Understanding the Alabama Agritourism Industry: Motivation, Value, and Cost

by

Meredith Hall Casey

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Auburn University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Auburn, Alabama
December 11, 2021

Agritourism, farm tourism, agriculture, tourism, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, agricultural education

Approved by

Dr. Christopher Clemons, Chair, Associate Professor of Agriscience Education
Dr. Amy Wright, Associate Dean for Instruction, College of Agriculture
Dr. James Lindner, Chair, Alumni Professor of Agriscience Education
Dr. Jason McKibben, Associate Professor of Agriscience Education
Dr. Matthew Ulmer, Community Workforce, Leadership, & Economic Development Specialist, Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Abstract

Agritourism, the business of hosting visitors on a farm or ranch, is a popular diversification strategy for farmers and ranchers for a myriad of reasons. Understanding why farmers and ranchers choose to start agritourism operations is critical for building relevant educational resources and supporting a thriving industry. This descriptive study assessed multiple factors associated with the agritourism industry in Alabama including the motivations of Alabama farmers to diversify their properties with agritourism, the most resource-intensive activities associated with agritourism, the self-efficacy of operators regarding common agritourism tasks, the agritourism activities offered by Alabama farmers, and personal characteristics of study respondents. Data was analyzed using SPSS and was reported using descriptive statistics. Respondents in general use agritourism activities to support their agricultural production business by generating more income, maximizing farm resources, and building relationships with their communities. General farm upkeep is the most demanding activity for Alabama agritourism operators in terms of time, money, and personal labor. Study participants believed in their ability to accomplish a range of tasks associated with agritourism. Three-quarters of respondents strongly agreed that they were confident interacting with visitors on the farm, minimizing risks, and marketing using social media. Educational resources developed for Alabama agritourism operators should focus on high-leverage, low input strategies to maximize income and resources, specific ways to make agritourism operations accessible for all guests, and legislation that is pertinent to agritourism operations. The data collected from this study will be used by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System to create educational resources for Alabama agritourism operators.

Acknowledgments

Foremost, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Chris Clemons, and my committee members Dr. Amy Wright, Dr. James Lindner, Dr. Matt Ulmer, and Dr. Jason McKibben for their time and guidance throughout my graduate education at Auburn University. Your support, trust, and encouragement mean more than I can begin to say. A special thanks is due to Dr. Adam Rabinowitz for serving as the university reader for this dissertation.

I am incredibly thankful for my husband, Matthew Casey. Matthew, your endless support has made this process possible. All of the little things you do each day truly make the big difference for me.

I am forever grateful for my mother, Julie Hall, and the constant motivation she provided both before and during this degree. Mom, thank you for your daily encouragement and for helping me see with perspective.

I am endlessly grateful for the support of my family, friends, fellow graduate students, and undergraduate students who have been nothing short of supportive and uplifting during my time at Auburn. I am overwhelmed with gratitude for every call, note, text, and talk.

I send special thanks to the agritourism operators of Alabama, especially the respondents to this survey. I see the impact you have on your communities, the memories you help create, and the many ways you educate your visitors about agriculture. Thank you for inspiring me and so many others with your resilience, creativity, and hospitality.

Pursuing a Ph.D. has been a lifelong dream of mine, and to be able to follow this dream in the place I call home means the world. I am excited to enter this next chapter knowing that I carry Auburn with me wherever I go.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

ACES	Alabama Cooperative Extension System
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ALFA	Alabama Farmers Federation
COA	Census of Agriculture
ERS	Economic Research Service
NASS	National Agricultural Statistics Service
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The family farm is perhaps one of the most iconic, romanticized facets of American culture. When the United States first gained independence, nearly every American was involved in food production. The first U.S. Census taken in 1790 revealed that 90 percent of Americans listed their primary occupation as farming (Allosso, 2015). The doctors, lawyers, clergy, and other professions that made up the remaining ten percent (and their spouses) likely kept gardens or smaller livestock to supplement their dinner tables (Allosso, 2015).

From the 1790s to the 1820s, the United States experienced a tremendous amount of growth in part due to the successful agricultural practices of the burgeoning nation (Meyer, 2003). The gross domestic product had tripled since the early 1790s (Meyer, 2003). Per capita incomes had increased by as much as twenty percent (Meyer, 2003). During this time, farm owners used their higher incomes to purchase more land to increase their farms' size while farm laborers started leaving the agricultural sector for higher-paying industrial jobs in cities (Meyer, 2003). After the Civil War less than half of the nation claimed farming as their primary occupation. By 1900 farmers made up only one-third of the total United States population (Allosso, 2015). Increases in agricultural technology brought about by industrialization helped farm producers grow more food with less human capital (Allosso, 2015). During the 1930s the size of the United States urban population overtook the rural population. By the 1950s the population of farmers was on the decline (Allosso, 2015). In 1980 farmers comprised less than 4 percent of the total work force in the United States (Allosso, 2015). Since 2000 more than half of the rural counties in the nation have experienced population decline, particularly in agricultural-based counties (Parker et al., 2018). Today only about 14% of the population lives in rural areas

(Cromartie et al., 2020) and only 3.4 million people identify their primary occupation as farming (USDA, 2019a).

Industrialization and the resulting urban expansion have led to dramatic population decreases in rural areas. As the American public grows increasingly distant from the family farm and agricultural production in general, tourism experiences can provide perspectives of new places and an escape from the bustle of everyday living. Farmers and ranchers that invite guests to experience agriculture on their properties not only raise crops and livestock; these agrarian entrepreneurs cultivate memories. Visiting a pumpkin patch in early fall or picking strawberries in late spring are local traditions, even rites of passage across rural and metropolitan communities.

Though agritourism may appear to be a novel idea, visiting farms and agricultural settings is not a new trend. Europeans have been visiting and vacationing at farms even before the 1800s. Not only has agritourism been practiced throughout Europe, farmers in France and Italy have received government support to start and maintain tourism on their farms (McKelvie, 2004). In the United States the surge of industrialization in the late 1800s led urban families to seek the quaint countryside for a break from bustling city life. On the western side of the country, dude ranches beckoned wealthy Easterners and Europeans with adventures of hunting and exploring nature (Chase & Grubinger, 2014). Following the World Wars, visiting farms regained popularity in the northeast and mid-Atlantic states and spread to southern, midwestern, and western states throughout the late 20th century (Veeck et al., 2006).

Though visiting farms has been cataloged around the world for quite some time, a universal meaning for agritourism has not emerged. The literature holds a myriad of different definitions of "agritourism" (Chase et al., 2018; Nickerson et al., 2001; Philip et al., 2010; Tew

& Barbieri; 2012,). Busby and Rendle (2000) identified 13 different descriptions of agritourism throughout the literature, ten of those definitions including the phrase “working farm”. Later studies of agritourism trends included other agricultural sites such as ranches (Che et al., 2005), nurseries (Tew & Barbieri, 2012), and farmers’ markets (Wicks & Merrett, 2003; Wilson et al., 2006). A host of reasons contribute to the ambiguous nature of the agritourism industry. First, agritourism encompasses a wide range of activities hosted on farms (and non-farm agricultural settings). Arroyo et al. (2013) found the types of activities offered, the physical setting, and the authenticity of the experience affected the extent that consumers, farmers, and extension professionals believed an activity to be “agritourism”. Second, the lack of data collection contributes to the knowledge gap surrounding agritourism. The United States Department of Agriculture’s Census of Agriculture (COA) began collecting “recreational services” data in 2002, listing “hunting, fishing, etc.” as examples. The following COA in 2007 expanded the term to “agri-tourism and recreational services” and extended examples to “farm or winery tours, hay rides, hunting, fishing, etc.” (Chase et al., 2018). However, the COA only records counts of farms and reports of income. Third, the lack of interest in providing data regarding tourism on farms contributes to the difficulty quantifying the size and scope of the industry (Busby & Rendle, 2000). Pennings et al. (2002) noted that time constraints particularly during the late spring, summer, and early fall months (May-October) prevented agricultural producers from completing research questionnaires. Thoughtful and efficient research design are critical for learning more about the industry and moving toward a more unified definition of agritourism.

Though agritourism has proven difficult to encapsulate in a single definition, the benefits of agritourism to agricultural producers, visitors, and communities are well-documented. Agritourism can increase farm profitability and provide a means for maximizing farm resources

(Barbieri, 2009; McGehee & Kim, 2004; Nickerson et al., 2001). Hosting visitors may or may not coincide with agricultural production; therefore, agritourism gives producers the opportunity to "extend" their seasons allowing for income generation beyond typical production months (Barbieri et al., 2008). For visitors, agritourism can offer not only entertainment but educational experiences with agriculture (McGehee & Kim, 2004; Tew & Barbieri, 2012). Direct sales of produce and other farm products gives visitors access to fresh, local food and creates farm-to-table links within communities (Veeck et al., 2006). For communities, especially rural areas, hosting visitors on farms provides jobs which may decrease "rural drain", the mass migration out of rural areas by younger generations (Barbieri, 2009; Nickerson et al., 2001). In addition to employment, agritourism helps support local economies by generating state and local tax revenue (Nickerson et al., 2001). Urban and suburban areas also benefit from agritourism. Farms and ranches within range of metropolitan areas provide an interface to agriculture that is all but lost to the effects of urban expansion. The ability to visit a well-developed agritourism farm, even for a short while, can stimulate interest in the preservation of "the social, environmental, and cultural benefits of farms" (Schilling et al., 2012, p. 211).

Motives and for starting agritourism operations have been recorded in parts of North America and Europe. The literature largely identifies economic reasons as the primary motivation for agritourism (Barbieri, 2009; Busby & Rendle, 2000; Di Domenico & Miller, 2012; Nickerson et al., 2001; Sharpley & Vass, 2006; Tew & Barbieri, 2012) followed by social reasons, including building relationships in the community (Frater, 1983; Nickerson et al., 2001) and educating consumers about agriculture (McGehee & Kim, 2004; Tew & Barbieri, 2012). Motivations can differ depending on the size of the farm (McGehee & Kim, 2004) and length of farm ownership (Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007). Understanding the motivation for entering the

agritourism industry is important for crafting specific, relevant education resources for agritourism operators.

The Cooperative Extension Service serves as the bridge between innovative land-grant university research and the public. Cooperative Extension is one of the most prominent nationwide education networks with a presence in all 3,006 counties in the United States. The heritage of Cooperative Extension is rooted in agricultural improvements. Since its official inception in 1914, Cooperative Extension has expanded to include expertise not only in agriculture, but family and consumer sciences, youth development, community leadership, workforce preparation, and disaster relief. Promoting diversification within agriculture (i.e., agritourism) through education and technical support certainly falls within the wheelhouse of Cooperative Extension (Akin et al., 2015; Honadle, 1990; Tweeten et al., 2008). Extension programming relies heavy on community needs assessments to create impactful programming that addresses the specific challenges and strengths of the community and/or state (Decker et al., 1989). A number of Cooperative Extension Services across the nation offer agritourism curricula, workshops, and multimedia resources, and designated personnel to support their respective agritourism industries. In 2019-2020, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) developed a web-based introductory agritourism module to be included in the Alabama Farming Basics online curriculum. No prior research has addressed the Alabama agritourism industry; therefore, gaining a better understanding of Alabama agritourism is critical for creating relevant education resources for current and potential agritourism operators.

Statement of the Problem

Information regarding agritourism in Alabama is currently limited to the data collected by the Census of Agriculture in 2002, 2007, 2012, and 2017. The data available reveals an ebb and

flow trend of the agritourism industry in the state. Agritourism data was first collected in Alabama in 2002 with 839 farms grossing a total of $5.2 million. In 2007, the number of farms with agritourism operations dropped to 591 but income increased to $7.1 million (National Agricultural Statistics Service [NASS], 2009). The number of farms participating in agritourism and agritourism-generated income increased in 2012 totaling 787 farms and $9.6 million (NASS, 2014). The most recent Census of Agriculture data collected in 2017 revealed a sharp decrease in agritourism operations and income, falling to 481 farms generating $6.7 million (NASS, 2019a). While this data provides a surface-level insight into the agritourism industry in Alabama, these numbers do not specify types of agritourism (winery, U-Pick, pumpkin patch, etc.), longevity of agritourism operations, regional concentration of agritourism, or personal characteristics of agritourism operators, nor does the data provide information regarding motivations for farmers to enter (or leave) the agritourism space.

Currently, university research and extension professionals do not have a clear concept of factors driving the Alabama agritourism industry or educational gaps in agritourism operator knowledge and skill sets. Specific information regarding Alabama agritourism other than number of operations and generated income does not exist in the literature. Diversifying farms into agritourism operations requires distinct skill sets including hospitality, market analysis, and targeted advertising in addition to agricultural production expertise (Busby & Rendle, 2000; Phelan & Sharpley, 2010; Wicks & Merrett, 2003). The fluctuating number of agritourism operations and income in Alabama may reflect a lack of knowledge around how to successfully launch an agritourism venture that is built for long-term sustainability. Gaining insight of why Alabama farmers choose to diversify their properties with agritourism provides a foundation for creating relevant, impactful programming.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical models used to frame this study included the expectancy-value model (Atkinson, 1957, 1964; Eccles et al., 1983), expectancy-value-cost theory (Barron & Hulleman, 2015), and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997).

Eccles et al. (1998) identified two basic questions that capture the essence of expectancy and value. "Can I do this?" reflects an individual's level of expectancy, and "Do I want to do this?" considers an individual's value of participating in a given task. Early expectancy-value models demonstrated motivation first as a summative (Atkinson & Reitman, 1956) then as a multiplicative (Atkinson, 1957, 1964) result of motive, expectancy, and incentive, both positive incentive for success and negative incentive for failure. Eccles et al. (1983) shifted the focus of the model from motivation itself to cognition of motivation; the updated model was founded in the assumption that individuals' *interpretation* of reality, rather than reality itself, determines expectancies, values, and behaviors. The model posited that expectancy is influenced by self-concept of ability and subjective estimates of difficulty. Value was described as the amalgam of enjoyment of the task, importance of successful task completion, and relevance to future goals. Important mediators of value included gender roles, past experiences, and cost in terms of effort, loss of other valuable assets, and price of failure (Eccles et al., 1983). Interest in the 'cost' element increased throughout the early 21st century (Flake et al., 2015), and eventually resulted in the expectancy-value-cost model (Barron & Hulleman, 2015). This model promoted cost from a mediator of value to a major factor of motivation with the potential to combine and interact with both value and expectancy (Barron & Hulleman, 2015).

Both the Eccles et al. (1983) expectancy-value model and Bandura's self-efficacy theory focus on individuals' perceived abilities to complete a task. Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy

as “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (p. 391). Bandura’s theory asserted that behavior change was directly influenced by experience. Four levels of experience including psychological and emotional states, social persuasion, vicarious experiences, and mastery experiences help construct a foundation for an individual’s perceived ability to complete a task (Bandura, 1986). Bandura theorized that individuals with higher self-efficacy were more likely to persist in a given task than individuals with lower self-efficacy in the same task (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). Understanding Alabama agritourism operators’ self-perceptions of tasks associated with agritourism (e.g., human resources management, business planning, marketing) will direct educational efforts for both current and potential agritourism entrepreneurs.

Purpose and Objectives

Because little information is available regarding the Alabama agritourism industry, this descriptive study will seek to capture a snapshot of the current state of agritourism in Alabama. This study will describe (a) personal characteristics of Alabama agritourism operators, (b) agritourism activities offered by Alabama farmers, (c) the motivations of Alabama farmers to diversify their properties with agritourism, (d) the value of agritourism, (e) the most resource-intensive activities associated with agritourism, and (f) the self-efficacy of operators regarding common agritourism tasks. Identifying opportunities and challenges within the Alabama agritourism industry will provide valuable insight of how to work alongside current agritourism operators to create a stronger statewide industry. The following research objectives will guide this study:

1. Describe initial motivating factors for Alabama farmers to diversify with agritourism.
2. Describe motivating factors for Alabama farmers to continue their agritourism ventures.

3. Describe most resource-intense activities for Alabama agritourism operators in terms of time, money, and labor.
4. Describe the level of confidence of Alabama agritourism operators to perform tasks related to running an agritourism operation.
5. Identify terms current Alabama agritourism operators associate with the agritourism industry.
6. Describe specific agritourism activities offered by Alabama farmers.
7. Describe agritourism characteristics of Alabama farms; (a) length of years offering agritourism activities, (b) percentage of farm income from agritourism activities, (c) percentage of farmed land dedicated to agritourism, (d) seasons that the farm is open to visitors, and (e) busiest season(s) of the agritourism operation.
8. Describe farm characteristics; (a) state region, (b) farm acres owned and leased, and (c) length of farm ownership.
9. Describe study participant characteristics of Alabama agritourism operators.

Significance of the Study

The fluctuating number of Alabama agritourism operators suggest interest in the industry, but educational and technical support for both launching and sustaining agritourism operations is limited. Prior to this study, no research had been conducted in Alabama to assess the perceived and manifested benefits and challenges of agritourism or technical support needs of current agritourism operators. The findings of this study may be helpful to local tourism and ACES professionals for developing resources to aid current and hopeful agritourism entrepreneurs.

Limitations

Because financial and time resources are finite, every research study possesses limitations. A host of factors may limit any study. The following factors have been identified as limitations specific to this study:

1. Data will only be collected in the State of Alabama; findings may not be directly applicable to other states. However, the methods and the instrument for this study could be used for a similar study in a different region.
2. The agritourism roster used to recruit the study population may not include every possible individual or that hosts agritourism activities. The agritourism roster is maintained by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and includes the names and contact information of agritourism locations in each county of the state. The data for the roster is provided by County Extension Coordinators and Regional Extension Agents.
3. The questionnaire used for data collection is web-based, and certain participants may experience internet connectivity issues that affect their ability to respond.
4. Non-response error may lead to biased results and analysis. Non-response error, or incomplete questionnaire responses, are a concern for most any voluntary survey. This limitation was mitigated by providing rationale for study participation, ample time to participate, and five points of contact as recommended by Dillman et al. (2014).
5. The questionnaire was distributed during late summer. Questionnaire and item non-response may be correlated to the demanding time of year for the survey population.

Assumptions

Leedy and Ormrod (2010) refer to assumptions of research as "self-evident truths" (p. 5). Without assumptions, research loses its meaning. The following assumptions were made for this study:

1. All respondents to the questionnaire answered each item truthfully and thoroughly. This assumption was addressed by providing clear instructions throughout the questionnaire.
2. All study participants to the questionnaire operate agritourism businesses in the state of Alabama. This assumption was addressed by recruiting study participants from the agritourism roster maintained by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

Definition of Terms

Agritourism – while multiple definitions of agritourism exist, for the purposes of this research, agritourism will be defined as an entrepreneurial operation that connects tourism with agricultural settings with the purpose of attracting visitors to farms, ranches, and other agricultural businesses to generate revenue for the farm, ranch, or agricultural business owner (National Agricultural Law Center, n.d.).

Farm Diversification – the reassignment of resources, including, but not limited to labor, land, capital, and infrastructure, into novel activities as a means of minimizing risk (Slocum & Curtis, 2018).

Motivation – general desire to perform some type of action (Slocum & Curtis, 2018).

Rural tourism – the temporary migration of people to rural destinations, the activities engaged in during their stay, and the facilities hosting these guests and activities (Slocum & Curtis, 2018).

Summary

Hosting visitors has been a diversification strategy for farmers and ranchers for decades. The emergence of a specific term for this phenomenon, “agritourism”, suggests that this diversification strategy is gaining wider recognition among agricultural producers and members of the public. The literature holds a spectrum of definitions for agritourism, and agritourism

activities can be incredibly diverse from one farm to another. Agritourism can provide a host of benefits to the host farm, visitors, and the greater community. Other than Census of Agriculture data, the Alabama agritourism industry has not been studied. Census data reveals an ebb and flow trend of agritourism operations in the state. Understanding why agricultural producers enter the agritourism space, the value they derive from hosting visitors, and the major costs of their agritourism businesses will be important for developing resources for current and potential agritourism operators.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of relevant, published research that has served as foundational material for the study.

A Brief History of Agritourism

Though "agritourism" may seem like a new buzzword and recent trend, the concept of traveling to visit farms and enjoying aspects of agrarian life has existed for centuries. The Native Americans of the United States took part in perhaps the earliest form of agritourism, traveling extensively to take part in feasts and ceremonies with other tribes at planting and harvest times (Chase & Grubinger, 2014). Across the European continent, travelers have been visiting and vacationing at farms even before the 1800s (McKelvie, 2004). During the surge of industrialization in United States in the late 19th century, urban families would escape the bustle of city life by vacationing on farms and ranches. On the western side of the country, dude ranches beckoned wealthy Easterners and Europeans with adventures of hunting and exploring nature (Chase & Grubinger, 2014).

Several European governments began actively taken part in supporting the farm tourism industry during the mid-20th century (McKelvie, 2004). In France, the Ministry of Agriculture introduced the *gites rureaux prives* in 1954 to provide financial assistance to farmers who desired to convert farmhouses and other buildings into tourist accommodations. The Danish Tourist Board cultivated interest in both farmers and travelers for "farm holidays", and farmers welcomed the idea of supplemental income. Farm tourism in Italy, referred to as 'agritourismo', appeared in the 1960s and has received government support through financial assistance, taxation laws, marketing, and coordination since the industry's inception (Frater, 1983). The

success of government support is reflected in the growth of the European farm tourism industries of Austria, England, Germany, and France. By the 1990s, all four countries had more than 20,000 operating farm accommodations each (Weaver & Fennell, 1997). Agritourism is still widely present throughout the European continent (Chase et al., 2018).

With no centralized support, the United States lagged behind European trends with only two thousand operations nationwide in 1969 (Weaver & Fennell, 1997); however, visiting farms regained popularity in the northeast and mid-Atlantic states around the 1970s and spread to southern, midwestern, and western states throughout the next decade (Veeck et al., 2006). Data related to agritourism was not collected by the Census of Agriculture until 2002. The Census referred to agritourism as "recreational services" and listed "hunting, fishing, etc." as examples. Both the 2007 and 2012 Censuses of Agriculture expanded the term to "agri-tourism and recreational services" and extended examples to "farm or winery tours, hay rides, hunting, fishing, etc." (Chase et al., 2018). The 2017 Census of Agriculture no longer included wineries in the "agri-tourism and recreational services" category. Even without winery revenue, agritourism income more than tripled from 2002 to 2017 (Whitt et al., 2019). Increased interest in local foods and visiting farms for education and recreation purposes does not appear to be waning (Savage et al., 2020).

Farm Diversification

Fluctuating commodity prices and asset values, natural disasters, and other unforeseen events make agriculture a fairly risky business, and farm owners often choose to seek out ways to mitigate these types of risk. Farmers and ranchers have been adapting and incorporating new business pursuits into their agricultural operations for decades (Carter, 2001; Ilbery, 1991). A term for this strategy did not widely appear in the literature until the late 1980s (Bowler et al.,

1996). “Farm diversification” (Ilbery, 1988) and “alternative farm enterprise” (Bowler et al., 1996) were both used to describe the reassignment of farm resources into new agricultural or non-agricultural ventures (Ilbery, 1991). The broadness of this early definition resulted in wide variation on the topic throughout the literature (Daskalopoulou & Petrou, 2002). Further works added stronger parameters to the definition, restricting the term to only on-farm developments (Barbieri et al., 2008) and ventures that increased farm value through increasing income, reducing risks, using available resources, or marketing farm goods (Barbieri & Mahoney, 2009). Barbieri et al. (2008) described eight types of diversification strategies on farms, including

> 1) Non-traditional crops, livestock, and practices; 2) New marketing and distribution; 3) Recreation, tourism, and hospitality; 4) Historic preservation and adaptive re-use; 5) Leases, easements, and time-shares; 6) Contracts and services; 7) Expertise, consulting, and education; and 8) Value added [products]. (p. 217)

Reasons for diversification can be complex and may include a combination of economic, market-based, and quality of life goals (Barbieri, 2009; Barbieri, 2010).

Defining Agritourism

In the same trend of “farm diversification”, the literature holds multiple different definitions of “agritourism” (Chase et al., 2018; Nickerson et al., 2001; Philip et al., 2010; Tew & Barbieri; 2012). Busby and Rendle (2000) suggest a singular meaning has not arisen been identified due to the range of activities hosted on farms, lack of data collection, lack of interest in providing data regarding tourism on farms, and difficulty quantifying the size and scope of the industry. Three themes (Arroyo et al., 2013) including the physical setting, the authenticity of the setting or experience, and the types of activities directly vary the definitions found in the literature. “Working farm” is the factor most often associated with agritourism throughout the

literature (Philip et al., 2010). However, some studies include other agricultural sites such as ranches (Che et al., 2005), nurseries (Tew & Barbieri, 2012), and farmers' markets (Wicks & Merrett, 2003; Wilson et al., 2006).

Researchers have developed typologies for agritourism operations in hopes of creating a more unified definition. Philip et al. (2010) categorized agritourism activities as direct (e.g., milking a cow), indirect (e.g., a corn maze), and passive (e.g., wedding venue in a barn). The researchers further classified agritourism operations into five different categories including 1) non-working farm, 2) working farm-passive, 3) working farm-indirect contact, 4) working farm-direct contact-staged, and 5) working farm-direct contact-authentic. Non-working farm agritourism takes places on a farm or ranch that is no longer used for production purposes, such as a previously used farmhouse used as a wedding venue. Working farm-passive contact agritourism describes tourist activities that are hosted on an active farm but do not involve interaction with agricultural production, such as a farmhouse stay. A farm-to-table dinner is an example of working farm-indirect contact agritourism as visitors are only peripherally involved with farm products while onsite. Working farm-direct contact-staged agritourism includes farming demonstrations and tours that allow visitors to observe common agricultural practices without the opportunity to take part in the activity. Working farm-direct contact-authentic agritourism describes experiences that allow visitors to take part production activities such as milking a cow in a barn or harvesting in a field. Despite these detailed descriptions, obscurity surrounding the term "agritourism" still exists. A survey of residents, farmers, and Extension faculty in Missouri and North Carolina accepted only three of the typologies (working farm-indirect contact, working farm-direct contact-staged, and working farm-direct contact-authentic) defined by Philip et al. (2010) as true agritourism (Arroyo et al., 2013).

In attempt to provide more clarity, further research combined visitor level of involvement with specific agritourism activities. Chase et al. (2018) presented a conceptual framework that incorporated tiers of activities (core and peripheral) within five categories of agritourism. The five categories of agritourism included direct sales, education, entertainment, hospitality, and outdoor recreation. Core activities are largely recognized as agritourism whereas peripheral activities are more debatable. Examples of both types of activities were provided for each of the five categories:

Core activities of 'direct sales' included U-Pick fruit and vegetable operations, U-Cut tree farms, and on-site farmstands. Off-site farmers' markets were considered a peripheral activity.

'Education' activities including on-farm classes, tours, and tastings were considered as core activities while agricultural fairs and museums were categorized as peripheral.

Core 'hospitality' activities included farm stays and on-site farm-to-table dinners. On-farm outfitter services were considered a peripheral hospitality activity.

Horseback riding, craft classes, and property tours were considered core 'outdoor recreation' activities, while peripheral activities included hiking, art, nature photography, wildlife observation, fishing, and hunting.

'Entertainment' core activities included on-farm festivals, corn mazes, and hayrides, whereas weddings and concerts on farms were considered peripheral.

Why is a unified definition for agritourism helpful, or even necessary? Academically, an agreed-upon meaning of agritourism promotes more uniform study of the phenomenon across places and time (Philip et al., 2010). In a more grassroots sense, a more unified definition of agritourism creates understanding among community stakeholders and my lead to increased adoption by farmers and other agricultural entrepreneurs (Gil Arroyo et al., 2011). Secondly,

lacking a universal definition convolutes the creation of helpful policies and assistance programs that can increase awareness and participation in agritourism activities for both farmers and visitors (Colton & Bissix, 2005). Finally, a clear definition of agritourism activities is important for building marketing strategies for connecting agritourism destinations with local and out-of-town clientele (Veeck et al., 2006).

Benefits of Agritourism

Though agritourism has proven difficult to capture in a single definition, the benefits of agritourism to farmers and ranchers are well-documented. Agritourism can help meet economic goals including increasing farm revenue and fully utilizing farm resources (Barbieri & Mahoney, 2009; McGehee & Kim, 2004; Nickerson et al., 2001). Agritourism provides an alternative stream of income to traditional agricultural production and can essentially extend the farms' season of productivity and capital-earning (Barbieri et al., 2008). In addition to financial goals, agritourism provides a means for achieving important intrinsic goals of farmers and ranchers (Barbieri, 2010). Retaining the family farm, creating employment for family members, and maintaining a rural lifestyle have been cited as benefits of choosing to start an agritourism venture (Barbieri, 2009; Nickerson et al., 2001; Veeck et al., 2006).

Agritourism attractions can provide benefits to communities beyond the farm (Barbieri, 2010). Tourism provides an alternative industry to rural economies that often utilizes already existing space in the community (Reeder & Brown, 2005). Building tourism around local farms and agricultural landmarks is often far less expensive than developing novel industry, such as manufacturing, and often requires significantly less investment from members outside the community (Akin et al., 2015). Hosting visitors on farms provides jobs to rural communities, which may decrease "rural drain" by younger generations (Barbieri, 2009; Nickerson et al.,

2001). In addition to employment, agritourism helps support local economies by generating state and local tax revenue (Nickerson et al., 2001) and often stimulates other local businesses. Direct sales of produce and products on farms creates farm-to-table links within communities and connects consumers with fresh produce (Veeck et al., 2006). Inviting visitors to "taste and see" provides a prime space for educating the public about agriculture and rural life. Agritourism often promotes rural crafts, customs, and lifestyles to an increasingly metropolitan public (Ollenberg & Buckley, 2007). Hosting visitors in agricultural arenas allows farmers and ranchers to informally educate the public which may have little to no interaction with agriculture otherwise (McGehee & Kim, 2004; Tew & Barbieri, 2012).

Costs of Agritourism

Like other industries, tourism development can both benefit and cost communities. Visitors have multiple types of impact in communities, including, but not limited to, economic, cultural, and environmental. As agritourism enterprises are largely seasonal, these businesses may not provide income year-round or in times of economic distress (Akin et al., 2015). Tourism in general is subject to the desires, perceptions, and fears of travelers; common agricultural practices such as pesticide use may influence the decision to visit a farm (Honadle, 1990). While economic impact is fairly straightforward to measure, cultural and environmental changes as a result of tourism are often overlooked (Kline et al., 2007). Cultural landmarks such as historic and scenic sites in rural communities can become overcrowded or threatened by increased traffic. Rapid rural growth can result in increased housing costs, an influx of corporate commercial development that can override small local businesses, and a loss of "sense of place" for rural residents. Environmental issues such as erosion or even exploitation of natural resources and increased water and air pollution may also manifest as a result of tourism (Reeder & Brown,

2005). A survey of agritourism operations in North Carolina revealed low to moderate impacts in vegetation loss, soil compaction, and soil erosion due to visitors, and effects were most commonly seen in areas such as walking trails, parking lots, and animal enclosures (Kline et al., 2007).

Motivation for Diversification with Agritourism

Motivations to diversify farms with agritourism have been identified in both North America and Europe. Economic reasons are the most commonly cited motivation for starting an agritourism enterprise (Barbieri, 2009; Busby & Rendle, 2000; Di Domenico & Miller, 2012; Nickerson et al., 2001; Sharpley & Vass, 2006; Tew & Barbieri, 2012). Increasing income (Barbieri & Mahoney, 2009, Bowler et al., 1996; Nickerson et al., 2001) and off-setting losses during years of lower production (Barbieri, 2010) are specific drivers for farmers and ranchers to diversify with tourism. Utilizing resources and increasing land productivity also motivates farmers and ranchers to delve into agritourism. A farmer in North Dakota noted, "You want to maximize your return per acre. If you have some pretty stuff, with trees and whatnot, it's hard to farm it, so what can you do to maximize the return on that per acre" (Schroeder, 2004, Diversify Productivity section, para. 2).

Social reasons are another significant reason for diversification with agritourism. Agritourism provides an excellent outlet for a farmer or rancher to commoditize an interest or hobby they enjoy themselves (e.g., hiking, fishing, hunting, bird-watching) (Schroeder, 2004). A number of studies capture the value agritourism operators find in building relationships in the community (Frater, 1983; Nickerson et al., 2001; Schroeder, 2004). Farmers and ranchers may choose to use their farms to promote agricultural literacy and educate consumers about agriculture (McGehee & Kim, 2004; Tew & Barbieri, 2012). Agritourism entrepreneurs are more

likely to be motivated by educating and interacting with customers than other types of farm diversification entrepreneurs (Barbieri, 2010). Operators find positive interactions with visitors rewarding, especially in rural areas that can be socially isolated (Schroeder, 2004). Farmer and rancher desire to diversify with agritourism is often multi-faceted and can vary widely (Schroeder, 2004). Motivations can differ depending on the size of the farm (McGehee & Kim, 2004) and length of farm ownership (Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007).

Economic Impact of Agritourism

The 2002 Census of Agriculture marked the first data collection of the economic impact of agritourism in the United States. Revenue generated from agritourism has increased steadily with each Census of Agriculture, tripling from 2002 to the latest report in 2017. More than 28,000 farms throughout the country offer some type of tourism activity (NASS, 2019b). Though agritourism only makes up about 5% of total U.S. farm income, hosting visitors on farms generates $950 million for farmers and ranchers throughout the country (Whitt et al., 2019).

While agritourism has seen a steady increase nationwide, Alabama trends are more sporadic. In 2002, the Census of Agriculture reported 839 Alabama farms hosting agritourism grossing a total of $5.2 million. Five years later, the number of farms with agritourism operations dropped to 591 but income increased to $7.1 million (NASS, 2009). Both the number of farms participating in agritourism and agritourism-generated income increased in 2012 totaling 787 farms and $9.6 million (NASS, 2014). The most recent Census of Agriculture data collected in 2017 revealed a sharp decrease in agritourism operations and income, falling to 481 farms generating $6.7 million (NASS, 2019a).

The Cooperative Extension Service

In 1857, pre-Civil War tensions were rising in the United States. Representative Justin Morrill introduced a bill to establish colleges to support innovations of agricultural and mechanical nature, sparking wide controversy among Congress members. States were to receive either 30,000 acres of public land or scripts to the same area of public land (for smaller, more densely populated states) per member of Congress for each state's "land-grant" university. A number of Southern legislators hailed that nationally-funded education was unconstitutional, a sentiment echoed by President Buchanan when he vetoed the legislation in 1859. The bill was reintroduced in 1862 to a new Congress that no longer included most Southern states due to secession, and the Morrill Act was confirmed by President Lincoln's signature later that year (Herren & Hillison, 1996). Jim Crow legislation passed throughout the 1880s denied Black Americans access to voting and outlawed education with Whites, inadvertently undermining the land-grant system. In 1890, a second Morrill Act was signed providing additional funding to land-grant universities which included an option to provide for the creation of "separate but equal" colleges for Black students (Comer et al., 2006).

Despite the massive breakthroughs in technology as a part of the industrial revolution on the late 1800s, the United States population remained largely rural and agrarian at the turn of the 20th century. Leaders in the agricultural community including George Washington Carver and Seaman Knapp laid a foundation for evidence-based, demonstrative outreach and connecting the public with land-grant university research (Gould et al., 2014). In 1909, the Country Life Commission released a report identifying areas of needed improvement in rural communities, including agricultural, economic, and social interests. The influence of scientific leaders and the findings in this report were undoubtedly connected to the passage of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, establishing a Cooperative Extension System as a part of each land-grant university

(Beaulieu & Cordes, 2014). Extension grew to accommodate the needs of a growing population that saw two World Wars and the Great Depression, incorporating programs including agricultural improvements, marketing, youth development, community beautification, nutrition, public health, and emergency relief (Gould et al., 2014).

Today, Cooperative Extension promotes economic sustainability, community engagement, and sound local decision-making through a range of programs (Beaulieu & Cordes, 2014). Extension still maintains strong support for agriculture and rural communities, providing farmers and ranchers with access to land-grant university research ranging from traditional commodities to organic niche crops and integrated pest management practices. In addition to rural residents, contemporary Extension education and outreach efforts also target individuals in urban and suburban settings (Gould et al., 2014). Working collaboratively with its federal partner, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, as well as state agencies, Cooperative Extension seeks to improve the lives of all Americans by improving scientific literacy, applying evidence-based research to solve problems, preparing young people for success in adulthood, and providing emergency response during times of crisis (National Institute of Food and Agriculture, n.d.).

Cooperative Extension and Agritourism

Cooperative Extension programming has long served as the link between innovative land-grant university research and the public (Gould et al., 2014). Extension education in family and consumer sciences, food safety, and financial literacy has been a support for small business entrepreneurs for decades (Muske & Stanforth, 2000). Because many extension programs target agriculture-based enterprises and clients (Gould et al., 2014), providing assistance for farm diversification is no exception (Akin et al., 2015).

Cooperative Extension programs across the United States have supported tourism efforts on farms through research and education since the late 1990s as agritourism gained momentum throughout the country (Honadle, 1990; Tweeten et al., 2008). The interdisciplinary nature of Extension programming including agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, and community development complements the myriad of skills required to build rural tourism and agritourism (Honadle, 1990). Extension professionals are positioned in high-level leverage points to build agritourism in communities, from raising public awareness of local farms (Morais et al., 2017) to partnering with governments to design educational programs for current and future operators (Hsu & Miller, 2008).

The Impact of Rural Places

More than 46 million Americans reside in rural places (Cromartie et al., 2020). Rural areas are vitally important to the nation as a whole. The food we eat, the clothes we wear, the paper on which we write, and the energy we use are often direct products from these areas (Cromartie et al., 2020).

Rural places are often associated with quaint farm landscapes and neighborly visits, but these areas also face unique challenges. Parker et al. (2018) found that a majority of residents in rural areas (70%) feel that those who live in urban and suburban areas do not understand the problems experienced by rural residents. Substance abuse has been identified as a major issue in rural communities, especially in the wake of methamphetamine and opioid crises. Rural communities historically have faced higher levels of poverty and unemployment than urban areas. Lack of access to jobs, quality education, and healthcare facilities have caused many rural residents to vacate the areas in which they were born and raised (Parker et al., 2018). Thirty years ago, rural communities were home to a quarter of the nation's population (DeBord, 1991).

Since 2000, more than half of the rural counties in the nation have experienced population decline, particularly in agricultural-based counties (Parker et al., 2018). Today, only about 14% of the population lives in rural areas (Cromartie et al., 2020).

Though rural population has declined, rural residents cite positive factors about their communities that entice them to stay in their current location. People in rural areas are more likely to know their neighbors, more likely to be satisfied with their family lives, and demonstrate more desire to remain in their current community than urban dwellers (Parker et al., 2018). In 2018-2019, rural counties grew for the first time since 2010 with a 0.02% increase in population and 0.6% increase in employment (Cromartie et al., 2020). Americans are re-assessing the value of living outside metropolitan city limits.

Industry and employment are vital for the continuation of rural places. Rural economies often look quite different from urban economies and usually rely on fewer types of industries to sustain their tax bases (Muske & Stanforth, 2000). Leading industries in non-metropolitan counties include agriculture (391 counties), manufacturing (348 counties), recreation (229 counties), and mining (184 counties) (Economic Research Service, 2020). Small businesses including retail, tourism, hospitality, and service-related trades are also an important part of rural economies (Muske & Stanforth, 2000). By cultivating artisans and niche markets in rural communities, the unique culture of these places can be preserved and celebrated. Meeting the needs of rural areas is critical to sustaining the value these places provide to the nation as a whole. The Rural Development branch of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides a variety of programs to financially assist with rural housing, utilities, and business-cooperatives (USDA Rural Development, n.d.). Rural development initiatives offer economic

and educational support to increase business and vitality in rural places. Agritourism may be a strategy to help bolster rural economies.

Summary

Hosting visitors is a strategy used by farmers and ranchers around the world to diversify their agricultural production businesses. Though agritourism may seem to be a recent trend, tourism on farms has been taking place for over a century in parts of the world. The wide variety of activities hosted on farms and ranches has made agritourism hard to capture in a single definition. Typologies and categories of agritourism may help promote a more unified understanding that can aid researchers and extension professionals in the study of this emerging industry. Agritourism has a host of potential economic and social benefits for farmers and ranchers, visitors, and the surrounding communities. Similar to other industries, agritourism also brings along certain costs, most often associated with the environment and community culture. Maintaining partnerships with organizations that can provide educational and technical resources, such as Cooperative Extension, are important for minimizing costs and maximizing success.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to describe the current state of the Alabama agritourism industry in terms of the motivations of Alabama farmers and ranchers to diversify their properties with agritourism, the continued value of agritourism, the most resource-intensive activities associated with agritourism, the self-efficacy of operators regarding common agritourism tasks, terms current agritourism operators associate with the agritourism industry, agritourism activities offered by Alabama farmers and ranchers, and personal characteristics of Alabama agritourism operators.

The following research objectives guided this study:

1. Describe initial motivating factors for Alabama farmers to diversify with agritourism.
2. Describe motivating factors for Alabama farmers to continue their agritourism ventures.
3. Describe most resource-intense activities for Alabama agritourism operators in terms of time, money, and labor.
4. Describe the level of confidence of Alabama agritourism operators to perform tasks related to running an agritourism operation.
5. Identify terms current Alabama agritourism operators associate with the agritourism industry.
6. Describe specific agritourism activities offered by Alabama farmers.
7. Describe agritourism characteristics of Alabama farms; (a) length of years offering agritourism activities, (b) percentage of farm income from agritourism activities, (c) percentage of farmed land dedicated to agritourism, (d) seasons that the farm is open to visitors, and (e) busiest season(s) of the agritourism operation.

8. Describe farm characteristics; (a) state region, (b) farm acres owned and leased, and (c) length of farm ownership.
9. Describe study participant characteristics of Alabama agritourism operators.

Research Approach and Design

Descriptive quantitative research design was used for this study. This research methodology is characterized by the positivistic approach that only observable and measurable claims about the world have meaning (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Quantitative research "involves either identifying the characteristics of an observed phenomenon or exploring possible correlations among two or more phenomena" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 182). This research methodology encompassed descriptive, correlational, and experimental studies. The type of study selected hinges on the ultimate purpose of the research. Quantitative research objectives most commonly include assessing, describing, and predicting behavior through an objective lens (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). This study described characteristics of Alabama agritourism operators; therefore, the research objectives of this study dictated a non-experimental descriptive quantitative research design.

Data was collected using a six-part online questionnaire. The first section of the questionnaire collected data about words that study participants associate with definitions of agritourism. The second section of the questionnaire collected data regarding participant self-perceived abilities of common agritourism tasks. The third section of the questionnaire collected data on the current agritourism activities offered by participants. The fourth section of the questionnaire collected data on the value of agritourism to participants. The fifth section of the questionnaire collected data on costs associated with agritourism in terms of time, capital, and

labor. The sixth section of the questionnaire collected data regarding personal characteristics of study participants.

Population and Sample

The population for this study included all agritourism operators in the state of Alabama (N = 128). Multiple ways to define the population size of this group exist. The 2017 National Agricultural Statistics Service Census of Agriculture registered 481 farms with agritourism and recreational services (N = 481). An updated roster of agritourism operations compiled by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) registered only 128 operations (not including farmers' markets or restaurants) (N = 128). Several factors may have contributed to this discrepancy in population size. First, the lack of a widely agreed-upon definition for agritourism may have obscured the true population size. Second, the data cataloged in the Census of Agriculture was self-reported by agritourism operators. The ACES roster was compiled from network of regional extension agents and county extension operators who reported agritourism operations of which they had knowledge within their county or region. Therefore, the ACES roster population may not be as complete as the population gathered from the Census of Agriculture.

Information accessibility differed between the Census of Agriculture and the ACES agritourism roster. The National Agricultural Statistics Service reports aggregate data. The privacy of individuals who participate in the Census of Agriculture is protected by law (National Agriculture Statistics Service, 2021). No contact information was available for this population. The ACES roster included names and contact information for each agritourism operation, and express permission was provided to gain access to this list (IRB Exempt Protocol #21-260 EX

2106). Because contact information was not available for the Census of Agriculture population (N = 481), the ACES roster was used as the population for this study (N = 128).

Prior to this study, information regarding agritourism in the state of Alabama was limited to farm count and income data collected by the Census of Agriculture. Because of the lack of baseline information about the industry, a census descriptive study was deemed more appropriate than a representative sample. Johnson and Christensen (2004) specified that in census research, "the whole population is studied, not just a sample, or subset, of the population" (p. 198).

Agritourism operators from the ACES roster were contacted by phone and/or email depending on available contact information to provide information about the study and to recruit study participation. One half of the population (n = 64) was initially contacted by phone and one half was initially contact by email (n = 64). For phone contacts, if the agritourism operator provided consent to participate in the study, an email was sent to the agritourism operator that included a link to questionnaire and the information letter for the study. For email contacts, an initial invitation was sent to the agritourism operator's email address that included the link to the questionnaire and the information letter for the study. To maximize response rate for both phone and email contacts, five points of contact were made as recommended by Dillman et al. (2014). Reminder emails were sent to phone contacts at 6-, 14-, 28-, and 34-day intervals. Reminder emails were sent to email contacts at 3-, 9-, 28-, and 34-day intervals.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

This study collected data via a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire was built in Qualtrics following the tailored design method (Dillman et al., 2014). Data was collected over 35 days from August 10-September 14, 2021. The questionnaire took approximately ten minutes to

complete. Because the questionnaire was web-based, data was gathered instantly from participant responses and stored in Qualtrics.

The first section of the questionnaire collected data about words that study participants associate with definitions of agritourism. Participants were provided terms associated with agritourism and asked to rate their association of the term with agritourism on a four-point interval scale. The four-point interval scale included 1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *somewhat agree*, 3 = *somewhat disagree*, and 4 = *strongly disagree*. The following values were used to interpret the scale: *strongly agree* = 1.00-1.50, *somewhat agree* = 1.50-2.50, *somewhat disagree* = 2.50-3.50, and *strongly disagree* = 3.50-4.00. The four-point interval scale and the scale's interpretation were the same throughout the study. The second section of the questionnaire collected data regarding participant self-perceived abilities of common agritourism tasks. Participants were provided tasks commonly associated with agritourism and asked to rate their confidence in successfully completing the tasks on a four-point interval scale. The third section of the questionnaire collected data on the current agritourism activities offered by participants. Participants were provided checklists of activities for five categories of agritourism defined by Chase et al. (2018). Participants were asked to indicate all activities offered at their respective operations. The fourth section of the questionnaire collected data on the value of agritourism to participants. Participants were provided motivating factors to start and to continue their agritourism ventures and asked to rate their agreement with the motivation on a four-point interval scale. The fifth section of the questionnaire collected data on costs associated with agritourism in terms of time, capital, and labor. Participants were given a list of common costs associated with agritourism and were asked to arrange the items from most resource-intensive to

least resource-intensive. The sixth section of the questionnaire collected data regarding personal characteristics of study participants.

Measure of Validity and Reliability

Reliability is a measure of the consistency of an instrument (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Validity describes the level that an instrument measures what the researchers intend to measure (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Face validity describes the extent to which an instrument appears to measure a particular characteristic (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Content validity describes the extent to which the instrument represents the content area being measured (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Face validity and content validity of the instrument were assessed by a panel of experts composed of Auburn University faculty, Alabama Cooperative Extension System personnel, and Alabama Farmers Federation staff. This panel of experts was asked to identify confusing statements, grammar errors, leading questions, and appropriate changes to content. The panels' observations and suggestions for changes were consistently in agreement indicating strong interrater reliability. Minor changes were made to the instrument for clarity as a result of this review.

Data Analysis

Data from this study was described using descriptive statistics. SPSS Statistics was used to analyze the data. Objectives one and two were analyzed and reported using mean, standard deviation, frequencies, and percentages. Objective three was analyzed and reported using means and standard deviations. Objectives four and five were analyzed and reported using mean, standard deviation, frequencies, and percentages. Objectives six, seven, eight, and nine were analyzed and reported using frequencies and percentages.

Summary

This chapter described the methods that were used for this study including the research design, description of the population to be studied, instrumentation, measurement of validity, data collection, and data analysis. The descriptive quantitative design was deemed the most appropriate to address the study's objectives. Because this study collected baseline information and agritourism activities can vary widely, a census of the population was used rather than a sample. Study participants provided information via a six-part web-based questionnaire designed using Qualtrics. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data collected from the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Agritourism, the business of hosting visitors on a farm or ranch, is a popular diversification strategy for farmers and ranchers for a myriad of reasons. Understanding why farmers and ranchers choose to start agritourism operations is critical for building relevant educational resources and supporting a thriving industry. This descriptive study assessed multiple factors associated with the agritourism industry in Alabama. This data will be used to guide the development of educational resources for current and future agritourism operators in the state. This chapter details the findings of this study. SPSS was used to conduct data analysis. The results presented in this chapter address the research objectives that guided this study, including:

1. Describe initial motivating factors for Alabama farmers to diversify with agritourism.
2. Describe motivating factors for Alabama farmers to continue their agritourism ventures.
3. Describe most resource-intense activities for Alabama agritourism operators in terms of time, money, and labor.
4. Describe the level of confidence of Alabama agritourism operators to perform tasks related to running an agritourism operation.
5. Identify terms current Alabama agritourism operators associate with the agritourism industry.
6. Describe specific agritourism activities offered by Alabama farmers.
7. Describe agritourism characteristics of Alabama farms; (a) length of years offering agritourism activities, (b) percentage of farm income from agritourism activities, (c)

percentage of farmed land dedicated to agritourism, (d) seasons that the farm is open to visitors, and (e) busiest season(s) of the agritourism operation.

8. Describe farm characteristics; (a) state region, (b) farm acres owned and leased, and (c) length of farm ownership.
9. Describe study participant characteristics of Alabama agritourism operators.

Response Rate

The target population for this study was comprised of current agritourism operators in the State of Alabama. The list of individuals that qualified for the study was collected by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) (N = 128). Agritourism operators from the ACES roster were contacted by phone and/or email depending on available contact information to provide information about the study and to recruit study participation. One half of the population (n = 64) was initially contacted by phone and one half was initially contact by email (n = 64) depending on the contact information available. Eight individuals (n = 8) from the phone sample started the questionnaire. Thirty-one (n = 31) individuals from the email sample started the questionnaire. Combining both the phone and email samples, a total of thirty-nine individuals started the questionnaire. Twenty-three individuals completed the questionnaire (n = 23). Six individuals (n = 6) from the phone sample and seventeen individuals (n = 17) from the email completed the questionnaire. A final response rate of 18.0% (n = 23) was reached. Because the questionnaire gathered descriptive information, incomplete responses were not deleted. Findings and tables in this chapter report the total number of respondents.

Objective One: Initial Motivating Factors for Alabama Farmers to Diversify with Agritourism

The first objective was to describe initial motivating factors for Alabama farmers to diversify their agricultural production businesses with agritourism. Factors that motivated study participants to start their agritourism operation are presented in Table 1 (n = 29). "Generate more income" (M = 1.4, SD = 0.9) had the lowest mean. Approximately 75% (n = 22) of respondents strongly agreed that increasing income was an initial motivating factor to start their agritourism operation. "Benefit from tax incentives" (M = 2.9, SD = 0.9) was the highest mean. Only two respondents (n = 2, 7.1%) strongly agreed that tax incentives were an initial motivating factor for starting their agritourism business.

Table 1

Motivating Factors to Start Agritourism

	Motivating Factor		Strongly Agree		Somewhat Agree		Somewhat Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
Motivating Factor	*M*	*SD*	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
Generate more income	1.4	0.9	22	75.9	3	10.3	2	6.9	2	6.9
Maximize farm resources	1.5	0.7	17	58.6	10	34.5	1	3.4	1	3.4
[a]Build relationships in the community	1.6	0.8	14	50.0	11	39.3	2	7.1	1	3.6
[a]Educate the public about agriculture	1.7	0.8	13	46.4	11	39.3	3	10.7	1	3.6
[a]Meet a need in the tourism market	1.8	0.8	11	39.3	12	42.9	4	14.3	1	3.6
Ensure my farm stays within my family	1.9	1.0	13	44.8	6	20.7	9	31.0	1	3.4
Manage fluctuations in income	1.9	1.1	14	35.9	7	24.1	4	13.8	4	13.8
Provide employment for family	2.1	1.0	11	37.9	8	27.6	7	24.1	3	10.3
[a]Recreate the success of others in agritourism	2.1	0.9	7	25.0	12	42.9	7	25.0	2	7.1
[a]Benefit from tax incentives	2.9	0.9	2	7.1	7	25.0	12	42.9	7	25.0

Note. 1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *somewhat agree*, 3 = *somewhat disagree*, and 4 = *strongly disagree*. n = 29, [a]n = 28.

Objective Two: Describe Motivating Factors for Alabama Farmers to Continue Their Agritourism Ventures

The second objective was to describe motivating factors for Alabama farmers to continue their agritourism ventures. Factors that motivate study participants to continue their agritourism operation are presented in Table 2 (n = 28). "Generate more income" had the lowest mean (M = 1.4, SD = 0.9) and more than three-quarters of respondents (n = 22, 78.6%) indicated strong agreement with this motivating factor. "Benefit from tax incentives" had the highest mean (M = 2.8, SD = 1.0). Only three respondents (n = 3, 11.5%) strongly agreed that tax benefits were a motivating factor to continue their agritourism operations.

Table 2

Motivating Factors to Continue Agritourism

	Motivating Factor		Strongly Agree		Somewhat Agree		Somewhat Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
Motivating Factor	*M*	*SD*	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
Generate more income	1.4	0.9	22	78.6	3	10.3	1	3.6	2	6.9
Maximize farm resources	1.5	0.8	16	57.1	9	32.1	2	7.1	1	3.6
[a]Build relationships in the community	1.6	0.8	15	55.6	9	33.3	2	7.4	1	3.7
[a]Educate the public about agriculture	1.6	0.8	14	51.9	10	37.0	2	7.4	1	3.7
[a]Meet a need in the tourism market	1.8	0.8	12	44.4	10	37.0	4	14.8	1	3.7
Manage fluctuations in income	1.8	0.8	12	42.9	11	39.3	4	14.3	1	3.6
Ensure my farm stays within my family	2.0	1.0	12	42.9	5	17.9	9	32.1	2	7.1
Provide employment for family	2.1	1.0	9	32.1	8	28.6	8	28.6	3	10.7
[a]Recreate the success of others in agritourism	2.1	0.9	7	25.9	13	48.1	5	18.5	2	7.4
[b]Benefit from tax incentives	2.8	1.0	3	11.5	8	20.5	7	26.9	8	30.8

Note. 1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *somewhat agree*, 3 = *somewhat disagree*, and 4 = *strongly disagree*. $n = 28$, $^{a}n = 27$, $^{b}n = 26$.

Objective Three: Describe Most Resource-Demanding Activities for Alabama Agritourism Operators in Terms of Time, Money, and Labor

The third objective was to describe the most resource-demanding activities for Alabama agritourism operators in terms of time, money, and labor. The most resource-intensive activities in terms of time are presented in Table 3. Activities that cost the most capital for Alabama agritourism operators are listed in Table 4. Activities that require the most personal labor for Alabama agritourism operators are listed in Tables 5.

The most time-intensive activities for Alabama agritourism operators are presented in Table 3 ($n = 27$). "General farm upkeep" was identified as the most time-consuming activity ($M = 1.6$, $SD = 1.7$) followed by "recruiting labor" ($M = 3.7$, $SD = 2.0$) and "managing risks" ($M = 4.1$, $SD = 1.6$). "Securing crop insurance" ($M = 6.6$, $SD = 2.6$), "marketing using roadside signage" ($M = 7.7$, $SD = 1.6$), and "other" ($M = 9.8$, $SD = 1.2$) were the least demanding activities in terms of time.

Table 3

Time-Intensive Activities for Respondents

Time-Intensive Activity	*M*	*SD*
General Farm Upkeep	1.6	1.7
Recruiting Labor	3.7	2.0
Managing Risks	4.1	1.6
Training Staff	4.5	1.7
Marketing Using Social Media	4.9	2.5
Marketing Using a Website	5.8	1.9
Food Safety	6.3	2.2
Securing Liability Insurance	6.6	2.6
Marketing Using Roadside Signage	7.7	1.6

Time-Intensive Activity	*M*	*SD*
Other	9.8	1.2

Note. Lower means indicate more time-intensive activities. *n* = 27.

Table 4 lists the most money-intensive activities for respondents (*n* = 25). Study participants identified "General farm upkeep" as the most capital-demanding activity (*M* = 2.1, *SD* = 1.7). "Securing liability insurance" (*M* = 3.7, *SD* = 2.1) and "recruiting labor" (*M* = 3.8, *SD* = 2.2) were also considerable costs in terms of money. "Marketing using social media" (*M* = 7.4, *SD* = 1.5), "marketing using roadside signage" (*M* = 7.4, *SD* = 2.2), and "other" (*M* = 9.4, *SD* = 2.2) were the least money-intensive activities. "Other" capital-intense activities included paying payroll, taxes, and research fees.

Table 4

Money-Intensive Activities for Respondents

Money-Intensive Activity	*M*	*SD*
General Farm Upkeep	2.1	1.7
Securing Liability Insurance	3.7	2.1
Recruiting Labor	3.8	2.2
Managing Risks	4.2	1.5
Training Staff	4.3	2.0
Food Safety	6.0	2.6
Marketing Using a Website	6.6	1.5
Marketing Using Social Media	7.4	1.5
Marketing Using Roadside Signage	7.4	2.2
Other	9.4	2.2

Note. Lower means indicate more money-intensive activities. *n* = 25.

Activities that require the most personal labor from Alabama agritourism operators are presented in Table 5 (*n* = 23). "General farm upkeep" was identified as the most labor-demanding activity (*M* = 2.1, *SD* = 1.7) followed by "recruiting labor" (*M* = 3.8, *SD* = 2.4) and "training staff" (*M* = 4.4, *SD* = 1.9). "Food safety" (*M* = 5.9, *SD* = 2.6), "marketing using

roadside signage" (*M* = 8.3, *SD* = 1.3), and "other" (*M* = 9.6, *SD* = 1.7) were ranked lowest in terms of personal labor.

Table 5

Labor-Intensive Activities for Respondents

Labor-Intensive Activity	*M*	*SD*
General Farm Upkeep	1.7	1.5
Recruiting Labor	3.8	2.4
Training Staff	4.4	1.9
Managing Risks	4.5	1.8
Marketing Using Social Media	5.5	2.7
Securing Liability Insurance	5.6	1.6
Marketing Using a Website	5.7	1.8
Food Safety	5.9	2.6
Marketing Using Roadside Signage	8.3	1.3
Other	9.6	1.7

Note. Lower means indicate more labor-intensive activities. *n* = 23.

Objective Four: Describe the Level of Confidence of Alabama Agritourism Operators to Perform Tasks Related to Running an Agritourism Operation

The fourth objective was to describe the level of confidence for Alabama agritourism operators to perform tasks related to running an agritourism operation. Study participants were asked to rate their level of confidence to complete thirteen tasks associated with agritourism. The results are presented in Table 6. "Interact with visitors on my farm" was the task with the highest level of confidence from study participants (*M* = 1.2, *SD* = 0.4) followed by "minimize risks to visitors on my farm" (*M* = 1.3, *SD* = 0.6) and "market my agritourism operation using social media" (*M* = 1.3, *SD* = 0.6). "Make ADA accommodations for my agricultural operation" (*M* = 2.1, *SD* = 0.9) and "interpret legislation concerning agritourism" (*M* = 2.1, *SD* = 1.0) were rated the lowest.

Table 6

Level of Confidence for Agritourism Tasks

As an agritourism operator, I am confident in my ability to…	Level of Confidence		Strongly Agree		Somewhat Agree		Somewhat Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	M	*SD*	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
Interact with visitors on my farm	1.2	0.4	27	84.4	5	15.6	0	0.0	0	0.0
Minimize risks to visitors on my farm	1.3	0.6	25	78.1	5	15.6	2	6.3	0	0.0
Market my agritourism operation using social media	1.3	0.6	24	75.0	6	18.8	2	6.3	0	0.0
Market my agritourism operation using a website	1.4	0.6	19	59.4	12	37.5	1	3.1	0	0.0
Maximize my farm's resources[a]	1.4	0.6	18	62.1	10	34.5	1	3.4	0	0.0
Develop a business plan for my agritourism operation	1.6	0.7	18	56.3	10	31.3	4	12.5	0	0.0
Train staff for my agritourism operation	1.6	0.7	16	50.0	13	40.6	3	9.4	0	0.0
Find educational resources to help me improve my operation[a]	1.7	0.7	13	44.8	12	41.4	4	13.8	0	0.0
Manage time between my agricultural production operation and my agritourism operation	1.8	0.8	15	46.9	11	34.4	5	15.6	1	3.1
Collaborate with other agritourism operators to form an agritourism trail[a]	2.0	0.9	10	34.5	10	34.5	7	24.1	2	6.9
Recruit labor for my agritourism operation	2.0	0.8	8	25.0	16	50.0	7	21.9	1	3.1
Make ADA accommodations for my agritourism operation	2.1	0.9	9	28.1	13	40.6	8	25.0	2	6.3
Interpret legislation concerning agritourism[a]	2.1	1.0	10	34.5	9	31.0	8	27.6	2	6.9

Note. 1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *somewhat agree*, 3 = *somewhat disagree*, and 4 = *strongly disagree*. $n = 32$, [a]$n = 29$.

Objective Five: Identify Terms Current Alabama Agritourism Operators Associate with the Agritourism Industry

The fifth objective of the study identified terms Alabama agritourism operators associate with the agritourism industry. Respondents (n = 35) were asked to rate their level of agreement with terms associated with agritourism found in the literature. Fourteen terms were provided for respondents to rate. The terms and the level of respondents' agreement are reported in Table 7. Terms with the strongest association to agritourism included "Agricultural Setting" (M = 1.1, SD = 0.3) and "Visitors" (M = 1.1, SD = 0.3). Approximately 89% (n = 35) of respondents strongly agreed that they associate "agricultural setting" with agritourism, and 93% (n = 30) strongly agreed that they connect "visitors" with their personal definition of agritourism. "Farmers' market" was the term with the highest mean and the highest standard deviation (M = 2.0, SD = 1.0). Only 34.3% (n = 35) of respondents strongly associated "farmers' market" with agritourism.

Table 7

Terms Associated with Agritourism

	Term		Strongly Agree		Somewhat Agree		Somewhat Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
Term	*M*	*SD*	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
Agricultural Setting	1.1	0.3	31	88.6	4	11.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
[b]Visitors	1.1	0.3	28	93.3	2	6.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
[a]Hospitality	1.2	0.4	26	81.3	6	18.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Farm	1.2	0.5	28	80.0	6	17.1	1	2.9	0	0.0
Agriculture	1.3	0.0	26	66.7	9	25.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
[a]Entertainment	1.3	0.6	23	71.9	7	21.9	2	6.3	0	0.0
[b]Farming	1.4	0.6	20	66.7	9	30.0	1	3.3	0	0.0
[b]Working	1.4	0.6	21	70.0	7	23.2	2	6.7	0	0.0
[a]Recreation	1.5	0.6	18	56.3	12	37.5	2	5.1	0	0.0
[b]Outdoor Recreation	1.5	0.7	18	60.0	8	26.7	4	13.3	0	0.0
[a]Education	1.6	0.6	16	50.0	14	43.8	2	6.3	0	0.0
Ranch	1.7	0.7	12	30.8	21	60.0	1	2.9	1	2.9
[b]Travel	1.8	0.7	10	33.3	15	50.0	0	16.7	0	0.0
Farmers' Market	2.0	1.0	12	34.3	14	40.0	5	14.3	4	11.4

Note. 1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *somewhat agree*, 3 = *somewhat disagree*, and 4 = *strongly disagree*. n = 35, [a]n = 32, and [b]n= 30.

Objective Six: Describe Specific Agritourism Activities Offered by Alabama Farmers

The sixth objective of the study identified specific agritourism activities offered by Alabama farmers. Activities are organized by agritourism category as described by Chase et al. (2018). Specific direct sale agritourism activities offered by study participants are listed in Table 8. Education activities are presented in Table 9. Entertainment offerings are listed in Table 10. Hospitality activities are included in Table 11. Outdoor recreations activities are listed in Table 12.

Table 8 (n = 29) lists direct sales offered by study participants. U-Pick produce (n = 16, 55.1%), harvested produce (n = 14, 48.2%), and flowers (n = 10, 34.4%) were the most common items offered for direct sale. Four operations (n = 4, 13.8%) offer fiber products and soaps/lotions/beauty products. Three operations (n =3, 10.3%) directly sell honey and fresh meats. Two operations (n = 2, 6.9%) market cider. U-Cut Christmas trees, wine, and cheese were marketed by one agritourism operation each (n = 1, 3.4%). No respondents indicated that they sell milk or processed meats. Other items produced for direct sale included jams, pickles, preserves, caramel, plants, organic compost, and pet treats (n = 4, 13.7%). Five study participants (n = 5, 17.2%) indicated that they currently do not offer any items for direct sale.

Table 8

Direct Sales Offered by Alabama Agritourism Questionnaire Respondents

Item for Direct Sale	*f*	*%*
U-Pick Produce	16	55.1
Harvested Produce	14	48.2
Flowers	10	34.4
Fiber Products	4	13.8
Soaps/Lotions/Beauty Products	4	13.8
Honey	3	10.3
Fresh Meats	3	10.3

Item for Direct Sale	*f*	%
Cider	2	6.9
U-Cut Christmas Trees	1	3.4
Wine	1	3.4
Cheese	1	3.4
Processed Meats	0	0.0
Milk	0	0.0
Other	4	13.8
None	5	17.2

n = 29.

Table 9 (*n* = 29) includes educational activities of agritourism questionnaire participants. Tours were the most commonly cited educational activity offered by respondents (*n* = 24, 92.3%). Seven operations (*n* = 7, 24.1%) provide tastings. Five operations (*n* = 5, 17.2%) facilitate internships. Four operations (*n* = 4, 13.8%) host farm equipment demonstrations and workshops. Other educational activities offered include early education field trips, hands-on activities, and a sheep shearing demonstrations (*n* = 3, 10.3%). Four study participants (*n* = 4, 13.8%) indicated that they currently do not offer any educational activities.

Table 9

Educational Activities Offered by Alabama Agritourism Questionnaire Respondents

Educational Activities	*f*	%
Tours	24	92.3
Tastings	7	24.1
Internships	5	17.2
Farm Equipment Demonstrations	4	13.8
Workshops	4	13.8
Other	3	10.3
None	4	13.8

n = 29.

Table 10 (*n* = 29) details entertainment activities offered by study participants. Hayrides (*n* = 18, 62.1%), children's play areas (*n* = 17, 58.6%), and petting zoos (*n* = 13, 44.8%) were the

most commonly offered entertainment activities by respondents. Nine operations (*n* = 9, 31.0%) offer a crop maze and host on-farm festivals. Seven operations (*n* = 7, 24.1%) host concerts. Other entertainment offerings include adult recreation areas, cultural activities, an interactive farm kitchen, small tractor driving, birthday parties, and watermelon-eating contests (*n* = 6, 20.7%). Six respondents (*n* = 6, 20.7%) reported that they currently do not offer any entertainment activities.

Table 10

Entertainment Activities Offered by Respondents

Entertainment Activity	*f*	*%*
Hayrides	18	62.1
Children's Play Areas	17	58.6
Petting Zoo	13	44.8
Crop Maze	9	31.0
Festivals	9	31.0
Concerts	7	24.1
Other	6	20.7
None	6	20.7

n = 29.

Table 11 (*n* = 29) presents hospitality activities offered by study participants. Photography sessions are offered by more than half of respondents (*n* =17, 58.6%). Eleven operations (*n* = 11, 37.9%) host weddings and receptions. Six operations (*n* = 6, 20.7%) hold farm-to-table dinners. Four operations (*n* = 4, 13.8%) offer overnight stays. Eight study participants (*n* = 8, 27.6%) indicated that they do not offer any hospitality activities at this time.

Table 11

Hospitality Activities Hosted by Respondents

Hospitality Activity	*f*	*%*
Photography Sessions	17	58.6
Weddings/Receptions	11	37.9

Hospitality Activity	*f*	%
Farm-to-Table Dinners	6	20.7
Overnight Stays	4	13.8
None	8	27.6

n = 29.

Table 12 (*n* = 29) lists outdoor recreation activities currently offered by respondents. Fishing (*n* = 8, 27.6%), hunting (*n* = 7, 24.1%), and bird watching (*n* = 6, 20.7%) were the most popular outdoor recreation activities offered by study participants. Five operations (*n* = 5, 17.2%) have hiking trails. Four operations (*n* = 4, 13.8%) offer horseback riding. All-terrain vehicles (ATV)/four-wheeler riding is offered by one operation (*n* = 1, 3.4%). No respondents indicated that they currently have mountain biking trails. Eight study participants (*n* = 8, 27.6%) reported that they do not offer any outdoor recreation activities at this time.

Table 12

Outdoor Recreation Activities Hosted by Alabama Agritourism Questionnaire Respondents

Outdoor Recreation Activity	*f*	%
Fishing	8	27.6
Hunting	7	24.1
Bird Watching	6	20.7
Hiking Trails	5	17.2
Horseback Riding	4	13.8
ATV/Four-Wheeler Riding	1	3.4
Mountain Biking	0	0.0
None	8	27.6

n = 29.

Objective Seven: Describe Agritourism Characteristics of Alabama Farms

The seventh objective of the study was to describe agritourism characteristics of Alabama farms including length of time agritourism activities have been offered, percentage of total farm/ranch income from agritourism, percentage of farmed land dedicated to agritourism,

seasons open to the public, and busiest seasons for the agritourism operation. Agritourism characteristics of Alabama farms including length of years offering agritourism activities, percentage of farm income from agritourism activities, percentage of farmed land dedicated to agritourism activities, seasons that the farm is open to visitors, and busiest season(s) of the agritourism operation are presented in Table 13 (n = 27).

Length of time offering agritourism activities ranged from less than one year to 33 years (n = 27). The largest group of respondents indicated they had been offering agritourism activities on their farms for 1-5 years (n = 8, 29.6%). Sixty-three percent (n = 17) of study participants reported that agritourism activities make up 1-25% of their total farm income. Nearly half (n = 13, 48.1%) of respondents dedicated 1-25% of total farmed land to agritourism activities. Approximately 96% (n = 26) of study participants open their agritourism operation to the public during the fall season. Seventy-four percent (n = 20) of operations are open during the spring, 55.5% (n = 15) are open during the summer, and 25.9% (n = 7) are open during the winter. Two thirds (n = 18, 66.7%) of respondents indicated that fall was one of the busiest seasons for the agritourism operation. Winter was reported to be the busiest season by the fewest number of study participants (n = 2, 7.4%).

Table 13

Agritourism Characteristics of Alabama Farms

Agritourism Characteristics		*f*	*%*
Length of time offering agritourism activities	<1 year	1	3.7
	1-5 years	8	29.6
	6-10 years	4	14.8
	11-15 years	5	18.5
	16-20 years	3	11.1
	21-25 years	2	7.4
	>25 years	4	14.8
	Total	27	100.0

Agritourism Characteristics		*f*	*%*
Percentage of farm income from agritourism	1-25%	17	63.0
	26-50%	3	11.1
	51-75%	1	3.7
	76-99%	2	7.4
	100%	4	14.8
	Total	27	100.0
Percentage of farmed land dedicated to agritourism	1-25%	13	48.1
	26-50%	5	18.5
	51-75%	0	0.0
	76-99%	3	11.1
	100%	6	22.2
	Total	27	100.0
Season(s) open to visitors	Winter	7	25.9
	Spring	20	74.0
	Summer	15	55.5
	Fall	26	96.2
Busiest season(s) for agritourism operation	Winter	2	7.4
	Spring	10	37.0
	Summer	7	25.9
	Fall	18	66.7

n = 27.

Objective Eight: Describe Farm Characteristics of Alabama Agritourism Operators

The eighth objective of the study was to describe farm characteristics of Alabama agritourism operators including state region, acres owned and leased, and total length of farm ownership. Farm characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 14 (*n* = 27).

Region 1 (*n* = 5) included northwest counties Lauderdale, Limestone, Colbert, Lawrence, Morgan, Winston, Walker, Fayette, Lamar, Marion, and Franklin. Region 2 (*n* = 4) included northeast counties Madison, Jackson, DeKalb, Cherokee, Etowah, Marshall, Cullman, and Blount. Region 3 (*n* = 4) included western counties Pickens, Tuscaloosa, Sumter, Greene, Hale, Perry, Choctaw, Marengo, Dallas, and Wilcox. Region 4 (*n* = 5) included central counties Saint Clair, Jefferson, Shelby, Bibb, Chilton, Autauga, Lowndes, Elmore, and Montgomery. Region 5 (*n* = 6) included eastern counties Cleburne, Calhoun, Randolph, Clay, Talladega, Chambers,

Tallapoosa, Coosa, Lee, Macon, and Russell. Region 6 (n = 0) included southwestern counties Washington, Clarke, Monroe, Conecuh, Butler, Escambia, Mobile, and Baldwin. Region 7 (n = 3) included southeastern counties Covington, Crenshaw, Pike, Bullock, Barbour, Coffee, Dale, Henry, Geneva, and Houston. Region 5 (n = 6) was the most represented region in the study, and Region 6 (n = 0) was the least represented region. The amount of land owned and leased ranged from 1-9 acres to more than 2,000 acres. The largest group of respondents reported owning and leasing 50-139 acres of land (n = 4, 25.9%). Length of farm ownership ranged from one year to 119 years (n = 27). The most common response for length of farm ownership was 6-15 years (n = 11, 40.7%).

Table 14

Farm Characteristics of Respondents

Farm Characteristics		*f*	%
State region	Region 1	5	18.5
	Region 2	4	14.8
	Region 3	4	14.8
	Region 4	5	18.5
	Region 5	6	22.2
	Region 6	0	0.0
	Region 7	3	11.1
	Total	27	100.0
Acres owned and leased	1-9 acres	4	14.8
	10-49 acres	4	14.8
	50-139 acres	7	25.9
	140-259 acres	2	7.4
	260-499 acres	2	7.4
	500-1,000 acres	2	7.4
	1000-2,000 acres	3	11.1
	>2,000 acres	3	11.1
	Total	27	100.0

Farm Characteristics		*f*	%
Length of farm ownership	1-5 years	4	14.8
	6-15 years	11	40.7
	16-25 years	2	7.4
	26-40 years	6	22.2
	41-66 years	3	11.1
	>66 years	1	3.7
	Total	27	100.0

n = 27.

Objective Nine: Describe Personal Characteristics of Alabama Agritourism Operators

The ninth objective of the study was to describe personal characteristics of Alabama agritourism operators. The personal characteristics of study participants including age, gender, household size, and highest level of education are presented in Table 15 (*n* = 27). The gender groupings of respondents were 51.9% male (*n* = 14) and 48.1% female (*n* = 13). The age of respondents ranged from 25 years to 78 years. Respondent age groupings included <30 years old (*n* = 3, 11.1%), 30-40 years old (*n* = 6, 22.2%), 41-50 years old (*n* = 3, 11.1%), 51-60 years old (*n* = 9, 33.3%), 61-70 years old (*n* = 4, 14.8%), and >70 years old (*n* = 2, 7.4%). Household size of respondents ranged from one person to six people (*n* = 27). The most commonly reported household size was four people (*n* = 8, 29.6%). The largest group of respondents indicated a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education (*n* = 11, 40.7%). Approximately 26% of respondents had earned a graduate degree (*n* = 7).

Table 15

Personal Characteristics of Respondents

Personal Characteristics		*f*	%
Gender	Female	13	48.1
	Male	14	51.9
	Total	27	100.0
Age	Less than 30 years	3	11.1

Personal Characteristics		*f*	*%*
Age	30 – 40 years	6	22.2
	40 – 50 years	3	11.1
	50 – 60 years	9	33.3
	60 – 70 years	4	14.8
	70+ years	2	7.4
	Total	27	100.0
Household size	1	6	22.2
	2	7	25.9
	3	3	11.1
	4	8	29.6
	5+	3	11.1
	Total	27	100.0
Education level	High school	4	14.8
	Some college, no degree	3	11.1
	Associate degree	2	7.4
	Bachelor's degree	11	40.7
	Graduate degree	7	25.9
	Total	27	100.0

n = 27.

Summary

Objective one data included personal characteristics of study participants including gender, age, household size, and education level. Respondents reported similar distribution of gender with males representing 51.9% (*n* = 14) of study participants and females representing 48.1% (*n* = 13). The most commonly reported age group was 50-60 years old (*n* = 9, 33.3%). A four-person household was identified as the most common household size (*n* = 8, 29.6%). The largest group of respondents had obtained a bachelor's degree (*n* = 11, 40.7%). Data regarding objective two included farm characteristics including state region, acres owned and leased, and length of farm ownership. State region five had the highest number of respondents (*n* = 6, 22.2%). The largest group of participants reported to own and lease 50-139 acres of land (*n* = 7, 25.9%). The most commonly reported length of farm ownership was 6-15 years (*n* = 11, 40.7%). Objective three data included agritourism characteristics including length of time agritourism

activities have been offered, percentage of total farm income from agritourism, percentage of farmed land dedicated to agritourism, seasons open for visitors, and busiest season(s) for the agritourism operation. The largest group of respondents have been offering agritourism activities for 1-5 years (n = 8, 29.6%). The majority of participants (n = 17, 63.0%) indicated that agritourism contributes between 1-25% to total farm income. Nearly half of respondents (n = 13, 48.1%) dedicate between 1-25% of their total farmed land to agritourism activities. More than half of respondents indicated that their agritourism operation is open to the public during fall (n = 26, 96.2%), spring (n = 20, 74.4%), and summer (n = 15, 55.5%). Two-thirds of participants (n = 18, 66.7%) reported fall to be one of their busiest seasons. Objective four gathered information about words that Alabama agritourism operators associate with agritourism. Of the fourteen words presented, "agricultural setting" (M = 1.1, SD = 0.3) and "visitors" (M = 1.1, SD = 0.3) had the strongest levels of agreement. "Farmers' market" had the lowest level of association to agritourism (M = 2.0, SD = 1.0). Objective five data captured the diversity of agritourism activities offered throughout the state. Activities were organized by category including Direct Sales, Education, Entertainment, Hospitality, and Outdoor Education. U-Pick produce was the most commonly offered Direct Sale activity (n = 16, 55.1%). The most popular Education offering was tours (n = 24, 92.3%). Hayrides were the most common Entertainment activity (n = 18, 62.1%). Photography sessions were the most reported Hospitality activity (n = 17, 58.6%). Fishing was the most popular Outdoor Recreation offering (n = 8, 27.6%). Objective six data revealed respondents' motivation to start their agritourism operations. "Generate more income" was the motivating factor with the lowest mean (M = 1.4, SD = 0.9). Objective seven data reported respondents' motivating factors to continue their agritourism ventures. "Generate more income" again had the lowest mean (M = 1.4, SD = 0.9). Objective eight data revealed activities

that cost study participants the most time, money, and personal labor. “General farm upkeep” was identified as the most prominent cost in terms of time (M = 1.6, SD = 1.7), capital (M = 2.1, SD = 1.7), and personal labor (M = 1.7, SD = 1.5). Objective nine data included self-perceived confidence levels of Alabama agritourism operations concerning tasks associated with running an agritourism operation. “Interaction with visitors on my farm” was he task with the highest level of confidence from study participants (M = 1.2, SD = 0.4).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to describe the Alabama agritourism industry in terms of the motivations of Alabama farmers to diversify their properties with agritourism, the continued value of agritourism, the most resource-intensive activities associated with agritourism, the self-efficacy of operators regarding common agritourism tasks, terms current agritourism operators associate with the agritourism industry, agritourism activities offered by Alabama farmers and ranchers, and personal characteristics of Alabama agritourism operators. “Agritourism” refers to an entrepreneurial operation that connects tourism with agricultural settings with the purpose of attracting visitors to farms, ranches, and other agricultural businesses to generate revenue for the farm, ranch, or agricultural business owner (National Agricultural Law Center, n.d.). Prior to this study, little research has been conducted regarding agritourism in Alabama. Capturing an accurate representation of the current state of the Alabama agritourism industry is critical for developing relevant educational resources for agritourism operators in the state. Potential participants were recruited for the study using an agritourism roster compiled by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES). Half of the participants for this study were recruited by phone and half were recruited by email depending on the available contact information listed on the ACES roster. Data for this study was collected from participants using a web-based questionnaire. Data were analyzed using the statistical program SPSS.

Conclusions

Objective One

The first objective was to describe initial motivating factors for Alabama farmers to diversify their agricultural production businesses with agritourism. Generating more income was

identified as the foremost reason for diversifying with agritourism. Seventy-five percent of respondents strongly agreed that increasing income was an initial motivating factor for starting their agritourism venture. Maximizing farm resources was another important motivating factor. Seventeen respondents strongly agreed that maximizing resources contributed to their decision to start their agritourism operations. Financial reasons, while significant, were not the respondents' only motivations for starting an agritourism business. Fifty percent of respondents strongly agreed that they initially began their agritourism ventures to build relationships in the community.

Objective Two

The second objective was to describe motivating factors for Alabama farmers to continue their agritourism ventures. Generating more income was identified as the most prominent reason agricultural producers continue to offer agritourism on their farms. More than three-quarters of respondents strongly agreed that the additional income from agritourism remains an important motivating factor. More than half of study participants strongly agreed that maximizing farm resources, building relationships in the community, and educating the public about agriculture are other motivating factors to continue offering agritourism activities. These financial and social motivating factors largely mirror the original reasons respondents made the initial decision to add agritourism activities.

Objective Three

The third objective was to describe the most resource-demanding activities for Alabama agritourism operators in terms of time, money, and labor. General farm upkeep, recruiting labor, managing risks were identified as the top three time-demanding activities. The three activities that require the most capital were general farm upkeep, securing liability insurance, and

recruiting labor. The most personal labor was required by general farm upkeep, recruiting labor, and training staff. In general, Alabama agritourism operators spend a majority of their resources maintaining their properties, making areas safe for visitors, and managing human resources.

Objective Four

The fourth objective was to describe the level of confidence for Alabama agritourism operators to perform tasks related to running an agritourism operation. Respondents in general felt most confident in welcoming visitors to their farms, keeping visitors safe, and showcasing their farms using social media. More than eighty percent of respondents strongly agreed that they were confident interacting with visitors on their farms, and no respondents disagreed with this statement. The overwhelming majority of respondents also indicated strong agreement in their ability to minimize risks to visitors on their farm. Seventy-five percent of respondents strongly agreed that they were confident marketing their agritourism operations using social media.

Objective Five

The fifth objective of the study identified terms Alabama agritourism operators associate with the agritourism industry. Respondents were asked to rate their level of association of fourteen terms commonly used in the literature regarding agritourism (Arroyo et al., 2013; Chase et al., 2018; Philip et al., 2010). Respondents indicated general agreement that all of the terms were associated with their personal definitions of agritourism. Agricultural setting, visitors, hospitality, and farm had the highest level of agreement that these terms were associated with respondents' personal perceptions of agritourism. At least eighty percent of respondents strongly agreed that these terms aligned with their personal perception of the agritourism industry. Agriculture was the term with the lowest standard deviation. No respondents disagreed that agriculture was associated with their personal definition of agritourism. Nine respondents

indicated that they only somewhat agreed with associating agriculture with their perception of agritourism. Farmers' market had the weakest association to agritourism and the highest standard deviation, signifying contention around this term. Twelve respondents strongly agreed that they associate farmers' markets with agritourism while four participants strongly disagreed that the term was related to agritourism.

Objective Six

The sixth objective of the study identified specific agritourism activities offered by Alabama farmers. Activities were divided into the five categories of agritourism as described by Chase et al. (2018). Categories included direct sales, education, entertainment, hospitality, and outdoor recreation. All categories were reflected in the collective activities offered by Alabama agritourism operators. Tours were the single most activity offered by the highest number of respondents. More than ninety percent of respondents offer tours of their agritourism operation. Hayrides were the most common entertainment activity, offered by eighteen respondents. Photography sessions were the most reported hospitality activity and were offered by seventeen study participants. The most common direct sale activity was U-pick produce, offered by sixteen respondents. Outdoor recreation opportunities did not reach the frequency of other categories; however, fishing was the most common outdoor recreation activity offered by study participants.

Objective Seven

The seventh objective of the study was to describe agritourism characteristics of Alabama farms including length of time agritourism activities have been offered, percentage of total farm/ranch income from agritourism, percentage of farmed land dedicated to agritourism, seasons open to the public, and busiest seasons for the agritourism operation. Total length of time agritourism activities have been offered ranged from one year to 33 years. The largest group

of respondents indicated they have been offering agritourism activities for 1-5 years. Sixty-three percent of participants obtain 1-25% of their total farm income from agritourism. Only four respondents indicated that 100% of their farm income comes from agritourism. Almost half of participants dedicate 25% or less of their total farmed acreage to agritourism activities. Six respondents indicated that 100% of their total farmed land was dedicated to agritourism. At least half of respondents reported that their operations were open during spring, summer, and fall. Only seven study participants own agritourism operations that are open during the winter months. Two-thirds of participants indicated that fall was one of the busiest seasons for their agritourism operation. Thirty-seven percent or respondents also reported spring, the planting season, as one of the busiest seasons. Busiest seasons of the agritourism operation appear to coincide with the busiest seasons of the agricultural production business.

Objective Eight

The eighth objective of the study was to describe farm characteristics of Alabama agritourism operators including state region, acres owned and leased, and total length of farm ownership. The most respondents owned agritourism operations in Region 5 which included eastern counties Cleburne, Calhoun, Randolph, Clay, Talladega, Chambers, Tallapoosa, Coosa, Lee, Macon, and Russell. No participants were from Region 6 which included southwestern counties Washington, Clarke, Monroe, Conecuh, Butler, Escambia, Mobile, and Baldwin. The majority of participants indicated they own and lease between fifty and 139 acres of land. Length of farm ownership ranged from one year to 119 years. The largest group of respondents have owned their farms for 6-15 years.

Objective Nine

The ninth objective of the study was to describe personal characteristics of Alabama agritourism operators. The largest groups of respondents were males, individuals between 50-60 years of age, individuals who live in a four-person household, and individuals whose highest level of education was a bachelor's degree.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

Non-response error was a limitation to this study. Steps were taken to mitigate non-response error by providing rational for study participation, ample time to participate, and five points of contact as recommended by Dillman et al. (2014). Incomplete and non-responses may be the result of one or more factors including the time of year of data collection, the gradual process of forming a statewide agritourism association, and the hesitancy to reveal information about the agritourism business.

Low response rate may be attributed to the time of year the survey was distributed (August through mid-September). A majority of respondents indicated that agritourism makes up 1-25% of their total farm income, suggesting that the majority of their income comes from their agricultural production business. Late summer and fall are often demanding seasons for agricultural producers due to harvests (Pennings et al., 2002). Additionally, more than ninety-five percent of study participants indicated that fall was one of their busiest seasons for their agritourism operation. A high traffic agritourism season combined with fall harvests may have contributed to a low response rate. Future studies regarding Alabama agritourism should consider the time of year data will be collected to maximize response rate.

A statewide association for agritourism professionals may be critical for connecting research professionals with agritourism operators. The Alabama Farmers Federation (ALFA) has a strong framework for creating networks to support those involved in agricultural production.

ALFA sponsors fifteen commodity-specific divisions and three associations that assist the respective commodities through advocacy, research, and policy development (Moore, 2021). Prior to September 2019, no such support existed for agritourism producers; however, the launch of Sweet Grown Alabama, a non-profit program aimed at creating a unified marketing presence for Alabama agricultural products, created a space for agritourism professionals to unite (Alabama Farmers Federation, 2020). Annual membership dues based on estimated annual sales provide Sweet Grown Alabama members access to the licensed Sweet Grown Alabama logo, statewide recognition through print and electronic marketing, networking and educational opportunities, and inclusion on the searchable online database (Sweet Grown Alabama, n.d.a). The searchable online database allows consumers to search for members based on product, zip code, or business type (Sweet Grown Alabama, n.d.b). A search of "Agritourism" products reveals only twelve agritourism locations statewide. Increasing membership in the "Agritourism" category of Sweet Grown Alabama will not only increase visibility for Alabama agritourism but may also increase opportunities to research the burgeoning agritourism industry through direct contact with members.

Hesitancy to reveal information about the agritourism business may have prevented some potential participants from responding. Because an agritourism study has not been completed in Alabama prior to this study, the researcher did not have a previously established level of rapport with the population. During a phone call to request participation in the questionnaire, the potential participant asked, "…you're not going to ask any personal questions, right?" (personal communication, August 10, 2021). Cultivating trust is a critical part of the social exchange of survey research as described by Dillman et al. (2014). Steps were taken to begin the process of building rapport with the population during this study. Questionnaire items that requested

explicit information regarding specific financial information (e.g., annual revenue) and exact location of the agritourism operation were purposefully excluded from the questionnaire to build trust with the study population. Appealing to participants' altruism, also recommended by Dillman et al. (2014), was another strategy used to develop rapport with the population. Participants were informed prior to taking the questionnaire that their responses would directly influence the development of educational resources for agritourism operators in Alabama. Continuing to cultivate relationships with this population will be critical for collecting data about the industry. Workshops, farm visits, networking events, and the roll-out of educational resources for agritourism by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System will be important opportunities for building trust with Alabama agritourism operators.

Objective One

The study's first objective explored study participants' motivations to start an agritourism operation. Alabama agritourism operators indicated that both financial and social reasons motivated them to launch an agritourism business. Financial motivation is one of the most widely reported reasons farmers adopt agritourism on their properties (Barbieri, 2009; Busby & Rendle, 2000; Di Domenico & Miller, 2012; Nickerson et al., 2001; Sharpley & Vass, 2006; Tew & Barbieri, 2012). Both generating more income and maximizing farm resources are considered financial motivations in the literature (Ollenberg & Buckley, 2007; Tew & Barbieri, 2012). Participants of the study indicated that not only does agritourism generate more income, agritourism also helps Alabama agritourism operators utilize the resources they have available on their properties. This finding is supported by current agritourism literature. Schroeder (2004) found that agritourism provides an alternative strategy for using farmland that may or may not be used for production and that maximizing return per acre was important for farmers.

Social reasons for starting an agritourism operation were also captured by the study. Half of respondents strongly agreed that they initially began their agritourism ventures to build relationships in the community. The literature affirms that social reasons are an important motivation for farmers to adopt agritourism (Frater, 1983; Nickerson et al., 2001; Schroeder, 2004). Hosting visitors and helping families create memories can be exciting and rewarding work. Agritourism may also provide a social outlet for farmers living in rural, isolated places (Schroeder, 2004). The literature states that motivations can differ depending on the size of the farm (McGehee & Kim, 2004) and length of farm ownership (Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007).

Future studies may address whether motivation for agritourism in Alabama can be predicted based on farm characteristics, personal characteristics, and agritourism activities offered. Educational resources for Alabama farmers looking to diversify into agritourism should address specific ways to increase income, maximize existing on-farm resources, and foster relationships with visitors and other members of the community.

Objective Two

The second objective of the study was to describe motivating factors for study participants to continue their agritourism ventures. Generating more income, maximizing farm resources, building relationships in the community, and educating the public about agriculture continue to motivate respondents to offer agritourism activities. The first two factors fall within financial motivations while the latter two factors are social reasons for agritourism. Once again, financial motivations were identified as critical motivating factors, as reflected in the literature (Barbieri, 2009; Busby & Rendle, 2000; Di Domenico & Miller, 2012; Nickerson et al., 2001; Sharpley & Vass, 2006; Tew & Barbieri, 2012). This finding suggests that agritourism operators will not continue their agritourism offerings if they are not generating profit from tourism.

Agricultural production is inherently risky, and hosting visitors on farms compounds risks. The income gained from the agritourism operation must make the operator's efforts worthwhile in order to continue offering agritourism activities. This insight may help explain the ebb and flow trend of agritourism in the state in terms of both number of farms offering activities and income generated from recreation on farms.

Overall, the motivating factors that drive Alabama farmers to continue their agritourism operations are highly similar to the motivations that led them to start their operations in the first place. This data suggests that the motivations of these agritourism operators remained stable over time. Unfortunately, the literature does not hold much information about motivation for agritourism over time. Understanding if motivations for agritourism change and, if so, how they change is important for building educational resources to sustain the agritourism industry. Future studies may explore both initial and longer-term motivation for farmers to host visitors on their farms. In the meantime, equipping agritourism operators with skills to pursue their initial motivating objectives may also help this group of entrepreneurs meet longer-term goals for their business.

Objective Three

The third objective regarded the costs of agritourism activities for Alabama agritourism operators in terms of time, money, and labor. Alabama agritourism operators spend a majority of their resources maintaining their properties, making areas safe for visitors, and managing human resources. General farm upkeep was identified as the most resource-demanding activity in terms of time, money, and labor. This activity includes a wide range of tasks that can vary from property to property and may include planting, harvesting, applying pesticides, mowing/bushhogging, maintaining machinery, applying fertilizer, caretaking of animals, and

other routine maintenance activities. For future studies, breaking the activity general farm upkeep down into specific tasks may provide more precise information about the activities that are demanding the most time, money, and personal labor from agritourism operations.

Respondents did not identify any type of marketing as a resource-intense activity. Marketing activities fell between the middle and lower portions of each list. Study participants indicated confidence in their abilities to market their operations using both social media and a website. Both social media and websites can be personally managed with little time, capital, and personal labor when users understand how to navigate and use these platforms (George & Rilla, 2011), which may explain the lower placement of these activities. Although study participants did not indicate they invest many resources in marketing, increasing the amount of time, money, and personal labor may be important for promoting the Alabama agritourism industry. Future Alabama agritourism studies may address the specific amounts of time, money, and personal labor spent on marketing through both traditional and web-based outlets. Comparing marketing strategies and investment in advertising across the different categories of agritourism (direct sales, education, entertainment, hospitality, and outdoor recreation) may also provide valuable information for current and future agritourism operators.

Objective Four

The fourth objective measured the self-efficacy of Alabama agritourism operators to perform tasks related to running an agritourism operation. Respondents indicated strong belief in their skills to interact with visitors on their farms. Agritourism is essentially a hospitality business with an agricultural setting. Interpersonal skills are a critical component of this type of work (George & Rilla, 2011). Respondents also indicated strong agreement in their ability to minimize risks to visitors on their farm. In objective three, respondents indicated that minimizing

risks to visitors was one of their most time-consuming activities. Alabama agritourism operators appear to understand the risks associated with agritourism, spend time minimizing them risks, and feel confident in their ability to maintain a safe environment. Three-quarters of respondents strongly agreed that they were confident marketing their agritourism operations using social media. Identifying which internet-based platforms Alabama agritourism operators are using, how often they are using them for marketing, and specific strategies used to increase traffic to their operation will be important objectives for future research.

Items that respondents did not demonstrate strong levels of confidence included making ADA accommodations for their agritourism operations and interpreting legislation concerning agritourism. These two items are critically important for accessibility, safety, and legal purposes. Case studies of agritourism operators that have model systems for ADA accommodations on their farms may be helpful for other operators to gain insight about what an exceptional inclusive farm setup can look like. Both items can be addressed with specific educational resources including publications and workshops.

Objective Five

The fifth objective sought to identify terms Alabama agritourism operators associate with the agritourism industry. The majority of respondents strongly agreed that the terms agricultural setting, visitors, hospitality, and farm aligned with their personal definitions of agritourism. Agriculture was the term with the lowest standard deviation. No respondents disagreed that agriculture was associated with their personal definition of agritourism; however, approximately one-third of respondents indicated that they only somewhat agreed with associating agriculture with their perception of agritourism. This finding may indicate that while agritourism takes place

in agricultural settings, agritourism operators may not completely associate their tourism services with their perception of authentic agriculture.

Similar to this study, agricultural setting was the term identified with the strongest association to agritourism by a survey of residents, farmers, and extension professionals by Arroyo et al. (2013). The finding suggests Alabama agritourism operators do associate agritourism with a specific sense of *place*. Farm was one of the highest rated terms while the term ranch was rated lower. The USDA does not differentiate between farms and ranches when taking counts for the Census of Agriculture; however, farms appear to dominate the agricultural landscape of Alabama. Most of the agritourism destinations listed on the ACES agritourism roster used for the study listed their name as "farm" even if they raised cattle. Ranches can and do offer agritourism activities, but most Alabama agritourism operators associate agritourism with the specific place of farms.

The greatest amount of variance occurred around the term farmers' market. Respondents indicated strong agreement and strong disagreement with this term. This finding indicates that some agritourism operators in Alabama subscribe to more generous definitions of agritourism while others associate agritourism strictly with on-farm activities. These findings suggest that a singular definition of agritourism has not emerged in the state of Alabama. The discrepancy in the definition of agritourism was evident when exploring the population for this study. Though the 2017 Census of Agriculture registered 481 farms with agritourism and recreational services, the updated roster of agritourism operations compiled by the ACES registered only 128 operations. Creating a unified understanding of agritourism is important for studying the phenomenon of agritourism and its trends (Philip et al., 2010), creating helpful policies and assistance programs (Colton & Bissix, 2005), and building statewide marketing strategies for

agritourism operations (Veeck et al., 2006). Finding ways to capture the complete population of agritourism operators will be critical for studying the statewide agritourism industry more thoroughly. Future research should further distill current agritourism operators' definitions of agritourism in order to move closer to a unified definition of agritourism for the benefit of the state's industry.

Objective Six

The sixth objective captured specific agritourism activities offered on Alabama farms. Activities were divided into the five categories of agritourism described by Chase et al. (2018) and included direct sales, education, entertainment, hospitality, and outdoor recreation. Every category of agritourism activity is offered in the state of Alabama. These most popular activities including tours, hayrides, photography sessions, U-pick produce, and fishing capitalize on features and equipment that likely already exist on farms. Activities including tours and photography sessions most likely require little if any overhead costs and provide a potential source of pure profit for agritourism operators who offer these activities. These low-input, high-leverage activities can help farmers achieve their goals of generating additional income and maximizing farm resources. Agritourism operators likely know the greatest assets of their farms. Encouraging farmers to evaluate their properties using SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis may help agritourism operators identify existing opportunities to increase profit and maximize resource use. Capturing the activities of highly successful agritourism operations through case study research may offer insight of how to identify, cultivate, and sustain successful agritourism offerings that complement the existing features of the property. Future studies may address the differences and similarities among farms that offer the five different categories of agritourism activities. As the statewide agritourism industry

grows, assessing the particular educational resources needs associated with each category of agritourism will be important for supporting the industry.

Objective Seven

The seventh objective described agritourism characteristics of Alabama farms including length of time agritourism activities have been offered, percentage of total farm/ranch income from agritourism, percentage of farmed land dedicated to agritourism, seasons open to the public, and busiest seasons for the agritourism operation. Total length of time agritourism activities have been offered ranged from one year to 33 years indicating both established and burgeoning agritourism operators participated this study. The largest group of respondents have been offering agritourism activities for only 1-5 years. Future research may evaluate the differences in self-efficacy of agritourism operators based on time spent in the agritourism industry. Understanding the educational needs of agritourism operators throughout the life of their agritourism businesses will be important for developing educational materials and training ACES personnel to offer technical assistance for these operations.

The majority of participants obtain 1-25% of their total farm income from agritourism, strongly suggesting that agritourism is a supplement to their agricultural production operations. Some agritourism operations may not charge for activities and depend on the sale of value-added products either on the farm or in the marketplace. Only four participants receive one hundred percent of their farm income exclusively from agritourism activities. Similarly, almost half of participants dedicate 25% or less of their total farmed acreage to agritourism activities, further suggesting that agritourism is a supplementary activity to wholesale agricultural production. Six respondents indicated that one hundred percent of their total farmed land was dedicated to agritourism. This number does not align with the number of participants who receive one

hundred percent of their total farm income from agritourism. This phenomenon may be attributed to other on-farm diversification strategies that can co-exist with agritourism including value-added processing, leasing land, and marketing harvested items to wholesale buyers in addition to direct selling to local consumers.

At least half of respondents reported that their operations were open during spring, summer, and fall. According to the literature, these seasons are commonly associated with agritourism activities (Rich et al., 2016). Winter months have the lowest amount of activity, which reflects the general cycle of agricultural production. The majority of participants indicated that fall was one of the busiest seasons for their agritourism operation. Harvest time and the plethora of agritourism activities suited to autumn (e.g., crop mazes, hayrides, U-Pick apples and pumpkins) quickly fill the days of this season. More than one-third of respondents also reported spring, the planting season, as one of the busiest seasons. Pennings et al., (2002) reported that farmers in the Great Plains, Midwest, and Southeast are the most engaged from May through October. Data regarding seasonality of agritourism is especially important for the design of future agritourism research. This study was conducted in August and September, close to the very busiest time of year for agritourism operators. Future studies may see improved response rates if offered during the winter months or months that coincide with less farm activity.

Objective Eight

The eighth objective described farm characteristics of Alabama agritourism operators including state region, acres owned and leased, and total length of farm ownership. Region 5 was the most represented region in the study. This region includes three metropolitan areas around the cities of Auburn-Opelika, Anniston-Oxford, and Phenix City, Alabama-Columbus, Georgia (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). No participants were from Region 6 which included only one

metropolitan area (Daphe-Fairhope-Foley) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). This finding suggests that the prevalence of Alabama agritourism operations may be influenced by the proximity of the farm to a metropolitan area. The larger populations of metropolitan areas provide larger target markets for agritourism operators to attract to their farms. Future studies may explore the relationships among state region, the number of agritourism operations within the state region, and the range of agritourism activities offered within each region.

The majority of participants indicated they own and lease between fifty and 139 acres of land. Farms that fall in the fifty- to 139-acre range are the most common size farms in the state of Alabama, making up 28.7% of the total amount of farms (USDA, 2019b). Length of farm ownership ranged from one year to 119 years, indicating that both beginning farmers and individuals from farming families completed the study. The largest group of respondents have owned their farms for 6-15 years. Objective seven revealed that the largest group of respondents had offered agritourism activities for 1-5 years, further suggesting that Alabama farmers use agritourism as a means of diversifying their properties and supplementing income and resource use from wholesale agricultural production.

This largest ownership group (6-15 years) most likely is not made up of generational farmers. Some of these farmers may have specifically purchased land for the purpose of agritourism activities considering that six participants dedicate all their space to agritourism, and four participants receive one hundred percent of their farm income from agritourism. This data regarding length of ownership suggests that the lack of extensive farm experience is not preventing farmers from moving into the agritourism space. Future studies may further explore the relationships among farming experience, motivation, and self-efficacy in Alabama agritourism operators. Identifying the educational needs of agritourism operators whether they

are beginning farmers or generational farmers will also be important for creating resources to sustain a successful statewide agritourism industry.

Objective Nine

The ninth objective of the study captured personal characteristics of Alabama agritourism operators including gender, age, household size, and highest level of education obtained. Gender of respondents was nearly half male and half female. The gender data collected from this study does not align with the state of Alabama agricultural producer data nor current agritourism literature. In the state of Alabama, males make up 65.7% of agricultural producers while females comprise 34.3% (USDA, 2019b). The literature suggests women often play a major if not leading role in agritourism operation management (Busby & Rendle, 2000; McGehee & Kim, 2004). Future studies may further explore the role of gender in agritourism involvement and management in Alabama.

Individuals aged 50-60 years made up the largest age group of respondents. The largest age group of Alabama agricultural producers is aged 35-64 years old and makes up 56.4% of the total agricultural producer population (USDA, 2019b). The U.S. agricultural producer population is aging from previous Censuses of Agriculture, with an average age of 57.5 years (USDA, 2019a). Age may have played a role in the ebb and flow trend of agritourism in Alabama since 2002 as producers often decide to downsize or sell their properties as they get older.

The largest group of individuals indicated they live in a four-person household. Household size was specified to include the respondent and any children that live at home. More than seventy-five percent of respondents indicated a household size of at least two people which suggests that agritourism is cohesive to family life and may provide a means to pass the farm on to the next generation as indicated in the literature (Barbieri, 2009; Nickerson et al., 2001; Veeck

et al., 2006). Exploring the role of family in the decision to adopt agritourism will be a topic for future studies of Alabama agritourism.

The largest group of respondents identified a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education. Combined with participants who hold a graduate degree, the total number of these two groups make up almost two-thirds of total responses. Agritourism operators who hold degrees in agriculture likely have had at least some interaction with either the Alabama Cooperative Extension System or the Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension Program. Increasing knowledge of the available extension resources in Alabama will be important for directing agritourism operators to the ACES agritourism curriculum and additional agritourism resources. Future research may address the specific university programs obtained by Alabama agritourism operators and the level of self-efficacy and technical skills of the population based on their degrees. Agritourism requires a working knowledge of many skills to be successful including agricultural practices, human resources, business administration, and hospitality. Identifying the skills most necessary for agritourism success may help land-grant universities in Alabama best prepare students who desire to enter the agritourism space after graduation.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe the current state of the Alabama agritourism industry. Data was collected including initial motivation for agritourism, continued motivation for agritourism, costs of agritourism, self-efficacy of specific agritourism tasks, agritourism activities offered, and characteristics of Alabama agritourism, farms, and agritourism operators.

The findings of this study yielded foundational data about why Alabama farmers enter the agritourism space. Study participants indicated that both financial and social reasons motivated them to initially launch their agritourism operations. Their motivations to start their

agritourism businesses and continue their agritourism businesses did not appear to change. Respondents in general use agritourism activities to support their agricultural production business by generating more income, maximizing farm resources, and building relationships with their communities.

The study identified the most demanding tasks Alabama agritourism operators face and gauged confidence in tasks common to agritourism. General farm upkeep was the most demanding activity for Alabama agritourism operators in terms of time, money, and personal labor. In regard to specific agritourism tasks, respondents felt most confident in welcoming visitors to their farms, keeping visitors safe, and showcasing their farms using social media. Educational resources developed for Alabama agritourism operators should focus on high-leverage, low input strategies to maximize income and resources, specific ways to make agritourism operations accessible for all guests, and legislation that is pertinent to agritourism operations.

The findings of this research captured how Alabama agritourism operators perceive the agritourism industry. Terms that Alabama agritourism operators most commonly associate with agritourism include agricultural setting, visitors, hospitality, and farm. Identifying terms current agritourism operators associate with the agritourism industry will continue to be important for moving toward a singular statewide definition of agritourism.

This study collected specific information about the burgeoning industry of agritourism in Alabama that has not been widely studied before. A wide range of agritourism activities are offered across the state, and a unifying organization may be helpful for showcasing the variety of agritourism offerings available to Alabama communities. Agritourism activities are offered throughout the year with fall, spring, and summer as the most important seasons for agritourism.

Agritourism activities are offered by farmers that have a wide range of farming experience, acreage, and personal characteristics.

The baseline data collected by this study will be foundational for future research regarding the exciting, unique industry of agritourism in Alabama.

References

Akin, H., Shaw, B. R., & Spartz, J. T. (2015). Promoting economic development with tourism in rural communities: Destination image and motivation to return or recommend. *Journal of Extension, 53*(2), Article v53-2a6. https://www.joe.org/joe/2015april/a6.php

Alabama Farmers Federation. (2020). *Farmers market signifies July 22 as sweet grown Alabama day*. https://alfafarmers.org/farmers-market-signifies-july-22-as-sweet-grown-alabama-day/

Allosso, D. (2015). *American Environmental History*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Arroyo, C. G., Barbieri, C., & Rich, S. R. (2013). Defining agritourism: A comparative study of stakeholders' perceptions in Missouri and North Carolina. *Tourism Management, 37*, 39-47. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2012.12.007

Atkinson, J. W. (1957). Motivational determinants of risk-taking behavior. *Psychological Review, 64*(6, Pt.1), 359–372. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0043445

Atkinson, J.W. (1964). *An introduction to motivation*. D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc.

Atkinson, J. W., & Reitman, W. R. (1956). Performance as a function of motive strength and expectancy of goal-attainment. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 53*(3), 361–366. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0043477

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 84*(2), 191–215. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. New York, NY: W.H. Freeman.

Barbieri, C. (2009, March 30-April 1). A comparison of agritourism and other farm entrepreneurs: Implications for future tourism and sociological research on agritourism. *Proceedings of the 2008 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium* [Symposium]. Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium, Bolton Landing, NY, United States. https://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/pubs/7101

Barbieri, C. (2010). An importance-performance analysis of the motivations behind agritourism and other farm enterprise developments in Canada. *Journal of Rural and Community Development, 5*(1), 1-20. https://journals.brandonu.ca/jrcd/article/view/352

Barbieri, C., & Mahoney, E. (2009). Why is diversification an attractive farm adjustment strategy? Insights from Texas farmers and ranchers. *Journal of Rural Studies, 25*(1), 58–66. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2008.06.001

Barbieri, C., Mahoney, E., & Butler, L. (2008). Understanding the nature and extent of farm and ranch diversification in North America. *Rural Sociology, 73*(2), 205–229. https://doi.org/10.1526/003601108784514543

Barron, K. E., & Hulleman, C. S. (2015). The expectancy-value-cost model of motivation. In J.D. Wright (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of the social and behavioral sciences* (2nd ed., pp. 503-509). Elsevier Ltd.

Beaulieu, L. J. & Cordes, S. (2014). Extension community development: Building strong, vibrant communities. *Journal of Extension, 52*(5), Article v52-5comm1. https://www.joe.org/joe/2014october/comm1.php

Bowler, I., Clark, G., Crockett, A., Ilbery, B., & Shaw, A. (1996). The development of alternative farm enterprises: A study of family labour farms in the Northern Pennines of England. *Journal of Rural Studies, 12*(3), 285–295. https://doi.org/10.1016/0743-0167(96)00015-0

Busby, G., & Rendle, S. (2000). The transition from tourism on farms to farm tourism. *Tourism Management, 21*(6), 635–642. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(00)00011-X

Carter, S. (2001). Multiple business ownership in the farm sector: Differentiating monoactive, diversified and portfolio enterprises. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research, 7*(2), 43–59. https://doi.org/10.1108/13552550110695552

Chase, L., & Grubinger, V. (2014). *Food, farms, and community: Exploring food systems*. University Press of New England.

Chase, L., Stewart, M., Schiling, B., Smith, B., &Walk, M. (2018). Agritourism: Toward a conceptual framework for industry analysis. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development, 8*(1), 13-19. https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2018.081.016

Che, D., Veeck, A., & Veeck, G. (2005). Sustaining production and strengthening the agritourism product: Linkages among Michigan agritourism destinations. *Agriculture and Human Values, 22*, 225-234. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-004-8282-0

Colton, J. W., & Bissix, G. (2005). Developing agritourism in Nova Scotia: issues and challenges. *Journal of Sustainable Agriculture, 27*(1), 91-112. https://doi.org/10.1300/J064v27n01_06

Comer, M. M., Campbell, T., Edwards, K., & Hillison, J. (2006). Cooperative extension and the 1890 land-grant institution: The real story. *Journal of Extension, 44*(3), Article 3FEA4. https://joe.org/joe/2006june/a4.php

Cromartie, J., Dobis, E. A., Krumel, Jr., T. P., McGranahan, D., & Pender, J. (2020). *Rural America at a glance: 2020 edition*. U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/100089/eib-221.pdf?v=272.3

Daskalopoulou, I., & Petrou, A. (2002). Utilising a farm typology to identify potential adopters of alternative farming activities in Greek agriculture. *Journal of Rural Studies, 18*(1), 95–103. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0743-0167(01)00027-4

DeBord, K. B. (1991). Facing reality in rural America. *Journal of Extension, 29*(1), Article 1FRM1. https://www.joe.org/joe/1991spring/f1.php

Decker, D. J., Noble, L. A., & Call, D. L. (1989). Forward with the original Land-grant concept. *Journal of Extension*, *27*(2).

Di Domenico, M., & Miller, G. (2012). Farming and tourism enterprise: Experiential authenticity in the diversification of independent small-scale farming. *Tourism Management, 33*(2), 285-294. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2011.03.007

Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2014). *Internet, phone, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (4th ed.). Wiley.

Eccles (Parsons), J., Adler, T. F., Futterman, R., Goff, S. B., Kaczala, C. M., Meece, J. L., & Midgley, C. (1983). Expectancies, values, and academic behaviors. In J. T. Spence (Ed.), *Achievement and achievement motivation* (pp. 75–146). W. H. Freeman.

Eccles, J. S., Wigfield, A., & Schiefele, U. (1998). Motivation. In N. Eisenberg (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology* (5th ed., Vol. 3, pp. 1017–1095). Wiley.

Economic Research Service. (2020, October 9). *Rural economies depend on different industries*. United States Department of Agriculture. https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/chart-gallery/gallery/chart-detail/?chartId=58290

Flake, J. K., Barron, K. E., Hulleman, C., McCoach, B. D., & Welsh, M. E. (2015). Measuring cost: The forgotten component of expectancy-value theory. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 41*, 232-244. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2015.03.002

Frater, J. (1983). Farm tourism in England—Planning, funding, promotion, and some lessons from Europe. *Tourism Management, 4*(3), 167-179.

Gay, L. R., & Airasian, P. (2000). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and application* (6th ed.). Merrill.

Gil Arroyo, C., Barbieri, C., & Rich, S. (2011, April 10-12). *Examining different agritourism definitions: a proposed study among farmers, households and extension agents* [Poster presentation]. 2011 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium, Bolton Landing, New York.

George, H., & Rilla, E. (2011). *Marketing strategies for agritourism operations*. University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources. http://dx.doi.org/10.3733/ucanr.8444

Gould, F. I., Steele, D., & Woodrum, W. J. (2014). Cooperative extension: A century of innovation. *Journal of Extension, 52*(1), Article v52-1comm1. https://www.joe.org/joe/2014february/comm1.php

Herren, R. V., & Hillison, J. (1996). Agricultural education and the 1862 land-grant institutions: The rest of the story. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 37*(3), 26-32. https://doi.org/10.5032/jae.1996.03026

Honadle, B. W. (1990). Extension and tourism development. *Journal of Extension, 28*(2), Article 2FEA1. https://www.joe.org/joe/1990summer/a1.php

Hsu, C., & Miller, L. (2008, March 9-15). *Perceptions of Taiwanese academics concering intangible resources of agritourism businesses* [Paper presentation].

24th Meeting of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education. EARTH University, Costa Rica. https://www.aiaee.org/attachments/article/705/246.pdf

Ilbery, B. W. (1988). Farm diversification and the restructuring of agriculture. *Outlook on Agriculture, 17*(1), 35-39. https://doi.org/10.1177/003072708801700107

Ilbery, B. W. (1991). Farm diversification as an adjustment strategy on the urban fringe of the West Midlands. *Journal of Rural Studies, 7*(3), 207–218. https://doi.org/10.1016/0743-0167(91)90085-7

Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2004*). Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches* (2nd ed.). Pearson.

Kline, C., Cardenas, D., Leung, Y., & Sanders, S. (2007). Sustainable farm tourism: Understanding and managing environmental impacts of visitor activities. *Journal of Extension, 45*(2), Article 2RIB2. https://www.joe.org/joe/2007april/rb2.php

Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2010). *Practical research* (9th ed.). Pearson.

McGehee, N., & Kim, K. (2004). Motivation for agri-tourism entrepreneurship. *Journal of Travel Research, 43*(2), 161-170. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287504268245

McKelvie, J. (2004). Agritourism in Europe. *Travel & Tourism Analyst*, (July), 1-44.

Meyer, D. R. (2003). *The Roots of American Industrialization*. JHU Press.

Moore, M. (2021, July 2). *Commodity groups crucial for farmers federation*. Alabama Farmers Federation. https://alfafarmers.org/commodity-groups-crucial-for-farmers-federation/

Morais, D., Jakes, S., Bowen, B., & Massey Lelekacs, J. (2017). Fork2Farmer: Enabling success of small farms through partnerships with well-known chefs and the tourism sector. *Journal of Extension, 55*(2), Article v55-2iw3. https://www.joe.org/joe/2017april/iw3.php

Muske, G., & Stanforth, N. (2000). The educational needs of small business owners: A look into the future. *Journal of Extension, 38*(6), Article 6FEA4. https://www.joe.org/joe/2000december/a4.php

National Agricultural Law Center. (n.d.). *Agritourism – an overview*. https://nationalaglawcenter.org/overview/agritourism/

National Agricultural Statistics Service. (2009). *2007 census of agriculture. Alabama state and county data*. United States Department of Agriculture. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2007/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Alabama/

National Agricultural Statistics Service. (2014). *2012 census of agriculture. Alabama state and county data*. United States Department of Agriculture. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2012/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Alabama/

National Agricultural Statistics Service. (2019a). *2017 census of agriculture. Alabama state and county data*. United States Department of Agriculture. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Alabama/

National Agricultural Statistics Service. (2019b). *2017 census of agriculture. United States summary and state data*. United States Department of Agriculture. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_US/usv1.pdf

National Agricultural Statistics Service. (2021). *More about the census of agriculture program*. https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/

National Institute of Food and Agriculture. (n.d.). *Extension*. https://nifa.usda.gov/extension

Nickerson, N., Black, R., & McCool, S. (2001). Agritourism: Motivations behind farm/ranch business diversification. *Journal of Travel Research, 40*(1), 19-26. https://doi.org/10.1177/004728750104000104

Ollenburg, C., & Buckley, R. (2007). Stated economic and social motivations of farm tourism operators. *Journal of Travel Research, 45*(4), 444-452. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0047287507299574

Parker, K., Horowirz, J., Brown, A., Fry, R., Cohn, D., Igielnik, R. (2018, May 22). *What unites and divides urban, suburban, and rural communities*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2018/05/22/demographic-and-economic-trends-in-urban-suburban-and-rural-communities/

Pennings, J. M. E., Irwin, S. H., & Good, D. L. (2002). Surveying farmers: A case study. *Review of Agricultural Economics*, *24*(1), 266-277. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9353.00096

Phelan, C., & Sharpley, R. (2010, April 26-27). *Agritourism and the farmer as rural entrepreneur: A UK analysis* [Paper presentation]. NeXT Tourism Entrepreneurship Conference, Ontario, Canada. http://clok.uclan.ac.uk/1677/

Philip, S., Hunter, C., & Blackstock, K. (2010). A typology for defining agritourism. *Tourism Management,* 31(6), 754-758. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.08.001

Reeder, R. J., & Brown, D. M. (2005). *Recreation, tourism, and rural well-being*. United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/46126/15112_err7_1_.pdf?v=7841.9

Rich, S. R., Standish, K., Tomas, S., Barbieri, C., & Ainely. (2016). The current state of agritourism research in the United States. *Travel and Tourism Research Association:*

Advancing Tourism Research Globally. https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra/2010/Visual/12/?utm_source=scholarworks.umass.edu%2Fttra%2F2010%2FVisual%2F12&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages

Savage, A. E., Barbieri, C., & Jakes, S. (2020). Cultivating success: Personal, family, and societal attributes affecting women in agritourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1838528

Schroeder, T. (2004). Motivations of resource-based tourism operators in North Dakota. *Journal of Extension, 42*(6), Article 6FEA6. https://www.joe.org/joe/2004december/a6.php

Sharpley, R., & Vass, A. (2006). Tourism, farming, and diversification: An attitudinal study. *Tourism Management, 27*(5), 1040-1052. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2005.10.025

Slocum, S. L., & Curtis, K. R. (2018). *Food and agricultural tourism: Theory and best practice*. Routledge.

Sweet Grown Alabama. (n.d.a). *Why join sweet grown Alabama?* https://www.sweetgrownalabama.org/why-join

Sweet Grown Alabama, (n.d.b). *Find sweet grown Alabama products*. https://www.sweetgrownalabama.org/find-sweet-grown

Tew, C., & Barbieri, C. (2012). The perceived benefits of agritourism: The provider's perspective. *Tourism Management, 33*(1), 215-224. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2011.02.005

Tweeten, K, Leistritz, L., & Hodur, N. (2008). Growing rural tourism opportunities. *Journal of Extension, 46*(2), Article 2FEA2. https://www.joe.org/joe/2008april/a2.php

United States Census Bureau. (2021). *Metropolitan and micropolitan statistical area totals: 2010-2020*. https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/technical-

documentation/research/evaluation-estimates/2020-evaluation-estimates/2010s-totals-metro-and-micro-statistical-areas.html

United States Department of Agriculture. (2019a). *Farm producers* (ACH17-2). https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights/2019/2017Census_Farm_Producers.pdf

United States Department of Agriculture. (2019b). *State profile: Alabama.* https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Alabama/cp99001.pdf

United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development. *All programs*. https://www.rd.usda.gov/page/all-programs

Veeck, G., Che, D., & Veeck, A. (2006). America's changing farmscape: A study of agricultural tourism in Michigan. *The Professional Geographer, 58*(3), 235-248. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9272.2006.00565.x

Weaver, D. B., & Fennell, D. A. (1997). The vacation farm sector in Saskatchewan: A profile of operations. *Tourism Management, 18*(6), 357-365. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(97)00039-3

Whitt, C., Low, S. A., & Van Sandt, A. (2019, November 4). Agritourism allows farms to diversify and has potential benefits for rural communities. *Amber Waves*. https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2019/november/agritourism-allows-farms-to-diversify-and-has-potential-benefits-for-rural-communities/#:~:text=Agritourism%20helps%20U.S.%20farmers%20and,own%20fruits%20and%20vegetables%E2%80%9D%20programs.&text=Adjusted%20for%20inflation%2C%20agritourism%20revenue,almost%20%24950%20million%20in%202017.

Wilson, J., Thilmany, D., & Sullins, M. (2006). *Agritourism: A potential economic driver in the rural west*. Economic Development Report. Colorado State University.

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Agritourism Instrument - Email

Start of Block: Introduction/Consent

Q75
*****THIS SURVEY IS BEST TAKEN ON A DESKTOP COMPUTER*****

****This survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.****

Your participation and expertise is important and valued!

We would like to invite you to participate in our research study about the Alabama agritourism industry. Operators such as yourself are the only source we have to collect data on this topic and we value your opinions and perspectives.

Please note that your participation is voluntary and you may stop participating at any time. Participation involves minimal risk, no more than encountered in everyday life. Data is being collected in a manner that there are no direct links to an individual participant.

Please do not hesitate to contact Meredith Hall or Dr. Chris Clemons if you have any questions about this research project. For further information, click the "Information Letter" link below.

Information Letter

Thank you and we look forward to your response!

Meredith Hall
Graduate Student, Agriscience Education
Auburn University
mrh0027@auburn.edu

Christopher Clemons, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Agriscience Education
Auburn University
cac0132@auburn.edu

○ **I AGREE** to participate

○ **I DO NOT** wish to participate

End of Block: Introduction/Consent

Start of Block: Defining Agritourism

Q1 Which of the following pictures best captures the way you see agritourism?

- ☐ Direct Sales
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Entertainment
- ☐ Hospitality
- ☐ Outdoor Recreation

Page Break

Q2 In my personal opinion, I associate agritourism with the word(s):

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Agricultural Setting	○	○	○	○
Farm	○	○	○	○
Ranch	○	○	○	○
Agriculture	○	○	○	○
Farmers' Market	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Q3 As an agritourism operator, I am confident in my ability to:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Interact with visitors on my farm.	○	○	○	○
Minimize risks to visitors on my farm.	○	○	○	○
Market my agritourism operation using social media.	○	○	○	○
Market my agritourism operation using a website.	○	○	○	○
Develop a business plan for my agritourism operation.	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Q4 In my personal opinion, I associate agritourism with the word:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Education	○	○	○	○
Entertainment	○	○	○	○
Hospitality	○	○	○	○
Recreation	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Q5 As an agritourism operator, I am confident in my ability to:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Recruit labor for my agritourism operation.	○	○	○	○
Train staff for my agritourism operation.	○	○	○	○
Make ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accommodations for my agritourism operation.	○	○	○	○
Manage my time between my agricultural production operation and my agritourism operation.	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Q6 In my personal opinion, I associate agritourism with the word(s):

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Working	○	○	○	○
Farming	○	○	○	○
Outdoor Recreation	○	○	○	○
Visitors	○	○	○	○
Travel	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Q7 As an agritourism operator, I am confident in my ability to:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Maximize my farm's resources.	○	○	○	○
Interpret legislation concerning agritourism.	○	○	○	○
Collaborate with other agritourism operators to form an agritourism trail.	○	○	○	○
Find educational resources to help my improve my agritourism operation.	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Defining Agritourism

Start of Block: Education

Q8 I offer the following **educational** activities on my farm/ranch:

- ☐ Workshops
- ☐ Tours
- ☐ Tastings
- ☐ Farm equipment demonstrations
- ☐ Internships
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other, pleas specify: _____

End of Block: Education

Start of Block: Entertainment

Q9 I offer the following **entertainment** activities on my farm/ranch:

- ☐ Concerts
- ☐ Crop maze
- ☐ Festivals
- ☐ Hayrides
- ☐ Children's play areas
- ☐ Petting zoo
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other, please specify: _____

End of Block: Entertainment

Start of Block: Direct Sales

Q10 I produce the following products for **direct sale** on my farm/ranch:

- [ ] U-Pick produce
- [ ] U-Cut Christmas trees
- [ ] Harvested produce
- [ ] Fresh meats
- [ ] Processed meats
- [ ] Cheese
- [ ] Milk
- [ ] None of the above

Page Break

Q11 I produce the following products for **direct sale** on my farm/ranch:

- [ ] Honey
- [ ] Fiber products
- [ ] Flowers
- [ ] Wine
- [ ] Cider
- [ ] Soaps/lotions/beauty products
- [ ] None of the above
- [ ] Other, please specify: _____

End of Block: Direct Sales

Start of Block: Hospitality

Q12 I offer the following **hospitality** activities on my farm/ranch:

- ☐ Farm-to-table dinners
- ☐ Overnight stays
- ☐ Weddings/receptions
- ☐ Photography sessions
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other, please specify: _____

End of Block: Hospitality

Start of Block: Outdoor Recreation

Q13 I offer the following **outdoor recreation** activities on my farm/ranch:

- ☐ Hunting
- ☐ Fishing
- ☐ Horseback riding
- ☐ ATV riding
- ☐ Bird watching
- ☐ Hiking trails
- ☐ Mountain biking
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other, please specify: _____

End of Block: Outdoor Recreation

Start of Block: Value of agritourism

Q14 Please consider why you started your agritourism operation to answer these questions.
I was motivated to start my agritourism operation to:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Generate more income.	○	○	○	○
Manage fluctuations in farm income.	○	○	○	○
Provide employment for family.	○	○	○	○
Ensure my farm stays within my family.	○	○	○	○
Maximize farm resources.	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Q15 Please consider why you **started** your agritourism operation to answer these questions.
I was motivated to **start** my agritourism operation to:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Benefit from tax incentives.	○	○	○	○
Educate the public about agriculture.	○	○	○	○
Meet a need in the tourism market.	○	○	○	○
Build relationships in the community.	○	○	○	○
Recreate the success of others in the agritourism business.	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Q16

I am motivated to **continue** my agritourism operation to:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Generate more income.	○	○	○	○
Manage fluctuations in farm income.	○	○	○	○
Provide employment for family.	○	○	○	○
Ensure my farm stays within my family.	○	○	○	○
Maximize farm resources.	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Q17
I am motivated to **continue** my agritourism operation to:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Benefit from tax incentives.	○	○	○	○
Educate the public about agriculture.	○	○	○	○
Meet a need in the tourism market.	○	○	○	○
Build relationships in the community.	○	○	○	○
Recreate the success of others in the agritourism business.	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Value of agritourism

Start of Block: Costs of agritourism

Q18 In your experience as an agritourism operator, which of the following activities require the most of **your time**? Click and drag the activities to arrange in rank order with 1 as the most time-intensive.

_____ Recruiting labor
_____ Training staff
_____ Managing risks
_____ Securing crop insurance
_____ General farm upkeep
_____ Food safety
_____ Marketing using a website
_____ Marketing using social media
_____ Marketing using roadside signange
_____ Other

Page Break

Q19 In your experience as an agritourism operator, which of the following activities require the most of **your money**? Click and drag the activities to arrange in rank order with 1 as the most money-intensive.

_____ Recruiting labor
_____ Training staff
_____ Managing risks
_____ Securing liability insurance
_____ General farm upkeep
_____ Food safety
_____ Marketing using a website
_____ Marketing using social media
_____ Marketing using roadside signange
_____ Other

Page Break

Q20 In your experience as an agritourism operator, which of the following activities require the most of **your labor**? Click and drag the activities to arrange in rank order with 1 as the most labor-intensive.

_____ Recruiting labor
_____ Training staff
_____ Managing risks
_____ Securing liability insurance
_____ General farm upkeep
_____ Food safety
_____ Marketing using a website
_____ Marketing using social media
_____ Marketing using roadside signange
_____ Other

End of Block: Costs of agritourism

Start of Block: Personal characteristics

Q21 How many acres do you farm? Please include acres you own **and** lease.

- ○ <1 acres
- ○ 1-9 acres
- ○ 10-49 acres
- ○ 50-139 acres
- ○ 140-259 acres
- ○ 260-499 acres
- ○ 500-1000 acres
- ○ 1000-2000 acres
- ○ 2000+ acres

Page Break

Q22 What percentage of your farm/ranch acreage is dedicated to agritourism activities?

- ○ 1-25%
- ○ 26-50%
- ○ 51-75%
- ○ 76-99%
- ○ 100%

Page Break

Q23 What percentage of your farm/ranch income comes from agritourism activities?

- ○ 1-25%
- ○ 26-50%
- ○ 51-75%
- ○ 76-99%
- ○ 100%

Page Break

Q24 How many years have you owned your agricultural operation?

_____

Page Break

Q25 How many years have you hosted agritourism activities?

_____

Page Break

Q26 What times of year is your agritourism operation open for visitors? Choose all that apply.

- [ ] Winter
- [ ] Spring
- [ ] Summer
- [ ] Fall

Page Break

Q27 What is the busiest season for your agritourism business?

- [ ] Winter
- [ ] Spring
- [ ] Summer
- [ ] Fall

Page Break

Q28 What is your age in years?

_____

Page Break

Q29 What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

Page Break

Q30 What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- High school diploma/GED
- Some college studies
- 2-year college degree
- 4-year college degree
- Some graduate studies
- Graduate degree

Page Break

Q31 How many individuals (adults and at-home children) live in your household?

- 1 person
- 2 people
- 3 people
- 4 people
- 5 people
- 6 people
- More than 6 people

Page Break

Q32 In what region on the map is your agritourism operation located?

- Region 1
- Region 2
- Region 3
- Region 4
- Region 5
- Region 6
- Region 7

Page Break

Q33
Does this definition of agritourism align with your personal definition of agritourism?

"Agritourism is the business of working farms and ranches connecting visitors with their products and resources."

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Somewhat Agree
- ○ Somewhat Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

Page Break

Q82 May we contact you for future studies about Alabama agritourism?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Q83 If yes, please provide contact information. Your information will be separated from your responses. Your information will not be shared.

- ○ Name _____
- ○ Phone _____
- ○ Email _____

End of Block: Personal characteristics