



Franklin County Agritourism Study Executive Summary

This study recognizes two fundamental facts of farming: entrepreneurship is at the heart of the agricultural economy, and determination to succeed has driven farmers to amazing accomplishments for generations. In Franklin County, farmers employing ingenuity, hard work, and business expertise have developed successful, diversified Agritourism enterprises.

The Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism reports that 3,300,000 tourists visit Western Massachusetts a year. Tourism revenues in Franklin County total \$38.6 million annually nearly reaching the \$42 million in agriculture sales for the county. On a national level, rural tourism is growing at the rate of 6% annually, and weekend travel is increasing. Franklin County farms are within easy reach of a huge Northeast population looking for rural experiences. Farmers throughout the county are making Franklin County a destination for Agri-tourists.

Success Stories

Agritourism is a driver for Western Massachusetts economic development, and it could get stronger. There are 88 farms in Franklin County that this study identified as having successful on farm agritourism activities. Agritourism development is providing full time work for farm family members who previously sought off farm employment, and adding additional jobs to the Western Massachusetts economy. A healthy, viable, sustainable agricultural economy is retaining open space and the rural character of the countryside. There is room for growth and 72% of the farms responding to the survey indicate that they are interested in expanding or developing Agritourism activities.

1. *Chase Hill Farm* (Warwick) is a successful seasonal dairy with certified organic milk, grass fed meat, cheese, and eggs from pasture raised chickens.
2. *Blue Heron Farm* (Charlemont) is a diversified farm renowned for producing high quality maple syrup, award winning Fjord Ponies, Boer goats, blueberries, and farm vacations. Their web site receives 36,000 visits per year.
3. *Keldaby Farm* (Colrain) raises and sells Angora goat breeding stock from their award winning sire, and Moonshine Design dyes, spins, and weaves the specialty mohair yarn, into wearable scarves, shawls, socks and throws in dazzling colors.
4. *Wheel-View Farm* (Shelburne) markets Scottish Highland and Galloway cattle as lean, natural, grass fed beef. Meat from grass fed animals receives premium prices and demand is so high that neighboring farmers are cooperating to raise additional beef cattle to meet the demand.
5. *Diemand Egg Farm* (Wendell) produces high quality eggs and turkeys, and their deli/farm store is stocked with tasty, value added products -- turkey sausages, chili, lasagna, soups, sandwiches, salads, frozen meals and baked goods.



6. *Pine Hill Orchard* (Colrain) is a destination for locals and tourists for a homegrown meal, heirloom apples, cider, baked goods, bedding plants and other locally produced goods. A tour of the orchard, wagon rides, U-pick, and Cider Days completes the many offerings available at this one stop farm.

Study Recommendations

1. When agritourism enterprises tie into existing local planning and marketing efforts, their reach and impact are greater;
2. Internet use will increase sales and expand market share;
3. Networking with other businesses and chambers of commerce can improve agritourism marketing;
4. Investing in cooperative marketing campaigns, like “Be a Local Hero/Buy Locally Grown,” can leverage consumer interest;
5. Listings in state farm maps, MassCountryRoads.com, and CISA’s *Farm Products Guide* bring attention to farm activities and encourage agritourists to visit the area.

Additional Facts

National Facts

- Sixty three million Americans visited farms between 2000-2003
- Rural tourism is growing at the rate of 6% annually
- Direct sales from farms to consumers has risen 37% since 1997
- Travel and tourism is about 11.3% of the nation’s gross domestic product
- 86 million adults traveled to small towns or villages with in the last 3 years
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State Facts

- Tourism is the third largest industry in MA with \$11.1 billion is annual sales
- Total employment generated by traveler expenditures was 205.8 thousand jobs
- There are 6,075 farms in the state with total commodity sales of \$384 million annually
- Approximately 300 farms offer visitor activities

Western MA Facts

- 3,300,000 tourists visit Western Massachusetts annually and
 - 30% stay in a motel or B&B, while 27% stay in private homes
 - Spend an average of \$315 is spent per trip
 - 35% shop while in the area
 - 20% attend cultural events/festivals
 - 16% visit museums
 - 14% take part in outdoor activities



Franklin County Facts

- Agriculture generated \$42 million in total sales in 2002
- Tourism revenues in the county total \$38.6 million annually
- Franklin County has the market advantage of being located close to significant population centers, Hartford, CT (population 1.8 million), Boston, MA (population 5.8 million), and New York City (population 22 million).
- 72% of the farmers surveyed are interested in developing Agritourism activities
- 53% of the farmers involved in programs like CISA's Local Hero Campaign consider their Agritourism efforts to be successful
- 88 farms are listed on the county Agritourism map
- 90,000 visitors stop at the Upper Pioneer Valley Visitor Center in Greenfield.

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