



NEWSLETTER

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ATPI UPDATE

Greetings ATPI Members (and Prospects!)

Due to moving our annual agritourism conference to the winter months, the Agriculture and Tourism Partners of Illinois (ATPI) did not hold a major membership event during 2006, but nevertheless a lot of activity was going on behind the scenes to provide both current and prospective members with a variety of localized programming concerned with all aspects of agritourism development and promotion. Planning efforts to organize the 2007 Illinois Specialty Crop and Agritourism Conference (see additional article for details) required a great deal of energy from board members and other cooperators, however, a total of 276 people attended a combination of 10 farm tours and workshops that were offered during the course of the year from Kane County to Union County.

The start of 2007 sparked a new beginning for ATPI and agritourism in Illinois with the agritourism conference merging with the IL Specialty Crop Conference. Over 400 attended the conference, which allowed ATPI an opportunity to reach a large portion of our membership, as well as the majority of specialty crop producers in the state. Since the conference in January, ATPI has collaborated with University of Illinois Extension, Tourism Development Offices, IL Farm Bureau, local RC&D councils and others to provide an additional 8 workshops on agritourism development, fee hunting and marketing, which has reached an additional 360 people interested or involved in the business of agritourism.

Efforts are currently underway to develop a new ATPI website that will be a useful method to share information and market agritourism in Illinois. The web address will be www.agritourismillinois.com. The site will be up and running sometime this summer.

The ATPI Board is always interested in membership input, so if you have any suggestions or sense emerging opportunities or challenges in your area please let us know. You can reach current President, John Pike at jpik@uiuc.edu or 618-453-5563. Questions and comments can also be directed to the Central Illinois Tourism Development Office at citdo@visitcentralillinois.com.

Let's work together to make the most of agritourism in Illinois!

John Pike, President ATPI

2007 Illinois Specialty Crop and Agritourism Conference is a Hit!

In response to membership input suggesting that the annual agritourism conference be held during the winter months instead of summer, ATPI was fortunate to have the opportunity to merge our conference with the long running Illinois Specialty Crop Conference. The 2007 Illinois Specialty Crop and Agritourism Conference held in January provided educational information and networking opportunities to over 400 producers and agritourism business owners from across the state!



Megan Bruch, Marketing Specialist, University of Tennessee Extension, Center for Profitable Agriculture

With generous support from Illinois USDA Rural Development, ATPI was able to bring Max Armstrong, Farm Broadcaster from WGN Radio, to Springfield for the keynote address. In addition, presenters from Purdue and University of Tennessee were also on hand to talk about agritourism innovation in other states.



Jerry Nelson, Co-Chair, Purdue Cooperative Extension New Ventures Team

Other topics covered in the agritourism breakout sessions covered website issues, business plan development and implementation, Illinois tourism resources, and marketing, and Duane Noland was guest speaker at the evening banquet.

Plans are already underway for the 2008 Illinois Specialty Crop and Agritourism Conference. Dates are reserved at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield for January 10 - 12. Watch for upcoming details and make plans to attend the educational conference and full trade show.



AgriHappenings

ATPI members should be aware of the AgriHappenings website recently made available by the Illinois Department of Agriculture. This site allows farm business operators to list upcoming special events and product availability. At <http://www.agrihappenings.com/> you can list your business under the categories of U-Pick, Hunting and Fishing, Orchards, Pumpkin Patches and Corn Mazes, B&B's, Wineries and Christmas Trees. There is also a calendar of events where individual special events and attractions can be listed. Please visit the AgriHappenings site soon to make sure your business information is listed and go back as needed to help get the word out about the activities and products offered at your agritourism destination.

2007 Sustainable Agriculture Tours Scheduled

University of Illinois Extension is offering tours that provide a behind-the-scenes look at small farms and other unique operations around the state. This year's schedule of six sustainable agriculture tours represents some of the innovative practices and income-producing solutions being developed. The North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Professional Development Program, [the Agriculture and Tourism Partners of Illinois](#), and the Agroecology/Sustainable Agriculture Program at the University of Illinois are also sponsors.

"Sustainable agriculture looks a little different as each operation develops its own niche products, agritourism opportunities and other enterprises to maintain or supplement farm income," said Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant, Small Farm and Sustainable Agriculture Extension Specialist who is coordinating the tours. "This year's tours showcase the creativity of the small farm. And one tour will show a variety of research projects at the U of I Dixon Springs Agricultural Center," she said. Cavanaugh-Grant said that this is the fifth year she has coordinated the tours.

Cost to register for these tours is \$20 per person and \$10 for each additional family member. Children under the age of 10 are free. This fee includes lunch. Registration at least one week in advance is required. Visit www.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm/ to register and for more details about each of the tours including a map and agenda or contact Donna Cray (217-241-4644; dcray@uiuc.edu).

Recipe to Reality Workshop Offered in Illinois

While many agritourism businesses have been developed out of the need to more profitably market fresh fruits, vegetables and decorative crops, the idea of processing some of these crops into finished food products has become increasingly common. Adding value to fruit and vegetable crops by processing them into jams, jellies, relishes, BBQ sauces and more can be good opportunities to diversify product lines, expand the sales season and reach new customers.

Finding information about regulations and procedures involved with value-added processing can be challenging at the local level, however, a program offered by the University of Nebraska Food Entrepreneur Assistance Program is a good source of information. **The Recipe to Reality Workshop will be held in the Chicago area on August 17th** and will cover topics such as product and process development, food regulatory issues and agencies, packaging and labeling, promotional material packaging, food safety and sanitation and more. This seminar helps attendees understand the challenges of starting a food business and allows them to make an informed decision as to whether developing a business is the right choice for them.

This program is nationally recognized and would be a good opportunity for anyone interested in exploring opportunities in food product development and processing. Registration information can be obtained on line at <http://fpc.unl.edu/Entrepreneur/recipe.shtml> or by contacting Jill Gifford at 402-472-2819.

Upcoming Events

Jun 14, Sustainable Ag Tour Stewardson, IL

Triple S Farms is a 200-acre diversified organic operation that produces dozens of varieties of organic vegetables, chickens, turkeys, hogs and cattle, organic dent corn, sweet corn, popcorn, soybeans and hard red wheat.

July 12, Fee Hunting Workshop, Harrisburg, IL

An informational workshop about hunting leases, commercial outfitting and liability issues. For information contact the Small Business Development Center at Southeastern IL College. Call (618) 252-5001 ext. 6 or email tara.richerson@sic.edu

July 18, Grundy and LaSalle County Agritourism Workshops

Visit the Northern Illinois Tourism Development Office form more information when announced. <http://www.visitnorthernillinois.com/>

July 30, Sustainable Ag Tour, Farmington, IL

Anne Patterson's Living Earth Farm is a small vegetable, fruit, nut, herb, and flower farm located

July 31, Illinois Farm Bureau Commodity Conference, Springfield, IL

A breakout session presented by John Pike (University of Illinois Extension and ATPI President) during the Commodity Conference covering Opportunities in Agritourism. For information check the IL Farm Bureau website closer to the time at <http://www.ilfb.org/> or consult with your local county Farm Bureau Office.

August 17, Sustainable Ag Tour, Elsau, IL

Three Rivers Community Farm is a 12-acre farm featuring Community Supported Agriculture.

September 14, Sustainable Ag Tour, Dixon Springs, IL

The University of Illinois Dixon Springs Agricultural Center has been the site for research projects since it was established in 1934. Fruit and vegetable production will be highlighted on this tour.

October 23, Sustainable Ag Tour, Maple Park, IL

A tour of Kuiper's Family Farm will highlight an agritourism operation, apple orchards, a pumpkin patch, and a wide variety of Christmas trees. The farm also has two gift shops that sell products such as fall and winter decorations, gourmet jams, jellies and apple cider.

Jan. 10-12, 2008, IL Specialty Crop and Agritourism Conference, Springfield, IL



Sites of Interest

www.agrihappenings.com

www.specialtygrowers.org

<http://asap.sustainability.uiuc.edu>

www.agritourismworld.com