

Purdue survey finds 'agritourists' have environmental concerns

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While most agricultural tourists responding to a Purdue University survey indicated that agriculture is an important industry, those who said they had visited a livestock farm tended to have concerns about how animal feeding operations affect water quality in their county.

The results suggest that [livestock producers](#) who open their operations to "agritourists" will have a receptive audience but should be prepared to potentially address questions about environmental concerns, said Nicole Olynk Widmar, associate professor of agricultural economics and co-author of the study Exploring Agritourism Experience and Perceptions of Pork Production.

"We can safely say that agriculture professionals are increasingly aware of how the industry is perceived by the media and consumers," Widmar said. "We hope this data provides context for future studies that could help us better understand changing perceptions about agriculture and the demographics of people who participate in agritourism."

The study was designed to measure the demographics and attitudes of people who have visited a working farm or food production facility and compare those to people who have not visited an agricultural production operation.

Researchers conducted an online survey of 857 U.S. households from July 23 to Aug. 6, 2014. The survey was administered by the market research firm Lightspeed GMI and targeted to be representative of the

overall U.S. adult population for age, gender, pre-tax income and region of residency.

Results showed 69 percent of respondents had visited a [livestock](#) operation - defined as a pig, dairy or horse farm. These respondents were more likely to agree with the statement, "I am supportive of the growth of livestock agriculture in my county," but also more likely to agree that, "I am concerned about impacts on [water quality](#) from livestock operations in my county."

"Just because you support something and believe it is important doesn't mean you won't ask critical questions," Widmar said. "There is some popular belief that consumers are taking a greater interest in food production. Our results seem to reinforce previous findings that the most engaged food consumers tend to be women in families with young children, and it seems that they are also more likely to be agritourists."

More information: Ann M. Cummins et al. Exploring Agritourism Experience and Perceptions of Pork Production, *Agricultural Sciences* (2016). [DOI: 10.4236/as.2016.74024](https://doi.org/10.4236/as.2016.74024)

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