accounted for 686,000 jobs[4], Australia's 8th largest employer supporting one in twenty Australians
- One in 8 Australian businesses was sustained by the Visitor Economy
- 48% or $66B[5] of all visitor spend in 2019 was in regions

The visitor economy includes industries such as food services, retail, accommodation, aviation, education & training, transport and culture, arts and recreation. Many, if not all of these are present in your local government area.

Austrade is the Australian Trade and Investment Commission. Austrade's remit is to acerate the growth of exporters, attract foreign investors and stimulates the visitor economy.

Thrive 2030: Australia's National Strategy for the Long-term Sustainable Growth of the Visitor Economy:

Australia's national strategy for the long-term sustainable growth of the visitor economy and all tourism and visitor economy strategies should align with the objectives and goals of this national plan.

In addition, your State or Territory government will have its own Tourism or Visitor Economy strategy, detailing the priority audience types they are planning to attract, the priority growth sectors and the spend and visitor numbers being aimed for over time.

Depending on your size, your local government area may have a shared resource or a dedicated team to support tourism and the visitor economy. Often this area is responsible for activities such as:

- Running your local visitor information centre
- Developing tourism plans
- Supporting inquiries from businesses about tourism
- Producing photos and images of your visitor experiences to use on websites and in council reports

If you are supported by a Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) your tourism and visitor economy might be more sophisticated and include:

- Destination marketing campaigns to attract visitors
- Destination management plans to align future growth with experiences your region can excel at
- Business engagement with interested operators either directly or with other entities such as a local chamber of commerce
- Advocacy and lobbying for government support for investment and infrastructure

The visitor economy crosses over with many teams in your local council. These could include:

- Economic development: consider how important tourism is to your LGA. Where does it fit
- Strategic planning: could welcoming more visitors change your region's future prosperity? Tourism operators will look for indicators in strategies to encourage investment and growth.
- Statutory planning: construction stimulates economic activity and many tourism businesses will require permits and registration with council before opening to the public. Are you statutory planning teams across your strategic intent for the visitor economy?
- Events: community engagement activities such as events often create a reason to visit friends and relatives
- Roads, footpaths, and works teams: consider community and visitors to your regions as you invest in infrastructure renewal and upgrades.

And many more.

[1] *Austrade.gov.au – About the Visitor Economy*
[2] *Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Australian National Accounts: Tourism Satellite Account 2018-19 financial year (ABS 2019)*
[3] *Tourism Research Australia (TRA), National Visitor Survey and International Visitor Survey as at 31 December 2020*
[4] *TRA analysis of ABS Labour Force Survey as at December 2019*
[5] *Tourism Research Australia (TRA), Tourism Businesses in Australia, 2018-19 financial year*

Stakeholders in the Visitor Economy include:

- **Tourism boards:** responsible for the promotion of tourism to a destination, be it a city, region, country, state or a collection of multiples of these. They may also be known as Destination marketing Organisations or DMOs
- **Transport services:** it's generally accepted that tourism involves travelling away from home in some capacity and therefore requires transport to reach their planned destination. Transport operators include road, air, water, foot, public and private.
- **Accommodation providers & services**: services and operators offering a place to stay for visitors. This could include hotels, models, hostels, holiday and caravan parks, campgrounds, home stays, farm stays and other innovative accommodation.
- **Conference and events:** conference and events bring people together in one place for a particular topic or common interest. They can be business or pleasure related and themed across a spectrum of interests. Large or small they are an important component of visitor economy.
- **Attractions:** built or natural, paid or free, large or small, well known or known to locals attractions add depth to the visitor economy. Some attractions are specifically for tourism purposes (theme parks) and others may be built for another purpose entirely and become and attraction (Sydney Opera House).
- **Tourism services:** include tour operators who put together trips and packages, online, inbound and offline travel agents who sell things other people operate, and all the other ancillary services that go into delivering a tourism experience be it parking, airports, the hospitality sector, travel insurance
- **The broader community:** community members, Traditional Owners, park agencies, public land managers and of course the visitors themselves are all stakeholders in the Visitor Economy.

It's important to map or identify who the stakeholders are in your visitor economy network for your local government. Then develop a stakeholder engagement plan to help keep them informed of the important updates over time. More information on this is available in section 6.

CHECKLIST: HOW IMPORTANT IS THE VISITOR ECONOMY TO YOUR REGION?

Understand the value of the Visitor Economy for your region

- ☐ **Develop & publish a tourism or visitor economy plan**
- ☐ **Promote the value of your visitor economy across your colleagues**
- ☐ **Promote the value and importance of your visitor economy to your councillors**
- ☐ **Promote the value and importance of your visitor economy to your community**

The Visitor Economy for our region is valued at: $_____

The Visitor Economy employs ____ people in our local government

We attract _____people to our LGA/region per year

Know your tourism region: We promote ourselves as _____

Is tourism and the visitor economy in your region planning to grow, shrink or stay the same?

Do you know what attracts visitors to your region?

Have you identified your stakeholders in tourism and the visitor economy?

3.0 Understanding Agritourism

In this section you will:

- **Be introduced to what is Agritourism**
- **See that on farm experiences are part of an Agritourism eco system**
- **Understand what triggers a farmer to diversify**

Agritourism is a type of experiential travel which connects people to product or produce, delivered on farming land through a direct "on farm" experience.

Four essential elements:

- Combines tourism and agriculture industries
- Attracts members of the public to visit the agriculture enterprise, on farm
- Is designed to increase farm income and
- Provides recreation, entertainment and or educational experiences related to the agriculture product

In Australia in year ended 2019, visitors who included an "on farm" experience in their holiday represented $5.9 billion in visitor spend, with the CSIRO identifying in 2018/19 this type of diversification had the opportunity to be valued at $18 billion by 2030.

Visitors who included a winery experience in their itinerary represented a further $10 billion in visitor spend in 2019.

Agritourism comes about most commonly when farmers diversify their farming activities to include a visitor experience. These visitor experiences can include providing tours, experiences and education around agriculture, providing direct connections with customers. Often it involves sharing the stories of their land and where food and agriculture products come from.

WHAT'S ESSENTIAL IN AGRITOURISM?

Agritourism does not include all farm tourism or all regional tourism. For something to be specifically known as agritourism the key elements are:

Place (essential): On Farm: To be called Agritourism, the experiences must be delivered on farm.

Then at least one other or both of the following:

People: engagement with farmers or farm workers to facilitate a connection to farm and product

Product: an experience of the agriculture the farm exists to produce

Agritourism is an eco system

Core Agritourism is strengthened by regional supporting services, creating an eco system of visitor experiences.

WHY DO FARMERS DIVERSIFY?

Talking with more than 60 farmers in the development of the National Agritourism Strategy Framework we found the top 5 reasons farmers diversify:

1. Environmental: A natural disaster triggers a change in approach to farming, land management or creates an income pressure that could be improved through diversification
2. Economic: Take back control of supply chains and reducing distribution costs
3. Economic: Need more employment to keep/attract family back to the farm
4. Social: Need more social contact and an opportunity to learn and try something new
5. Cultural: Lifestyle change or change in values which could be triggered by redundancies, growing awareness of climate change or desire to be more values aligned in life.

The above triggers are not naturally associated with tourism. In fact more than two thirds of the farmers we spoke with didn't realise they were in tourism until they launched their experience.

When you are speaking with farmers looking to diversify, the circumstances may not be of their own making. Farmers need empathy, support and information that is clear and concise.

WHO MAKES A GOOD AGRITOURISM OPERATOR?

Farmers are passionate about agriculture and their farms. But are they equally passionate about sharing their stories with visitors and having people visit their properties on a regular basis? Being extroverted is not a prerequisite for being great at Agritourism, but being open to hosting visitors is.

If you are planning to grow the number or range of Agritourism operators and experiences in your region you may need to consider:

- Supporting farmers to align their business behind your regional strategy, giving them confidence that their enterprise is valued by the region
- Helping them network with other farmers on the journey as they expand into a new business
- Providing support for expanding their skills capabilities including training in customer service, media interviews, hosting journalists and how to sculpt and shape their value proposition into a compelling story.

Credit: Tourism Western Australia

4.0 Agritourism and sustainability

In this section you will:

- **Become aware of the growing importance of sustainability to farmers**
- **Understand what is sustainable tourism**
- **Be encouraged to consider what you can do to support farmers to be sustainable in Agritourism**

Many farmers identified that diversifying into tourism was part of a broader farm change brought on by:

- Growing awareness of the impact of conventional farming on the environment
- A shift in values towards more sustainable environment and land management practices
- Considerations of the future on the land for their children and
- An appreciation of the quality of life available in the country versus urban areas and making sure this was available for generations to come.

Acute factors such as drought, floods and bushfires were responsible for some of the shift, but for others it was growing awareness through media, business and farm advisors and even their children nudging them towards change.

Tourism is an income diversification stream, but it also becomes a storytelling channel as the journey towards sustainability becomes part of the broader farm change.

How is this relevant to you as a local government?

Encouraging Agritourism to be as sustainable as possible as it evolves makes good business and community sense. Many councils are implementing sustainable and circular economy practices. Planned developments that are supportive of good social, cultural, environmental and economic outcomes will become the sorts of industries, businesses and employers regions will need in the future .

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM?

Sustainable tourism is defined by the UN World Tourism Organisation as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" .

In practical terms, applying sustainable tourism policies and management techniques means balancing social, cultural, economic and environment considerations of stakeholders.

Agritourism is evolving as an inherently sustainable form of tourism. Examples of this include:

- Support for rural and regional economies, keeping people on farms and on Country
- Increasing understanding of culture and heritage
- Support for environmental practices
- Locally retained earnings
- Visitor experiences and expenditure that support increased skills for local people, provide jobs and diversity of farm income
- Embracing Indigenous Australian's ethos of "look after country and country will look after you" with growing adoption of regenerative farming and circular economy techniques

Biosecurity challenges caused by increased visitor traffic to farms can be managed with good risk management and safety planning. Innovative sewerage and septic treatment systems support zero waste outcomes on farm and growing efficiencies in off grid power capture mean sustainable visitor experiences are now a reality.

What's next for you as a local council?

Ensure your sustainability and circular economy strategies include farmers and rural land. Make provision for agritourism as a diversification opportunity as an allowable land use, farmers are open to becoming more sustainable. Help upskill farmers in how to embrace sustainable practices and make them part of their experience story.

Credit: Tourism Australia

5.0 Defining and engaging your agritourism stakeholders

This section will help you:

- **Identify your stakeholders**
- **Consider when and how people should be consulted or involved**
- **Work out how to develop effective working relationships**
- **Align on stakeholder goals to build trust**

Who is, could or needs to be involved in Agritourism?

It's important to identify who is interested, concerned, support and responsible for your visitor economy network and for your farmers to do the same as they consider their diversification.

Tourism and the visitor economy can include obvious tourism stakeholders, but also stakeholders from environment groups, heritage representatives and neighbours.

Remember too, your farmers may not consider themselves in tourism, so their network may include agriculturalists, their trusted advisors and farm retailers not normally engaged in the visitor economy.

Stakeholder engagement means systemically and strategically engaging with those who have a stake in agritourism. Taking this approach means you will:

- Ensure the right people are involved in the conversation from the beginning
- Consider agritourism growth from the perspective of all stakeholders
- Be aware of the important issues and what they mean to different people
- Identify early whether everyone's needs can be met, and
- Help build a network of support for agritourism growth over time.

You can identify stakeholders by talking to people, reading existing reports, going online and also by calling for expressions of interest for people to be involved.

Your stakeholders are dynamic – as your approach to agritourism matures, new stakeholders will emerge so be prepared to update your lists regularly.

Check with your local government's communications team as you may already have a stakeholder engagement policy, framework and methods to be used for different circumstances.

If tourism and more specifically agritourism is new to your region, consider engaging with some existing business networks, chambers of commerce or community groups.

Identifying each stakeholder's interest will help you to keep them in mind for future engagement.

Some stakeholders to consider:

- Members of your community
- Visitors interested in agritourism
- Tourism & agritourism operators
- Tourism organisations & networks
- Agriculture networks
- Business networks such as chamber of commerce, which may include local bankers and financiers
- Environment and land management agencies
- Traditional owners and Indigenous agencies
- Local government & state government
- Cultural heritage agencies (historic and Indigenous)
- Your internal council stakeholders
- Your councillors and mayor

Remember to consider your internal stakeholders as those involved in agritourism could be a cross section of your local government team that may not normally come together. Creating clear lines of dialogue and a sense of a project working group will serve your future aspirations well and help you to align on your goals.

Find reason to keep your councillors up to date. Planning objections to new developments often make their way to the people's representatives and having them well versed in what is and isn't agritourism will help create trust in the community.

DEVELOP A STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK:

A framework will help you identify how (method) and how frequently you intend to communicate about Agritourism. Also consider that if farmers are not engaging with tourism until after they are actively diversified, communication about the opportunities agritourism provide may need to come through other networks to plant the seed earlier.

DO YOU NEED AN AGRITOURISM WORKING GROUP?

The stakeholders involved in Agritourism don't always cross paths in the course of normal business – you may need to facilitate them to come together. To help determine your aspirations for Agritourism for your council or region or if you have need for regular stakeholder engagement, a working group can provide a cross section of representation in an efficient manner.

Working groups have representatives from multiple stakeholders and the representative is tasked with taking the discussions to their group and evolving their view or contribution.

The goal of a working group should be to provide for more efficient communication lines and to integrate the needs of stakeholders into the output. The output should be supported by all those involved.

CHECKLIST FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT:

Define your stakeholders at the outset remembering that the cross section of stakeholders in Agritourism may not normally have reason to engage with each other

Understand each stakeholder's interest (statutory, professional, economic, cultural or personal) keeping in mind their interest for next steps

Define your internal stakeholders for Agritourism – including planners, strategists, your executive, your councillors and your mayor

Develop & implement a stakeholder engagement framework, checking first to see if you have templates that exist in council already

Consider whether your aspiration would benefit from an Agritourism working group made up of key stakeholders.

Credit: Voyages Indigenous Tourism

6.0 Indigenous engagement in agritourism

This section will help you:

- **Consider the importance of early engagement with Traditional Owners for Agritourism**
- **Understand the Caring for Country approach**
- **Consider the sorts of Indigenous engagement for farmers**
- **Support Indigenous peoples to consider Agritourism**

THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY ENGAGEMENT WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS FOR AGRITOURISM

Many agriculture departments and agencies are already committed to Aboriginal engagement and support of Aboriginal economic development. For many regional and rural farmers considering a diversification project, Traditional Owner engagement may be limited.

Farmers may turn to local council for advice in:

- Identifying the Traditional Owners of the land their farms include
- Guidance around why and how to engage
- Support with introductions and facilitation of engagement with a specific development in mind
- Understanding of the timeframes, methods and process of engagement
- Natural disaster recovery and embracing more Traditional methods of land management and species revegetation

Farmers who participated in the investigation expressed unequivocal support for early engagement with Traditional Owners. The sorts of inquiries they initiated included:

- Support with acknowledgement of Country for visitors
- Deeper understanding of the traditional practices that were common on their farm
- Engagement to support a shift towards more regenerative farming practices
- Understanding leading to land revegetation
- Product collaborations (Bushfood inspired)
- Tours and interpretation experiences
- Interpretation material
- Culture and Heritage reports for planning permits
- Pathways to bushfood and bush medicine cultivation in share enterprises

The Federal Department of Environment's 2016 guidance document "Engage Early" was developed for projects being considered under the Environment and Bio Diversity Act 1999[6] (EPBC Act) and is endorsed by the Department of Agriculture as a strong engagement framework.

The Australian Facilitators Network has also development an excellent series of questions to ask when creating an Indigenous Informed framework.

First Nations Australians are our first land managers. Visitors to regions are increasingly seeking out dedicated Indigenous

[6] *Engage Early—Guidance for proponents on best practice Indigenous engagement for environmental assessments under the EPBC Act (agriculture.gov.au)*

experiences and also valuing operators who provide a touch point to Culture and acknowledge the Traditional custodians of the lands on which experiences are delivered.

CARING FOR COUNTRY – INCLUSIVITY IN AGRITOURISM

The symbiotic relationship Indigenous people have with the land is encapsulated in the sayings "Caring for Country" and "look after country and country will look after you." While often considered as the land and sea management practices and outcomes, more recently, it's being acknowledged that including the stories and customs as well help support identity, health and cultural life. Caring for Country is as much the emotional and physical wellbeing of people as it is the practices of looking after the land[7].

Multigenerational non-indigenous farmers expressed similar connections to place as did Indigenous people on country, albeit with a greater connection to intergenerational physical ownership than the Traditional Owners spiritual and physical. There is work to be done yet for many farmers to explore their journey with local Traditional Owners, acknowledging country and collaborating on a new shared future.

Agritourism may provide an opportunity for collaborations between farmers and Traditional Owners for the benefit of all Australians. Learnings from First Nations Australians have the potential for caring for country traditions to transcend from being Indigenous to becoming the practices we take to the world as being Australian.

Natural disasters provided some opportunity for outreach to Traditional Owners, with many Farmers indicating they had asked for advice after flood or bushfire to regenerate their land with flora endemic to their farm or consider more contemporary regenerative farming practices.

Agritourism has also brought producers and First Nations people together through collaborations involving native ingredients, stories, art work and social enterprise models supporting local education programs.

There is a burgeoning Indigenous Agritourism sector supporting the propagating of native ingredients and medicines at scale, and with some support and encouragement, these have the potential to become flavours synonymous with Australia.

Restaurants, conference and hospitality operators provide an opportunity for distribution for small scale suppliers.

SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS AGRITOURISM OPERATORS

Indigenous involvement in Agritourism is immature, but growing. From engagement with farmers to support new land management practices through to encouraging Indigenous Agritourism Experiences, there are many synergies between Agritourism and a Caring for Country approach.

Commercial producers of Bushfoods and Bush medicines are few but growing, and many of these flavours have the potential to become widespread, elevated to the flavours synonymous with Australia.

Indigenous Agritourism enterprises often require new, innovative and more community or social enterprise business models.

[7] *Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population & Communities & Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2011, The Benefits of Caring for Country* https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/research_pub/benefits-cfc_0_2.pdf

Consider engaging with your Traditional Owner cooperatives, Department of Agriculture in your State or Territory, Indigenous Business Australia or your State or Territory Tourism Organisation's Indigenous Tourism representative.

It is important to remember intellectual property of Indigenous peoples is of great value. Time and knowledge need to be respected and valued and benefits shared.

CHECKLIST FOR INDIGENOUS AGRITOURISM ENGAGEMENT

- ☐ Support your farmers and tourism operators to identify and develop relationships with Traditional Owners of the land they operator on
- ☐ Develop guidelines for farmers around why and how to engage, with specific guidelines for planning applications
- ☐ Work with local traditional owners to develop some fact sheets around timeframes, methods and process of engagement and any tips specific to farmers
- ☐ Include in natural disaster recovery support packages opportunities to encourage Traditional Owner engagement for advice on land management
- ☐ Consider what Bush foods and bush medicines are endemic to your region to help re-vegetate in council gardens and public land
- ☐ Support farmers to demonstrate respect for and/or acknowledge traditional knowledge when it comes to native bushfoods and botanicals.

Credit: Tourism Australia

7.0 Aligning on goals: councillors, team and community

This section will help you:

- **Consider what aligning on goals means**
- **Identify that shared goals are better for outcomes**

A new sector such as Agritourism provides a unique opportunity to bring together stakeholders who may not normally engage. In these circumstances, it's vital to understand what every stakeholder's goals and objectives are. Understanding these objectives may be complicated by this being the first time many stakeholders have thought about what the future of Agritourism might look like.

- For your local government, this may be the first time Agritourism has been called out as a dedicated sector with a plan to grow its contribution to the visitor economy
- For farmers considering diversification, tourism is a new, unchartered sector that is being compared and contrasted with other growth opportunities
- Your local Councillors may be new to local government and also new to Agritourism as a sector of growth for your region
- Your local community can support farmesr by taking visiting friends and relative to farms, if only they are aware the experiences exist
- For your other industries there may be ways for them to collaborate and partner with farmers to create new products or experiences

Aligning all your stakeholders on your region's aspiration early will make it easier to grow the sector faster over time. You will need to keep refreshing their memories, but doing this as you share progress will remind them of the journey you are on.

Top Tips for aligning on goals:

- ☐ **Identify Key Stakeholders:** consider who your stakeholders are, all the family members involved in a farm and allow time to talk
- ☐ **Quantify the Opportunity:** have the facts available for your region to underpin your decision making
- ☐ **Share Case Studies:** find farmers in your region or those further away to show what success and the journey look like
- ☐ **Run an Information session:** gather people together to talk through what Agritourism is and why you are making it a focus
- ☐ **Develop a Working Group:** keep your momentum by bringing a selection of people together regularly
- ☐ **Engage Your Strategy Team:** getting Agritourism in your plans makes it easier for all stakeholders to support.

Credit: Tourism Western Australia

8.0 Building regional skills and capacity

This section will help you:

- **Understand the different skills required between agriculture and tourism**
- **Determine what capabilities you need to support agritourism growth**
- **Establish how community capacity building supports farmer diversification**

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated a regional skills shortage present for more than a decade. International workers and Working Holiday Visa holders had become essential to both the agriculture and tourism sectors . Many regional communities are feeling the loss of this mobile workforce.

As local government you may already have broader plans in place to address skills shortages in your region. For farmers, the skills that have underpinned their strength as a producer are vastly different from those required to expand and operate in tourism.

No one business needs every skill full time in the beginning. Clusters of farmers diversifying can create opportunities for small businesses to emerge supporting in areas such as labour hire, marketing, social media and digital production as well as more operation skills in regulatory compliance, risk management and engaging directly with customers.

Credit: Tourism Western Australia

CORE SKILLS FOR EACH INDUSTRY SECTOR:

AGRICULTURE	TOURISM
Industry Leadership	People Leadership
Interpersonal skills – focused on staff, supply chain, negotiations, technical communication, listening.	Interpersonal skills – focused on Customer Service, customer engagement and customer experience delivery, problem solving
Analytical skills – evaluating inputs and conditions to optimise outputs. Problem solving for a desired crop yield. Bookkeeping	Analytical skills – visitor numbers, revenue, yield management, supply inputs, margins, commissions. Bookkeeping
Technology skills – apply technology to a rural setting such as irrigation, cultivation, harvesting, transport, quality assurance.	Technology skills – booking systems, point of sale, email marketing, social media, spreadsheets, emails, powerpoint
Mechanical skills	Administration and record keeping – compliance, regulatory administration, customer data.
Time management	Marketing & digital marketing – content creation, website management, social media, branding, media buying, journalist visits, storytelling
Physical health	Partnerships & collaborations – working with other operators, networking, brand alignment. Traditional Owners
Organisational skills – seasonal requirements, time management	Market development, international trade skills
Adaptability	Adaptability
Understanding of the farm and agriculture sector specialised to their particular produce.	Specialised knowledge of the tourism industry, distribution development, events & business events

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING:

Community capacity building is a form of community development that is designed to help communities develop, implement and sustain their own solutions to problems that means they have more control over their long term sustainability. The focus on being community led means it often has a greater sense of local leadership, fosters local pride and means skills improvements immediately benefit the local community.

Agritourism supports people to live a rural life more sustainably. The outcomes for Local Government and regional tourism organisations taking a community capacity building approach in support of Agritourism could include:

- Expanding the diversity of the community engaged and employed in rural settings
- Encourage cross over of leadership from other industries into tourism, farming and agritourism
- Strengthen the skills of individuals already engaged in farming to support their diversification journey
- Ensure Agritourism is on the agenda by including in long term masterplans and sector based strategic plans for your local government area
- Reporting back to the community on Agritourism achievements
- Supporting Agritourism through community organisations and council collaborations
- Promoting and supporting your local producers by using them in local contracts,.

Together, these build the skills and confidence of people and groups in the community, give a greater sense of ownership of your long term vision, ensure strategies are practical and attainable at the grass roots and promote inclusion.

Top Tips

Be aware of the different skills needed in tourism compared with agriculture

Support farmers with opportunities to upskill in new areas

Identify new opportunities locally to support farmers with new skills such as marketing and HR

Consider your community capacity building and how Agritourism can benefit

9.0 How can you get started?

This section will help you:

- **Get started with some great quick wins**
- **Identify the issues for your region**
- **Support regional dispersal through connected visitor experiences**

Audit your existing operators: How many agritourism operators do you have in your LGA or region? What categories of farm product and types of experiences do they offer? What days of the week are they open and how engaged with tourism are they now?

Audit your existing farmers: What farmers do you have in your region? Do you have access to council rate payer lists and properties to be able to form a profile of your agriculture sector.

What is your region known for? What products and farming methods are prevalent? What is your region or destination's unique proposition that may be used to attract visitors?

Survey your stakeholders: find out what the existing challenges and opportunities are by asking your stakeholders.

Put your best foot forward: develop a suite of marketing assets such as photos, videos and short descriptions and add them to your regional tourism media gallery. Start to use them in your destination marketing, council brochures and annual reports and visitor information centres. Remember to share to your State or Territory tourism organiation.

Make sure your operators are in the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse: This essential database of Australian product feeds hundreds of distribution partners via online channels.

Support regional dispersal with Tasting Trails: connect your products and experiences together on farm with a touring route or tasting trail. These support regional dispersal and create a more unified visitor experience.

Collaborate with stakeholders: bring your stakeholders together to identify the issues for your region, network and introduce people together promote partnerships and collaborations.

Promote the value of the visitor economy to your region: sharing who is impacted by the visitor economy and the value to your region create a positive community for new operators to engage with.

10.0 Longer term

This section will help you

- **Consider what's needed to bring your insights together into a plan**
- **Support operators through mentoring and experience development**
- **Align to the national agritourism strategy framework**

To achieve longer term success in Agritourism will require a range of steps:

Quantify the opportunity: identify the opportunity for Agritourism's broader economic impact beyond just the farm income

Align your plans: regional masterplanning, long range liveability plans, SEIFA indexing, economic development (tourism and agriculture) and talent attraction can all be impacted by growth in Agritourism but operators and financiers need to see the alignment of planning to give confidence to invest.

Align your people: bring all your stakeholders on the journey. Economic development, strategic and statutory planning, tourism people, agriculture people, councillors and executive. Sharing widely, early and often will garner greater support.

Consider the Agritourism Eco System: beyond on farm experiences a thriving agritourism sector includes restaurants, food events, providore stores, farmers markets, touring routes, wayfinding, a community culture of health lifestyle and support for local produce throughout procurement.

Community Capacity Building: evolving locals into leaders requires commitment and support. Having a culture of growing your own locally applies equally to people as it does to produce. Agritourism has an opportunity as an industry to encourage next generations back into regional and rural communities and the use of digital tools and support programs can nurture them through best practice training that isn't compromised because of location.

Encourage the Experience: support your operators by helping them experience others. Visit other regions and organise groups of mentors to visit them. Benchmark yourselves as a region against the best, with your own local flavour.

Align to the National Strategy Framework: this vital plan is the first to chart a national approach to the agritourism growth. The opportunity for the sector is one of significant growth through long term consistent industry development and export market growth. Look for opportunities to align and support your Regional and State/Territory tourism office in their efforts to better represent products and experiences.

Find your Heros: identify your existing operators, share their stories and encourage mentoring, sharing and transparency with new farmers.

Creating authentic and immersive experiences is key to growing regional tourism

AUSTRALIAN REGIONAL TOURISM LTD

Australian Regional Tourism Ltd (ART) was established to re-balance an increasing focus on tourism in urban capital cities. ART is the peak body that represents regional tourism practitioners and acts as a hub for collaboration, cooperation, ideas generation, knowledge sharing, networking and more. On behalf of its members, ART promotes sustainable regional development through regionally focused research, destination management planning, product development, marketing and the development of skilled human resources.

The ART Mission is to develop regional Australia through building competitive tourism.

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