

Agritourism in the Cowichan Valley, British Columbia,  
Canada

by  
Anna Romanova



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CANADA

by  
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### **Declaration**

This Thesis is a product of my own work and is not the result of anything done in collaboration.

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*Anna Romanova*

### **Abstract**

Agritourism is an emerging form of farm diversification undertaken by farmers in the Cowichan Valley on Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada; however, agritourism benefits farmers and rural communities, it is also a huge undertaking and commitment for farmers, which requires additional tourism-based knowledge and skills. Farmers who pursue agritourism supplement their income, preserve farms for future generations, introduce farming to tourists, and strengthen local economy.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify the support strategies and obstacles that exist for agritourism development in the Cowichan Valley. This qualitative research was accomplished by using document analysis and semi-structured interviews, and examined agritourism development from the farmers' perspectives. The study identified two groups of farmers: the first group were those who are already offering agritourism on their farms as a part of their farm diversification activities; these farmers receive tourists who visit for leisure or educational purposes. The second group of farmers were those who want to participate in agritourism, but who do not yet offer it.

Past research investigates promotion of agritourism, including personal and cooperative advertising by farmers and related successful agritourism development as a result of marketing. Farmers in the community may choose either a collaborative or competitive approach, a factor that also influences the development of agritourism. Insufficient government and financial support for farmers also affects their willingness to participate in agritourism. Moreover, lack of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge about agritourists' motivations and needs also determines how prosperous agritourism is for farmers.

Preliminary findings suggest that farmers in the Cowichan Valley are confused about the concept of agritourism. Although, participating farmers expressed satisfaction with their current situation, they were not aware of government strategies supporting agritourism in the region. Non-participating farmers were discouraged by this lack of financial support and unclear about procedures related to implementing agritourism on their farms.

Key Words: agritourism development, marketing for agritourism, agritourism-based education, government support for agritourism.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

Tourists are looking for an authentic food-related experience as a means of appreciating places they have visited (United Nations, 2012a). There is growing evidence, therefore, that tourism-based development of agricultural communities is receiving worldwide attention and is being pursued as a means of strengthening rural economies. The Cowichan Valley in British Columbia is a densely populated farming area ripe for potential for agritourism development, and is therefore a suitable site to identify enhancements and obstacles for agritourism development.

Getting to know the culture and lifestyle of a certain territory often involves an appreciation of its food. Gastronomy is “the art of selecting, preparing, serving, and enjoying fine food” (Wolff, 2006, p. 740). Related studies explore food production, logistics, culture, economy, and treatment. Gastronomy is an important component of tourism and often is undertaken employing traditional values, but may also follow new trends in tourism: a healthy lifestyle, sustainable farming, and authentic experiences (Scarpato, 2002). The United Nations World Tourism Organization’s (UNWTO) *Global Report on Food Tourism* (2012a) claims, “the growth of food tourism worldwide is an obvious fact” (p. 10). The flexibility and adaptability of food tourism makes it one of the most dynamic sectors in the tourism market at large.

During the International Conference on Food, Culture and Tourism in Baku, Azerbaijan in September 2012, the UNWTO Secretary-General Mr. Taleb Rifai said, “food tourism is [also] an important vehicle for development, with locally sourced produce ensuring tourist dollars are invested back into the community, allowing other businesses to thrive” (United Nations, 2012b). Agricultural development benefits rural communities, where development is understood as “the sustained improvement of the population’s standards of living or welfare” (Anriquez, 2007, p. 2). Even decades earlier, in 1970, Schutjer’s study in India revealed that agricultural development

should be focused on providing knowledge and resources to small-scale farmers so that they can increase their efficiency and profitability.

Agritourism is defined as visiting or working on a farm or in any other agricultural space for enjoyment, education, or involvement in activities that generate extra income for farmers (Che, 2005; Colton, 2005; Srikatanyoo, 2010). As early as Gannon's research (1994) and still relevant today Rao (2012), tourism can contribute to successful economic development in rural communities if there is a long-range policy that takes into account economic diversification, authentic experience, tourism benefits and costs, a strategic tourism plan, proper production and marketing, professional training, and forecasting.

The following study will identify support strategies and obstacles for the development of agritourism in the Cowichan Valley, British Columbia, Canada. To this end, the objectives of the research are:

- to identify ways to improve support for farmers already participating in agritourism;
- to identify barriers farmers who do not currently participate in agritourism face, but who have expressed an interest in agritourism;

In addition to the above, consideration will be given to the role of education and of tourists' motivations and needs. Specifically, two sub-questions will be examined:

- How do entrepreneurial skills and knowledge about agritourism affect farmers' decisions to participate in agritourism?
- How does an understanding of agritourists' motivations and needs influence the development of agritourism?

The study will examine agritourism development from the farmers' perspective that is only from the supply side of tourism. As agritourism is a new and emerging activity in the

Cowichan Valley, this study focussed on the supply side because it is a good timing to get farmers' opinions about agritourism development in the valley and inform policy-makers about its potential.

The first group of farmers involved in the study will be those who already provide agritourism-related activities on their farms as part of them aim to diversify their farm activities. The second group of farmers involved in the study will be those who do not provide agritourism on their farms, but who are considering it.

There is potential for agritourism growth and development in those communities where some farmers are considering diversifying their farms into tourist attractions, especially when the profitability of their farms is decreasing and they do not want to give up their farm activities. (Howell, 2004; Lack, 1995). Diversification is used to describe farm recourses being used to create alternative farm initiatives in order to produce a new source of income and employment (Oredegbe, 2009). The Centre for Rural Research in University of Exeter (UK), suggests that there are three types of farm diversification: 1) Structural diversification includes tourism (accommodations, recreation) and adds value to farm enterprises (direct marketing, processing); 2) agricultural diversification, which consists of unconventional enterprises (crop and animal products), farm woodland (energy forestry, wildlife conservation), and agricultural contracting (for other farmers or non-agricultural organizations); and 3) passive diversification which is the leasing of land or buildings. Naturally attractive areas, a high level of social capital, a region's culture, the population in the area, policies (external factors) and financial abilities, the labour force, the size of the farm and livestock (internal factors) all influence a farmer's decision to diversify into agritourism (Dries, 2012). This master's thesis looks specifically at agritourism as one form of diversification undertaken by farmers in the Cowichan Valley.

Previous research in British Columbia on this topic and examined for this study includes three key documents: 1) a Master's thesis that examined quality assurance criteria and standards for agritourism in the Lower Fraser Valley (Howell, 2004); 2) another Master's thesis underlines differences between financially successful and unsuccessful agritourism businesses and offers management strategies in the whole British Columbia (Lack, 1995); and 3) a peer reviewed article which is a comparative study suggesting an agritourism industry plan for social sensitivity and capacity in and the City of Kimberley and Queen Charlotte City (Cooke, 1982). By looking at support strategies available to, and obstacles for, agritourism development in the Cowichan Valley, the present study will help fill the scholarship gap on agritourism research in British Columbia. This study will also contribute to scholarship on agritourism because of the research design approach: the development of agritourism examined two groups of farmers with different levels of involvement in agritourism, and therefore having different perspectives to offer. Moreover, the research findings may be used to inform the next Cowichan Region Tourism Plan developed by Community Tourism Foundation (2010-2015). That foundation helps communities to develop long-term tourism plans, and assisted with the creation of the Cowichan Sustainable Economic Development Strategy (2011), and the Cowichan Region Area Agricultural Plan (2011), both prepared by the Cowichan Region Economic Development Commission. All these plans include initiatives to develop agritourism and emphasize the creation of a stakeholder group to evaluate agritourism strengths and weaknesses in the region. Moreover, they incorporate the design of a self-guided agritourism product; identify the need for assistance in developing farm-based accommodations and farm marketing; and highlight the need for effective agritourism regulations and zoning bylaws. Results from this study will complement the above initiatives or may help create new approaches to the sustainable development of agritourism in the region.

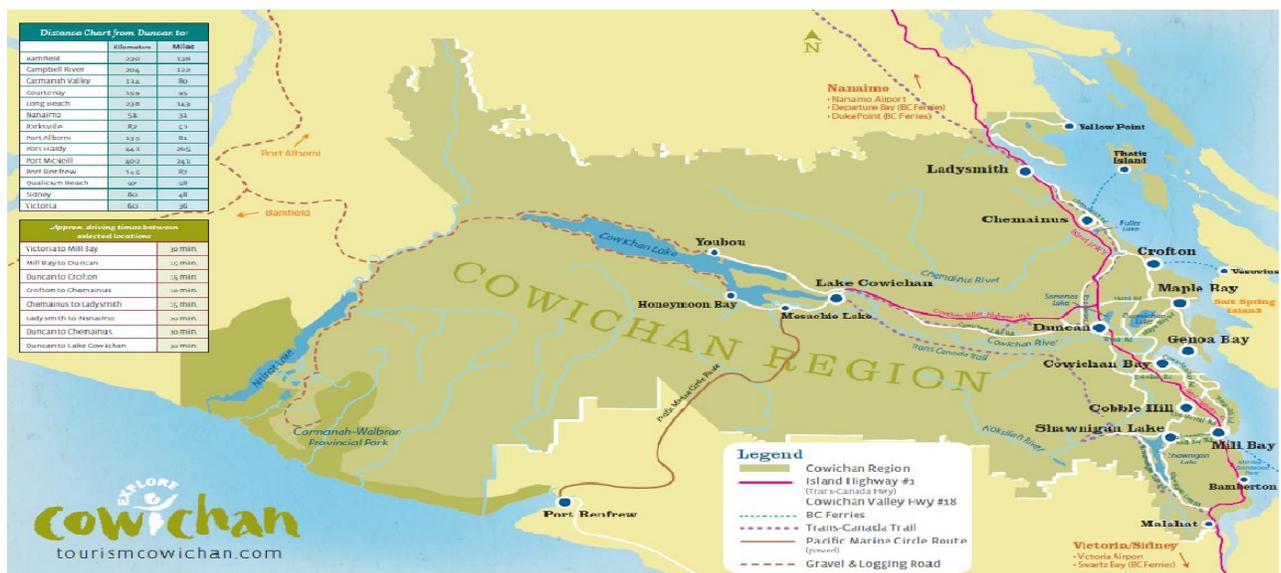
Scholars Colton (2005) and Sharpley (2006) suggest that research on the obstacles to implementing agritourism in different geographical locations will enrich what we know about agritourism. Recent research into farmers’ entrepreneurial skills highlights that more studies are needed “to identify the content and form of the knowledge in demand and the possibilities of the supply” (Kruzmetra, 2012, p. 143). Educating farmers about tourists’ needs and motivations will also complement or contradict present research (Srikatanyoo, 2010).

**Context for the Study**

The Cowichan Valley is located in the southern half of Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada’s westernmost province, and covers more than 3,473 square kilometres (see Figure 1 for the specific location of the Cowichan Valley, and Figure 2 for the location of Vancouver Island and British Columbia within Canada). The Cowichan Valley Regional District covers nine electoral areas and includes four municipalities: the City of Duncan, the Town of Lake Cowichan, the District of North Cowichan, and the Town of Ladysmith.

Figure 1

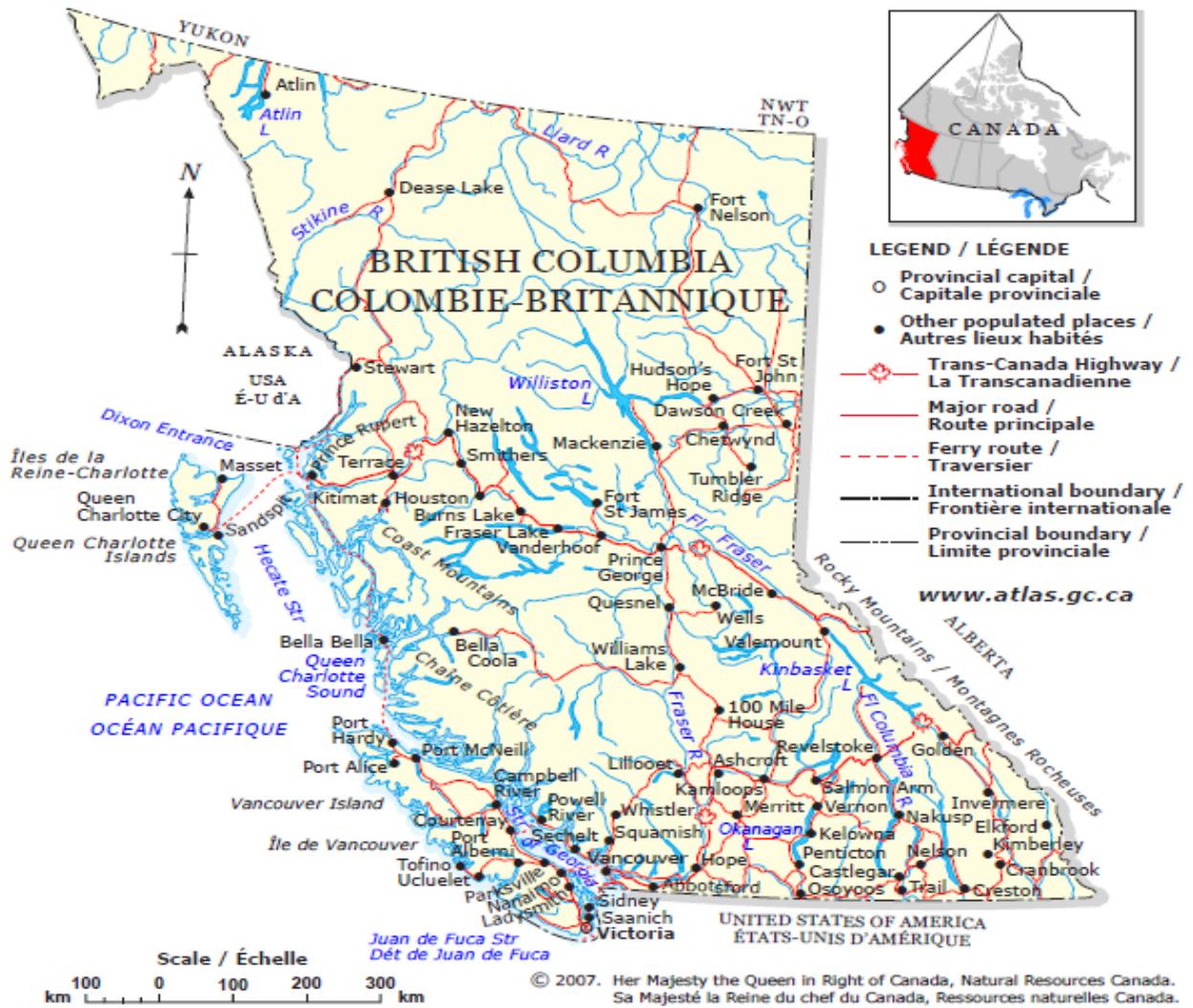
*Map of Cowichan Valley, Vancouver Island*



(Cowichan Tourism, 2014a)

Figure 2

Map of Vancouver Island, British Columbia



(Natural Resources Canada, 2014)

The Cowichan Valley takes its name from a First Nations' word meaning "the warm land," which reflects the climate and weather in the region. In 1862, Sir James Douglas, the Governor of the Crown Colony of Vancouver Island, colonized traditional land of the Cowichan

people. Since that time, this geographical area has hosted nine First Nations reserves on the 2,400 hectares territory with seven traditional villages between Duncan and Cowichan Bay. Cowichan tribes make up 60% of the Hul'qumi'num population (Cowichan Tribes, 2014; Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group, 2014).

The current population of the valley is approximately 80,000, almost half of which is employed or self-employed labour force. According to Sustainable Economic Development Strategy produced by Cowichan Region Economic Development Commission, residents of the Cowichan Valley work primarily in the sales and service industries, which include agriculture that takes the fifth position in the Table of Estimated Occupations by Major Groups 2010 (Cowichan Region, 2011). Only 7% of businesses involve agriculture. At the same time, the region boasts 685 farms as of 2011; 85.4% of these are less than 70 acres, comparing to 65.6% in British Columbia and 22.21% in Canada. Therefore the size of farms in the Cowichan Valley is relatively small compared to the size of farms all over the country which reaches up to 3,520 acres and more (4.09% of total amount of farms). The average age of farmers in the area is 56 years old (Statistics Canada, 2014a). These statistics suggest that many middle-aged farmers on small farms might be interested in the development of agriculture in the Cowichan Valley.

The Cowichan Valley is located in Mediterranean and Maritime climatic zones and at 14.1 Celsius provides the warmest average annual temperature in January in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2014b). The valley has the third longest growing season in Canada which is almost 200 days a year (The Old Farmer's, 2014). The most rain in the valley falls between October and March and is approximately 102.42 cm. (Cowichan Valley, n. d.). Surveys taken in Canada describe the soil in the Cowichan Valley as being poorly drained, having medium acid, and good fertility and organic levels. This soil was historically suitable for hay and pasture, beans, cole

crops corn leaf vegetables, cereals, and most forage crops and peas. It requires careful cultivation practices and lime (Soil information, 2014; Soil management, 2014).

Farmers in the Cowichan Valley provide primary as well as secondary processed products. Visitors can buy most types of meat, dairy, berries, vegetables, and fruits right from the farms or farmers markets. At the same time, farmers offer cheeses, jam, canned products, spices, and lavender products. There are 16 wineries and a cidery that sell locally grown wines and ciders (Cowichan Tourism, 2014b).

Although agritourism in the Cowichan Valley is still an emerging activity, more than 30 years ago Murphy (1988) suggested that the Cowichan Valley was suitable for tourism and economic development (as compared to other areas on Vancouver Island). Moreover, same study highlighted that residents of the valley felt that there was more potential for tourism than any other industry. Since locals are most affected by tourism development in rural areas, their buy-in as stakeholders is essential. Murphy's research (1990) also suggests that the Cowichan Valley is located in a favourable zone for tourism development as it is between two major cities on Vancouver Island – Victoria and Nanaimo. Despite its location, the valley went unnoticed by passing agritourists until the local rural community began implementing their agritourism initiatives.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### **A Brief History of Agritourism**

In the 1960s, farmers in Europe began thinking about diversifying their farm activities by positioning them as tourist destinations. This happened as a result of growing demand for tourist attractions and farmers' increasing awareness of the economic benefits of tourism-oriented activities on their farms. European governments in France, Italy, England, Denmark, and Germany encouraged the development of agritourism as early as the 1950s. In France, the French Ministry of Agriculture provided financial aid for farmers to build accommodations and meet an increasing demand for agritourism. In the late 1960s, the Italian government realized the significance of agritourism for rural redevelopment by providing taxation policies to support it. In 1970, Danish tourism organizations encouraged farmers to diversify into agritourism as a means of earning additional income. In Germany in 1974, 7% of all accommodations were farm-based and 40% of grants went towards capital costs (Frater, 1983). More recently, in 2005, 18.1% of farmers in 15 European Union (EU) countries chose to diversify into agritourism. Between 2000 and 2006, the EU Rural Development Budget for agricultural diversification was € 522 million (European Commission, 2008b). LEADER (a method that allows local stakeholders to develop an area) and the Common Agricultural Policy recognized the growth of agritourism all over the EU and encouraged its development through their initiatives (European Commission, 2008a; European Network, 2014).

After World War II, the number of Canadian farms rapidly declined and those that remained were looking for new ways to generate income. Weaver (1997) suggests two conditions that caused diversification into agritourism: agricultural overproduction and increased demand

for rural leisure opportunities. Many farms implemented agritourism as a survival strategy in Canada (Barbieril, 2010) and all over the world (Colton, 2005).

### **Agritourism and Sustainable Rural Development**

Phillips's (2010) Table of Definitions for agritourism and related labels shows that "rural tourism" and "rural enterprises" are word combinations widely used to describe agritourism. Agrarian products and specific farming environments further define agritourism. A number of authors suggest that agritourism is part of various subsets of wilderness and adventure tourism, as well as green or ecotourism (Hegarty, 2005; Lane, 2009; Roberts, 2001). Agritourism is often used interchangeably with the following terms: "agrotourism," "farm tourism," "farm-based tourism," and "vacation tourism." Agricultural tourism encourages visits to farms for diverse purposes including: education, entertainment, on-site retail purchases, volunteer opportunities, cooking classes, knowledge of farm history, and gardening workshops.

Rural tourism often reduces the tourists' carbon footprint and is an attraction for "slow travellers" who travel mostly by road, stay longer, engage with local transportation, support the environment, and want to experience the history of the places they visit (Moore, 2012). Slow tourism allows visitors a greater appreciation of local heritage, people and culture. The Slow Food Movement promotes sustainably grown and heritage foods, and emphasizes the pleasure of eating food (Schneider, 2008). It also values eating meals together, understanding where food comes from, and appreciating the gift of food (Petrini, 2001). The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights signed in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by General Assembly on 16 December, 1966 affirms this: [it is] "the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food" (United Nations, 1966). For the slow food movement, food is not only grown slowly, in

traditional ways, it is consumed slowly. The movement promotes: "consumer activism as well as industry and public policy initiatives" and recommends consuming and producing food slowly and locally (Hall, 2009). It is more sustainable to use shared surface transport instead of planes, cruise ships, and individual cars and to focus people's interest on the destinations closer to home (Margo, 2012).

The *Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Project (SARD)*, a project under the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO), focuses on improving rural communities and fulfilling economic, social, and environmental needs of current generations without sacrificing the livelihood of future generations. It suggests that agritourism offers significant benefits for farmers, tour operators, tourists, non-government organizations (NGOs), businesses, and local governments and should be accomplished in a socio-culturally, economically, and environmentally sustainable manner (Sustainable Agriculture, n. d.). Agritourism should also be suitable and engaging for tourists without compromising agricultural activities. For example, visitors could be invited to purchase and eat agricultural products and take part in related activities (UNWTO, 2012a) – such as providing local organic food via a "farm-to-table" experience (Hall, 2012).

Tourism used to be considered sustainable and called a "smokeless" industry because it was not considered harmful to the environment; however, this assumption has been challenged in recent decades and is no longer considered to be an accurate view (Margo, 2012). Changes to resource and land use, biodiversity, and pollution, have increased tourism's negative effect. According to the UNWTO, the number of international tourists went up by more than 200 million between 2001 until 2007, which significantly increases tourism's carbon footprint (Hall, 2009). Based on a research report completed for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural

Affairs by the University of Surrey, tourist responses to a survey on the *Public Understanding of Sustainable Leisure and Tourism* illustrated that most tourists are not aware their vacation activities are harmful to the environment (Miller, 2007). Same report also highlight that when people plan their vacations, they are concerned primarily with fulfilling their own needs. Nonetheless, he found also that some tourists consider more sustainable types of transportation and try to reduce their travel-related carbon footprint.

### **Benefits of Agritourism Activities and Development**

A number of scholars (Nickerson, 2001; Ollenburg, 2007; Schilling, 2012; Tew, 2011) state that farmers are able to benefit from agritourism because it can generate additional income to sustain the farm, as well as prepare for retirement and create future job opportunities for their children (Ollunburg, 2007). In times of economic distress, such as “poor harvest or depressed prices,” agritourism activities can provide alternative or supplemental income (Tew, 2011, p. 216). For some farmers, tourists may serve as a substitute for off-farm employment to meet the economic needs of the farm and household until agricultural yield improves (Ollenburg, 2007). This may contribute in turn to the local community through sales taxes, local employment, and stimulation of local businesses such as restaurants and shops (Tew, 2011). Agritourism creates economic benefits for local economies by attracting different types of visitors, promoting agricultural development, and raising awareness among tourists and local residents about agriculture’s contribution to the economy and quality of life (Lobo et al, 1999).

Although farmers consider the economic benefits of farm diversification, agritourism also provides some social benefits including succession planning. Agritourism provides activities and employment that supports and encourages family members to stay on the farm. It can also serve as a means to retain family-owned properties for future generations (Nickerson, 2001; Ollenburg,

2007). Social benefits also include providing farmers with opportunities to educate tourists about agriculture, and create the potential for family members to make new connections with visitors. Farmers like to share their unique farm experience, sense of place, quality and lifestyle. Visitors appreciate the authenticity of farm life, and often return to the area as a result of the positive experiences they have there (Gannon, 1994). Farmers also provide uninformed visitors with an educational experience by sharing agricultural techniques. Nickerson (2001) and Ollenburg (2007) both suggest that if visitors understand farm life, they are more likely to defend agricultural operations when farmers require support.

### **Strategies and Obstacles for Agritourism Development**

**Marketing and promotion.** Studies that have investigated agritourism development highlight the role promotion plays in its success (Che, 2005; Clarke, 1996; Colton, 2005; Frater, 1983; Lobo et al, 1999). This success includes the sharing of marketing ideas between farmers in a region to strengthen existing networks (Che, 2005). Brochures and online promotion websites provide information about agritourism destinations and providers (Che, 2005). Promotional materials might include a description of the farms and their activities, contact information, and availability of products throughout a year. Some brochures are distributed at farmers' markets and visitor centres, as well as online (Che, 2005; Wilson, 2007). Local groups, organizations, and interested stakeholders discuss the effectiveness of collaborative approach and often pursue group advertisement as a more cost effective means than direct marketing, or they choose to rely upon word-of-mouth endorsements. Some farmers will engage in individual promotion by giving their business cards directly to the tourists or leaving them in tourist information centres (Clarke, 1996). Combining personal and group marketing or subscribing to a marketing group have also proven to be successful (Sharpley, 2006).

Another key to agritourism successful promotion is having an organization in the region focused exclusively on agritourism (Che, 2003; Clarke, 1994; Frater, 1983). The mandate of these organizations could be to research trends in the agritourism market, compare national and international developments in agritourism, recruit new farms, design marketing strategies specifically for the region, coordinate events, build advertising campaigns, and represent members' interests on the provincial and national levels (Lobo et al, 1999).

A 1994 study of successful agritourism promotion strategies conducted by Clarke in New Zealand found that tourists come to tourism destinations through the "travel industry distribution system" (p. 148). This distribution system refers to overseas travel agents, tour operators, and promotional literature. The same study highlights the importance of developing domestic and international markets for successful promotion campaigns (Clarke, 1994).

More recently in Canada, Colton's (2005) research in Nova Scotia illustrates that promotion of agritourism should not only focus on local products for sale, but also on how to participate in farming activities in a relaxing environment, at one with nature. His research also revealed how frustrated farmers were when their promotion strategies were unsuccessful promotional campaigns, because they did not prioritize marketing among their activities. Ineffective marketing is a big challenge to overcome and it occurs due to lack of unity among agritourism entrepreneurs, that is why partnerships among farmers are recommended (Sharpley, 2002).

**Partnerships.** McGehee (2007) proposed a collaborative approach to marketing to maximize the possibilities of agritourism providers in a given region. The collaboration has to happen between farmers themselves, farmers and tourism promoters, and farmers and community members. The literature highlights that since different farmers are providing the same services to

the same tourists, a collaborative rather than a competitive approach for agritourism development is best. Farmers generally prefer to work together and compete with supermarkets and other retail outlets rather than with each other. If a farmer cannot provide a tourist with a specific product or service, the farmer will refer the tourist to another farmer, rather than to a grocery store. This system supports farmers economically and builds capacity in the agricultural community (Che, 2005; Lobo et al, 1999).

Not having a network between agribusinesses is an obstacle for farmers' involvement and raising their awareness of agritourism. Increased cooperation and networking contributes to the long-term survival of farms in rural areas, improved community spirit, and greater self-reliance. Farmers recognize the importance of working together to achieve common goals by establishing strong connections with each other and with different levels of government (Colton, 2005).

**Government support.** Agritourism is often more effective with government support (Colton, 2005; Farter, 1983; Sharpley, 2002). However, researcher looking into funding support for agritourism in Nova Scotia revealed that farmers think provincial and municipal governments are no longer optimistic about agritourism there (Colton, 2005). Lack of cooperation between different levels of government and stagnant legislative processes make it less likely agritourism will be successful. Colton suggests that there is a need to have a strategic plan, sponsorship, and distribution of work across roles is recommended for all farmers and stakeholders (2005).

Nevertheless, some European countries such as France, Italy, Germany, Denmark, and England have positive national policies that encourage the development of agritourism. Some of those policies provide funding for farmers to renew or build accommodations for tourists. Others are aimed at rural re-development and stimulating interest in agritourism among farmers. The European policies provide financial aid, but also make tax legislation and access to publicity as

flexible as possible (Frater, 1983). More recent overview of agritourism in Europe by Clemens (2004) suggests that EU provides policies, which “favour younger producers, poorer regions, and less favoured areas where environmental restrictions limit production opportunities” (p. 8).

**Financial support.** The absence of sufficient funding for agritourism restricts its development and prosperity (Lobo et al, 1999; Frater, 1983; Sharpley, 2002, 2006). Farmers underscore the need for reduced local taxes and business rates as well as subsidies for advertising. From the farmers’ perspective, the public sector could “be more proactive in supporting the promotion of rural tourism businesses” (Sharpley, 2006, p. 1049). Another important financial barrier for farmers is the inability to secure bank loans. Sharpley (2002) claims that most owners of traditional farm properties are older, and therefore banks are less willing to loan them money.

In contrast, early research carried out by Frater in Germany and France in 1983 suggests “rural landowner[s] or farmer[s] can obtain grants or loans to help finance the conversion of farm buildings” (p. 172). At that time in order to obtain loans or grants for building or reconstruction of farm buildings, farmers had to be eligible to apply for and meet certain requirements, but, in general, most farmers were given financial aid. However, more recent study shows that when European countries joined the European Union, EU funds are available for farmers who still need to meet each country’s special criteria. For example, in Italy farmers must to have two years of farm-related experience to access government grants for agritourism. In addition to that, they have to accomplish 100 hours of training and pass an oral exam to get the licence to participate in agritourism (Clemens, 2004).

**Education and training.** As farmers diversify their farm activities, one of the main challenges is their inability to successfully maintain a “double stream business.” Maintaining a

primary agricultural business and running a tourist one requires training. Agritourism professional development teaches these business skills and analysis of tourism markets and profiles. Farmers gain entrepreneurial skills that benefit their agritourism activities (Sharpley, 2002, 2006). Entrepreneurial business skills and tourism knowledge, and understanding of agritourists' motivations and needs are examined below.

**Entrepreneurial business skills and tourism knowledge.** Years ago farmers recognized they did not have sufficient knowledge engage as tourism operators (Gannon, 1994). Not having this ability before, some farmers take business or training courses to compensate for this shortage now (Sharpley, 2006). However, some farmers prefer to visit other farmers who already have experience in agritourism and who are able to provide practical recommendations. Colton's (2005) research in Nova Scotia suggested that since farmers are very busy throughout a year, even a guidebook or "how to" handouts with basic recommendations would be helpful. In spite of the lack of time farmers have for self-education and the lack of appropriate seminars and handout material, many farmers understand that successful management of a tourism business depends on this education (Kruzmetra, 2012). A 1999 study is still relevant today in terms of understanding of market trends and "consumer behaviour, consumer attitudes and consumer preferences" (Lobo et al, p. 24) is also critical to this success.

**Understanding agritourists' motivations and needs.** The future of agritourism is dependent on understanding and meeting consumers' preferences (McGehee, 2007; Srikatanyoo, 2010). Previous studies found that farmers are more likely to explore agritourists' needs and motivations if they are already involved in agritourism (McGehee, 2007). One of these studies found that an operator who has accommodations and guided tours is interested in clients' preferences more than somebody who only hosts occasional events on a farm (Srikatanyoo,

2010). Targeting tourists and then adapting farm activities for them is a key. Since most farms are located in rural areas, agritourists are receptive to accommodations, host communities, and the environment (Srikatanyoo, 2010). Before advertising agritourism in a region, marketing agents also need to know what to emphasize: for instance, educational opportunities, family participation, or recreation (McGehee, 2007). For these reasons, farmers and policy makers need to know agritourists' needs and motivations in order to run successful enterprises and create effective marketing strategies.

### **Chapter 3. Methodology**

#### **Qualitative Research**

This research was designed to be qualitative because qualitative methods put the researcher in the world that is studied to learn about some of its aspects and to suggest ideas useful to this world (Rossman, 1998). Denzin (2005) asserts that "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them" (p.3). Malterud (2001) suggests three factors that constitute research: reflexivity (shared preconceptions); transferability (adequate sample and consideration of who/what findings concern); and interpretation and analysis (description of theoretical framework and clear systematic procedure).

There are three main differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods. First, qualitative research focuses on processes that are not usually experimentally measured, whereas a quantitative approach can examine phenomena using amount, frequency, and intensity (Denzin, 2005). Shenton (2004) suggests a few strategies that are fundamental to qualitative research and which also suit this study: credibility (using appropriate research methods, random sampling, reviewing previous literature to frame findings); transferability (overall description of the examined phenomena and context, so the findings can be compared to other studies done elsewhere); dependability (description of the methodology and its effectiveness, reflection on the research process); and confirmability (allowance for researcher's assumptions, recognizing the limitations of the research, using a variety of methods to support the findings). In addition to the above, Hollinshead (2004) presents 'crystallization' as a way of selecting "methods-in-tandem to differentially, yet collectively, capture a multiple range of interpretations about the issue being explored" and then refine interpretations in terms of the research context (p. 91). Second,

qualitative research allows for a close look at the phenomena and environment under study, while quantitative research does not have direct interaction with what is being studied. As part of the 'close look at the phenomena,' scholars such as Ratner (2010) and Siegesmund (2010) propose that, with qualitative research, the researcher can reflect upon the individuals' situations and analyse them in a real-world environment. Lastly, qualitative research gives rich and deep descriptions of processes whereas quantitative research tends to generalize findings (Denzin, 2005; Goodson, 2004).

A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study of agritourism because it seeks to capture farmers' perspectives, histories, opinions, and feelings, and interpret them in the context of agritourism development. To ensure credibility, confirmability, and crystallisation of this research, interviews and document analysis were used together to build insights into farmers' perspectives and to answer the research questions. The literature review was employed to identify features of sustainable agritourism, and to create a framework that was used to analyse the data.

The present qualitative study uses a small sample size. Small samples have been used in previous research on agritourism and are beneficial, because they offer an opportunity to investigate a small number of participants as they manifest complex phenomena (Breier, 1988). For example, Wilson (2007) used 12 farmers in a study to understand motivations and obstacles for developing a family farm. Although the sample size was the main limitation of her study, she managed to get different results from other studies done on the same topic. In contrast, in her exploration of new forms of alternative agriculture borrowed from Asia by the United States, Imbruce (2007) found that ten farmers were representative of the phenomena under study.

The sample size for this study is 10 farmers: there are five farmers participating in agritourism out of the 24 farmers listed on the Cowichan Valley tourism website. In addition,

there are five farmers out of an unidentifiable number of farmers who are not participating in agritourism yet, but who are considering it – to varying degrees – as a means to diversify their farms. The data gained from this research is rich in information, is relevant for the current state of agritourism development in the Cowichan Valley, and findings will make a valuable contribution to the literature on agritourism development that may inform similar future studies conducted in British Columbia, Canada, or elsewhere.

### **Research Methods**

The methods chosen for this study were document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Mason (1996) proposed that “the term *method* in qualitative research generally...implies a data generalization process involving activities which are intellectual, analytical, and interpretive” (p. 36). Qualitative research uses interviews, observation, written texts, visual aids, and personal experience (Denzin, 2005).

**Document analysis.** Document analysis has been used in studies about agritourism to ascertain context for the topic (Forbord, 2012; Ilbery, 2007; Naipaul, 2009). The researcher analysed documents to access agritourism in the Cowichan Valley as it is presented in local agricultural, tourism, and economic spheres. Document analysis is widely used in qualitative tourism research (Decrop, 2004). Document analysis was used in this study to analyse policy and other documents associated with agritourism in the Cowichan Valley (see Table 1). The method was employed to identify how decision-makers view the development of agritourism in the region, and to determine what strategies they have already implemented or are recommended. First, the researcher identified and reviewed online and offline published sources about tourism and agriculture in the Cowichan Valley. Second, documents containing specific information about agritourism and documents where agritourism was slightly mentioned were separated and

analysed. Finally, , the analyzed information about agritourism was used to confirm and challenge findings from interviews and to support answering the research questions. This research method did not involve any additional participants, information was checked and rechecked, it was not costly, and reference lists in the end of the reviewed documents led to finding other references related to agritourism.

Table 1

*Analysed Documents*

#	Name of the Document	Organization	Year Issued
1	Cowichan Region Area Agricultural Plan	Cowichan Region Economic Development Commission	2010
2	Cowichan Region Tourism Plan 2010-2015	Community Tourism Foundations	2010
3	Sustainable Economic Development Strategy	Cowichan Region Economic Development Commission	2011
4	Economic Development Strategy	Cowichan Region Economic Development Commission	2002
5	Tourism Vancouver Island Business Plan	Tourism Vancouver Island	2011
6	The British Columbia Agricultural Plan	B.C. Agricultural Plan Committee	2005

**Interviews.** Interviews conducted for this study provided comprehensive information and perspectives about agritourism in the Cowichan Valley. Fontana (2005) claims that the interview is not just a process of exchanging questions and answers between people; it is a process of mutually created storytelling. He adds that: “The focus of interviews is moving to encompass the *hows* of people’s lives (the constructive work involved in producing order in everyday life) as well as the traditional *whats* (the activities of everyday life)” (p. 698). A semi-structured interview approach was employed and involves seeking deep level of knowledge held by

participants, going beyond the common sense to expose what is the usually hidden, and achieving clear understanding of the multiple interpretations on the same topic (Johnson, 2002).

Farmers who took part in the interviews were both participants and non-participants in agritourism. The questions for farmers already participating in agritourism were focused on improvements to agritourism development support strategies, i.e. what they wanted to see in order to make the industry better (see Appendix 3 for sample interview questions). Questions for non-participating farmers focused on the barriers to participating in agritourism and identified their level of agritourism-based knowledge and education (see Appendix 4 for sample interview questions).

During the interviews, the researcher had the opportunity to clarify and give explanations if the responder needed them. The interviewer maintained a friendly conversational atmosphere, and avoided influencing the interviewee's responses (Veal, 2011). Depending on the responses from an interviewee, the researcher could adapt the discussion during the interview, but maintained focus on the research questions. An interview is a very time-consuming procedure (Muise, n.d) and can be an expensive venture. In the case of the research presented here, there were expenses related to getting to and from the location where interviews took place, which did limit the geographical scope of the research. One of the main challenges for interview data collection was that interviews were conducted between August and September, which is the busiest season for farmers.

The researcher identified participants, arranged and conducted interviews. The researcher found participating farmers through the Internet database and sent them an email invitation (see Appendix 6). Another source of finding participating farmers was the *Buy Local Buy Fresh Map* issued by Cowichan Green Community, which has up to 70 farmers with their contact

information. To get enough participants for the study, the researcher randomly contacted farmers listed on the map and invited them to participate in an interview. This technique was used for both participating and non-participating farmers as the researcher asked farmers whether they were involved in agritourism or not during initial phone contact. A snowball sampling technique was used to identify non-participating farmers who would like to be involved in agritourism. Snowball sampling can help the researcher identify key interviewees (Marzano, 2009; Stevenson, 2008). Veal (2011) defines snowball sampling as a method where “interviewees [are] used as [a] source of suggestions for additional contacts” (p. 370). Since some participants did not respond to the email or did not have an email address, the researcher had to make phone calls and invite interviewees over the phone.

Once interviews were confirmed, consent forms were issued to the interviewees. The consent forms introduced the research, described confidentiality issues, and provided information on any potential harm caused by participating in an interview (see Appendix 7). A total of 10 farmers were interviewed: five farmers already participating in agritourism, and five farmers who were interested to participate in agritourism but who were not already involved in it.

The researcher followed up with a reminder email and a phone call, and arranged an interview at a location and time suitable for the farmer and for the researcher. Interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and note taking during the interview. Digital recordings of the interviews were transcribed into a Word Document and identified by date in the order they were conducted. Once all the interviews were transcribed, they were analysed. As the researcher went through the transcripts, the most informative quotes relevant to answering the research questions were extracted and inserted into an Excel document and organized around similar themes. Next, thematic titles were given to each group of quotes. The researcher picked nine out of twelve

themes that were further described in the research findings chapter based on the strength of the theme, in part assessed by the quantity of quotes supporting each theme.

The data was stored on the researchers’ personal computer’s hard drive, with both being password protected and only available to the researcher. Farmers were assured that they would remain anonymous in the research findings and any documents or reports prepared from the research. Therefore, pseudonyms are used to identify farmers in the research findings chapter.

Interview profiles are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Interviewee Profiles*

#	Name	Relationship to Agritourism	Location	Farm Operations Since
1	Peter	Participating	Cowichan Bay	2001
2	Jack	Participating	Duncan	2004
3	Ben	Participating	Cobble Hill	1990
4	Mary and Jane	Participating	Maple Bay	2009
5	James	Participating	Duncan	2009
6	Cole and Ann	Non-participating	Maple Bay	2006
7	Laura	Non-participating	Cowichan Station	2008
8	Zack	Non-participating	Cowichan Bay	2009
9	Lisa	Non-participating	North Cowichan	2010
10	Kathrin	Non-participating	Shawnigan Lake	2007

**Focus group.** Kamberelis (2005) claims that a well moderated focus group allows the researcher: “to explore group characteristics and dynamics as relevant constitutive forces in the construction of meaning and the practice of social life” (p. 902). The same study also suggests that focus groups provide an opportunity to analyse the natural settings and effects of on-going discussion that is not possible to achieve through interviews. Focus groups are beneficial in the

way that they help to generate a large amount of data from a relatively big number of people in a short period of time.

The researcher had planned to conduct a focus group to address the most frequently made points emerging from the interviews as this can provide an opportunity to gain insights on interview data with the farmers who were interviewed for the study. Time did not allow for this stage of the research to conduct a focus group and it was assessed that document analysis and interviews provided sufficient data with which to answer the research questions.

### **Analytical Framework**

An analytical framework is a tool of qualitative research, which “helps us [researchers] to structure the analysis of our data and to order and communicate our findings” (Pearce, 2012, p.50). Pearce (2012) underlines the importance of using the analytical framework for analysing data gained from in-depth interviews. Because the information can be rich, it is critical to use a framework to present clearly articulated findings and not to overwhelm the reader with long and insipid discussion. An analytical framework can be used when the themes have been selected from the previous literature or theories to analyse specific issues, and at the same time leave a possibility for discovering unexpected aspects of analysed data (Gale, 2013).

An agritourism development framework was developed and used in this study to analyse the data, answer the research questions, and address the objectives of the study. The literature reviewed provided the elements that contribute to the framework. To create the framework, six main requirements for sustainable agritourism development were identified and organized in sequence starting from the most essential element to the least essential. The scholarship on agritourism indicated that these elements appear in sequence: First, an order to develop agritourism products, farmers need to have sufficient knowledge and consider tourists’ needs

first. Second, they need government and financial assistance. Third farmers need to develop marketing strategies, and finally, farmers need to build a network with other farmers..

The detailed descriptions of the elements of the framework are: 1) educational opportunities that provide farmers with the business and tourism related knowledge and abilities they require to build the necessary skill set to help them succeed as agribusiness operators; 2) providing farmers with an understanding of tourists' motivations and knowledge on how to meet visitor needs to create a unique experience on their farms; 3) identify appropriate type and degree of government involvement, including for instance, regulations and guidelines for agritourism, providing relevant updates and strategic documents, and promoting interest in agritourism as a prosperous area of development; 4) identifying financial assistance opportunities from government, agriculture and tourism organizations, or private funds that can support and assist farmers to sustain their farms; 5) developing and implementing effective marketing strategies identified by farmers to help them promote themselves, including individual level promotion (e.g. website, social network, word of mouth) as well as group initiatives (e.g. brochures, maps, magazines, tour guides); and 6) adopt a collaborative approach to support established and emerging farmers in the area so they can share their experiences about agritourism and its implementation, as well as to promote tourist references to each other farms (for instance, if they do not offer the specific experience sought, or if there their bookings are full). Table 3 presents the framework features in a table format. The elements are presented in chronological order from most important to least important.

Table 3

*Agritourism Development Framework*

#	Sustainable Development of Agritourism	Summary Description	Reference
1	Agritourism and agribusiness education	Ability for farmers to gain entrepreneurial skills and relevant agritourism-based education	Colton (2005) Kruzmetra (2012) Sharpley (2002, 2006)
2	Tourists' needs/motivations	Access to tourism oriented information and training to meet tourist needs and understand their motivation to participate in agritourism	McGehee (2007) Srikatanyoo (2010)
3	Strategic government involvement	Timely updates regarding regulations and strategic plans that govern agritourism	Colton (2005) Lobo et al (1999) Sharpley (2002)
4	Financial assistance	Financial support available in the form of grants, loans, donations	Colton (2005) Sharpley (2002, 2006)
5	Effective marketing strategies	Individual and cooperative actions that promote agritourism at the individual farm level, and in the region generally	Che (2003) Clarke (1994) Colton (2005) McGehee (2007) Sharpley (2002, 2006)
6	Partnerships	Collaboration and support between farmers	Che (2003) Colton (2005)

**Limitations of the study**

The data for this research was collected in late August through the end of September, which is still a busy time for the farmers. Other participants could have been involved in this study if interviews would take place during less busier time of year. Meanwhile, to ensure that the 10 required participants would be found for this study, the researcher adapted to farmers' schedules and met with them in locations that were convenient for them. The geographical area was limited by the financial means of the researcher. Had the researcher had access to more financial resources, the participants could have been invited from more locations across the Cowichan Valley and at greater distances from main highways and towns. . A final limitation to

this study is that the research conducted focussed only on agritourism development from the farmers' perspective. Therefore, it does not take into consideration agritourism development in the Cowichan Valley from visitor perspectives. The latter would form an interesting future study and would complement the findings from the present research.

### **Research Ethics**

This research was submitted to the Vancouver Island University Research Ethics Board (VIU REB) on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013 and was approved on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Christians (2005) suggests four codes of ethics researchers need to follow in order to complete research according to moral principles. First, participation in the study should be completely voluntary and the researcher should provide full information about the research. Participants need to have a full description of activities they are being asked to be involved in. Second, the researcher should not use deception to involve participants in the research; all conditions for participation have to be trust based and straightforward. Third, it is sometimes imperative that all participants need to remain anonymous. In these cases, information about participants' identities has to be confidential and must not appear on any materials produced to deliver research findings. Finally, to the best of the researchers' abilities, all data presented in the research has to reflect the information shared by participants. The qualitative approach used to execute this Master's research is based on these four codes of ethics.

## Chapter 4. Research Findings

This section represents thematically organized findings from the analysis of documents related to tourism or agriculture in the Cowichan Valley and from interviews with farmers. The first section of this chapter is an overview of agritourism, promotion, government support, and strategic planning of farmers participating in agritourism. The second section reflects on awareness about agritourism, partnerships, entrepreneurial business skills and tourism knowledge, and understanding tourists' motivations and needs from farmers not yet engaged in agritourism. These themes are analysed in relation to the agritourism development framework presented in the previous chapter.

### Farmers who already participate in agritourism

**Farmers' overview of agritourism.** The study found that farmers in the Cowichan Valley are confused by what is meant by 'agritourism.' Even farmers who have been participating in agritourism for many years do not share a common definition. Ben, who has been involved in agritourism for four years, does not define what he is doing as agritourism:

I have never started agritourism ... I offer what I think has to be offered, which coincidentally happens to be what agritourism is about ... I never attempted to do an agritourism experience here [but] it so happens that what I do can be categorized as agritourism.

Farmers have no regrets if they diversified into agritourism, whether they started participating to sustain their farm or protect it for the next generation. All farmers interviewed

agreed that tourism was an economically sustainable way to retain their farms. Jack who is already involved in agritourism thinks that the future of the farm relies on tourism. He explains:

Agritourism is really something that we want to increase on the farm because we realize growing vegetables is physically demanding. So we know we cannot do it forever. I think we can focus more on tourism and less on production in the future.

Farmers also provide educational activities on their farms to satisfy a wide range of tourist interests. Farmers do not have a target audience in terms of age or tourist occupations; they cater to everyone: from students who come for tours, to families on getaway weekends, to retirees on vacation. James uses the term “edutainment” to describe what he does on his farm:

We talk of the origins of lavender, its history, because it goes back a long way. We talk about the labyrinths, and the history of labyrinths, and the reason we have a labyrinth, and our design for labyrinths, which is distinctly different from most. It is contemporary and it is geometrically designed. We show them how we dry lavender. We also have a still and we show them [how to extract] oil from lavender. It is a whole process and it is entertaining; for many it is quite educational. So [it is] edutainment.

Even in rare cases when farmers are certain that what they are doing corresponds with the definition and objectives of agritourism, government agencies seem to disagree. Mary and Jane explain how the Agricultural Land Commission Act (ALCA) creates “...the definition of agritourism [and] the definition of farm product... It is quite complicated.” Moreover, they add

there are “all [these] rules and regulations about what you can and cannot [do]” and that these directives date back to the 1970s. .

Although the Cowichan Agricultural Area Plan (2011) ensures that according to zoning regulations farm land should be used for what it is zoned for, farmers are still not sure what kind of activities are suitable for what zones. Farmers become confused when they think their agritourism activities do not fall under the definition provided by the Local Government Act.

**Promotion.** Interviews with farmers revealed that all participating farmers were a part of cooperative marketing for the whole Cowichan Valley, joining together to produce maps and brochures, and to advertise in magazines where other farms from the region could be found as well. Additionally, every farmer had their own website and social network. Four farmers also indicated word-of-mouth was the most efficient method for promotion. Among them was Peter, a participating farmer, who explained that although he had tried various marketing methods, none had been successful: “To be honest marketing is not worth the money anymore... We found that the best advertising, the way the world is now, is word-of-mouth.”

All five farmers who participate in agritourism and were interviewed for this study promoted themselves locally in newspapers, magazines, and on radio. As James explains: “...the first target is your locals.” Nevertheless, farmers from the Cowichan Valley receive a lot of international tourists that come from other parts of North America, Europe, South America, and Australia. International tourists often come to their farms because they have heard of the Cowichan Valley from relatives or friends, or explored the valley as part of their travels in British Columbia. Evidence that people come to the valley from all over the world shows the power of word-of-mouth as a marketing tool.

Participating farmers who were interviewed refer tourists to other farms and businesses in the valley, including accommodations and tourism attractions. Peter, a participating farmer, sees great value in creating a diverse experience for visitors, building a network with other agricultural operations:

There is not enough time to do everything on the farm, so we do as much as we can and there are enough great people in the valley who do what we cannot do. There is no point taking business away from them. There is a great bakery, so we get bread from them and great restaurants, which is why we do not cook dinner. [We offer] massive support for the community, because they are supporting us at the same time.

Participating farmers chose and implemented very effective cooperative and individual marketing strategies towards promoting agritourism as a result of which they stay busy with incoming tourists all season long. That is why the government support is very important for farmers, so they can grow and succeed as agribusinesses.

**Government support.** All of the interviewed farmers said they had not heard of, or benefitted from, government strategies for the development of agritourism in the Cowichan Valley. They are dissatisfied with the government because regulations and rules related to agritourism in the region make the process overly bureaucratic. Although new policy regulating agritourism in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) was updated in 2003, some participating farmers believe that the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) is still using outdated information. Indeed, Land Commission Act became a law on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1973 and was focused entirely on the proper farm use, which involves nothing but agriculture related activities.

Mary and Jane feel that the: “Agricultural Land Commission has set rules about what you can or cannot do on farmland and these laws were developed in 1973 and they are outdated, totally outdated.” They are further highlight how “everything has changed. Farming has changed. The face of farming has changed, and it is time for the Land Commission to start working on this.”

However, one interviewed farmer acknowledges that, in order for agritourism to be a successful undertaking, farmers need to be more proactive. Since agritourism is an emerging activity for farmers in the Cowichan Valley and there are no strong institutions to support them, agritourism should be developed from the bottom-up.

It may be that planning ambiguity in the valley contributes to the challenges. As James suggests, it is hard for CVRD to distinguish agritourism from other spheres of development in the valley:

So do they do a good job on agritourism? I do not know. That is a hard thing to do when you are trying to build it for everybody. The CVRD has to look for help and promote the valley and all that is in it; not just be focused on agritourism.

Recently issued tourism plan in the Cowichan Valley echoes James’s thoughts, where strategies related to agritourism development were described along with other types of tourism being practiced in the area. The Cowichan Region Tourism Plan (2010) recommends developing marketing strategies for agritourism that target residents and visiting tourists. From 2002 to 2011, agritourism went from a young industry that had potential for growth to a supported and progressive industry. Economic strategies in 2002 were directed at strengthening the organizations for this sector, improving communication between farmers participating in

agritourism and key players, helping farmers resolve permit issues, and developing marketing strategies for this sector. The most recent economic development strategies are focused on promoting agritourism as a benefit to both agriculture and tourism in the region. Farmers who did not participate in agritourism said they did not understand permit regulations, were confused about how to market it, and felt they did not have support from the government. Findings from interviews confirm that farmers continue to face same obstacles, strategies to resolve which were developed a decade ago, which highlights minimal efforts that planners used towards implementation of those strategies. .

**Financial assistance.** Three farmers also feel there is a lack of financial assistance from the government. Four farmers developed agritourism out of their own savings, relying only on their own finances. Peter, a participating farmer, has a strong opinion on what is needed: “We are not looking for grants or anything like that. It seems that whenever something agricultural starts to get a few steps forward, government comes and knocks them a few steps back. It seems counterproductive.” The reason farmers are not looking for the grants or funding is because they are not aware of their existence and there are no clear directions how to access them. The farmers’ reality is they are supported by local organizations, which underline farmers’ importance, but not by the government regulations.

Other initiatives by different kinds of agencies are also becoming involved. In 2010, the non-profit organization Cowichan Green Community (CGC) published their first *Buy Local, Buy Fresh Cowichan Region Food Map*, getting financial assistance from local authorities. The map includes farm contact information, its location, and a list of products available for sale. Since that time, the map has been published every year and is used as a promotional tool for advertising farmers in the valley. CGC is also one of several organizations farmers rely on to make

connections with each other, participate in community events, and get updates about agriculture-related activities.

**Farmers' strategic planning.** Farmers who participated in this study said self-guided tours with signs and trails around the properties would allow them to continue with other chores on the farm. Others suggested more accommodations for tourists, not bed-and-breakfast facilities, but the Cowichan Region Tourism Plan (2010) does offer assistance developing farm accommodations. Some farmers also planned to develop microbreweries and to bring more artists to the farms to create unique events. James said: "Am I going to change anything? Not really. I have worked on the key principal: to keep it simple... because the more complex it becomes, the more overhead you create."

### **Farmers who do not participate in agritourism**

**Awareness of agritourism.** All farmers who were interviewed said they would eventually like to get involved in agritourism. However, they felt they did not want any agritourism-related activities to create a distraction from their main activity — growing healthy food. As Lisa explains: "We want to grow healthy food for people and we recognize that... I do not want to partake in agritourism just to make money because our passion is growing food." Lisa's concerns summarize how farmers are concerned that agritourism would shift their focus from traditional farmers' activities to something inexperienced before that would require additional investment, time, knowledge, and attention.

Farmers who have not pursued agritourism hope that if they get involved, it will sustain them economically and help diversify their businesses. Moreover, if they get involved, they would like to provide both recreational and educational agritourism experiences: "I like to educate people and there is always an underlying educational [element to] it," says Laura, a

farmer who is interested in pursuing agritourism.

Other two farmers also articulated the desire to educate tourists and not just entertain them. This decision is driven by the fact that visitors always have questions for farmers - they are looking for more information when they come to farms. Cole and Ann will use this approach if they implement agritourism on their farm: "I am not really interested in entertaining people. I think there is a lot of education that people would be interested in; maybe not so much in husbandry, but the day-to-day feeding, care." Farmers are willing to provide education for visitors on its own or alongside entertainment because they feel that people are detached from the land in present times. They also believe that people need more information to increase their awareness and appreciation of locally grown food. The educational and related opportunities offered by agritourism underline farmers' social motivations for diversifying into agritourism. Whatever path farmers choose, they will need to know how to effectively market their farms and tourism-oriented experiences .

While participating farmers in agritourism have found marketing strategies, non-participating farmers are not sure how easy it would be to market their farms as a tourist destination. Lisa claims that "...marketing is probably the easy part of it." However, Cole and Ann disagree. They explain that "... the biggest issue would be just to get the word out I think, to advertise ourselves." This represents lack of understanding about effective marketing choices and the importance of peer support.

**Partnerships.** Four non-participating farmers were confident that participating farmers would help them if they decide to implement agritourism on their farms. However, they also appear to seek knowledge about agritourism everywhere *but* from their peers. For example, Lisa explains the challenge in this way: "You are always going to be there talking to other people who

are doing this [agritourism], who are successful...but I am not going to sit down with them for a week and ask them ten zillion questions.” Another non-participating farmer, Zack, also had doubts about seeking help:

I am quite sure every farmer here is more than willing to assist you, it would just be hard to get help at the right time because they are busy; and if something goes wrong on their place, they may or may not commit to be at your place. It would take a lot of coordination.

These expressions are combined with the belief held by three of farmers who felt that there is lack of cooperation between farmers. Concerns related to the competitive aspects of agritourism may also be at play in terms of trying to create a unique experience on their farms. Cole and Ann for instance, note that “...cooperation between farmers I think is a bit idealistic. I think they need to stop being competitive and be more cooperative.”

There is no partnership between farmers and financial institutions in the region. In fact, it appears to be one of the main reasons that have discouraged interested farmers from getting more involved in agritourism. Funding that might be available for a farmer is not easily accessible for them. Financial providers have to rethink the means by which they provide support to farmers. Lisa expressed her frustration by saying that: “There are grants and things out there, but if you are not a grant proposal writer and you do not know what they [grant providers] want to hear, it is not easy to access that stuff.” Therefore, in order to know how to access grants or how to manage agritourism development on their farms more effectively, farmers need business skills and agritourism-based knowledge.

**Entrepreneurial business skills and tourism knowledge.** All of the interviewed and farmers who do not currently participate in agritourism indicated they lacked sufficient knowledge about what agritourism is. Furthermore, they are not aware of permit procedures required by the government, and uncertain also about insurance and liability issues associated with bringing tourists to their farms. Three farmers said that having a handbook or a solid plan would help them know where to start. Attending presentations, accessing online information, or getting together with other farmers were also cited as helpful tools. The challenges associated with running both a farm and an agritourism business was also mentioned. For example, Cole and Ann proposed that:

[We] know [we] can handle the day-to-day business aspect as far as selling and buying cattle, selling hay. [We] can handle that, but being a tourism attraction? Can you make that leap? ...or do you need a completely different direction and education? ... And if that is the case, then education needs to be accessible.

Accessible education for farmers is what the Cowichan Agricultural Plan (2010) aims to provide. It suggests that the Cowichan campus of Vancouver Island University offer continuing education courses about agricultural tourism. However, the Vancouver Island University's official website does not have any information about such courses. This misleading direction can be addressed in the upcoming agricultural plans as well as some information about meeting tourists' needs and motivations.

**Understanding tourists' motivations and needs for agritourism.** Farmers are uncertain about what kinds of experiences tourists might prefer. The majority of farmers expect to deliver

their knowledge about food, and will educate people about farming and the kind of activities they offer. As Cole and Ann explain: “I want to know how to start what exactly. How do you get people to come? What are people looking for when they come to visit a farm? ” This knowledge needs to be available to farmers for their successful management of agritourism on their farms.

## **Chapter 5. Summary Discussion**

This section highlights key points made in the findings section for addressing the research question of this study. Particularly, the improvements that could enhance support to agritourism development from participating farmers' point of view as well as obstacles for its development from non-participating farmers' point of view. A significant part of successful and sustainable agritourism development relies on the local authorities and other interested stakeholders, such as agriculture and tourism related institutions, non-profit organizations, and private enterprises. Well-designed strategies and initiatives are the keys for effective regulation of this activity. From the farmers who already participate in agritourism perspective, it is a rewarding undertaking in many ways: financially, emotionally, and intellectually. The following chapter represents the main points made by participating farmers for developing agritourism and the highlights made by non-participating farmers about the obstacles for agritourism development.

### **Supporting Agritourism**

Overall, participating farmers seem to be satisfied with the way they have combined agriculture and tourism on their farms. They admit that it took a lot of time, effort, and investment to make their agribusinesses successful, but at this stage they are happy with their progress. Nonetheless, two farmers wanted to expand accommodations on their properties but yet not turning them into bed-and-breakfasts. In this case they would have a place for occasional tourists who would like to stay overnight without committing to host visitors every night, which might be overwhelming for farmers. They recognize that some tourists prefer to spend a night at a farm because of the unique experience farmers can offer.

Easier government restrictions on accommodations involves increasing the number of houses per agricultural zone and decreasing additional taxes that farmers would have to pay for

properties. Providing a list of agritourism activities and to have more freedom with respect to the range they offer on their farms was also mentioned as a way to increase support. It is important that all farms are recognized geographically on the maps and in the brochures and local guides. Poor mapping means tourists have a harder time finding their farms. This is one area in which farmers think the Cowichan Valley's marketing could be more efficient. If farmers could put road signs on the main roads and highways to identify their farms, this would be useful.

Farmers also hoped the government would have more respect and understanding of agritourism and how their businesses operate. They would like some funding to hire extra help through their own network. An additional pair of hands during the busiest time of the year, April to October, would be beneficial and allow them more staff to support both their main agricultural interests and their tourism efforts.

### **Obstacles to Agritourism**

Non-participating farmers have a few concerns about implementing agritourism on their farms. They are confused about permits, insurance, legal ramifications, and proper marketing techniques. They understand the difference between marketing products and marketing a tourist destination, but they are not sure which promotional strategy might be most effective.

One of the biggest obstacles for farmers is lack of knowledge about agritourism. Farmers do not know how to start, where to access resources about agritourism, and what kind of expectations tourists might have. Simple tools such as guidebooks, online information, and presentations would help the diversification process. Farmers also mentioned that having courses on agritourism at Vancouver Island University and getting together with more experienced farmers would increase the likelihood of participating in agritourism.

The research questions for this study were addressed and thematically aligned within the chosen framework. Participating farmers shared marketing strategies they used, emphasized the gaps within government support, highlighted lack of financial support, and described their future plans, which help to understand how agritourism development can be enhanced in the valley. Non-participating farmers need to be more aware about agritourism, create strong partnerships with other farmers, gain business skills and tourism knowledge, and understand tourists' needs and motivations to overcome obstacles for implementing agritourism on their farms.

Two major themes emerged additionally to the ones suggested by the framework for this study. Farmers' future plans related to improving agritourism on their farms is an important requirement for sustainable agritourism development. It is essential that farmers do not get discouraged with the lack of support, and continue to desire agritourism to prosper on their farms. The other theme is awareness of agritourism. Farmers need to know more about general concept of agritourism, and its benefits for farmers and community so they can diversify into this activity more easily and more surely. Therefore, and based on the findings of this study, two more requirements for the sustainable development of agritourism could be added to the agritourism development framework that was presented in the methodology chapter of this study (p. 33). Table 4 presents the adjusted framework with additions highlighted in the shaded areas and a revised sequence of elements based on the findings from the research is proposed. The revised sequence based on farmers' perspectives suggests that awareness about agritourism comes before education, and marketing strategies follows the farmers' strategic planning.

Table 4

*Modified agritourism development framework*

#	Sustainable Development of Agritourism	Summary Description	Reference
1	Awareness of agritourism	Raising farmers' consciousness about ways to diversify farming operations and focus on tourism	
2	Agritourism and agribusiness education	Ability for farmers to gain entrepreneurial skills and relevant agritourism-based education	Colton (2005) Kruzmetra (2012) Sharpley (2002, 2006)
3	Tourists' needs/motivations	Access to tourism oriented information and training to meet tourist needs and understand their motivation to participate in agritourism	McGehee (2007) Srikatanyoo (2010)
4	Strategic government involvement	Timely updates regarding regulations and strategic plans that govern agritourism	Colton (2005) Lobo et al (1999) Sharpley (2002)
5	Financial assistance	Financial support available in the form of grants, loans, donations	Colton (2005) Sharpley (2002, 2006)
6	Strategic planning - Farmers	Articulated strategies developed by farmers towards their future direction in agritourism development of their farms	
7	Effective marketing strategies	Individual and cooperative actions that promote agritourism at the individual farm level, and in the region generally	Che (2003) Clarke (1994) Colton (2005) McGehee (2007) Sharpley (2002, 2006)
8	Partnerships	Collaboration and support between farmers	Che (2003) Colton (2005)

The additional two components create a comprehensive agritourism development framework that incorporates findings from this study on what is required to create sustainable agritourism development. Farmer's strategic planning involves keeping their vision focused on the possibilities for agritourism growth on their farms, seeking the ways to enhance flow of tourists, and being up-to-date with the government regulations, so farmers can follow the

Cowichan Valley's perspective on agritourism. Another element related to the analytical framework's component of agritourism and agribusiness education is awareness about agritourism. Before starting to diversify into tourism or implement tourism activities on their farms, farmers need to be aware of what agritourism actually is. Findings show that three out of five non-participating farmers do not know what agritourism is and all five of them cannot define it. That is why it is important for farmers to be aware of agritourism to create it on their farms and be strategic for its further implementation.

## **Chapter 6. Conclusion**

Rural communities often promote agritourism to attract visitors and build economic security in their regions. Farmers diversify into tourism for different reasons: to keep their farms, to supplement income, or to educate people about food security. Agritourism is most likely to succeed when government strategies align with tourists' needs and farmers' preferences. An effectively chosen promotional strategy, government assistance of any level of development, financial aid, and collaboration between farmers are the key elements of successful agritourism enhancement. Additionally, entrepreneurial skills for prosperous tourism operating are an asset among farmers as well as understanding tourist needs and motivations.

Farmers participating in agritourism in the Cowichan Valley are satisfied with their current level of development. Non-participating farmers require financial and educational support to get into the business. These two extremes coexist in the valley, and although local strategic plans and documents state that agritourism will continue to be developed in the valley, farmers are not aware of specific initiatives or funding to do so.

### **Recommendations**

After analysing the farmers' perspective on the agritourism development in the valley and searching for the documents that regulate this activity, this research suggests a few recommendations. They can enhance support growth and mitigate obstacles for agritourism development in the Cowichan Valley. They include:

1. The Cowichan Region Area Agricultural Plan could to be reissued every year with the section devoted to agritourism, where related initiatives can be specified. This documents one of the few which has a direct relation to agritourism in the valley. That is why it is important to have strategies updated with the constantly changing tourism trends.

2. Tourism or agricultural departments should create a position of advisor to assist farmers with resolving issues around agritourism. This would address the lack of knowledge and understanding regulations around agritourism.
3. Locally centred database of volunteers can be created to assist farmers with agricultural activities while they can devote more time to agritourism during the busiest time of the year (from May until October). This is suggested so farmers can keep up with providing locally grown food and proper service to tourists at the same time.
4. The process that involves putting signs on the roads can be revised and introduced to farmers. This is one of the marketing tools that farmers want to use to make their promotion more effective and to reach to larger audience.

### **Future Research**

Based on the research findings presented in this study, a few areas where additional research would be useful can be identified:

- What strategies will increase cooperation between farmers? Findings identified that the lack of networking among farmers is an obstacle for agritourism development in the area. Therefore, additional research on this issue would be helpful to address the ways cooperation can be created and increased among farmers.
- To what extent do government regulations related to agritourism influence farmers participation in it? Lack of government support and not understanding what regulates agritourism was a barrier for farmers to implement it on their farms. Knowing how much farmers are depended on defined rules affects their participation in agritourism might be a useful addition to this research area.

- How can farmers gain greater access to agritourism support and development resources?  
Lack of agritourism-based education was highlighted as another obstacle for agritourism development. Farmers need to know how to start, where to get information, and what strategies to follow.
- How can agritourism development be enhanced in the Cowichan Valley from the demand side; that is from tourists' perspective? This study addressed agritourism development only from the supply or farmers' side. To ensure that farmers create desirable agritourism experiences, visitors' preferences need to be accounted for as a significant feature of sustainable agritourism development.

The Cowichan Valley is a very attractive place for tourists, because of its landscapes and favourable geographical location on the southwest part of Canada. Agritourism is a rapidly growing type of rural tourism that requires more research, interest, and presents additional questions today than existed a few decades ago. Agritourism started being recognized and supported in this area around fifteen years ago and has potential to be actively developed. There are farmers in the valley who have diversified into agritourism and succeeded in its development as well as there are farmers who would like to pursue agritourism in the future. Agritourism development in the Cowichan Valley is on its way to becoming a prosperous type of rural sustainable tourism; however, it will still require attention from the government and other interested stakeholders.

### **Appendix 1. Knowledge Mobilization Plan**

Knowledge mobilization plan of this master's thesis suggests following actions:

1. The thesis defence is a part of graduation process. Therefore, the research presentation will be open for Recreation and Tourism Faculty, Management Department, graduate students and anybody who expresses interest in the topic. The anticipated defence date is Tuesday, 22 April, 2014.
2. The thesis as the final document will be shared with farmers participated who helped in creating this product. Additionally, it will be given to Tourism and Agriculture Departments in the Cowichan Valley. Proposed date of execution: middle May.
3. Some presentations of this research may happen in the future. Researcher is planning to attend 7<sup>th</sup> World Conference for Graduate Research in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure held in Turkey. Proposed date of execution: early June.
4. A brief report summarizing the key findings from this research will be offered for participating farmers. Proposed date of execution: middle June.
5. A presentation summarizing findings and recommendations from the research will be held in Duncan for the research participants and interested stakeholders. Proposed date of execution: May, 2014.

## **Appendix 2. Reflective Chapter**

### **What I have learned in each stage of the research process?**

- **Topic definition**

I found that it was not easy for me to pick a topic to research. My biggest challenge was narrowing down the research area and research question so it would be feasible during the length of my program. Once this was achieved, a mind mapping tool helped me a lot with clarifying my objectives.

- **Proposal**

In developing my proposal I found that I did not know a good way of saving and organizing my resources. Only later in developing the proposal I developed my own system of saving and categorizing sources for different parts of the thesis.

- **Methods**

In the first draft of my proposal I had one more method which was a focus group following the interviews. However, during the gathering of my data I realized that questions that I developed for the focus group would simply repeat the questions from the interviews. If I were at the stage of developing my questions again, I would think through them better or I would not spend time developing this method.

- **Data collection**

Since my interviewees were farmers it was challenging to pick the time of year for interviewing them. I interviewed them from late August till the end of September and some of the farmers had to refuse to participate in the research because they were too busy. Now I would choose the time for the data collection more wisely.

I was concerned that not all of my interviews were up to 40 minutes, because it was the average time described by other researchers. Later, I realized that interviews that were shorter in length could contain more valuable information than longer ones.

**What did I change between the proposal and final product and why?**

As it was mentioned before, I did not use a focus group method, because I found that document analysis and interviews provided sufficient data with which to answer the research questions.

**What challenges did I face and how did I handle them?**

I found it was challenging for me to write the whole thesis in English and keep up with grammar, sentence structure and lexical meaning. I often went to the Writing Centre at VIU to get help with my writing.

The other challenge I had is finding farmers who were not participating in agritourism but wished to pursue this activity. I used a snowball sample technique that helped me to identify them.

**What am I most proud of with my research process?**

I am proud of how I managed to do the original research, collect data, write this thesis, and in a foreign language. It took a lot of effort on my part to complete such a project on the graduate level.

Agritourism was completely unknown to me before I chose it as my research topic. I am proud of how much knowledge I have in this area now, how it helped me to inform my thesis and how much more complete now my understanding of agritourism is now.

**Appendix 3. In-depth Semi-structured Interview Questions Participating Farmers**

Themes:

1. General information about the farm operator:
  - Can you please tell me a little bit about your farm? What does it specialize in?
2. Type of agritourism activities:
  - What kind of agritourism activities do you have on your farm?
  - How did you start doing agritourism and why?
  - What kind of tourists are coming to your farm? Where are they from? How long do they stay?
3. Promotion/improvement of agritourism on the farm:
  - What have you done to promote agritourism on your farm?
  - What do you need to do to improve agritourism on your farm? Have you tried to do it?
4. Strategies for promotion on the farm and in the Cowichan Valley:
  - Have you heard about any strategies to promote agritourism in the Cowichan Valley?  
Please name them.
  - If the participant name strategies: Have you benefitted from any of those strategies?
  - What do you think can be done to increase agritourism in the Cowichan Valley?
5. Farmer's future plans for agritourism:
  - What are your future plans for agritourism development on your farm?

## **Appendix 4. In-depth Semi-structured Interview Questions**

### **Non-participating Farmers**

Themes:

1. General information about the farm:
  - Can you please tell me a little bit about your farm? What does it specialize in?
2. Potential thoughts about agritourism:
  - What do you know about agritourism (farm tourism)?
  - If the participant does not know anything, I will provide a definition. Have you ever thought to implement agritourism on you farm?
  - What type of agritourism were you thinking about?
3. Challenges for agritourism and addressing those:
  - Do you have any challenges to implementing agritourism on your farm? What are they?
  - What have you done to address those challenges?
  - Are you aware of any support efforts that would help you to develop agritourism?
4. Knowledge about agritourism:
  - How would you rate your knowledge about agritourism on the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is weak and 5 is strong?
  - Would you like to know more about agritourism? What knowledge would you like about agritourism?
  - How would you prefer to access this knowledge (i.e. online, classroom, tour to the other sites)?

**Appendix 5. In-person Invitation to the Interview:****“Agritourism in the Cowichan Valley”****Would you like to participate in an interview to discuss agritourism  
development in the Cowichan Valley?**

Hello,

I am a graduate student in the Sustainable Leisure Management Program at Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo. This program offers students an opportunity to (a) learn about sustainability, (b) observe how different communities are trying to create sustainability, (c) realize positive change and innovation, and (d) allow students to design and implement their own research projects. The program also requires students to gain applied experience in field research that will benefit communities they study. The purpose of my small sample study is to identify enhancements and obstacles to agritourism in the Cowichan Valley. This research project will look at agritourism development from the farmers’ perspective. Based on the findings, I intend to provide Cowichan Valley farmers and policy-makers with recommendations for increasing agritourism. In addition, results from the research will be published in my thesis.

I would like to invite you to participate in an interview to share your experience, perspectives, and thoughts about agritourism. The interview can take place at a time and location convenient for you and will last approximately 30-45 minutes. If you already participate in agritourism, we will discuss your farming background, general information about agritourism, opinions about improving agritourism, and strategies and support you have found helpful. If you do not already participate in agritourism, but would like to, we will discuss challenges you have identified or may have faced with respect to implementing agritourism, and your level of awareness about agritourism.

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor if you would like to participate in an interview or have more questions. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your time!

Anna Romanova,  
Graduate Student  
MA Sustainable Leisure Management  
Recreation and Tourism Management  
Vancouver Island University  
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Suzanne de la Barre, Ph.D., Supervisor  
Department of Recreation and Tourism  
Management  
Vancouver Island University  
Suzanne.delaBarre@viu.ca  
(250) 753-3245, local 2833

**Appendix 6. E-mail Invitation to the Interview**

Dear [name of the Farmer],

I am a graduate student in the Sustainable Leisure Management Program at Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo. This program requires us to gain applied experience in field research. The purpose of my small sample study is to identify enhancements and obstacles to increase agritourism in the Cowichan Valley. This research project will look at agritourism development from the farmers' perspective. Based on the findings, I intend to provide Cowichan Valley farmers and policy-makers with recommendations for increasing agritourism. In addition, results from the research will be published in my thesis.

I would like to invite you to participate in an interview to share your experience, perspectives, and thoughts about agritourism. If you agree to participate, I will ask you no more than 10 questions and the interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. If you already participate in agritourism, we will discuss your farming background, general information about agritourism, opinions about improving agritourism and strategies and support you have found helpful. If you do not already participate in agritourism but would like to, we will discuss challenges you have identified or may have faced with respect to implementing agritourism, and your level of awareness about agritourism. I would value your participation in the interview and would be happy to arrange a time and place suitable for both of us.

In addition, I wonder if you know other farmers, either participating in agritourism or not, and who you think might be interested in my project. If so, please pass this information on to them or ask them to contact me. Thank you very much.

Anna Romanova,  
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**Appendix 7. Consent Form for In-depth Semi-structured Interviews:**

“Agritourism in the Cowichan Valley, British Columbia, Canada”

MONTH, 2013

Anna Romanova,  
Recreation and Tourism Management  
Student,  
Vancouver Island University  
[annikless@yahoo.ca](mailto:annikless@yahoo.ca)  
(250) 714-3031

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Management  
Vancouver Island University  
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(250) 753-3245, local 2833

**(Purpose)** I am a graduate student in the Sustainable Leisure Management Program. This program requires us to gain applied experience in field research. The purpose of this research is to identify the enhancements and obstacles to the growth of the agritourism sector in the Cowichan Valley on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. This research asks what improvements could be made to increase agritourism and how to overcome barriers to implementing agritourism.

**(Description)** During the study you will be asked to answer no more than 10 questions. If you already participate in agritourism, we will discuss your farming background, general information about agritourism, opinions about improving agritourism, and strategies and support you have found helpful. If you do not already participate in agritourism but would like to, we will discuss challenges you have identified or may have faced with respect to implementing

agritourism, and your level of awareness about agritourism. I will ask you open-ended questions to invite you to share your experience, perspectives, and thoughts about agritourism. Participation will last approximately 30-45 minutes.

**(Potential harm)** There is no known harm associated with your participation in this research. The potential benefits are sharing results with participants and providing farmers participating in agritourism with recommendations. This study might improve an understanding of agritourism in the Cowichan Valley and provide an analysis of the support that is available, as well as identifying what barriers the sector faces. This study might also assist policy makers in creating strategies for agritourism development.

**(Confidentiality)** Information about your participation will not be made public, you will not be identified in the research results, and you will remain anonymous during the whole project. Information will be kept confidential, and only my supervisor and I will have access to the data collected during the study. Data will be placed in Microsoft Word and Excel documents, and will be stored and password protected on my hard drive and on a backup external hard drive. The data will be destroyed two years after submitting my thesis to the department of Recreation and Tourism Management. Electronic files will be also destroyed at that time. I will share the findings from my study by providing an executive summary, a copy of my thesis to those participants who want one, and through presentations made to relevant associations and other stakeholders at meetings or other similar gatherings (approximate time of completion is December, 2013).

**(Participation)** Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time for any reason without explanation. The interview is voluntary and you may choose not to answer any of the questions for any reason and without having to explain these reasons to me.

**(Concerns About your Treatment in the Research)** If at any time you have any concerns about your treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer, by telephone at 250-753-3245 (ext, 2665) or by email at reb@viu.ca

If you have any questions about this research project, or would like more information, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor. Professor Suzanne de la Barre can be reached at the contact information below (please contact her by email by August 15<sup>th</sup>, after which she can also be reached at the phone number listed below).

**(Consent)** I have read the above form, understand the information read, and understand that I can ask questions or withdraw at any time. I consent to participate in today’s research study and to having my interview audio-recorded.

---

Participant’s Signature	Date
<p>Anna Romanova, Sustainable Leisure Management Student, Vancouver Island University <a href="mailto:annikless@yahoo.ca">annikless@yahoo.ca</a> (250) 714-3031</p>	<p>Suzanne de la Barre, PhD Supervisor Vancouver Island University <a href="mailto:Suzanne.delaBarre@viu.ca">Suzanne.delaBarre@viu.ca</a> (250) 753-3245, local 2833</p>

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