

Families looking for educational, fun vacations are considering overnight stays on family farms to experience “haycations.” If you own a farm and would like to turn your farm into a day or overnight vacation, the LSU AgCenter can assist you with planning.

The third generation of the Patterson Family of Mount Ulla, North Carolina, is changing the way they do business at [Patterson Farms Inc.](#) Since 1946, their family has been providing quality produce, plants and service on land owned by their family since 1919. The third generation of family farmers has introduced agritourism.

If you visit their farm today, they proudly share that their goals are the same as previous generations of Patterson’s but to keep up with changing times they have developed a more diversified operation to include three divisions – Patterson Farm Repack, Patterson Landscape & Nursery, and Patterson Farm Market & Tours. The farm employs 300 people.

The Patterson’s are a good example of a growing number of farmers who are including education as one of their goals. When they are not planting, harvesting, packaging or distributing produce from their 350 acres of tomatoes, 36 acres of strawberries, 40 acres of pumpkins or 15,000 poinsettias, they are hosting farm tours.

There are currently 905 farms and ranches across the country that offer lodging, according to Farm Stay U.S., with only 134 of that number in the South. So there is definitely room for growth in our part of the South. Louisianans reported 170 farms engaged in forms of agritourism in 2007, but all do not offer lodging. Nationwide in 2007, agritourism generated over \$566 million in income for farms.

In 2008, the Louisiana Legislature passed an agritourism limited liability law to help protect agritourism owners from frivolous law suits. A complete review of the law can be found on the LSU AgCenter’s website under rules and regulations at www.lsuagcenter.com/agritourism. Today, more than half of the states in the U.S. have a similar law.

Agritourism, agri-tainment, outdoor adventures, nature-based tourism are all words that can be used to describe activities on agricultural lands. Landowners in certain regions of the United States began experimenting with these options for supplemental income in the 1990’s. The LSU AgCenter’s agritourism website contains resource materials on agritourism that include best management practices and a guide on the benefits of agritourism.

Agritourism is much broader than a farm tour. Agritourism covers most operations on land if the owner or operator is engaged in agriculture. Hunting and fishing are considered agritourism and many people are deriving a seasonal income from guiding or offering their land for hunting purposes. Oftentimes these venues have overnight lodging, skeet shooting and fishing.

In nearby Arcadia, PaPa Simpson’s Farm has been offering farm tours since October of 2003. Jerry Simpson and his family are a good example of traditional farmers adding something new to their farm. His farm tours are popular with school children and he provides special activities during the holidays for children to bring their parents to the farm.

To learn more, contact Dora Ann Hatch, agritourism coordinator for the LSU AgCenter.