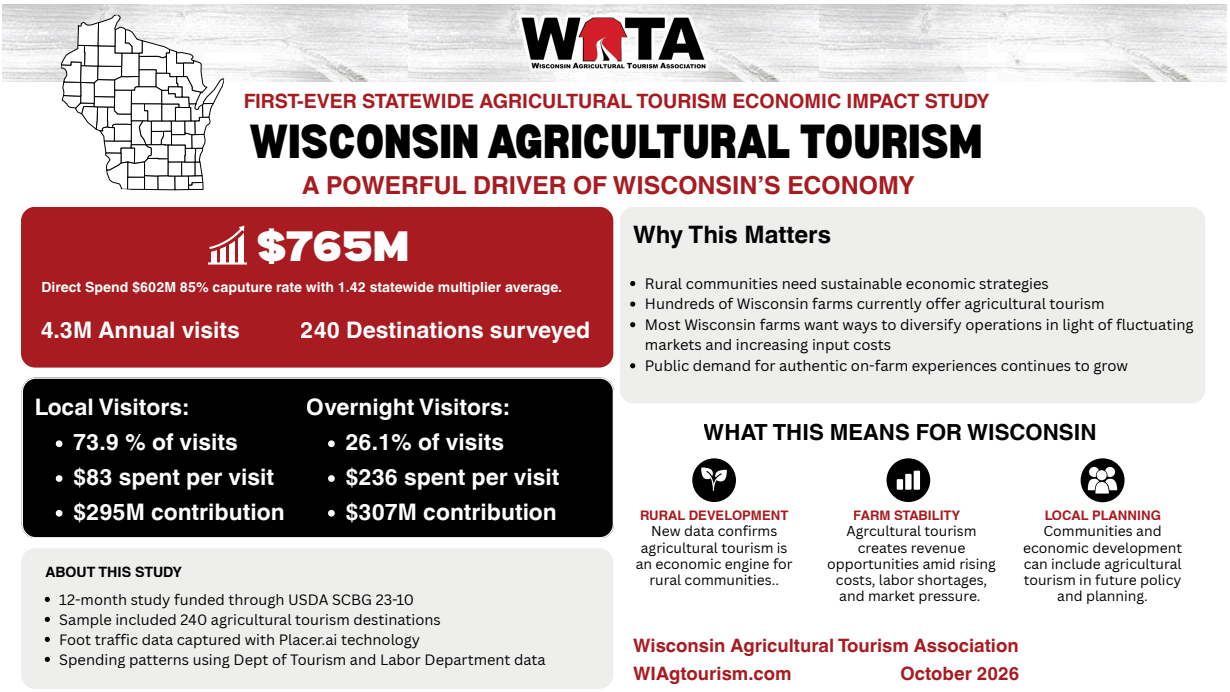
Economic Impact Study of Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism in 2025: Sample Shows $765 Million Impact

Executive Summary

In a first study of its kind in this state, the Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association conducted an analysis of the economic impact of Wisconsin agricultural tourism in 2025. This study reviewed a sample of 240 agricultural tourism destinations, virtually all of them working, family farms.. The findings revealed this modest sample generated over $765 Million in economic impact and over 4.3 million visitors from January to December 2025.

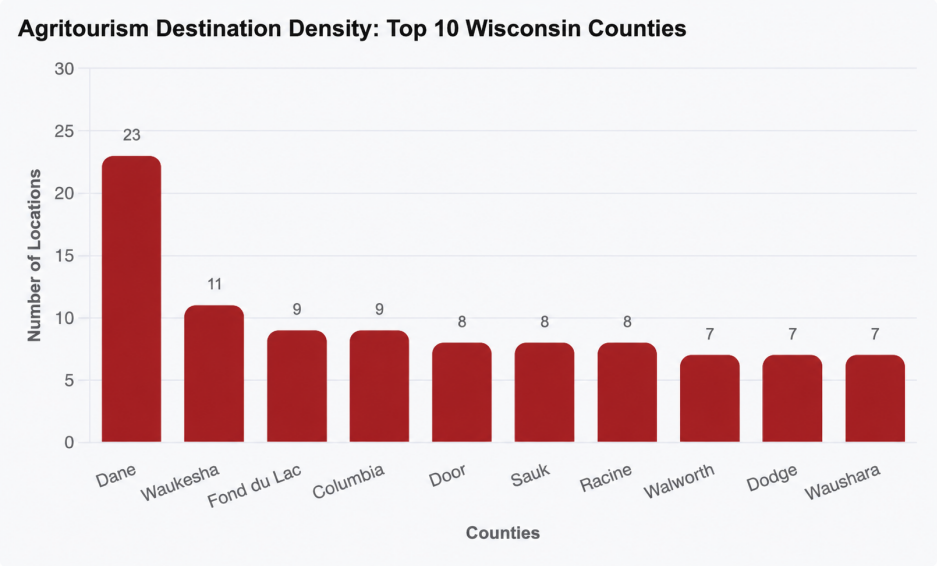
The implications are significant given the steadily increasing public demand for authentic on-farm experiences; the 58,000 family farms seeking to diversify and increase revenue; and the economic needs of rural communities across the state's 72 counties.



Key Take-aways

- **Agricultural tourism is a strong economic engine.** Agricultural tourism continues to grow. The 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture reported 660 Wisconsin farms offering agricultural tourism and direct-to-consumer sales. Today, there are hundreds of farms offering on-farm experiences because they: meet public demand; provide a way to diversify operations and generate much-needed income.
  In just this modest sample of 240 sites, the study found an aggregate economic impact of $765 Million, a benefit felt by every county.
- **Local and Out-of-Town visitors bring dollars every visit.**[1] Nearly 73.9% of visitors were local (traveling fewer than 50 miles), while 26.1% were tourists traveling over 50 miles.
  - Local visitors spent an average of $83 per visit
  - Overnight tourists spent an average of $236 per visit
- **Impact grows when combined with other strategies.** When coupled with other tourism and rural business efforts, agricultural tourism boosts economic vitality even further.

To highlight the density of agricultural tourism assets across regions without identifying individual farms, this chart maps out the counties containing the highest volume of participating 240 sample operations.
These observations are supported by USDA findings. Surveys across the US also suggest that agritourism has the potential to revive rural economies.[2]



[1] Wisconsin Department of Tourism report, https://bit.ly/4hABOBd

[2] USDA Economic Research Service (ERS), *Amber Waves*, Nov. 4, 2019, https://bit.ly/4iSkaez

Implications

- **Growing public demand.** According to the USDA Census of Agriculture, agricultural tourism revenue in the USA increased from $707 million in 2012 to $950 million in 2017, and to $1.26 Billion in 2022.[3]
  Years of surveys by travel agencies, industry analysts, state and federal organizations point to climbing visitor demand for authentic and immersive farm and food-related activities.[4]
  Analysts also point to the growing appetite for meaningful, and culturally connected experiences. This not passive tourism. Instead, visitors want hand-on experiences — gathering fruit at U-pick operations, herding livestock, chatting with local farmers, and taking on-farm classes. Survey's also note that many visitors want to slow down and enjoy longer stays on farms, This is fueling dramatic increase in demand for overnight stays. In fact, on-farm accommodations account for over 32 percent of total agricultural tourism revenue worldwide, a strategy to help farmers deal with volatile markets.[5]
  The GenZ age group is leading the charge, in large part because it values experience over price, and because it knows how to use social media to find and book agritourism experiences.[6] Born between 1997 and 2012, they are digital natives, which is reflected in the emergence of digital passports, smartphone portals used to create agritourism tours with multiple stops, and to make travel and ticketing easy. Sustainable farm practices are considered a requirement as they consider booking experiences. And because multi-generational traveling is a growing sector within agritourism, destinations are working to meet this need as well.
  A small, but growing segment of on-farm visitors are seeking high-end experiences and they're willing to pay for it. Some premium accommodations may include spas, gourmet meals, luxury accommodations, and wellness programs for $200 to $400 per night.[7]
  Second to the popularity of outdoor recreation at a farm, is the demand for on-farm education. This segment is expected to grow at a rate of 13.6 per cent annually between 2025 and 2030. Many Wisconsin farms are meeting this demand right now. This study attests to the growing public demand, and significant economic impact.

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[3] USDA 2022 Agricultural Census, https://bit.ly/4hiNE47

[4] Wisconsin Department of Tourism report, https://bit.ly/4hABOBd

[5] Mordor Intelligence, https://bit.ly/4jttQfC

[6] The Future of Agritourism: 7 Trends Shaping Farm Experiences in 2026, Agritecture, https://bit.ly/4AILPVQ

[7] New York Post, July 30, 2026, https://bit.ly/4hueKEd

- **Income diversification.** The USDA Economic Research Service forecasts yet another decline — up to 5.5 percent —in farm income[8],[9] even as farmers again face increased costs for fertilizers, pesticides, labor and taxes. The struggle is compounded by tariffs and international competition.

  Wisconsin dairy operations face thinning margins. Ten years ago, Wisconsin had 9,695 dairy farms — about 47% more farms than the 5,115 dairy farms in the state as of Jan. 1 2026. In August of this year, the number was down to 4,991, dropping below 5,000 farms for the first time in our state's history.[10]

  Farmers want to diversify income streams, and agricultural tourism is a strategy that does not require federal or state dollars. Several hundred of Wisconsin's 58,000 family farms are ready and eager to meet this demand.[11] The University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension acknowledged this need when it trialed an agriculture tourism training project earlier this year.[12]

  However, to implement this strong economic engine fully, farmers and their rural communities need policies favorable to adapting and expanding agricultural tourism activities. Many states are taking measures encouraging agricultural tourism. For example, in 2025 the Montana Department of Commerce Agritourism Grants Program awarded over $350,000 to 17 farms and tribal businesses for infrastructure development, educational activities, and improved visitor experiences.[13]

  Internationally, agricultural tourism is viewed as a significant development strategy, with economic impact expected to continue growing from $104.07 Billion in 2026 to $145.82 Billion in 2032[14]

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[8] USDA Economic Research Service 2026 farm income forecast, https://bit.ly/4hwQRfi

[9] ProFarmer article, https://bit.ly/47pfzt8

[10] USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service, August 2026, https://bit.ly/4yglPPH

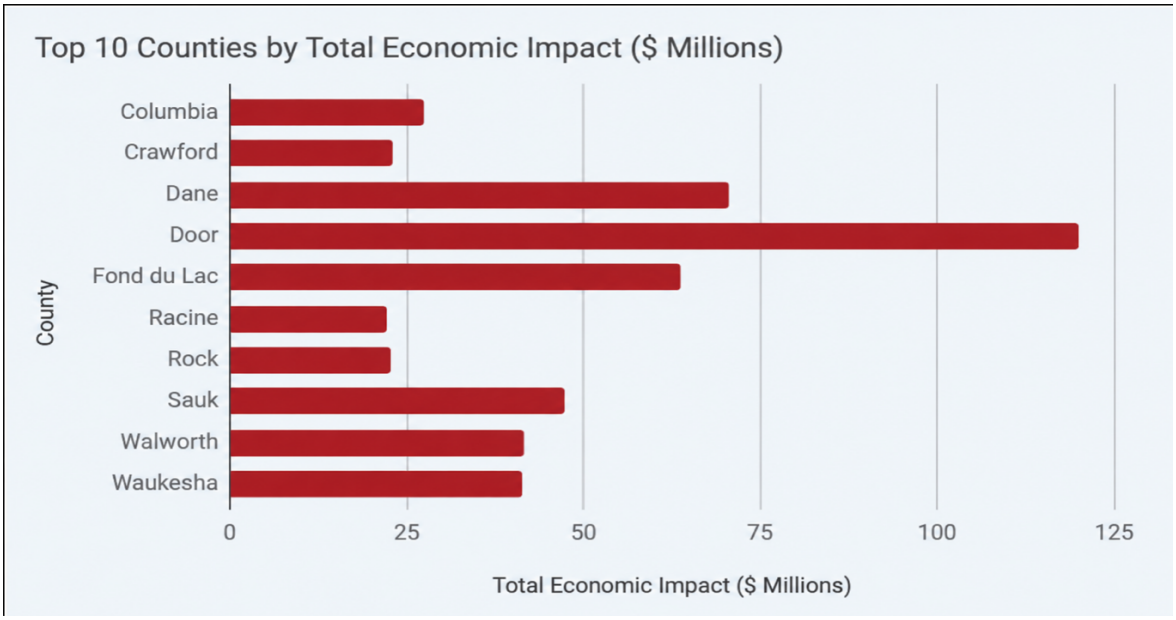
[11] Agritourism Boom: U.S. Farmers Turn Visitors Into New Revenue, AgroLam, , https://bit.ly/4hDMEGK

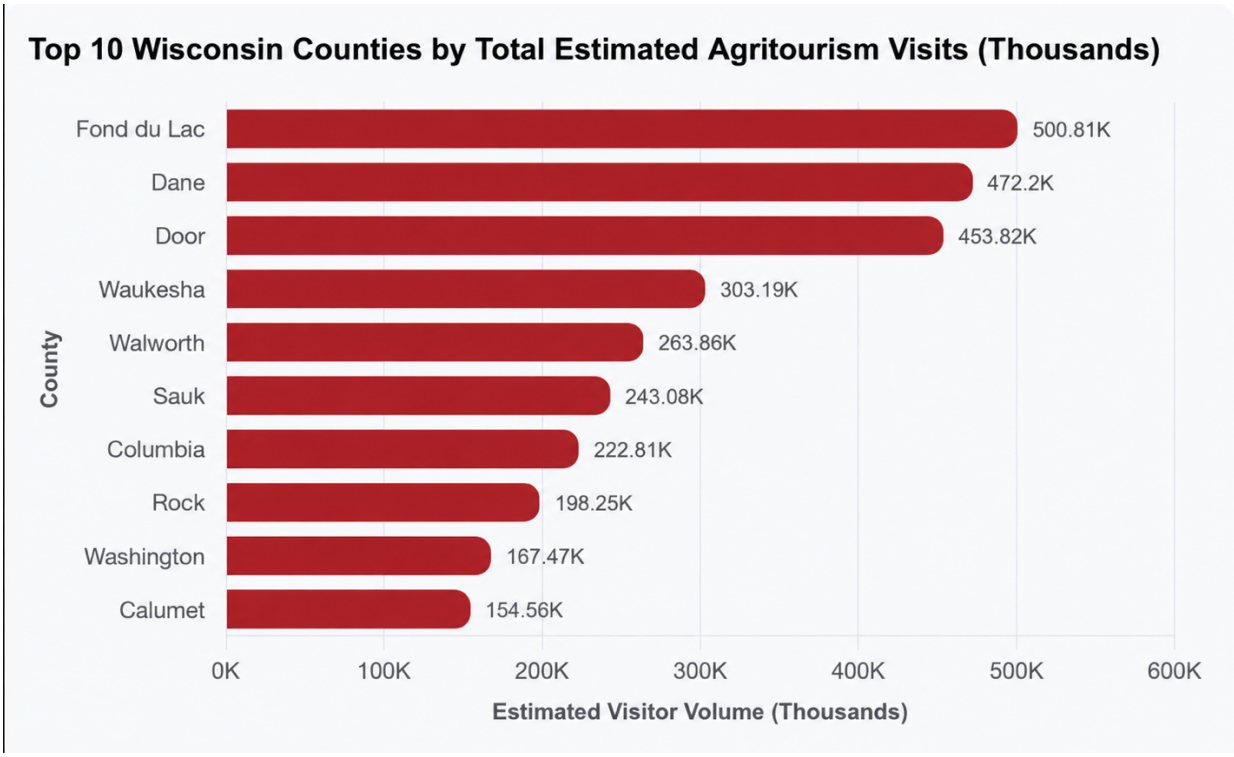
[12] University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension agriculture tourism training, https://bit.ly/4hPQk9j .

[13] Markntel Advisors, https://bit.ly/4e29czD

[14] Modor Intelligence report, https://bit.ly/4jttQfC

Agricultural Tourism benefits rural communities. This study underscores that agricultural tourism is a significant driver and strategy for rural economic development because farm visitors also buy products and services offered in nearby rural businesses. The chart ranks the top 10 counties based on the total dollar volume pumped back into local economies after compounding direct consumer spend with county multipliers.





This chart displays the foot-traffic patterns captured through geofenced data, highlighting the leading counties bringing consumers directly to regional agricultural corridors.

Methodology

- 12-month study was conducted from January 1 to December 31, 2025
- The study was funded through USDA SCBG 23-10
- Sample included 240 agricultural tourism destinations
- Traffic data was gathered with Placer.ai technology
- Spending patterns were based on Wisconsin Dept of Tourism[15] and Labor Department[16] data

Conclusion

The growth of Wisconsin's agricultural tourism sector demands a modernized, strategic, state-level response to boost rural economic vitality, and encourage family farms to diversify revenue streams, thereby sustaining their operations and the vitality of nearby local businesses.
The USDA recognized this in their 2019 edition of *Amber Waves*,[17] where the USDA indicated agricultural tourism helps farms generate the income needed to remain competitive and for rural communities to remain viable.

Given the number of family farms, and economic pressures they contend with every year, the potential economic benefits are significant both for the farms and the nearby rural businesses.

Other states across the US, and many countries around the world are harnessing agricultural tourism as a significant economic engine for rural communities: for both the farms and downtown businesses.

Cities, towns and counties across Wisconsin can take these findings into account as they develop their rural economic development initiatives, long-term plans and policies.

About WATA

Established in 1973, the Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association (WATA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to forwarding agricultural tourism as a powerful economic engine for the state. By providing essential policy insights, marketing support, and educational resources to hundreds of working farmers and tourism destinations, WATA provides informational and networking resources that can revitalize rural communities and preserve family farms. WATA takes pride in connecting travelers with authentic on-farm experiences that showcase the best of Wisconsin's agricultural heritage and innovations.

Discover more at wiagtourism.com.

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[15] Wisconsin Department of Tourism findings, https://bit.ly/4hABOBd

[16] Cite Department of Labor website page(s)

[17] USDA ERS Amber Waves, Nov. 4, 2019, https://bit.ly/4iSkaez