



# INCORPORATING AGRITOURISM INTO YOUR BERRY BUSINESS

## AGRITOURISM

Agritourism is a direct marketing strategy that has recently been gaining in popularity and can diversify or increase farm income. Agritourism operations can help spread the income channel, provide an opportunity for value adding (particularly for fruit that doesn't meet retail quality specifications) and assist with vertical integration of the business.

Agritourism activities help to build a direct relationship between the farm and consumers, enhances the understanding of the berry farming system and can potentially contribute to brand loyalty in the longer term. Agritourism activities that are considered authentic, locally relevant, have an educational component and allow the consumer to "meet the farmer" and see how berries are grown are strong motivators for agritourists.

Examples of agritourism in the berry industry include formal partnerships with schools, farm-based festivals, farm gate shops and "pick your own" approaches.



## LUVABERRY – WAMURAN, QLD

The small family owned and operated business were seeking the opportunity to do something different that returned a better per kilogram price for their strawberries back to the business and reduced other business overheads such as labour, packaging and transport costs. The "pick your own" aspect to the business has evolved from initial engagements with their kids school and through learning the hard way many things have improved over the subsequent years.

Key considerations and challenges they have encountered have included weighing the fruit, processing payment, in-field people management, managing field operations such as spray regimes and withholding periods appropriately. Furthermore, managing biosecurity and ensuring the appropriate infrastructure is in place including car parking and toilets are further considerations.

The 2020 "Peckish Picking" activity was another evolution in the business primarily to address the social distancing requirements associated with COVID-19.

***"Peckish Picking requires on-line registration and payment and fosters an intimate relationship between the visitor and the farm"***

## ASHBERN FARMS - STANTHORPE, QLD

Ashbern Farms has been operating the fully commercial strawberry farm including a “pick your own” component for approximately ten years. The agritourism element to the farm was a conscious choice to capitalise on the high level of tourists that visit Stanthorpe and the Granite Belt particularly over the summer holidays.

The majority of the fruit from the farm goes to existing retail and wholesale fruit markets, however, incorporating PYO has enabled the business to engage with the local community, become involved with the public and be an additional aspect to the local tourism industry.

There are significant strategic management requirements to conduct a commercial farm alongside a PYO operation including construction of appropriate infrastructure such as buildings, amenities, signage, parking and fencing.

It has been challenging at times to ensure that the farm is kept in impeccable condition adding to the daily logistical challenge of managing normal farm machinery movements with the unpredictability of visitors and children.

Committing to the PYO element of the business at Stanthorpe has provided us with a good platform to engage directly with our customers and continue our drive for increased brand awareness and loyalty.

## STRAWBERRY FIELDS - PALMVIEW, QLD

PYO has been established for more than 40 years at this site and was initially opened as a farm gate shop to sell directly to the public “seconds” or fruit that didn’t meet market specifications.

Today, the farm balances PYO, on-farm shop and commercial production. Aside from the peak

strawberry production periods of August and September, nearly all fruit is sold on farm in the form of PYO, fruit sales at the shop, seconds fruit processed into jam, ice-cream, topping for sale in the farm shop as well as through the on-site café.

When the business has excess fruit available it is working with other local business at Palmview and lower Sunshine Coast areas to support “buy and supply locally” initiatives.



## ADVANTAGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

### Advantages

- Can be a business diversification option
- Good way to build customer and brand loyalty
- Can be used as an educational tool regarding food and agriculture
- Ideal opportunity and venue to sell value added products including jam, ice-cream

### Consideration

- Installation and management of customer facilities including bathrooms, carparks, sun-shelter
- Additional workplace, health and safety considerations and possibly additional public liability insurance and requirements
- Constant interaction with people, limited privacy around your farm and
- State and local Government regulations specific to café and food service, car-parking and retail outlets

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