

# Agribusiness Clusters as 'Paradigm Shifters' in Regional Markets

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# West Virginia Agritourism Definition

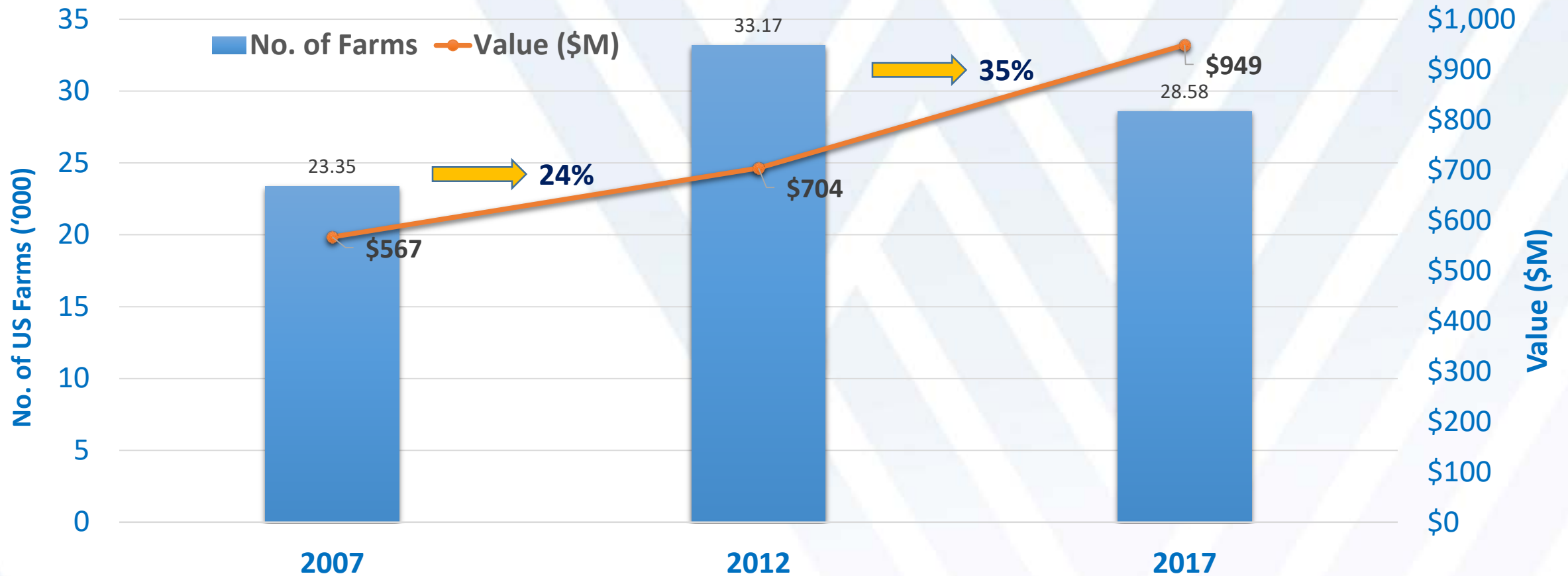
“Agritourism” means any lawful activity carried out on a farm or ranch that allows members of the general public for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes to view or enjoy rural activities. Agritourism specifically includes weddings and receptions held on farms or ranches, or activities that take place on a forest farm.

Source:

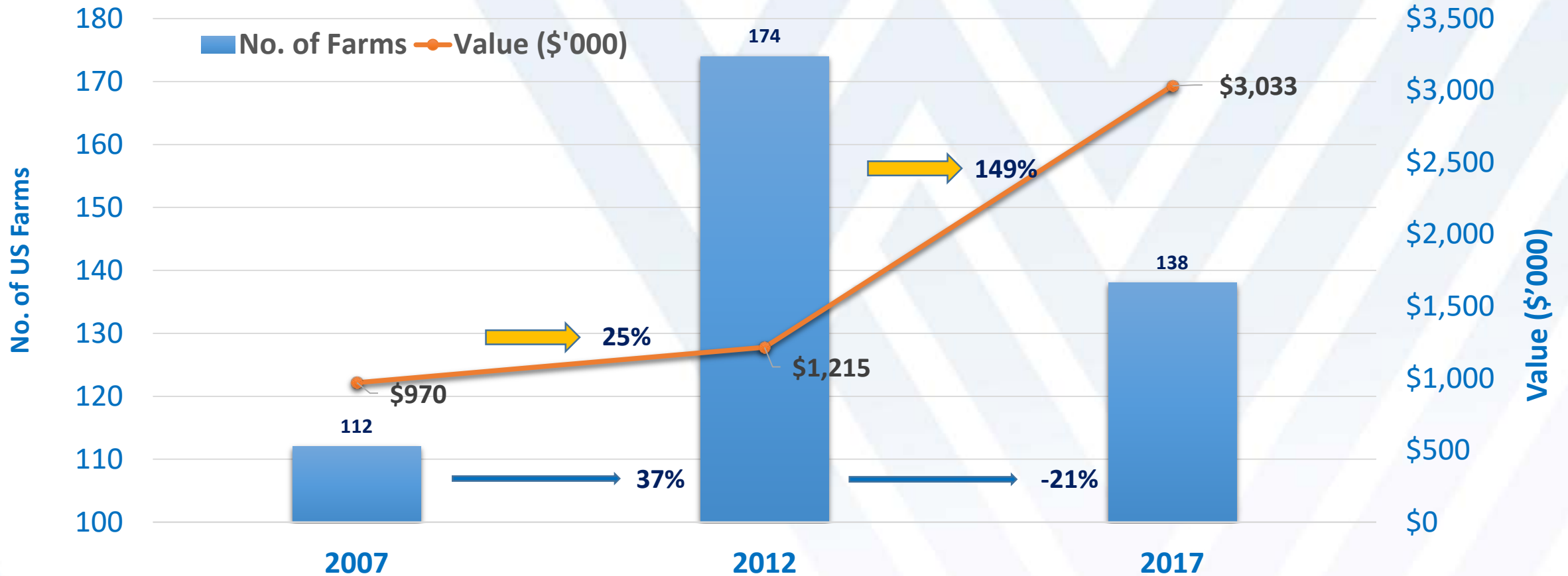
<https://apps.sos.wv.gov/adlaw/csr/ruleview.aspx?document=16891&Keyword=>



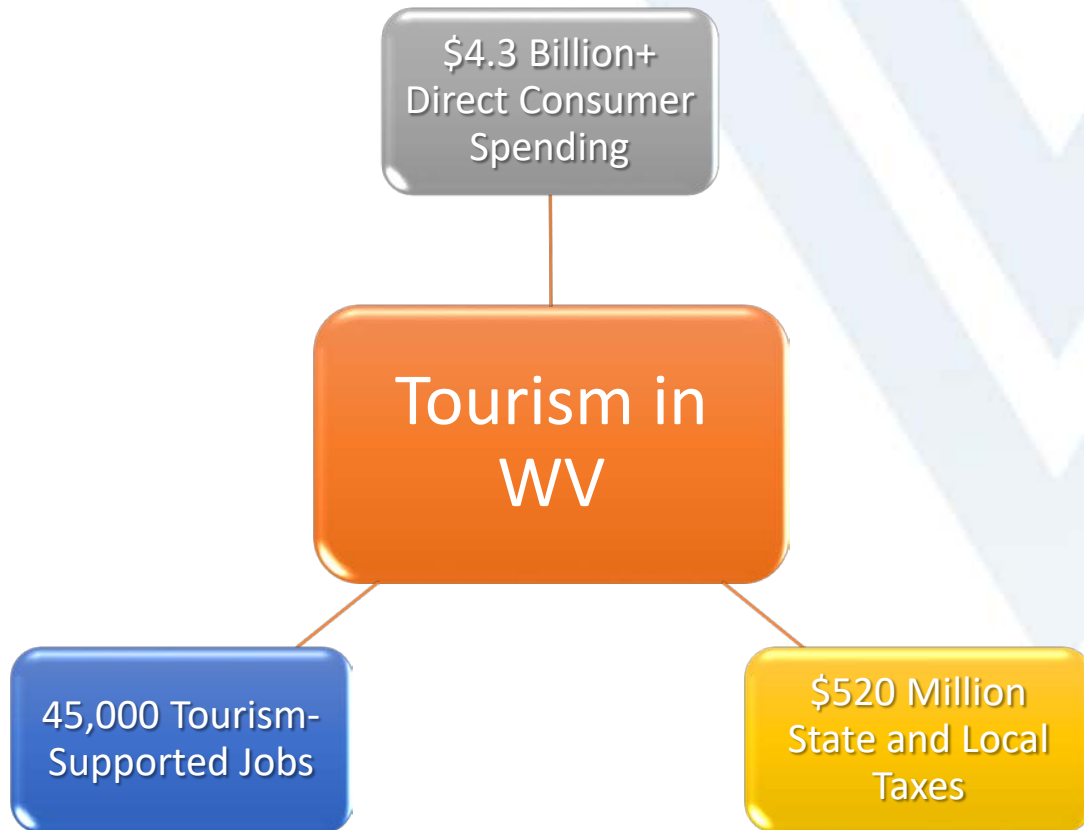
# National Statistics – Agritourism and Recreational Services



# WV Statistics – Agritourism and Recreational Services



# Why Agritourism in WV and the Surrounding Region



Source: <https://wvtourism.com/>



**History  
and  
Culture**



**Nature  
Contacts**



**Local Foods**



**Local  
Treasure  
Hunting**

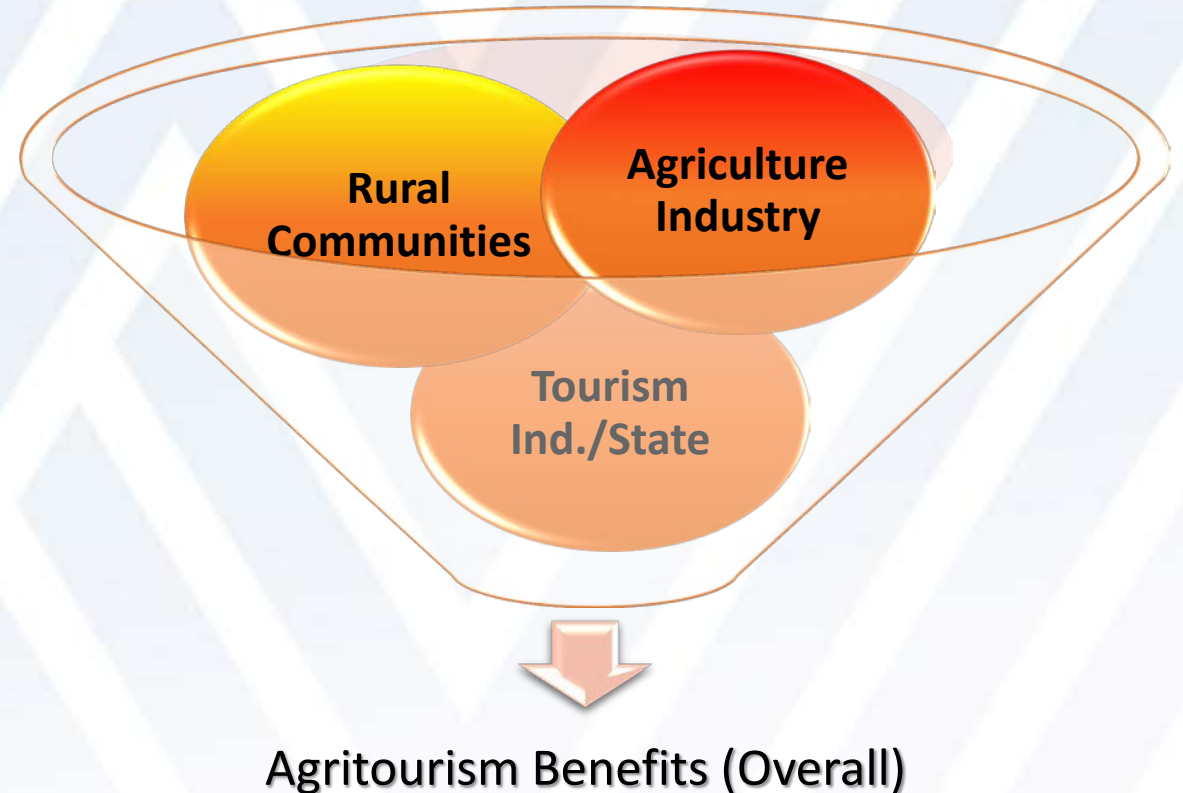


**Hands-On  
Activities**

**WV and Regional Farms have the RAW INGREDIENTS for EXPERIENTIAL TRAVEL!**

# Role of Agribusinesses and Rural Communities in WV Tourism

- Unique, authentic experiences – **experiential travel**
- Part of a larger trip itinerary
  - Tourism business is **shared business** = longer visits and greater expenditures
  - Partnering to **‘round-out visits’**
  - Creating impression that NE is a **‘good value’ trip**, or **‘year-round adventure’**
- Appeal to a **‘sense of longing’** or **‘sense of place’**



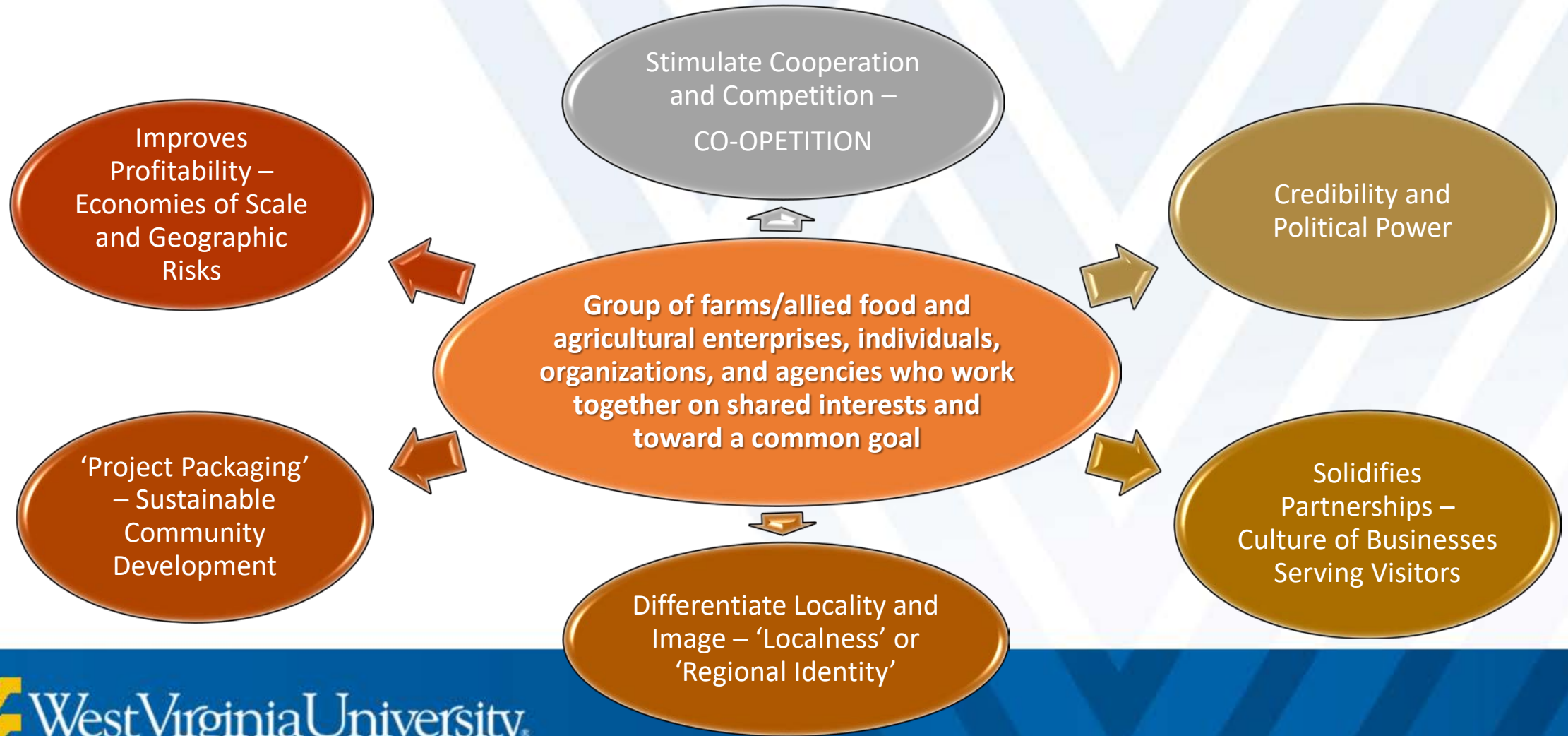
# Challenges with Agritourism in WV and the Region

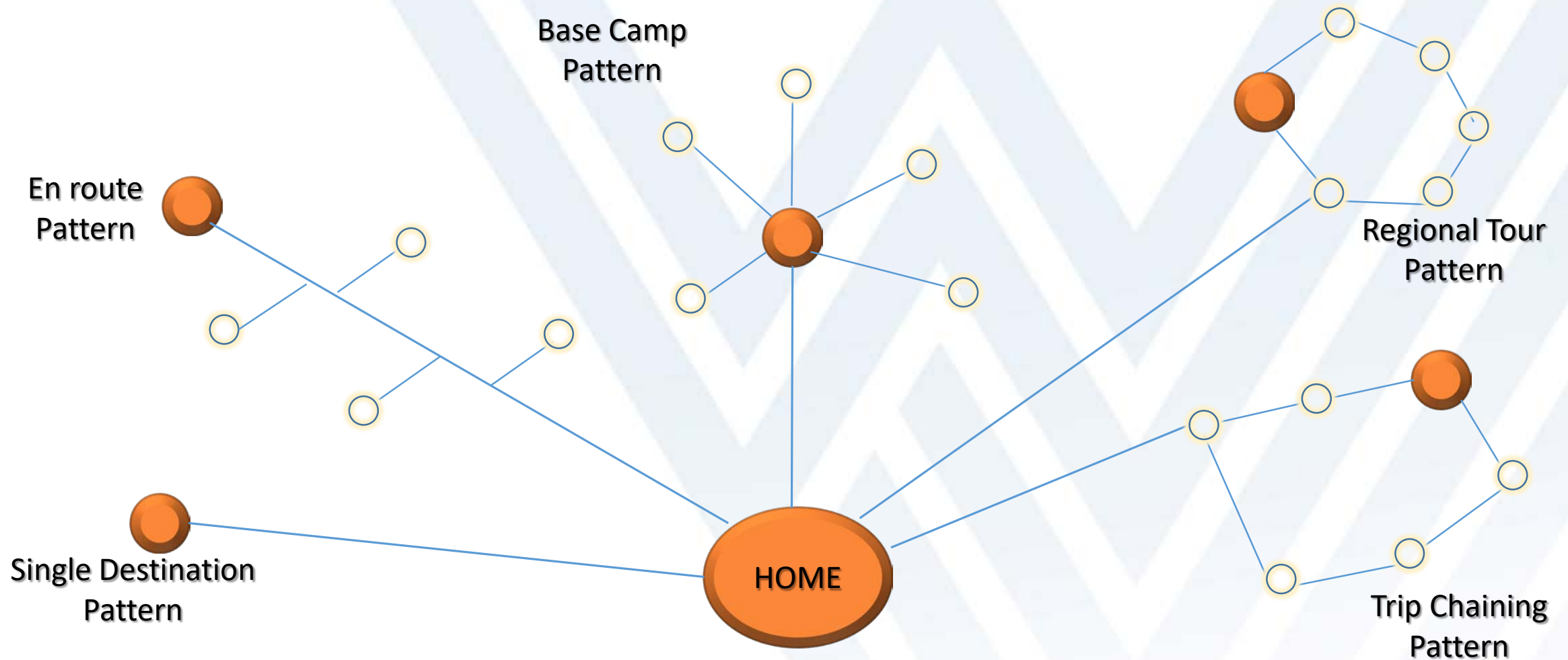




# Need for New Paradigm – ‘Paradigm Shifters’

(Regional Marketing or Cluster Networks or Multi Destination Visits)



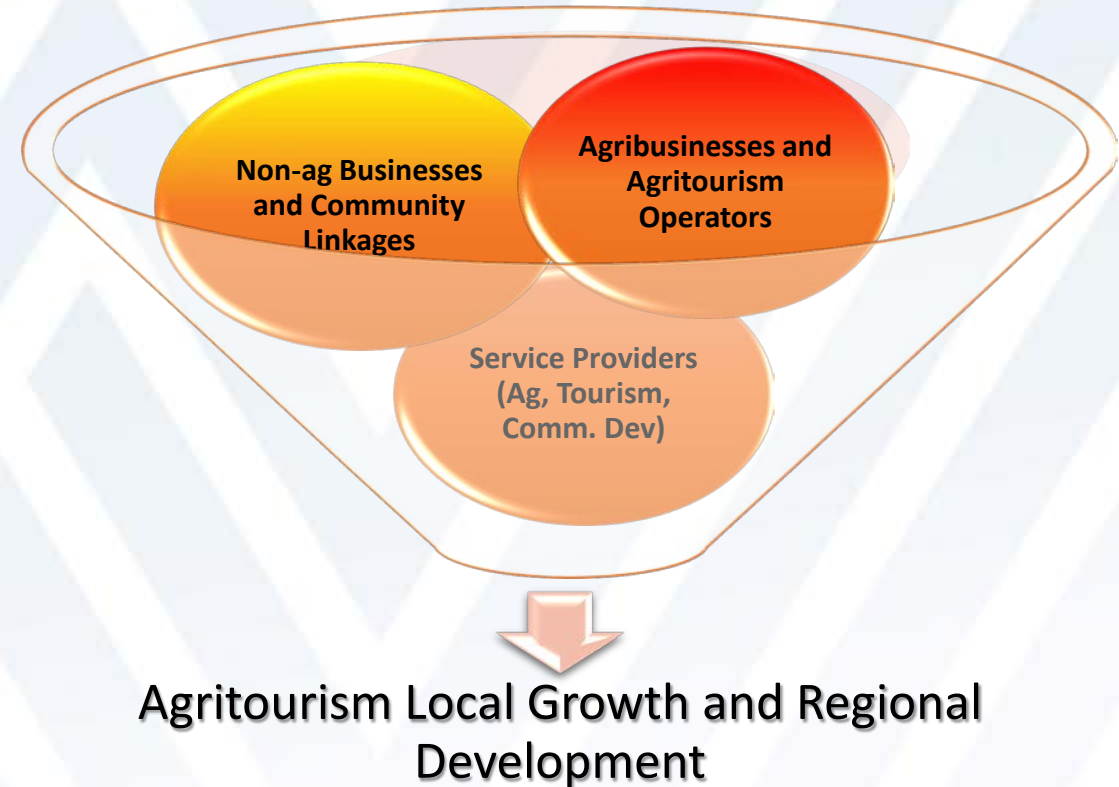


## Models of SMEs Micro-Cluster Networks

# Overall Study

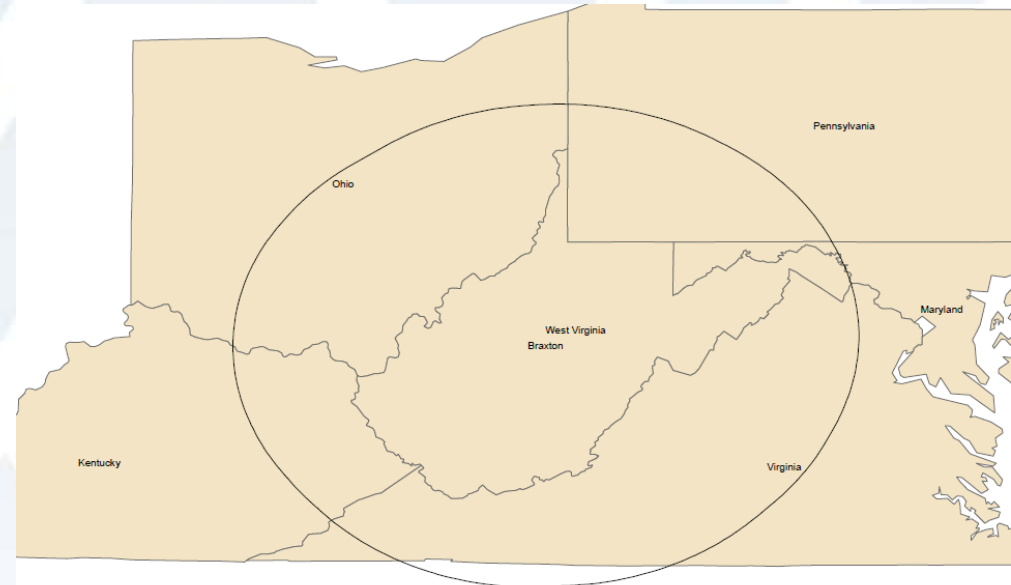
Opportunities for agritourism development in region as a strategy for enhancing farm viability and sustainable community development

- Status of agritourism in the region
- Factors affecting agritourism participation
  - strengthening the agritourism product
- Exploring agritourism models
  - agritourism clusters as 'paradigm shifters' in innovation and collaboration
- Needs assessment for strengthening the agritourism product
  - capacity development and curriculum design

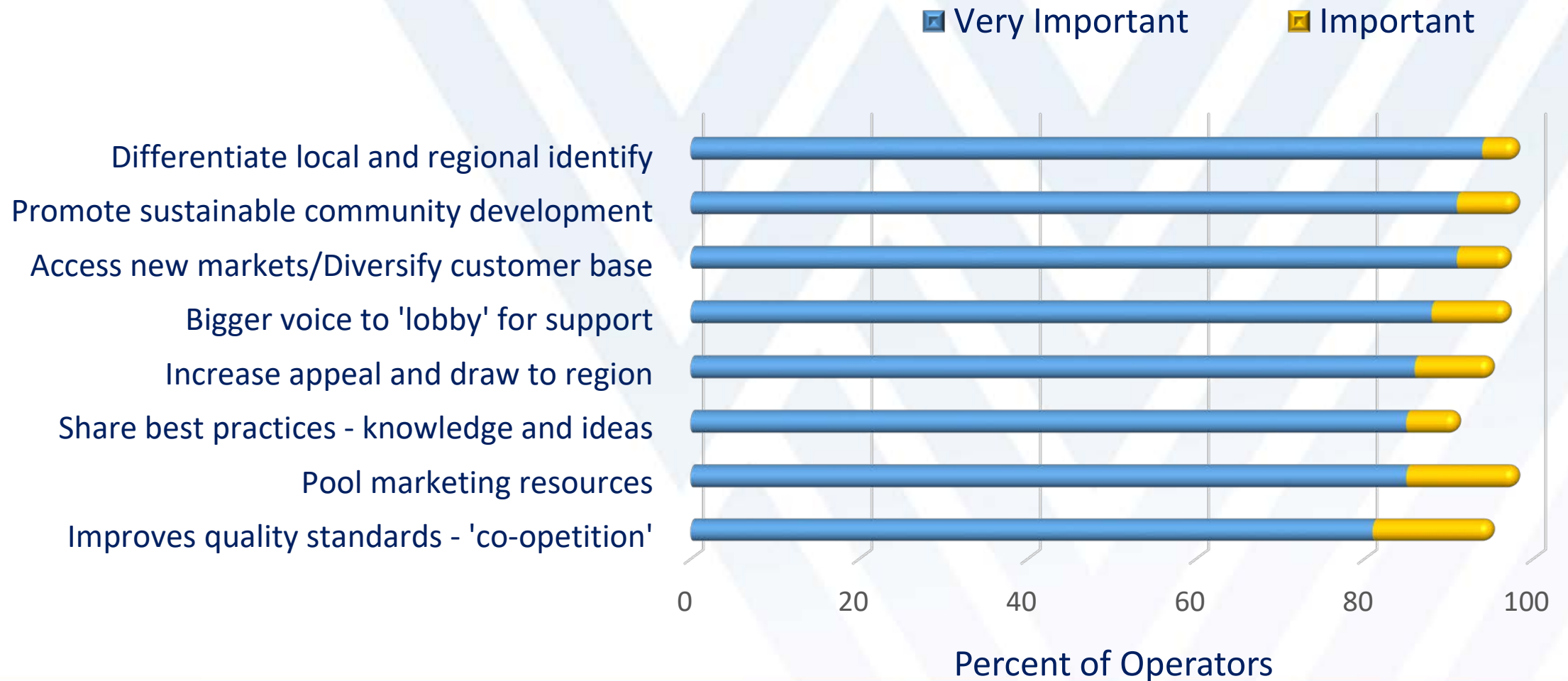


# Methods – Agritourism Operators and Service Providers

- **Focus Group** – 32 agritourism operators, 19 Service Providers and Community Stakeholders
  - Perception of Clustering Realities




# Factors Affecting your Decision to 'Cluster' with Others



# What were the BENEFITS of Participating in a 'Cluster'?

OPERATION	COMMUNITY/REGION	STATE	VISITORS
Customers - Encourage repeat visitors, new customer base	Promote region and local offerings to visitors	Promote local products, activities and events (offering unique, authentic experiences)	More value for money
Financials - Higher revenue, better cash flow, new revenue streams, shared costs	Increased visitor spending	WV – unique, vibrant, value for money, 'stay longer'	Longer stay, better all-round visit, year-round destination
Customer Relations - Educating, building relationships, and getting support and feedback from customers	Encourage communities to promote agricultural based tourism activities	Promote role of agriculture within your state	Farm-to-customer relationships
Marketing - Add value to 'Farm Brand', promote business to larger customer base, promote future events, joint and cross-marketing	Platform for community involvement and vibrant communities (involving visitors, residents, farm operators, and other non-ag businesses)	Closer linkages to the non-agricultural business communities	
Sharing information - Mutual support, earning from peers, sharing best practices	Advocacy, support and 'voice' for future infrastructure development	Promoting economic development that builds on unique resources, community connections and environmental stewardship (which cannot be outsourced)	
Improve quality standards - Made improvements to operation I would have otherwise neglected	Foster 'farm to customer' relationships – 'know your farmer-know your food'	Foster 'farm to customer' relationships – 'know your farmer-know your food'	

# What were the KEYS TO SUCCESS for Participating in the Micro-Clusters?

OPERATION	COMMUNITY/REGION	STATE
Quality and diversity of offerings – providing value for money	Shared vision and shared sense of fate	Support of Producers' Association
Quality of customer service and hospitality – '5 Star Service' - <i>moving from 'production oriented' to 'customer-oriented' mind-set</i>	Proximity to other attractions and amenities, and good infrastructure – itinerary planning and communications	Support of state agencies and tourism stakeholders (WVDA, Tourism, Extension, CVBs, independent 'destination marketing organization') <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Marketing and other financial and technical support</li> <li>- Signage</li> <li>- Policy</li> </ul>
Appearance and aesthetics, Interpretive and safety signage	Scenic, vibrant and welcoming community	
Consistent and shared promotion and 'market positioning', maps and apps	Strong local organizations and leaders; one or two 'main drivers'	
Sufficient cash to invest – start small and build up (business plan)	No 'free riders' – equal contribution and follow-through	
Proximity to and compatibility with other businesses	Enthusiasm, passion and creativity	
Shared planning, communication and follow-through (family and community)	Check egos at the door	
Knowledge– know customers, operation and industry	Stay informed - training	

# QUESTIONS?

*almost heaven*

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