

Agritourism has been around a long time. It dates back to the late 1800s when city dwellers escaped urban life on short vacations to the farm to visit their relatives. In the 1920s, the growth of automobile travel made it easier for people to head for the country. Rural recreation rose significantly in the 1930s during the Great Depression and in the 1940s following World War II. In the 1960s and 1970s, horseback riding and farm petting zoos became popular. In the 1980s and 1990s, farm vacations, overnight stays at bed and breakfasts and commercial farm tours became popular. Today, demand continues to grow for agritourism.

Agritourism is a business venture on a working farm, ranch or agricultural enterprise that offers educational and fun experiences for visitors while generating supplemental income for the owner. Visitors participate in friendly “discovery” and learning activities in natural or agricultural settings. Because it blends entertainment and education, agritourism is also known as “agrientertainment,” “agritainment” or “agrotourism.”

There are many agritourism ventures operating across our state. The latest statistics compiled by the Agriculture Census, showed that agritourism in Louisiana more than doubled from 2007 to 2012.

Agritourism is a perfect way to involve family and friends. Growing up in a rural community most children do not have the opportunity to travel to a summer job. So, if you live on a farm why not create your own work opportunity.

That’s just what twelve year old Cameron Churchman did. His family farms 1,000 acres of corn and soybeans and when Cameron wanted to earn money to buy an X-Box his mom suggested that he sell vegetables by the roadside. He started from their family garden selling produce from his radio flyer wagon. After the summer he was able to buy his X-Box.

The following summer the garden was increased and his roadside business expanded using a tent instead of the radio flyer to display vegetables. By the third year, the garden expanded to two acres and a permanent stand was built by the roadside. What a great story of entrepreneurship from someone so young. Cameron took the assets of the farm and turned them into cash.

Cameron’s operation can also take advantage of the 2008 Agritourism Limited Liability Law that assists agritourism professionals like Cameron and his family who were vulnerable to lawsuits and who may have difficulty in obtaining liability insurance. The law limits the liability of an agritourism professional for injuries that occur through no fault of the agritourism professional. An agritourism professional who qualifies can complete the necessary paperwork and be covered.

So, whether you start an agritourism business to increase cash flow in the off season or to sell the agriculture experience to others, agritourism can be an enterprising asset to your family farm.

For more information, contact Dora Ann Hatch, LSU AgCenter Agritourism Coordinator.