

Georgia Trend

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New breed: Scott Cagle is leading the way when it comes to blending agriculture and tourism in Georgia

Agritourism In Action

Scott Cagle is a Grade-A agri-zealot. "You think it's bad to be dependent on other countries for gas and energy, just think about food," he says. Though Cagle's Dairy in Hickory Flat has been "agri-educating" since the 1960s, when Cagle's parents, Albert and Bernese, would welcome groups from local schools, agritourism became a primary component of the dairy's operations in 1993; and has since been replicated in farms all over Georgia and the rest of the country.

It was a question of necessity, says Cagle. In developable areas, farmers lose their suppliers and labor. "We had two choices; sell our operation and move to a more rural area to farm, or think of something in conjunction with agriculture to increase revenue." he says.

As logical as it sounds, no one has been as innovative as the Cagle's in this new field. The dairy now features a popular corn maze and hosts farm parties, barnyard birthdays and stock dog trials. It's also home to Clayton and Estelle's Farm Market and many other activities for agritourists. "We add things each year," Cagle says. "One of the biggest hits is our new nighttime tour of the lake."

Agriculture and tourism, the state's number one and number two industries, also happen to be clean, Cagle adds. "Farms are important to preserve open spaces and give the county a rural feel. But it's most important to educate people---they need to realize where food comes from and how important it is to have a safe and wholesome food supply."

Ben Young