

Central Alberta Agritourism Development Strategy

Date: March 30, 2023

Photo Credit: Government of Alberta



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March 30, 2023

Rene Rondeau, Board Member, Central Alberta Tourism Alliance Executive Director, Tourism Red Deer 4200 Queen Elizabeth II Highway #101 Red Deer, AB T4N 1E3

Dear Mr. Rondeau,

Please find enclosed the Central Alberta Agritourism Development Strategy. It was a pleasure working with you and the Project Committee to develop this important document. We look forward to learning about your future successes.

If you have any questions or require clarification on the attached report, please feel free to contact me at 780.266.7888.

Sincerely,

Justin Rousseau, Managing Director Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.



Central Alberta Agritourism Development Strategy | March 30, 2023

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Executive Summary





Overview of Central Alberta

Central Alberta has a long history and deep roots in agricultural production. Over 5,000 farms operate in the region, which stretches from the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in the west to the open prairie in the east. The municipalities that make up the region include the Cities of Red Deer and Lacombe, Towns of Blackfalds, Sylvan Lake, Innisfail, Olds, and Rocky Mountain House, as well as the Counties of Clearwater, Lacombe, Red Deer, and Mountain View. The region is situated on the traditional territories of the people of Treaty 6 and Treaty 7. The area is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3.





Destination Analysis

Agritourism has been identified as an area of significant opportunity for Central Alberta. The sector is still in the early stages of development but fortunately a strong foundation exists to build upon. There is growing interest among agriculturalists and entrepreneurs to pursue agritourism, and indicators from visitor markets, tourism trends, existing strategies, and the broader visitor economy point toward a bright future for this sector. Champions are coming to the fore and leading the way for existing and potential new agritourism operators.

There are many opportunities to capitalize on; however, there are barriers to development that will need to be addressed. Foremost among these include a need for a mechanism for stakeholder collaboration, expanding agritourism product offerings, increasing market awareness, enhancing the capacity of operators, and establishing encouraging and easy to navigate regulatory frameworks. Addressing these barriers will take coordinated efforts and investments from multiple partners. The resources invested in these activities will be well worth it because of the economic, community, and environmental benefits that a growing and sustainable agritourism sector can generate for Central Alberta.



Photo Credit: Central Alberta Tourism Alliance

Vision for the Future

Through agritourism, Central Alberta has an exciting opportunity to invite visitors to connect with the people and places that bring the region's agricultural heritage to life. The following statement describes Central Alberta's vision for the future.

10 Year Vision

"Central Alberta will be recognized as the premier agritourism destination in Alberta by 2033."

Outcome Statements (i.e. what will be different in 10 years?)

- > There is an impactful and sustainable collaboration framework in place to support agritourism development in Central Alberta.
- There is significantly more agritourism product available to visitors. The product maintains high standards to ensure visitors are delighted by their experience and become advocates.
- Visitors are travelling to Central Alberta in increasing numbers to experience the > region's high quality agritourism offerings.
- Central Alberta has a clear, compelling, and unique brand that sets it apart as an agritourism destination.
- > New and existing agritourism operators have a clear development pathway that they can follow to start and/or grow their businesses.
- Agritourism is recognized by communities as a key driver for economic growth and diversification of the visitor economy in Central Alberta.
- Agritourism is contributing to the strength and sustainability of the broader > agricultural sector in Central Alberta.
- Central Alberta is becoming known across Canada and around the world as a > destination for high quality agritourism experiences.



Market Strategy

It is recommended that Central Alberta employ a product development strategy as its strategic focus in the short to medium term. Central Alberta is well positioned to benefit from this approach because of a strong agricultural product base to build from, a need for new experiences, and large available markets in Calgary, Edmonton, and Central Alberta.

In the medium to long term, it is recommended that Central Alberta shifts its strategic focus toward diversification. The reason for this is an opportunity to engage new, high-value markets that will stay longer and spend more.

Target Markets

Considering existing visitor data, and taking into account what inspires agritourists to travel to Central Alberta, the following target markets have been identified for the strategy.



Primary Target Market:

Visitors from across Alberta who are seeking to deepen their connection to agriculture through fun, fulfilling, and sustainable experiences.



Secondary Target Market:

Visitors from across Canada and other countries who are seeking to immerse themselves in authentic agriculture-related experiences that are uniquely Central Albertan.



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Photo Credit: Central Alberta Tourism Alliance

Goals

Four overarching goals have been developed to guide the strategy.



Organizational Development

GOAL: Establish a collaboration framework and invest in organizational capacity to support agritourism development in Central Alberta.

The first step toward successful agritourism development in Central Alberta will be to establish a collaboration framework that brings operators and governments together to pursue mutual goals through agritourism development. Businesses and organizations should come together through collaborative efforts with a common, overarching goal to grow agritourism and the benefits it can provide. Investments to enhance the capacity of these groups will be needed to properly action the strategy.



Marketing and Promotional Development

GOAL: Increase and enhance marketing activities to entice more agritourists to visit Central Alberta.

To become a preferred destination for agritourism, Central Alberta should establish a clear, compelling, and unique tourism brand. The region's understanding of its visitors should be enhanced and marketing activities expanded. Increasing the awareness of the region's new high-quality agritourism experiences among target markets will be key to success.



Product Development

GOAL: Develop outstanding agritourism experiences that will attract visitors to Central Alberta.

In order to attract more agritourists to Central Alberta, highly engaging and immersive experiences should be developed. The following high potential product development opportunities can be used as a starting point for experience providers to develop their own unique product offerings.

- 1. Increasing Participating in Open Farm Days
- 2. Central Alberta Brewery Tour
- 3. Farm Tours
- 4. Taste of Central Alberta Experience
- 5. Cook Like a Local
- 6. Agritourism Itineraries
- 7. Niche Agritourism
- Accommodations
- 8. Leveraging Festivals and **Events**



Destination Development

GOAL: Strengthen the capacity of operators and communities to develop agritourism.

Stakeholders should undertake key capacity enhancing actions that will support agritourism development in the region. Governments can play a key role in supporting agritourism development by developing agritourismfriendly policies and establishing supportive regulatory frameworks.





Photo Credit: Alberta Farm Days

Implementation Plan

The strategy contains action items that will advance the region toward its vision for agritourism development. The following actions have been identified as the top short-term priorities to accomplish.

Top 10 Action Items

5

Select a Host Organization for the strategy and establish an Agritourism Development Task Force. The Task Force will play a central role in implementing the strategy. It is important that agritourism businesses are highly engaged in this group.

Allocate resources to implement the strategy. Wherever feasible, resources should be leveraged between partner organizations to build collaboration between stakeholders.

Increase capacity to implement the strategy by securing contracted human resources to move projects forward quickly and effectively.

Host an Agritourism Development Forum to officially kick off implementation of the strategy and to generate ideas that can be implemented immediately among operators.

Focus product development efforts on agritourism offerings that are close to being visitor and/or market ready to rapidly expand the product base that is available in the region.

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g

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in Central Alberta.

Work with local DMOs in Central Alberta to develop agritourism-specific collaborative marketing campaigns that showcase high-quality agritourism experiences.

Develop a clear, compelling, and unique agritourism brand for Central Alberta.

Develop an Agritourism Mentorship Program to connect experienced operators with new and emerging operators to coach them along their development journey.

Provide tourism experience and package development training to existing and potential new agritourism operators.

Develop an information resource that clearly describes the regulatory requirements for starting and expanding an agritourism business

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Conclusion

The Agritourism Development Strategy offers a strategic direction that will advance Central Alberta toward its vision to become recognized as the premier agritourism destination in Alberta.

To be successful, the strategy will require a high degree of collaboration among stakeholders, investment from multiple partners, and a strong focus on high-value actions. The return on this investment is expected to include increased visitation and visitor spending, diversification of local economies, and a strengthening of the broader agricultural sector across Central Alberta.





Project Overview



Introduction

Central Alberta is a beautiful and expansive land spanning from the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in the west to the prairies in the east. The diverse region consists of the Cities of Red Deer and Lacombe, Towns of Blackfalds, Sylvan Lake, Innisfail, Olds, and Rocky Mountain House, as well as the Counties of Clearwater, Lacombe, Red Deer, and Mountain View. Each of these communities contribute to the agritourism offering in Central Alberta and have their own strengths, growth areas, and opportunities. For an expanded discussion on each community, please see Appendix D.

The region is situated on the traditional territories of the people of Treaty 6 and Treaty 7. The area is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3.

The region provides a variety of opportunities for visitors including arts and performances, sports, museums and historic sites, outdoor recreation areas, and wildlife parks. A foundation for agritourism is present with some unique agritourism operators attracting visitors to ranches, locations with fresh farm produce and goods, corn mazes, and event centres. A region rich in diverse agricultural activity, agritourism in Central Alberta has significant growth potential. The development of an agritourism vision and strategy shared across the region will provide direction for growth that supports businesses, stakeholders, and communities.^{1,2}

Agritourism in Alberta

Alberta is rich with agricultural production. The province has the second largest farm area of all Canadian provinces, accounting for 32% of Canada's total farm area, and boasting the highest farm operating revenues of all the provinces.³ With such a vast amount of agricultural production, Alberta is ripe with opportunity for agritourism.



Operator Quote

"Having people visit our farm educates them on our entire process and practices. We gain the opportunity to teach them how good stewardship is integrated into every aspect of our operation from field to their table."

— Juanita Bender, West Country Mills (Bentley)



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Photo Credit: Central Alberta Tourism Alliance

Process

The project had five, interconnected phases as described below.





Photo Credit: Central Alberta Tourism Alliance

Project Team

The project was overseen and developed by the Project Team. Below is a list of Project Team representatives.

Project Team				
Organization	Repr			
Central Alberta Tourism Alliance	Amanda Mercer – Town of Gordon Shaw – Town of In Jason Baranec – Town of B Jeff Hartling – Town of Roc Jennifer Hartigh – Govern Jereld Pratt – Clearwater (Lisa Lima – Travel Alberta Michelle Zeggil – City of Re Monica Bartman – Lacom Natasha Bhola – Town of S Rene Rondeau – Tourism B Sandra Badry – Red Deer			
Consultant Team	Expedition Management (Justin Rousseau – Managin Maxwell Harrison – Senior Cassandra Gilmore – Asso Breanna Hives – Graphic D Food Tourism Strategies			

Rheannon Green, Partner Tannis Baker, Partner

m

Representatives

vn of Sylvan Lake of Innisfail of Blackfalds ^R Rocky Mountain House vernment of Alberta ater County perta of Red Deer combe County n of Sylvan Lake ism Red Deer Deer County

ent Consulting Ltd. (Lead Firm)

naging Director enior Associate Associate hic Designer





Overview of Research

A variety of primary and secondary research activities were conducted to develop this strategy. Primary research was gathered through facilitated input sessions with residents and agritourism stakeholders, an online survey, interviews with stakeholders and partners, a digital interactive mapping tool, and in-person community assessments. Secondary research was gathered from local, regional, provincial, and national data sources, information requests of the Client, a review of relevant literature, and an online review. A list of research activities undertaken and organizations consulted during the project is provided in Appendix A.

Operator Quote

"Consumers not only want to know how their produce is made, grown or raised, they want to know who is doing it. They want to know the farmer, their family, and their workers. Making these personal connections is what drives agritourism. Once that relationship is formed, consumers are more comfortable and more willing to purchase products from those farms and businesses, which in turn will increase profits for those businesses."



— Alida Prins, Gull Lake Honey Company (Gull Lake)





Destination Analysis





SWOT Analysis

A high-level analysis of Central Alberta's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) as they relate to agritourism was completed to support the strategic planning process. The key findings from this analysis are summarized next.

	Strengths		
> >	 Well-established agricultural sector and deeply rooted farming cultures in communities throughout the region provide a solid foundation from which to build agritourism. Growing interest in agritourism from businesses, stakeholder groups, governments, and residents. Strong agritourism operators are drawing visitors to the region and provide an example to other operators of what can be accomplished through agritourism. The region is centrally located with ready access to over 3.2 million potential visitors in Calgary and area, Edmonton and area, and Central Alberta. 	> > > >	Lack of collabo for agritourism There is no sind Alberta whose development. Lack of visitor a Lack of market offer to visitors Lack of funding development. Lack of a clear Limited marke
	Opportunities		
	Organizing and aligning key stakeholders for agritourism development. Providing opportunities for mentorship to new operators to jump start their development. Expanding and diversifying agritourism offerings. Developing high-quality, visitor/market/export-ready agritourism experiences. Deepening the region's understanding of agritourists. Supporting the broader agricultural sector through agritourism. Capitalizing on the trend of entrepreneurs moving to small communities and rural areas to start new tourism-related businesses. Reducing seasonality by offering year-round experiences.	> > > > >	Onerous and u stunt agritouri Inconsistent qu could lead to re weakened brar Challenging ec inflation, can p Attracting and Competition fo resources (loca Competition fo Environmental agricultural lar climate change
	Opportunity to align agritourism development with community and regional strategies (see Appendix B).		

Weaknesses

- ration and communication mechanisms operators.
- gle organization or group in Central primary role is to shepherd agritourism
- and market-ready tourism products.
- t awareness of what the region has to
- and capacity to support agritourism
- and compelling agritourism brand. t data on agritourists.

Threats

- certain regulatory requirements could
- ality among agritourism experiences

- threats, including degradation of

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Product Strengths and Growth Areas

As a result of the asset inventory process, engagement process, and in-person tours, we have identified strengths and gaps in the agritourism product offering in the Central Alberta region as a whole. Please see Appendix C for a summary of the asset inventory and Appendix D for community-specific strengths and gaps.

Regional Tourism Product Strengths:

- Established Agritourism Attractions The region's agricultural roots and large inventory > of agritourism assets sets the stage for a vibrant and dynamic industry. There are well established operators that showcase the exceptional quality of experiences Central Alberta has to offer visitors.
- Variety of Agricultural Producers With over 5,000 farms, Central Alberta has a variety of specialized and mixed agricultural producers who produce both consumable and non-consumable goods.⁴ The large supply and diversity of producers provides many opportunities for agritourism experiences to be developed
- Farmers' Markets Almost every community in the region has its own well-established farmers' markets. Many farms and producers attend multiple markets throughout the region. Each market has a customer base of residents and visitors, which provides a great platform for introducing new producers, products, and experiences.
- **Camping** Campgrounds are available across the region in large quantities and varieties, as well as at select farms through programs like Harvest Host.
- **Museums** Nearly every community in the region has its own museum that showcases > the agricultural roots of the region. This provides an opportunity to deepen visitors' connections to the agricultural history of communities. Museums can also serve as information sources for agritourism operators.
- **Event Venues** Central Alberta has a strong supply of event venues that have been specially developed to support agricultural-related events. Venues like Westerner Park in Red Deer, the Regional Exhibition grounds in Olds, or the Spur West Events Centre near Alhambra provide ample opportunity to integrate agritourism into festivals and events.

Regional Tourism Product Gaps:

- > Agritourism Accommodations The region is well supplied with campgrounds and RV parks in the rural areas and fixed roof accommodations in urban areas. However, there is a gap in terms of agritourism accommodations (e.g. farm stays, guest ranches). This is an area that could be expanded to accommodate agritourists who want to fully immerse themselves into the experience.
- Retailers Offering Local Agricultural Products The option to purchase artisanal food products and non-consumable goods produced by local farms is limited across the region. Providing more opportunities for local products to be purchased may increase sales and awareness of producers.
- > Food Service Establishments using Local Ingredients Central Alberta has a wide variety and large inventory of food and beverage providers, but only a select group promotes their use of locally grown and processed ingredients. Using local ingredients is one of the simplest forms of promoting the industry and creating a more sustainable food system. It also exposes more people (visitors and residents alike) to locally produced and available products.
- **Farm Experiences** Many of the agritourism attractions identified through the inventory process do not have regularly scheduled tours or indicate that they are open to the public. While many farmers and producers enjoy showing visitors around, they do not always have this option listed on their website, meaning that many tourists would not know this is an option. There is also a lack of immersive agritourism experiences, where guests can engage all their senses.
- Winter and Shoulder Season Experiences There is a lack of winter and shoulder season agritourism experiences to continue attracting visitors outside of the busy summer season.



Industry Engagement

Input from industry stakeholders in Central Alberta was gathered in the fall of 2022. Agritourism operators, local businesses, governments, non-governmental organizations, and residents all provided input. In total, the engagement process produced 154 touchpoints with agritourism stakeholders. A project-specific website was developed to help promote and support the engagement process. The website received 1,205 total visits from 441 unique users.

Key Themes from the Engagement Process

Five key themes were synthesized from all the engagement inputs received. They are as follows.



1. Momentum is Building Around Agritourism

It is clear that considerable momentum is building around agritourism in Central Alberta. Many of the agritourism operators the consultant team spoke with only began pursuing agritourism in the last two years. Furthermore, established operators shared that they are planning on expanding and diversifying their current offerings. These developments indicate a high degree of interest among new and existing businesses to pursue agritourism development.



2. Demand for Enhanced Collaboration and Communication

Participants in the engagement process requested enhanced opportunities for collaboration and communication between agritourism operators. Given that many operators are located in somewhat remote, rural areas they find it difficult to engage with other operators who are dispersed throughout the region. Operators described that they felt isolated and were missing out on useful opportunities to learn from and swap ideas with their fellow operators.

"We are just getting started!"

> - Agritourism Operator



3. Need for More Agritourism Product

Expanding visitor experiences was selected as one of the top issues to focus on by respondents to the online survey. Participants see opportunity for a wide variety of agritourism experiences that can be showcased. They also see opportunities to weave educational elements into agritourism experiences, and stressed the importance of maintaining high standards for agritourism offerings. The activities

"We love hearing the "Wow! I didn't know that!" expressions from our visito<u>rs."</u>

- Agritourism Operator

with the greatest potential for development according to survey respondents included agritourism festivals and events, unique agricultural accommodations, educational agritourism experiences, and recreational agritourism experiences.



4. Opportunity to Improve Awareness

Survey respondents identified advertising, promotions, and brand development as a need for the region.

Another facet of this theme was a need to improve awareness among agricultural businesses of the benefits that agritourism can produce. Stakeholders felt that more businesses would be pursuing agritourism if they knew it was a viable opportunity that would benefit them.

"Sharing our lives in agriculture has enriched us in many ways and we hope it enriches others!"

- Agritourism Operator



5. Need to Address Barriers

Participants identified several barriers to agritourism development in Central Alberta. Foremost among these barriers was a lack of understanding of how to go about developing agritourism. Operators the consultant team spoke with often had strong backgrounds in agriculture, but were new to tourism. As such, there is a need to improve knowledge of development processes, funding opportunities, insurance requirements, regulatory requirements (e.g. land use bylaws, building permits, food handling permits, safety codes, public health "The one thing that shines rules, tax implications, etc.), and the tourism industry through in agriculture is in general. Other barriers identified by participants passion." included labour shortages, transportation/access, - Agritourism Operator balancing agricultural work with tourism work, and weather-related factors. Addressing these barriers will be important toward spurring agritourism development.



Photo Credit: Central Alberta Tourism Alliance

Agritourism Champions in the Region

10 agritourism champions were identified through an Agritourism Operator Assessment process. Brief profiles of these champions are provided in Appendix E. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list, and there are other agritourism operators who are active but were not specifically identified through this process. Also, it is expected that additional agritourism champions will come forward in Central Alberta as the sector develops. Engaging as many stakeholders as possible in implementation of the strategy will be vital to success.

Agritourism Champion Profile – Kraay Family Farm

Kraay Family Farm has long been recognized a successful agritourism business in Central Alberta. The business seeks to expand its operations every year with the addition of at least one new experience. The owners' ingenuity and natural inclination for what types of experiences their quests would like to have led to the success of them seeing on average 45,000 people per operating season (July to October).



Photo Credit: Lacombe Tourism

Case Study: Alberta's Craft Brewing Industry

Government regulations can make or break an industry. An excellent example of this took place in relation to Alberta's craft brewing industry as the following case study describes.

Alberta is a beer-loving province. On average, beer consumption in Alberta is among the highest in Canada. Back in 2013, Alberta had 13 small craft breweries. This was just one more than Nova Scotia, which had a quarter of the population, and one-sixth as many as British Columbia. The reason for this difference was because of AGLC policies, the most significant of which was a production capacity requirement of 5,000 hectolitres per year. To produce that much beer, a brewer would need to make a significant financial investment before they could obtain a licence. This barrier to entry prohibited Alberta from keeping up with the rest of Canada in terms of craft beer production.

Fortunately, these policies were changed to better support craft brewers. Within five years, Alberta saw dozens of new breweries start up across the province. Alberta is now home to over 130 independent small breweries.⁵

Removing regulatory barriers to entry was key to unlocking the potential of craft beer in Alberta. The agritourism sector stands to benefit from governments taking a similar approach. By addressing barriers and creating supportive regulatory frameworks, Central Alberta will set the stage for agritourism development.



Photo Credit: Travel Alberta / Colin Way (left), attitudeDrive Adventure (right)



Visitor Analysis

Market data on visitors to Central Alberta was analyzed to support the strategic plan. The main findings are summarized next.

Domestic Tourism in Central Alberta Tourism Region (2019)⁶

In 2019, 7.36 million visits were made by residents of Alberta and other parts of Canada to destinations in the Central Alberta tourism region. Albertans accounted for 6.99 million of these visits, with 368,000 person-visits originating from other parts of Canada. Visits to the Central Alberta tourism region accounted for 23% of total person-visits in Alberta.

Approximately 27% of all visits included at least one overnight stay. Of the 2 million overnight visits to the region, Alberta residents accounted for 95%, followed by Saskatchewan residents (3%) and British Columbia (1%).

The main purpose of overnight visits was to visit friends and relatives, followed by pleasure, business, and other reasons. 61% of nights were spent in the homes of friends and relatives, followed by hotels, resorts, and other commercial roofed properties (19%), and campgrounds, RV parks, and backcountry camping (19%). Domestic visitors tended to stay between 2.2 and 4.0 nights with an average party size of 2.1 – 2.3 people. Domestic overnight visits were primarily from July to September (40%), followed by April to June (25%), October to December (20%), and January to March (15%).

The total direct tourism expenditures for the region was an estimated \$1.041 billion, of which private vehicle/rental accounted for the largest share, followed by food and beverage, accommodations, retail/other, recreation/entertainment, and public/local transportation.

Traveling to visit family and friends is a significant driver of travel to Central Alberta. In fact, "Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) represents a considerable share of all tourism in Alberta."⁷ The VFR market accounts for 43% of all in-province trips by Albertans, and VFR is the main reason for more than half of Canadians traveling to Alberta from other provinces.



Domestic Visitation to







Photo Credit: Central

Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.

Regional Markets

Calgary, Edmonton, and the communities surrounding these cities offer a significant market opportunity to Central Alberta. With a population of over 2.9 million, these regional markets represent a substantial number of potential visitors.

High Levels of Expenditures from Outside Alberta

In 2017, Alberta-based visitors were responsible for the majority of person-visits; however, this market was only responsible for 54% of total tourism expenditures. Other Canada (22.0%), overseas countries (14%) and the United States (10%) were responsible for almost half of the total tourism expenditures made in the province. Key sources of overnight inbound travel to Alberta include neighbouring provinces, the U.S., and major European and Asian markets.8

Operator Quote

"Over the past number of years there has been a growing interest from consumers to understand exactly where our food comes from. As manufacturers and producers, there is an ever-growing opportunity to share this information with the public through agritourism. The more that we can keep our business and sourcing of goods locally to Central Alberta, the better it is for everyone involved."

- Nolan West, Rival Trade Brewing Co (Alhambra)



Alberta's High Value Travellers

High value travellers spend more per visit, yield the highest return on investment and make the greatest contribution to the province's economic growth. Using psychographic, demographic, and socioeconomic data, Travel Alberta has built two personas that highlight the traits of Alberta's high value travellers.⁹

Curious Adventurers

For Curious Adventurers, travel is about getting a different perspective on the world. They are energized by exploring new places and inspired to learn all they can about a destination through its landscapes, authentic culture and the people they meet. Curious Adventurers are most interested in rural areas, cities, and mountains, and prefer travelling during the summer. They seek out authentic connections, belonging, feeling like locals, personal enlightenment, and fulfillment. Team Alberta's recommended market focus for Curious Adventurers is Alberta, Canada, U.S., U.K., Germany, and Japan.¹⁰

Hotspot Hunters

For Hotspot Hunters, travel is about achievement and accomplishment. They want to visit the top attractions, take part in one-of-a-kind experiences, and connect with local experts. Hotspot Hunters are most interested in mountains and cities, and are open to travel in all seasons. They seek out accomplishment, fulfillment, connection by doing, the best moments ever, and value. Team Alberta's recommended market focus for Hotspot Hunters is Alberta, Canada, U.S., Mexico, and China.¹¹

With opportunities for hands-on learning and connection to local people and culture, agritourism lends itself well to appealing to Alberta's High Value Travellers. This presents a great opportunity for Central Alberta agritourism businesses to be highlighted in the province's tourism marketing campaigns.



Comparator Analysis

Comparators in the agritourism market were analyzed in relation to Central Alberta. The main strengths of these destinations and the factors that differentiate Central Alberta are identified below. Please see Appendix F for an expanded discussion on comparators, as well as destinations that Central Alberta could partner with in the future.

Main Strengths of Comparators:

- Dedicated Agritourism Supports >
- Marketing and Brand Awareness >
- Support from Local Communities >
- Strong Cluster Development >
- **Financial Supports** >
- Local Food Strategies >
- Longer Growing Seasons >

Differentiators for Central Alberta

- Diversity in agricultural offerings. >
- Location with easy vehicle access to over 3M people in multiple urban markets. >
- Well established agricultural sector deeply rooted in the culture. >

Operator Quote

"Agritourism is a great way for us to diversify our income stream by offering something other than 'just garlic' to our customers and helps our farm to be sustainable year round."



— Mark & Brenda Visscher, Deep Roots Farm (Joffre)



Trends Analysis

where food comes from.

To inform the strategic planning process, trends that affect agritourism development were reviewed. The most relevant trends for Central Alberta are summarized next. See Appendix G for an expanded discussion.



Tourists are motivated to showcase "Instagrammable" destinations that they visit with their followers.

·····| Technology Overload

Travellers are looking to "unplug" from technology and reconnect with nature.





Opportunity Assessment





Tourism Product Development Opportunities

Several high potential opportunities for agritourism product development were identified through the opportunity assessment process. Descriptions of the opportunities are provided next.

1. Increasing Participation in Open Farm Days

Alberta Open Farm Days is a well-established, province-wide agritourism incubator event that runs for a full weekend every summer. The event was first established in 2012 with 46 farms participating. It has since grown to 150 farms in 2019 when participating farms hosted over 40,000 visitors.¹² This growth demonstrates there is demand for agritourism experiences and agricultural education from tourists.

Open Farm Days gives visitors an opportunity to experience the farm and understand where their food comes from. It is a backstage pass to meet the farmer, experience agritourism, and taste local foods direct from the producer.¹³ Central Alberta has a relatively low participation rate in Open Farm Days when compared with other areas of the province, indicating there is opportunity for agritourism operators to become more engaged in this event. Given the limited time commitment and engaged audience, Open Farm Days is an excellent opportunity for existing operators to test ideas for new experiences and for new operators to gauge their interest in pursuing agritourism. Businesses interested in learning more about the event and registering to participate can do so at the Open Farm Days website.





Photo Credits: Central Alberta Tourism Alliance



2. Central Alberta Brewery Tour

One of the main areas of strength for Central Alberta is the amount and quality of its breweries. Although many are relatively new businesses, they are quickly becoming local institutions and points of community pride. They also frequently use agricultural products grown in Central Alberta in their production processes, which enhances local economic impacts.

More can be done to position local breweries as agritourism attractions. One way this could be accomplished is through a packaged tour that would bring customers on an expedition to visit different breweries, learn about the brewing process, and taste the excellent beverages that brewers are making in Central Alberta. It is recommended that transportation is provided as part of the tours and opportunities to package accommodation options be explored.

Another way to better connect Central Alberta's breweries together from a tourism perspective would be through the development of a visitation incentive program. Such a program could be positioned as a "passport" where participants are challenged to visit every brewery included in the program. Once participants can prove they visited all the breweries, perhaps by collecting a stamp or taking a photo at each location, they would be rewarded with a small gift, such as a certificate of completion, recognition on a website or social media post, or a savings voucher for local businesses. Incentive programs like these are an easy and inexpensive way to combine existing assets together in a way that is attractive for visitors. Examples of successful incentive programs include the *Triple* Crown Challenge in Canmore, Alberta and the Passport to the Peaks Program in Grande Cache, Alberta.

Another opportunity to connect Central Alberta breweries together and with breweries outside the region would be to participate in the Alberta Ale Trail. This province-wide tourism initiative is currently under development, so there could be opportunity for Central Alberta to position itself as an anchor destination along the trail.





Photo Credit: Travel Albertra / Britta Kokemor (top), Central Alberta Tourism Alliance (bottom)



3. Farm Tours

Farm Tours offer an experiential and often educational opportunity for visitors to celebrate agriculture and foster a deeper connection with their food and the people who produce it. Central Alberta has many farms and ranches that could offer farm tour experiences that would be attractive to visitors interested in learning about their food and agricultural lifestyles. Farm tours can take many forms, but they often include a variety of engaging, hands-on activities that are fun for the whole family. Examples include harvesting demos, animal care instruction, stick calf roping, horseback riding, line dancing classes, and much more. There are also endless opportunities to weave culinary, cultural, and heritage elements into farm tours to add enhanced value to the visitor experience.

From an operator's perspective, offering farm tours is often viewed as an attractive opportunity by farmers who are passionate about their agricultural lifestyle and want to share it with others, while also increasing the financial sustainability and return on investment of their land and operations. Operators typically begin their entry into tourism by offering small scale experiences and tours, and then building from there as their own interest and interest from visitors grows. There are several examples across Alberta of farms and ranches that have transitioned their operations into highly successful agritourism businesses, including Kraay Family Farm, Chinook Honey Company, and the Rocking R Guest Ranch.¹⁴



4. Taste of Central Alberta Experience

Central Alberta has some of the best agricultural products in Canada, if not the world. There is an opportunity to showcase these products and grow tourism through high-end, farm-to-table culinary experiences. More than simply a great meal, these experiences should be enhanced with opportunities to meet the chef and/or producers who can share the story behind each meal, such as where the ingredients came from, how they were made, and what the theme or inspiration of the meal is. These experiences could be offered year-round and positioned as a signature Central Alberta culinary experience.



Photo Credits: Central Alberta Tourism Alliance



5. Cook Like a Local

Through this experience, visitors would join a chef to learn how to cook like a local. The first part of the experience would entail joining the chef at their favourite store(s) to source locally produced ingredients and learn the backstory on where the ingredients came from. Once participants have all the ingredients they need, it is time to get busy cooking with expert guidance from the chef. The experience concludes with participants eating a fabulous meal that they cooked for themselves. This experience can be kept fresh and new as different agricultural products come in season throughout the year.

6. Agritourism Itineraries

Developing itineraries for self-directed travellers is one of the easiest and most inexpensive things Central Alberta can do to promote tourism. Itineraries can be developed to highlight specific product lines that appeal to certain visitor markets (e.g. breweries, farm visits, culinary experiences, farmers' markets, etc.). Itineraries can then be readily shared with visitors through websites, print materials, and other marketing channels. For examples of interesting travel itineraries developed in other parts of Alberta see:

- Travel Drumheller: https://traveldrumheller.com/itineraries/ >
- > Travel Alberta: https://www.travelalberta.com/ca/plan-your-trip/itineraries/

Developing travel itineraries for agritourism development is particularly appealing because it does not necessarily require the creation of new experiences. In most cases, all that is needed is to combine existing attractions in creative ways that offer compelling routes for visitors. Brewers in Red Deer have already seen success with itinerary development through the creation of the Red Deer Ale Trail. Other product categories could follow their lead and build their own unique and engaging itineraries. To support future itinerary development, a helpful itinerary development process is provided in Appendix H.





Photo Credits: Central Alberta Tourism Alliance



7. Niche Agritourism Accommodations

Having attractive accommodation options is key to driving overnight visitation. Many destinations are experiencing success with low-impact accommodation options that still provide creature comforts (e.g. yurts, domed tents, tipis, glamping, etc.). Developing niche agritourism accommodation options in the region, such as farm stays, guest ranches, or cabins, will enable a more fulsome experiencewto be offered to visitors.

8. Leveraging Festivals and Events

Communities in Central Alberta host a wide variety of festivals and events throughout the year. These events bring thousands of visitors to the region and are being positioned as key drivers of economic development (see Red Deer and Sylvan Lake tourism event strategies). Agritourism operators stand to benefit from existing and new festivals and events by incorporating their experiences into on-site and off-site experiences. The opportunity is particularly strong for culinary-related experiences as good food and beverage are keystones to all festivals and events. In the future, it is also possible for the region to develop a region-specific Open Farm Days type event.



Photo Credits: Travel Alberta / Cooper and O'Hara (top), City of Red Deer (bottom)







Vision, Strategy, and Goals

Photo Credit: Central Alberta Tourism Alliance



Photo Credit: Central Alberta Tourism Alliance

Vision for the Future

Through agritourism, Central Alberta has an exciting opportunity to invite visitors to connect with the people and places that bring the region's agricultural heritage to life. The following statement describes Central Alberta's vision for the future.

10 Year Vision

"Central Alberta will be recognized as the premier agritourism destination in Alberta by 2033."

Outcome Statements (i.e. what will be different in 10 years?)

- > There is an impactful and sustainable collaboration framework in place to support agritourism development in Central Alberta.
- There is significantly more agritourism product available to visitors. The product maintains high standards to ensure > visitors are delighted by their experience and become advocates.
- Visitors are travelling to Central Alberta in increasing numbers to experience the region's high quality agritourism > offerings.
- > Central Alberta has a clear, compelling, and unique brand that sets it apart as an agritourism destination.
- New and existing agritourism operators have a clear development pathway that they can follow to start and/or grow > their businesses.
- > Agritourism is recognized by communities as a key driver for economic growth and diversification of the visitor economy in Central Alberta.
- Agritourism is contributing to the strength and sustainability of the broader agricultural sector in Central Alberta. >
- Central Alberta is becoming known across Canada and around the world as a destination for high quality agritourism > experiences.



Strategy for Agritourism Development

It is recommended that Central Alberta employ a product development strategy as its strategic focus in the short to medium term. A strong agricultural product base to build from, a need for new experiences, and large available markets in Calgary, Edmonton, and Central Alberta support this focus.

In the medium to long term, it is recommended that Central Alberta shifts its strategic focus toward diversification. The reason for this is an opportunity to engage new, high-value markets that will stay longer and spend more.

Target Markets

Considering existing visitor data, and taking into account what inspires agritourists to travel to Central Alberta, the following target markets have been identified for the strategy.



Primary Target Market:

Visitors from across Alberta who are seeking to deepen their connection to agriculture through fun, fulfilling, and sustainable experiences.



Secondary Target Market:

Visitors from across Canada and other countries who are seeking to immerse themselves in authentic agriculture-related experiences that are uniquely Central Albertan.



Central Alberta Agritourism Development Strategy | March 30, 2023

Photo Credit: Central Alberta Tourism Alliance



Goals

Four overarching goals have been developed to guide the strategy. Key short-term action items have been included under each goal in this section. See Appendix I for a description of an organizational framework to support implementation and Appendix J for the full implementation plan.



Organizational Development

GOAL: Establish a collaboration framework and invest in organizational capacity to support agritourism development in Central Alberta.

The first step toward successful agritourism development in Central Alberta will be to establish a collaboration framework that brings operators and governments together to pursue mutual goals through agritourism development. Businesses and organizations should come together through collaborative efforts with a common, overarching goal to grow agritourism and the benefits it can provide. Investments to enhance the capacity of these groups will be needed to properly action the strategy. See Appendix K for an expanded discussion on organizations who can help support agritourism development in Central Alberta.

KEY ACTIONS:

- Select a Host Organization and establish an Agritourism Development Task Force. The Task Force will play a central role in implementing the strategy. It is important that agritourism businesses are highly engaged in this group.
- > Allocate resources to implement the strategy. Wherever feasible, resources should be leveraged between partner organizations to build collaboration between stakeholders.
- > Increase capacity to implement the strategy by securing contracted human resources. It is suggested that this resource would be a contracted firm in the beginning to access specialized expertise and to reduce the need for day-to-day supervision.
- Host an Agritourism Development Forum to officially kick off implementation of the strategy and to generate ideas that can be implemented immediately among operators.



Product Development

GOAL: Develop outstanding agritourism experiences that will attract visitors to Central Alberta.

In order to attract more agritourists to Central Alberta, highly engaging and immersive experiences should be developed. The following high potential product development opportunities can be used as a starting point for experience providers to develop their own unique product offerings.

- 1. Increasing Participating in Open Farm Days 5. Cook Like a Local
- 2. Central Alberta Brewery Tour 6. Agritourism Itineraries
- 3. Farm Tours
- 4. Taste of Central Alberta Experience

KEY ACTIONS:

- Develop an Agritourism Mentorship Program to connect experienced operators with new and emerging operators to coach them along their development journey.
- > Provide tourism experience and package development training to existing and potential new agritourism operators.
- > Focus product development efforts on agritourism offerings that are close to being visitor and/or market ready to rapidly expand the product base that is available in the region.
- > Develop engaging agritourism itineraries that will showcase the region's best agritourism assets to attract increased visitation.

- 7. Niche Agritourism Accommodations
- 8. Leveraging Festivals and Events





KEY ACTIONS:

Marketing and Promotional Development

GOAL: Increase and enhance marketing activities to entice more agritourists to visit Central Alberta.

To become a preferred destination for agritourism, Central Alberta should establish a clear, compelling, and unique tourism brand. The region's understanding of its visitors should be enhanced and marketing activities expanded. Increasing the awareness of the region's new highquality agritourism experiences among target markets will be key to success.

> Work with local DMOs in Central Alberta to develop agritourism-specific collaborative

marketing campaigns that showcase high-quality agritourism experiences.

> Develop a clear, compelling, and unique agritourism brand for Central Alberta.



Destination Development

GOAL: Strengthen the capacity of operators and communities to develop agritourism.

Stakeholders should undertake key capacity enhancing actions that will support agritourism development in the region. Governments can play a key role in supporting agritourism development by developing agritourism-friendly policies and establishing supportive regulatory frameworks.



KEY ACTIONS:

- Develop an information resource that clearly describes the regulatory requirements for starting and expanding an agritourism business in Central Alberta.
- Review and enhance municipal bylaws, policies, and procedures to ensure a strong foundation and favourable regulatory framework is in place to support agritourism development.



Photo Credits: Central Alberta Tourism Alliance



Conclusion

Photo Credit: Central Alberta Tourism Alliance


Conclusion

The Agritourism Development Strategy offers a strategic direction that will advance Central Alberta toward its vision to become recognized as the premier agritourism destination in Alberta.

To be successful, the strategy will require a high degree of collaboration among stakeholders, investment from multiple partners, and a strong focus on high-value actions. The return on this investment is expected to include increased visitation and visitor spending, diversification of local economies, and a strengthening of the broader agricultural sector across Central Alberta.



Appendices



(inc

Appendix A: Overview of Research

Surveys Administered

Agritourism Development Strategy > Online Survey (98 responses)

Meetings Conducted

- Steering Committee Meetings (5) >
- Resident Input Sessions (2) >
- Agritourism Industry Input Sessions (4) >
- In-Person Tours and Assessments (6) >

Documents Reviewed

- Tourism research and visitation statistics > from Travel Alberta, Province of Alberta, and national sources
- Existing inventories of tourism assets > and business listing databases.
- Existing tourism-related planning and > support studies in partner municipalities.

Stakeholders Engaged (through interviews, surveys or in-person meetings)

Municipal Governments:

- 1. City of Red Deer
- 2. Clearwater County
- 3. Lacombe County
- 4. Red Deer County
- 5. Town of Blackfalds
- 6. Town of Innisfail
- 7. Town of Rocky Mountain House
- 8. Town of Sylvan Lake

Businesses and Stakeholders:

9. Tourism Red Deer	33.
10.West Country Mills	34.
11. Heritage and Hobby Farm	
12. Silver Star Cheese	35.
13. DNA Gardens	36.
14. Hidden Valley Garden U-Pick	37.
15. Gull Lake Honey Company	38.
16.BBB Honey Farms Inc.	39.
17. Deep Roots Farm	40.
18. Little Farm on Wall Street	41.
19. Sunnybrook Farm Museum	42.
20.Kraay Family Farm	43.
21. Ellis Bird Farm	44.
22. Farm Local Foods	45.
23. Ranch Gate Market	46.
24. Bee Hive Artisan Market	47.
25. Parkland Nurseries and Garden Centre	
26.Cilantro and Chive	Ext
27. Bo's Bar and Stage	48.
28. Westerner Park	49.
29. Rival Trade Brewery	50.
30.Troubled Monk	51.
31. Gasoline Alley Farmers Market	52.
32. La Café Pergola	

33. Alta Vista

- Hamingja Heritage Farm & Nature
- Preserve
- Field and Forge Brewing Co.
- Fresh and Repeat
- Koornneef Farms
- The Farmhouse Market
- Sundre and District Museum
- Discovery Wildlife Park
- Red Shed Malting
- ZS Holdings LTD
- Bert and Bert Farms
- **Double T Percherons**
- The Wooden Shoe Store & Coffee Shop
- Red Deer Regional Airport
- Bentley & District Agricultural Society

ternal Stakeholder Groups:

.Travel Alberta Government of Alberta .CDÉA/Tourisme Alberta Twenty31 ClearThink Group



Appendix B: Expanded Strategic and Community Alignment Analysis

Central Alberta Region

Document	Strategic Alignment Summary
Central Alberta Tourism Alliance Terms of Reference (2020)	Outlines CATA's mandate and purpose, which includes a focus on growth and diversification.
Central Alberta Destination Management Plan (2015)	Identifies the strategic priority to Grow and Diversify Authentic Memorable Experiences, with a priority Agri-Culinary tourism Farm Market Attraction, supported by a designated touring route, and correspondir
Economic Development in Rural Alberta Plan (2022)	Identifies marketing and promoting rural tourism as one of five strategic directions. Also includes new a update the Alberta Agri-Food Investment and Growth Strategy; improve awareness of agriculture and ag Alberta's rural visitor economy to ensure rural and Indigenous communities are strong and vibrant with economic diversification.
Central Alberta Tourism Alliance Accommodation Study: Final Report (2018)	This study evaluates the accommodation sector and identifies the need for additional fixed-roof accomm the depth of the market is limited in many regions. It suggests that Central Alberta needs to become "n to increase the number of demand generators for tourists.
CATA Trails Tourism Plan (2020)	Identifies 5-8 signature trail tourism experiences within Central Alberta, and encourages the expansion of services, including accommodations, food and beverage, etc. Targeted Traveler Profiles mirror those of
Government of Alberta Land Use Plan (2008)	Identifies innovation and value-added diversification as a way to achieve a healthy economy supported by plan includes additional Regional Plans that were to be completed by 2012, but to date the Red Deer Re the partner destinations) has not yet been started. The North Saskatchewan Plan (in which Clearwater in Phase 2.

ty initiative to create a major regional ling events during Fall Harvest Season.

actions to establish new targets and agri-food related careers; and support ith opportunities for employment and

modations in Central Alberta, but that 'more of a must-see destination", and

of trails based businesses and support of agritourists.

by the land and natural resources. The Regional Plan (which includes most of er County is included) is currently only



Individual Communities

Municipality/County	Strategic Alignment Summary
City of Red Deer	Tourism Red Deer Business Plan (2022) Puts forward a vision and plan for a new organizational structure that will dramatically increase the resources and capacity Agritourism and culinary experiences are one of the suggested product focus areas for Tourism Red Deer.
	Red Deer Major Events Strategy (2021) Establishes a vision for Red Deer to be recognized as the top major event destination among mid-sized cities in Canada by 2030 strategic focus is on attracting major sporting events and major arts/culture events, while also building upon successful majo the Agri-Trade Equipment Expo and the Canadian Finals Rodeo.
	Tourism Red Deer Strategic Plan 2020-2022 (2020) Identifies food tourism, outdoor recreation, and cultural heritage and arts tourism are key focus areas, all of which intersect wi
	Environmental Master Plan (2019) Identifies the action to develop an Urban Agriculture Action Plan relating to areas such as community gardens, urban farming and edible landscaping, urban livestock and more, with the intended outcome to increase production, consumption, and knowl Red Deer. From this was developed a Local Food Movement group to complete tasks such as finding a way to collectively reach weekly with available products, and to expand farm tours like those given on Open Farm Days so they happen more often thro
	Downtown Red Deer's Investment Attraction Plan (2016) Includes targeting specialty clusters for business attraction to address existing gaps in the downtown core, including food produ and health and wellness, all which lend themselves to agritourism development potential.
City of Lacombe	Municipal Sustainability Plan (2014) A key direction identified within the economic strategy area is the development of tourism products and opportunities, as well as a section to maintain the integrity of the land and agricultural industry while moving toward a more sustainable food system f disposal.
Town of Blackfalds	Town of Blackfalds Economic Development and Tourism Strategy (2021) Identifies tourism as a key area of priority, including mentoring business to business collaboration to create new local options.

ces and capacity of the organization.

Canada by 2030. The recommended successful major annual events like

which intersect with agritourism.

ns, urban farming, public agriculture ption, and knowledge of local food in collectively reach out to restaurants more often through the year.

luding food products, entertainment,

nities, as well as a food and agriculture ble food system from farm to fork to



Municipality/County	Strategic Alignment Summary
Town of Sylvan Lake	Destination Positioning Strategy (2022) Informs the messaging strategy used for promotional campaigns that leverages the value of the lake and p communicate a holistic experience, shifting the focus to ensure that Sylvan Lake is known for more than just th
	Sylvan Lake Tourism Marketing Strategy (2019) Recommends engaging businesses within the local and regional tourism community to build excitement for shou Sylvan Lake as a year-round destination. It also encourages local restaurants to collaborate with and source ingre food artisans to celebrate the agricultural bounty of Central Alberta.
	Sylvan Lake Festival and Events Strategy (2018) Outlines the need for a fall culinary festival that incorporates local craft breweries, food producers and restaura
Town of Innisfail	Community Economic Development Strategy and Tactical Plan 2021-2024 (2021) Strategic objectives include leveraging community assets to develop competitive advantages in key sectors in developing the local economy by supporting local business through a comprehensive buy local campaign.
Town of Rocky Mountain House	2018-2022 Strategic Plan (2018) Prioritizes promoting the Town of Rocky Mountain House as a tourism destination.
Town of Olds	Olds Municipal Development Plan (2020) Recognizes the importance of fostering long term economic growth through tourism, including pursuing opport value-added industries and those related to Olds College's areas of educational focus.
	Olds College Strategic Plan: Growing 2025 (2021) Prioritizes expanding the agriculture acres and assets that the Smart Ag Ecosystem has access to, and new kn to create solutions and opportunities in the agriculture value chain.

pairing it with non-lake activities to the lake.

oulder season tourism and co-creating gredients from nearby farms and local

rants.

including agri-business, and to start

ortunities by promoting and attracting

knowledge, products, and technology



Municipality/County	Strategic Alignment Summary
Red Deer County	Red Deer County Economic Development Strategy (2017) Identifies agriculture as a key industry for the County, as well as food manufacturing and tourism. Objectives supporting entrepreneurs, strengthening partnerships and regional networks, and agricultural development.
	Red Deer County Municipal Development Plan (2020) Outlines agriculture as the County's primary industry, with the protection of agricultural operations as a priority, added agricultural industries is supported by the County.
Clearwater County	David Thompson Country Regional Tourism Strategy (2017) Identifies working with partners to open opportunities for tourism development, and to support the tourism industry including accommodations.
	Clearwater County Council Strategic Plan 2022-2026 (2022) Outlines the commitment to growing and diversifying their economy, including diversified agriculture investment sports events centre, and unique tourism marketing initiatives. The County also plans to develop an Agriculture
Lacombe County	Lacombe Regional Tourism Strategic Plan 2021-2022 (2021) Goals to promote and support the further development of areas of tourism including agritourism, culinary touri
	Lacombe County 2022-2027 Strategic Plan (2022) Outlines the priorities and goals for the council, including protecting agricultural lands and conservation of education, and increasing the awareness of location and assets.
	Municipal Development Plan (2019) The top priorities are to protect and encourage the County's strong agricultural community; to demonstrate resp environment and provide a variety of recreational opportunities; and to diversify and support economic growth.
Mountain View County	Overview of Strategic Direction Priorities 2022-2027 (2022) Demonstrates support for traditional, innovative, and value-added agriculture industries.
	Mountain View Region Case for Tourism and Strategic Recommendations (2021)

Identifies agritourism as an area of opportunity for tourism experiences.

es include promoting innovation and

y, and that the development of value-

ry through infrastructure development

ent and attraction, an agricultural and re Master Plan.

urism, and rural tourism.

of soil quality through advocacy and

esponsible stewardship of the natural h.



Appendix C: Agritourism Asset Inventory Summary

An inventory of agritourism assets in Central Alberta was undertaken to inform the strategy. The process recorded 590 assets across 7 inventory categories. The number of assets recorded for each category is shown in Figure 1. For each asset, the inventory identified the following information (where available):

- > Asset Name
- Classification >
- Market Readiness >
- Location >
- Contact Information >
- Description of the Product Offering >

The inventory focused on assets that are directly related to agritourism. It should be recognized that there are many more assets, services, and businesses in the region that support or contribute in some way to the broader visitor economy in the region.

Figure 1. Number of Agritourism-Specific Assets per Category

Municipality	Accommodation	Agritourism/ Culinary Tourism Attraction	Community Assets and Services	Festivals and Events	Food and Beverage Providers	Processors and Retailers	Other	Totals
City of Red Deer	19	4	27	9	22	27	0	108
City of Lacombe	6	1	6	5	8	8	0	34
Town of Blackfalds	4	1	9	7	5	2	0	28
Town of Innisfail	2	2	1	2	4	7	0	18
Town of Olds	7	3	4	4	3	8	0	29
Town of Rocky Mountain House	12	2	2	3	8	7	0	34
Town of Sylvan Lake	8	1	1	1	9	8	0	28
Clearwater County	38	32	4	5	5	9	2	95
Lacombe County	13	26	16	3	5	10	0	73
Mountain View County	20	18	3	7	5	10	0	63
Red Deer County	12	38	5	2	9	14	0	80
Totals	141	128	77	48	84	110	2	590



Appendix D: Community-Specific Product Analysis and Opportunity Areas

Blackfalds

Many residents move here to get away from the hustle and bustle of larger urban areas, while remaining close to city amenities. With its small population and close proximity to both Red Deer and Lacombe, Blackfalds provides an opportunity to explore more passive agritourism experiences and as a gateway to regional exploration. Areas of opportunity for agritourism development center around more urban offerings like retail, food providers, the local museum, and as a gathering place to celebrate the surrounding agriculture.

Strengths

- > **Community Gathering Spaces** Blackfalds has a supply of activity spaces with natural areas that could be used as event sites to celebrate local agriculture and provide opportunity for pop up agritourism experiences.
- **Events** Blackfalds hosts several community celebrations in which agriculture and agritourism experiences could be incorporated. This volume of annual events suggests an active and engaged community, which is beneficial to ongoing support of agritourism development.
- > **Historic Blackfalds Digital Walking Tour** This digital tour is a fantastic opportunity to explore the history of Blackfalds in a modern setting. It is a great resource for visitors to explore the town and provides the opportunity to incorporate agricultural stories into the experience, or even develop an extension tour that adds some immersive agritourism experiences in partnership with other local businesses.

Gaps

- > Agritourism Assets There are not many assets that are directly connected to the agritourism industry.
- > Accommodations To position itself as an agritourism hub, the town could work with existing accommodations to incorporate local agricultural products and décor/imagery to better reflect its agricultural surroundings. There may also be opportunity for new, immersive agricultural-themed accommodations to open in the town.
- **Specialty Retailers** Blackfalds could look toward expanding the number of retailers carrying local agricultural products and processed goods. This serves as an extension to local agritourism experiences, and allows visitors to repurchase and relive their experience on a more frequent basis.

Opportunities

- > Food and Beverage Providers Working with local establishments to incorporate local agricultural products into their menus would begin to shift the foodscape and set the standard for restaurants in town.
- > Retailers Selling Local Products While the town itself does not have agritourism attractions, it can develop a strong retail industry to support both consumable and non-consumable agricultural products.
- **Event Spaces** The activity venues host visitors throughout the year, which would make them an ideal location to promote regional itineraries. With its close proximity to agritourism assets, an emphasis could be put on short trips to take within an afternoon.
- **Community Gardens** Community spaces with gardens could be enhanced to include agricultural products like grains and produce. They could serve as sites for education and workshops, while reinforcing the connection to the agricultural roots.

Action Items

- 1. Implement applicable action items to support agritourism development (see the Implementation Plan in Appendix J).
- 2. Enhance the Historic Blackfalds Digital Walking Tour to incorporate agritourism elements.
- 3. Encourage food, beverage, and retail businesses to incorporate local and regional agricultural products into their offerings.
- 4. Develop day-trip itineraries to link rural agritourism attractions with the town.
- 5. Leverage community gardens to enhance local agritourism offerings.





Clearwater County

Clearwater County extends through the mountainous region of Central Alberta, making it a prime location for outdoor adventures and rustic accommodations. Surrounded by stunning natural landscapes and provincial parks, Clearwater County is well-known for its untouched wilderness. This is reflected in the types of tourism businesses found in the area, which have an emphasis on exploration of the natural environment including lakes, waterfalls, and trails and outdoor adventure. This results in a higher concentration of equestrian and guided outdoor experiences that celebrate the cowboy culture of the area.

Strengths

- > **Rustic Accommodations** Accommodations skew higher in campgrounds, RV parks, and cabins rather than traditional hotels and motels, which aligns itself very well with the agritourist profile that values immersive experiences.
- > **Cowboy Culture** The County has several agritourism attractions that incorporate equestrian experiences and quided experiences. While not farm-focused, these experiences reflect the cowboy culture and history of the area.
- **Agriculture-Related Events** Clearwater County is home to several annual events that emphasize local agriculture, including the Clearwater County West Country Ag Tour, the Rocky Pro Rodeo, and weekly farmers' markets in Caroline and Bergen.

Gaps

- > **Food and Beverage** Food and beverage providers are in short supply within the County, meaning visitors are more likely to leave the County to seek out meals.
- > Agritourism Attractions There are over 1,000 farms in the County, and from those only 23 were identified as currently offering visitors the opportunity to visit and experience the farm.
- > **Tourism-Ready Processors and Retailers** Clearwater County has many processors who are not currently open to visitors. Some attend local farmers' markets or make their goods purchasable online; however, without a regular physical location their experiential potential is limited. More Processors could seek to have small retail shops or collaborate with existing retailers to have their products available on a continuous basis.

Opportunities

- > **Events** Incorporating more of the County's agricultural story and local producers into Community Events.
- **Storytelling** Storytelling that combines the cowboy culture and agricultural histories into the backcountry and outdoor experiences within the region.
- > **Retailers Selling Local Products** With a land area of more than 18,000 square kilometres, having more retailers carrying local agricultural products and processed products would provide more experiences to keep visitors in the region longer.
- > **Local Food Packages** These could be incorporated into guided experiences, but also available for pre-purchase at accommodations or for pick up at other community stops.

Action Items

- 1. Implement applicable action items to support agritourism development (see the Implementation Plan in Appendix J).
- 2. Provide opportunities for on-site and off-site agritourism experiences to enhance the tourism potential of community events.
- 3. Encourage operators to incorporate agritourism storytelling into backcountry and outdoor experience offerings.
- 4. Develop local food packages and sell them to visitors.
- 5. Expand agriculture-related retail offerings in the County.





Innisfail

Innisfail has the opportunity for developing its own agritourism assets to draw visitors into the town. The community's most recognized agritourism assets, including Innisfail Growers and Daines Ranch, are not actually located within the town but in the surrounding Red Deer County. Regardless, they provide opportunities for promotion and collaboration both within the town and in the surrounding county. Innisfail's smaller community lends itself well to developing lower volume, but more engaging agritourism experiences.

Strengths

- **Processors** Innisfail is home to a variety of processors including coffee roasters, processing facilities, breweries, distilleries, and even chocolatiers. Processors have the unique opportunity to not only talk about, but showcase the commodity transformation from raw ingredient to finished good, which sets the stage for engaging agritourism experiences.
- > **Museum** The Innisfail and District Historical Village is a remarkable setting for sharing agricultural histories, equipment, and nearby agritourism experiences within the town. It hosts special events throughout the year and sets the stage as a venue for pop up agritourism experiences and information sources for local farms and producers.
- **Growth Potential** There is great potential for growth within all areas of agritourism assets. The way the community embraced local establishments like Field & Forge and Dark Woods Brewing & Coffee Roasting shows that there is support for locally focused businesses.

Gaps

- > Local Food Culture Most food and beverage establishments are either chain restaurants or have standard pub fare that does not celebrate and highlight the local agricultural surroundings.
- Agritourism Experiences Agritourism experiences are currently underdeveloped, providing opportunity to develop experiences within existing tourism assets. This includes the farmers' markets, food and beverage operators, the museum, and retailers.
- **Accommodations** Partnerships could be explored with existing accommodations to increase local agritourism awareness and experiences, and reinforce them with local agricultural products for purchase at the sites.

Opportunities

- > **Leveraging Processors** There is opportunity to leverage existing processors to develop visitor experiences, as well as fostering a culture that favours local processors.
- > **Food and Beverage Storytelling** With the agricultural landscape right outside their doors, Innisfail restaurants and food services could reflect that foodscape and share local connections to the food on the plate.
- > Collaboration with Discovery Wildlife Park The park is a major community attraction, and finding opportunities to partner or package with the park could be beneficial for agritourism operations.

Action Items

- 1. Implement applicable action items to support agritourism development (see the Implementation Plan in Appendix J).
- 2. Encourage agricultural processors to pilot visitor experiences to grow local agritourism offerings.
- 3. Incorporate agritourism storytelling elements into local food and beverage offerings.
- 4. Position Discovery Wildlife Park as an anchor attraction and build visitor experiences around it.
- 5. Encourage local accommodations to incorporate agritourism experiences with their offerings.





Lacombe County

Lacombe County is a haven for farm-based agritourism offerings and is positioned to be a leader for agritourism development in the region. It has a great diversity in the types of farms and experiences already available, with a strong indication of more experiences to come. It boasts the farms and producers that give the City of Lacombe its agricultural ties. The county is well positioned for collaborations with other communities to grow agritourism experiences.

Strengths

- **Excellent Agritourism Attractions** Lacombe County is home to some of the most well-established agritourism operators, including Kraay Family Farm, Billyco Junction, Ellis Bird Farm, and Sunflower Valley Farms. There are other operators coming up as well, and with some additional support, would also provide exceptional experiences, including Gull Lake Honey, Koornneef Farms, and West Country Mills.
- **Retailers** Lacombe County has a good variety of unique retailers and farm stores, including The Wooden Shoe, Deep Roots Farm, and Brown Eggs & Lamb.
- **Farm Life** There are excellent opportunities to view farm life when driving across the County. From bison to cattle to sheep to poultry, regional explorers can witness (and in some cases, interact) with a large variety of farm animals.

Gaps

- > Accommodations Most of the accommodations throughout the County are smaller motels and campgrounds. Tourists unfamiliar with the area may be more inclined to travel the extra distance to one of the bigger communities in search of accommodations with more amenities.
- **Community Events** Opportunities for agritourism operators to work together and highlight their businesses within the greater context of community events would put them front of mind with residents and visitors.
- **Food and Beverage** There appear to be few food and beverage providers that use locally producers products and promote local farms.

Opportunities

- > Local Products on Menus Getting more local products onto the menus at food establishments across the county would serve to integrate farms and producers into the local food scene.
- > Horticultural Experiences There are several greenhouses in the county, but none appear to offer tours or experiences. Creating horticultural experiences centered around these assets would provide a new experience not currently available.
- > **Events** There is opportunity for agritourism operators to highlight their offerings at local and regional events through both food and promoted itineraries.
- > "Build a Meal" Itinerary This would entail a curated "build a meal" itinerary highlighting the unique farm stores in the County where visitors can purchase elements to ultimately build their meal with local products from each stop.

Action Items

- 1. Implement applicable action items to support agritourism development (see the Implementation Plan in Appendix J).
- 2. Encourage food and beverage businesses to incorporate local and regional agricultural products into their offerings.
- 3. Develop the "Build a Meal" itinerary and promote it to visitor markets.
- 4. Leverage greenhouse assets to expand horticultural experiences in the county.
- 5. Provide opportunities for on-site and off-site agritourism experiences to enhance the tourism potential of community events.





Lacombe

In recent years, Lacombe has become a foodie destination, thanks largely in part to exceptional food and beverage providers like Cilantro & Chive and Sweet Capone's Bakery. There has been an increase in food culture that is deeply connected to the agricultural roots of the area and is working hard to build a strong and vibrant community.

Strengths

- > **Food and Beverage Providers** Lacombe has embraced local food and drink offerings, which helps to ensure the ventures succeed long term.
- Artisan Processing From gluten-free baking to bison butchery, there are exceptional processors in Lacombe that are highly skilled at their craft. This could lend itself to workshops and educational experiences in addition to retail opportunity.
- **Museums** Lacombe is home to three museums, each of which touches on the agricultural history of the region. These museums have the potential to incorporate immersive agritourism experiences that connect the history of the community to modern industry, and serve as promotional opportunities for encouraging regional exploration of nearby agritourism attractions.

Gaps

- > Accommodations Most accommodations in the town are major chains and do not integrate the regional agricultural history strongly. The opportunity here lies in partnerships with hotels to create agritourism experience packages, and to incorporate more local ingredients into their menus and retail shops.
- **Agritourism Attractions** Lacombe has a shortage of agritourism attractions within the city. There is opportunity for the development of urban agritourism opportunities that focus on bringing the farm to the city through food and beverage producers, retailers, and special events.

Opportunities

- > **Foodie Guide** Using the food and beverage offering as the anchor, the community could develop a Foodie Guide that highlights the exceptional culinary offering, and connects visitors with the farms and producers in the surrounding area.
- > **Dining Event** An annual dining event in changing iconic locations around the city that highlights local food culture.
- **Cooking and Processing Events** Local food events that give skilled artisans a chance to show off their crafts. These could include black-box style cooking competitions, country fair-style events like piemaking or preserves, and skills competitions for butchers.

Action Items

- 1. Implement applicable action items to support agritourism development (see the Implementation Plan in Appendix J).
- 2. Develop a Foodie Guide.
- 3. Explore opportunities to host a Dining Event and Cooking and Processing Events.
- 4. Encourage local accommodations to package agritourism experiences with their offerings and incorporate local ingredients into their menu and retail shops.
- 5. Seek to attract agritourism attractions to the city.





Mountain View County

Mountain View County focuses more on nature-based opportunities and guided experiences rather than farm-based offerings. The Cowboy Trail, which runs through the County, is an established tourism brand that plays off the cultural and equestrian roots of the area. As the backcountry areas have historically been one of the major attractors to the region, agritourism development can look to blend backcountry with the farmscape. It can provide value-added experiences for backcountry visitors, such as farm stays and packaged meals featuring local ingredients designed for nature enthusiasts.

Strengths

- > **Cowboy Trail** Already an established brand, the Cowboy Trail provides a natural tie with the agricultural roots of the region. There are many businesses including outfitters, farms, and markets that utilize the Cowboy Trail branding, as well as the established route and promotional campaigns supporting the brand.
- > Unique Retailers The County has well-established retailers that support local agriculture, including the Farm Table (Carstairs) and the Farmhouse Market (Sundre). Retailers like these that are focused on local products are key drivers for agritourism operations. They serve as advocated for those operators/producers and provide more frequent consumer interactions where they can be sharing information about agritourism experiences with their customers.
- **Diversity of Farms** The County has a great variety of farm types, from cattle to u-picks to alpacas to greenhouses. This diversity sets the stage for a wide variety of agritourism experiences that can appeal to different audiences.

Gaps

- > **Farms Experiences** While some of the farms in the County are open to receiving visitors, most do not have consistent experiences available. To grow agritourism in the region, there needs to be farms with regular tours or structured experiences available that can be planned for by visitors and offered on a regular basis.
- **Food and Beverage** The culinary offerings within the County are mostly either fast food chains or local spots that do not promote or reflect the local agricultural industry, making this a missed opportunity. The few providers who are active in promoting the local industry also operate with limited hours, making it difficult for visitors to access those experiences.
- **Accommodations** The majority of accommodation options are seasonal campgrounds and RV parks. The Town of Sundre has developments in the works to help address this gap, but there is still opportunity for other parts of the County to increase off-season accommodations to extend their visitor season.

Opportunities

- > **Leveraging the Cowboy Trail** Highlighted itineraries that support the Cowboy Trail brand but take visitors further off of Highway 22 and into the region.
- **Ranch Experiences** Guest ranch experiences that go beyond accommodations and trail rides to include more of the "ranch experience" of working the land and caring for the animals.
- **Unique Food and Beverage Experiences** The County is lacking food culture, and food experiences have been proven to be a big draw for a destination. Working with existing operators to embrace the local agricultural assets will help to define the area.

Action Items

- 1. Implement applicable action items to support agritourism development (see the Implementation Plan in Appendix J).
- 2. Develop itineraries leveraging the Cowboy Trail brand.
- 3. Develop ranch experiences to diversify agritourism offerings.
- 4. Expand farm tour experiences.
- 5. Seek to develop unique food and beverage experiences.





Olds

Olds serves as a gateway to the region from Alberta's largest urban market of Calgary. It provides access to the northern communities and the western region, so it is a vital hub for agritourism operations. Olds College is a unique asset that functions as the epicenter of agricultural technology and advancement in Alberta.

Strengths

- > Olds College Olds College is known as the go-to post-secondary institution for agriculture not just within Central Alberta, but all of Alberta. The College has a hospitality program, which helps to integrate agritourism into student learnings and leads to a more educated workforce. With the additions of Olds College Brewery (tied to the Brewmaster program recognized as one of the top in Canada) and a Retail Meat Shop (tied to the butchery program), the College is setting the stage for the future of the industry.
- **Processors and Retailers** Olds has a good number of processors including butchers, bakeries, and a brewery. Notable operators include Olds Uptowne Market and Kolb's Fine Meats which are well known beyond the local community.
- **Event Venues** Olds is ripe with venues for agritourism experiences. In addition to Olds College having the perfect venue for demonstrations of all sorts, there are other facilities like the Olds Regional Exhibition and the CLC Fine Arts and Multi Media Centre that could play host to immersive experiences or agritourism/homesteading workshops.

Gaps

- > Food and Beverage Providers While there are many food service establishments in the town, there are only a few that promote local ingredients and products.
- **Agritourism Assets** Given the volume of infrastructure available within the community for agritourism experiences, there appears to be limited structured, sellable experiences. Working in partnership with Olds College to establish regular, immersive agritourism experiences through some of the school's programs would encourage more community engagement and allow for more visitors to explore the community.

Opportunities

- > **Partnerships with Olds College** To help address labour challenges for farms, as well as hospitality students who could help with the agritourism side of operations.
- > **Itineraries** Gateway itineraries that start in Olds leading into other parts of the region.
- > Local Products on Menus Getting more local products onto the menus at food establishments would serve to integrate farms and producers into the local food scene.
- > **Events** There is opportunity for agritourism operators to highlight their offerings at local and regional events through both food and promoted itineraries.

Action Items

- 1. Implement applicable action items to support agritourism development (see the Implementation Plan in Appendix J).
- 2. Explore partnerships between agritourism operators and Olds College to address labour challenges.
- 3. Develop gateway itineraries that begin in Olds and encourage visitors to explore surrounding areas.
- 4. Encourage food and beverage businesses to incorporate local and regional agricultural products into their offerings.
- 5. Provide opportunities for on-site and off-site agritourism experiences to enhance the tourism potential of community events.





Red Deer

Red Deer is the most populous community in Central Alberta, with considerable agritourism assets, including attractions, food and beverage providers, accommodations, festivals and events, and processors and retailers. Culinary and agritourism offerings are priorities for Tourism Red Deer, which positions the industry well for growth.

Strengths

- > Westerner Park As an agricultural hub located right in the city, Westerner Park is the perfect venue for celebrating the agritourism industry.
- **Major Events** Red Deer hosts major agricultural-related events, such as Agri-Trade, Westerner Days, and the Canadian Finals Rodeo. These major events provide captive audiences who are already connected to the agritourism industry.
- Culinary Offerings Red Deer has an abundance of food establishments offering culinary experiences that incorporate products from local farms and producers. Of those, there are some key champions of the industry, including Cilantro and Chive, Westlake Grill, Occam's Razor, and Bo's Bar and Stage. They not only utilize local agricultural products but are advocates for the farms and producers and are eager to share their stories with their customers.
- **Retailers for Local Food** Well established retailers like Big Bend Market provide ready access to local food products.

Gaps

- > Agritourism Experiences in the City As an urban centre, it can be difficult to bring farm experiences into the city. Utilizing the many community spaces and event venues, Red Deer has opportunity for pop up immersive agritourism experiences and special events to celebrate the agricultural industry year-round.
- **Linking Agritourism with Accommodations** There is opportunity for accommodation providers to incorporate more artisan products (both consumable and non-consumable) into their offerings.

Opportunities

- > **Collaborate with Partners** Work with Tourism Red Deer, Westerner Park, and the City to strengthen agritourism as a pillar of investment and to bring more awareness to agritourism in the region.
- > **Itinerary Development** Building itineraries for day trips around Red Deer for those attending major events (Agri-Trade, CFR, Westerner Days). Itineraries could be themed to match the audiences of each event.
- > **Expanding Agritourism Experiences** Bringing immersive agricultural experiences to museums, markets, community gardens, and events.
- **Leveraging Processors** Processing lends itself well to urban environments, and can be combined with workshops and homesteading classes to integrate agriculture into storytelling.

Action Items

- 1. Implement applicable action items to support agritourism development (see the Implementation Plan in Appendix J).
- 2. Develop themed itineraries for those attending major events in Red Deer.
- 3. Tie in agritourism to Red Deer's Major Event Strategy.
- 4. Expand agritourism experiences by leveraging local assets.
- 5. Seek to involve local processors in agritourism development.
- 6. Encourage accommodation providers to incorporate agritourism into their offerings.
- 7. Work with Tourism Red Deer to strengthen agritourism as a pillar of investment.
- 8. Partner with Westerner Park and Heritage Ranch to bring more awareness to agritourism in the region.





Red Deer County

Anchored by the newly established Gasoline Alley Farmers' Market, Red Deer County has an excellent balance of establishments necessary for agritourism development. With easy access to the population centres of Red Deer, Sylvan Lake, and Innisfail, the County has a strong local reach to help support initiatives. Its central location lends itself well to collaboration with its neighbours.

Strengths

- > Agritourism Assets Red Deer County has a well-rounded cluster of agritourism assets, including farms, markets, and food and beverage.
- > Variety of Agritourism Offerings Red Deer County has a wide variety farm types, agritourism-related experiences, markets, food and beverage, retailers, and processors. This variety makes for well-rounded experience packaging.
- > **Curated Itineraries** Red Deer County has two active agricultural-related itineraries that are successfully driving traffic throughout the region, including the Red Deer Ale Trail and the Scandinavian Trail. Though agriculture is not the primary focus of either itinerary, it is a secondary theme that is important to the narrative.

Gaps

- > Agritourism Accommodations The County lacks agritourism accommodations (e.g. farm stays, guest ranches). Most accommodations are located in the nearby communities of Innisfail, Red Deer and Sylvan Lake, leaving the county with an opportunity for growth in accommodations, especially when combined with immersive agritourism experiences like farm stays.
- > **Events** Few agritourism-related events happen in the County. However, there are numerous events that could be leveraged in nearby communities, such as Red Deer and Sylvan Lake.
- > Food and Beverage Providers Supporting Local There is a shortage of operators that promote local farms and producers (outside of the farmers' markets). These operators are key to sharing the local agricultural story with markets beyond agritourists, and when shared in a meaningful way, can turn regular customers into agritourists.

Opportunities

- **Unique Accommodations** With Sylvan Lake and Red Deer in such close proximity, the need for accommodations is not as strong, but the addition of farm stays or more unique accommodations would be of benefit.
- **Farmers' Market Farm Tour** Creating a driving route of experiences connected to the vendors at the market so visitors can experience the production side as well.
- > Event to Celebrate Agriculture With an abundance of farms and producers, creating a unique event to celebrate them would be beneficial. The event could be connected to other major events in Red Deer or Sylvan Lake to enhance the experience and target a captive audience.

Action Items

- 1. Implement applicable action items to support agritourism development (see the Implementation Plan in Appendix J).
- 2. Develop a Farmers' Market Farm Tour.
- 3. Seek to attract agritourism accommodations.
- 4. Encourage food and beverage businesses to incorporate local and regional agricultural products into their offerings.
- 5. Consider establishing an event to celebrate agriculture in Red Deer County.





Rocky Mountain House

Rocky Mountain House is well known as the place "Where Adventure Began" with the story of the Rocky Mountain House trading fort and the travels of explorer David Thompson. The adventurous spirit of the community is reflected in its businesses, with many that incorporate backcountry, nature, or adventure experiences, while maintaining a strong connection to cowboy culture.

Strengths

- Accommodations Rocky Mountain House has a large inventory of accommodations, including both fixed roof and camping sites. This guantity allows for an increase of overnight visitors without increased infrastructure development. Opportunity for packaging with agritourism experiences could help to increase room occupancy rates.
- **Branding** The community has a clear tourism brand, and the businesses that have developed in the area strongly reflect that brand. The well-established brand lends itself to immersive experiences that incorporate agriculture and local producers.
- Farmhouse Local Foods This market store is the heartbeat of the agricultural community in Rocky Mountain House. The operator does a phenomenal job curating local products for retail sale from across Central Alberta. Through this hub, the community is connected to farms and producers throughout the area.
- Farmers' Market Large, well appointed seasonal farmers' market that draws significant visitation.

Gaps

- > Agritourism Experiences The community has limited agritourism experiences available in town. This provides opportunity to develop more urban forms of agritourism that put food and beverage operators, retailers, and events at the forefront of development.
- **Food Service Establishments that Incorporate Local Food Products** Few restaurants appear to promote the use of local products in their culinary offerings. Finding opportunities to connect the restaurants and food establishments to agricultural producers will help to build relationships and support for the industry.
- **Festivals and Events** Outside of weekly farmers' markets, Rocky Mountain House appears to have few events that celebrate or incorporate the agricultural industry. Enhancing existing markets into bigger celebrations at different points of the year could increase agritourism positioning without significant investment.

Opportunities

- **Networking Sessions** For food operators to meet farmers and sample their products.
- > Integrating Local Food There is opportunity to integrate local food sampling and storytelling into guided expeditions, including the types of agriculture in the area and products currently being grown/raised/processed.
- > Accommodations Opportunity to marry the agricultural roots of the community with adventurous landscapes and rustic accommodations.

Action Items

- 1. Implement applicable action items to support agritourism development (see the Implementation Plan in Appendix J).
- 2. Encourage food and beverage businesses to incorporate local and regional agricultural products into their offerings.
- 3. Host networking sessions to connect local farmers with restaurants.
- 4. Encourage accommodation providers to incorporate agritourism into their offerings.
- 5. Consider establishing an event to celebrate agriculture in Rocky Mountain House.





Sylvan Lake

Sylvan Lake has a well-developed inventory of tourism assets, including a large number of food and beverage providers and processors and retailers. This is primarily due to the large number of visitors who travel to the community in the summer months to access the lake. With the seasonal influx of visitors who are seeking a variety of experiences, agritourism development is well suited to the community as it touches on many of the same needs and interests as their visitors. The challenge for Sylvan Lake will be to find ways to connect with the local farms and producers in a way that extends visitation beyond the summer season.

Strengths

- > Food and Beverage Offerings Sylvan Lake has a good variety of food service establishments that embrace the local food industry by incorporating local products into their menus. These offerings span all levels of service, from takeaway to breweries to upscale casual.
- **Events** There are many community and tourism-related events that typically include some form of local food or beverage options.
- > Accommodations Sylvan Lake has a large number of hotels, motels, and campgrounds, as well as numerous vacation rental properties. While they are often at full capacity during the summer, the shoulder seasons and winter months typically see lower occupancy rates, which provides opportunities for packaging and event partnerships to both fill the rooms and attract visitors to the area.

Gaps

- > **Connecting the "Lake Experience" with Agritourism Offerings** Visitors are primarily drawn to Sylvan Lake to experience the lakeshore, but they are likely unaware of the agricultural landscape that surrounds them. Working with lakeshore businesses to share the agricultural stories and producers from the surrounding area will help to position the town as an agritourism hub.
- **Retailers Selling Local Food Products** While there are some exceptional retailers, there are many other specialty retailers who could incorporate artisan food products onto their shelves.
- **Agritourism Experiences** There are currently limited agritourism experiences within Sylvan Lake. There is opportunity to focus on more urban agritourism experiences, such as enhanced brewery tours that include agricultural components, processing demonstrations at local events, and incorporating urban agriculture within community development plans.

Opportunities

- > **Events** Shoulder and winter season events that celebrate or feature local farms and producers.
- > **Promoting Local Food** Many local restaurants use ingredients from nearby farms and producers, but do not actually promote those producers through their businesses. Cross-promotional opportunities between the farms and restaurants would help to integrate the local food story into the dining experiences.

Action Items

- 1. Implement applicable action items to support agritourism development (see the Implementation Plan in Appendix J)
- 2. Consider hosting agritourism events in the shoulder and winter seasons.
- 3. Enhance promotion of culinary offerings that incorporate locally grown and produced ingredients.
- 4. Link the "lake experience" with agritourism offerings.
- 5. Encourage accommodation providers to incorporate agritourism into their offerings, particularly in the shoulder and winter seasons.





Appendix E: Agritourism Champion Profiles

The Veterans

Cilantro+Chive

Cilantro+Chive is passionate about agriculture, food, and agritourism development, and its team has grown to include over 100 employees across two locations in Red Deer and Lacombe. Well respected among local farms, producers, brewers, and communities as an advocate for supporting local whenever possible, Cilantro+Chive has been recognized by Lacombe as a community builder, as well as by the Alberta Small Brewers Association as Restaurant Supporter of the Year three times (as voted by the membership).



Gull Lake Honey Company

Gull Lake Honey Company has helped put Gull Lake on the map as a destination to experience local agriculture. While their hives are distributed throughout the region, their farm is home to a retail storefront that includes their own honey and beeswax products, as well as a variety of other local artisan goods like jewellery and apparel. Right next door, they also have a small selection of other animals like horses and chickens, and frequently have bison calves from Frontier Bison that graze on a section of their land. This business is working hard to bring more attention and excitement to the area by hosting a variety of events and markets on the farm that incorporate other local vendors and businesses. The company is also exploring the potential of on-farm accommodations including RV stays and maybe one day even a small lodge!



Photo Credits: Central Alberta Tourism Alliance



Kraay Family Farm

Kraay Family Farm in Lacombe County has long been recognized a successful agritourism business in Central Alberta. The business seeks to expand its operations every year with the addition of at least one new experience. The owners' ingenuity and natural inclination for what types of experiences their guests would like to have led to the success of them seeing on average 45,000 people per operating season (July to October).



Deep Roots Farm

Well established in the local community, Deep Roots Farm encourages collaboration among the food producers in their area near Joffre and in Lacombe County. In addition to running a garlic operation, they also host garlic educational workshops and have a retail storefront that features other local food products and artisan products. They work closely with local chefs and restaurateurs and are keen to expand their storefront.

DNA Gardens, Delidais Estate Winery

The foundation of DNA Gardens was originally a berry u-pick and greenhouse business, but it has diversified in recent years. The onsite café sells both consumables and takeaways like frozen pies and preserves, and products from both the new winery and distillery. Summer RV camping, seasonal Friday night brisket dinner with a play, and a new pizza oven round out their on-farm activities. Off farm, they also have a booth at the Gasoline Alley Farmers' Market so that guests can sample and purchase their consumables without having to make the drive to Elnora in Red Deer County. An active participant in Open Farm Days for many years, DNA Gardens is constantly pushing the limits to continue to grow the business.



Photo Credit: Kraay Family Farm (top), Deep Roots Farm (center), Travel Alberta (bottom)





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Newcomers on the Rise

Sylvan Star Cheese

Under new ownership as of 2022, Sylvan Star Cheese is an example of quality agricultural products being produced in Alberta. The new owners are looking to the future with ideas for expanding the agritourism side of their operations. They are exploring their event space for hosting functions and are looking to formalize tours at their property in Red Deer County, just east of Sylvan Lake. They support other local producers in their retail store and have booths at farmers' markets in both Calgary and Edmonton. Sylvan Star cheeses can be found in many mainstream grocers, making them one of the more accessible local agricultural products and a strong representation of agritourism in Central Alberta.



West Country Mills

West Country Mills in Lacombe County expanded their existing wheat farm operations to include milling, which allowed them to step into the agritourism realm. They are supplying local establishments with their on-farm milled flour and sell their products via other local retailers as well. Milling is an area that Alberta is lacking, so this is a welcome and unique business. Having participated in Open Farm Days in 2021 and 2022, they are keen to find ways to integrate a visitor experience into their operations, including an emphasis on educational experiences, special occasion tours, and school groups. They are currently renovating their facility to include a storefront area, and are working towards establishing regular operating hours for visitors.



Photo Credit: Sylvan Lake News (top), West Country Mills (bottom)



Rival Trade Brewing

Rival Trade Brewing is a newcomer to the Rocky Mountain House area and are already expanding their operation. Rival Trade is keen to establish itself as a hub of local celebration, and they have brewed a collaboration beer with fellow agritourism operators at Gull Lake Honey. Once their expansion is complete, which is expected to triple their production capacity, they will be able to look at expanding other areas of their operations as well.

Beehive Artisans Market

Beehive Artisans Market is a hub of community spirit in Nordegg. It features over 70 local vendors with everything from foods to artwork. They recently built tiny cabins to provide accommodations for visitors, and they offer a small taste of local foods that can be purchased to help stock the cabin.

Occam's Razor

Occam's Razor has successfully transformed itself from an exceptional cocktail lounge into a local food destination in downtown Red Deer. Their menus rotate with the seasons and with available fresh produce, and the local suppliers are even featured on its own page of the menu. The business is extremely passionate about local ingredients and has formed tight bonds with suppliers, even throwing a fundraiser dinner for a local farm whose crops were destroyed in a hailstorm. The establishment is currently undergoing an expansion, which includes additional seating capacity and extending the kitchen hours so more customers can enjoy and learn about local food producers.



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Photo Credit: Canada247 (top), Beehive Artisans Market (center), Open Table (bottom)







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Appendix F: Expanded Comparator Analysis

BC Okanagan Valley

The Okanagan Valley is a shining example of successful agritourism development in Western Canada. The region's sunny and dry climate, fertile soil, and topography lends itself well to supporting agricultural production. As a result, agriculture has been a significant economic driver for the region, led strongly by the dominant wine sector. The Okanagan Valley boasts 86% of the province's vineyard acreage, and 186 of the 394 licensed grape wineries. As a whole, the BC wine industry welcomes over 1.1 million visitors annually, employs 12,000 people, and has an economic impact of \$3.75 billion annually.¹⁵ The region's key strengths include dedicated support for agritourism development, a well-rounded agricultural industry, strong marketing and brand awareness, local support, and clustering of product offerings (i.e. wine, cider, beer).

Ontario

Ontario is home to diverse agricultural production, from farms and vineyards to freshwater fisheries and bakeries, and they have done an excellent job promoting their agricultural sector both at home and abroad. Thanks to the early adoption of tourism initiatives, the province has been showcasing their agricultural experiences for much longer than in other parts of Canada. The province's key strengths related to agritourism include a variety of experiences, integrated support structures, strong government supports, and a large population base to draw visitors from.

Lethbridge and Area

The Lethbridge area is recognized as a hub for food processing and agritourism offerings. The existing logistics and transportation supply chains have led to a growing number of niche innovators choosing to build their businesses here (see CanadasPremierFoodCorridor.ca). With the development of Canada's Food Tours, as well as the Highway 3 Ale Trail, Lethbridge is positioning itself as a significant agritourism destination not just within Alberta, but on the national stage.

Partnership Opportunities with other Destinations

Camrose County

Camrose County has been working hard to promote their local food artisans for several years, even forming a collective that helps to spread awareness and engages with consumers on social platforms (Food Artisans of Camrose County). While not all the businesses offer a tourism experience, the collective helps to highlight the unique and exceptional quality of their ingredients. As they are an active collaboration and situated guite close to Lacombe County along the Highway 2 corridor, there would be great opportunity for cross-promotion and expanded tour itineraries for travelers enroute to other major destinations.

Leduc County

Located just outside of Edmonton, Leduc County has put significant investment into supporting their agritourism industry. They worked to develop a strategy that would help to highlight and support their agricultural and culinary experiences, while putting Leduc County on the map as a tourist destination. Similar to Camrose County along the Highway 2 corridor, there would be good opportunities for cross-promotion and to encourage further exploration of Central Alberta.

Kneehill County

Located just southeast of the CATA area, Kneehill County has been slowly building up agritourism in the area. They are home to some large scale producers like Sunterra, and are at the gateway to Drumheller, which sees on average over 460,000 visitors from over 150 countries. Drumheller itself is lacking in local food options, so finding ways to work with the county to highlight regional producers has the potential for significant exposure and taste of place to both domestic and international visitors, beyond the primarily Albertan market that Central Alberta sees.

Highway 22

Known as The Cowboy Trail, Highway 22 runs through the Alberta foothills from Cardston to Mayerthorpe and has long been known as a way to explore the histories of cowboy culture. The Cowboy Trail Tourism Association promotes tourism experiences and services along the 700km route across Alberta. From attractions to country vacations to indigenous experiences to artisans, they provide a collective marketing platform to highlight them all. As Highway 22 cuts through both Clearwater County and Mountain View County, they would be a natural fit for collaboration and cross-promotion.



Appendix G: Expanded Trends Analysis



Interest in Knowing Where Food Comes From

With the growth of urban centres, it is estimated that only 3% of Canadians still have a direct connection to a farm.¹⁶ That growing disconnect has led to a lack of understanding as to where food actually comes from, and the significant role of the farm in the local food economy. Many younger generations receive only basic education about farming in schools, and with many parents also not having connections to farming, education is needed all around to ensure a better understanding of local food systems, environmental resilience, and even nutrition.



Food and Travel as Cultural Experiences

Since the emergence of the Slow Food movement, tourists have really begun to use food as a way to experience the unique culture of a destination. With the desire to experience an authentic sense of place, agriculture and dining provide interactive experiences that allow a visitor to learn about and understand a culture more deeply. Much of a culture's history is told through their agricultural practices, preparations, and flavour profiles. This lends itself to immersive experiences like farm stays where visitors get to fully experience the operation on a deeper level.



Rise of Artisan Production

In a world where big box stores have overtaken much of the foodspace, there is a rise in small-scale producers and small-batch production. This includes niche products and value-added products, and they are not necessarily food products. Respect for makers is growing, which is shifting the focus to the creation of the products, rather than simply consuming them. Leading this charge in Alberta is the craft beer industry, which after the shift in liquor laws almost a decade ago, has seen huge growth in small-scale craft beer producers, with many brewers popping up in rural areas. It has been a great economic driver for many smaller communities, bringing in travelers from outside their areas that might not have visited prior to the establishment of a brewery.



Travel to "Show"

With social media platforms taking over much of both the work and personal space, this has led to an emergence in showcasing "Instagrammable" destinations with unique and distinctive scenery. For rural locations in particular, agricultural landscapes are an ideal backdrop for those looking for picture-perfect settings. Central Alberta's diverse landscapes, from the mountains to the west and the prairies to the east, to the waterways that weave through the land, have an abundance of imagery that shares its story with stunning visual impact.



Technology Overload

With so much of daily life being focused around technology, many travelers are looking for ways to unplug. Agritourism lends itself perfectly to this type of escape. The rural setting is quieter, calmer, and frequently has limited cell phone reception, which can be a welcome break. For many, it is an opportunity to reconnect with nature, and to even see the stars without the bright city lights.



Appendix H: Itinerary Development Process

When developing new itineraries, it is helpful to think through the following steps:¹⁷

STEP 1: Research other itineraries in the marketplace

Take a tour which will be similar to the tour you wish to develop through your itinerary and obtain copies of other itineraries for comparison. This will help you develop ideas for your tour, give you an idea of what is already in the marketplace and provide possible ideas for itinerary design and content.

STEP 2: Name your itinerary

Come up with an interesting or catchy name that will resonate with your target audience.

STEP 3: Map out the duration, locations and other logistical details

- When and where will your itinerary begin? >
- When and where will your itinerary end? >
- Will operators and attractions be open to visitors > during the tour?
- What time of year can the itinerary be completed? >

STEP 4: List the major locations and highlights

What major attractions will your itinerary bring visitors to? What are the main locations and highlights that visitors are going to experience?

STEP 5: Research itinerary content

List the main topics you wish to include in your itinerary, such as unique stories, history, flora, fauna, culture, as well as the main points to consider with each of these topics and the resources you will use to find the information.

STEP 6: List any 3rd party activities, attractions, entrance fees and inclusions

List any activities offered by tourism operators or entrance fees along your itinerary and be sure to identify them.

STEP 7: Provide options for food and beverage

Your itinerary should identify options for food and beverage along the tour at regular mealtimes.

STEP 8: Provide options for accommodations

If your itinerary takes place over multiple days, it should provide options for accommodations.

STEP 9: Perfect the timing

It is important to map out your itinerary accurately to ensure that visitors will arrive on time for activity and meal stops. Prepare a table that shows start, stop and duration times for each location, attraction or activity.

STEP 10: Test drive your itinerary

It recommended that several 'dry runs' of your itinerary be completed prior to launch. This will ensure the timing is right.



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Appendix I: Implementation Framework

The following describes how stakeholders will come together to action the strategy. The implementation framework includes an overarching structure and outlines roles for each group in implementation. A discussion on provincial and federal grant programs to support implementation of the strategy is provided in Appendix L.

Host Organization

A Host Organization will be needed to provide oversight and ensure the strategy is moving forward in the most effective and cohesive manner.

The role of the Host Organization is as follows:

Role:

- > Coordinates implementation of the strategy.
- Secures partnerships and leverage funds. >
- Coordinates the activities of contracted human resources. >
- Encourages investment in agritourism development initiatives > where appropriate.

A set of criteria that can be used to assist in selecting a Host Organization is provided next.

Figure 2. Criteria for Selecting a Host Organization

Criteria	Description
Goal Alignment	The extent to which the goals of the organization align wi
Organizational Capacity	The extent to which the organization has the capacity to a infrastructure, experience, management capacity, and fin for the strategy?
Collaboration	The extent to which the organization encourages and sup stakeholders.
Knowledge	The extent to which the organization understands ag
Resource Requirements	The extent to which the organization will need addition and action the plan.
Entrepreneurial Mindset	The extent to which the organization has the ability t in order to generate revenue to be reinvested in impl
Growth Potential	The extent to which the organization will have the potent terms of visitation, visitor expenditures, and new products
Evaluation and Performance	The extent to which the organization can be clearly evalua measured.
Complementary Skills	The extent to which the organization will bring to the arra and/or other resources that will add value.
Past Success	The extent to which the organization has been successful

ith those of the strategy.

add value. Do they have the business nancial resources to be an active leader

pports collaboration between

gritourism development.

onal resources to fulfill its mandate

to be innovative and entrepreneurial plementation of the strategy.

tial to achieve year over year growth in ts.

ated and have its performance

angement a complementary skill set

al elsewhere in similar projects.



Agritourism Development Task Force

Role:

- Drives implementation of the strategy forward. >
- > A forum for collaboration and communication on the promotion and development of agritourism initiatives.

It will be important for the task force to be made up of individuals who are champions of business, highly engaged in their sector, collaboratively minded, and stand to gain by building the agritourism sector in Central Alberta.

Action Teams

Action Teams implement key projects in product development and marketing. As with the Task Force, it will be important for the Action Teams to be made up of individuals who are champions of business. Local government champions will also be needed for these groups to be successful.

Role:

Implement key projects in product development and marketing.

Contracted Human Resources

It is recommended that contracted human resources are secured to enhance the capacity of stakeholders to implement key initiatives in the strategy over the short term (i.e. next 2 to 3 years). The contract would be overseen by the Host Organization and tasked with completing activities to support agritourism development and the efforts of the Agritourism Development Task Force.

It is envisioned that the contract would be resourced through grant funding over the next 2 to 3 years, at which point the approach would be re-evaluated. The role could be filled by a firm or individual with the knowledge and skills to move the strategy forward. It is recommended that a firm be hired in the short term because it is easier to access niche-based expertise and to secure termed funding rather than dedicated, ongoing funding for a new staff person. Additionally, overhead expenses like office space and equipment can be avoided.

Role:

- Implement agritourism development initiatives from the strategy. >
- > Support the Host Organization, Agritourism Development Task Force, and Action Teams in their agritourism development efforts.



Partner Roles and Responsibilities

The implementation of this strategy will require the cultivation of partnerships to collaboratively accomplish initiatives. The following identifies key partners for the strategy and describes their role.

Organization	Role
Host Organization	> Takes the lead role in ensuring the strategy is moving forward in the most effective and cohesive manner.
Agritourism Development Task Force	 A multi-stakeholder, industry-led group that acts as a forum for consistent communication, collaboration, implementation of the strategy.
Businesses and Entrepreneurs	 The private sector provides many front-line services to visitors, such as accommodations, food and beverage Businesses will play a key role in growing agritourism in Central Alberta through the development and delition Businesses must be actively engaged in implementing the strategy.
Central Alberta Tourism Alliance	> A collaborative organization that will seek to help support agritourism in Central Alberta.
Municipalities	 Municipalities in Central Alberta can play a key role in supporting agritourism development by establishing regimes that encourage agritourism business development and give certainty to operators.
Agricultural Societies	> Agricultural Societies should be engaged to leverage their deep rooted connections in agricultural commu
Destination Management Organizations (DMOs)	 Opportunities for partnership include agritourism-specific collaborative marketing campaigns, product dev capacity building programs, advocacy, and other areas of alignment.
Travel Alberta	 Travel Alberta provides funding for the development and marketing of tourism initiatives through its Touris organization also provides research on visitor markets and helpful resources to support tourism developm as an active partner in implementation of the strategy.
Indigenous Tourism Alberta	 Indigenous Tourism Alberta's mandate is to lead the development of Alberta's Indigenous tourism industry development of Indigenous-related agritourism offerings in Central Alberta.
Alberta Forestry, Parks, and Tourism	 One of Alberta Forestry, Parks, and Tourism's responsibilities is supporting Alberta's vibrant tourism indus The Alberta Parks division manages provincial parks in the region and is a potential partner in developing encouraging stewardship of the land.

, and idea sharing related to

age, and experiences. elivery of high-quality experiences.

ng regulatory, policy, and land use

unities.

evelopment support, training and

rism Investment Program. The ment. Travel Alberta should be engaged

try. ITA could be a future partner in the

ıstry. g tourism product, as well as



Appendix J: Implementation Plan

The action plan is divided into sub-sections that align with the four goals of the strategy. This is followed by a community-level action plan that is geared toward individual communities who want to encourage agritourism development, a list of the top 10 action items for the strategy, and a high-level implementation timeline.

1. Organizational Development64	+
2. Product Development	5
3. Marketing and Promotional Development67	7
4. Destination Development)

Each action item has been assigned a suggested priority rating, estimated cost, organizational lead, and anticipated timeline for implement.

Cost Criteria

Low Cost (L)	Less than \$5,000
Medium Cost (M)	\$5,000 - \$25,000
High Cost (H)	More than \$25,000

Organizational Lead

The action plan identifies organizations responsible for leading action items. It is expected that lead organizations will provide the resources necessary to implement their action items. Where appropriate, they are encouraged to seek partnerships with the private sector, stakeholder groups, municipalities, provincial ministries, and other applicable groups wherever possible to leverage available resources.

Abbreviation	Organization
НО	Host Organization
ADTF	Agritourism Development Task Force
CHR	Contracted Human Resources

Implementation Timeline

Short Term (S)	Less than 2 years
Medium Term (M)	2 – 5 years
Long Term (L)	More than 5 years

Quick Wins



A yellow star indicates that an action item is a "Quick Win." Quick wins are actions that can be implemented within a year or two, have a high probability of success and have a relatively low cost.

Future Planning, Evaluation, and Reporting

A key component of the success of this strategy will be evaluation of its initiatives. The action plan should be reviewed bi-annually, at which time priorities should be re-evaluated and a discussion of any variances should occur in reference to key performance indicators (KPI's). If new projects are added (or old projects removed) as the plan progresses, this should be done by weighing the relative priority of all projects in the plan. The action plan should be updated on a yearly basis; therefore, the third quarter evaluation period will set the stage for the updated version of the plan. In the fourth guarter, the updated plan should be formalized, and a draft approved by the end of the year.

Implementation Considerations

The action plan identifies many initiatives and action items. Attempting to complete all of them concurrently will stretch the resources and limit the focus of stakeholders as they implement the strategy. Therefore, it is recommended that implementation of the plan begin with the highest priority items.



1. Organizational Development

Priority Initiatives	Action Items	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline
A. Organize for Tourism Development	1.A.1 – Establish a Host Organization and Agritourism Development Task Force who will be primarily responsible for implementing the strategy.	H/L	HO/S
B. Allocate Resources for Agritourism Development	1.B.1 – Allocate resources to implement the Agritourism Development Strategy. Wherever feasible, resources should be leveraged between partner organizations to build collaboration between stakeholders.	H/variable	AII/S
	1.B.2 – Increase capacity to implement the strategy by securing multi-year funding to hire contracted human resources.	H/H	HO + ADTF/S
C. Collaborate with Key Partners	 1.C.1 – Host an Agritourism Development Forum to officially kick off implementation of the strategy. It is envisioned that the Forum would be a highly engaging in-person event that would serve as a rallying point for agritourism stakeholders. The event could be hosted at an existing agritourism operator to further showcase what the region has to offer. Consider hosting Agritourism Development Forums annually to report on successes, describe upcoming initiatives, increase communication and collaboration, and energize stakeholders in the agritourism sector. 	H/M	ADTF + CHR/S
	1.C.2 – Deliver presentations to municipal Councils in the region to inform them of the strategy and seek support for implementation.	H/L	HO + ADTF/S



44 X X	2. Product Development
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Priority Initiatives	Action Items
A. Expand and Enhance Agritourism Offerings in Central Alberta	2.A.1 – Develop an Agritourism Development Mentorship program that would connect experienced operators with new and emerging operators in Central Alberta to coach them along their development journey.
	 2.A.2 – Provide tourism experience and package development training to existing and potential new agritourism operators. Consider offering training workshops on an annual or bi-annual basis and collaborating with partners to increase participation and share associated costs.
	There are several well-developed, free of charge resources that can be leveraged by existing and potential new agritourism operators for training purposes. These include:
	Foothills Tourism Association's Agritourism Tools and Resources Town of Essex Agritourism Toolkit County of Simcoe Growing Agritourism Toolkit British Columbia's Farm Diversification Through Agritourism Guidebook TIAC's Growing Agritourism Learning Series Resources for Agritourism Development
	2.A.3 – Provide support to agritourism operators seeking to apply for development grants (e.g. Travel Alberta's Tourism Investment Program).
	2.A.4 – Develop an Agritourism Experience Standards Guideline that will help to set the tone and expectations for high-quality agritourism experiences in Central Alberta.
	Consider implementing a certification program to highlight experiences that meet or exceed the standards guideline to help promote those offerings.
	2.A.5 – In the short to medium term, focus product development efforts on agritourism offerings that are close to being visitor and/or market ready. This will help to expand the product base in the region.
	2.A.6 – As Central Alberta matures as an agritourism destination, begin developing export ready experiences that appeal to high-value domestic and international visitors.

Priority/Cost Lead/Timeline

H/L-M	ADTF + CHR/S

H/L - H

ADTF + CHR/ Ongoing

H/L

ADTF + CHR/ Ongoing

M/L

ADTF + CHR/M

M/variable

ADTF/S-M

M/variable

ADTF/M-L



Priority Initiatives	Action Items		Lead/Timeline
	2.A.7 – Explore opportunities to weave agritourism experiences into tourism product areas that the region is strong in (e.g. nature-based/adventure experiences, sport tourism, cultural events, etc.).	L/variable	ADTF/Ongoing
B. Develop an Agritourism Database	2.B.1 – Develop a database of businesses looking to partner with agritourism operators and share access to the database with industry (e.g. restaurants looking for local ingredients, retailers looking for artisanal products, accommodations looking for experiences to package with, etc.).	M/L-M	HO/M
	Update the database on at least an annual basis to ensure it remains relevant to agritourism operators.		
C. Leverage Festivals and Events	2.C.1 – Develop on-site and off-site agritourism experiences to complement festival and event offerings \bigstar in Central Alberta.	M/variable	ADTF/Ongoing
D. Visiting Friends and Relatives Tourism Product	2.D.1 – Develop an Agritourism Ambassador Program and recruit residents who are passionate about showcasing their community's connection to agriculture to visitors to join the program.	L/L	ADTF + CHR/S-M
	2.D.2 – Provide resources, training, and other supports to encourage residents to host VFR (e.g. trip planning tools, ambassador programs, VFR packages, how-to-host tip sheets, etc.).	L/L	ADTF + CHR/M
	2.D.3 – Encourage agritourism experience providers to offer host incentives, such as discounts when residents bring visitors with them.	L/variable	ADTF + CHR/ Ongoing





3. Marketing and Promotional Development

Priority Initiatives	Action Items	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline
A. Expand Marketing of Central Alberta's Agritourism Offerings	3.A.1 – Begin discussions with DMOs in Central Alberta to explore opportunities for agritourism-specific collaborative marketing campaigns, cross promotions, website listings, destination development initiatives, or fee for service provision.	H/variable	ADTF + HO/S
	3.A.2 – Encourage agritourism operators to develop marketing plans for their experiential offerings.	H/L	ADTF/Ongoing
	3.A.3 – Provide tourism marketing training to existing and potential new agritourism operators. Consider offering training workshops on an annual or bi-annual basis and collaborating with partners to increase participation and share associated costs.	H/variable	ADTF + CHR/ Ongoing
	Focus should be put toward digital marketing training to respond to the needs of operators (e.g. social media, website design, e-commerce).		
	3.A.4 – Expand the use of social media and digital platforms in agritourism promotions. For example, ensure the region's visitor and market ready tourism products are listed on Travel Alberta's ATIS platform and other relevant consumer-facing tourism website.	M/L	ADTF + CHR/M
	3.A.5 – Work with partners to leverage Travel Alberta's Cooperative Investment Program to achieve a higher leverage on tourism marketing resources.	M/variable	ADTF/Ongoing
	3.A.6 – Plan familiarization tours with media outlets, travel influencers, and the travel trade to showcase the region's high quality, market and export ready agritourism experiences.	L/variable	ADTF + CHR/M - L
	3.A.7 – Send delegations of agritourism champions to important tourism conferences and trade shows to capitalize on emerging opportunities, build capacity and drive visitation to the destination.	L/L	ADTF/Ongoing
B. Understand the Visitor	3.B.1 – Conduct research to better understand existing and potential future visitor markets (e.g. visitor surveys, PRIZM analysis, data collection, etc.).	H/L	ADTF + CHR/ Ongoing
	3.B.2 – Develop and maintain target market profiles for the region's best customers. Share these with agritourism operators to help inform their product development and marketing efforts.	L/L	ADTF + CHR/ Ongoing

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Priority Initiatives	Action Items	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline
C. Tourism Branding	3.C.1 – Establish a clear, compelling, and unique agritourism brand for Central Alberta. The brand should take into consideration the direction put forward in the strategy and be grounded in what makes the destination special.	H/M-H	ADTF/S
	3.C.2 – Develop supporting materials and marketing collateral to bring the agritourism brand to life.	H/L - H	ADTF + CHR/S
	3.C.3 – Communicate the brand to agritourism operators and stakeholders and encourage them to align with the positioning.	M/L	ADTF/S
	3.C.4 – Work to ensure consistent implementation of the brand throughout all agritourism marketing activities and materials	M/L	ADTF/Ongoing
D. Educate Communities in the Region on the Benefits of Agritourism	3.D.1 – Communicate and promote the benefits of agritourism to communities in the region through a coordinated public relations campaign.	M/L	ADTF + CHR/ Ongoing
	3.D.2 – On an annual basis, formally share "good news" stories related to tourism with communities in the region (e.g. new business openings, business success stories, positive economic, social, and environmental impacts of agritourism, etc.).	M/L	ADTF + CHR/ Ongoing





4. Destination Development

Priority Initiatives	Action Items	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline
A. Support Development of the Agritourism Sector	 4.A.1 – Review and enhance municipal bylaws, policies, and procedures to ensure a strong foundation and favourable regulatory framework is in place to support agritourism development. Where feasible, seek to align regulatory frameworks across Central Alberta to give operators 	H/variable	HO/S
	enhanced certainty and make it easier for them to operate in multiple jurisdictions.		
	4.A.2 – Develop an information resource for agritourism operators that clearly describes the regulatory requirements for them to operate legally. This may include topics such as zoning rules, licenses, fees, insurance, etc.	H/L	HO/S
	4.A.3 – Complete the community-specific action items described in Appendix D.	M/variable	HO/ongoing
B. Increase the Capacity of Agritourism Operators	 4.B.1 – Support existing and potential new agritourism operators by providing educational and capacity building opportunities. There are many excellent training opportunities that could be offered, including Open Farm Days training, human resource training through Tourism HR, and other training programs. 	H/L - H	HO + ADTF/ Ongoing
	4.B.2 – Work with Olds College to develop an agritourism-related work placement program to ease human resource constraints.	L/L	ADTF/M
C. Address Insurance Barriers	4.C.1 – Study the feasibility of offering a group insurance program for agritourism operators.	M/H	ADTF + CHR/M
D. Develop Tourism Sustainably	4.D.1 – Encourage the sustainable development of agritourism in Central Alberta. This can be accomplished through:	M/L - H	HO, ADTF, CHR/ Ongoing
	 > Developing policies and programs to protect critical natural, social, and community assets in the region. > Developing education programs targeted at visitors and residents on how to enjoy the region's agritourism offerings in a sustainable way. > Encouraging businesses to implement sustainability standards and practices. > Establishing a visitor management system in high traffic areas. > Implementing impact monitoring programs. > Developing a sustainability pledge. > Become a signatory of the Future of Tourism movement (see: https://www.futureoftourism.org/). 		



Priority Initiatives	Action Items	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline
E. Measure Performance and Celebrate Successes	4.E.1 – Utilize the attached performance metrics and other measures as appropriate to measure performance of the agritourism industry in Central Alberta on an annual basis. Use the data collected during the first year of measurement as a benchmark to compare future results to.	H/L	HO + ADTF/ Ongoing
	4.E.2 – Complete an economic impact analysis to benchmark the agritourism industry for future comparison.	M/M	HO/S



Performance Evaluation Framework

15 key performance indicators (KPI's) have been developed to help evaluate implementation of the strategy. It is suggested that the KPI's be measured on an annual basis.

Focus Area for Growth		KPI
1. Increased Experiences	1.1	20% annual growth in experiential agritourism programming on a region-wide basis (years 1-5).
	1.2	75% of all businesses that are related to agritourism trained in identified workshops (by year 5).
2. Increased Awareness	2.1	10% annual growth in digital engagement with visitors seeking agritourism experiences (year 2 on).
	2.2	10% annual growth in new agritourism product awareness by visitors (year 2 on).
	2.3	10% annual growth in new agritourism product awareness by residents (year 2 on).
3. Increased Revenue	3.1	10% annual growth in new agritourism businesses and associated increase in municipal business tax revenue (year 2 on).
	3.2	10% annual growth in operational revenue for agritourism operators (year 2 on).
	3.3	10% annual growth in accommodation receipts for agritourists (year 2 on).
	3.4	10% annual growth in receipts for retail and restaurant operators offering local products (year 2 on).
4. Increased Visitation	4.1	10% annual growth in number of visitors to agritourism attractions each year (year 2 on).
	4.2	10% annual growth in number of overnight stays by agritourists each year (year 2 on).
5. Increased Satisfaction	5.1	85% great rating for agritourism attractions (by year 5).
	5.2	85% great rating of overall experience in the Central Alberta region (by year 5).
	5.3	Achieve a Net Promoter Score of 50 (by year 5).
	5.4	20% increase in number of return visitors who are agritourists (by year 5).

Measurement Tool

Quarterly/annual reports

Quarterly/annual reports

Website Metrics

Visitor Survey

Resident Survey

Operational budgets

Operator Survey

Operator Survey

Operator Survey

Visitor statistics from attractions

Operator Survey

Visitor survey

Visitor survey

Visitor survey

Visitor survey



Appendix K: Expanded Agritourism Service Delivery Analysis

Central Alberta Tourism Alliance

CATA works to enhance the capacity of the destination by creating a desired future and a road map to reaching it. The organization focuses on coordination, planning, development, marketing and investment at the regional level. CATA primarily consists of Economic Development Officers from municipalities in the region, with representation from Tourism Red Deer and Travel Alberta. The organization has no paid staff and charges a small fee for membership. As such, their capacity to action development initiatives is somewhat limited.

Tourism Organizations

Several local and regional tourism organizations operate in Central Alberta, including Tourism Red Deer, Visit Sylvan Lake, Explore Nordegg, David Thompson Country, and Lacombe Regional Tourism. These organizations primarily provide tourism marketing, advertising, and promotional services. Some also provide enhanced supports, such as product development, training, capacity building, networking opportunities, community engagement, visitor services, and advocacy. There is opportunity for agritourism operators to partner with DMOs to leverage their marketing expertise and resources to increase awareness.

Travel Alberta

Travel Alberta is the destination management organization for the province of Alberta. It works toward building a thriving visitor economy that benefits all Albertans.¹⁸ The organization provides support for tourism marketing and product development through its Tourism Investment Program, is conducts research on visitor market and key industry indicators, and it offers helpful resources and services that industry can leverage to help grow the visitor economy.

Agricultural Societies

There are many Agricultural Societies operating in Central Alberta, and they provide a critical link to agricultural communities and businesses. There is opportunity to partner with these societies to leverage their deep connections in the agricultural industry to support agritourism development.

Government of Alberta

The Government of Alberta develops and implements provincewide regulatory frameworks. The Ministry of Forestry, Parks and Tourism is responsible for supporting Alberta's vibrant tourism industry, among other responsibilities. Under this mandate, the Ministry provides funding to support tourism development.

Municipal Governments

Municipal governments develop and implement local regulatory frameworks. They also invest in tourism development through various types of grants, support programs, and related initiatives. It is important to note that agritourism is still a relatively new concept, and that in many cases regulatory frameworks have not kept pace with the evolution of this sector of the visitor economy. Governments interested in supporting agritourism development can do so by ensuring their rules and regulations encourage development and give entrepreneurs the certainty they need to invest.





Appendix L: Provincial and Federal Grant Programs

The following describes some of the provincial and federal grant programs available to support agritourism development.

Provincial Funding

The Government of Alberta invests funds in provincial, regional, and local tourism initiatives through various programs as described in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Provincial Funding Programs

Organization	Program	Available Funding
Travel Alberta	Cooperative Investment Fund	\$100,000 maximum
Travel Alberta	Product Development Fund	\$500,000 maximum
Government of Alberta	Northern and Regional Economic Development (NRED)	\$20,000 minimum
Government of Alberta	Major Cultural and Sport Events	\$250,000 maximum
Government of Alberta	Community Facility Enhancement Program	\$125,000/year (small) \$1,000,000/year (large)
Government of Alberta	Heritage Awareness Grants	\$25,000 maximum
Government of Alberta	Historic Resource Conservation Grants	Grants range from \$1,000 - \$100,000
Government of Alberta	Alberta Export Expansion Program	\$25,000 maximum
Government of Alberta	Workforce Partnership Grants (Labour Market Partnerships and Workforce Attraction and Retention)	No maximum
Government of Alberta	Economic Development in Rural Alberta Plan	\$50,000 to Ag Societies to develop a coaching series on agritourism development.
Government of Alberta	Alberta Culture Days Grant	\$10,000 maximum

Federal Funding

The Government of Canada invests in programs that could be leveraged to support agritourism development, including:

- > Federal Youth Employment and Skills Program
- Federal Agri-Food Trade Services >
- > Federal AgriDiversity Program
- > PrairiesCan Business Scale Up and Productivity Program



Photo Credit: Central Alberta Tourism Alliance



Appendix M: References

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