Agritourism in Southwest Western Australia

HONEY BEE PRODUCTS

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MARKETING and TRAINING

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Agritourism in Southwest Western Australia

Authors:
Ms Rebecca Holliday
Dr Kirsten Martinus
Dr Bryan Boruff
Agritourism in Southwest Western Australia

Ms Rebecca Holliday, Dr Kirsten Martinus* and Dr Bryan Boruff, The University of Western Australia
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*Corresponding Author Details

Dr Kirsten Martinius
Centre for Regional Development
Department of Geography
School of Social Sciences
The University of Western Australia
Crawley WA 6009
Email: kirsten.martinius@uwa.edu.au
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Executive Summary

Agritourism is becoming an important part of the Australian tourism market providing direct and indirect benefits to agricultural businesses and rural communities across Western Australia (WA). Between 2015 and 2016, over 1.5 million tourists visited Australian farms - and whilst agritourism conjures notions of wineries and farm stays, the market has become increasingly diverse. More broadly, agritourism can be thought of as any activity supplementary to agricultural production where tourists visit working farms or other agricultural settings to participate in an interactive experience. This report emerged to better understand agritourism within WA, with the WA tourism industry still to realise the full potential of offerings across a range of agricultural related products and services.

WA is a strong agriculture state with a diverse number of agricultural resources. Yet, to date, wine has dominated the market with a focus on cellar door tastings, dining, and purchases. There is little appreciation of how to expand other types of agritourism to grow the market, as recent trends suggest consumers are interested less in ‘buying things’ and more in ‘doing things’. Tourists are increasingly in search of an authentic and compelling experience, and agribusinesses prove a destination with physical characteristics that enhance visitor experiences. To this end, this report aims to enrich understandings of the Southwest WA agritourism sector, highlighting opportunities for future growth.

Whilst agritourism is a subset of rural tourism, there are considerable variations in what constitutes an agritourism experience. Indeed, agritourism moves beyond merely tourism in a regional or rural setting to a working farm or agricultural setting where tourists can engage and participate in agricultural production. Instead, it can be viewed as a social and cultural experience that engages providers, visitors and broader society alike to enhance community wellbeing. This report defines agritourism in the WA context as:

**AGRITOURISM IS AN ACTIVITY THAT CAN SUPPLEMENT AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION WHERE TOURISTS ARE GUESTS PARTICIPATING IN EDUCATIONAL AND INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCES WHICH PROMOTE FARM PRODUCE AND REGIONAL LIFESTYLES.**

To gain insight into tourist preferences and movements throughout WA, this report presents an enhanced understanding of agritourism offerings in the Southwest. First, agritourism providers across the region were systematically identified and the location of each mapped. Second, agritourism provider marketing approaches were surveyed with an emphasis on the use and importance of social media. Third, agritourism businesses were audited to understand the breadth and depth of experiences offered to tourists. Finally, a subset of agritourism providers were interviewed to provide a deeper understanding of successes and failures within the industry. Using results from these four approaches, recommendation for future growth of the industry were documented.
Whilst business appears to have a variety of views on how to further develop the agritourism sector in WA’s Southwest, greater industry consolidation and strategy was considered key to improving communication between local and state tourism bodies and in allowing mass and targeted advertising to entice more visitors. This type of coordinated approach to promoting WA agritourism, as well as better linking to the already well-established wine industry, would provide enhanced visibility and traceability within Australia and abroad. Nonetheless, as emerges in this report, success in the development of the industry relies heavily on the creation of an authentic WA agritourism experience and story. Without this, tourists are unlikely to recommend Western Australia’s bountiful agricultural resources to others.

Recommendations emerging from this study include:

1. Progressing a more complete audit of agritourism businesses to develop a directory of all WA providers, beyond Southwest.
2. Develop an agritourism experience certification system based on the audit whereby providers can register the type of experience they offer to visitors based on the identified five experience layers and associated segments. This can be advertised via government, association and businesses websites and enhance traceability of agritourism products.
3. Assist WA agritourism providers in developing more formalised structures (drawing on exemplars from other nations) to support knowledge sharing and collaborations in regional or themed agritourism offerings.
4. Assist in the further development of regional food, wine and tourism trails for self-drive or tour groups, including the compilation of novel approaches undertaken in other regions to attract visitors.
5. Development of an on-line hub to register WA agritourism offerings, food trails, events, etc. to both assist business networking and provide visitors with a better understanding of the rich diverse experiences of WA.
6. Create better linkages between the already well-established wine industry and other agritourism offerings in WA’s Southwest.
7. Solicit an enhanced understanding of agritourist preferences and expectation by visitor origin to inform experiential offerings and marketing strategies based on a range of international, cultural and generational orientations.
8. Improve communication between local and State tourism bodies, governments and associations with agritourism businesses so as to develop a strong regional approach to agritourism and value-add to the State.
1 Introduction

Agritourism, otherwise known as food tourism, is becoming an increasingly important sector of the Australian economy, providing direct and indirect benefits to Australian agribusinesses and regional markets. Traditionally thought of as either farm stays or cellar door visits, the term agritourism now encompasses a wide variety of activities where agriculture and tourism intersect. Essentially, it is the act of visiting a region to engage with farm or food-related businesses (including restaurants, markets, produce outlets and natural attractions) for enjoyment, education, or to participate in activities and events. Approximately 1.8 million domestic and international tourists visited Australian farms between 2015 and 2016, this number has been growing by approximately 9% each year. The sector is currently worth some $9.4 billion per annum. The economic benefit from agritourism is particularly relevant to Australia as it takes place in regions where there is often limited economic activity outside of agriculture.

In Western Australia (WA), the most prominent agritourism activities are centred on the wine industry and the Margaret River region. A vibrant tourism offering has emerged over the past two decades in this region encompassing gourmet foods, and craft beer and spirits. However, the WA tourism industry is only just beginning to realise the full potential of agritourism. There are a number of product categories (e.g., honey, fruit, vegetables, truffles, and seafood) which could be further developed but are currently under represented. The limited development of this sector to date, has meant its value has not been fully realised. For a number of ancillary reasons, WA attracts only a small percentage of inbound international tourists, one of which is a lack of novel tourism experiences. Indeed, the lack of differentiation appears to be a key reason for the low number of international tourists from China and other Asia Pacific countries, including Indonesia, Malaysia, India, South Korea and Japan.

Western Australia is a strong agriculture state with many agricultural resources that could be integrated with tourism offerings as recent tourism trends suggest consumers are focusing less on ‘buying things’ and more on ‘doing things’, emphasising an experiential dimension. There is a growing recognition that tourists are in search of compelling experiences, with both utilitarian and hedonic components, involving emotional, physical and intellectual engagement. Agribusiness and agrifood businesses in particular, are authentic places with physical characteristics that define an atmosphere favourable to the enhancement of the visitors’ experience. While visiting a winery for example, tourists often seek a relationship with place and want to know more about the wine itself, but also about the region and the people involved (traceability of product). Wine related tourism has dominated the agritourism market in WA, yet there is little understanding of the extent to which other types of agritourism could be expanded to grow this market further.

The following report aims to address growth opportunities in agritourism by ‘providing an understanding of the current movement, profiles and potentials of the agritourism sector in Southwest WA’. To address this aim, first, agritourism providers across the region were systematically identified and the location of each mapped. Second, agritourism provider marketing approaches were surveyed with an emphasis on the use and importance of social media. Third, agritourism businesses were audited to understand the breadth and depth of
experiences offered to tourists. Finally, a subset of agritourism providers were interviewed to provide a deeper understanding of successes and failures within the industry. Using results from these four approaches, recommendation for future growth of the industry were documented.

The rest of the report is structured as follows: Section 2 begins with an overview of the Southwest WA agritourism industry. Section 3 provides a working definition of agritourism and establishes a conceptual framework of the various components of the agritourism experience. Section 4 presents a detailed profile of agribusinesses in Southwest WA followed by a comprehensive depiction of the role both visitors and providers play in the agritourism experience (Section 5). Section 6 presents a detailed understanding of Southwest WA agritourism offerings and experiences as perceived by agritourism providers. Section 7 draws on findings from the previous sections to provide recommendations for growing and enhancing the Southwest WA agritourism industry.

Before proceeding, we put forth several terms to establish constancy throughout the document.

– A provider — refers to an individual providing an agritourism experience, being distinguished from an agricultural ‘producer’ in that there is no ‘production’ of an agritourism experience. Just the provision of one. How this is accepted, interpreted and synthesised by the visitor is up to the individual.

– A producer - refers to the individual involved in the primary means of agricultural production conducted on a farm. In many instances, agritourism occurs alongside a farm’s primary means of production, but can be managed by a different person.

As such, the provider and producer are often not one in the same, therefore we signal this difference by using different terminology throughout the document.
2 Identification and geo-location of agritourism businesses

To begin, businesses in the Southwest of WA offering agritourism experiences were identified through a two-step process. First, a systematic spatial search of the region using Google Maps was undertaken using the search terms: factory, farm, farm stay and station stay. The systematic search identified 293 businesses, 244 of which: 1) had a functioning website; 2) were not vineyards; and, 3) were within the projects’ geographic scope of Western Australia’s Southwest. Next, representatives from the Goldfields-Esperance Development Commission, Great Southern Development Commission, Peel Development Commission, Wheatbelt Development Commission and the Cooperative Research Centre for Honey Bee Products (CRCHBP) were contacted to review these lists and identify omissions. A website of agritourism in Western Australia (http://touristradio.com.au/agritourismwa/) was reviewed providing an additional 42 businesses. A systematic search of bookings.com, stayz.com.au, waholidayguide.com.au was also undertaken to ensure there were no additional businesses in Southwest WA which had been overlooked, and to check commerce activities of all businesses found in the various searches.

All businesses were then catalogued by name. Wineries were removed as these fell outside of the project’s scope. The remaining agritourism businesses (n=94) were geo-located and mapped to understand their spatial distribution across Southwest WA.

2.1 Locating agritourism businesses in Southwest WA

Agritourism businesses were identified and mapped across Southwest WA including those areas defined by the boundaries of the Goldfields-Esperance Development Commission, Great Southern Development Commission, Peel Development Commission, and Wheatbelt Development Commission. In total, 94 agritourism businesses were identified and mapped consisting of 25 Factories, 23 Farms, 42 Farmstays and 4 locations promoting honey bee products and agritourism experiences (Figure 1). Ten clusters of agritourism offerings were identified within the surrounds of Perth, Mandurah, Busselton, Margaret River, Pemberton, Manjimup, Bridgetown, Donnybrook, Walpole to Albany, and Esperance.

Appendix 1 provides a more detailed map and enlarged insets of the 10 spatial clusters, as well as the 94 agritourism businesses identified in Southwest WA.

2.2 Provider survey overview

To provide an overview of agritourism offerings across Southwest WA, 25 agritourism providers completed a survey at the end of 2019 (results are detailed in Section 4.3). Survey responses indicated a long and storied history of agritourism offerings, with 8 (32%) providers citing more than 20 years in operation. Three (12%) providers operating for 15 to 20 years, 5 (20%) for 10 to 15 years, 5 (20%) for 5 to 10 years, and 4 (16%) for less than 5 years. Table 1 shows the number of self-reported visitors survey respondents attracted in 2019. Five (20%) attracted less than 100 visitors, 14 (56%) between 101 and 4000 visitors and 7 (28%) had 4001 or more visitors over the last 12 months.
OVERVIEW LOCATIONS OF AGRITOURISM BUSINESSES IN WA’S SOUTHWEST REGION

Figure 1. Agritourism providers across Southwest WA
One of these was an outlier – The Berry Farm – with 150,000 visitors. As such, the potential to grow visitors is immense.

**Table 1. Visitor numbers for the past 12 months, as reported by providers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visitor number range</th>
<th>Number of providers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to 25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 to 100</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 to 200</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401 to 500</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501 to 1000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1001 to 4000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4001 to 8000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,001 plus</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of note were reports of increases in visitors with 15 (52%) and 16 (64%) providers reporting growth over the past 12 months and 5 years respectively. Longer term growth was attributed to increased word-of-mouth and repeat visitation, advertising, and to new service offerings. Only 5 (20%) providers identified a decline in visitor numbers over the past 12 months and 5 year period. Longer term declines were attributed to global economic declines, changes to migration agreements (impacting international volunteer workforces and the second year working holiday visa program), and increases in local Airbnb short-stay accommodation. In subsequent interviews, several providers identified that visitor decreases over the short-term may be due to poor weather, or personal health and legal problems.

In spite of perceived visitor increases, a few respondents planned to expand agritourism operations over the next 12 months (3 providers or 12%) or within five years (5 providers or 20%). This is shown in table 2. Providers developing agritourism offerings over the next 5 years expressed plans including: the establishment or expansion of accommodation, building a restaurant, expanding crops to increase produce available, creation of value-add produce (i.e. alcohol products), installation of rain water tanks for cottages, and offering more workshops.

**Table 2. Provider intention to expand agritourism in the next 1 to 5 years**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expansion intention</th>
<th>Within 12 months</th>
<th>Within 5 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than half of the providers surveyed reported no expansion plans for the next 12 months (14 providers or 56%), and 11 (44%) providers identified no plans to expand within the next 5 years. The main reasons identified included nearing retirement age, enjoyment of current lifestyle and capacity to take on more work. Other reasons included: a desire to focus on
production while maintaining current agritourism levels; and a desire to maintain authenticity and uniqueness which may be lost through expansion.

The most common method of expansion in agritourism identified by providers was through the provision of more accommodation. Further, many providers wanting to grow their agritourism businesses noted the need to enrich visitor experiences by offering more things to do. For example, the creation of specific product museums, expansion of existing tasting tours or the promotion of fruit-picking opportunities for overnight visitors.

**Box 1: Novel findings of agritourism providers**

Results from the audit, survey and interviews noted some interesting differences between agritourism providers that catered for day visitors and those that catered for overnight stays.

**Those focusing on day visitors were more likely to:**
- Engage in the production of plant based (excluding traditional agricultural crops), honey or yabbie/marron products;
- Provide opportunities to taste and purchase produce and value-add products in a farm shop;
- Offer learning experiences, specifically one-off instructional sessions that may involve produce tastings, demonstrations and/or workshops associated with experiences such as beekeeping and honey extraction, organic/bioorganic gardening, and horse riding;
- Have been operating for 10 to 20 years;
- Experience higher visitor numbers on Saturday and Sunday between 10 am and 2 pm.

**Those focusing on overnight visits (typically farm stays) were more likely to:**
- Engage in more traditional agricultural activities involving production of cattle, sheep, crops, and orchards;
- Provide opportunities to participate in staged agricultural physical tasks such as farm tours, animal feeding, and fruit or vegetable picking;
- Allow visitors to engage with and enjoy the natural environment and landscapes via walking and bicycle rides;
- Have non-agricultural facilities for their visitors, such as playgrounds, mini golf and barbeques;
- Limit business expansion plans due to age, lifestyle and capacity;
- Have been operating for around 20 years, and employ 1 to 5 people;
- Be divided into those businesses with more visitors on Friday, Saturday and Sunday as they target weekend or short stay experiences, or those who are busy seven days a week particularly during school holidays (both Australian and overseas).
3 Agritourism: a working definition and conceptual framework

A systematic review of literature from 2010-2019 was conducted to identify definitions of agritourism. Electronic data bases including ProQuest and Science Direct were searched using the following terms: agri-tourism, agritourism, agrotourism, agro-tourism, senary, sixth industry, integrated tourism, agricultural tourism, farm tourism, rural tourism, farm-based tourism, green tourism, farm, enterprise, farm stay, farm-stay, on-farm, on farm, farm-based education, tourist and agritainment. Search terms were based on alternative descriptions of agritourism found within the literature or identified as key attributes of agritourism (Phillip et al., 2010; Paresishvili et al., 2017). Articles which did not provide a definition or identify agritourism attributes were excluded. The review was used to craft a definition of agritourism relevant to the WA context, and provide a conceptual framework informing the business audit, survey and interview processes. The remainder of this section outlines the definition and conceptual framework that emerged.

Agritourism is considered a subset of rural tourism (Paresishvili et al., 2017), but there are considerable definitional variations as to what constitutes an agritourism experience (Phillip et al., 2010; Flanigan et al., 2014; Eshun and Tettey, 2014; Gil Arroyo et al., 2013). Many of these definitions were found to be limited to broad descriptors of tourism in regional or rural settings. For example, ‘agritourism serves as a supplemental source of income or a lower-risk coping mechanism, while agricultural production remains the primary focus’ (Tew and Barbieri, 2012, p. 216) and ‘agritourism is considered to be a kind of farm diversification which can be developed as a supplementary activity to agriculture’ (Srisomyong and Meyer, 2015, p. 95). These definitions were non-specific and did not allow for agritourism to be differentiated from other types of tourism. There were other definitions of agritourism which also identified more specific market elements such as, activity type, proximity to farm activity, producer/visitor relationships, and economic and social outputs. For example, ‘farming-related activities carried out on a working farm or other agricultural settings for entertainment or education purposes’ and ‘agritourism principally represents an agricultural phenomenon with the on-farm organisation of an authentic touristic offer as a subsidiary activity’ (Streifeneder, 2016, p. 262). Such definitions were more useful in that they detailed the actual activities or experiences associated with agritourism.

These variations in definition make it difficult to provide a single holistic conceptual understanding of agritourism given the political and cultural implications associated with adopting one approach. Furthermore, lack of a clear framework for identifying what constitutes an agribusiness would likely create ‘confusion and lessen its appeal among consumers, further hindering communication and collaboration among stakeholders’ (Gil Arroyo et al., 2013, p. 39). To this end, a clear and coherent definition was developed to guide and frame this research specifically within the WA context (see below).

A number of common attributes are central to the concept of agritourism and include: a working farm, farm diversification, supplementary income, education, and authenticity in experience. The most frequent attributes found in the literature were a working farm or agricultural setting coupled with an invitation by the producer to participate in related activities (Phillip et al., 2010; Gil Arroyo et al., 2013; Barbieri and Mshenga, 2008; Srisomyong
et al., 2015). Activities involving visitors appeared supplementary to agricultural production, and instead were considered in the literature as farm diversification and added income strategy (Phillip et al., 2010; Northcote and Alonso, 2011; Tew et al., 2012; Zasada and Piorr, 2015). As such, we established the following definition to embody the agritourism experience specific to the WA context.

**AGRITOURISM** is an activity that can supplement agricultural production where tourists are guests participating in educational and interactive experiences which promote farm produce and regional lifestyles.

Our definition of agritourism reflects the complexities found within the literature, given the wide variety of agritourism activities and constituent elements identified. This includes, but are not limited to: education, interaction with producers and agricultural products, provision of value-add products or farm operations, and authenticity of experience (Phillip et al., 2010; Gil Arroyo et al., 2013). Indeed, there have been several attempts to create a typology of agritourism (cf. Phillip et al., 2010; Gil Arroyo et al., 2013; Flanigan et al., 2014) by describing different elements or layers of experience. For example, Phillip et al. (2010) and Flanigan et al. (2014) classified the working farm based on levels of interaction or contact with agriculture, and authenticity of the agricultural experience. In addition, Gil Arroyo et al. (2013) focussed on understanding provider and visitor preferences and found that both associated agritourism with an agricultural setting, entertainment and farm, but that producers felt that the additional element of education was also important.

Indeed, agritourism can be viewed as a socially and culturally embedded experience with contributions from providers, visitors and broader society (Phillip et al., 2010; Tew et al., 2012). Flanigan et al. (2015) identified agritourism as having ‘wider public benefits’ than just financial returns ‘such as public education about food and farming’ (Flanigan et al., 2015, p. 129). It is not surprising then that numerous scholars have examined agritourisms’ role in civic education, specifically in terms of food awareness and farming (e.g., Phillip et al., 2010; Gil Arroyo et al., 2013; Flannigan et al., 2015; Flanigan et al., 2014). Further, the benefits accrued are not limited to the individual’s involved in a specific activity or experience, but extend to the rural areas in which agritourism operates as it encourages sustainability (Flannigan et al., 2015) and enhances a sense of community and community wellbeing (Naidoo and Sharpley, 2016).

Based on the WA-specific definition of agritourism, a conceptual framework was developed by drawing on agritourisms’ common attributes as well as the social and cultural experiences shared by providers, visitors and broader society. Illustrated in Figure 2, three key elements are essential to the provider and visitor relationship. First, agritourism offers an exchange between providers and visitors. For example, providers give visitors opportunities to come to a farm and stay (if onsite accommodation is provided), interact with farm animals, engage in agricultural activities and learn about agricultural production and regional lifestyles (Phillip et al., 2010; Tew et al., 2012). In exchange, visitors give providers a supplementary income and business promotion, through word-of-mouth, social media reviews and interpersonal interactions (Phillip et al., 2010; Tew et al., 2012).
Secondly, the interaction allows **social bonds to develop** as visitors learn about where food comes from, as well as the processes and challenges involved in food and agricultural production (Tew et al., 2012; Talbot, 2013; Flanigan et al., 2014). These interactions also allow visitors to learn about producer motivations in choosing a farming and/or rural lifestyle. Visitors can then develop an appreciation for alternative livelihoods and regional lifestyles, during the process of having a hands-on authentic experience in an agricultural setting (Flannigan et al., 2015). Producer agritourism experiences generate opportunities to engage in alternative livelihoods to traditional farming, which value-add to their core business. It also gives producers’ opportunities to interact with visitors and share their products. This may provide them with a greater sense of purpose and pride as visitors enjoy their farm and other offerings. This in turn can enhance an agritourism providers’ quality of life, as well as strengthen their connection to the land and region (Tew et al., 2012).

Finally, the shared provider/visitor outcomes of the agritourism experience connects the experiences of providers and visitors to higher-level positive and/or negative outcomes. This essentially **creates a community of provider-visitor regional experiences**. While provider and visitor experiences originate from individual exchanges, they collectively develop into and represent shared outcomes. For example, positive provider-visitor experiences can generate a shared sense of community and interpersonal connection as they learn about each other’s lives. These exchanges can also grow into a greater connection to the local products of a particular region, or into shared visions for greater sustainability and environmental awareness in regional areas.

An agritourism-based interaction or activity may provide a layering of experiences as identified by Phillip et al. (2010) and Flanigan et al. (2014). Five layers were identified as important to the Southwest WA agritourism context, as outlined in Table 3 (also see the typology of agritourism experiences in Appendix 2). These include **learning, interaction, authenticity, location and length of stay**. That is, experiences may occur on **location**, perhaps over a **period of time**, and include different **learnings** (Streifeneder, 2016; Phillip et al., 2010; Gil Arroyo et al., 2013; Flanigan et al., 2014, 2015) and **interactions** with varying degrees of **authenticity** (Phillip et al., 2010; Gil Arroyo et al., 2013). However, a fundamental element of an agritourism experience appears to relate generally to the context of a working farm that produces agricultural products (Phillip et al., 2010; Barbieri and Mshenga, 2008; Gil Arroyo et al., 2013; Srisomyong et al., 2015; Streifeneder, 2016). As noted by Flanigan et al. (2014): ‘**agritourism is predominately based on working farms, but there are also circumstances where products based on off-farm locations could be defined as agritourism**’ (p. 401). For example, off-farm experiences may include market stalls or agricultural demonstrations. While variation exists between individual providers, agritourism is offered to visitors during day visits and/or as overnight experiences through the provision of farm stay accommodation (Phillip et al., 2010; Flanigan et al., 2014).

To assess WA agritourism experiences, each ‘experience layer’ was sub-divided into ‘segments’ to further differentiate the experiences of agritourism activities (Table 3). These segments align with agritourism experiences identified within the wide body of literature on the topic (Gil Arroyo et al., 2013; Barbieri and Mshenga, 2008; Flanigan et al., 2015; Flanigan et al., 2014; Phillip et al., 2010; Valdivia and Barbieri, 2014; Srisomyong et al., 2015; Streifeneder, 2016). The **agritourism experience layers** (learning, interaction, authenticity, location and length of stay) and respective segments, were used in this research to develop a typology of agritourism experiences for Southwest WA (See Appendix 2). The typology was then developed into a tool
to assess the experience provided by each agritourism offering found across the region. A description of the analytic tools, and associated findings are reported in the following sections.

**Table 3. Agritourism layers of experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience layer</th>
<th>Layer description</th>
<th>Experience layer segments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>The nature of the educational experience provided and how it is delivered</td>
<td>Formal presentation (lecture style)&lt;br&gt;Instructional (interactive) – One off session&lt;br&gt;Instructional (interactive) – Program of study&lt;br&gt;Self-guided learning (sign posted/AR informative tours)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>What will I learn and how?</em></td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>How visitors are involved in the experience</td>
<td>Full emersion (a day in the life)&lt;br&gt;Practical/physical tasks (pick strawberries/feed animals/make soap from produce)&lt;br&gt;Observation of tasks&lt;br&gt;Self-guided involvement (bush walking or bike riding on farm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>What type of involvement and engagement will be required?</em></td>
<td>Not applicable (no coordinated activities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>Will visitor experiences reflect actual agricultural activities carried out on the property</td>
<td>Actual working farm activities&lt;br&gt;Staged working farm activities&lt;br&gt;Sales or non-farm activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>How staged is the experience?</em></td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>The location of experience/activities</td>
<td>On-farm&lt;br&gt;Off-farm&lt;br&gt;In-situ (on-farm activities which are separate to agricultural operations)&lt;br&gt;Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Where is the experience?</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Stay</td>
<td>The availability of on-site accommodation</td>
<td>Overnight or extended visits&lt;br&gt;Day visit&lt;br&gt;Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Agritourism providers offer visitors

- Accommodation / Relaxation / Adventure
- Authentic and Staged Farm Activities
  Education / Animals / Produce
- Knowledge of Agricultural Production,
  Produce and Regional Lifestyles

Agritourism visitors offer providers

- Income
- Promotion / Social Media Review
- Interpersonal Interactions

Shared Outcomes:

Provider Experiences:
- Share / Hear Stories
- Connectedness to the Region
- Enhanced Quality of Life
- Maintain a Regional Lifestyle
- Personal Satisfaction of Sharing Produce
- Sense of Purpose

Visitor Experiences:
- Sense of Global and Locally-Connected Community
- Interpersonal Connections
- Personal Development and Growth
- Knowledge of Lived Experiences
- Connection to Regional Produce
- Regional Sustainability
- Share / Hear Stories
- Appreciation of Regional Life
- Appreciation of the Challenges for Producers
- Experience Fresh and New Produce and Products
- Exposure to Alternate Livelihoods

Figure 2. Conceptual framework of the agritourism provider/visitor relationship
4 Profiling agritourism businesses in Southwest WA

The following section unpacks the three methods used in this research to examine the WA agritourism sector and presents general findings from the subsequent analysis of each method. These include:

1. **Social Media Assessment** to understand how agritourism businesses engaged in attracting visitors;
2. **Business Audit** to assess the websites of all agritourism businesses in Southwest WA.
3. **Survey Instrument** to provide general agritourism information on a large number of businesses.

4.1 Social media assessment

A social media assessment was undertaken to identify the level to which agritourism providers in Southwest WA engage with various Social Media outlets to promote their agritourism experiences. This assessment involved a systematic internet based search of the 94 agritourism providers that were identified via the website business audit. Figure 3 shows results for these agritourism providers, as well as those found not to provide agritourism of the initial 244 businesses audited. The range of social media platforms used include: Facebook, Trip Advisor, Instagram, Youtube, Twitter and LinkedIn. Agritourism providers were found to be highly engaged with social media, with 62% of the 94 providers having a presence on at least one platform (Figure 3).

Facebook was the most popular social media platform for providers (50%), followed by Trip Advisor and Instagram with 29% and 14% respectively (Figure 3). The least popular Social Media outlets were YouTube (10%), Twitter (4%) and LinkedIn (3%). The online survey and interviews supported these findings with Facebook and Instagram used daily or weekly to post new or revised content. While Facebook was the dominant social media platform, the provider interviews identified that TripAdvisor was a popular social media platform for providers who offer accommodation when compared to those that do not, in which case Instagram was often used by providers catering for day visits.

While 38% of providers did not use any of the assessed social media platforms, 27% of providers used just one platform (usually Facebook). 20% used two platforms (usually Facebook and Trip Advisor) however, some opted for a Facebook-Instagram combination (see Figure 3 inset). 15% of providers used three platforms, usually Facebook and a combination of two other platforms including Trip Advisor, Youtube and/or Instagram. As one agritourism provider noted:

> ‘How the agritourism side of the business developed was I don’t really have that much time. People were pushing their photos and experiences, and publishing it on Facebook maybe five years ago. My daughter said to me that we really need to get a Facebook page for the farm’ (Interviewee 1)
Figure 3. Social media presence and number of platforms used (insert)
4.2 Business audit tool

A Business Audit based on the five experience layers identified in Table 4 was developed to assess the layers of experience provided by each agritourism business identified in Southwest WA. The audit initially evaluated each business’ website to ascertain whether each engaged in agriculture and tourism activities. All other web-based business information was excluded, such as social media and online forums (i.e., Facebook, Instagram and TripAdvisor) as well as accommodation booking websites (i.e., www.airbnb.com.au, www.stayz.com.au/ and www.bookings.com.au). Websites with no information on either agricultural or tourist activities were excluded from the audit, as they were deemed not to be agritourism business.

Of the 293 businesses originally identified, 244 were deemed suitable for audit as they had operational websites, were not vineyards, and were within the projects’ geographic scope. Of these, 94 businesses were identified as agritourism providers as they met the ‘working farm’ criteria of our definition of an agritourism business. Activities on the websites of these 94 businesses were systematically assessed against each experience layer, with summary information on the experience and type of activity on offer recorded. An iterative approach was taken during the audit process. First, the audit tool was trialled on ten randomly selected businesses. Appendix 3 provides the sample results for three of these businesses. As a result, the audit tool was refined primarily in how the accommodation provision was interpreted and expansion of the learning layer to distinguish between ‘one-off instruction’ and a ‘program of study’ with repeat visits. Then, after refinement, all agribusiness websites were assessed by one researcher to ensure consistency.

Table 4 provides a summary of audit results. In general, agritourism provider websites’ showed that a single provider offered multiple activities. Further, the audit found some providers offered multiple activities within the same experience layer segment. Agritourism experiences were likely to involve instructional one-off learnings (64%) as well as a mix of interactive activities such as self-guided (79%) or practical/physical (76%) tasks and sales/non-farm activities (60%) or staged working farm activity (61%) experiences. Agritourism experiences were also most likely to be on-farm (98%) with options for overnight (57%) and/or day (65%) visits.
### Table 4. Agritourism business audit results (number and percent of providers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Layer</th>
<th>Layer Description</th>
<th>Experience Layer Segments</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning</strong></td>
<td>The nature of the educational experience provided and how it is delivered</td>
<td>Formal presentation (lecture style)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instructional (interactive) – One off session</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instructional (interactive) – Program of study</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self-guided learning (sign posted/AR informative tours)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>What will I learn and how?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction</strong></td>
<td>How visitors are involved in the experience</td>
<td>Full emersion (a day in the life)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Practical/physical tasks (pick strawberries/feed animals/make soap from produce)</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Observation of tasks</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self-guided involvement (bush walking or bike riding on farm)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not applicable (no coordinated activities)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authenticity</strong></td>
<td>Will visitor experiences reflect actual agricultural activities carried out on the property</td>
<td>Actual working farm activities</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Staged working farm activities</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sales or non-farm activities</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>How staged is the experience?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>The location of experience/activities</td>
<td>On-farm</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Off-farm</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In-situ (on-farm activities which are separate to agricultural operations)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of Stay</strong></td>
<td>The availability of on-site accommodation</td>
<td>Overnight or extended visits</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Day visit</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: The percentage values do not tally to 100% as they reflect multiple responses.

### 4.3 Online survey instrument

An online survey was conducted to further understand the agritourism experiences provided by businesses in Southwest WA, and to assess the cogency of experience layers used within the audit tool. Survey questions explored the fundamental characteristics and experiential elements of agritourism offerings, and included general questions to profile visitors and businesses (e.g., visitor numbers, time of day and day of week; number of employees, main agricultural product and agritourism offering). Appendix 4 provides an example of the survey instrument administered using Qualtrics Survey Software during the months of October to November 2019.
Businesses (participant) were first invited through an email including an embedded personalised link for data matching. These were sent in three batches to minimise the impact of potential technical difficulties relating to survey software and questionnaire design. Three reminder emails were sent to non-respondents (see Appendix 5 for distribution dates). Ten businesses opted out of the survey. Fifty-one of 243 businesses responded, resulting in a response rate of 20.9%. Of the 51 respondents, 40 completed the survey and 11 submitted incomplete surveys.

Of the 40 completed surveys, 25 (62.5%) self-identified as engaging in agritourism activities and 15 (37.5%) responded that they did not. Of the 25 agritourism survey respondents, 24 were business owners and one was a farm manager. Most had operated their agricultural business for a considerable time, with 18 (27%) stating more than 15 years, five (20%) for 10 to 15 years and two (8%) less than 6 years. Two noted they did not reside on the farm associated with their agritourism offering.

When asked to identify the ‘agricultural’ product associated with their agritourism offering, there were a variety of responses - including non-agricultural products (such as small wood products, dog breeding and a generic reference to tourism). Table 5 categorises provider responses into 12 categories of products or services. Most providers cited agritourism experiences associated with cattle, beef, sheep, or hay – with four of the six providers noting some combination of these.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agricultural product</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cattle/beef/sheep/hay</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chestnuts/persimmon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avocados</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy/Cheese</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olives</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trout/marron/yabbies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apples</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truffles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small wood products</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breeder (miniature horses and dogs)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 The Agritourism experience - producers and visitors

In addition to the social media assessment, business audit and on-line survey, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with a shortlist of agritourism providers self-identified through the on-line survey. Interviewees represented a cross-section of agritourism providers. The criteria used to select businesses focussed on: type of core agricultural product; income source; length of time as an agritourism provider; availability of overnight and day experiences; number of employees; and, intentions to expand agritourism activities. In total, 12 businesses were invited to participate in a one-hour telephone interview, of which 10 businesses agreed (Figure 4). Interviews were conducted from December 2019 to January 2020.

The interviews sought to understand how businesses promote their agritourism experience and how they benefit from providing the experience. Interview results were also used to validate the applicability of the conceptual framework (Figure 2) and experience layers (Table 3) for the Southwest WA context. Appendix 6 provides an overview of the survey instrument and Appendix 7 a list of interviewed businesses. Each interview was recorded, and coded for further analysis. Findings from the interviewees are presented below; italics are used to indicate interviewees own words, which are included in this report to give depth and texture to the story of agritourism in Southwest WA.

Findings highlighted the importance of a shared experience as well as a range of benefits extending beyond financial gain. These will be discussed in depth in this section, but was best exemplified by one comment regarding the tangible and intangible aspects of agritourism:

‘Personally, there’s the tangible and intangible. [Visitors] pay for the apples they take, which is nice. The farm has a bit of income, [which is] put in with the market income and that really helps. But the intangible is a way of giving back. I realize I am very fortunate to have the amount of land that I have - and it’s just a pleasure to educate people and show them what we do ... allow them to feel the wonder of nature and how things grow’ (Interviewee 1)

The remainder of this section documents interview findings and discusses the agritourism experience in the context of the three components of the conceptual framework identified in Section 2. That is, what is offered, experienced, and shared as outcomes from the perspective of the agritourism providers interviewed.
Figure 4. Distribution of interviewee businesses
5.1 Provider offerings and experiences to Visitors

This section presents interview results highlighting what providers felt they offered to agritourism visitors. In general, interviewees communicated a wide range of opportunities for visitors to engage with agricultural related activities and produce. This included petting and feeding farm animals, milking goats, apple picking, truffle hunts, catching marron, olive oil tastings and tractor rides as well as a number of non-agricultural experiences and facilities (such as barbecues, mini golf, canoeing, painting classes and playgrounds). Overall, interviewees highlighted that they often focussed on niche and value-added products, which provided a competitive edge and point of difference in the southwest WA agritourism market. In doing so, providers cited competing on quality rather than quantity, stating there was limited advantage in providing goods at a low cost.

In terms of offerings, a number of interviewees commented that visitors, in the first instance, were exposed to educational experiences focusing on organic farm practices, sustainability, how food is grown and agricultural production processes. Several interviewees identified that they provided more structured and targeted learning on specific aspects of farm-life, such as backyard beekeeping and equestrian training. The provision of deeper learning by some providers meant visitors were given opportunities to acquire new skills, confidence and awareness of rural lifestyles and agriculture.

“They come away with a new skill, confidence about bees, more awareness of bees and pollinators in general” (Interviewee 8)

Most interviewees commented on the opportunity agritourism offered to visitors to purchase products made of local farm-grown produce. They felt that this meant agritourism providers also had a broader role to play in educating visitors about the quality of Australian products beyond their own offerings. Indeed, their efforts to grow and create high quality authentic products and experiences became a vehicle to educate visitors on the importance of supporting local produce and quality products over low quality and inexpensive alternatives. This included a better understanding of how the purchasing choices of visitors, when they returned home, impacts the sustainability of local farms and regional areas.

“One of the main things is promoting and talking about the purity and the goodness of good quality honey. If people are able to support local and support Australian products it will make a big difference. Educating people about the fake or not true products that are coming into Australia” (Interviewee 7)

Indeed, as one provider noted, there were two categories of agritourism visitors. Non-foodies who had very limited knowledge of quality produce, and foodies who were well educated and sought the best products. This difference can be linked to a lack of consumer discretion in buying, where purchasing choices are made solely on price. However, more recently, consumer choice was reported to be increasingly driven by a growing awareness of climate change and the health risks of low-quality foods.
The desire to provide quality products also extended to **flexible farm-stay accommodation**. Many noted that they provided for the complete range of visitor types, single visitors to couples to multi-generational family groups from overseas, and inter-state. Farm stay accommodation was found to also cater for business travellers including private sector consultants and public sector employees.

Providers noted that they aimed to promote the experiences they offered honestly and accurately. They felt this gave visitors the freedom to choose what suited them. In doing so, visitors are able to match experience expectations and needs to become more fulfilling for both visitors and providers. For example, the provision of an authentic farm stay experience was paramount for one interviewee:

> ‘[Visitors] get a true farm experience, they get an appreciation for the importance of agriculture to Western Australia. Particularly city people we like to educate them about the importance of agriculture. They get an experience of open space, they get an experience of the stars, they see production and they can taste the products. For our Sydneyites [of Asian heritage] that visited, I cooked up the yabbies and they sat in the sheering shed to eat the yabbies. They thought that was amazing’
> (Interviewee 10)

The provision of an **authentic experience of rural living and lifestyles** also appeared important for regional events. For example, one interviewee expressed disappointment on the promotion of local seafood at Albany’s Festival of the Sea: ‘there was alcohol, beer and wine and a little bit of food but very little seafood, yet that is what it was supposed to be about. We need to be careful to offer a really honest and complete experience’ (Interviewee 4). In the context of the farm, it appeared to be a key element of agritourism, with one interviewee noting:

> ‘It is just that pure buzz and satisfaction that we’ve looked after those trees, we have nurtured them, pruned them, and that has enabled us to produce quality extra virgin olive oil which people then come in a taste and give us that positive reinforcement and positive feedback that they have enjoyed. It’s that kind of connection that somebody is grateful for something that you have done that you have provide for them’ (Interviewee 9)

In addition to agricultural products and hands-on practical experiences, agritourism provider’s **offer access to physical space and natural landscapes** unlike the urban areas many Australian and international visitors are familiar with. One agritourism accommodation provider said ‘we will have [Australian] kids get out of the car and scream and run around screaming because they have never seen so much space’ (Interviewee 2). Agritourism providers appeared to have a strong sense of the importance of natural spaces and their unique position in being able to share them with visitors.
The provision of natural space was viewed as an opportunity for visitors to disconnect from day-to-day urban life both physically and electronically. As such, agritourism accommodation providers noted that they actively encouraged visitors to get outdoors and enjoy their properties or adjacent land on their own or as part of guided tours. Interviewees provided examples of the types of activities suggested, including bush walking, horse riding and mountain biking. Nonetheless, several commented that the open space, isolation, visibility of stars and lack of urban noises was daunting for some visitors, while others found it relaxing. As two separate interviewees noted:

‘... there are eight cottages and they are in a semi-circle. They look out over the farm and we advertise them as having uninterrupted views of the farm and generally people love that. They love the silence and the lack of light. We have had people from Asia who have been frighten because it is silent and there is not light. They are just not use to that. Generally people just love it’ (Interviewee 10)

‘That’s one of the fine lines that we walk is getting people to get away from... modern technology and to have a place of simplicity and have a break. The Asian tourists are very lost without it’ (Interviewee 2)

5.2 Provider perceptions of engaging with agritourism

This section unpacks provider perceptions concerning what engaging in agritourism has brought them and their wider communities. There were several aspects to this. Firstly, interviewees thought agritourism generated an array of individual professional development benefits, such as the procurement of new skills (in business and web development, internet sales and marketing) and in learning how to communicate a providers’ story to visitors. The latter was critical, and highlighted by one provider who saw his customers as future storytellers of his business and of regional WA:

‘As a business, number one is income. We do it to make a profit. As a business person, you wouldn’t go into agritourism if you didn’t make a profit. ... Number two is getting [visitors] on the farm allows us to tell [our] story. People buy stories, and when they go home you have them becoming your storyteller’ (Interviewee 6)
Secondly, as a source of **supplementary income** to farm core activities. Agritourism was found to provide farmers and their families’ with opportunities to diversify farming activities, while still contributing to the farm. However, lifestyle was still cited by most interviewees as the reason for providing agritourism activities, with profit making and wage recovery second. Engagement in agritourism appeared to lead providers to develop unique value-add products as it ‘[brought] people to farms and made farms a bit more productive’ (Interviewee 7). This was important to agricultural providers because of the variability of rain and other ‘seasonal factors, agritourism encourages people to visit farms and spend money and provide extra income to help [farm families] survive’ (Interviewee 7). Further, several providers also highlighted that running a big property was physically demanding, particularly in the case of older interviewees. Nonetheless, they found that agritourism gave them an opportunity to appreciate their own lives and work. As one noted, ‘when we have guests who really appreciate what we do and what we have built and we know that they have learnt stuff - that’s when we realize why we are doing this’ (Interviewee 5).

For day visit providers, the survey indicated that income from agritourism was generally not the main source and accounted for between 1% and 30% of their total income. However, given that agricultural production and agritourism were frequently inter-linked, it was not easy to define income sources precisely. Yet, one interviewee highlighted how the additional income afforded by agritourism was helpful in maintaining a desired lifestyle.

> ‘It has also been a good source of a small amount of income which has meant that I haven’t had to go back to employment with anybody else. My children are both at school now but it will mean for me at this stage that I won’t have to go and seek employment elsewhere so I get to manage my time myself’ (Interviewee 8)

Providers catering only for overnight visits were more likely to receive a larger share of their income from agritourism activities - approximately 60% to 70%. This may be because accommodation providers were not as involved in the day-to-day management of farming activities. One accommodation provider stated that farm work was the responsibility of others; which in this case was other family members.

> ‘For us it’s our only income. This is not a side hustle ... when we have had no guests for three weeks means we have had no income for three weeks’ (Interviewee 5)

In several instance, agritourism activities were coupled with alternative farming activities such as share-farming (i.e. an approach where one person owns the land and another farms it). One York-based share-farmer grows crops on several small farms in the area. As there are large numbers of small land holdings of less than 600 acres around York, single farm activities can be unprofitable given the expense of farm machinery. As one respondent described:

> ‘We own the land and the share-farmer puts in the crops, he puts in all of the labour and all of the cost, he seeds it, fertilizes it, he does the firebreaks around it, he monitors it, harvests it and takes it off the property. He leaves us 15% of what he take off the property...This year we got 600 bales’ (Interviewee 5)
Thirdly, interviewees demonstrated that visitors were a means to enhancing and strengthening interpersonal connections across regional communities as a whole. To this end, providers highlighted that they had spent time exploring how to value add to their agricultural produce through the production of cheeses, jam, honeycomb, sweet chestnuts and chestnut ham. Several providers expressed that exposing visitors to, and educating them about, agriculture in the Southwest was something they were responsible for even if it wasn’t profitable. Through these interactions, as well as those with other agritourism providers, interviewees felt they had become more connected to their regional community and less isolated. As one interviewee noted, he had ‘become more involved in my community even though I’ve lived here for forever - I now know a lot more people now that I wouldn’t have otherwise met’ (Interviewee 8).

Visitors then afforded agritourism providers a reason for ‘maintain[ing] the place [in a manner] which is consistent with having guest come’ (Interviewee 3), thereby contributing to overall regional pride of place and community. Interactions with visitors were also an important element for otherwise isolated providers, which in turn, bolsters regional communities given isolation as a key challenge across much of regional Australia. Such interactions also allowed providers to keep informed of trending topics, an example given by one provider was the growing awareness of food miles and buying local. These interactions allowed providers to work on solutions to address how these issues and challenges might impact the perception and sale of their own product offering in ‘anticipation of some of the wider community questions’ (Interviewee 3). And, as another interviewee noted:

> ‘Because you are more isolated you make more of an effort to have that kind of community spirit, and community feel. … We have quite a lot of regular customers’
> (Interviewee 9)

Interviewees also saw these interactions with outsiders as a means to promote individual agritourism providers and the region more broadly. The experiences of visitors was understood by tourism operators through the posts and blogs of visitors on various social media forums. The agritourism providers interviewed were in general positive towards visitor feedback on social media as a form of promotion. One interviewee did see social media as a distraction to core business and points to how providing an agritourism experience requires a diversity of tasks and engaging with social media was an opportunity cost to being effective in the core business.

> ‘...it takes you away from core business and our core business is developing amazing products and providing the best experience and if we spend all of our time on facebook trying to satisfy some grumpy person that really just has an opinion, we are not doing our core business’
> (Interviewee 4)

However, on-line activity was also seen by providers as a valuable avenue for promoting the agritourism experiences which extends traditional word-of-mouth recommendations. Providers expressed the importance of receiving this type of visitor feedback. As one interviewee noted, it was ‘helpful to received feedback on the uniqueness of your business... it makes you a bit house proud about what you do and when people come in’ (Interviewee 3) and it is a ‘great boost that our products are well loved’ (Interviewee 9). The importance of this was highlighted by one provider who stated that creating the visitor experience was key as each
Food trails were identified by providers as critical to developing and promoting agritourism as well as the surrounding region, as they increased awareness of local products and services in both visitors and providers beyond the well-known wine and wineries. Most providers believed food trails were a tool in growing visitor numbers as they prolonged the time spent in a region through the ‘suggestion’ to visit local agritourism businesses, cafes, restaurants and unique shops. However, providers felt the most effective way to attract tourists was to have a key destination draw-card included in a food and tourism trail. For example, Pemberton Tree Top Walk could help promote local businesses if it were packaged alongside tour itineraries that including niche agritourism offerings.

Agritourism appeared to also place providers in a position which challenged farming traditions and/or personal ideologies, such as the ‘vegan movement’ which rejects animal-based foods. Indeed, one interviewee who operates farm stays on a beef farm advised that ‘animal welfare is really important, but being vegan isn’t the answer to environmental problems’ (Interviewee 2). This interviewee added:

‘You look at the Southwest which is beef country and the health of the land here compared to the Wheatbelt and all the clearing associated with large scale monoculture cropping. ... Getting people onto the land to see how it works is really important. Meat production does not have to be degrading to the land but there is room for improvement’ (Interviewee 2)

One interviewee expressed concern over the ‘anti‐animal brigade – vegans, plant based cell factories, animal based cell factories, urban farming, climate change, glyphosate, GMO’ and the potential impact on the broader agricultural industry (Interviewee 6). They noted making an effort to find out individual visitor interests, so as to tailor the experiences provided. They reported taking vegan visitors on a different journey than meat-eating visitors. Another interviewee commented that it was not ‘helpful to make people feel guilty every time they eat’ (Interviewee 2), and another that being involved in lamb or beef production ‘opened you up to a whole lot of grief [even though you were] a perfectly good legal citizen’ (Interviewee 3).

Finally, it was felt that agritourism raised the profile of regional challenges to a State and national level by hosting ministerial events and committee members. For example, as one interviewee noted on the lack of telecommunications in regional areas of Western Australia:

‘We got the Minister for Telecommunications out here, Minister Fifield, a couple of years ago. I spoke at an event and spoke about telecommunications being our major thing. They thought it was a really good idea to have a conference out in the...’
Agritourism in Southwest Western Australia

Rebecca Holliday, Kirsten Martinus, Bryan Boruff

5.3 Agritourism provider perceptions of visitor experiences

Given that visitors were not interviewed as part of this project, agritourism provider’s comments were used to explore how they perceived visitor agritourism experiences. The majority of visitor experiences recounted by providers appeared to relate to the differences in how providers and visitors viewed their interactions. From a provider’s perspective, agritourism was a tool to get the visitors to buy a product:

‘Our objective at the end of the journey is that they are going to buy a range of chestnut products. Their perception is, and I don’t mean this in a wrong way, that we are providing experiences’ (Interviewee 6)

However, visitors often viewed the experience itself as central to their interaction with the provider.

Interviewees also noted that, telling the producer or provider’s story of how they became involved in agriculture and agritourism, the challenges faced and hurdles overcome, is a central component of the experience sought by visitors. Providers advised that by telling their story, visitors learned about agriculture, where food comes from and developed an appreciation for regional lifestyles. Interestingly, the importance of providers’ stories is not discussed within the literature and therefore a unique contribution to understanding the visitor experiences.

‘People love that story, they love the information we can give them in what we do and how we do it’ (Interviewee 7)

The providers’ story, interactions with agriculture and product sampling were seen by the agritourism provider as vehicles to engage visitors, to give ‘greater awareness, knowledge and first-hand experience (Interviewee 9)’ of ‘Southwest agriculture when [in fact] they have very little knowledge about it’ (Interviewee 6). They allowed visitors to learn about agriculture and ‘that food is not created in the back room in Coles. [That] it has a history and has lived somewhere before it came to the shop’ (Interviewee 1). The providers felt that visitors were better able to develop an appreciation for the food production process, the farmers and the challenges faced. In this way, the agritourism experience was seen to connect visitors to food and the communities that produce it. As one interviewee summarised:

‘I think the world is starved of realism around where its food comes’

‘So just talking to people and let them know that there are some people in the world where this is part of our lives, it’s not something you saw at 110km off the side of the freeway. It’s actually a fundamental part of people’s lives’ (Interviewee 3)
Producers felt that through agritourism experiences, visitors were able to understand fresh quality food and value-added products in a local farming context which exposed them to processes of growing and harvesting. In additional, they could gain first-hand knowledge of organic and sustainable agricultural practices and farm management techniques. Being able to purchase the products they sampled, meant visitors could continue their experience off the farm and share the providers’ story with others. Agritourism experiences then provided visitors with a means by which to make better and more informed choices on how they eat, alongside growing the customer base of the provider within the visitor’s home communities.

Providers noted that the visitor’s agritourism experiences were often not limited to one provider, but comprised of the many different experiences a region offers across one or more days. Often they were self-drive experiences shared with family and/or friends, with experiences informed by visitor research, farm trail pamphlets (electronic and printed), provider recommendations, and sometimes visitor centres. While some farm trails listed wineries, agritourism provides exciting and novel alternative experiences alongside iconic attractions like the Tree Top Walk, Wave Rock or artwork painted on wheat silos. Indeed, a Manjimup-based provider reported that some visitors struggled finding things to do if they were in Manjimup for more than a few days. They suggested that an iconic tourism attraction capitalising on the ‘massive trees and forests’ for domestic and international tour groups, couples and families would retain visitors longer (Interviewee 3).

‘Talking to a lot of Singaporeans they love the idea of driving down to Margaret River for a week and then getting a hire car and driving around the rest of the Southwest for a week. They love the idea of exploring the little nooks and crannies. It’s a really alien world for them. It’s winter time usually when I see them [in Manjimup], so they see the green grass and all the other things. The biggest feedback from [these visitors] is there is just not quite enough to do. Accommodation providers [in Manjimup] say that if people are here for two days there’s things to do, but they struggle if they are here for four’ (Interviewee 3)

Indeed, providers thought agritourism gave visitors from the city a break from their urban lifestyles. As one operator noted: visitors are in ‘open space’ and experience ‘great wonder and delight to see something that you’ve seen all your life but suddenly to see it in its own environment. It’s like if you have only ever been in a swimming pool then you suddenly saw the sea’ (Interviewee 1). Visitors choosing to stay in farm stay accommodation were viewed as having more time to relax and disconnect from their daily lives. This included experiencing the stars at night, getting involved in animal feeding during the day and touring the farm on their own time.

Further, as not all farm stays provide meals, there is an economic spill-over to the surrounding areas as visitors go to local restaurants, cafes and pubs. This broader regional engagement by visitors was seen to increase the socio-economic vibrancy of an entire region, which in turn enhanced a visitors’ experience. However, one provider highlighted their own limitations in knowing how to advise visitors on how best to engage with the agritourism experience:
The international visitors in particular ask what activities do we have, and we don’t have many activities. A lot of people have a misconception of what can be done on a farm on a daily basis’ (Interviewee 5)

The differences between international visitors and domestic ones was highlighted by the statement:

‘People from Singapore don’t have holidays, they have experiences. They do this in the morning and this in the afternoon, and they are going to this restaurant and they are going to watch that, and they’ll see the dolphins. You know it is all written out just the same as a school holiday plan’ (Interviewee 1)

Further, Interviewee 3 noted that many visitors of Filipino, Sri Lankan, Indian, Malaysian or South East Asia origin, but residing in Australia, were ‘two generations away from the farm’ but felt that such visitors still had a deep attachment to being on a farm, such that agritourism provided them with a sense of family connection.

‘They all want to come to the farm because they have a little feeling still in the back of their minds that the farm is like their ancestral home. I think they like to come to just a normal farm. To be honest, we are nothing more than just a little farm - but they feel it is homely, they feel ok. I am quite old now, so they kind of feel like this is their grandparents’ home’ (Interviewee 3)

One interviewee who came from the UK with her husband approximately six years ago felt WA agritourism experiences were unique as visitors developed a ‘greater awareness, knowledge and [and have a] first-hand experience which is not something you can really do in the UK. I’ve been to Italy and France … and I never really felt anything similar as to what you can engage with in Margaret River’ (Interviewee 4).

As such, it became apparent from the interviews that providers themselves needed to be better versed in the experiences of their surrounding region, as well as the different expectations of the various visitors they cater too, as such information was critical in creating meaningful visitor experiences and encouraging return visits. Indeed, as noted by a provider who worked at the Demark Tourist Bureau, when Denmark won the ‘inaugural top tourist town award’ (Interviewee 4), there was a recognition by local providers that tourists did not want:

‘...to be treated as tourists. They want to be treated as people. Our experience is that you treat everybody the same. That speaks also for a whole region, or a town, or a city that they come from. When you start to treat yourself as a tourist town rather than a town for your people and those that live there, you start to change things and it’s not always for the best’ (Interviewee 4)

5.4 Shared outcomes

This section explores the shared outcomes from the agritourism experience documented by the interviewees which emerged from interactions between visitors, providers and their
families, and regional communities. Providers felt a mutual learning occurred where they and their visitors learned about each other’s lifestyles creating a **knowledge of lived experiences**. This would not be possible without emersion in the experience by the visitor – many of whom come from metropolitan cities and know little about regional life. Further, in conversing with visitors, providers gain insights into the different cultures and lived experiences of those from overseas as well as those from the city. This in turn, leads to new and enhanced connections as the provider-visitor interaction **generates a wider sense of global-local connectivity** extending from the provider’s home to the visitor’s.

An interesting shared outcome emerging from the interview findings was **mutual personal development and growth** of both providers and visitors. Interviewees reported that the high engagement of the agritourism experience pushed both providers and visitors into unfamiliar spaces which was sometime challenging, but resulted in personal growth and development. For example, this may have meant overcoming personal challenges in visiting new places or learning how to ‘sell’ or develop self-confidence to interact with unfamiliar people. One provider said she suffered anxiety before teaching beekeeping classes, reflecting ‘it’s been good for me growing like that and knowing that I can actually do this and people are interested’ (Interviewee 8). This provider also noted that they had seen ‘a lot of [visitors] leave with [greater] confidence knowing that they can set up their own beehive in their backyard. A lot of people walk away from their hive inspections and say ‘wow that was so much calmer than what I thought it would be’’ (Interviewee 8).

Agritourism was seen as a platform for **developing stronger interpersonal connections** between individual providers and visitors, as well as within regional communities and between regional communities and visitor home towns. As one interviewee observed: ‘**new friendships form between different local people**’ as the common interest of growing businesses and creating a stronger regional agritourism experience meant ‘**[local providers will] walk away with each other’s number and support each other**’ (Interviewee 8).

In addition, providers felt that overcoming the isolation of living in regional communities was a key driver in why there was ‘**more effort made to [generate strong] community spirit, and community feel**’ by engaging with visitors, particularly local ones, as well as other producers and community members (Interviewee 9). As one recounted:

> ‘I do get a lot of fulfilment from it. When you’re a farmer, and even though I am only a small farm and not that far away - not like the wheat farmers - you still live a very isolated life. It is nice to have people to talk to and explain what you’re doing - tell them what you do wrong and what you do right. Everyone’s very appreciative, there’s something there to make people feel a part of our community. It’s very fulfilling’ (Interviewee 1)

Education emerged as a key theme in the interviews, with the provider’s story being a critical means by which to raise awareness on issues related to the environment and **regional sustainability**. This included a **connection to regional produce** as providers impress on visitors the importance of buying local produce, the links between healthy high quality food and healthy lifestyles, and the personal, environmental and production challenges of farmers. Some providers stated that they attended Land Care support training and other workshops to better equip themselves in how to impart the learning, practice and teaching of sustainable
farm practices and animal care. Indeed, the storytelling process was viewed as a key means by which visitors personally connect with regional produce and producers, as well as being informed of the global sustainability implications and personal health benefits gained through buying Western Australian. This was captured by one interviewee who said:

‘It’s nice to be able to open and broaden people’s awareness regarding what a farming lifestyle involves. The hard work - it’s not a nine to five job. I think people start to appreciate it a bit more. The [rise of particular] hash-tags - buy local, support local, plate-to-fork, or tree-to-fork - is indicative of this awareness.’
(Interviewee 9)

And for one interviewee commenting that Perth visitors...

‘Have bad diets, and don’t understand where their product comes from. Therefore, they may end up buying cheap overseas product, because of its price. As a farmer, our job is to promote premium products and say if you keep buying cheap product you are going to destroy the farming community, you are going to destroy your health, you’re going to destroy the planet and create other social issues’
(Interviewee 6)

Findings also highlighted negative shared experiences due to the ‘appalling’ regional telecommunications systems as it ‘effect[ed] tourism’ (Interviewee 10). Several Interviewees indicated it was difficult doing business without reliable internet and phone access, and that visitor experiences were also impacted if they couldn’t access telecommunications with non-Telstra devices. Indeed, providers noted that many visitors came to their region not realising that a Telstra connection was needed. One provider recalled having several families leave because of phone or internet access issues as their plans were on Optus and Vodafone. Some providers communicated that the sense of isolation from no phone or internet access was particularly bad for seniors and Asian visitors, with Europeans less effected (Interviewee 10).

As one provider offering health retreats and farm stay experiences noted, the Telstra mobile tower built 18 months prior had made a ‘huge difference because you can at least tell people you have Telstra reception and Wi-Fi at the office’ (Interviewee 2). Interestingly, the provider noted the paradox of needing to provide Wi-Fi in their chalets with the wish to ‘get people away from... modern technology and to have a place of simplicity and have a break’ (Interviewee two). The latter being critical for the provider, given their agritourism business was a self-discovery retreat for women to engage in ‘trauma work or healing work with emergency service personnel’. Part of the therapy was in reconnecting clients to nature, as the ‘simple lifestyle of farming... help[ed] to reset people’s nervous systems’ (Interviewee 2).
6 Agritourism experience layers

This following section discusses findings from the audit of Southwest WA agritourism businesses in the context of responses from provider interviews discussed above. Guided by the concept of a layered experience (Figure 5), agritourism offerings were assessed based on the depth and emersion provided to the visitor. In Figure 5, each circular band denotes one of the five experience layers (learning, interaction, authenticity, location and length of stay). Each layer is further segmented into sub-categories relevant to the layer. For example, the innermost grey band, the learning layer of experience, is segmented into five sub-types: formal presentation, instructional-one-off, instructional-program of study, self-guided and not applicable. The experience layers sub-categories have then been shaded according to the number of times provided by agritourism businesses as identified through the audit of businesses (Table 4). Shading was based on the number of times each sub-category was identified through the business audit with dark shading highlighting more frequent offerings and light shading representing less frequent offerings. For instance, the business audit identified that an instructional one-off agritourism learning experience was the most frequent offering by businesses, and is represented by dark grey shading. In contrast, the least frequent offering, learning experience, was self-guided learning, and is represented by light grey shading.

Many providers offer more than one sub-category within an experience layer. Indeed, each of the interaction, authenticity and length of stay experience layers have two sub-categories with relatively high frequency of offering compared to the remaining sub-categories. For example, 79% of providers offered self-guided involvement and 76% practical and/or physical tasks in the interactive experience layer, as denoted by the two darkest green segments. This indicates that both of these sub-categories are common for this experience layer. Only one sub-category was proportionally higher in both the learning and location experience layers. This indicates that these layer are dominated by the offering represented by only one sub-category. Figure 5 indicates that providers are more likely to offer instructional one-off learning (64%) compared to other learning sub-types, and interactive experiences that are either self-guided (79%) and/or practical/physical tasks (76%). Results of the audit indicate a mix of sales/non-farm (60%) and/or staged working farm (61%) experiences, with most occurring on-farm (98%) through a day visit (65%) and/or stay overnight (57%). Appendix 8 shows Figure 5 graphically.
Figure 5. Agritourism business audit findings – experience layers and sub-categories*

*percentages represent the ratio of providers (found as part of the business audit) offering in each sub-category for each particular experience layer to the total number of audited businesses. Experience layers are denoted in legend to the right, with each divided by equal length (as percentages may equal over 100% with businesses providing more than one layer).
6.1 Learning experience

Learning was identified by most interviewees as core to the agritourism experience, and is often delivered as formal sessions, and interactive (one-off or programs of study) or self-guided learning types. Each can be seen as providing different types of learning, with the majority focused on specific farm produce, value-add products and/or the processes involved in growing, harvesting and caring for or making the product. Interview findings indicated the shared provider-visitor learning experience extending beyond the actual product. According to the audit, just over two thirds of all agritourism offerings included an educational experience. One-off instructional sessions were a particularly frequent type of learning experience, including guided farm tours, agricultural demonstrations, tastings, animal grooming and feeding, truffle hunts and/or workshops. Workshops were often centred on farming-related activities which not only shared knowledge of regional practices, but practical skills or techniques which could be used when the visitor returned home. For example – beekeeping, fruit preserving, and organic or sustainable farm practices. A smaller proportion of learning experiences were considered ‘formal’ and organised over multiple visits, such as horseback riding and equestrian training.

As identified in Section 5, interviewees highlighted the importance of learning within an agritourism experience and similarly, 22 of the 25 (88%) survey responses from agritourism providers indicated that some form of education was provided to visitors. However, only one third of provider websites specifically mentioned education as part of the visitor experience. The audit revealed that whilst instructional (interactive) one-off sessions were the most commonly offered educational experience, followed closely by formal presentations, these offerings were not overtly communicated as an educational experience.

Box 2: Empowerment through learning

Pure and Local, a Yallingup home-based business, specialises in quality cut comb and other honey related products supplied to local cheeseries, wineries, and specialty shops throughout Southwest WA. Apiarist owner, Alyssa Clark, manages bee hives across a number of sites, provides hive consultancy services, and beekeeping classes to all ages. Starting four years ago, Pure and Local provided Alyssa with a ‘good source of a small amount of income’ when her children began school. Relearning beekeeping skills taught by a family member 10 years ago, adapting to the ‘physical work’ of beekeeping, and facing public speaking fears has been personally empowered, as she demonstrates to ‘others that this is something anyone can do with a few adjustments’.

‘...it has shown me I can do whatever I want’-

For the past three seasons, Alyssa has provided half-day beekeeping classes to people interested in setting up and manage their own backyard hives. Participants of these small interactive groups are exposed to the scientific and practical sides of beekeeping, ‘coming away with a new skill, confidence about bees, and more awareness of bees and pollinators’. Additionally, they have a ‘nice morning out’ and ‘connect [with other students] over a common interest’.

‘As a woman I love being able to teach people a new skills.’-
Alyssa also speaks to kindergarten and primary school students, reinforcing what teachers have been ‘explaining to them about pollination and where food comes from’ and the impact on children’s own health as they grow older. Alyssa’s children have their own beekeeping suits, and help her to demonstrate beekeeping to other children. Alyssa inspires ‘[children] that they can do anything’ by exposing them to a ‘unique occupation’, and giving them confidence to ‘get out of their comfort zone’.

Photo credit: Pure & Local (https://www.pureandlocal.net/)

6.2 Interactive experience

The agritourism business audit further revealed agritourism experiences were largely presented as structured learning tasks (as discussed above) and/or independent self-guided activities such as exploring the natural amenity of a farm property and adjacent lands, and/or using on farm facilities (farm shop, playground, swimming pool, barbeque, etc.). Each provides a different interactive experience, such as through the observation of agricultural practices (e.g., sheering, olive oil and chestnut processing, honey extraction, milking and cheese making) or on farming emersion activities (e.g., working holiday type arrangements involving visitors in daily farm operations). The audit found that many interactive experiences were offered seasonally, coinciding with specific farming activities offered at different times of the year.

According to the business survey, self-guided interactive activities were the most common way (79% of providers) that visitors experience a farm or farm based product. This was followed by practical and/or physical tasks (76% of providers) and observational experiences (16% of providers), and (32% of providers).

Box 3: A journey of interaction and engagement

The sweet chestnut trees at the Chestnut Brae Farm (https://www.chestnutbrae.com.au/) are well established having been planted some 40 years ago. When looking for a farm to purchase in 2013, John and Linda Stanley had strict criteria: ‘we must have mobile phone access, it must be three hours from the airport, it must have water all year round, it must be a crop that is harvestable in year one, and it must be a crop Australian’s don’t understand’. Armed with experience as authors of ‘Food Tourism – A Practical Marketing Guide’ and as agritourism industry consultants (John Stanley Associates) in 35 countries, John and Linda decision to grow an ‘odd’ crop was based on a desire to ‘own the category’ and operate separately to other farmers.

After several years getting the farm ‘back into shape’, John and Linda started developing their value-add product range as well as the export and agritourism side of the business. Their vision
was to move from selling just chestnuts to 100% value-add sales. Today, a third of their chestnuts are fed to pigs to produce chestnut-fed pork and Spanish/Italian style chestnut-fed ham. Chestnut Brae has perhaps the only chestnut peeling machine in Australia, allowing for the sale of fresh chestnuts and a range of value-added products including chestnut flour, chestnut puree, chestnut ice cream, chestnut mustard, chestnut honey and chestnut ale. Visitors are welcome to stay and relax overnight in farm-stay accommodation or just visit for an hour and have a Chestnut Experience.

-‘The Chestnut Experience is an entertainment, education, engagement journey.’-

The Chestnut Experience is a tailored experience, with John and Linda beginning by asking visitor backgrounds, interests and level of agricultural and food knowledge. Then on a working farm tour, visitors learn about the ‘health benefits of chestnuts; [or]... if they are keen on agriculture they take a different journey; if they are vegetarians or vegans, they take a different journey than if they were meat focused’. Depending on the individual and the time of year, visitors have an interactive chestnut experience by picking chestnuts, watching chestnut processing and product sampling.

-‘At harvest season they would do a lot of touching. Ideally I want them to touch things but it does depend on the person and it does depend on the season... if they touch things, they get engaged and they will buy more, its psychology.’-

Through the Chestnut Experience and by hearing Chestnut Brae’s story, Linda and John hope visitors can become their ‘story tellers’ sharing their experiences with others and encouraging more to come.

6.3 Authenticity of experience

Whilst it can be argued that all agritourism experiences in Southwest WA imbue a sense of authenticity, there is variation. For example, nearly two thirds of businesses audited, offered product sales or non-farm activities, such as farm shop visits, tastings and the use of non-agricultural facilities (e.g. playgrounds, mini golf and other events). These experiences were in a farm setting, but not part of everyday farm life. A similar proportion of businesses offered staged working farm activities where visitors would get a select or limited experience of farm life, being ‘the provision of opportunities for visitors to experience agriculture in a way that is safe from the intrinsic hazards of authentic working farm activities’ (Flanigan et.al. 2014, p.400). This included farm tours, animal feeding and small scale fruit picking; activities often limited produce biosecurity concerns and adherence to farm and tour group insurance requirements.

Only 11% of providers offered actual working farm experiences, such as working holidays. Other actual on-farm experiences identified through the audit included large scale olive picking, fishing, truffle hunts and practical beekeeping workshops for novice beekeepers. Actual working-farm experience were activities where visitors performed tasks alongside an agricultural provider (cf. Flanigan et.al., 2014) or where visitors observed routine tasks of the provider in an ‘unaltered agricultural environment’ (Streifeneder, 2016, p. 400). As one provider noted:
Box 4: Authenticity is in the story

The authenticity of an experience appeared to be imbedded in the producer or provider story, such that visitors are able to connect with and feel a producer, provider, and regions’ journey.

‘I always say to people we don’t sell honey we sell our story. Because we do have quite an amazing story that we tell that goes with the history since we started and how everything is going. Then people taste the honey and they love the combination of the story and the product that we have’ (Interviewee 7)

Providers thought that an authentic experience was not necessarily about performing activities as if you were the farmer, such as sheering sheep, harvesting crops or making value-add products. But instead, more closely linked to the appreciation visitor gain of the challenges and triumphs of producers and regional communities. This occurs as the visitor is exposed to real farm practices and lifestyles, fresh and new produce, and products that have come directly from a working farm. This authenticity becomes a central component of a visitors’ agritourism experience.

‘A lot of people are fascinated by the backstory as well as understand what goes into running the farm. It’s nice to be an educator to help people learn and understand’ (Interviewee 9)

Providers reported carefully constructing their story, as they felt it was a key element in shaping visitor experience and allowed them to deliver a certain message:

‘As for the consumer, the city consumer is going to get a story about farming, as farmer we should sell our story and if we are not carful our story will be told by someone else and that story will be not the message we want’ (Interviewee 6)

When providers spoke about an experience, it was in broad terms rather than the details of specific activities or where it occurred. The following interviewee quotes highlight the importance of creating a shared provider-visitor authentic agritourism experience:

‘They get a true farm experience, they get an appreciation for the importance of agriculture to Western Australia … I think the other thing we have here is that we are a genuine farm, we are not a hobby farm. When people come here they are coming to a working farm and that very attractive’ (Interviewee 10)

‘We feel we should not just jump on band wagons but create something a bit more genuine and authentic’ (Interviewee 4)
6.4 Location of experience

Nearly all agritourism businesses audited (96%) provided on-farm experiences to visitors, with approximately 14% offering off-farm experiences. Off-farm experiences usually involved market stalls, school education visits and walking or bike riding activities and tours. There were also a number of providers offering on-farm experiences that were not necessarily related to daily farming activity.

**Box 5: Honey everywhere**

The small property of Little Eedan Farm is home to ‘cattle, sheep, goats and all types of different poultry’. It also has 300 hives, which were introduced to improve Arno and Rene van Eedan’s vegetable gardens. Whilst they initially gave away the honey they produced, they are now commercial beekeepers as ‘more and more people started asking for it’ because of the high quality honey they produce. Honey, is now their main source of income.

However, they maintain that the ‘priority is bees and the second is honey’.

Year round visits to Little Eedan Farm are made by appointment. Both locals and overseas tourists ‘from Germany, China, Japan, Hungary, you name it’ drive down or come on tour bus to hear their story, see the animals, taste and purchase their honey products. With the support of their local council, Little Eedan Farm will expand agritourism offerings by building an on-farm shop with cafe area and a restaurant that serves their honeys and other local produce.

‘Our main focus it to get our buildings up and running so we can accommodate all those groups of people even better because you want the facilities in place for them to come and relax and have a good meal and taste our honeys... If you are on a bus for half a day... you want to go to a place where you can sit down and relax and enjoy the moment.’-

Little Eedan Farm is one of the 12 businesses on the Chittering Farm Flavour food and wine trail, which encourages visitors to tour the flavours of Chittering. Further, the honey products of Little Eedan Farm can be bought off-farm at various farmers markets and shows, where pamphlet displays and their distinctive honey van helps promote the business. A strong locational presence has raised the profile of the farm, resulting in an increase in visitors and shops and cafes stocking their products.

‘Our van with all our logos on it is a big attraction and people see it from far and wide and they come and have a look at what’s available. I really believe it’s one of the major things that put us where we are today.’-

Concerned of ‘middlemen taking too much money from the products that are being produced’, Little Eedan does not sell in bulk or to larger supermarkets. To ensure their product retains its
value and quality, they have 'made a deal with all the shops that stock their honey to sell for the same price as the honey sold on the farm ...so they can provide a good product for a good price to people'.

Photo credit: Little Eeden Farm (https://www.littleeedenfarm.com/)

6.5 Length of stay of experience

Opportunities provided to visitors to come for day visits or stay overnight in on-farm accommodation varied by agritourism provider. According to the audit, day visits were offered by 65% of providers with 57% offering overnight visits. Only 22% catered for both day and overnight visitors; with 40% providing day only experiences and 35% overnight only experiences. Providers offering overnight experiences were typically farm stays. Given the propensity of visitors to engage with multiple agritourism offerings within a region, a mix of agritourism providers catering for day and overnight visits attracts a wider range of visitors for a longer period of time.

Box 6: From school visits to international visitors

Billa Billa Farm Cottages is owned by Donna O’Brien and is co-located with the family beef farm owned by her brother. It has long provided opportunities to experience and observe a range of farming activities. Throughout the 1990’s, it catered for school children as well as short-term tourists in chalet style accommodation. Closed for six years, it reopened in 2012 with four renovated cottages targeting local and international guests interested in pony rides, animal feeding, sheep shearing, explore the large organic vegetable patch, learn about food production and farm practices, and enjoying rural serenity without Wi-Fi.

The last five years has seen an increase in visitors, primarily through word-of-mouth and due to improved services and facilities. Catering for up to eight guests, the cottages are full during the WA school holidays and increasingly busy during the Singaporean and Malaysian school holiday months of March, May and June. The increases in overnight guests in August and September are attributed to the rise in Perth based family’s willingness to drive five hours for one or two nights stay during weekends.

Billa Billa has a rising number of ‘European visitors including, Italians, Dutch, Germans as well as visitors from across Asia (primarily Singapore and Malaysia). More recently visitors have begun arriving from 'India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan’. Growth in the international
market has been facilitated by their ability to accommodate large family groups. This is particularly attractive for Asian groups which often span three generations as quite often, adult child(ren) living in Perth take visiting parents and grandparents on holiday. Often, they are farmers in their home country and ‘It’s always nice to talk to farmers from that part of the world.’

Billa Billa seeks a ‘niche outside of the school holidays’ to counter the seasonality of tourism because ‘a lot of the money you make goes straight back into the business, keeping the accommodation up to scratch and maintaining the property, the tourism area rather than the whole farm’. Seasonal visitor fluctuations make it difficult to retain full and part-time staff for cleaning, office duties and farm maintenance making it ‘hard to fully involve guest in the farming side of things’. Donna noted that changes to working holiday ‘visa regulations have made it harder’, as her comment on HelpX highlights:

‘I use to swap food and accommodation and [international workers] would do 4 hours a day work. They would be free to explore for the rest of the time, and absolutely loved it... I met heaps of beautiful young international people, but you’re not allowed to do it anymore’.

As a result, Donna O’Brien established Peak Wilderness Experiences where wellness, trauma and equine assisted retreats are hosted at Billa Billa outside of school holidays. Guests, are involved in trauma healing, and encouraged to connect with the land and the ‘simple lifestyle of farming as being on the land helps to reset people’s nervous systems’.

Photo credit: Billa Billa Farm Cottages (http://www.billabillafarmcottages.com/)
7 Promoting Agritourism in Southwest Western Australia

Agritourism offerings in Southwest WA have not enjoyed extensive exposure to the mass tourism market. Mass tourism in the region is generally confined to pre-planned tours and associated destinations with pre-arranged activities and travel via tour provided transport (generally buses). As such, the agritourism market is often neglected in the promotion of local niche products and produce. In general, agritourism targets two types of audience:

*Tailor-made tourism* – this type of tourism is driven by small and medium sized tourism operators. Based on the request of the tourists, they organize tailor-made trips generally for groups of 10 to 15 tourists. The groups may be pre-formed by the tourists themselves (such as friends or relatives) or formed by tourism operators based on the common interests of tourists (i.e., several families form an *ad hoc* group through the common interest of visiting a farm with animal activities). The experiences or activities are tailor-made to suit individual needs.

*Self-driving tourists* – people who organize their own itinerary with their own mode of transportation (car, caravan, mobile home, motorbike) are an increasing share of the tourist market in WA. Most of these tourists come from overseas markets, such as Asia, and therefore represent a future growth market for agritourism. A key trend amongst Asian tourists are ‘self-driving’ tours, which have emerged as a growing number of visitors come from this region and gain confidence in determining and experiencing Southwest WA independently. Regional areas in Australia, including Western Australia, already have well developed infrastructure for self-driving and mobile home tourism.

To this end, attracting visitors is a key concern for WA agritourism operators, with our research showing Southwest WA providers use various methods to promote agritourism businesses and activities. These included websites, social media, accommodation booking platforms, word of mouth (verbal and through social media), tourist visitor centres and associations, industry associations (i.e. beekeeping networks), school visits, flyers, newspaper advertisements, newsletters and shop window notices and billboards.

From the interviews, it was identified that providers employed a diverse range of strategies to promote their businesses. This was best exemplified by the following quote.

> ‘We do a lot of marketing through social media, we promote ourselves through Facebook, Youtube and Instagram – the three major drivers in social media. We write articles for the press. We do traditional marketing for example, we are in the Qantas Spirit magazine with our chestnut ham. We constantly send press releases to the ABC news, TV lifestyle programs. Our own newsletter goes out through our database. It’s a combination of traditional and social media marketing. We still believe traditional marketing has a role, a lot of people would argue that it’s all got to be social media, I would not accept that. For our market, traditional marketing is just as important as social media marketing’ (Interviewee 6)

In fact, many interviewees thought the most effective form of advertisement was by attending farmers markets and regional shows, as well as by located (farm or shop) on an arterial road or on a town main street. Providers who promoted to an international market also worked with international tourism agencies, while others were active on social media or engaged through journalists of national and international publications. Those who exported products also reported travelling overseas to engage with current and prospective buyers, as well as
educating overseas tourism providers and industry representatives. Interview findings showed slight differences in how providers catered for domestic and international tourists. These differences would require a systematic exploration within the interviews and analysis to unpack and understand fully – including how different international tourist types (e.g., backpackers, family holidays, business travellers) and cultures (e.g., Asian, European) might demand different tailoring of agricultural offerings. The complete understanding of all these market variations was not the aim of this project, which was focussed primarily on gaining a first look at agritourism offerings in WA’s Southwest. Nonetheless, provider comments show fascinating insights into these differences, and provide possible avenues for further research. These are found in Appendix 9.

In addition, findings demonstrated a sense of community collaboration where a single product benefited from a wider regional marketing strategy. In this way, many providers were found to promote the local produce and services of other providers. For example, by getting involved in establishing, sponsoring or coordinating regional events such as the Truffle Kerfuffle in the Shire of Manjimup, the Margaret River Gourmet Escape and Farmer on Your Plate. Others promoted local tourism and regionalism through board membership on local tourism associations and visitor centres.

In general, providers expressed the need for greater support in developing their own agritourism offerings as well as in how they collaborated together to generate a regional agritourism experience. Some felt that more targeted advice on agritourism operations from business development experts was critical. For example, having access to consultants who could assess operations and make suggestions for improvements.

"From all the millions of dollars that get spent on tourism, is there a way to put a small amount of that spend into the wages of one or two people that actually go out there and focus on different regions and different issues and try and give provider a little bit of feedback on how they can do things better’ (Interviewee 3)

Another suggested a ‘boot camp’ approach where other providers could go to a colleagues’ farm and ‘tear it to bits from a development point of view and put it together as a group of growers’ (Interviewee 6). The comments and suggestions give insight into the need for additional support for agritourism operators in the development of regional products. Such observations are particularly salient given the isolation of many agritourism providers living in rural WA. The remainder of this section unpacks how providers engaged with the various promotional mediums and tourism organisations to attract visitors and create a shared agritourism experience.

7.1 Online activity

This section unpacks the online activity of providers by looking at how they use social media as well as the various booking platforms that are available to them.

**Social media**

Social media serves as an important forum for agritourism with both providers and visitors actively engaging social media portals such as Facebook, TripAdvisor and Instagram. Providers’ use social media to promote and develop their business and products, and to communicate the
experiences they offer to visitors. One provider using social media as a business development tool to promote their services highlighted that:

‘I started out advertising my services through our local Facebook buy and sell pages and making myself available to do hive maintenance and consulting and a little bit of honey sales’ (Interviewee 8)

Providers have an awareness that visitors post about the experiences they have, with one provider noting that visitors were sharing their experience on their own Facebook site even before having a dedicated page for the business. This encouraged one provider to create their own Facebook site.

‘As the business developed overtime, we did not have much time, visitors just started publishing photos on Facebook’ (Interviewee 1)

Visitors also leave reviews about their experience on the provider’s site which results in free advertising. As one interviewee stated:

‘If you look at the reviews that they put up on our Facebook page when they have been on the farm their reviews are just outstanding and its giving something back to the community again’ (Interviewee 7)

It is worth noting however that whilst visitors leave reviews or post photos which can be beneficial to provider’s business, what a visitor decides to promotes can be unexpected. For example, one provider offering a truffle experience and truffle hunts advised that visitors more commonly posted photos of animals on the farm rather than the product itself.

‘Amazingly, if you go onto our Instagram and look at our hashtag there are a lot of pictures of cows and lambs. It’s funny we go off and do the truffle hunting, but there seems to be more photos of the cows and the sheep then there is of the truffle’ (Interviewee 3)

**Online booking platforms**

Not all digital platforms were viewed as positive to agritourism business promotion. One interviewee identified that accommodation booking platforms (Airbnb and Bookings.com) could actually serve as a liability to the business for two reasons.

Firstly, there concerns were expressed of the ability of booking platforms to accurately depict the provider’s business and the experience a visitor can expect to receive. Managing visitor expectations is of utmost importance to agritourism providers in an attempt to:

- Avoid negative visitor reviews;
- Ensure prospective visitors understand the type of experience on offer; and,
- Provide essential information such as if meals are provided, where the nearest town is located, Wi-Fi availability, or if they required a Telstra mobile device to make calls or connect to the internet.
Secondly, with the inclusion of booking fees, the amount charged for accommodation can exceed the amount approved by the providers - without their knowledge.

Whilst these are the views of only one provider, the comment highlights the importance (to the provider) of representing the business and visitor experience honestly and accurately. A sentiment which has been communicated by a number of interviewees.

7.2 Tourism Visitor Centres and Associations

Tourism visitor centres and associations are common in Australia, but their effectiveness in promoting the agritourism sector is varied. This section examines the different visitor centre and association types which emerged through the research as having a role in agritourism in Southwest WA. Indeed, overall providers expressed the importance of having a collaborative approach to developing WA agritourism, perhaps promoted under an ‘umbrella organisation’ (Interviewee 6) allowing local and regional engagement. Many expressed the importance of working together with universities, state government, growers associations and others.

‘We have to work together; if you think you are going to something yourself and be selfish you can just pack up and leave. I think it’s a team work thing. Everyone will really win out of if we can work together’ (Interviewee 7)

One provider working as an international agritourism consultant said it was common to have peak representative agritourism body for providers in the North America and Europe.

‘next month in Iowa, I am working for Iowa University who have the peak body for farm agritourism in Iowa, then I am in Canada and it’s a group of growers that produce an organization called Ontario Fresh that is grower led. Then I’ve got America’s national one which grower led. Then I’ve got one in Sweden that is put together by a supplier. The British one is grower led. There is a mix around the world’ (Interviewee 6)

Providers felt that such peak bodies could facilitate workshops to enhance the skills of agritourism providers, such as in marketing and social media, as well as assist in compiling a directory of agritourism providers and their offerings to enable networking and the development of agritourism trails. The remainder of this section highlights provider comments regarding the various bodies assisting agritourism in Southwest WA.

Visitor Centres are membership-based associations within a community tasked with promoting local businesses. Agritourism providers saw visitor centres as a means to promote their business, though several interviewees questioned their value, reporting they had reduced their membership level or withdrawn membership. Interviewees noted several issues relating to Visitors Centres that had motivated this decision:

- Charges for brochure racking without having brochures to rack (Interviewee 3);
- Absence of technical support for visitor centre digital media offerings (Interviewee 3);
- Limited generation of visitor traffic (Interviewee 3, Interviewee 9);
- Variability in the degree of assistance between the different Visitor Centres (Interviewee 3, Interviewee 9).
Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association (MRBTA) was generally viewed by agritourism providers more positively than Visitor Centres and other tourism associations as they had resources to develop new initiatives and retain professional staff. Interviewees found it easier to deal with one association who was able to get messages to people visiting the Margaret River, Dunsborough and Busselton areas, than it was to deal with numerous smaller local associations (Interviewee 3). However, it was noted that the MRBTA has an intrinsic focus on the wine industry despite the many non-alcohol agritourism businesses in the area. One interviewee commented that:

*A couple of times of I have approached the Tourism Association direct with a couple of ideas about stories for the magazine but they have never been interested in taking up our suggestion* (Interviewee 9)

Tourism WA was known by most of our respondents, with many registered and promoting their business on the Tourism WA website. One provider identified that they planned on engaging with Tourism WA once their business is larger so that ‘Tourism WA and places like that will promote us and get us out there and we will be bigger and better’ (Interviewee 7).

One provider advised that they had undertaken some consulting work for Tourism WA when they were establishing the 22 food trails which were developed for the Tourism WA Taste 2020 - A Strategy for Food and Wine Tourism report (Interviewee 6). The interviewee was also of the understanding that the Tourism WA’s food trail initiative came to an end in December 2019 (Interviewee 6).

There were few specific negative comments directed towards Tourism WA, however there were several comments directed towards the organisation:

- The opportunities to be gained by engaging with Tourism WA was not always clear (interviewee 9);
- Business were incorrectly located (Interviewee 5); and
- More one-on-one on-farm consultations could be provided to help provider’s further develop their agritourism business (Interviewee 3).

Tourism Council membership offers provider’s tourism accreditations obtained by meeting specified criteria and standards, which can then be displayed publicly. As a member of the Tourism Council, providers can have their businesses listed on the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse and have access to discounted workshops (Interviewee 5). It was understood that Tourism Council advocates for and supports agritourism businesses in Western Australian by engaging with politicians and raising the profile of the economic benefits of tourism (Interviewee 5).

One provider advised that Tourism Council accreditation is ‘a good thing because when you go through the accreditation process it makes you check off your business plan.’ However, it was noted that the understanding of accreditation maybe lost on international tourists:
I think it probably means less to international tourists because they wouldn’t know about it. Local tourists would know what it is. People in the hospitality industry would know what it is’ (Interviewee 2)

7.4 Food trails and events

This section discusses the food trails and events that providers identified as crucial in developing agritourism in Southwest WA.

**Food trails:** Often promoted as Food and Wine trails, these regional groupings of food, wine, and tourist activities act as self-drive agendas for experiencing a location’s diversity of attractions. Food and wine trails attempt to increase the attractiveness of a location by promoting tourism related business that can be accessed by short drives in between. As the name connotes, food and wine trails in South Western WA often focus on wine based experiences and related food offerings (see Appendix 10). Less common, are tourist trails that focus on non-alcohol and farm related activities. Figure 6 provides an overview of current tourist trails (one or more overlapping) focusing on farm related activities. Three primary clusters can be identified: 1) North of Perth encompassing the Swan and Avon Valleys; 2) Donnybrook, Bridgetown, Nannup and surrounds; and 3) the southern coast from Walpole to Albany.

All interviewees saw food trails, farm trails and food and wine trails as critical in supporting the agritourism industry, generating visitor awareness of the local foods available across Western Australia. During interviews, providers often mentioned other agritourism offerings on the same farm trail as their business. For example: one provider on the Chittering Farm Flavour Trail mentioned Local Goat and Nesci Estate Wine Farm several times; and, another on the Blackwood River Valley Farm Trail referenced Cambray Cheese (See Appendix 10 for an example of a farm trail pamphlet). Often interviewees found food trail pamphlets useful in making recommendations of other providers to visitors, and for learning about the other agritourism businesses nearby (Interviewee 1).

“So it’s really nice to have the Farm Trail [pamphlet] there for me so I can look at it and say look here are all the things that are available along the way’ (Interviewee 1)
Figure 6. Farm trails found in Western Australia’s Southwest
Providers highlighted personal experiences with visitors that had used farm trail pamphlets and information on the Trails WA website to guide their agritourism experiences and plot their travel route (Interviewee 10). As one interviewee stated:

“They are riding down the road and stopping and doing something, and learning something and they pick up a little bunch of this and a little bowl of that and that gives their holiday a bit more prominence because they’ve got their memories, they’ve got their little artefact and they’ve had the experience as well” (Interviewee 1)

Another interviewee - located in the southern part of the Wheatbelt - spoke positively about the public art Silo Trail that runs from Northam to Albany and corresponding pamphlets (by FORM) (Interviewee 10). They communicated a desire for more trails like this:

‘...the big thing is, we need more trails so that people are coming out here to see things and connecting them. If you go down to the Southwest you do have the ocean, which is magnificent, and you have wineries but you don’t have anything more than what we’ve got – it’s just different’ (Interviewee 10)

Several participants suggested there should be an increase in the number and variety of food trails, for example along specific themes - such as olive trails or seasonal trails highlighting regional events such as local agricultural shows or art centres (Interviewee 9 and Interviewee 10).

‘People would know that for these months they can go and visit’ (Interviewee 10)

Another interviewee stated that the ‘State’s 22 food trails’ were part of Tourism WA’s culinary trails Taste 2020 - A Strategy for Food and Wine Tourism to develop agritourism (Interviewee 6) (Tourism WA, 2015). He thought that including too many farms on a single food trial was not advisable, because ‘agritourism is not about a farm, it is about a number of farms that an agritourist will visit’ in a day (Interviewee 6). He suggested six farms was ideal and that 12 would be a ‘disaster’, because ‘life is about keeping it simple for them [visitors]. Give them too many choices they won’t go anywhere’ (Interviewee 6). When asked why food trails have been so effective, he said:

‘Because there was interest from the consumer to visit farms, or foodies to visit farms, there was a whole in the market place, food trails are common around the world and are very popular around the world - so visitors are expecting a food trail’ (Interviewee 6)

He felt that visitors had certain expectations of the Western Australian experience in general, ‘we are famous for clean air, health living, and there will be food trails’ (Interviewee 6). Internationally, Ireland, Italy, France, Ontario and Vancouver in Canada were identified as being good examples of how to create successful food trail experiences (Interviewee 6). And, Tasmania and Orange in New South Wales were seen as having the best practice models in Australia. Orange in particular was highlighted as an example to learn from, given it ‘went from unknown food-related town to a real foodie town simply through marketing’ (Interviewee 6).

**Food events:** Interviewees were less supportive of food events and their contribution to promoting agritourism, citing examples of: the Manjimup Cherry Harmony Festival, Truffle
Kerfuffle in Manjimup, Mundaing Truffle Festival, Margaret River Gourmet Escape, Balingup Festival, Albany’s Festival of the Sea and Farmer on your Plate in Perth. One provider felt quality products were achieved through daily improvements, and ‘events tend not to be the best avenue of agritourism as events are fraught with a lot of work and investment for a very small amount of time. They don’t really improve incrementally over time because you have a lag of 12 months before the next thing happens. We don’t find that to be a good long term investment’ (Interviewee 4).

However, several providers did note that the focus of some food events were more inclusive of farmers and extending the agritourism experience as an off-farm experiences. Examples of these were the Manjimup Cherry Harmony Festival, Truffle Kerfuffle, and Farmer on your Plate.

‘My definition of agritourism is activities on the farm that enrich consumer experience of farm product. That’s where I would come from in agritourism, having said that some agritourism will be off the farm and some is on the farm. For example, next week is the Cherry Harmony Festival in Manjimup that is agritourism but its farmers going off the farm for it. So it’s promoting local farm activities either on or off the farm’ (Interviewee 6)

Agritourism provider and previous chair of Farmer on your Plate said the event ‘promoted regional WA, the fabulous products that are grown out here and exposed people to meeting real farmers’ (Interviewee 10). Whilst another interviewee involved in the Truffle Kerfuffle stated that ‘we as a farm look on that as a great festival for farmers and we can make money out of it’ (Interviewee 6). The founding chair and sponsor of the Truffle Kerfuffle, now in its tenth year, described it as a ‘fine dining expose’ of the Southern Forests region of Western Australia (Interviewee 3). … The objective of it is to use truffles as the hook to get people to come to the Southern Forests region and learn about the region which is a forgotten spot’. Attended by 5,000 people in 2019, the interviewee noted it would ‘never be an event for 20,000 people on the foreshore …and therefore there is a need to be strategic in its operation design and how it engages people (Interviewee 3). However, Truffle Kerfuffle has used media personalities and popular chefs, such as Poe, to maximise media promotion.

Unlike the Manjimup Cherry Harmony Festival, Truffle Kerfuffle, and Farmer on your Plate, the Margaret River Gourmet Escape was not viewed as favourably by agritourism providers as it was less about the ‘food experience side, and it seemed heavily focused on wine industry promotion’ (Interviewee 9). While it was seen to helps food tourism in general, it was criticised as not being open in small business or farmers. As one interviewee noted:

‘We did Gourmet Escape this year through Tourism WA, there’s no way as a [individual] farmer, I could be involved in the Gourmet Escape because it’s aimed at the big end of town. That doesn’t help farmers although it’s helping food tourism. What we need is events that help farmers’ (Interviewee 6)

Providers felt events that connected farmers to consumers in a more direct way were more favourable, being extensions of the on-farm experience and allowing provider-visitor interactions. One provider suggested blending food and agriculture into one event bringing ‘people within the industry and different industries together’ (Interviewee 9). Yet pragmatically, as one interviewee highlighted:
8 Concluding comments

This report aimed to better understand the agritourism experiences of Southwest WA. To do so, it was first fundamental to identify what an agritourism business was. This was challenging in the first instance, given the lack of transparency in definitions of agritourism identified in policy documents or academic sources. A thorough literature review was conducted to develop a shared provider and visitor understanding of the agritourism experience. We found that the agritourism experience was more than just the transaction of an agritourism product or service offering, but a way in which to develop a healthy and connected sense of community as well as better understandings of where food comes from and challenges to production. Further, agritourism was found to be a powerful vehicle for change across a range of deepening global issues and transformational platforms. This included declining regional communities, the promotion of food awareness, environmental consciousness, and reconnecting urban communities to regional places. The definition we proposed is uniquely Western Australian, and therefore highly relevant to understanding the state-of-play of agritourism in the Southwest of the State.

Using this definition, the project developed a conceptual framework which could be used to identify and analyse agritourism businesses in Southwest WA. This involved understanding the different layers of agritourism experiences as well as how they might be further classified to better realise agritourism offerings. Given that the aim of the project was to provide a comprehensive list of agritourism businesses in Southwest WA, a systematic search of all businesses aligning to our definition was conducted using the internet, as well as compiling lists from various government sources. Then, drawing on our conceptual framework, the project conducted a business audit of all websites of these businesses, an electronically distributed survey and semi-structured interview of key informant businesses. This report represents the findings from these various analytic approaches.

In total, 94 agritourism businesses were identified in Southwest WA. To market their product, 61% used social media, with Facebook being the most popular. Accommodation providers also tended to use Trip Advisor, while providers without accommodation tended towards Instagram. An audit of all agritourism businesses with websites highlighted that providers in Southwest WA tended to offer multiple experience types both across and within the five experience layers (learning, interaction, authenticity, location and length of stay). Interestingly, a survey of these agritourism businesses found only 62.5% identified as agritourism providers, indicating a lack of regional understanding of what agritourism actually is. This suggests a greater level of coordination is needed to organise and raise awareness of agritourism businesses to better market regional offerings and develop a regional branding.

Indeed, a key aspect to emerge from the interviews was the importance of the producer or provider’s story in the context of the region, often the element which allowed visitors to engage
and learn as well as connect visitor-producer communities (often thought of as traceability). This was seen as a crucial component of the shared experience of agritourism offerings. As such, the development of these offerings as well as how they are packaged as regional experiences was seen as highly important by agritourism providers. Particularly given the current fragmented way the sector is arranged, as providers tend to suffer from isolation in rural Western Australia.

Recommendations emerging from this study include:

1. Progressing a more complete audit of agritourism businesses to develop a directory of all WA providers, beyond Southwest.
2. Develop an agritourism experience certification system based on the audit whereby providers can register the type of experience they offer to visitors based on the identified five experience layers and associated segments. This can be advertised via government, association and businesses websites and enhance traceability of agritourism products.
3. Assist WA agritourism providers in developing more formalised structures (drawing on exemplars from other nations) to support knowledge sharing and collaborations in regional or themed agritourism offerings.
4. Assist in the further development of regional food, wine and tourism trails for self-drive or tour groups, including the compilation of novel approaches undertaken in other regions to attract visitors.
5. Development of an on-line hub to register WA agritourism offerings, food trails, events, etc. to both assist business networking and provide visitors with a better understanding of the rich diverse experiences of WA.
6. Create better linkages between the already well-established wine industry and other agritourism offerings in WA’s Southwest.
7. Solicit an enhanced understanding of agritourist preferences and expectation by visitor origin to inform experiential offerings and marketing strategies based on a range of international, cultural and generational orientations.
8. Improve communication between local and State tourism bodies, governments and associations with agritourism businesses so as to develop a strong regional approach to agritourism and value-add to the State.
9 References


Appendices
Appendix 1: Map of all Southwest WA agritourism businesses
### Agritourism in Southwest Western Australia

#### Appendix: AgriTourism Business Type and Name

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location ID</th>
<th>Map</th>
<th>Business Type and Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Balingup Lavender Farm</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Barrister Downs Dairy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Barnyard 1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Barthooldneys Meadery</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Beer Farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bunthfood Factory &amp; Nursery &amp; Tennessee Hill Chalets</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Cambray Cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Denmark Animal Farm &amp; Pentland Alpaca Stud</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Eaglebay Olives</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Horses and Horsemen</td>
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<td>Jersey Farm</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>Jester’s Flat</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>Levanda Grove</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Millers Icecream</td>
</tr>
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<td>15</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Mt Romance Sandalwood Factory</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Old Vasse Trout and Marron Farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Olio Bello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Petra Olive Oil Estate</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Providence Margaret River</td>
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<td>The Berry Farm</td>
</tr>
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<td>21</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Truffle and wine Co</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<td>Vasse Virgin</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Whirlwind Olives</td>
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<td>Yinni Grove</td>
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<td>Mardofarm and Farrell’s Organics</td>
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<td>Limes Orchard &amp; Farm Stay</td>
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<td>I</td>
<td>The Dell</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>G</td>
<td>Nannup Brook Farm - Southern Forests Honey</td>
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<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Pure &amp; Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Southern Forests Honey</td>
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</table>
| 94          | A   | West Coast Honey
Appendix 2: Typology of agritourism experiences in Southwest Western Australia

Typology for defining agritourism experiences

- On-farm
  - On-farm In-situ
- Off-farm

Agritourist Experience

Accomodation
- On-farm
- Non-farm

No Accomodation
- On-farm
- Non-farm

Interactive
- Educational
- Not Educational

Not Interactive
- Educational
- Not Educational
## Appendix 3: Sample of audit trial results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Name</th>
<th>Boronia Farm</th>
<th>Sunflowers Animal Farm and Farmstay</th>
<th>Mt Romance</th>
<th>Gelfro Organic Farm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Donnybrook</td>
<td>Margaret River</td>
<td>Albany</td>
<td>Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary farming activity</td>
<td>Commercial organic fruit orchard and small breeding herd of cows</td>
<td>315 acre cattle farm</td>
<td>Sandalwood factory</td>
<td>600 acres - Organic Sheep Farm; Organic Oats; seasonal honey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main tourist activity/attraction</td>
<td>Farm Stay with animals</td>
<td>Animal farm and farm stay</td>
<td>Online Shop and energy/vibration sounds sessions with sandalwood</td>
<td>Farm stay - Bed and breakfast and equestrian services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm stay accommodation on organic orchard with dam; attractive surroundings; promotes permaculture veggie garden; can purchase fruit and marron</td>
<td>Actively promotes animal interactions, Souvenir shop and Simmo’s Icecream, proximity to other businesses; animal farm and accommodation appears separate to the Cattle farm</td>
<td>World’s largest distiller of Sandalwood oil which promotes being a sustainable business; main website focus is the sale of sandalwood product online; offers energy, vibration and powerful sounds sessions; no factory tours; looks like an online shop - physical shop not promoted</td>
<td>Bed and Breakfast located on working organic sheep farm; proprietor was a professional horse rider and is an accredited coach and offers equestrian training. Website promotes an agricultural spray product which is used on equestrian tracks and ovals called ‘All Purpose Spray Adjuvant’ however it unclear if the proprietor sells the product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Boronia Farm</td>
<td>Sunflowers Animal Farm</td>
<td>Mt Romance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal presentation</strong></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional (interactive) – One off session</strong></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔ Bottle feeding of baby animals; 90 minute tractor tour of the farm (with farm dogs)</td>
<td>✔ Energy session: Gongs and Sandalwood in a sixteen sided cone featuring celestial skies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional (interactive) – Program of study</strong></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Professional Horse Riding Clinics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-guided learning</strong></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not applicable</strong></td>
<td>✔ No organised learning activities</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction</th>
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<th>Sunflowers Animal Farm</th>
<th>Mt Romance</th>
<th>Gelfro Organic Farm</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full immersion (a day in the life)</strong></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practical/physical tasks (pick strawberries/ feed the alpacas/make soap from produce)</td>
<td>✔ Feed the chickens, alpacas and goat</td>
<td>✔ Hand feed a wide range (350) animals race toy boats down stream Collect eggs, tractor rides and pony rides guests for staying in accommodation</td>
<td>✔ Energy session: Gongs and Sandalwood in a sixteen sided cone featuring celestial skies.</td>
<td>✔ Feed the chickens and alpacas Ride your own horse Eat farm grown vegies and honey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of tasks</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-guided involvement</strong></td>
<td>✔ Walk or ride bikes See wild flowers and permaculture vegetable garden</td>
<td>✔ Wander through the animal farm garden Walking trails</td>
<td>✔ BYO Horse and ride on the property; swim in pool; bush walks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not applicable (no coordinated activities)</strong></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authenticity</th>
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<th>Sunflowers Animal Farm</th>
<th>Mt Romance</th>
<th>Gelfro Organic Farm</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actual working farm</strong></td>
<td>✔ Access to orchard</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔ Activities on Authentic Farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staged working farm</strong></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔ Petting zoo</td>
<td>✔</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sales/non-farm activities</strong></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not applicable</strong></td>
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### Agritourism in Southwest Western Australia

#### Business Name

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<tr>
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<th>Mt Romance</th>
<th>Gelfro Organic Farm</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>On-Farm</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Cottage’ accommodation and a small assortment of animals are located on the working farm</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-Farm</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-contained accommodation and collection of animals are separate to cattle farm</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-situ</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>❌</td>
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<tr>
<td>Property has a sandalwood distillery</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of stay</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overnight visit</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottage accommodation</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Self-contained accommodation units (28 people max)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No accommodation</td>
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<td>Day visit</td>
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<td>Animal farm – day visit</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Appendix 4: Online Survey Instrument

**Information box**

**About the survey**
The University of Western Australia’s School of Agriculture and Environment is currently undertaking research into agritourism in the Southwest of Western Australia. Funding for the project has been obtained by the Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

WA is a strong agriculture state with many agricultural resources that could be integrated with tourism offerings. This research aims to unpack the current agritourism experiences offered by businesses in the Southwest of Western Australia. It is hoped that this information will provide a platform for the development of better policies and strategies to support greater engagement in agritourism by Western Australian businesses.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can withdraw from the study, without consequence, at any time and your data will be destroyed.

**Confidentiality**
Information from this project will be published but your name and identifying details will not be used in any publication arising out of the research without your consent. However, it may be possible to identify persons from the analysis.

**Business profile**

1. Are you the owner of the business? If not, what is your position title?
2. Is this a family owned and operated business?
3. Where is your business located? (suburb name)
4. Where is your primary residence? On farm, off farm but nearby or elsewhere.
5. How long has your business been in operation? (Years/months)
6. How many people do you employ?
7. Briefly, how would you describe your day to day role in the business?
8. What is your main agricultural product?
9. What proportion of your income is derived from agricultural operations?
10. What proportion of your income is derived from agritourism operations?
Agritourism experiences

Information box
Agritourism is an activity which is supplementary to agricultural production where tourists are invited by producers onto working farms, or other agricultural settings, to participate in educational and interactive experiences which promote farm produce and lifestyles.

11. Are you currently engaged in any agritourism activity?

12. How long have you been engaged in agritourism/value-add activities? (year/months)

13. Please describe the type of products or activities you offer visitors?

14. Briefly, how and where do you promote these?

15. For each of the following 5 experience types, please select the categories which best describe what a visitor to your business is likely to encounter (multiple responses are permitted).

   Experience type 1: Learning (how will they learn?)
   □ Formal presentation
   □ Instructional (interactive) – One off session
   □ Instructional (interactive) – Program of study (multiple sessions/classes)
   □ Self-guided learning (e.g. sign posted/audio/augmented reality informative tours)
   □ Not applicable

   Experience type 2: Interactive (how much will they be involved?)
   □ Full immersion (e.g. a day in the life on a farm)
   □ Practical/physical tasks (e.g. pick strawberries/feed animals/make soap from produce)
   □ Observation of tasks
   □ Self-guided involvement (e.g. bush walking or bike riding on farm)
   □ Not applicable (no coordinated activities)

   Experience type 3: Authentic of activity (how real is the experience?)
   □ Actual working farm activities
   □ Staged working farm activities
   □ Sales and non-farm activities (e.g. cooking demonstrations or shop)
   □ Not applicable

   Experience type 4: Location of activities (where is the experience?)
   □ On-farm
   □ Off-farm
   □ In-situ (on-farm activities what are separate to agricultural operations)
   □ Not applicable

   Experience type 5: Length of stay (how long can they stay?)
   □ Overnight and extended stays
   □ Day visit
   □ Not applicable

16.1. What days of the week are the most popular for your visitors?

16.2. What time of day do you have the most visitors?
16.3. How many visitors have you had in the last 12 months?

16.4. Has this number increased, decreased or remained the same compared to the previous 12 months?
☐ Increased
☐ Decreased
☐ Remained the same

16.5. Do you know why this has occurred?

16.6. Has this number increased, decreased or remained the same compared to 5 years ago?
☐ Increased
☐ Decreased
☐ Remained the same

16.7. Do you know why this has occurred?

17.1. Do you plan to expand the agritourism side of your business in the next 12 months?
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Maybe

17.2. Do you plan to expand the agritourism side of your business in the next 2 to 5 years?
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Maybe

17.3. What do you think these expansion plans will include?

17.4. If no, is there a reason why you don’t plan on expanding?

18. Overall, how would you rate your experience as an agritourism provider?
☐ Very positive
☐ Positive
☐ Neither positive nor negative
☐ Negative
☐ Very negative
☐ Not applicable

19. Would you like to make any general comments about your experience in the agritourism industry?

---END---
Appendix 5: Online survey distribution summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution Batch Number</th>
<th>Number of invitations sent successfully</th>
<th>Fully completed responses</th>
<th>Email invitation date</th>
<th>Reminder email: attempt 1</th>
<th>Reminder email: attempt 2</th>
<th>Reminder email: attempt 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Batch 1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19 October 2019</td>
<td>31 October 2019</td>
<td>12 November 2019</td>
<td>19 November 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batch 2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24 October 2019</td>
<td>31 October 2019</td>
<td>12 November 2019</td>
<td>19 November 2019</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix 6: Semi-structured interview schedule

Please read the following definition on agritourism and answer the questions below.

Agritourism is an activity which is supplementary to agricultural production where tourists are invited by producers onto working farms, or other agricultural settings, to participate in educational and interactive experiences which promote farm produce and lifestyles.

The following questions relate to your experience with this activity.

1. How would you describe your visitor profile, for example:
   a. Annual numbers.
   b. The most busy, and most quiet periods.
   c. Age profile and origin.

2. Do you get any of the following from agritourism? Which are most important and why?
   □ Supplementary ‘farm’ income?
   □ Business development and diversification opportunities
   □ Opportunities to share / hear peoples (visitors/other providers) stories
   □ A connectedness to the region
   □ Personal satisfaction of sharing your produce
   □ An opportunity to explore alternative roles on the farm
   □ A sense of purpose
   □ A sense of community
   □ Interpersonal connections
   □ Knowledge of lived experiences
   □ A connection to regional produce
   □ A sense of economic sustainability
   □ A sense of environmental sustainability
   □ A sense regional sustainability
   □ Other, please specify_____

3. Does agritourism benefit a visitor/tourist with any of the following? Which are most important and why?
   □ Opportunities to experience fresh and new produce and products
   □ Opportunities to share / hear other peoples (providers and other visitors) stories
   □ An appreciation of regional life
   □ Knowledge of agricultural production
   □ An appreciation of the challenges faced by producers
   □ Exposure to alternate livelihoods
   □ A sense of community
   □ Interpersonal connections
   □ Knowledge of lived experiences
   □ A connection to regional produce
   □ A sense of economic sustainability
☐ A sense of environmental sustainability
☐ A sense regional sustainability
☐ Other, please specify ______

4. Do you specifically promote your business to international tourists? If yes, what does this involve and how effective has it been?

5. Do you tailor your activities/products to cater for international tourist’s needs or preferences? If so, how?

6. Do you promote and tailor your activities/products people in other locations (for example other States, Perth)? If so, how?

7. Do you feel a regional approach to promoting agritourism would have a positive or negative impact on your business? Why?

8. Do you feel a regional approach to promoting agritourism would have a positive or negative impact on the South West’s agritourism industry? Why?

9. Are you aware of any organisations or groups (such as tour operators, tourism organisations, accommodation providers, government bodies or membership organization) that assist in promoting local tourism or agritourism businesses? If yes, who are they?
   a. Have you collaborated or worked with any of them? If yes, which ones and what assistance did they provide?
   b. Overall, how effective are they?

10. What could be done to enhance the agritourism industry in the Southwest of Western Australia?

---END---
Appendix 7: Businesses interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview number</th>
<th>Business Name</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>Spring Valley Orchard</td>
<td>3 December 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 2</td>
<td>Billa Billa Farm Stay</td>
<td>5 December 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 3</td>
<td>Truffle Traders</td>
<td>5 December 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 4</td>
<td>Southern Coast Woodworks</td>
<td>6 December 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 5</td>
<td>Lavendale Farm</td>
<td>6 December 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview 6</td>
<td>Chestnut Brae</td>
<td>6 December 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 7</td>
<td>Little Eedan Farm</td>
<td>18 December 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 8</td>
<td>Pure &amp; Local</td>
<td>31 December 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 9</td>
<td>Whirlwind Olives</td>
<td>2 January 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 10</td>
<td>Mary’s Farm Cottages and Caminata Yabbies</td>
<td>3 January 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 8: Business website audit results (numbers and percent in each experience)

# Data shown for each experience layer does not total 100% as many agritourism providers offer more than one type of activity within each experience layer. Shaded boxes denote the number of providers offering each type of activity.
Appendix 9: Provider comments on the international visitor experience

The majority of visitors to agritourism offerings in WA’s Southwest are domestic, with rising and emerging opportunities in the international market. As one interview noted, the majority of providers did not ‘really tailor their experiences to the international visitors, with the exception of shortening their story if language is a barrier’. Nonetheless, there appeared to be some interesting comments by providers regarding slight differences in how they approached and catered for various segments of this market. For example, one farm stay provider noted they were ‘China ready’ by giving slippers, tooth brush kits, and rice and noodles for visitors from Asia. Others noted engaging with the Singaporean market via tour agencies, and that Singaporeans tended to spend more money than Chinese visitors.

In general, the comments regarding international guests demonstrated an ad hoc approach in how Southwest WA agritourism providers marketed and catered for this market. There was a breadth of themes which emerged as relevant in how international visitors might differ from Australian domestic one. For example, from how and where to market, variations in how experience type are demanded and understood, background and context the visitor comes from and how this informs the WA agritourism experience, and insurance issues. The following provides specific comments relating to these themes when providers were asked the question:

**When you have your international visitors stay do you tailor any of the services or experiences you offer to them specifically?**

‘No, there’s no need. They really want an Australian experience. They have come to Australia so they don’t want a European experience’ (Interviewee 10).

‘I guess I do, I would not say I have an intentional plan to, I do in the way I talk to them, the things that I tell them. I spend more time talking to them making sure they feel welcome, tell them more history stuff. Often I talk about the Land Settlement Scheme and how young agriculture is down here and our culture. A bit more about the history of agriculture to where it’s come to now’ (Interviewee 2).

‘No. everything is amazing for everyone. English is a good language and you can explain everything to people’ (Interviewee 7).

‘In a nutshell we provide the same level of service in that if an international visitor asks to go on a tour of the grove and have a tour of the press we would certainly do that. It depends on their level of English would depend on how that talk would go. It’s the same in the tasting room. A couple of times I’ve had people come in and usually its only one member of the family that speaks English so they try to do a translation as I am speaking. ....So usually and their level of English is not high I do tone it down and keep it brief but they still get the opportunity to taste

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and I still describe what the taste experiences will be, I just might not go into a more detailed level about the history of olives, and the history of the farm but they still to experience the product’ (Interviewee 9).

‘The only difference with the international market, partially with the Asian market ...., we provide slippers and dental packs, whereas we don’t do it for the Aussies as it’s not an expectation. The Asians always take their shoes off and they leave them outside the door. It’s an expectation. Because we’re also China Ready accredited we always leave some rice and noodles in the cottage and some oil that’s just standard. If someone turns up and they have no food, they can make a meal’ (Interviewee 5).
Appendix 10: Blackwood River Valley Farm Trail pamphlet

Source: Trails WA, n.d.