

Growing Agritourism in West Virginia

Evaluating current policies and barriers to growth

**Interim Committee on Agriculture
and Rural Development
Nov. 14, 2021**

**Presented by the West Virginia
Department of Agriculture**

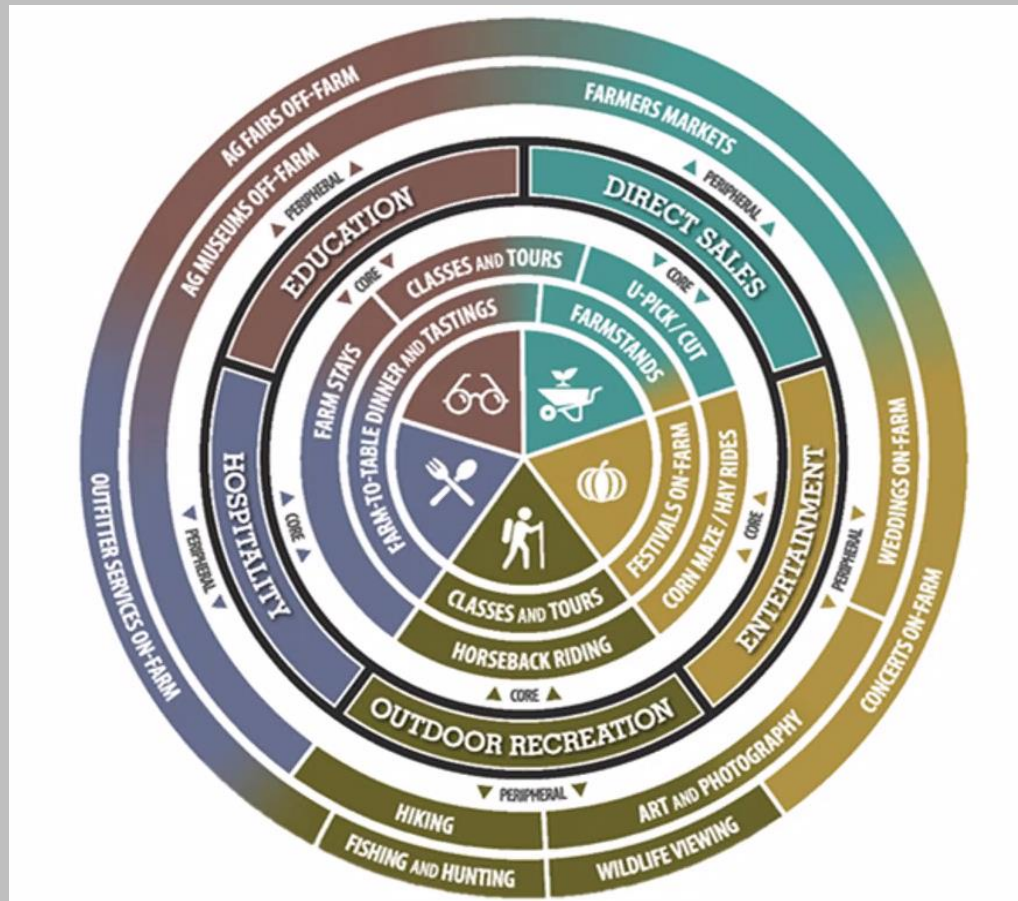


What We Intend to Cover

- History and Intent Agritourism
Bill: 19-36
- Current Issues Facing the Industry
- Case Studies in West Virginia
- Path Moving Forward

[Full Code](#)





Open discussion

**What was the original
intent SB 446: Creating
Agritourism
Responsibility Act (2018)**



Emerging Agritourism Issues

As the industry continues to grow, we see more and more issues come to our office for hopeful solutions or assistance to overrule.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEFINITIONS

Local government does not have to look at the same definitions that we use. For zoning and planning commissions, it makes it difficult to deem business as “agritourism” and not “commercial.”

EXEMPTIONS

Agriculture is allowed certain exemptions in business. What exemptions should agritourism be allowed? I.e.. – Fire Marshall Codes?

EXPANSIONS

Agritourism businesses (who are mostly farmers) are being asked to perform certain studies before being granted expansion of their businesses to be able to grow. These can equivalent \$100,000 up front.

AUTHORITY

Law states that Commissioner of Agriculture can call on other authority members to advise and help industry growth, but it doesn't give us authority to rule over them in decision making process.



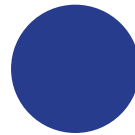
Internal (WVDA) Solutions

When approached, WVDA have come to the following solutions:



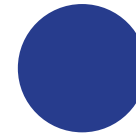
Support

After assessing the situation, often the WVDA has offered a letter of support to local governments. While our goal is advance agriculture, we lack any real authority beyond providing guidance.



Site Visits

While navigating producer facing issues, the WVDA has sent staff to perform site visits to understand problem areas that were causing delays or questions.



Tracking

Teams have tracked all the inquiries and request for assistance to ensure these issues are being examined and to further understand trends within the industry.

Cases We've Had

HANNA FARMS

Greenbrier County - Unable to open a new agritourism business because "agritourism" wasn't considered "agriculture." The operators wanted a special permit to be filed and approved but neighbors weren't on board without a new road solution. They were in an agriculture zone.

BLACK DRAFT DISTILLERY

Berkeley County - Issues expanding their business. Being classified as commercial and being asked to do a water run off study, install a commercial driveway, and being asked for an engineer to perform all studies. Agriculture is supposed to be exempt from these things but local government refuses to accept them as agriculture.

Cases for Study

FIRE CODES

The State Fire Marshall's office deemed agritourism facilities under the WVDA, while lumping haunted houses into agritourism.

Fear on the Farm – Putnam

Fright Nights at Glade Springs Resort – Raleigh

Horse Show Greenbrier Resort – Greenbrier

ACE Adventures – Fayette County

Millers Night Haunted Farm – Lewisburg

Event Barn, Potomac Ridge – Jefferson

HARD CIDER

There are 114 Cideries in states surrounding us and only 2 in WV. 52 in PA, 26 in OH, 34 in VA. West Virginia cideries are Swilled Dog Cider and Spirits in Dry Fork and Hawk Knob Cider in Lewisburg. Brooke and Brad Glover own Swilled Dog and Josh Bennett owns Hawk Knob.

Cases for Study

HAWK KNOB CIDERY

Hawk Knob Cidery tried to host a “artisan show” on his cidery property so that new customers would come and try their cider while there too. Local government told them this was not allowed in their zoning of “forestry” because it was business.

They have had no issue before on concerts or other events.

RUSTY NAIL WINERY

Rusty Nail Winery in Berkeley County was trying to expand their farm winery. Local government stopped production and planning and gave them a check list of items that would need completed before hand. List included things like a storm run off study, a turning lane added on his main road and other extreme cost projects.

Other States Economic Development from Agritourism

IN 2020 WV HAD 4.6 BILLION DOLLARS IN TRAVELERS SPENDING DOLLARS – WV TOURSIM ANNUAL REPORT

- In 2015, Virginia housed 1,400 agritourism businesses, including wineries, ranches, historical attractions and pick-your-own vegetables and fruit farms.
- Tourism is Kentucky's third largest industry, contributing more than 8 billion dollars annually. Agritourism, along with nature-based tourism, average a 30 percent increase annually nationwide, making these the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry
- Maryland hosts more than 30 agriculture-related festivals and fairs that attract over a million visitors annually. These agritourism events generate over \$162 million in economic impact and support over 1,000 jobs that can be linked to value-added agriculture.

WV CURRENTLY OFFERS 223 AGRITOURISM FARMS

- Fast-forward to 2020, and we live in a socially distanced world. People aren't traveling as much, but in the coming years, tourism will come roaring back – with a vengeance.
- This, in turn, will affect agritourism, which will see sustained growth between 2020-2027 for a target \$117.37 billion market cap (a CAGR of 7.42%), according to Fortune Business Insights.

2016 Annual Traveler Spending in Billions

OH – 42
PA – 40.8
VA – 22.9
MA – 16.8
KY – 9.2
WV – 4.1



Where do we go from here?

What does legislature want us to handle?



AUTHORITY

How much authority should the Commissioner of Agriculture have over other entities?



FINAL SAY

If local government calls a business commercial, but the WVDA deems it agritourism, who has the final say?



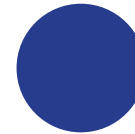
WHICH DEPARTMENT

Agritourism businesses touch several departments and officials, who do they listen to for overall guidance?



NEW GROWTH

Agritourism isn't at capacity in WV yet, other states are including Breweries, Farm Stays, Hunting, Craft Drink Trails, Farmers Markets and others in their program now.



CHECK SYSTEM

Do we need to establish a "check system" for businesses to meet certain requirements to be "agritourism."



WHERE IS THE LINE DRAWN?

Where do we draw all the lines, how do we keep it organized and clear.

DO WE HAVE GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTION VS REGULATORY?

CONTACT US

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