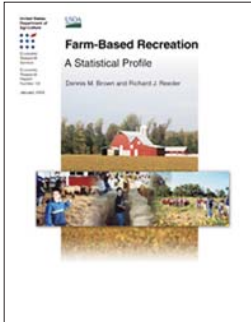


# ERS *Report Summary*

Economic Research Service

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*This is a summary  
of an ERS report.*

Find the full report at  
[www.ers.usda.gov/  
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## Farm-Based Recreation: A Statistical Profile

Dennis M. Brown and Richard J. Reeder

Farm-based recreation, or agritourism, which includes hunting, fishing, horseback riding, and other onfarm activities, provided income to about 52,000 U.S. farms (2.5 percent of total U.S. farms) in 2004. Agritourism is more common in Europe and other parts of the world and might play a more important role in the U.S. economy in the future, both as an alternative source of farm income and as a way for rural communities to diversify and stimulate their economies.

### What Is the Issue?

To diversify and increase returns on their farm investments, more American farmers may consider moving into farm-based recreation. What is it about today's farmers and their land that will provide the keys for success? This report provides a detailed view of the types of farmers and the types of places where farm recreation may have the greatest potential.

### What Did the Study Find?

The study found the South accounts for more than half of all farms receiving recreational income, followed by the Midwest, which accounts for about a quarter. Recreational farm operations are also more likely to be in completely rural nonmetropolitan counties and in areas dependent on recreation in general. Farms involved in recreation require a steady stream of consumers and should be located near cities. Conversely, farms located farther from metropolitan areas have a greater potential for offering high-quality habitat as might be demanded by hunters, anglers, and trail riders.

Farm operators were more likely to run a farm-based recreation business if:

- They had a high net worth.
- They worked fewer hours off the farm during the summer.
- Their property was a greater distance from a city of at least 10,000 in population.
- Their county had an abundance of natural amenities (water, climate, and topography).

The amount of income earned from farm-based recreation is a function of net worth, but otherwise there is very little overlap between factors associated with a farmer's decision to provide onfarm recreational opportunities and the amount of money he or she can expect to earn from such activities. Earnings tend to be highest in more densely populated counties, in areas with low or negative growth rates, and in counties where the overall recreational activity (farm and nonfarm) is high.

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### **How Was the Study Conducted?**

This study used 2004 survey data collected from 20,579 U.S. farms to provide summary descriptive information about the extent of the farm recreation industry, including information on farm size and type, farm operator characteristics, and community characteristics. Regression analysis identified the statistical significance of various factors thought to affect the likelihood of farmer involvement in an onfarm recreation business and the amount of income derived by farmers involved in a recreation enterprise. Data on farm-based factors came from the 2004 ARMS survey. Data on place-based factors reflected characteristics of the county in which a farm was located.