

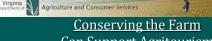
2015 Virginia Agritourism Conference Staunton, Virginia - March 11, 2015 Andy Sorrell, Va. Dept. of Ag. & Consumer Services



• Many small farmers are diversifying to non-traditional agriculture like raising specialty crops, direct-sale to the public, and agritourism activities



- · Agritourism can be described as the junction between agriculture and tourism – a value-added activity that generates additional farm income and creates a loyal customer base for farm products
- when the public visits working farms to pick their own produce or cut a Christmas tree, tour wineries / cideries to buy (and taste) products, and participates in activities like weddings - Agritourism is occurring!
- Agritourism can be an important adaption strategy for overcoming economic disparity and enhancing the viability of small farms, particularly in places facing growth pressures



Can Support Agritourism

- Permanent protection for working lands is accomplished through a conservation easement -a voluntary, legal agreement between a landowner and a third party that permanently limits the uses of the land in order to protect ag, forestal and other natural resource values
- Conservation easements allows the landowner to continue to own and use their land and to sell it or pass it onto heirs
- Easement spells out resources that need to be protected: should also defines what can be agritourism activities can be done - farmers need to know what they want to do so an easement can be drafted to accommodate their goals



- Conservation easements can provide incentives and money to help support the farm: tax deductions, tax credits, estate and property tax benefits and cash payments to purchase and retire development rights from a farm via a conservation easement
- VDACS has a matching Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program that provides 1:1 matching state funding to localities that have established locally funded PDR programs Since 2008: 15 localities - 65 easements - 9,000 acres
- USDA NRCS has Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP): Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) and Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE)



and Working Lands

- VDACS organized the Working Lands Group in 2010 in response to the perception by some in the agricultural community that the donation of a conservation easement was not a viable option for protecting productive working
- In past, agritourism and working farms haven't always been seen as a good fit for traditional conservation
- Stakeholder group worked to make conservation easements more appealing to working farms & resulted in:





