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## **Student defends thesis, ‘Factors Influencing Producer Participation in Agritourism Ventures: A Survey’**

**MANHATTAN, KAN, June 15, 2005-** David Mace, Wamego, Kan., defended his thesis, “Factors Influencing Producer Participation in Agritourism Ventures: A Survey,” Tuesday, June 14, 2005. Mace is a Business Development Specialist at the Ag Innovation Center at Kansas State University.

Agritourism is gaining in popularity among farmers and ranchers and policy makers are implementing initiatives to encourage its adoption around the country. Mace analyzed the results of a survey of 85 farmers and ranchers to understand the factors that are motivating producers to embark on agritourism initiatives. The study is important because it will help policy makers to determine how they can accelerate the growth of agritourism while providing insights into the role it plays in producers’ strategy.

“We discovered that agritourism entrepreneurs are not purely motivated by monetary factors in their decision-making about agritourism,” Mace said. “Actually, the reasons for operating agritourism businesses were motivated by a complex set of factors, with no single dominant factor. The most important discovery from the study was that producers did not see agritourims as a panacea to their current economic and social problems.” In this sense, its role as a solution in rural development should be measured and the appropriate strategies developed to support its success.

David Mace’s study contributes to the literature on agritourism and enhances the understanding of the motivating factors for current and aspiring operators of agritourism ventures. This was the observation of Mace’s thesis advisor, Dr. Vincent Amanor-Boadu.

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“Agritourism is viewed as another strategy for enhancing farm income and achieving rural economic development. Understanding the motivating factors driving its adoption is important if we are going to craft successful and sustainable policies,” Amanor-Boadu said. “This thesis also provides us with a perspective on entrepreneurs’ motivations, something that has been studied for more than two centuries and still evades our complete understanding.”

K-State’s Master of Agribusiness is an award-winning, distance education degree program that focuses on food and agribusiness management. Students in the program are located in 30 states within the United States and 12 countries abroad. They range in age from 25 to 55 and work in every sector of the food and agribusiness industry.

The program, launched in 1998, was the first graduate agribusiness program in the nation to be offered through distance education. The executive style, distance education delivery breaks down barriers associated with earning a master’s degree, such as access to a university campus, job changes, relocations and job-related travel.

“We have developed a program that meets students’ educational needs, and we deliver it in a format that meets their schedules,” said Allen Featherstone, director of graduate studies for K-State’s department of agricultural economics. “Students can access the program regardless of where they are.”

The MAB program was awarded the University Continuing Education Association/Peterson’s Award for most innovative distance education program in 2001. Additional honors include: American Distance Education Consortium’s National Excellence in College & University Distance Education Honorable Mention, Spring 2001; University Continuing Education Association Credit Program of Excellence, Spring 2000; University Continuing Education Association Region V Credit Program Award, Fall 1999.

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