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**WISCONSIN** **GOVERNOR PROCLAIMS STATEWIDE**

**AGRICULTURAL TOURISM WEEK, SEPT. 21-OCT. 2, 2023**

**Economic Engine Builds Momentum**

**Janesville, WI, Sept. 6, 2023**: For the third year running, Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers has proclaimed the last week of September as Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Week. “We continue to see the public’s growing demand to meet farmers and visit farms of all kinds,” said Governor Evers. “Families and individuals are seeking out the experiences only working farms can provide — relaxation, entertainment, education, food and adventure,” he said.

Tourism on farms continues to increase, with visitors enjoying a wide range of activities, including farm to-table events, wine tastings, harvest festivals, craft breweries, distilleries, farm weddings, art tours, baking classes, and herding dog competitions, just to name a few.

“People are getting into their cars and traveling to farms in growing numbers,” said Sylvia Burgos

Toftness, a board member of the Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association (WATA). According to Allied Market Research, visitors are seeking on-farm stays, education, ecotourism, and satisfying their curiosity about rural and farm living. “Wisconsin’s agricultural producers want to, and are prepared to, meet this demand with welcoming farm-based experiences,” said Burgos Toftness.

“Our website, [www.wiagtourism.com, m](http://www.wiagtourism.com/)akes it easy to find an afternoon or weekend of ag-ventures,” said Sheila Everhart, WATA Executive Director. “Our site’s easy to use and includes an interactive map that helps visitors find all kinds of activities, foods, and beverages. The WATA member farms include petting zoos, event barns, wineries, you-pick orchards and berry patches, pasture walks, corn mazes, tree farms, pumpkin patches, and more,” she said.

Nationally, the agricultural segment of the tourism industry tripled from $202 million in 2002 to $949 million in 2017, an increase of nearly 370%, according to the most recent U.S. Census of Agriculture report. This steady increase is part of a large global trend.

Wisconsin’s deep agricultural foundation in combination with its vibrant tourism industry fuel a powerful economic engine. Agriculture contributes more than $104.8 billion annually to Wisconsin’s economy. The state is home to 64,100 farms on 14.2 million acres, with an average farm size of 222 acres. Annually, 435,700 jobs, or 11.8% of state employment, are involved in agriculture.

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism saw overall tourism surge in 2021, generating $20.9 billion in total economic impact, an increase of 21 percent over 2020. In 2022, Wisconsin hosted over 111.1 million visitor trips, generating $1.5 billion in state and local taxes.

“Many small - and medium-scale Wisconsin family farms need the revenue on-farm tourism generates,” said Everhart. “We must continue to streamline our regulatory environment so that agricultural tourism and innovation can flourish, and help our farmers, ranchers, and foresters meet the growing demand for agricultural education, experiences, food, feed, fuel and fiber.” #####