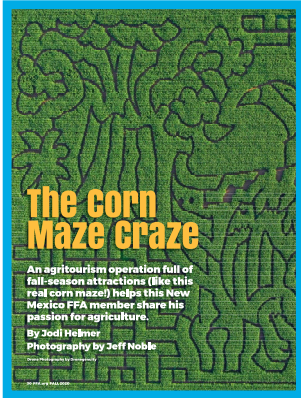




NEW HORIZONS

Fall 2020 TEACHING GUIDE



ARTICLE SUMMARY

THE CORN MAZE CRAZE

The agritourism industry is a vital part of engaging and educating the public about the agriculture industry. Explore how one agritourism site works to engage the community, and learn how you could engage the community in your state.

Bell Ringer

What is agritourism?

Discussion Questions

1. What is agritourism?
2. Why is agritourism important to the economy?

Activity

Part 1: Hand out the worksheet "The Corn Maze Craze" (Appendix 2). Have students read the article "The Corn Maze Craze" in the fall 2020 issue of FFA New Horizons and complete the worksheet. Once students have completed the reading and questions, have students share popcorn-style why they think agritourism is important. Hold a class discussion after five to 10 students have shared their opinions.

Part 2: Next, students will complete research about agritourism sites in their states. Then, have students reflect why that business is considered agritourism. As students work, draw an outline of your state on the board. Once students finish, have them come to the board to locate and record the agritourism site they found. Once students are done recording their research, have them share with the class why the site they selected is considered agritourism. Next, have students research the top five agricultural commodities in their state and identify which one they feel people in their state need to learn about the most. Have five students share their top commodity.

Part 3: Students will follow the steps outlined on the worksheet to design their own agritourism site for their county. Have students share their theme and attractions with two other students and then with the class.

Part 4: Have students use the graph provided to map out their own corn maze for their agritourism site. The following guidelines need to be kept in mind while students develop their site: (1) the maze should follow the theme selected, (2) identify the graph measurements to ensure their maze will make sense when made into a large scale (ex. one square is one foot) and (3) the maze should have a clear entrance and exit, and they should be labeled. Once students have finished, have them hang their mazes around the room for all students to be able to see the creativity of the class.

FFA Tip

Have students use the Agricultural Literacy Experience Planning Guides from National FFA to plan an event to share with their peers, community or elementary students to help educate them on an agricultural topic.

SAE Tip

Challenge students to list all the types of agricultural tourism they can. Have them select one type and list all the skills and knowledge required to create and run the business. Explore your local agritourism business creation or employment opportunities and share them with students.

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

AFNR Performance Element: CS.02, CS.05 • FFA Precepts: FFA.PL-A, FFA.PG-J, FFA.CS-N • Common Core – Reading: Informational Text: CCSS.ELA.RI.9-10.2, CCSS.ELA.RI.9-10.3, CCSS.ELA.RI.9-10.4 • Common Core-Literacy in Science & Technical Subjects: Writing: WHST.9.10.4 • Common Career Technical Core: AG2.AG5 • AFNR Career Ready Practices: CRP.02, CRP.04, CRP.06, CRP.08 • P21 Skills: COMMUNICATION, CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING, FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY, INITIATIVE AND SELF-DIRECTION, LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY, THINK CREATIVELY

VOCABULARY

Agritourism
Attraction
Undertaking

EXIT TICKET

What role does agritourism play in helping to educate the general public about the agriculture industry?

CAREER FOCUS AREA

Any

RELATABLE LINKS

[Agricultural Literacy Experience Planning Guides](#)

RESOURCE HIGHLIGHTS

[AgExplorer.com](#)

[Agricultural Literacy Experience Planning Guides](#)

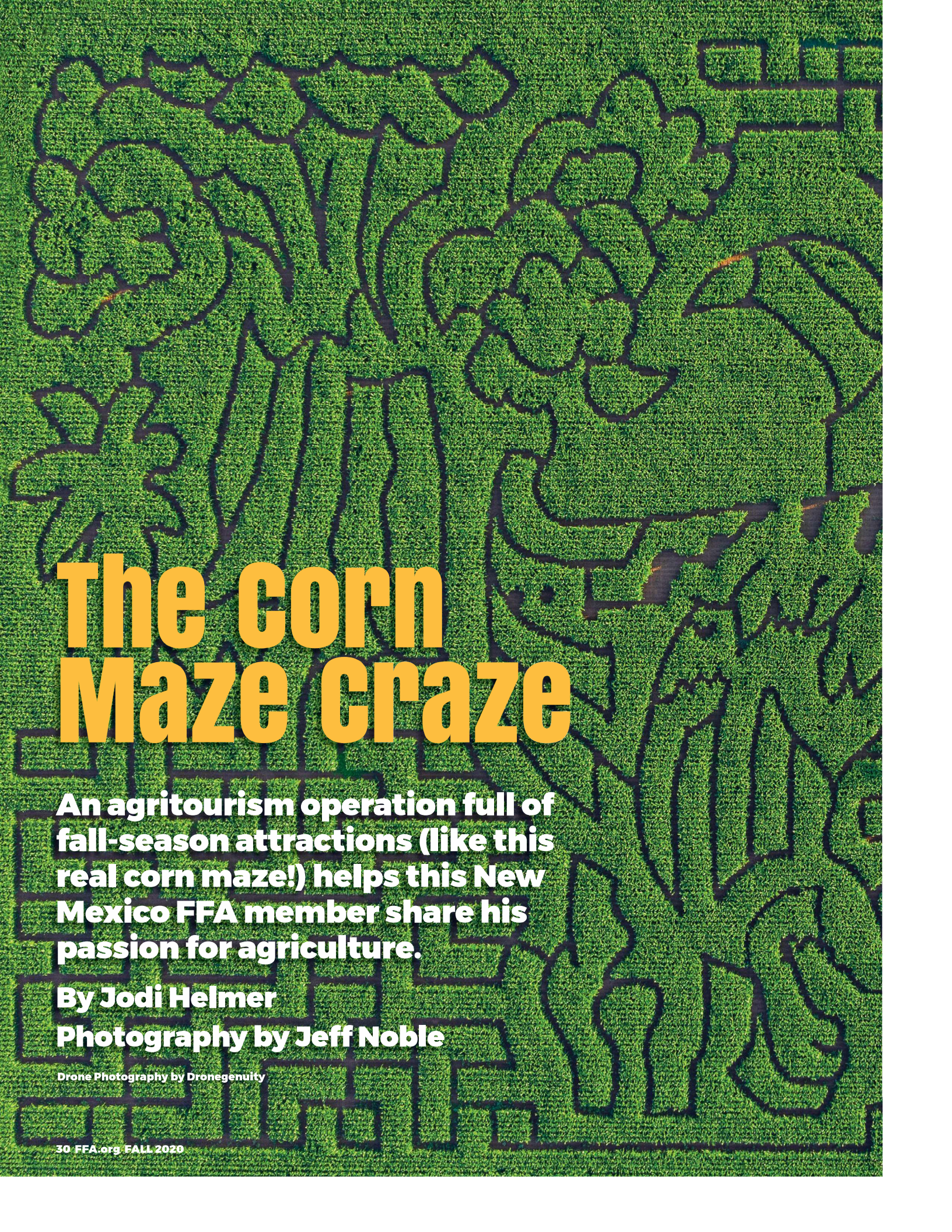
REFERENCES

AgExplorer: [AgExplorer.com](#)

APPENDIX

Appendix 2: The Corn Maze Craze





The corn Maze craze

An agritourism operation full of fall-season attractions (like this real corn maze!) helps this New Mexico FFA member share his passion for agriculture.

By Jodi Helmer

Photography by Jeff Noble

Drone Photography by Dronegenuity





The McCall family had been growing pumpkins on their Moriarty, N.M., farm for several years when they decided to invite the local kindergarten class to visit their pumpkin patch.

“The school groups came to the farm on a school bus, went out into the field and picked pumpkins for \$4 each,” says FFA member and farmer Caleb McCall. “My dad had an aha moment that this could work for the farm.”

After those first school visits in 1998, trips to McCall’s Pumpkin Patch became an annual tradition. The farm transitioned from selling truckloads of pumpkins wholesale to welcoming school groups and opening the farm gates to the public. On those first fall weekends, the farm welcomed an average of 2,000 visitors, and some families drove from as far away as Albuquerque and Santa Fe to experience life on the farm.

“It just grew from there,” McCall says. “We started out with one class of kindergartners in 1998, and last season, we had over 100,000 people.”

Sharing the Story of Agriculture

The pumpkin patch was only the beginning.

The McCall family began adding new attractions each season and developed an agritourism business — farms that contain a recreational or educational enterprise component, such as tours of a working farm and pick-your-own fruits, as described by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Agritourism isn’t a new trend, but it’s one that continues to grow. “Farm agritourism revenue more than tripled between 2002 and 2017, according to data from the Census of Agriculture,” the USDA reports. “Adjusted for inflation, agritourism revenue grew from \$704 million in 2012 to almost \$950 million in 2017.”

The McCall operation started with a pumpkin patch and petting zoo. It now offers more than 50 attractions, including hayrides, pumpkin cannons, a produce stand, a low ropes

course, a cow-theme train ride, pig races and multiple food outlets.

One of the newest attractions is a 3,000-square-foot castle complete with princess makeovers, tea parties and costumed princesses reading stories. McCall calls the castle his favorite attraction on the farm. “It’s the epicenter of our Main Street,” he says.

In addition to looking to world-class attractions such as Walt Disney World and Dollywood for inspiration, the family has connected with agritourism operators across the country to help generate ideas and trade tips for running a successful pumpkin

Top left: A 3,000-square-foot castle is complete with princess makeovers, tea parties and costumed princesses. Top right: Morgan, Caleb, Kevin and Kirsten McCall (left to right). Above: A 32-foot-tall milk can — the second tallest in the world — that operates as a soft-serve ice cream stand is one of the standout attractions.



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A young man with short brown hair and black-rimmed glasses is smiling broadly at the camera. He is wearing a blue short-sleeved button-down shirt. He is standing in a cornfield, with large green corn leaves in the foreground and background. His arms are crossed in front of him, partially obscured by the leaves.

“We want to
take people
away from
the city,
away from
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**away
from the
stress.”**

- Caleb McCall



Above: McCall's Pumpkin Patch started with one class of kindergartners in 1998 and had over 100,000 visitors last season.

patch and corn maze. Creating an entertaining environment is just part of their mission.

"We're a miniature-scale amusement park with an agriculture focus," McCall says. "I've been very active about advocating for agriculture. I love teaching people about where their food comes from because with that knowledge and their support for agriculture, the industry thrives."

The FFA Connection

McCall is always learning. As a member (and past president) of Moriarty FFA, he learned a lot about farming in agriscience classes and activities, such as the agronomy career development event (CDE). The farm is also the basis for his current supervised agricultural experience (SAE) in diversified agriculture. He hopes it will help him earn his American Degree in 2020. McCall also credits FFA leadership skills that have been essential on the farm.

Attending the New Century Farmer conference in 2019 allowed him to connect with other young producers to share knowledge, ideas and challenges that will propel their future success. He calls it a highlight of his FFA career, and he believes that staying in contact with attendees and sharing experiences will influence his path in agriculture.

"If I didn't do FFA, I don't think I'd be able to talk about the farm as fluently," he says.

McCall is currently a freshman studying plant, soil and

environmental science at West Texas A&M University, and he's developing even more of a foundation for a career in agriculture.

"My dad was taught by his grandpa how to farm, and a lot of the practices we used are passed down. No one on the farm has ever had the understanding of how it all works," he explains. "My plan is to get that understanding and come back and be able to fix a lot of those practices and bring more of an educational process to the farm."

Lost in the Possibilities

The 14-acre corn maze is one of the highlights of McCall's Pumpkin Patch. It takes months to pick a theme and settle on a design. Past themes have included a tribute to New Mexico, Pac-Man, *Looney Tunes*, and a castle and dragon. The 2020 maze features dinosaurs as a nod to the *Land of the Lost* TV series. The farm has also worked with sponsors, including McDonald's and the University of New Mexico, to use the corn maze as a canvas for logos and branded messages.

In 2013, after the now-iconic Super Bowl commercial, the McCall family chose "God Made a Farmer" as its corn maze theme. The maze design featured a tractor and an American flag. McCall says it was one of his favorites. Once the design is complete, McCall flies a drone over the corn maze and snaps photos so visitors can see how it looks from above.

The family works with The MAiZE Inc., the world's largest cornfield maze design company, to design and cut all of its corn mazes. The McCalls also travel to destinations such as Arizona, Hawaii, Florida and California to attend annual conferences to stay up-to-date on trends.

The maze is not the only thing that changes every year. The McCall family is constantly adding new attractions to its agritourism operation. A 32-foot-tall milk can — the second tallest in the world — that operates as a soft-serve ice cream stand is one of the standout attractions. Major improvements to the haunted attractions are under construction and scheduled to make their debut this fall.

Although McCall's Pumpkin Patch already has a strong educational focus, McCall hopes to expand on that element of the operation by adding an educational barn that highlights different areas of agriculture, such as dairy, poultry and crop production to further educate visitors about where their food comes from.

"We want to take people away from the city, away from technology, away from the stress," he says. "We want them to have fun and experience what life is like on the farm." •

THE MAKING OF A MAZE

Creating a corn maze is a big undertaking. Some farmers take a DIY approach, sketching out designs on graph paper and using GPS-enabled tractors to carve paths, while others hire companies to turn their ideas into maze designs. In both cases, the process is similar. Corn is planted in a grid. When it grows knee-high, flags are set out to mark the outline. The design is spray-painted and then cut to create the paths.

In 2013, FFA sponsor Culver's started the Thank You Farmers project to support agricultural education programs. The restaurant group has partnered with farmers to create agricultural-themed mazes for the past five seasons, and the designs have ranged from a honeybee and hive to a horse pulling a plow. To date, Culver's has grown 38 Thank You Farmers project corn mazes in 19 states. In 2018, a farm in Olivet, Mich., designed a corn maze with the FFA logo.

