



## Rural

# Australian farmers take advantage of 'foodie' tourism by hosting farm tours

WA Country Hour By Tyne Logan and Michelle Stanley

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[The Southern Forest Food Council is trying to promote local producers by showcasing local farms on 'food trail' tours.](#) (ABC Rural: Tyne Logan)

**As the rise of the everyday 'foodie' drives tourism across the country, Australian farmers are trying reap the benefits by hosting 'paddock to plate' experiences.**

The latest region is the southern forest region, in the south-west of Western Australia. The area is just a short drive away from the booming tourism destination of Margaret River, but in comparison is far less known.

Producers in the region are hoping to change that, by showcasing the region as an agritourism destination.

The Southern Forest Food Council — which is the body in charge of marketing produce for the region — this month held its inaugural 'genuinely extraordinary' farm and food tour, which travels between the rich, green agricultural land in Pemberton, Manjimup and Northcliffe.

Chairman Bevan Eattes said the purpose of the tours was to promote the work of farmers in the area.

In the last year a number of agritourism operations have begun around WA, which include a tour bus travelling to different farms that are not usually open to the public to see what they produce.

The tourists will often then eat the produce from the farms at local restaurants along the way.

As well as the Southern Forest Food Council's tour, similar tours have been started in Carnarvon and the Swan Valley.

## Tasmania leading the charge on 'food trails'

Agricultural consultant John Stanley said he understood there were 11 food trails being established by Tourism WA across Western Australia.

But he said as far as food trails go, the eastern states appeared to be ahead of the game.



[Harry Roberts hands out disposable shoe covers so that biosecurity hazards are not transferred from farm to farm.](#) (ABC Rural: Tyne Logan)

"Tasmania is also developing food trails and is very advanced in the food trail market," he said.

"Orange, in NSW, has developed a city development of food and is about to do some work in northern NSW.

Manjimup shearer Ron Niven, who was inducted into the shearing Hall of Fame in 2015 said, for him, any opportunity to educate people on the practices of shearing was worth it.

"The more we show people what good wool is grown in this area the better off we are, because it is a good product and you can't argue with it," he said.

## Asian markets the focus

Mr Eattes said while everyone was welcome on the tours, the main target group was the Asian market.

Tourism WA market manager for China, Indonesia and emerging markets Rei Seah said this kind of tour would work if the marketing was well targeted.

"From an Asian market perspective, they are always looking for something unique and something very different from their home country," she said.

What is noticeable about many of the tours is that the farmers associated have a direct line to the consumer and a brand they want to push.



[Farm tour operations tend to be most appealing to producers who have a direct line to the consumer.](#) (ABC Rural: Tyne Logan)

Mr Eattes said this was the type of producer most inclined to participate.

However he said he believed a modified structure could work for most farms.

"Obviously out in the wheatbelt there's more of that broadacre crop so there might be a little bit more of a disconnect, but I think there are certainly people there who would still find that interesting," he said.

A big consideration for farmers who want to become part of a tour is biosecurity hazards from tourists going to multiple different farms in a day, so tourists are often asked to fill out a form, wipe their boots and wash their hands before stepping onto a property.