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Agricultural Operations & Farm Wineries, Breweries, & Distilleries

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One of the features of Albemarle County is the scenic beauty and natural resources of our Rural Area, including the beauty of our agricultural lands on agricultural operations (aka farms) and farm wineries, breweries, and distilleries (FWBD). We encourage agritourism under the regulations outlined below to protect this rural use.

AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS -

An agricultural operation is more commonly known as a farm, but includes any operation devoted to the bona fide production of crops, or animals, or fowl, including the production of fruits and vegetables of all kinds; meat, dairy, and poultry products; nuts, tobacco, nursery, and floral products; and the production and harvest of products from silviculture activity. This term includes aquaculture and plant nurseries.

Read more about the regulations in our [Agricultural Operations FAQs](#) handout.

FARM WINERIES, BREWERIES, AND DISTILLERIES (FWBD) -

Farm wineries, breweries, and distilleries are agricultural operations devoted to the production of wine, cider, beer, and spirits, using agricultural products grown at the agricultural operation.

- *Farm wineries* must be licensed as a "farm winery" under [Virginia Code § 4.1-207](#).
- *Farm breweries* must be licensed as a limited brewery under [Virginia Code § 4.1-208](#).
- *Farm distilleries* must be licensed as a limited distillery under [Virginia Code § 4.1-206](#).

Read about the regulations in our [Farm Wineries, Breweries, and Distilleries FAQ](#) handout.

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Can I rent out my agricultural operation for weddings and receptions?

Can I host my family member's wedding at my agricultural operation?

How many people may come to a wedding at my farm winery, brewery, or distillery?

How many people may come to my farm winery, brewery, or distillery for tasting?

What kind of non-wedding event can I have at my agricultural operation?

How many people can come to my agricultural operation for direct sales, agritourism, non-wedding events, and educational workshops or demonstrations?

Can I have music at my agricultural operation or farm winery, brewery, or distillery?

Albemarle County: Agricultural Operations & Farm Wineries, Breweries, & Distilleries

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BY-RIGHT PRODUCTION AND SALES

Agricultural operations and farm wineries, breweries, and distilleries (FWBD) are a by-right use in the Rural Areas, and the following activities are permitted without a zoning clearance:

- Growing, harvesting, and producing agricultural products, including vegetables, fruits, honey, meat, dairy, and poultry products, flowers, or wine, beer, and distilled spirits from products grown on your farm.
- Tasting of wine, beer, or distilled spirits made from products grown on your farm.
- Harvest-your-own activities.
- Direct sale of wine, beer, or distilled spirits to customers

To have other activities at your agricultural operation or FWBD, including events or agritourism activities, you may need to meet certain requirements and obtain a zoning clearance, as outlined below.

AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS EVENTS

Am I Eligible to Hold Agritourism Activities and Events at My Farm?

Agritourism activities are permitted at all agricultural operations, but some agricultural operations require an [Agricultural Operations Clearance](#) as described below.

If your agricultural operation event is a regular occurrence that was established before May 15, 2019, you may continue to hold your event.

If your agricultural operation event was not a regular occurrence before May 15, 2019, you must have 5 acres of land devoted to agricultural production to qualify to hold agricultural operation events.

What Agritourism Activities and Events Can I Host at My Agricultural Operation?

- For sites larger than 21 acres in size and with fewer than 50 visitor vehicle trips per day (25 vehicles in and out of the site), no zoning clearance is required for agritourism and events. For sites smaller than 21 acres in size or with more than 50 visitor vehicle trips per day (25 vehicles in and out of the site), an [Agricultural Operations Clearance](#) is required for agritourism and events.
- By-right agritourism includes: educational programs, workshops, and demonstrations, farm tours, and direct sales (excluding harvest-your-own activities).
- By-right agricultural operation events include: farm-to-table dinners, agricultural festivals, livestock auctions, livestock or agricultural product shows, events that promote the sale of agricultural or silvicultural products, events that promote the sale of food products related to the agricultural operation, and fundraisers and charity events.

What is Not Permitted at My Agricultural Operation?

- You may not hold weddings, receptions, and other event-space rental activities without a [special use permit](#).
- You may not have events with more than 200 people in attendance without a [special use permit](#).
- You may not hold agritourism activities or agricultural operations events on sites smaller than 21 acres in size without an [Agricultural Operations Clearance](#).
- You may not hold agritourism activities that create more than 50 visitor vehicle trips (25 vehicles in and out of the site) without an [Agricultural Operations Clearance](#).

FARM WINERY, BREWERY, AND DISTILLERY EVENTS

Am I Eligible to Hold Agritourism Activities and Events at My Farm Winery, Brewery, or Distillery?

Agritourism activities are permitted at all farm wineries, breweries, and distilleries (FWBD), but some FWBD require a [Farm Winery, Brewery, or Distillery Clearance](#).

If your FWBD was established before December 9, 2015, you may hold events as described below.

If your FWBD was established after December 9, 2015, you must have 5 acres of land devoted to producing agricultural products that are used in your wine, beer, or distilled spirits to qualify to hold events as described below.

What Kinds of Agritourism Activities and Events Can I Host at My Farm Winery, Brewery, or Distillery?

- For sites larger than 21 acres in size and with fewer than 50 visitor vehicle trips per day (25 vehicles in and out of the site), no zoning clearance is required for agritourism activities. For sites smaller than 21 acres in size or with more than 50 visitor vehicle trips per day (25 vehicles in and out of the site), a [Farm Winery, Brewery, or Distillery Clearance](#) is required for agritourism and events.
- By-right agritourism includes: exhibits, museums, and historical segments related to alcoholic beverages, guest winemakers, brewmasters, or distillers and trade accommodations of invited winemakers, brewmasters, or distillers, hayrides, picnics, provision of finger foods, soups, and appetizers to visitors, and tours.

- By-right farm winery, brewery, or distillery events include: wine, beer or distilled spirits fairs, festivals, or receptions where wine, beer or distilled spirits are sold or served, club meetings and activities, tasting educational seminars, tasting luncheons, business meetings, and corporate luncheons with a focus on selling wine, beer or distilled spirits, gatherings with the purpose of promoting sales to the trade, winemaker, brewmaster, or distiller dinners where wine, beer or distilled spirits are paired with food, agritourism promotions, fundraisers and charity events, and weddings or receptions.

What is Not Permitted at My Farm Winery, Brewery, or Distillery?

- Restaurants and helicopter rides are prohibited at farm wineries, breweries, and distilleries (FWBD).
- You may not have events with more than 200 people in attendance without a [special use permit](#).
- You may not hold FWBD agritourism activities or events on sites smaller than 21 acres in size without a [Farm Winery, Brewery, or Distillery Clearance](#).
- You may not hold FWBD agritourism activities or events that create more than 50 visitor vehicle trips (25 vehicles in and out of the site) without a [Farm Winery, Brewery, or Distillery Clearance](#).
- You may not hold any FWBD events without 5 acres of land devoted to producing agricultural products that are used in your wine, beer, or distilled spirits.

Read a summary of these regulations in our [Farm Winery, Brewery, and Distillery FAQ handout](#).

OUTDOOR AMPLIFIED MUSIC

If you're interested in having music at your agricultural operation event or your farm winery, brewery, or distillery event or tasting room, you must obtain an [Outdoor Amplified Music Clearance](#), and follow the County's noise regulations.

- Noise must not exceed 60 dBA during the day and 55 dBA at night, as measured at your property line.
- Outdoor amplified music is prohibited from 10pm – 7am on Sunday through Thursday and from 11pm – 7am on Friday and Saturday.
- Music occurring in structures with open windows or doors is considered outdoor amplified music.

HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

FAQs

[Expand/Contract Questions and Answers](#)

- **Can I rent out my agricultural operation for weddings and receptions?**
No. Weddings, receptions, and other event-space rental activities are not currently permitted at agricultural operations without a [special use permit](#). This prohibition applies regardless of the frequency of weddings, the size of the weddings, and the size of the parcel the agricultural operation is located on.
- **Can I host my family member's wedding at my agricultural operation?**
Yes. You may host private weddings and receptions for your own use, and not for compensation.
- **How many people may come to a wedding at my farm winery, brewery, or distillery?**
You may have up to 200 guests at a wedding or reception, not including winery staff and event vendors.

- **How many people may come to my farm winery, brewery, or distillery for tasting?**

There are no limits on tasting room attendees during regular business hours.

- **What kind of non-wedding event can I have at my agricultural operation?**

Permitted agricultural operation events include the following:

- Farm-to-table dinners
- Agricultural festivals
- Livestock auctions
- Livestock or agricultural product shows
- Events that promote the sale of agricultural or silvicultural products
- Events that promote the sale of food products
- Fundraisers and charity events

- **How many people can come to my agricultural operation for direct sales, agritourism, non-wedding events, and educational workshops or demonstrations?**

With a zoning clearance, you may have up to 200 attendees at a time.

- **Can I have music at my agricultural operation or farm winery, brewery, or distillery?**

You must obtain an [Outdoor Amplified Music Clearance](#), and follow the County's noise regulations.

- Noise must not exceed 60 dBA during the day and 55 dBA at night, as measured at your property line.
- Outdoor amplified music is prohibited from 10 pm – 7 am on Sunday through Thursday and from 11 pm – 7 am on Friday and Saturday.