

INTRODUCTION

*by Russell Tronstad and
Julie Leones¹*

This is a manual intended to help farm and ranch operators and other individuals who grow or process food products market their products and services directly to the consumer. It is one way of 'adding value' to agriculture before products leave the farm. Some forms of direct marketing are integrally linked with tourism in the local community. This manual also explains these connections and provides information on how to enhance sales and other related tourism activities and services.

Agriculture and tourism share a lot in common in Arizona. They both depend in part on nature, the weather and the quality of Arizona's natural resources. They both include large numbers of family-run businesses. Individuals in both industries are becoming aware that good marketing is a key to success of the industry and of individual businesses (Moyer). Eating and drinking establishments that serve tourists are in an excellent position to help promote local agricultural products through what they serve and the information they provide on their menus. Farms that sell products directly to visitors can help attract large numbers of visitors to a community. These visitors may also buy meals, lodging and other items from businesses that serve tourists.

As explained above, any time farmers or ranchers sell their products or services

directly to the final user they are engaged in direct farm (or ranch) marketing. Some examples of direct farm marketing include pick your own orchards and farms, roadside stands, and farmers' markets. Related farm marketing activities include selling directly to restaurants, and on-farm restaurants or restaurants with their own 'kitchen' gardens and orchards (currently the rage in California).

Large numbers of direct farm marketing operations exist in other states. Extension specialists in Wisconsin and Michigan estimate there are over a 1,000 such enterprises in each of their states. The national estimate is 12,000 U-pick operations and roadside stands. A very generous estimate of the total number of U-picks, roadside stands, farmers' markets and wineries in Arizona is 60. On a per capita basis, we might expect as many as 500 outlets to operate in Arizona based on the number of such operations in the Midwest. Hence, unlike some states, there is great potential for farmers interested in marketing directly to consumers and not much competition.

Agricultural tourism has also been referred to as 'Agritourism' and 'Agriculturally based leisure attractions'. Agricultural tourism is the visitation of agricultural attractions as part of a leisure time activity. Agricultural tourism may include visits to dude ranches, pick your own farms, roadside stands, wineries, farm or ranch bed and breakfasts, agricultural festivals and fairs and food processing facilities (such as dairies, packing plants, etc.).

Agricultural tourists are interested in having a farm **experience** and incidentally, want to buy agricultural and food products. Consequently, farmers and ranchers interested in selling to agricultural tourists, need to be aware that they are selling services as well as products.

Not all agricultural tourism involves purchasing directly from farms, but much of it does and not all direct farm marketing is done to people interested in a farm experience, but much of it is. Farm and ranch operators who plan to do some direct marketing can benefit from understanding who agricultural tourists are and what they are looking for.

The idea of creating a reference handbook on direct farm marketing and tourism came out of a study of agricultural tourism in Cochise County, Arizona and subsequent discussions with extension specialists and agents who have worked with producers interested in direct marketing. Materials pertaining to direct marketing and agricultural tourism from all over the United States were reviewed and the best materials were incorporated where appropriate. Some articles or publications have been included 'as is' while others are referenced in articles written specifically for this handbook. Finally some materials are excerpts from longer publications.

This handbook is intended for three distinct audiences. The first audience is agricultural producers in the state already involved in direct marketing. A second audience includes farm and ranch operators who are interested in direct marketing of services or products that they currently produce. The final audience are individuals such as master gardeners, 4-H members and others who want to grow or process products especially for direct marketing.

The manual is organized in sections that can stand on their own. A farm operator interested in starting to direct market may benefit from going through the manual systematically from start to finish. Farm operators already involved in direct marketing may wish to refer first to the sections that most concern or interest them. The manual has been placed in a binder to allow the addition of new materials as they become available. Each section consists of a brief introduction and a compilation of materials relating to the section topic. Each section also includes a list of references.

References

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¹ Russell Tronstad and Julie Leones, Assistant Specialists, Department of Agriculture and Resource Economics, Cooperative Extension, The University of Arizona, Tucson, Az.

FROM:

Direct Farm Marketing and Tourism Handbook.

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