

WHAT IS AGRITOURISM?

'What is agritourism?' you ask. Apart from checking an online dictionary, a definition might be something like this: Agritourism is where tourism meets agriculture in the country to generate an experience for the tourists, and revenue for the owners. But you want more than that, so this article explores the question in depth and provides you some real answers on what is agritourism.

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What is agritourism? Well, you could probably go to dictionary.com and get some technical definition, but when you're asking yourself 'what is Agritourism' then we know that you're here for more than that. So in this article we're going to briefly explore what it is and how it applies to you here in the Australian country.

To tick off on some of the basic definitions, Agritourism is a form of tourism. It's where tourists visit agricultural organisations to engage with them and experience what they have to offer. This may include –

- working on the farm, or
- touring the property in an immersive way, or
- simply tasting the results such as wine, cheese, or fruits.

Regional Tourism defines it as a type of experiential travel which connects people to product or produce, delivered on farming land through a direct "on farm" experience. And we note that **CSIRO** spells it out like this – Experiences and tourism, or agritourism, describe experiences and attractions that bring visitors to regional and rural Australia and provides them with opportunities to experience and interact with elements across the food and agribusiness value chain. Examples include tours and cuisines at farms, wineries, breweries, and farm-gates.

But let's paint a picture for you. It might help to convey how it looks in practice.

Gary is a farmer, but not just your average farmer. He's got a few thousand acres a few hours west of Sydney, and the property is mostly under crop. He has a couple of farm hands, and his wife is a great support in running the large organisation.

And the farm does well when it does well. Well, obviously, you say. But the reality is that Australia is a land of extremes. There are times, such as droughts or natural

disasters, when a farm doesn't do well. And the challenge is that when the bad times start to outweigh the good times, the farm suffers. Of course, when the farm suffers, the people on the farm do it tough as well.



But what has all this got to do with Agritourism?

Ah, that's where Gary's wife Lisa comes in. She's become tired of the ebbs and flows of the annual income, and she's decided to do something about it. They're going to get an additional income stream flowing into the farm by opening it up to tourists. She's answered the question 'What is agritourism?'

So she reaches out to the local shire. She discusses how to comply with any regulations on running a tourism business. She finds out that they're very accommodating. Because the farm is classified as a small-scale agricultural development, they don't need to apply for a development application to run a tourist business. So far so good.

And then Lisa also finds out that there's a little-known provision in the planning regulations. This allows them to put a maximum 60 mtr2 manufactured home on the property without needing to get approval. And as long as there's a maximum of 20 guests, with a maximum of 21 consecutive days of stay. Better and better!

They also chat to their accountant and lawyer. This is to make sure that everything is under control such as

insurances, any tax details, and a form that the visitors will need to sign when they arrive. All sorted.

Gary & Lisa then purchase 3 compact accommodation units.

They set them up on the farm in a location that takes advantage of the stunning views of rural Australia. But they make sure they're close enough to the main homestead to be practical. She ensures they're nicely furnished, right down to the knives and forks, and the towels on the rack.

After advertising it on some social media channels using some magical photos of the setting of the units on the farm, they start to get some tourists arriving to stay for a few days at a time. Lisa spends her days showing them around the farm. And the tourists join in on the farm. They watch what happens, even drive the tractors, help at fence repairs, and feed the dogs in the morning.

The tourists move on after a few days with browner skin, happier faces and wiser for the experience. But you know what else the tourists move on with?

They move on with lighter pockets. Yes, they spend their money.

And that's what agritourism's all about. So to continue to answer the question 'What is agritourism?', it's all about generating income for the agricultural entity. And it can be quite an income too! The discussions around how to market your entity to the best advantage to gain the maximum financial benefit is certainly something you need to have. But it's not what this article is about.

But there's another little secret ingredient that farmers sometimes overlook. And this is where the accommodation units can be used to house workers in the peak seasons. So it's the best of both worlds. Whichever way you look at it, these compact little homes are generating a return on investment whichever way you look at it.


So another definition of Agritourism could be the following: Where tourism meets agriculture in the country to generate an experience for the tourists and revenue for the owners.

And please bear in mind that there would be another

hundred stories out there. And you'd find that they'll all be a bit different to Gary's & Lisa's. Each farm or agricultural entity is unique in its own way. And just like any good business, it needs to be marketed in a unique way.

So as we wrap up answering the question 'What is agritourism?' we leave you with a question – what would your story look like? What would the definition of Agritourism look like in your situation? How would that extra income stream work for your entity?



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