

THE IMPLICATIONS OF NEW EXTENSION ROLES AS A RESULT OF THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF AGRI-TOURISM IN THE CARIBBEAN

J.T. Maynard<sup>1</sup> and D. Dolly<sup>2</sup>

ABSTRACT

Since 2000, a number of Caribbean countries, including Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, the Caymans, Dominica, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago have been using various models of agri-tourism. Some of the tourism products delivered include farm tours, nature trails, visits to agro-processing facilities, farm museums and farm stays. Agri-tourism is a livelihoods strategy that brings together two traditionally distinct sectors to create new opportunities, which have implications for advisory service providers. It is a diversification strategy, in which both household economic survival and the conservation of agricultural land become equally important. This case-study seeks answers to discover if the advent of agri-tourism has created a

need for specialised and dedicated agri-tourism extension or advisory services. It also seeks to find the capacity elements necessary to successfully operate such services and the policies required to facilitate new extension–client relationships. This information may suggest a new function for agricultural extension officers and rural advisory service providers. This will require new skills in farm family self-assessment, entrepreneurship and business planning, marketing, promotion, visitor risk assessment and a range of other skills linked to the tourism industry. The analysis facilitates recognition of the core differences between the tourist industry and the agriculture sector that are relevant to agri-tourism operators. For example, agriculture offers a tangible product, such as food, while tourism offers an intangible product, i.e. an

experience. The paper concludes with policy and capacity-building issues for retraining advisory officers that will be essential to preserve the integrity of agricultural production, while supporting the tourism experience.

**KEY WORDS:** *EXPERIENCE, LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY, RETOOLING, RISK, SERVICES*

1 PO Box 1809, St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda  
2 Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, University of the West Indies, Saint Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago



## INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

As world economies change and small agriculture economies decline, Caribbean farmers, like their counterparts in Europe and North and Latin America need to diversify their farm operations for economic survival (Beus, 2008; Hatch, 2009; Kentucky Agri-Tourism Working Group, n.d.). Universally, agri-tourism is defined as the activity of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education or active involvement in the activities of the farm or farming operations (KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Occasional Papers, 2005; Pittman, 2006; Waithe, 2006; Brookover and Jodice, 2010; ATDC, 2010; Culver, 2010; Lobo, 2010; Nielsen, 2010; Schmitt, 2010; Harvey, 2011). Agri-tourism is also considered as a diversified product of farms or farming areas, that bases value creation in the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Fiore *et al.*, 2007; Jurowski, 2009).

To further facilitate research and policy-making, five agri-tourism typologies that are gaining popularity in academic and agri-tourism circles were tested, namely: (i) non-working farm agri-tourism, (ii) working farm, passive contact agri-tourism, (iii) working farm, indirect contact agri-tourism, (iv) working farm, direct contact, staged agri-tourism and (v) working farm, direct contact, authentic agri-tourism (Phillip *et al.*, 2010). The last four typologies all coincide with the four realms of consumer

experience as defined by Pine and Gilmore (1998). The paradigm created a space that allowed researchers and practitioners to analyse tourism experiences, as distinct from tourism services, on the scales of economic value creation<sup>3</sup>.

Agri-tourism is a growing alternate farm activity in the Caribbean. The corresponding extension and rural advisory service and small business development environment for the emerging agri-tourism farmer has not been particularly responsive. Tourism evolved from a vibrant hotel industry in the early 1950s, in the era of ‘travel for sea, sun and sand’. National tourism departments were oriented only towards the management and operation needs of hotels and destination marketing and do not have a dedicated ‘tourism extension function’ charged with facilitating change and bringing innovations to entrepreneurs, as has occurred in parts of North America and Europe. Currently, neither of the front line functionaries of either the tourism or agriculture industry are particularly oriented to agri-tourism product innovation and agri-tourism technology transfer, although agriculture extension has been involved in commodity and farming systems diversification and technology transfer for decades.

The agri-tourism product is the result of the staging of farming processes used in the production of raw materials, to create memorable visitor experiences. Concrete and tangible items such as food, craft etc. are merely supplementary

or complementary items. The ‘staging’ of the farm is the equivalent of processing in traditional value-added agriculture and requires an appreciation of experience economy strategies which: “...create experiential value and provides a tool to help small business operators assess and enhance their experiential offerings that generate value for consumers” (Fiore *et al.*, 2007). Furthermore, in order to guarantee authenticity, quality and relevance of the agri-tourism product, elements of identity economy and experience design must be included in the analysis required to stage consumer experiences. Memory creation and marketing and distribution of experiences require the use of elements of the social economy and social media. These issues fall outside the realm of traditional agriculture extension and rural advisory services and may be viewed as part of the role of the tourism product designer.

In 2010, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda appointed an experienced agriculture technician to the Ministry of Tourism to develop agri-tourism. This expert was responsible for analysis and development of the agri-tourism value chain, tourism experience creation, product design

<sup>3</sup> B. J. Pine and J. H. Gilmore pioneered the separation of experiences from the service economy as a distinct value creation offering and coined the term and concept of the experience economy.



and entrepreneurship and the use of social media. It soon emerged that specialist knowledge and skills to support the emerging agri-tourism entrepreneur – an agri-tourism extension or agri-tourism advisory service – was required. This spawned the notion of a case-study to access the information and technology needs of agri-tourism farmers and options for developing this enterprise. This case-study analyses agri-tourism as an evolving product in Caribbean tourism, within the context of relevant contemporary global literature and practice, to answer the following three questions:

- Has the advent of agri-tourism, as an economic livelihood activity in the Caribbean, created a need for specialised and dedicated agri-tourism extension or agri-tourism advisory services?
- What are the capacity elements necessary to operate this service successfully?
- What are the policies required to facilitate new extension–client relationships and functions?

## **MATERIALS, METHODS AND DATA SOURCES**

Information was gathered through a short 23-question online survey of Ministries of Agriculture in 19 different Caribbean islands, aimed at gaining a snap-shot of the state of agri-tourism on their individual island territories. Respondents were asked to complete the survey and to facilitate completion by any other Ministry involved in supporting the development of agri-tourism.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Responses were received from the following 12 Caribbean territories: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago. Of the 18 responses received (15 from Ministries of Agriculture, three from Ministries of Tourism), six defined agri-tourism as including farm tours and sales of farm produce to hotels and other tourism consumers while the remaining nine limited the term specifically to farm tours and related activities. For 23% of the respondents, agri-tourism operations in their territory were complementary enterprises on the farms and 76% reported it as a supplementary activity. Agri-tourism was not identified as the main farm operation on any farm.

There were approximately 300 agri-tourism attractions listed in the survey. The main agri-tourism activities practised in over half of the respondent territories were products such as jams and jellies and craft items, nature education tours, agricultural education programmes, hiking on-farm, on-farm demonstrations and overnight on-farm stays.

All respondents reported that a Ministry-based agriculture extension service operated in their jurisdiction. Training and visit extension systems and farmer field school methodologies were practised in 37% and 13% of the territories, respectively. Approximately 25% of the

respondents reported that they used a farmer-focused, commodity-based approach to extension. A dedicated agri-tourism extension service was reported in two territories. In five other instances, the main source of agri-tourism extension support was from extension officers with some knowledge of agri-tourism. Sixteen of the 18 respondents reported no dedicated agri-tourism advisory service of any sort, which suggests that for the dedicated agri-tourism extension service, support may have been drawn from subject matter agri-tourism related specialists or general extension agents with some specialised agri-tourism related training. Other agri-tourism extension support appears to have come from specialised terminal projects operated by technical co-operation agencies in the region, which are not permanent and do not guarantee sustained service delivery.

87% stated that the Ministry of Agriculture was the farmers' main source of information on agri-tourism and 93% cited the Ministry of Tourism as their main source. A quarter (25%) of respondents indicated the Ministry of Industry as an information source. In one instance, the National Trust was listed as a source of agri-tourism information. 68% of the respondents reported that their Ministry had never offered any kind of agri-tourism training, while 56% indicated that various types of agri-tourism training had been offered by other agencies including NGOs, Inter-American Institute



for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Ministry of Forestry, Ministry of Tourism, the Tourism Product Development Company and agri-tourism projects supported by technical assistance agencies or development funding.

From a list of 33 possible topics deemed important for agri-tourism training, over 62% of the respondents included: product development, marketing, customer service, rural tourism, the use of social media in agri-tourism, tour guiding, product definition, entrepreneurship, on-farm visitor safety, costing and pricing, safety on educational tours, operation of educational tours and finances and investment among others. ‘Management of groups’ was one topic not mentioned in the survey but was suggested by one respondent.

The following issues were raised with respect to policy recommendations: incentives, training of farmers, training of extension personnel in tourism and provision of agri-tourism support, land use and zoning on agri-tourism farms, inclusion of agriculture tours in the national list of tourist attractions, mandatory training for taxi operators and tourism workers about the importance of agri-tourism, development of an agri-tourism policy as well as a policy for agri-tourism extension or agri-tourism advisory services, national budgetary allocation for agri-tourism policy implementation, agri-tourism standards, monitoring of agri-tourism enterprises and tax incentives on income generated from agriculture

based or agri-tourism based activities.

Most farmers in the case-study countries produce single commodities or a basket of essential food items for which there is always a demand. In contrast to housewives and restaurants, the consumer of agri-tourism purchases an experience that is based on varying levels of participation on the farm or interaction with the farming way of life. Because the production process in agri-tourism is ‘staging of the farm’ to create visitor experiences, the agri-tourism operator must deal with these additional issues. The production unit is now a dual-purpose one, producing a biological product, while staging the same biological processes to generate a

complementary or supplementary product, which is the tourism experience. As stagers and providers of consumer experiences, agri-tourism farmers are owner-operators of a diversified business.

Agriculture extension or rural advisory agents need to be re-trained to guide the agri-tourism farmer through their entrepreneurship journey. The desirable training topics and policy concerns generated in the case-study are listed in Tables 1 and 2.

The new role of farmers corresponds with the views of US, Canadian and British researchers and extension agents (Muske and Stanforth, 2000; Comen and Foster, 2003; Muske *et al.*, 2004; Hsu,

**TABLE 1: INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND LEARNING NEEDS OF THE AGRITOURISM ENTREPRENEUR**

Information, Education and Learning Needs		
Tourism	Enterprise	Personal Development
Tourism and hospitality legislative frameworks and regulations	Entrepreneurship and business planning	Farm family personality self-assessment
Management of tourism product delivery	Inventory, categorisation and classification of attractions	Staff development
Tour guiding and interpretation	Project preparation	Language skills
Rural tourism	Risk assessment, management and mitigation	Public speaking
Product quality assurance analysis	Financial/Enterprise	Networking
Agri-tourism and the internet: Social media	Consumer relations and customer service	Breaking barriers in the use of ICTs in small business
Tourism product development	Marketing management, community outreach	
Tourism experience design	Marketing, advertising and promotion	
Information technology	Revenue management	
	Insurance and risk management	



2005; Barbieri, 2008; Burke and Sewake, 2008; Phelan and Sharpley, 2010; NCSU Tourism Extension 2009, 2010, 2011).

Any move to develop agri-tourism extension or rural advisory services will place the officers on the front line with their counterparts in the tourism sector. To further ensure credibility, the training of agri-tourism extension agents should be done through the university system in both the academic credit and continuing education credit stream.

## CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The tourist industry has mainly been a service-oriented industry, whereas the focus of farming is on primary production and value-added by-product or product manufacturing. Agri-tourism is a new attraction in the evolving experience

segment of the tourism economy. In the Caribbean, however, as agri-tourism straddles two industries and economies, modifications to the production function of the farm should be handled carefully to maintain the integrity of the core agriculture production function, to avoid any compromise to either the core or secondary functions (i.e. the design and delivery of quality tourist experiences). Good farm management is as important as good tourism management. Therefore, the basic orientation of the agri-tourism extension or advisory personnel must be agriculture.

The preservation of the agricultural production integrity of the farm requires the agriculture extension officer or rural advisory service provider to develop an appreciation of tourism principles and visitor-experience design skills. The case-study results suggest that each territory should

carry out further agri-tourism value-chain analysis to determine how the agri-tourism extension services should be delivered.

## LITERATURE CITED

**Agri Tourism Development Cooperation (ATDC), n.d.** ATDC, Maharashtra, India.

[http://www.agritourism.in/faq.html#1\\_bottom](http://www.agritourism.in/faq.html#1_bottom)

**Barbieri, C. 2008.** '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 GTR-NRS-P-42. USDA, Bolton Landing, NY, USA.

**Beus, C.E. 2008.** *Agri-tourism: Cultivating Tourists on the Farm*. Washington State University Extension Farming the Northwest Publication, Report no. EB20202. WSU Publishing and Printing, WA, USA.

**Brookover, R. and Jodice, L. 2010.** Pee Dee Agritourism Product Development Plan. Clemson International Institute for Tourism Research and Development, Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management. [http://www.clemson.edu/public/ciecd/focus\\_areas/agribusiness/programs/agritourism/agritourismresources/PeeDeeAgritourism.pdf](http://www.clemson.edu/public/ciecd/focus_areas/agribusiness/programs/agritourism/agritourismresources/PeeDeeAgritourism.pdf)

**TABLE 2: POLICY CONCERNS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRITOURISM AND AGRITOURISM ADVISORY SERVICES**

Incentives and Resource Allocation	Training	Planning, Standards and Regulations
Agriculture tours in the national list of tourist attractions	Tour guiding for extension agents	Land use and zoning on agri-tourism farms
Tax incentives on income generated from agriculture based or agri-tourism based activities	Mandatory training for taxi operators and tourism workers about the importance of agri-tourism	Extension agent assigned by district to provide agri-tourism support
National budgetary allocation to implement agri-tourism policies		Agri-tourism/farm tours standards
		Development of a national agri-tourism policy
		A policy for agri-tourism extension or agri-tourism advisory services
		Monitoring of agri-tourism enterprises



**Burke, K and Sewake, K. 2008.** 'Adoption of computer and internet technologies in small firm agriculture: A study of flower growers in Hawaii.' *Journal of Extension* 46 (3). <http://www.joe.org/joe/2008june/rb5.php>

**Comen, T. and Foster, D. 2003.** *Agricultural Diversification and Agritourism: Critical Success Factors*. Interim Report Presented to the Vermont Department of Agriculture, VT, USA.

**Culver, C. 2010.** *Glossary of Agricultural Production, Programs, and Policy*. (4th ed.) Division of Agriculture, University of Arkansas, AR, USA. <http://www.nationalaglawcenter.org/ag-law-glossary/>

**Fiore, A.M., Niehm, L., Oh, H., Jeong, M. and Hausafus, C. 2007.** 'Experience economy strategies: Adding value to small rural businesses.' *Journal of Extension* 45 (2). <http://www.joe.org/joe/2007april/iw4.php>

**Harvey, E. 2011.** Agritourism Development in the Caribbean: Some experiences and lessons. Barbados Agritourism Unit, Barbados. Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). <http://www.agri-tourismlinkages.com/agrosuccess.pdf>

**Hatch, D.A. 2009.** *Agri-tourism: A New Agricultural Business Enterprise*. Louisiana State University Ag Center Research and Extension, USA. [http://www.text.lsuagcenter.com/en/community/community\\_dev/Agritourism/publications/Agritourism+++a+new+agricultural+business+enterprise.htm](http://www.text.lsuagcenter.com/en/community/community_dev/Agritourism/publications/Agritourism+++a+new+agricultural+business+enterprise.htm)

**Hsu, C.C. 2005.** Identification of intangible resources essential to agri-tourism enterprises in Taiwan: a Delphi study. PhD Dissertation. Graduate School of Ohio State University, OH, USA. [http://www.rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc\\_num=osu1133277756](http://www.rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1133277756)

**Jurowski, C. 2009.** 'An examination of the four realms of tourism experience theory.' International CHRIE Conference-Refereed Track 2009 ICHRIE Conference. University of Massachusetts–Amherst, Amherst, MA, USA <http://www.scholarworks.umass.edu/refereed/Sessions/Wednesday/23/>

**Kentucky Agri-Tourism Working Group. n.d.** *Issue White Paper: Establishment of an Agritourism Industry in Kentucky*. [http://docsfiles.com/pdf/establishment\\_of\\_an\\_agri\\_tourism\\_industry\\_in\\_kentucky.html](http://docsfiles.com/pdf/establishment_of_an_agri_tourism_industry_in_kentucky.html)

**Lobo, R. 2010.** *Helpful Agricultural Tourism (Agritourism) Definitions*. University of California Cooperative Extension, San Diego County, CA, USA.

**Muske, G. and Stanforth, N. 2000.** 'The educational needs of small business owners: A look into the future.' *Journal of Extension* 38 (6) <http://www.joe.org/joe/2000december/a4.php>

**Muske, G., Stanforth, N. and Woods, M.D. 2004.** Micro business use of technology and extension's role. *Journal of Extension* 38 (6) <http://www.joe.org/joe/2004february/a4.php>

**NCSU Tourism Extension. 2009.** The Business Side of Agritourism. Workshop 2009. <http://www.ereg.caes.uga.edu/documents/december09agritourismagenda.pdf>

**NCSU Tourism Extension. 2010.** The Business Side of Agritourism. Workshop 2010. [http://www.ncsu.edu/tourismextension/programs/business\\_side\\_of\\_agritourism\\_workshop.php](http://www.ncsu.edu/tourismextension/programs/business_side_of_agritourism_workshop.php)

**NCSU Tourism Extension 2011.** The Business Side of Agritourism. Workshop 2011. [http://www.ncsu.edu/tourismextension/programs/business\\_side\\_of\\_agritourism.php](http://www.ncsu.edu/tourismextension/programs/business_side_of_agritourism.php)

**Nielsen, N.C., Just, F. and Nissen, K.A. 2010.** 'Rural tourism: Return to the farm perspective.' Working paper prepared for 19th Nordic Symposium in Tourism and Hospitality Research in Akureyri, Iceland.



**Phelan, C. and Sharpley, R. 2010.** 'Agritourism and the farmer as rural entrepreneur: A UK analysis.' NeXT Tourism Entrepreneurship Conference. Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

**Phillip, S., Hunter, C. and Blackstock, K. 2010.** 'A typology for defining agritourism.' *Tourism Management* 31: 754–758.

**Pine, B.J. and Gilmore, J.H. 1998.** 'Welcome to the experience economy.' *Harvard Business Review*.

**Pittman, H.M. 2006.** *Planting the Seeds for a New Industry in Arkansas: Agritourism*. The National Agricultural Law Center, University of Arkansas School of Law, Arkansas, USA.

**Schmitt, M. 2010.** 'Agritourism: From additional income to livelihood strategy and rural development.' *The Open Social Science Journal*. 3: 41–50 <http://www.benthamscience.com/open/tosscej/articles/V003/SI0010TOSSCIJ/41TOSSCIJ.pdf>

**Tourism KwaZulu-Natal 2005.** Agritourism. Occasional Paper No. 35. <http://www.zulu.org.za/userfiles/1/Occ%20paper%2035%20AgriTourism%20in%20KZN.pdf>

**Waithe, R. 2006.** *Developing an Inventory on the Status of Agro-Tourism Linkages and Availability of Resources to Support the Sustainable Development of Linkages (Barbados)*. Barbados Agri-tourism Inventory Report. IICA, Barbados. <http://www.garvey.readyhosting.com/iica/Publications/RWaithe.pdf>