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Agritourism: Challenges of Small and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers in North Carolina

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AGRI TOURISM AS AN ADDITIONAL ENTERPRISE, CHALLENGES OF SMALL AND SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED FARMERS ADOPTION IN NORTH CAROLINA

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Abstract

Agritourism can be a great source of entertainment, income, and education. In order to model the key factors that affect its adoption among small farmers in North Carolina, a case study approach is employed to set the tone for further analysis of the subject area. Anthropological characteristics such as age, gender, household income before taxes, ethnicity, educational background and operational factors such as total acreage, geographical information, and economic situation of the farm are identified as recurring elements. Four farms were interviewed in the case study to identify the choices and challenges of operating an agritourism enterprise. The most common primary challenges are expenses, access to capital and liability issues. The most common goal for engaging agritourism is income generation and less common goals include educating the public about agriculture as well as family heritage.

Statement of Problem

Previous studies fail to identify challenges that hinder small and socially disadvantaged farmers adopting agritourism, who raise diversified, specialty crops or livestock, use sustainable or organic farming methods, have limited resources, or employ alternative marketing strategies (García-Pabon & Lucht, 2009; Hassanein, 1999; HoltGiménez, 2006; Ostrom, V. Yang, Tedesse, Chang, N. Yang & Lee, 2002; Ostrom & Jackson-Smith, 2005; Suvedi, Knight Lapinski & Campo, 2000; USDA, 1998). According to Hill, Walter, Jillian (2013) it took four suits against the USDA through Pigford (Black farmers), Keeseagle (Native American farmers), Garcia (Latino farmers) and Love (Women farmers), to initiate this effort in 1997. This prompted the United States Department of Agriculture to establish varying programs to address challenges small and socially disadvantaged farmers face.

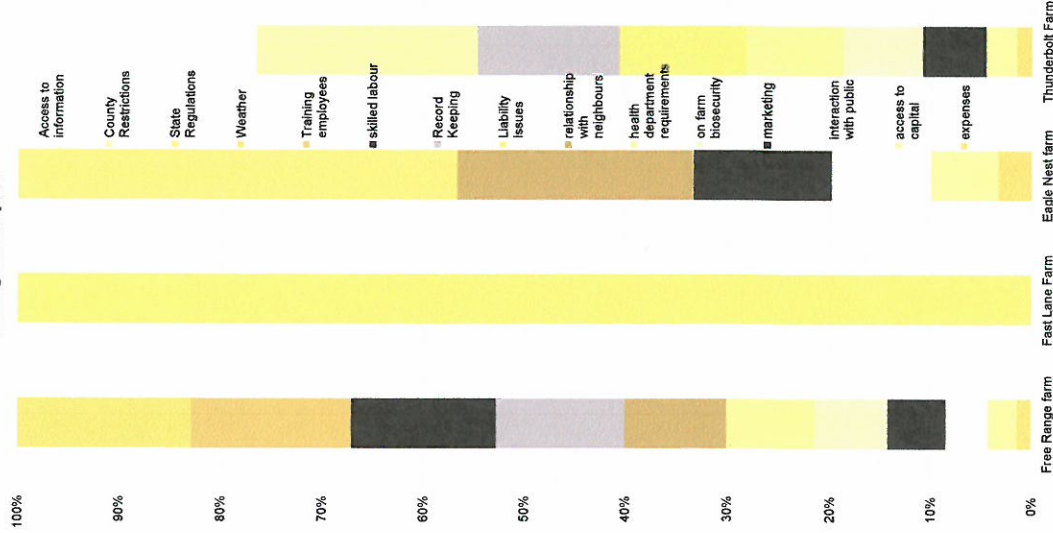
Description of Research Methodology

A case Study Approach was employed to identify the challenges that four well established farms in Agritourism face in order to extrapolate the likelihood that these challenges may be greater for disadvantaged small farmers in Agritourism.

- The operator of the farm was the unit of analysis with data obtained from a mix of personal interviews and open-ended questionnaires conducted in 2014.
- Four farms namely; Free range, fast lane farm, Eagle Nest Farm, Thunderbolt Farm, were surveyed using questionnaires to determine the challenges that they face in operating an Agritourism enterprise.



Challenges to Adoption



Results

The main challenge facing all farms except Free Range was Liability issues. Other challenges include access to information, county restrictions, state regulations, training employees, skilled labor, record keeping, relationship with neighbors, marketing and interaction with public. The challenges faced by these well established farms goes to indicate the possibility of socially disadvantaged farmers such as immigrants, native Americans and African Americans facing much greater challenges. Immigrant and refugee farmers may face additional challenges due to limited literacy and English proficiency, limited access to basic resources such as land, water, capital, or transportation, and a lack of familiarity with local growing conditions, regulations, and markets. And while they may be skilled agriculturists, they may lack essential business and environmental risk management skills.

Summary and Conclusions

According to the USDA's project on "DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED FARMERS AND RANCHERS IN ALABAMA, GEORGIA, MISSISSIPPI AND SOUTH CAROLINA", Farmers from socially disadvantaged groups, such as the African-American farmers in the South who are the Federation's reason for existing, often suffer even more from pursuing traditional farming. They start from a limited capital base and have not had equitable access to the financial and commodity markets until recently. This study can conclude that there is a real challenge to socially disadvantaged farmers adopting Agritourism, however extensive research on the subject is needed to clearly identify the key factors.

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