A Guide to Agritourism: A class for Fresno region farmers and ranchers
Offered by UC Cooperative Extension Fresno County and the UC Small Farm Program in partnership with the Fresno Farm Bureau and the Fresno-Clovis Convention & Visitors Bureau

Course Syllabus

Course Overview
This course will introduce the student to the range of opportunities for diversifying a working farm or ranch by providing enjoyment and education to visitors for profit. Local experts will guide participants as they assess their own farms or ranches for agritourism potential and start creating business, risk management and marketing plans for their own agritourism operations. Local experienced agritourism operators will share their own experiences and will be part of a supportive network of advisors as class participants plan and start new enterprises.

Students will participate in individual exercises and will share their work during small-group discussions in class, and will have homework assignments to complete between the class sessions. The homework will include completing several assessment worksheets in cooperation with family or business partners, as well as writing first drafts of parts of their own business plans. Class instructors will provide each participant with individual feedback on all assignments turned in.

The participants will be encouraged to (but not required to) participate in group online discussions about the classes, readings and individual planning work.

Dates: Thursday, December 8, Wednesdays, January 25 and March 14
Times: 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. each session
Location: Fresno County Farm Bureau, 1274 West Hedges Avenue, Fresno CA 93728
Cost: $25 for 3-session course ($30 after December 1)
Information: Penny Leff, UC Small Farm Program, paleff@ucdavis.edu, 530-752-7779

Course Outline

◆ Lesson 1: Consider the possibilities – Thursday, December 8, 2011

8:00-8:30  Registration/Continental Breakfast
8:30-8:45  Welcome /Overview of the workshop series
  Stephen Vasquez, UCCE Fresno Co. and Penny Leff, UC Small Farm Program
8:45-9:30  Successes in agritourism – Experienced operators tell their stories, discuss costs & benefits and start-up challenges
  Bret Engelmann, Engelmann Cellars
  Stacy Grote, Simonian Farms
  John Olivas, Rancho Notso Grande
9:30-10:00  Assessing your farm or ranch for agritourism potential
  Penny Leff, UC Small Farm Program
  Overview of assessment process
  Guided individual exercise using worksheet to begin assessment
Lesson 2: Business Planning and Risk Assessment - Wednesday, January 25, 2012

8:00-8:30 Sign in/Continental Breakfast

8:30-8:40 Welcome /Overview of the day
    Stephen Vasquez, UCCE Fresno County
    Penny Leff, UC Small Farm Program

8:40-9:10 Small Group exercise – share assessment of farm or ranch for agritourism potential and analysis of possible agritourism enterprises
    Facilitator: Penny Leff, UC Small Farm Program

9:10-9:40 Introduction to business planning
    Rich Mostert, Central Valley Business Incubator
    Overview of planning process steps & resources
    Discussion of mission statement, business concept, goals, objectives

9:40-10:00 Individual exercise – Begin drafting mission statement & business concept

10:00-10:15 Break

10:15-11:00 Understanding visitors, connecting and collaborating
    Gay Fortana, Fresno Clovis Convention and Visitors Bureau
    Steve Murray, Murray Family Farms

11:00 -11:30 Cash Flow projection, start up costs
    Rich Mostert, Central Valley Business Incubator
    Introduction to cash flow projection
    Presentation of homework exercise

11:30-11:45 Conducting a risk management assessment of your farm or ranch
    Penny Leff, UC Small Farm Program
    Presentation of homework exercise

11:45 -12:00 Mentoring and homework discussion and wrap-up

12:00 -12:30 Networking social
Homework – due at beginning of next class: Complete first draft of mission statement, business concept, goals and objectives. Complete first draft of first year cash flow projection. Conduct risk management assessment of farm or ranch using worksheets provided in class

Lesson 3 – Market analysis and effective marketing – Wednesday March 14, 2012

8:00-8:20  Sign in/Continental Breakfast
8:20-8:30  Welcome /Overview of the day
  Richard Molinar and Penny Leff
8:30-9:00  Small Group exercise – share and discuss individual cash-flow projections and risk management assessments
  Facilitator: Penny Leff, UC Small Farm Program
9:00-9:30  Conducting a market analysis
  Conrad Braganza, Fresno-Clovis Convention & Visitors Bureau
9:30-9:50  Effective websites and social media for agritourism
9:50-10:00  Break
10:00 -10:30  Creating a marketing strategy
  Melanie Coventry, Fresno-Clovis Convention & Visitors Bureau
10:30 -11:00  Individual exercise: begin drafting a marketing strategy
11:00 -11:30  Small Group Exercise: Share individual marketing strategy drafts in small groups (with facilitation assistance from marketing presenters)
11:30 -11:45  Individual exercise: Complete 6 month action plan
11:45 -12:00  Wrap-up and evaluation
12:00 -12:30  Networking social

Required Text (provided to all students at no charge):
Agritourism and Nature Tourism in California, by Holly George and Ellie Rilla, Published by UC ANR Publications

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