Agri-Tourism Involving County Partners

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Project Catalyst

- Georgia has high population growth rate
  - Harris County is one of the fastest growing counties in Georgia
- Increasing Land Values – Property Taxes
- Increased Operating Costs
  - Fuel
  - Fertilizer
  - Labor
- Unstable Global Markets for Agricultural Products
Project Background

- Attended statewide meeting with local producers
- Formed committee to plan and host a regional Agri-tourism conference
- Committee wanted to narrow the focus of the conference to venues and events that could be successfully offered in the West Central Georgia region
Why Regionalize?

- Climate Zones & Population Density vary making Georgia Agriculturally Diverse

- **North GA:** Poultry, Green Industry, Wine Grapes

- **Central GA:** Forage Crops, Beef Cattle Green Industry, Peaches Timber

- **South GA:** Cotton, Corn, Peanuts, Hunting Plantations, Blueberries, Peaches
Why Agri-Tourism?

- Capitalize on tourist market
  - GA is 7th most visited state in the US
  - Travelers/tourist spend more than $16.6B annually
  - tourism supports 217,000 jobs
- Promotes farmland preservation & green space conservation
- Very Versatile
  - can be customized to fit any size farming operation
  - an increasing number of people want to reconnect to farming heritage
- Educational Value
Educational Value

- Puts a “face on farming”… Helps visitors better understand our food and fiber system
- Gives visitors an idea of what is needed to produce safe, high quality food
- Visitors learn that farmers are stewards of the land and focused on long term sustainability
Why Collaborate?

- Networking......Make new contacts
- Educational Value – Exposed to new ideas
- Work together as a group with a common goal
Collaborative Partners

- Local Government/Commissioners
- Local & Regional Tourism Directors
- Chamber of Commerce
- Resource Conservation & Development Councils
- Hotel/Motel Owners
- Schools
- County Extension Personnel
- Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Local Farmers/Producers
Critical Collaborative Partners

- County Commissioners/Local Gov’t Officials
- Chamber of Commerce/Tourism Directors
Collaborating with Local Officials

- **Important…….**
- Needed to complete the licensing and permitting process
- The better local officials understand the Agri-Tourism venue and the impact on the surrounding area (economic and ecological) the more likely they are to give approval
Tourism Distribution Network

- Tourism Professionals have the system in place to advertise and promote your product/service
- Important relationship between landowner and tourism directors
- Needed to help identify the appropriate marketing mix
Marketing Mix

The “Seven P’s”: ¹

- **Place** - Can you take advantage of your location?
- **Product** - What do you have to offer your guests?
- **People** – Who are the tourists/guests?
- **Price** – How much should you charge for your services?
- **Promotion** – How do you advertise your business?
- **Physical** – What are tangible components of service?
- **Process** – How do you provide quality customer service?

¹ Virginia Cooperative Extension
Program Objectives

- Increase knowledge related to Agri-Tourism
- Identify possible venues for Agri-Tourism events in the West Central Georgia Region
- Provide an educational forum for land owners to meet with County and State officials to identify and discuss both the benefits and challenges of Agri-Tourism
- Promote:
  - Farmland Preservation
  - Green Space Conservation
  - Economic Development
Program Purpose

- To inform agricultural producers and land owners of the challenges faced with county zoning issues, state and county laws regulating signage and the costs related to liability insurance.
- To educate county officials about the benefits of Regional Agri-Tourism as it relates to ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, GREEN SPACE CONSERVATION and FARMLAND PRESERVATION.
Program Impact

- An increased awareness of the complex nature of Agri-Tourism by 100% of the participants as documented in the program evaluation.

- Knowledge was gained by program participants with respect to the challenges and potential benefits associated with Agri-Tourism.
Evaluation Methods

- Written evaluations
- Word of mouth feedback
- Written comments by the program hosts
Summary -- Conclusions

- Agri-Tourism adds value, increases revenue by diversifying the farming operation.
- Regionalizing Agri-Tourism brings groups together that share common interests.
- Collaborating with local officials and tourism directors is key for successful Agri-Tourism Venues.