What has Irish Agriculture to Offer Irish Tourists

Barry Caslin

Agritourism 2018
Sheerwater Hotel
Ballinasloe
Co. Galway

barry.caslin@teagasc.ie  www.teagasc.ie/rurdev
Agenda

- Agritourism v Rural Tourism
- Case Study 1 Carrick Quads
- Case Study 2 Cavan Canoe Centre
- New project advice
What is Agritourism

- Basic requirements: Farm that offers accommodation, food and other attractions connected with authentic real life.
- Tourists that experience this kind of activity
  - Use accommodation and stay in an acting farm
  - Have the possibility to experience everyday life on the farm and to live like the local family.
  - Want a contact with the local community
Teagasc Rural Development

- Options Programme
- Diversification
- Innovation

https://www.teagasc.ie/rural-economy/rural-development/
Agritourism and Rural Tourism

- **Agritourism**: based on farm accommodation or activity provision often sponsored by agriculture ministries.

- **Rural Tourism**: includes agri-tourism, but includes non-farm enterprises, villages and small towns. Often sponsored by rural regeneration and rural development agencies.
Women and Agritourism

- Rural women were often under-employed.
- Women are strong in hospitality and people skills.
- Women are good at working in partnerships
- Women thrive on the challenge of rural tourism.
- In some cases rural women have married into farm families, bringing new skills and contacts.
Trends in Tourism

Types of tourism that enters into rural tourism and agritourism:

Educational tourism
- Agritourism: to get know agri production, functioning farm
- Rural tourism: to get know life in the village, customs, architecture

Health tourism
- Agritourism: therapy based on agriproducts, diets, work on the farm, hypnotherapy
- Rural tourism: herb medicine,

Industrial tourism
- Agritourism: visiting, bread breaking in the windmill
- Rural tourism: narrow gauge train excursions, conferences in post-industrial spaces

Culture tourism
- Agritourism: culinary tourism based on own products, events
- Rural tourism: tasting, events

Adventure tourism
- Agritourism: participation in everyday works, animals
- Rural tourism: accommodation in unique places
Understanding Change

- Growing competition from resorts, low cost city hotels, cheap flights
- Social marketing
- Web marketing groups
- Niche markets
- New tourism concepts
- The elderly sector
- Climate change & changes in society
What can Agritourism Deliver

- Money and “life” to rural areas, with relatively low capital costs, regenerating peripheral regions, and helping small farms suffering declining agricultural viability.

- Offer new leisure and holiday opportunities to growing number of city people who want outdoor active tourism, in nature areas, made possible by rising car ownership.
And

- It can if professionally managed – support – financially and politically – conservation projects of many kinds, including landscape, biodiversity, cultural and linguistic, plus organic farming, architectural conservation and innovative ideas generally.

- It can have important spin-offs but it needs time and support to achieve those spin-offs.
Examples of projects

- Angling tourism pond
- Quad bike and 4x4 off road track
- Open farm/pet farm
- River adventure park
- Allotments business on farm
- Cross country hunter trials course
- Self catering / B&B farm stays
- All weather arena
- Boat Marina
- Glamping / camping
- Pony trekking / Adventure horse rides / riding schools / Equine swimming pool
- Conversion of old farm buildings for tourism accommodation
- Conversion of old farm buildings for tourism amenities
- Recycling business using old farm sheds
- Rural therapy centre
- Conversion old mill into training centre
Case study 1: Carrick Quads
Carrick Quads

- Farm based quad bike facility
- Owned by John & Leona Molloy – Carrick on Shannon Co. Roscommon
- John – Successful organic suckler farmer.
- John diversified before into mushroom production.
- Strong business acumen.
- Suckler enterprise complements the diversification project.
Carrick Quads
Carrick Quads

- Idea came to promoters on short break to Wexford – Quad Attack based on farm of John Cullen Enniscorthy.
- Carrick on Shannon is a popular town in West of Ireland – Stags / Hens
- Quad track provides fun pursuit for such parties.
- Visiting families docked in the area use the facility
Carrick Quads Strengths

- Only quad track facility in west of Ireland.
- Land available to construct track on
- Close proximity to Carrick-on –Shannon
- Potential to liaise and work with many businesses in Ck on Shannon
- Develop links with other websites
Project Development

- Planning was approved in 2011 and work started on the project in 2012
- Funds came from own resources and Roscommon LEADER programme
Carrick Quads Market

- Families – weekdays in summer
- Stag and Hen parties
- School & GAA clubs
- Corporate groups – (many weekdays)
- Promoted through print and targeted direct sales campaigns
- Presence at trade shows
- Work with local accommodation providers – set-price arrangements
Carrick Quads

- The business has grown dramatically over the past six years
- The addition of complimentary attractions are being planned.

www.carrickquads.com
Case study 2: Cavan Canoe Centre

- Established in 2007
- Promoter: Sean Thorntan
- Drystock farmer located on the shores of Lough Oughter – Co. Cavan
- Third generation farmer and native to the area.
Farming enterprise

- Farming since age of 16
- Started with 75 acres
- Over past 20 years has increased to 175 acres both owned and rented.
- Farms 50 suckler cows – females are slaughtered and males sold at 1.5 year old.
- Education at Teagasc College Ballyhaise – Certificate in Agriculture & Certificate in horse breeding.
The Project

- Dedicated canoe and kayaking centre
- Located at gateway to Inishmore island
- Offer guided and unguided tours
- Kayaking experience, family activities, school tours, summer camps, learning courses
- Sean identified the unique opportunity to explore the areas waterways, landscape and history for tourism and income development.
Cavan Canoe Centre
Product Development

- Thornton’s had experience of providing tourist accommodation, access to waterways across their lands and advice for fishermen in the area for past 20 years.
- Always been a close association with the waterways and their protection.
- Promoter has a keen interest in water sports, open boating, cruising and fishing.
- Promote is active member of Inland Waterways Association.
- Undertook training to acquire skills to become qualified kayak/canoe guides.
- Business was established with help of Cavan Local LEADER company.
LEADER support

- Cavan LEADER programme assisted in the purchase of equipment and safety gear.
- Also supported the conversion of old farm buildings into a Canoe Centre and changing rooms.
Future Plans

- New Walkways and nature trails are soon to open.
- Accommodation is planned to add additional income stream to this family run and rural tourism enterprise.
Fairymount Farm Accommodation

- 450 acre farm
- 2 x self catering
- Walks
- Bike park Ireland

http://www.fairymountfarm.com/
Cottage and House
Key considerations in farm diversification

- What are key interests and skills in your rural area?
- What supports are available?
- What are the type of tourism diversification enterprise suited to your area?
- What level of investment and education is required, language, marketing etc.?
- What is labour availability in rural areas?
Typical Mistakes

- Access to finance and bridging loans
- Not getting key decision makers involved
- Not investing enough effort in research.
- Not taking time to examine budgetary financials.
- Ensuring diversification projects fit in with core farming within a region.
Training Supports Required

- Ability to shop around for finance deals
- Training that helps project developers to scrutinise terms and conditions
- Making realistic cash flow projections
- Investigating funding grant opportunities
- Specifying identical requirements on quotes
- Ensuring cash flow to account for grant paid in arrears.
Conclusion

- Best tourism projects complement the existing farm business.
- A good project will remove the volatility that exists in the current farming business.
- No substitute for forward planning and looking at every aspect of the business.
Thank you for your attention!
Agri-Tourism Conference 2018