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An Epistemological Approach to the Success of Women in Agritourism

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Title: An Epistemological Approach to the Success of Women in Agritourism

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Abstract:

Agritourism, broadly defined as educational or recreational activities offered on working farms (Gil Arroyo et al., 2013), is mainly led by women (McGehee et al., 2007). Women's involvement in the development, management, and innovation of agritourism is expected to grow in future years due to women's greater participation in farming, along with a greater interest in local foods and farmers among the public (Kline et al., 2016). Despite such involvement, the extant literature indicates that women in agritourism experience many structural (e.g., reduced agency support) and cultural (e.g., expected gendered-family roles) challenges hindering their entrepreneurial success, especially in terms of income (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008; Halim, 2016). The concomitant increase of women's involvement in agritourism and their lower entrepreneurial achievement calls for identifying specific actions that can increase their chances of success. This is especially important as agritourism is shown to have the capacity to produce many socio-cultural (e.g., increase of farm youth retention), environmental (e.g., preservation of tangible heritage), and economic (e.g., revitalization of rural economies) benefits to the farmer, the farm household, and society (Barbieri, 2013; Che et al., 2005).

However, identifying the challenges women in agritourism face is complex, as they emerge from the multiple roles women on farms play (farmer, caregiver, land steward). As such, moving forward from the mere identification of challenges to the actions to overcome them requires a systemic approach in which a stratified analysis of women's roles and challenges can be unfolded. The Agritourism Systems Approach, which delineates a multi-layered epistemological perspective encompassing three units of analysis (farmer, farm household, society) intersected by three agricultural dimensions (socio-cultural, environmental, economic), appears suitable to understand the types and sources of challenges women in agritourism face (Barbieri, in press).

In this presentation, we will use the Agritourism Systems Approach as an epistemological tool to input challenges women in agritourism face into distinct layers (e.g., farmer challenge emerged from socio-cultural paradigms). In doing so, the identification of actions (e.g., policy development, technical capacity, empowerment efforts) towards strategizing the success of women in agritourism will be facilitated. We will use data gathered from women involved in agritourism (2015, 2017) and evidence from the literature for the epistemological application of the Agritourism Systems Approach.