



MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UPCOMING AGRITOURISM WORKSHOPS FOCUS ON WEB SITES, SOCIAL MEDIA TO MARKET FARM FUN

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Free workshops across the state led by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture will help “fun farms” attract visitors with easy-to-use Web sites and emerging social media. The workshops will be conducted in West Tennessee on Aug. 12 in Jackson, in Nashville on Aug. 13 and in White Pine on Aug. 14.

State Agritourism Coordinator Pamela Bartholomew says she can’t wait to help folks who are more comfortable on a tractor than in front of a computer learn what social media is and how to use it to help build farm income.

“We all understand that the news media is what we read, hear or watch that tells us some version of news,” says Bartholomew. “We know the entertainment media entertains us. But the phrase ‘social media’ is so new, and changing so often, that lots of people don’t even know what it is or what it’s for.”

“Social media refers to all the new communication technology like Facebook, Twitter, Web sites and blogs that were developed simply as a way for people to socialize, share ideas and opportunities.

“If you run a farm operation that depends on visits from the general public – a pick-your-own orchard, a pumpkin patch or corn maze, a farm bed and breakfast, for instance,” says Bartholomew, “you need to become comfortable with social media so you can use it to bring people to your farm. A simple one line sentence about an upcoming event sent out to previous customers via Twitter could mean a lot more people coming back through your farm gate.”

The workshops will feature Web site experts to help participants learn what makes a Web site attractive to visitors, and easy to use. One session will focus on how to incorporate social media into a farm’s marketing plan. Participants will also be presented information from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture on the range of programs and opportunities for the state’s agritourism operators, including how to become part of the longstanding Pick Tennessee Products promotion. Pick Tennessee Products is the state’s

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AGRITOURISM WORKSHOPS FOCUS ON WEB SITES, SOCIAL MEDIA 2 - 2 - 2

agricultural marketing program offered free of charge which includes placement on the Pick Tennessee Products Web site.

The Aug. 12 event will be held at the West Tennessee Research and Education Center, 605 Airways Boulevard in Jackson. The Aug. 13 workshop will be conducted at the Ed Jones Auditorium, 440 Hogan Road in Nashville, and on Aug. 14, at the Great Smokey Mountain Expo Center, 1615 Pavilion Drive, in White Pine. The workshops will run from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. with lunch provided.

“Take your marketing skills to a new level,” says the agritourism coordinator. “Being open to using new technologies and techniques is actually a hallmark of American agriculture. Today, consistent, quality communication is key to growing agritourism enterprises, and these workshops will take a lot of the guesswork out.”

“Will we still be twittering two years from now? Will Facebook be upstaged by some newer network in no time? That’s entirely possible,” says Bartholomew. “But from now on, to be a part of the marketplace, we’ll need to be continuously adapting and changing right along with the media. These free workshops are a great opportunity to get caught up on what’s current and keep your farm out front.”

Call the Tennessee Department of Agriculture at 615-837-5321 to register. For more information about the workshops, call Pamela Bartholomew at 615-837-5348.

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