

Farm Tourism Guide

This resource aims to provide information to assist BC farmers looking to explore tourism opportunities and help them navigate the regulatory environment in an effort to encourage more farm tourism across British Columbia

SUPPORTING FARM DIVERSIFICATION

Farm diversification offers products and experiences to guests while empowering farmers to diversify revenue streams, generate extra income and attract visitors. This can take various forms, allowing farmers to broaden and deepen the tourism experience by combining activities and adding to the goals for dispersion both regionally and seasonally.

The extent to which farmers choose to integrate with tourism can range from low, medium to high levels of engagement and it requires varying degrees of farm resource investment. This incremental engagement can impact the range of activities offered, the level of exposure to visitors, and the balance of investments and returns ¹.

Interest in farm diversification participation can range from ²:

- **NOT AT ALL:** No diversification activities or desire to engage in them.
- **LOW:** Minimal engagement, primarily focused on product sales.
- **MEDIUM:** Day experiences offered with some investment in farm enhancements.
- **HIGH:** Comprehensive, immersive experiences and related overnight stays.

NAVIGATING THE REGULATORY LANDSCAPE

The Agricultural Land Reserve (“ALR”) is a provincial zone where use of land is prioritized for farm use. The highest priority is the agricultural activity that takes place on the farm. Before you start, understanding the regulatory landscape is crucial. Farms within the ALR must ensure compliance with the *Agriculture Land Commission Act* and the ALR Use Regulation, as well as municipal and regional bylaws. Learn more about ALR requirements [here](#).

For farms not within the ALR, landowners should contact their local government to find out more about bylaws applicable to on-farm diversification such as agri-tourism related activities.

RETAIL SALES

People value knowing where their food comes from and popular farm gate items like fresh produce or preserves can connect consumers directly to farm-fresh goodness. In the ALR, processing, packaging, and retail sales of farm products are a permitted farm use if at least 50% of the inputs come from the farm. While selling farm products is permitted in the ALR, setting up food services such as bistros, cafes, and restaurants requires an application to the ALC, except for farms that contain a winery, cidery, brewery, meadery or distillery which may be exempt in some cases.

To learn more about farm retail sales guidelines, see [ALC Use Regulation Section 11](#) as well as [ALC Policy L-01: Farm Product Processing in the ALR](#) and [ALC Policy L-2: Farm Retail Sales in the ALR](#).

AGRI-TOURISM ACTIVITIES

The growing demand for agri-tourism experiences can help farms be more resilient, stay strong financially and ensures long-term food security of our province. In the ALR, agri-tourism activities must be held on a farm with Class 9-Farm status with BC Assessment and should be related to the primary farm activities. Agri-tourism activities may include farm tours, educational programs, and harvest festivals, but permanent facilities cannot be built or converted for agri-tourism.

To learn more about agri-tourism activity guidelines, see [ALC Use Regulation Section 12](#) as well as [ALC Policy L-04: Agri-tourism Activities in the ALR](#).

GATHERING FOR AN EVENT

Hosting non-agricultural events on farms, such as weddings, concerts etc., can also supplement farm income while showcasing B.C. farmland as a backdrop. Specific criteria ensure events complement farm operations and respects farmland.

To learn more about gathering for an event guidelines, see [ALC Use Regulation Section 17](#) as well as [ALC Policy L-22: Gathering for an Event in the ALR](#).

AGRI-TOURISM ACCOMMODATION & TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

Offering overnight stays can provide guests with an immersive farm experience. There are two types of accommodations available for farms located in the ALR: Tourist Accommodation and Agri-tourism Accommodation.

Tourist Accommodation: This includes options like a bed and breakfast with up to 4 bedrooms in your main residence (and where you live). It doesn't require farm class status or the need to offer specific agri-tourism activities.

Agri-tourism Accommodation: To offer this type of accommodation, your farm must have farm class status. You'll also need to provide agri-tourism activities related to the stay. Agri-tourism Accommodation can include up to 10 sleeping units, which can be in your main residence, tents, RVs, or cabins. It's important to understand that Agri-tourism Accommodation alone does not constitute an agri-tourism activity.

To learn more about accommodation guidelines, see [ALC Use Regulation Sections 33 and 34](#) as well as [ALC Information Bulletin IB-06: Tourist and Agri-Tourism Accommodation in the ALR](#).

AGRI-TOURISM READINESS CHECKLIST ³

- Step 1 Zoning and Regulation Check:**
Determine if your farm is in the ALR and understand applicable regulations (ALC or local regulations) apply.
- Step 2 Compliance Review:**
If your farm is located in the ALR, ensure compliance with the ALR Use Regulation.
- Step 3 Cost-Benefit Analysis:**
Evaluate investment required against potential benefits. If possible, connect with similar operations to identify key considerations and learn from their experiences.
- Step 4 Resource Assessment:**
Identify and optimize available resources for farm diversification.
- Step 5 Experience Development and Promotion:**
Identify what activities you want to provide: retail sales, agri-tourism activities, hosting events, and/ or accommodation. Work with your regional district or local government to identify and secure the necessary permits and approvals. Promote your agriculture-related experience.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For detailed guidance on navigating regulations and maximizing potential, consult:

- [Agricultural Land Commission \(ALC\) Policies](#)

For information on agriculture and food programs, or funding opportunities:

- [Funding sources available to support agriculture producers and processors](#)

For information on tourism programs, or funding opportunities:

- [Funding sources available to support B.C.'s tourism sector](#)



Ministry of
Agriculture
and Food



Ministry of
Tourism, Arts,
Culture and Sport



References

^{1, 2, 3} See the [Farm Diversification through Agri-tourism: Guidebook](#).