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Understanding and Targeting School Groups for Agritainment Enterprises: Georgia Elementary Schoolteacher Survey Results

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Introduction.	1
The Survey Sample.	3
Table 1. Response Rates by County and Size of School System...	4
Table 2. Percent of Total Surveys Returned by Grade Level and County and by Size of School System.	5
Market Potential	5
Table 3. Likelihood of Teachers to Take a Farm Field Trip...	6
Table 4. Likelihood of Teachers to Take a Farm Field Trip...	6
Table 5. Average Number of Field Trips Taken by Grade Level.	7
Table 6. Average Number of Students and Adults Per Field Trip by Grade Level.	7
Table 7. Maximum Distance and Time That Teachers Will Travel for a Field Trip.	8
Table 8. Maximum Distance and Time That Teachers Will Travel for a Field Trip.	8
Price Determination.	8
Table 9. Average Upper Cost Limit for Field Trips by Grade Level.	9
Table 10. Average Upper Cost Limit for Field Trips by Grade Level.	9
Table 11. Teachers' Willingness to Pay for the Described Agritainment Field Trip.	10
Table 12. Teachers' Willingness to Pay for the Described Agritainment Field Trip.	11
Table 13. Chaperones Pay to Accompany Teachers and Children on Field Trips...	12
Table 14. Chaperones Pay to Accompany Teachers and Children on Field Trips...	12
Scheduling School Field Trips...	12
Table 15. When Field Trips Are Planned (Percentage of Teachers Who Plan Their Trips at Each of the Given Times - Multiple Responses).	13
Table 16. When Field Trips Are Taken (Percentage of Teachers Within Each Grade Who Take Field Trips at Specific Times - Multiple Responses).	14
Important Field Trip Components.	14
Table 17. Experiences, Activities or Criteria Considered Important in Choosing Field Trips. . .	15
Table 18. Potential Field Trip Activities Teachers are Interested in Visiting.	16
Table 19. Potential Field Trip Activities Teachers are Interested in Visiting.	17
Marketing Agritainment Enterprises to Schoolteachers.	18
Table 20. Percentage of Teachers Who Did Not Take A Farm Field Trip for Selected Reasons	19
Table 21. Percentage of Teachers Who Learn About Field Trips by Selected Methods.	20
Activities and Facilities Needed.	20
Table 22. Hours Expected to Stay at Field Trip Facility.	21
Table 23. Percentage of Teachers Who Believe Certain Activities/Facilities are Necessary. . . .	22
Table 24. Percentage of Teachers Who Believe Certain Activities/Facilities are Necessary. . . .	22
Conclusions.	22

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Introduction

Declining or stagnating commodity prices have forced farmers to look for creative and innovative means of generating additional on-farm revenue to supplement earnings from more traditional agricultural operations. Many Georgia farmers have turned to agricultural and nature based-tourism activities to generate this additional revenue. Other farmers have the desire to provide educational opportunities to Georgians, especially children, to expose them to agriculture and its importance to local communities. Farmers can expand their businesses and increase farm income by offering people the opportunity to visit and experience agricultural and nature-based activities.

The past few years have witnessed an increased interest in agritainment activities (agritourism and environmental entertainment activities) across Georgia. These activities range from petting zoos, working dairies, boating, and birdwatching. Other agritainment activities such as children's camps, corporate events, and cabin rentals are also gaining popularity. These are just a few of the activities that are being provided across the state and have created new uses for many farm and natural resources and hopefully will contribute to additional on-farm revenue.

Agritainment operations are often started as a means of providing others educational opportunities as well as building agricultural awareness. Many agritainment activities are the result of small-scale hobbies that evolve into large operations generating significant on-farm income. For example, a successful North Georgia agritainment operation generates half of its on-farm income from agritainment activities. Agritainment operations implemented as a hobby may find it difficult to generate sufficient revenue to cover all the costs associated with the activities and they fail to realize a positive net return. To be successful, it is important to commit necessary farm resources, including a significant amount of managerial time and farm labor as well as a significant investment in marketing and promotion.

Understanding Customer Needs

A number of farmers across Georgia have expressed interest in developing *agritainment* enterprises. A key factor in determining the success of these operations is a reliance on attracting large groups, i.e., school groups. School groups provide a source of steady revenue during the school year and are very effective in promoting the agritainment operation as they are likely to tell their siblings and friends about the experience. In many instances, agritainment operations rely on hosting groups during the week to generate revenue and allow the operation to break-even on their fixed and operating costs.

In spite of the importance and potential of school groups, many agritainment operators overlook these groups, especially if their operation is located in a rural area, because they assume that children and their teachers live in the area and have access to activities associated with

farming. This is not necessarily the case. Each year fewer people are living on farms or have access to rural land.

Unfortunately, most agritainment operations are not “turn key” businesses with customers lining up at the door waiting for it to open. Also, many farmers do not always possess the skills necessary to effectively market these operations as it inherently different from traditional commodity marketing. Agritainment operations require a significant amount of planning, marketing, and promotion to create successful enterprises.

To effectively and efficiently plan agritainment enterprises targeting elementary school groups, the Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development (CAED), conducted a mail survey of Georgia elementary schoolteachers in the Spring of 2003. The survey was administered by county agents who delivered the materials to the identified elementary schools.

While the information in this document is based on survey data obtained from elementary schoolteachers, it does not address important issues associated with starting and operating an agritainment operation in Georgia. Therefore, this information should be used in conjunction with the CAED’s companion Extension publication "Considering an Agritainment Enterprise in Georgia” .

Marketing

The primary focus of all marketing and promotion activities are simple, to inform potential visitors about the operation and its activities and to attract visitors to the farm. The agritainment audiences are often separated into two groups: individual families with children and groups, i.e., school groups, senior citizen groups, church groups, civic groups, daycare groups, children and youth groups, and tour groups, just to name a few. Families are frequently targeted on weekends and holiday while groups’ are often targeted during weekdays. Marketing methods can be developed to address each of these groups and may include brochures, print, radio, Internet, television, signs, sponsorships, use of a logo and positive word-of-mouth comments and referrals.

The effectiveness of marketing methods can vary significantly by targeted group. As a result, it is critical to have a good understanding of how best to communicate with various groups as well as knowing each groups interests. This understanding will increase the effectiveness of your message. However, it is important to ensure that different marketing materials are consistent and don't contradict each other. To avoid sending conflicting messages, an overall theme/image should be devised which can be fine-tuned for different target markets. For example, families generally visit agritainment activities for fun while school groups are looking for a combination of fun and educational activities. Therefore, it is necessary to have a understanding of each targeted group and develop specific marketing materials focusing on the needs and expectations for each. Because of school group market potential, they are considered a good target market for agritainment activities, and it is essential to obtain a good understanding of their preferences, constraints and opinions to develop a successful agritainment enterprise.

School groups are good target markets for agritainment activities for several reasons:

- Most elementary school classes take one or more field trips
- Agritainment activities can be easily adapted to relate to the classes educational objectives
- Elementary schools are accustomed to planning and taking field trips and have the infrastructure to do so
- Schools provide large group opportunities, either individually or collectively, school classes tend to represent large numbers of individuals (i.e., average classes may have 20 students, an average grade level may have 100 students, an average school may have 600 students and an entire county system may have thousands of students)
- school groups normally have a specific point of contact (teacher) who understands the group's constraints and provides leadership for arrangements

Many successful agritainment enterprises rely on school groups for a bulk of introduction to their business. Especially during October, school buses flock to pumpkin patches around the state, sometimes unloading more than 200 students each hour. At a per-person fee of up to \$6.00, agritainment enterprises can generate substantial revenues. However, there are often many challenges to developing a thriving business. It is essential to get people to the farm, provide them with an enjoyable experience and convinced them they will have an equally pleasing, new experience if they return next week, next month or next year. Each of these areas requires a great deal of work.

Attracting visitors to the farm initially requires development of a high-quality enterprise and a high-quality marketing/promotion plan. Keys to insuring a quality experience include a well planned and well-executed agenda from arrival to departure, a safe environment and a good value. To ensure repeat visits, customers must realize that their next visit will be equally pleasing, yet different enough to decrease chances of repetition or boredom.

Keep in mind that different groups have different expectations. That is, the expectations and requirements of a senior citizen group will differ from those of a kindergarten class. So, targeting different groups may require different promotional methods.

Because elementary school classes can be such a vital target market for agritainment activities, a survey of elementary schoolteachers in a 18-county area was conducted by the Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development in the spring of 2003 to identify the needs, expectations, and desires of school groups. This publication is devoted to summarizing the results of this survey.

The Survey Sample

The survey targeted public schoolteachers in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. A one-time, mail survey was used. A total of 3,219 surveys was mailed to 18 counties across

Georgia and were delivered to the public elementary schools via their county extension agents. More counties were targeted, but due to school district policies they were unable to participate in the study. The counties included in the study are presented in Table 1. The county agent delivered a packet of surveys, each accompanied by a cover letter that explained the importance and purpose of the study. The elementary schoolteachers were asked to complete the postage-paid questionnaire and return it to the Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development.

A total of 533 questionnaires was returned for a response rate of 16.6 percent, the response rates ranged from a low of 2% in Taylor County to a high of 48% in Coffee County, (Table 1).

County	Surveys Returned	Response Rate	Size Classification
Barrow	50	21%	Medium
Brantley	6	7%	Small
Coffee	98	48%	Small
Dougherty	38	9%	Large
Fannin	7	9%	Small
Gordon	25	16%	Medium
Hall/Gainesville	82	16%	Large
Henry	53	11%	Large
Lamar	21	34%	Small
Monroe	18	19%	Medium
Muscogee	64	13%	Large
Oconee	42	34%	Medium
Rabun	6	11%	Small
Seminole	2	5%	Small
Taylor	1	2%	Small
Towns	10	36%	Small
Union	4	7%	Small
Wheeler	6	21%	Small
Total	533	16.6%	Small

Table 2 summarizes the return rate by grade level and the size of the school system. The return rate was not uniform, with some counties having a higher return rate than others.

Table 2. Percent of Total Surveys Returned by Grade Level and County and by Size of School System.		
Grade Level	Number	Percent
Pre-K	14	3%
Kindergarten	89	18%
First	76	15%
Second	77	15%
Third	101	20%
Fourth	66	13%
Fifth	61	12%
Special education	8	2%
Kindergarten though fifth	14	3%
School System Size	Number	Percent
Large	236	44%
Medium	138	26%
Small	158	30%

Response rates were significantly higher for the larger school system group. However, the number of responses in the remaining two groups is sufficient for meaningful analysis. The data is displayed by school system size if noticeable or significant differences are observed. If the differences in the responses by the three groups are not significantly different, they will be referred to in the text.

Market Potential

It is important to estimate the market potential for any business opportunity to determine if the market is large enough to support the activity. The survey asked elementary school teachers how likely they would be to take a farm field trip. The result of this question is critical to estimating the market potential for elementary school field trips.

Elementary schoolteachers indicated a strong interest in farm field trips. When asked how likely they would be to take a farm field trip, 34 percent of the teachers said they would be very likely, while a total of 78 percent were very likely and somewhat likely to do so. Tables 3 and 4 represent the likelihood of teachers by grade level and school system size to take a farm field trip.

Likelihood	Pre-K	Kind.	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	Spc. Ed.	K-5	Average
Very Likely	51%	79%	41%	29%	21%	20%	32%	57%	50%	34%
Somewhat Likely	41%	14%	41%	56%	55%	45%	35%	29%	36%	44%
Somewhat Unlikely	5%	0%	12%	13%	13%	23%	18%	0%	7%	13%
Very Unlikely	3%	7%	7%	3%	10%	12%	15%	14%	7%	8%

The information in Table 4 suggests that teachers in any size school system are likely to take a farm field trip. This is encouraging and suggests that farm field trip potential exists across the entire state and not restricted to a particular demographic setting or the size of the school system.

Likelihood	Large	Medium	Small	Average
Very Likely	34%	32%	37%	34%
Somewhat Likely	43%	45%	46%	44%
Somewhat Unlikely	16%	11%	11%	13%
Very Unlikely	7%	12%	7%	8%

A number of different field trip opportunities are available to schoolteachers and their students. Therefore, determining the number of field trips that various grade levels take over the course of a year is very important in assessing the level of competition for an agritainment enterprise. On average, it appears as though elementary classes take between two and three field trips each school year. On average, kindergarten students take three field trips per year. Table 5 represents the average number of field trips taken by each grade level. The average number of field trips taken each year did not vary substantially by grade or by the size of the school system.

Pre-K	7.6
Kindergarten	3.1
First	2.3
Second	2.0
Third	2.5
Fourth	2.0
Fifth	2.2
Special education	3.5
Kindergarten thru fifth	3.3
Average	2.5

Because school field trips are often planned on an individual class or grade-level basis, it can be important to obtain information about the number of students and adults (chaperones) to expect from each group. Knowing the group size will help determine the amount of labor that will be needed. According to the survey, the average size kindergarten through fifth grade field trip group is 53 students and nine adults. These results suggest that multiple classes are combined for field trip purposes. Table 6 represents the average number of students and adults per class by grade level.

Grade	Number of Students	Number of Adults
Pre-K	31	12
Kindergarten	54	10
First	47	8
Second	53	8
Third	53	7
Fourth	54	14
Fifth	68	10
Special education	13	4
Kindergarten thru Fifth	38	7
Average	53	9

In addition to competing with other field trip opportunities, an agritainment enterprise should only target those school groups within a reasonable distance of the farm. A reasonable distance may be determined in either minutes or miles. Tables 7 and 8 present the maximum distance and times (in miles and minutes) that teachers are willing to travel for a field trip by grade level and size of the school system. According to these results, agritainment enterprises should be targeting schools within 51 miles and/or 58 minutes from the farm.

	Grade Level									
Distance/ minutes	Pre-K	Kind.	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	Sp. Ed.	K-5	Average
Miles	52	45	48	49	54	55	57	50	55	51
Minutes	54	50	53	55	66	63	67	57	62	58

There are significant differences in willingness to travel by the size of the school system. Teachers in smaller school systems are willing to travel greater distances for field trips than are their larger school system counterparts. Willingness to drive further by smaller school system teachers may be attributed to the lack of field trip opportunities in the immediate and local areas. The market trade area (land area containing potential customers) for agritainment operations in smaller school system areas is significantly larger than the market trade area for large school systems (Table 8).

	Size of School System			
Distance/minutes	Large	Medium	Small	Average
Miles	52	48	78	51
Minutes	43	43	70	58

Price Determination

Getting an idea of how much school groups are willing to pay for an agritainment farming experience can be difficult. One method to derive an estimate is to evaluate the prices they typically paid for field trip activities. Obtaining an understanding of the cost limits teachers use in planning their field trips provides useful information in setting the per-student field trip price. The field trip's price must be high enough to cover associated costs, yet not so high that it discourages participation. According to the survey, teachers do indeed have cost limits for their field trips. Exceeding these limitations could exclude an agritainment enterprise from a teacher's

consideration as a potential field trip. The survey found the upper limit for field trip costs was about \$6.94 per student. This figure is an average of all grade levels and may vary according to the nature of a field trip and the associated activities. It appears there is a positive relationship between the upper cost limit and the grade level. Higher grade levels have higher upper cost limits than lower grade levels. Table 9 represents the average upper cost limit for field trips by grade level.

Table 9. Average Upper Cost Limit for Field Trips by Grade Level	
Grade	Cost
Pre-K	\$6.38
Kindergarten	\$6.73
First	\$6.06
Second	\$6.66
Third	\$7.29
Fourth	\$7.64
Fifth	\$7.91
Special education	\$9.58
Kindergarten through fifth	\$7.40
Average	\$6.94

The data reveal a significant difference in upper cost limit by the size of the school system. Larger school systems have significantly lower cost per student limits than do smaller systems. The small school systems have the highest upper limit field trip costs. Table 10 represents the average upper cost limit for field trips by the size of the school system.

Table 10. Average Upper Cost Limit for Field Trips by School System Size	
School System Size	Cost
Large	\$6.52
Medium	\$7.13
Small	\$8.07
Average	\$6.94

Knowing the upper price limit is helpful, but it does not mean that an agritainment enterprise can succeed at that price. The important thing to remember about pricing is customers

must perceive the experience to be a good value, i.e., activities are worth the price. However, it is important to remember that just because teachers have a \$6 to \$7 upper price limit, they still expect a quality field trip. The upper price level allows the agritainment operator to work backwards and see what products and services can be provided at various prices.

Teachers were asked if they would be interested in visiting an educational and hands-on farm field trip. A follow-up question was asked to determine teachers' willingness to pay per student to visit the described operation. The teachers indicated that would be willing to pay nearly \$6.00 per student for an educational and hands-on farm related field trip. Results varied by grade level but not significantly, with the exception of special education teachers. Special education teachers are willing to pay significantly more for farm related field trips (Table 11).

Table 11. Teachers' Willingness to Pay for the Described Agritainment Field Trip (Figures represent the percent of teachers in a particular grade level who are willing to pay the specified price person for the described field trip)	
Grade	Per Person Price Level
Pre-K	\$5.85
Kindergarten	\$5.77
First	\$5.01
Second	\$5.46
Third	\$5.78
Fourth	\$6.65
Fifth	\$6.88
Special education	\$9.17
Kindergarten through fifth	\$6.73
Average	\$5.82
Range	\$1.00 to \$20.00

Once an agritainment enterprise is in operation, it will be important to obtain feedback about the value of the enterprise and the price charged (Table 12).

Table 12. Teachers' Willingness to Pay for the Described Agritainment Field Trip (Figures represent the percent of teachers by school system who are willing to pay the specified price person for the described field trip)	
School System Size	Per Person Price Level
Large	\$5.95
Medium	\$6.14
Small	\$5.98
Average	\$5.82
Range	\$1.00 to \$20.00

Once an agritainment enterprise is in operation, it will be important to obtain feedback about the value of the enterprise and the price charged.

Chaperones provide an additional source of income according to the survey results. The data in Table 5 suggests that on average, nine chaperones accompany elementary school field trip groups. Given a price of \$6.00 per person an additional \$54.00 can be generated by charging chaperones. However, many operations do not charge chaperones because they are volunteering their time by accompanying the field trip and also provide additional supervision for the groups.

Table 13 represents the percentage of school teachers by grade level that indicated their field trip chaperones are charged for their visit to field trips. Kindergarten teachers were significantly more likely than other teachers to indicate their chaperones are charged for going on field trips while fifth grade teachers are significantly less likely to indicate their chaperones are charged.

Table 13. Chaperones Pay to Accompany Teachers and Children on Field Trips by Grade	
Grade	Percent Yes
Pre-K	64%
Kindergarten	90%
First	73%
Second	78%
Third	71%
Fourth	72%
Fifth	60%
Special education	71%
Kindergarten through fifth	64%
Average	74%

Medium size school systems are significantly more likely than large school systems to charge chaperones and admission fee (Table 14).

Table 14. Chaperones Pay to Accompany Teachers and Children on Field Trips by School Size	
School System Size	Percent Yes
Large	65%
Medium	87%
Small	76%
Average	74%

Scheduling School Field Trips

Understanding when most school field trips are taken not only helps an agritainment enterprise better plan to host school groups, but it can help identify times when other groups should be targeted. There is, however, a difference in the time teacher's plan a field trip and the time they actually take a field trip. Teachers tend to plan their field trips before the school year begins or at the beginning of the school year. However, some teachers indicate they plan field trips throughout the school year. Understanding when teachers plan their field trips can also be helpful in scheduling the timing of promotions. Similarly, understanding when teachers take

field trips can help determine when school-related activities should be featured at the farm. Table 15 represents the percentage of teachers that plan their field trips at various times of the year. Results do not vary noticeably by the size of the school system.

Table 15. When Field Trips Are Planned (Multiple Responses)										
Grade Level										
When Planned	Pre-K	Kind.	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Spc. Ed.	K-5	Average
	-----Percent-----									
Beginning of School Year/ pre-planning	14	36	36	38	23	24	31	25	35	48
Though -out year	79	98	41	48	62	64	43	50	64	53
Month in advance	29	9	5	5	7	5	2	0	7	7
Before new grading period	0	0	0	1	2	0	3	0	0	1
Other	0	1	4	1	2	3	10	0	7	1

March, April, and October appear to be the most popular times for taking field trips. Forty-seven percent of field trips are taken during the spring months (March - May) while 37% are taken during the fall months (September - November). Table 16 indicates the percentage of teachers who take field trips at various times of the year. These results are consistent across school district size.

Table 16. When Field Trips Are Taken by Grade										
Grade Level										
When Taken	Pre-K	Kind.	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	Spc. Ed.	K-5	Average
	-----Percent-----									
January	11	1	4	2	3	1	3	5	2	3
February	12	7	9	5	6	5	4	5	7	7
March	14	14	11	13	14	18	15	19	9	14
April	3	23	23	27	26	22	22	10	22	23
May	8	9	13	12	0	13	18	19	13	10
September	9	6	5	5	7	2	8	10	7	6
October	17	22	17	18	21	23	23	14	22	20
November	12	8	10	14	14	11	7	5	9	11
December	14	11	7	3	10	4	0	14	11	7

Important Field Trip Components

The best way to sell a product is to offer a product that people want. This holds true for agritainment enterprises. Whether teachers plan field trips by curriculum, grade level, or mere availability can influence both the theme of an agritainment enterprise and the promotion tactics used to attract school groups. According to the survey, elementary schoolteachers are very interested in scheduling field trips related to the materials they are teaching and that are educational and informative. Teachers overwhelmingly indicated an educational trip related to their curriculum is very important in their field trip selection criteria. Table 17 represents the percentage of teachers, by grade level, who use certain criteria when selecting field trips.

Given these results, it is obvious that elementary teachers prefer to select field trips that relate to Georgia's Quality Core Curriculum (QCC). Therefore, it should be worthwhile for an agritainment enterprise to gain a better understanding of what elementary educational objects and incorporate these into their operations (Table 17). A general understanding of the topics covered in science and other related subjects may provide additional ideas that could be incorporated into a farm field trip. By incorporating educational activities, students can actually learn about topics related to their classroom curriculum, and an agritainment business may increase the likelihood of attracting school groups.

In addition to the curriculum, elementary schoolteachers consider interactive or hands-on experiences to be very important in selecting field trips. Several factors impact teachers' field trip decision process are presented in Table 17. These results did not vary significantly by the size of the school system.

Table 17. Experiences, Activities or Criteria Considered Important in Choosing Field Trips										
Grade Level										
Response	Pre-K	Kind.	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Sp. Ed.	K-5	Av.
	-----Percent-----									
QCCs/ CRCTs/ Subject matter/ educational objectives	57	88	55	58	80	84	68	57	56	71
Experiences children will not have otherwise	35	38	32	32	22	31	38	43	14	32
Distance	50	24	19	20	25	30	24	0	21	24
Appropriate grade/ age level activities	7	28	28	17	24	21	22	29	14	23
Length	14	25	25	18	19	21	19	14	21	21
Picnic area	0	21	28	23	21	18	17	29	21	21
Cost/Value	36	19	22	23	21	16	14	29	29	20
Hands on Experience	21	21	22	11	21	19	16	0	21	19
Holiday celebration	14	18	18	21	19	19	24	0	21	19
Availability	29	24	13	13	15	28	16	29	21	18
Safety	21	21	21	13	19	18	17	14	14	18
Interest/ fun	0	21	15	15	18	19	16	29	14	17
Bathrooms	14	25	19	7	12	18	22	0	21	17
Behavior	0	16	22	15	16	18	17	0	7	16

In addition to understanding the criteria teachers use to select field trips, it is important to gain insight into the types of field trips teachers are interested in. Table 18 represents a list of various agricultural and environmental field trip activities given to teachers and asked which they were interested in visiting. Farm tours, working dairies, and livestock, and petting zoos received the most interest followed by exotic livestock petting zoos, educational programs, hay rides, dairy product processing facilities, pumpkin patch operations, and pick-you-own activities. The remaining activities received significantly less interest. These results do not vary significantly by the size of the school system.

Table 18. Potential Field Trip Activities Teachers are Interested in Visiting										
Grade Level										
Activities	Pre-K	Kind.	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Spc. Ed.	K-5	Ave.
	-----Percent-----									
Farm tours	79	80	70	53	46	35	43	63	43	56
Working dairy	64	71	55	55	38	36	43	50	36	50
Livestock petting zoo and educational program	79	75	67	51	33	27	30	38	71	49
Exotic livestock petting zoo and educational program	79	66	49	48	28	35	28	50	50	44
Hay rides/wagon rides	93	72	55	45	27	12	21	38	43	42
Educational programs & classes	29	28	39	42	46	53	52	25	43	42
Dairy product production facility (cheese and milk)	36	44	41	47	43	30	36	38	50	41
Pumpkin patch (pick-your-own pumpkin)	86	78	50	47	22	8	25	50	36	41
U-pick vegetable or fruits operation	86	56	49	40	30	27	23	38	43	40
Hiking/backpacking/nature trails	14	21	18	32	28	35	43	25	29	28
Working cattle farm	43	34	24	26	15	21	26	25	21	25
Field crop production/harvest	7	22	22	31	21	17	31	50	14	24
Maze (corn, switch grass)	43	22	17	25	18	20	16	13	7	20
Agribusiness operation (food processor, farm supply)	0	6	12	17	22	21	38	0	14	17
Other	0	0	0	0	3	0	8	0	0	2

Teachers interest in various activities do not vary significantly by the size of the school district (Table 19).

Table 19. Potential Field Trip Activities Teachers are Interested in Visiting				
Activities	School System Size			Average
	Large	Medium	Small	
Farm tours	57%	50%	57%	56%
Working dairy	55%	47%	41%	50%
Livestock petting zoo and educational program	48%	50%	49%	49%
Exotic livestock petting zoo & educational program	41%	50%	41%	44%
Educational programs & classes	41%	40%	43%	42%
Hay rides/wagon rides	44%	41%	36%	42%
Dairy product production facility (cheese and milk)	41%	42%	36%	41%
Pumpkin patch (pick-your-own pumpkin)	42%	40%	38%	41%
U-pick vegetable or fruits operation	41%	44%	32%	40%
Hiking/backpacking/ nature trails	24%	26%	36%	28%
Working cattle farm	30%	19%	20%	25%
Field crop production/ harvest	26%	17%	24%	24%
Maze (corn, switch grass)	20%	19%	20%	20%
Agribusiness operation (food processor, farm supply)	18%	16%	18%	17%
Other	3%	0%	1%	2%

This information is valuable in and provides direction to the type of activities the farm should offer and how to promote them to school groups. For example, a curriculum activity at could include planting a seed in a small container. This would provide each child with an opportunity to plant a seed at the farm with instructions on how to care for and nurture the plant at home or in the classroom. This ties into agriculture, as well as into the spring theme of rebirth and growth. By including hands-on activities for students, the agritainment enterprise becomes an extension of the in-class curriculum.

In addition to providing a hands-on field trip experience that is related to a classroom curriculum, the trip must be enjoyable for the children. You may have the best educational material and picturesque setting, but if the children do not enjoy the field trip, teachers may not return. The purpose of a field trip is to provide children with a fun new venue for learning. If the

activities and experience are not fun, children will lose interest and divert their attention to other non-related activities like talking, playing, and getting out of control.

Marketing Agritainment Enterprises to Schoolteachers

Understanding why teachers have not participated in farm field trips in the past could be helpful in evaluating the competition and targeting promotions to school groups. Nearly one-sixth of elementary schoolteachers interviewed in the CAED's survey did not nor plan to take a farm field trip during the 2002/2003 school year because they were unaware of any such enterprises. This is surprising since a number of farm-tour opportunities are located within the state. Therefore, schoolteachers appear largely unaware of the availability of farm tours and agritainment enterprises.

Another reason teachers indicated they did not take a farm field trip was that it is not relevant to Georgia's Quality Core Curriculum(QCC). Teachers are under pressure from the state and federal government to adhere to specific guidelines. It is important that teachers schedule field trips that allow them to meet these guidelines. As a result, field trips must stress that a variety of age-appropriate activities will be offered at the farm. That is, the enterprise may feature hand-milking a cow for fifth-graders, a corn maze for third-graders, and a pumpkin patch and hay-ride for first-graders. By offering a variety of "activities" or different field trip alternatives, each can focus on different grade levels. A farm enterprise may be able to overcome the obstacle of attracting only one grade level and provide activities that meet the different grade level QCC's.

Another frequently mentioned reason for not taking a field trip in 2002/2003 is the lack of funds or budgetary constraints. This hurdle maybe difficult to address but is not expected to persist indefinitely as the economy recovers. Table 20 represents the percentage of teachers in each grade level who did not take a farm field trip in the previous year for the selected reasons.

Table 20. Percentage of Teachers Who Did Not Take A Farm Field Trip for Selected Reasons										
Reason	Grade Level									
	Pre-K	Kind.	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Spc. Ed.	K-5	Average
	-----Percent-----									
Lack of information/ locations	8	14	18	17	13	21	11	0	0	15
Not relevant to QCCs	0	4	11	10	9	25	13	0	8	11
Already have taken or scheduled all field trips allowed	15	7	10	10	7	4	9	13	0	8
Fellow teachers chose other types of field trips	0	0	0	1	1	2	4	0	0	1
Not an option	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
other	23	20	37	31	27	20	26	25	23	27

Given the large percentage of teachers who were unaware of farm field trip opportunities, it is essential that the agritainment enterprises be aggressively marketed and promoted to schoolteachers. Apparently, the most effective marketing and promotional media is word of mouth. Nearly eight of 10 teachers indicated they learned about field trip opportunities via word of mouth. This may mean that teachers who have a satisfactory experience at an agritainment enterprise will be the best form of advertisement and promotion to other teachers. Therefore, efforts should be focused on not only getting groups to the farm, but on making sure they have a great experience while there.

Word-of-mouth advertising can impact a business both positively and negatively, depending on an individual's experience. If a teacher, student, and/or parent visit a farm and have a less-than-satisfactory experience, they will pass this information onto others. Table 21 represents the percentage of teachers who learn about field trip opportunities by a variety of methods.

Table 21. Percentage of Teachers Who Learn About Field Trips by Selected Methods	
Learned About Field Trips	Percentage
Word-of-Mouth	78%
Mailings	50%
Flyers/bulletin boards	23%
Brochures/ Pamphlets	18%
Experiences/ past trips	16%
Internet/email	13%
School or county lists/ school administration (memos, newsletters) or approved list	10%
Literature or advertising (no specific information)	7%
Newspaper	5%
Community	3%
TV	1%

Following word-of-mouth, mail materials were the methods mentioned most often. Mail material is a marketing channel used to deliver printed material to potential visitors. Combining all responses related to printed material makes it more important than word-of-mouth advertising. Therefore, creating an attractive and informative agritainment brochure/ flyer should be included in an enterprise's overall marketing and promotion plan. More than four of 10 teachers indicated they learn about field trip opportunities via brochures/pamphlets and flyers. Nearly three-quarters of the teachers indicated the best way to inform them of field trip opportunities is to receive material in the mail. In addition to mailing information, it may be a good idea to distribute brochures/flyers in person to the schools at the beginning of the school year. Schools generally have teacher in-service training days prior the opening of the school year. This could be a great time to provide teachers with information about an agritainment enterprise. In addition, brochures and flyers should be handed out at the farm and circulated in the community. This will increase exposure of the business and may reach teachers and parents who did not receive the information somewhere else.

Activities and Facilities Needed

The importance of having activities becomes apparent when the amount of time teachers expect to spend at field trip facilities is examined. School teachers indicated that they expect to spend 2.5 - 3.0 hours at the field trip facility (Table 22). It is not practical for teachers to load children on buses, transport them 20 minutes or more to have them spend minimal time on a field trip. Therefore, it is extremely important for agritainment operations to have sufficient activities

planned to occupy this length of time. The length of time teachers expect to spend at the field trip facility does not vary noticeably by the size of the school system.

Table 22. Hours Expected to Stay at Field Trip Facility by Class and System Size	
Grade	Number of Hours
Pre-K	2.4
Kindergarten	2.2
First	2.6
Second	2.8
Third	2.8
Fourth	2.4
Fifth	2.8
Special education	3.0
Kindergarten through fifth	2.9
School System Size	Number of Hours
Large	2.4
Medium	2.4
Small	2.7
Average	2.5

In addition to providing a quantity of activities to fill time, it is equally important to provide a quality experience that relates to a classroom curriculum. Teachers tend to have certain expectations of general field trip activities and facilities. Among these, restrooms, eating area, instructors, and learning centers are very important. While a play area was the second to least important feature, it was desired by almost one-third of the teachers in the survey. Table 23 represents the percentage of teachers who believe certain activities/facilities are a necessary part of a field trip.

Table 23. Percentage of Teachers Who Believe Certain Activities/Facilities are Necessary by Grade Level										
Activity/Facility	Pre-K	Kind.	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	Spc. Ed.	K-5	Av.
	-----Percent-----									
Restrooms	100	99	100	100	100	98	100	100	100	100
Eating Area	100	87	92	96	93	94	87	75	93	91
Instructor	79	70	78	83	88	73	90	75	64	80
Learning Centers/Activities	57	69	73	79	82	80	82	63	79	76
Play Areas	64	45	42	42	31	25	13	38	43	35
Food Service	14	2	7	3	8	13	10	13	0	7
Other	0	6	3	3	1	2	3	13	0	3

The results are similar across the size of the school system, Table 24.

Table 24. Percentage of Teachers Who Believe Certain Activities/Facilities are Necessary by Size				
Activity/Facility	Large	Medium	Small	Average
Restrooms	100%	100%	99%	100%
Eating Area	91%	91%	91%	91%
Play Areas	76%	85%	77%	80%
Food Service	79%	76%	73%	76%
Instructor	32%	33%	41%	35%
Learning Centers/Activities	8%	3%	9%	7%
Other	4%	2%	2%	3%

Conclusions

Substantial market potential exists for agritainment enterprises in Georgia. School groups are often considered one of the primary target markets for farm tours and field trips. However, to compete with the many other field trip opportunities available to school groups, agritainment enterprises must understand the preferences, constraints and needs of teachers. On average, elementary classes take about 53 students and nine adults on each field trip and tend to

pay less than \$7 per person. On average, teachers prefer to drive less than 51 miles and less than 58 minutes to a field trip destination.

Nearly half of the teachers plan their field trips either at the beginning of the school year or before the school year starts. Most field trips are taken in the spring and fall and have a relation to their class curriculum. In addition, many field trips are selected because of grade level constraints, hands on/interactive components, and the level of fun and enjoyment. Teachers also indicate that restroom facilities, an eating area, and learning centers are necessary for school field trips.

In general, elementary schoolteachers are interested in farm field trips. However, many teachers are simply not aware of such opportunities and the lack of information about these types of opponents. Sometimes, teachers are not able to take a certain field trip because another grade-level already takes that type of trip. This may imply that some schools do not allow the same field trip to be taken by different grades. However, stressing a variety of age-appropriate activities may enhance an agritainment enterprise's chances of attracting more than one grade from a single school. As is the case for many local value-added businesses, word-of-mouth advertising is the most frequent way teachers learn about field trips. It is important to remember that providing a high-quality, and good-value agritainment experience is the best way to influence word-of-mouth advertisements. In addition, one of the best ways to heighten awareness about agritainment activities by schoolteachers is through brochures and flyers.

To maximize returns, agritainment enterprises should host as many groups as their resources will support. A plan should be considered that allows numerous groups to be at the farm at the same time. According to the study, the average amount of time that classes stay at a field trip location is two hours. Without sacrificing safety or quality, an agritainment enterprise should be able to host several groups.

The Center for Agribusiness & Economic Development



The Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development is a unit of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences of the University of Georgia, combining the missions of research and extension. The Center has among its objectives:

To provide feasibility and other short term studies for current or potential Georgia agribusiness firms and/or emerging food and fiber industries.

To provide agricultural, natural resource, and demographic data for private and public decision makers.

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