

## **Introduction**

The agriculture industry has experienced significant change over the previous four decades whereby farmers are now looking beyond traditional farm enterprises to generate income. These include various forms of direct farm marketing and other farm-based businesses. A form of secondary enterprise that offers much promise in adding value to a growing number of farm operations is agritourism. Agritourism is an emerging sector with economic potential in the coming five to eight years comparable to that experienced by the wine industry in British Columbia (BC). In 1995, an estimated \$14.3 million in gross revenues were generated province-wide by strictly agritourism businesses.

Agritourism is defined as travel that combines agricultural or rural settings with products of agricultural operations – all within a tourism experience. It includes providing visitors with opportunities to experience a broad spectrum of agriculturally based products and services ranging from fruit and vegetable stand shopping (direct farm marketing) to winery, orchard, garden and alpaca tours. It also includes farm-based bed and breakfast accommodation to visitor participation in harvest festivals, farmer's markets and cattle drives.

This project joins three distinctive goals of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (MAFF): (1) to assist in the development of emerging industries; (2) to facilitate diversification options for farm operators; and, (3) to continue to promote agritourism as a method of diversification for farmers in British Columbia. An *Agritourism and Direct Farm Marketing Survey* conducted in 2001 revealed that agritourism operators were facing legal and regulatory constraints, which in turn is affecting the overall growth of the industry. This project attempts to identify the particular regulatory areas that are affecting the industry and the effect these regulations have on the economic viability of the industry.

The project undertook several tasks, the final results being this report. Project steps included:

1. Reviewing the regulatory process as it presently exists in BC;
2. Researching other jurisdictions in Canada and the United States for comparison purposes;
3. Developing a survey questionnaire for the collection of information from

agritourism operators on the time and monetary costs of complying with the existing regulations;

4. Conducting the survey with a sample of agritourism operators from across the province;
5. Tabulating and analyzing the survey results on a regional basis as well as aggregating them to form a provincial whole;
6. Making recommendations including best practices from other jurisdictions to improve government's role in the agritourism industry in BC.