

LSU AgCenter offers series on ‘agritourism’ starting July 21

The LSU AgCenter is offering a series of educational programs across the state, beginning July 21, to help people get into the agritourism business.

Agritourism is a business venture on a working farm, ranch or agricultural enterprise that offers educational and fun experiences for visitors while generating supplemental income for the owner, according to Dora Ann Hatch, LSU AgCenter community rural development agent.

“It’s everything from a U-pick blueberry patch to hunting leases to corn mazes,” Hatch said. “Agritourism is a broad area that covers entrepreneurial activities outside of production agriculture.”

To better explain agritourism ventures, the LSU AgCenter and Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) have planned an Agritourism Roadshow at seven locations in the state this summer.

The sessions will include information about the legislation passed in 2008 that limits liability for certain agritourism ventures, Hatch said.

In addition, Carrie Castille with LDAF will explain how to complete the required plan of operation to be eligible for certification with LDAF.

The roadshow is suggested for these individuals:

- Farmers looking to diversify their business to add supplemental income.
- Farmers seeking new agricultural alternatives to keep present farm workers employed during the off season.
- Educators interested in sharing their knowledge of farm experiences.

The 2008 legislation authored by Rep. Andy Anders and Sens. Francis Thompson and Mike Walsworth provides that LDAF will develop a set of rules and regulations and that the LSU AgCenter will define a plan of operation for an agritourism venture and review those plans, Hatch said.

An agritourism plan of operation is a planning document that will assist agritourism professionals in identifying and addressing possible inherent risks on their operations through recommended best management practices. The plan will include listing of activities, their risks, suggestions for minimizing those risks, and a plan for the location of warning signs.

The plan can be completed online at www.lsuagcenter.com/agritourism. The LSU AgCenter will forward approved plans to LDAF, and LDAF will arrange for a site visit before certifying, Hatch said.

Locations for the roadshows are:

- LSU AgCenter Red River Research Station, 262 Research Station Drive, Bossier City, July 21, 10 a.m. to noon
- Vidalia Conference Center, 112 Front St., Vidalia, July 23, 10 a.m. to noon
- LSU AgCenter Scott Research Center, 212 Macon Ridge Road, Winnsboro, July 23, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- LSU AgCenter Calhoun Research Station, 321 Hwy. 80 East, Calhoun. July 30, 10 a.m. to noon
- LSU AgCenter’s Dean Lee Research Station, 8208 Tom Bowman Drive, Alexandria, Aug. 20, 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- LSU AgCenter’s Hammond Research Station, 21549 Old Covington Highway, Hammond, Aug. 27, 10 a.m. to noon
- LSU AgCenter’s Rice Research Station/Southwest Regional Office, 1373 Caffey Road, Rayne, Oct. 6, 10 a.m. to noon

The roadshows are free and no registration is required. For more information, contact Hatch at (318) 927-9654 or dhatch@agcenter.lsu.edu.

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