



Front Porch Series – Fast Facts

Title: **Stewardship & Leadership in Agritourism: Our Family's Journey DeBuck Family Farm**

Event Date: Thursday, August 8, 2024, Supporting slides and Fast Facts Summary can be found [here](#).

Featured Presenter: **Scott DeBuck, Owner and President of NAFDMA**

Facilitators: **USLGA Education & Research Committee, Barbara Cesiro & Mary Pilotte**

Tech Support: **Exec. Director Michele Hyson**

Event Goal: This FPE aims to share insights into the growing area of farm-related agritourism. Scott DeBuck, President of [NAFDMA](#), and owner of DeBuck's Family Farm (Van Buren Twp, MI) shares his story of transforming their family farm from a traditional, struggling dairy and crop operation, to a thriving agritourism destination. Tips and strategies for embracing agritourism are shared, along with forecast trends for success looking forward.

Terms used during the event: This is a technical presentation. There are many technical terms which inform the topic of plant propagation and are important to understand for propagation success.

- **Agri-tainment** – a focus on developing agriculturally themed entertainment for the farm, to attract visitor sales.
- **Flash Sales** – a pre-event discounted ticket sale. They offer the benefit of booking an early sale ahead of the actual event expense.
- **NAFDMA** -International Agritourism Association. According to their website, NAFDMA's goal is to "advance agritourism including on-farm retail, pick your own, consumer-supported agriculture, direct delivery, and farmers' markets. We facilitate events, resources, communications, and peer-to-peer exchanges that bring together new relationships and opportunities." They do this through Connecting, Inspiring, Empower/educating, Trust, and Innovation.

Key Points Summary:

- **When your farm is struggling look at all means to generate revenue.**, This may mean leaving your comfort zone, learning about new things, allowing visitors to your farm and transforming your operation into something totally different. Start small, and only add attractions and elements as you have funding to pay for them as you go.

- ***Pro-Tip* You can only grow as large as you have parking space for.** Visitors need easy parking on site. Plan accordingly. DeBuck's has 20 acres for parking, to support 8-9,000 visitors per day for events.
- **Field trips and attractions** keep people coming back. ***Pro-Tip* Think attractions for every season.** DeBuck's offers April Tulips, June/July Lavender, August Sunflowers, and Sept.-October Fall Festival.
- **You-Picks are popular, attracting up to 10,000 visitors in 3 weeks.** DeBuck's offers "fill a vase" with small and large options to cover different price points.
- **There are many regulations, special ordinances and legal considerations** related to agritourism on the farm. ***Pro-Tip*** get a good insurance provider and legal assistance BEFORE you start. It is not a matter of IF you will be litigated against, it is a matter of when, especially if you grow to be successful. These same resources can help you navigate the best business structure, employment regulations/insurance/liability coverage as well.
- **Online ticketing can streamline your operation, reduce headcount needs, and avoid point of sale delays.** Another benefit is that online tools can embed the accident waiver sign off process, a necessary element for any agritourism farm.
- **Food is the trend for the future** for Agritourism. DeBuck's does as much in food sales as admission ticket sales. They hired a consultant to help them focus on future trends in food, and how to set up accordingly to meet the opportunity.
- **Flash sales offer the benefit of booking early sales to help forecast food demand,** with a percentage of those tickets never being validated/used.
- **Market to ensure your parking lot is full!** Spend \$ to make dollars (i.e. calculate what it would cost to get them on the farm, then based on your data, see how that compares to average actual spend per person.).
- **Social media - *Pro-Tip* make every post a call to action** ... no casual posts. Customers will become numb if they get too many posts sent to them.

Other Session Notes: Attendees – 38

Q & A

Q: Vendor for DeBuck's Farm agritourism insurance?

A: Farm Bureau \$5MM Umbrella policy