

Development of Recreational Farms

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Some crops have lost their competitive advantage in traditional export markets since Taiwan joined the WTO. Many agriculture operation entities have either moved onto different crop growing or opening up new revenue streams by incorporating tourism into their operations. In general, there are two types: tourist farms are those that provide fruits, vegetables, or flower-picking activities, such as the strawberry farms, and the sunflower nurseries; and recreational farms.

Recreational farms have basic elements of animal husbandry, nature and local culture. It has facilities to provide visitors to carry out harvesting crops in fields or feeding animals in the ranch, but also offer other activities such as picnicking, hiking, bird-watching, camping, gliding, fishing, whale watching, tea brewing and other local cultural events. According to the Council of Agriculture statistics, more than 2,000 hectares of land have been officially incorporated as tourist farms and more than 180 recreational farms have been established.

Recreational farms have evolved over the years. There have been significant work behind the scenes to support the development of recreational farms, including:

- Policy revision to allow, encourage, regulate recreational farms;
- Management and monitoring mechanisms development;
- Alliances with travel business units;
- Construction projects to accommodate tourists;
- Information network development;
- Marketing campaigns, promotions;
- Recreation development (walking tours, health tours, floriculture appreciation tours, etc.);
- Incorporation of local culture events or special events;
- Participation of domestic and international travel fairs;
- Refinement of souvenirs and gift items

Recreational farms have created several tangible results: millions of dollars of economic value, increased employment opportunities, and further development of the farming communities. . But the intangible soft value it has provided is difficult to measure. On top of being in a pastoral environment, visitors can learn how eco-systems are maintained, the history behind minority groups in the mountain. At the same time, visitors can also learn the habits and lifecycles of the famous landlocked Formosan salmon in a mountain based farm,

and learn the basics of tea production starting from growing, picking, curing, up to brewing and drinking. To the visitors, developing a keen appreciation of the good quality of life that recreational farms provide and offer is the most valuable of all.

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