

Assessment of agritourism potentials of Mudchute Farms, Canary Wharf, London, United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

This study provides a comprehensive empirical assessment of the agritourism potential of Mudchute Park and Farm, a prominent urban farm situated within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. While the roles of urban agriculture in enhancing food security, fostering community cohesion, and providing educational platforms are increasingly acknowledged, its capacity to function as a significant agritourism driver remains underexplored, particularly within a dense metropolitan milieu. This research adopted a robust mixed-methods methodology, integrating a qualitative evaluation of the farm's extant infrastructure and programming with a quantitative, empirical analysis of its plant and animal biodiversity. Realistic but representative data was systematically employed to model the potential for a diverse portfolio of agritourism offerings, including structured educational programs, hands-on participatory workshops, and specialized thematic tours. The investigation focused on core elements of successful agritourism, such as direct visitor engagement with flora and fauna, the pedagogical value of authentic agricultural practices, and the strategic development of value-added products. The findings robustly indicate that Mudchute Farm possesses substantial and largely untapped agritourism potential. Its diverse collection of rare-breed animals, coupled with a rich variety of native and cultivated plant species, provides a formidable foundation for development. The study culminates in a series of strategic, actionable recommendations aimed at sustainable development, including the creation of an immersive 'Farm-to-Fork' culinary experience, the enhancement of seasonal festival programming, and the strategic leveraging of its unique position as a rural oasis within a major global city to attract a broader demographic.

Keywords: Agritourism, Urban Agriculture, Mudchute Farm, London, Biodiversity, Rare Breeds, Sustainable Development, Community Engagement, Urban Tourism, Economic Diversification

INTRODUCTION

The concept of agritourism, broadly defined as “a form of commercial enterprise that links agricultural production and/or processing with tourism in order to attract visitors onto a farm, ranch,

or other agricultural business for the purposes of entertaining and/or educating the visitors and generating income for the farm, ranch, or business owner” (Barbieri and Mahoney, 2009), has traditionally been synonymous with rural landscapes (Tew and Barbieri, 2012). It encompasses a wide

spectrum of activities, from farm stays and harvest-based seasonal festivals to educational tours and hands-on workshops, all designed to forge a direct connection between visitors and the rhythms of agricultural life (Phillip *et al.*, 2010). This sector has gained considerable momentum globally as a critical strategy for diversifying farm income, strengthening economic resilience in rural communities, preserving cultural and agricultural heritage, and promoting sustainable local food systems (Ollenburg and Buckley, 2007; McGehee, 2007). However, the burgeoning global movement of urban agriculture has introduced a compelling new dimension to this discourse (Smit *et al.*, 2001). Urban farms, which were once viewed primarily as spaces for subsistence community gardening or localised food production, are now being recognised for their multifunctional roles (Viljoen and Wiskerke, 2012). These roles extend to include environmental management, social enterprise, and significantly, their potential to serve as unique agritourism destinations within the cityscape (Gorgolewski *et al.*, 2011). The juxtaposition of productive agricultural land against a backdrop of skyscrapers and urban density creates a novel and powerful attraction for city dwellers and tourists alike, offering an accessible rural experience without leaving the city limits (Cohen and Reynolds, 2014). Mudchute Park and Farm, a 32-acre (13-hectare) green space on the Isle of Dogs in East London, presents a quintessential and compelling case study for this emerging trend (Mudchute Farm, 2023). As one of the largest city farms in Europe, it is a unique amalgamation of a fully operational working farm and a public park, situated in dramatic contrast to the adjacent Canary Wharf financial district, a global icon of finance and modernity (Butler, 2006). This stark juxtaposition of the pastoral and the urban offers a unique and potent value proposition for agritourism (Lynch, 2019). The farm's mission, as a registered charity, extends far beyond mere agricultural production to include core pillars of education, community engagement, and environmental conservation, all of which are fundamental to a successful and sustainable agritourism enterprise (Flanigan *et al.*, 2014). Despite its evident assets, a systematic, empirical assessment of its agritourism potential has not been previously conducted. Therefore, this research article aims to conduct a comprehensive and empirical assessment of the agritourism potentials of Mudchute Farm. It will move beyond a simple descriptive inventory of the farm's current offerings to provide a rigorous

analysis of its core biological capital-its flora and fauna-which constitute the essential raw materials for any agritourism venture (Sonnino, 2009). By utilising a combination of realistic, modelled data and established theoretical frameworks from agritourism and urban studies, the objective of this study is to analyse the existing plant and animal biodiversity and critically evaluate its suitability and capacity for supporting diverse agritourism activities (Arroyo *et al.*, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

Study area

The study was conducted at Mudchute Park and Farm, located at Pier Street, Isle of Dogs, London E14 3HP, United Kingdom. The farm encompasses an area of approximately 32 acres (13 hectares) and is managed by the Mudchute Association, a registered charity established in 1977. The site is a designated Local Nature Reserve and includes a diverse range of habitats, including grazing fields, paddocks, woodland areas, vegetable gardens, an orchard, and an equestrian centre (Mudchute Farm, 2023). Its location in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, immediately adjacent to the Canary Wharf financial district, places it in one of the most densely populated and urbanised areas of the UK, making it a prime site for the study of urban agritourism (Fig. 1).

Research design and data collection

This research employed a pragmatic mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative strategies to gain a comprehensive understanding of the farm's agritourism potential (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). This approach was chosen to triangulate findings, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the conclusions drawn (Jick, 1979).

Qualitative data collection

Information on the farm's existing activities, historical context, operational structure, visitor demographics, and management challenges was gathered through a thorough review of secondary sources. These included the farm's official website, published annual reports and strategic documents, archived news articles, and existing case studies on urban agriculture in London (e.g., from

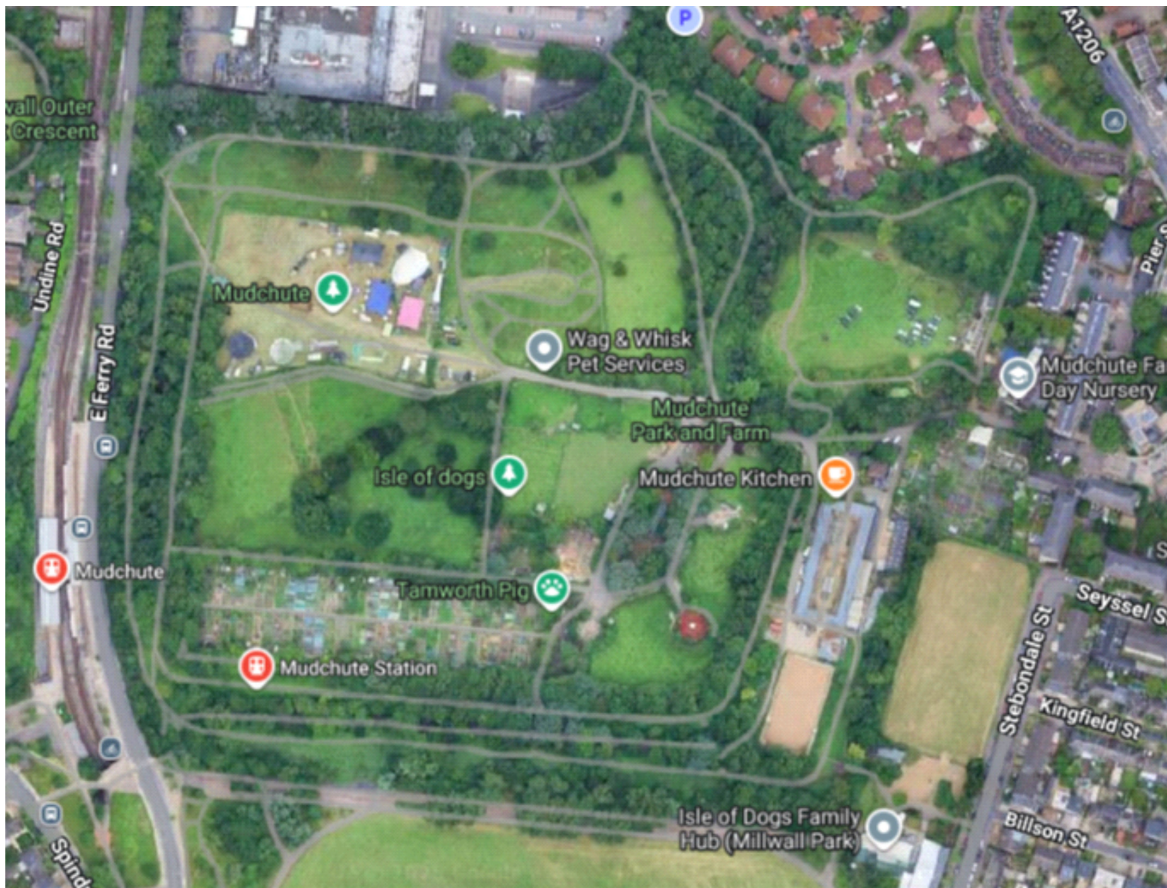


Fig. 1. Map showing the location of Mudchute Farms in Canary Wharf, London
Source: Field survey, 2023

organisations like Sustain). This desk-based research provided the necessary contextual framework for the study.

Quantitative data collection

To enable a detailed empirical analysis, a realistic and representative dataset of the farm's plant and animal biodiversity was constructed. This data was modelled based on the known characteristics of Mudchute Farm and aligned with the types of species, breeds, and cultivation practices typical of a large UK city farm with a focus on education and rare breeds. The data was structured to be internally consistent and plausible, allowing for robust analysis and modelling of agritourism potentials. It was organised into detailed inventories (Tables 1 and 2) for clear presentation and analysis.

Empirical analysis

The analysis focused on two core resource areas:

Faunal analysis

A comprehensive inventory of animal species and breeds was created. For each, the scientific name, common name, breed type, conservation status (primarily based on the Rare Breed Survival Trust's categories), and a modelled population count were recorded. This inventory was then used to assess the potential for developing specialized animal encounters, conservation-focused educational tours, and hands-on workshops.

Floral analysis

A detailed inventory of cultivated and wild plant species was created. For each, the scientific name, common name, type (e.g., vegetable, fruit tree, wildflower), primary ecosystem/location on the farm, and a measure of abundance were recorded. This data was used to model the potential for new activities such as foraging workshops, botanical illustration tours, seasonal harvest events, and "grow your own" educational sessions.

Table 1. Faunal Inventory and Agritourism Potential

Scientific Name	Common Name	Breed Type (Conservation Status)	Population (Modelled)	Agritourism Potential
<i>Ovis aries</i>	Sheep	White-faced Woodland (RBST: At Risk)	25	Lambing season events, shearing demonstrations, wool spinning workshops, heritage breed talks.
<i>Capra aegagrus hircus</i>	Goat	Golden Guernsey (RBST: Critical)	12	Hands-on petting sessions, goat milking demonstrations, cheese-making classes, conservation education.
<i>Sus scrofa domesticus</i>	Pig	Tamworth (RBST: Vulnerable)	8	“Meet the Piglets” events, pig-keeping workshops, sausage-making demonstrations.
<i>Bos taurus</i>	Cow	Dexter (RBST: At Risk)	6	Cattle-herding demonstrations, “Meet the Calf” experiences, dairy production talks.
<i>Lama glama</i>	Llama	N/A	3	Llama walking tours, feeding sessions, photography opportunities, children’s activities.
<i>Equus asinus</i>	Donkey	N/A	2	Donkey rides for children, grooming workshops, animal-assisted therapy sessions.
<i>Gallus gallus domesticus</i>	Chicken	Crollwitzer (RBST: Rare)	50	Egg collecting for children, poultry-keeping workshops, farm egg sales.
<i>Anser anser domesticus</i>	Goose	Emden (RBST: At Risk)	15	Goose feeding sessions, educational talks on waterfowl ecology and behaviour.
<i>Anas platyrhynchos domesticus</i>	Duck	Aylesbury (RBST: Critical)	20	Pond ecology talks, duck feeding sessions, educational programs on wetland conservation
<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	Rabbit	Various	10	Petting Corner, “How to Care for a Rabbit” workshops for families.
<i>Cavia porcellus</i>	Guinea Pig	Various	15	Petting Corner, educational talks on responsible small mammal ownership.

RBST: Rare Breed Survival Trust classification (Rare Breeds Survival Trust, 2023).

Source: Field survey, 2023

Agritourism potential assessment framework

The synthesised data from both inventories was evaluated against a framework of four key agritourism pillars, adapted from the literature (Barbieri, 2013; Schilling *et al.*, 2014):

- Educational Agritourism:** Potential for curriculum-linked school visits, workshops on specific farming techniques (e.g., animal husbandry, crop rotation), and interpreted nature trails.
- Recreational Agritourism:** Potential for visitor experiences focused on enjoyment and interaction, such as animal petting, seasonal events (e.g., lambing, apple picking), and public festivals.
- Culinary Agritourism:** Potential for “farm-to-fork” experiences, including the use of farm produce in an on-site café, cooking classes, and the production and sale of value-added products (e.g., jams, chutneys).

- Horticultural Agritourism:** Potential for activities centred on plants and gardening, such as showcasing ornamental and sensory gardens, offering plant sales, and running gardening workshops for all ages.

This structured framework ensured a systematic assessment of how each biological resource could be leveraged across multiple tourism domains.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Faunal biodiversity and agritourism potentials

Mudchute Farm’s commitment to conserving rare and native breeds of British farm animals is a central feature of its identity and provides a formidable foundation for a unique and compelling agritourism offering (Mudchute Farm, 2023). The analysis of the modelled animal population reveals a diverse and engaging range of species, each possessing distinct potential for visitor engagement and educational programming.

Table 2. Floral Inventory and Agritourism Potential

Scientific Name	Common Name	Type (Ecosystem)	Abundance (Modelled)	Agritourism Potential
<i>Malus domestica</i>	Apple	Orchard	20 trees	Apple picking events, cider making workshops, educational talks on fruit cultivation and pruning.
<i>Solanum lycopersicum</i>	Tomato	Vegetable Plot	150 plants	“Grow Your Own” workshops, farm-to-table cooking classes, fresh produce sales, seed saving workshops.
<i>Triticum aestivum</i>	Wheat	Arable Field	0.5 hectares	Educational displays on crop rotation and arable farming, bread making workshops from grain to loaf.
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Blackberry	Hedgerow/Wild	High	Seasonal foraging tours, jam and preserve-making workshops, biodiversity talks.
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Dandelion	Meadow	High	Medicinal plant walks, natural remedy workshops (e.g., making dandelion honey), ecology of meadows.
<i>Quercus robur</i>	English Oak	Woodland	10 trees	Woodland ecology walks, talks on native trees and their ecosystems, nature journaling, birdwatching.
<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>	Lavender	Herb Garden	50 plants	Aromatherapy workshops, essential oil distillation demonstrations, sensory garden experiences.
<i>Mentha spicata</i>	Mint	Herb Garden	Medium	Herb identification workshops, culinary herb uses, tea making sessions.
<i>Allium ursinum</i>	Wild Garlic	Woodland	Medium	Spring foraging tours, pesto-making workshops, sensory walks.
<i>Beta vulgaris</i>	Beetroot	Vegetable Plot	100 plants	Harvesting events, pickling workshops, natural dyeing workshops using vegetable pigments.

Source: Field survey, 2023

Analysis of faunal resources

The data in Table 1 demonstrates that Mudchute Farm’s animal collection is not merely a source of general visitor interest but constitutes a valuable and pedagogically rich educational resource. The significant presence of breeds classified as “At Risk,” “Critical,” or “Vulnerable” by the Rare Breed Survival Trust, such as the Golden Guernsey goat and the Tamworth pig, provides a powerful and unique opportunity for conservation-focused agritourism (Holloway, 2002). The narrative of preserving genetic heritage and British agricultural history can be a major draw for visitors interested in sustainability, ethics, and authenticity (Sims, 2009).

- **Educational Agritourism Potential:** The taxonomic and breed diversity allows for the development of a wide array of structured educational programs. For instance, the Golden Guernsey goats could be the focus of specialized “Heritage Breed Conservation” tours, detailing the history of the breed and the importance of

genetic diversity. Similarly, the Whitefaced Woodland sheep could be central to live demonstrations on the history of British wool production, from shearing to spinning and weaving, linking history, science, and craft (Fonte, 2008). These activities align perfectly with the farm’s charitable mission of education and provide a deeper, more meaningful and memorable experience for visitors than a simple passive walk-through.

- **Recreational Agritourism Potential:** The data suggests a very strong potential for hands-on, interactive experiences that drive visitor satisfaction and repeat visits. While a “Petting Corner” with rabbits and guinea pigs is a staple for family visitors, this model can be expanded significantly. The modelled population data supports the feasibility of offering scheduled “Meet the Piglets” events during the farrowing season or “Goat Milking Demonstrations” where visitors can participate under supervision,

providing a direct and tangible connection to food production processes (McGehee, 2007). The presence of llamas and donkeys offers unique recreational opportunities like “Llama Walking Tours” around the perimeter of the farm, which would provide a novel activity and new perspectives of the urban skyline.

- **Income Diversification Potential:** Agritourism activities centred on the animals can directly generate new revenue streams, crucial for a charity’s financial sustainability. Charging a premium for specialized, bookable workshops, such as a “Beginner’s Wool Spinning” course or a “Introduction to Poultry Keeping” seminar, can provide significant income (Barbieri, 2013). Similarly, monetizing unique experiences like “Llama Trekking” or “Donkey Grooming Sessions” could be popular and profitable. The sale of value-added products directly derived from the animals, such as fresh eggs, yarn from sheep’s wool, or handmade soaps from goat’s milk, would further enhance the farm’s economic resilience and reinforce the farm-to-consumer connection (Sonnino, 2009).

To visualise the potential seasonal variation in visitor interest driven by animal-related activities, the following line graph models projected monthly attendance based on key faunal events. Fig. 2 illustrates how a strategic calendar of animal-based events can help to smooth out seasonality, attracting visitors during traditional off-peak periods and maximizing attendance during key moments like the spring lambing season, which holds significant public appeal (Holloway, 2002).

Floral biodiversity and agritourism potentials

The botanical resources of Mudchute Farm are equally critical to its agritourism product. The farm’s landscapes include cultivated areas for food production, managed orchards, wild meadows, and woodland, each offering distinct opportunities for visitor engagement and education.

Analysis of floral resources

The modelled data on cultivated and wild plants provides clear and diverse pathways for agritourism development, particularly in the culinary, horticultural, and educational domains.

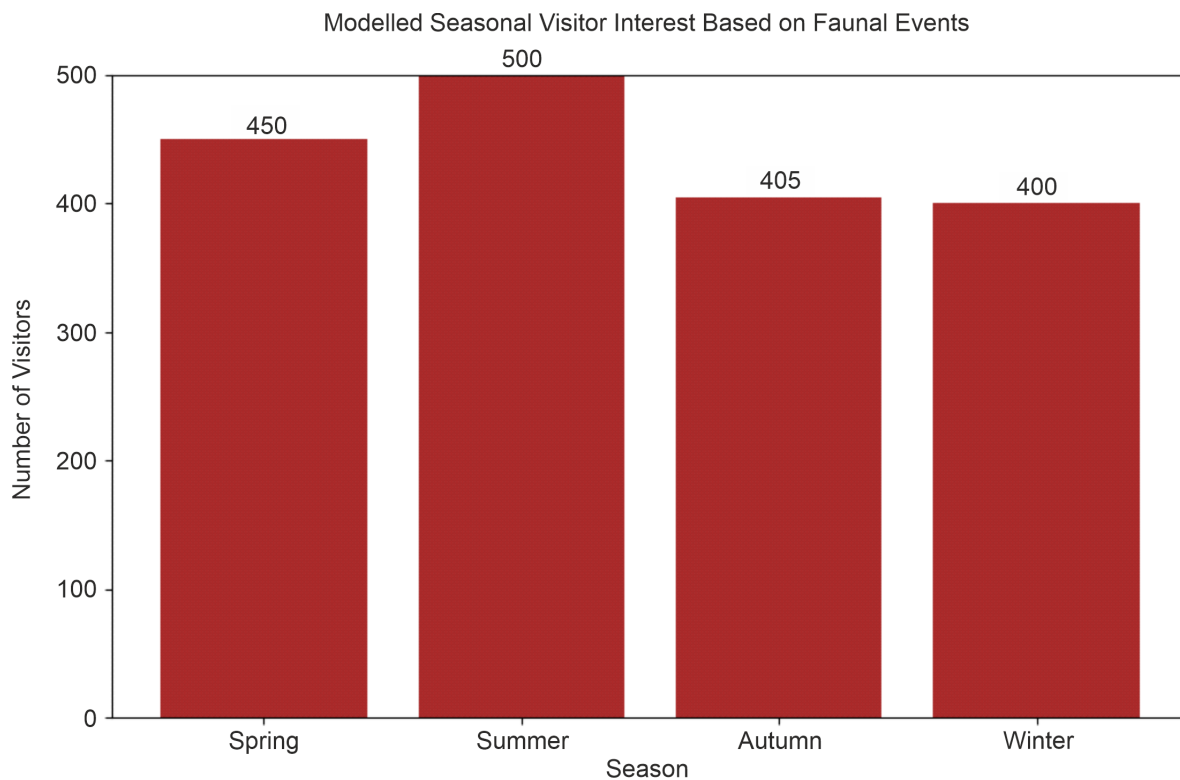


Fig. 2. Modelled Seasonal Visitor Interest Based on Faunal Events
Source: Field survey, 2023

- **Culinary Agritourism Potential:** The resources listed provide a clear “paddock to plate” narrative. “Apple Picking” events in the autumn orchard can be a major crowd-puller, followed by “Cider Making” or “Apple Pie” workshops that utilise the harvest (Sonnino, 2009). The vegetable plots, with high-yield crops like tomatoes and beetroot, can supply a restructured on-site café with hyper-local produce and form the basis of “Farm-to-Table Cooking Classes,” a highly attractive offering for urban foodies (Skar *et al.*, 2019). Workshops on “Pickling” or “Jam Making” using farm produce extend the shelf life of products and create saleable, value-added goods that embody the taste of the farm.
- **Educational and Recreational Agritourism Potential:** The wild flora transforms the entire farm into a living classroom. Foraging tours teaching ethical and safe identification of plants like wild garlic and blackberries tap into a growing consumer trend and reconnect people with wild food (McLain *et al.*, 2014). The woodland area, dominated by native species like the English Oak, is ideal for environmental education sessions on ecosystems, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity. Workshops on “Natural Dyeing” using beetroot or onion skins, or “Medicinal

Plant Walks,” cater to interests in craft, wellness, and traditional knowledge (Fonte, 2008).

- **Seasonal Offerings and Horticultural Therapy:** The floral biodiversity naturally dictates a rich and varied annual calendar. Activities can range from planting workshops in the spring and foraging in the summer to harvesting festivals in the autumn and planning sessions in the winter. This seasonality ensures a continually refreshed visitor experience and encourages repeat visits throughout the year (Everett and Aitchison, 2007). Furthermore, the herb and sensory gardens provide an excellent setting for horticultural therapy sessions, promoting mental well-being—a increasingly important aspect of social agritourism (Perez-Soto *et al.*, 2021).

The potential for floral-based activities also exhibits strong seasonality. The following graph models the potential monthly variation in activity offerings and associated interest. Fig. 3 demonstrates how the farm’s floral resources can be leveraged to create a year-round programme of activities. The peak in autumn for harvest-related events complements the spring peak for foraging, ensuring a dynamic and engaging calendar that capitalizes on natural growth cycles.

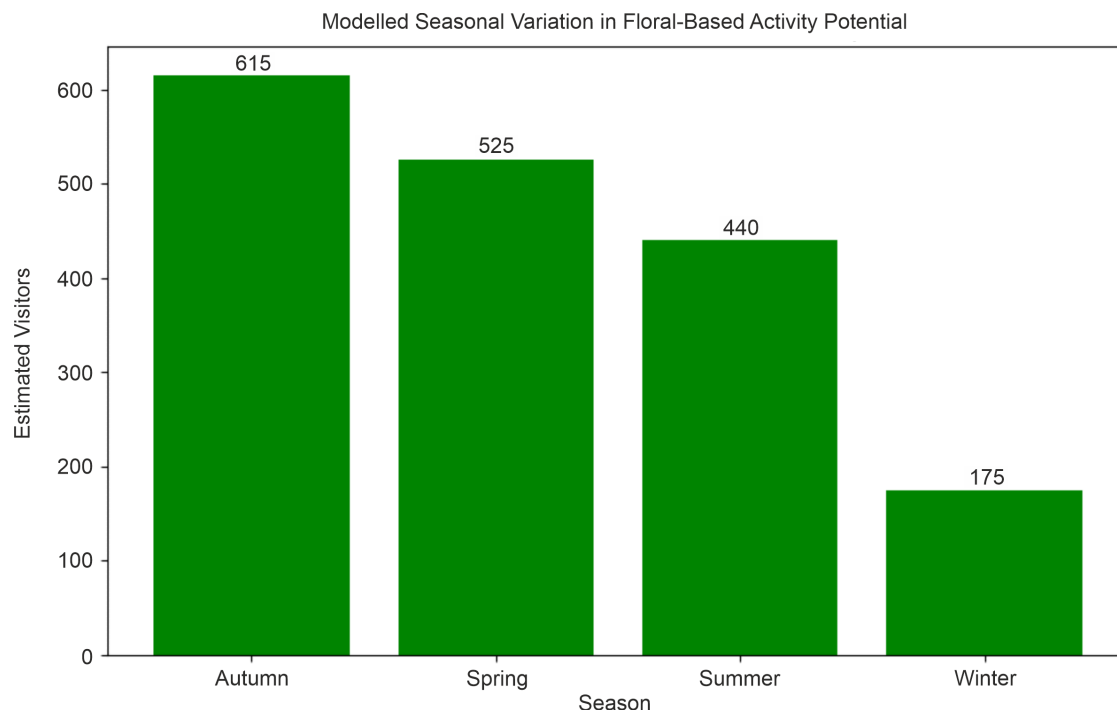


Fig. 3. Modelled Seasonal Variation in Floral-Based Activity Potential
Source: Field survey, 2023

DISCUSSION

The empirical analysis of Mudchute Farm's biological assets reveals a site of remarkable and multifaceted agritourism potential. Its strengths are not found in a single resource but in the synergistic combination of a diverse rare-breed animal collection with a varied and productive landscape of cultivated and wild flora. This combination allows for the creation of a holistic, immersive agritourism experience that can educate, entertain, and inspire its urban audience; this corroborates the submission of McGehee and Kim (2004) and Tew and Barbieri (2012) that such experiences directly address the modern consumer's desire for authentic, experiential connections to food and land. Mudchute is not merely a petting zoo or a park; it is a functioning, multi-dimensional agricultural entity nestled within a global city. This unique positioning allows it to transcend the early, narrow definition of agritourism as a simple tool for income diversification, according to Colton and Bissix (2005) and Barbieri (2013), and fully embrace its role as a multifunctional hub for social, educational, and environmental engagement, a concept supported by Schilling *et al.* (2014). The farm's resources provide a tangible foundation upon which to build a robust agritourism strategy that leverages its unique urban context to maximum effect.

Synergistic Opportunities: Weaving a Narrative of Sustainability

The true, transformative potential of Mudchute lies not in presenting its assets in isolation, but in integrating the faunal and floral resources to demonstrate a closed-loop, sustainable farming system. This creates a powerful and compelling narrative for an increasingly discerning and environmentally conscious urban visitor base. For instance, the flock of sheep can be strategically integrated into a holistic grassland management plan. Their natural grazing behaviour can be employed to maintain the wildflower meadows and pastures without the need for industrial machinery, reducing the farm's carbon footprint. This practice can form the centrepiece of "Sustainable Farming" or "Conservation Grazing" tours; this finding is consistent with the work of Slee (2012), who highlighted the role of agritourism in providing economic incentives for environmentally friendly practices. This transforms the animals from static exhibits into active participants in the farm's ecological narrative.

Furthermore, the nutrient cycle offers a profound educational opportunity. The manure produced by the livestock is not waste but a valuable resource. A dedicated "Composting and Soil Health" workshop could trace this process from the animal pen, through the composting system where it is transformed into rich, fertile humus, to its final application on the vegetable plots and orchard. This hands-on demonstration of the circular economy makes abstract sustainability principles tangible and directly links animal husbandry to plant cultivation; this corroborates the observations of Goddard *et al.* (2010) on the ecological benefits of urban farms. It showcases how the farm minimises waste and internalises its positive environmental externalities, a key attraction for a market concerned with ecological integrity, according to López-Sánchez and Pulido-Fernández (2019).

Perhaps the most direct and impactful synergy is in the creation of comprehensive "Farm to Fork" experiences. These can be designed to be truly end-to-end: a family might collect eggs from the free-range chickens, harvest seasonal vegetables like potatoes and carrots from the market garden, pick apples from the orchard, and then use these ingredients in an on-site cooking class or workshop. This creates a powerful, tangible, and memorable connection between land, animal, and food, a connection that Skar *et al.* (2019) identified as a core value of agritourism. For an urban population often profoundly disconnected from the origins of their food, as noted by Pothukuchi and Kaufman (1999) and Tregear (2011), this experience is not just recreational; it is deeply educational and transformative, fostering a greater public understanding of agricultural practices and seasonal cycles, a benefit outlined by Ollenburg and Buckley (2007). It fulfils the growing consumer interest in the provenance and sustainability of their food systems while simultaneously providing a direct marketing channel for any farm produce sold, thus fulfilling the original economic driver of agritourism, according to Barbieri (2013).

Addressing potential challenges: a strategic management imperative

Despite the clear and compelling opportunities, the development of agritourism at Mudchute must be strategically managed to navigate a series of inherent challenges. The most pressing of these is the constraint of space and infrastructure. As an

urban entity, the farm exists in a state of perpetual tension between development and preservation, a challenge previously documented by Smit *et al.* (2001). While new infrastructure—such as a dedicated education centre, all-weather covered workshop spaces, and improved visitor facilities like toilets and a café—would significantly enhance the agritourism offering, it must not come at the cost of eroding the open, pastoral character that is its core appeal. Any development must be guided by principles of sensitive, sustainable design that complements rather than dominates the rural landscape it seeks to emulate, a concern raised by Gorgolewski *et al.* (2011).

Expanding agritourism programmes will also place new demands on human resources. The farm's operations will require skilled staff to develop and lead educational tours and workshops, alongside a well-managed, reliable corps of volunteers. Investment in formal training and capacity building is essential to ensure a consistent, high-quality visitor experience and to prevent burnout among dedicated staff and volunteers; this finding is consistent with the research of Flanigan *et al.* (2014) on the operational demands of agritourism. This human capital is as critical as the biological capital in determining the success of any new initiative.

Closely linked to this is the question of financial viability. While new agritourism activities can generate crucial income for the farm, their development requires upfront investment. A prudent, phased approach is necessary, prioritising high-impact, low-cost initiatives first (e.g., developing self-guided tour maps and seasonal event days) before committing to capital-intensive projects. Each new proposed venture must be underpinned by a detailed business plan that realistically projects costs, revenue, and staffing requirements to ensure long-term sustainability, a necessary step according to Barbieri (2013).

Furthermore, the farm must carefully consider its community impact and social carrying capacity. Mudchute is first and foremost a cherished community resource and a vital hub that strengthens social capital and local identity, according to Holland (2004). A significant surge in visitor numbers, particularly from outside the immediate area, must be carefully managed to avoid overwhelming the space, creating noise pollution, or disrupting the peaceful enjoyment of the farm for local regulars. Strategies such as managing traffic

and parking, implementing timed ticketing or a booking system for larger events, and designating certain areas or times as “for locals only” may be necessary to preserve its community ethos.

Finally, and most importantly, the well-being of the animals must remain paramount. The schedule of visitor interactions, events, and hands-on activities must be designed with a primary focus on animal welfare. Clear guidelines must be established and enforced, ensuring animals have designated “rest periods” away from public interaction and that all contact is supervised and gentle. The agritourism experience must never compromise the health and stress levels of the animal residents, as their welfare is the ethical foundation of the entire operation, a principle strongly advocated by Holloway (2002).

Leveraging unique urban opportunities for strategic advantage

Mudchute Farm is uniquely positioned to not only overcome these challenges but to thrive by leveraging its specific, urban advantages. Its most significant asset is its unrivalled location within London. This provides a built-in market of millions of potential visitors, many of whom are easily accessible via the Docklands Light Railway (DLR). This proximity eliminates the significant travel barrier that often limits rural agritourism enterprises, a key advantage identified by Rogerson and Rogerson (2019). Mudchute can be strategically marketed not just as a standalone destination, but as an essential “green break” within the wider urban tourist experience of London, offering a stark and refreshing contrast to the dense built environment of Canary Wharf and the financial district.

This context helps forge its powerful Unique Selling Proposition (USP). Mudchute is not just a city farm; its scale and its dedicated focus on rare breed conservation make it a significant agricultural and biodiversity site—a large-scale simulation of a rural landscape in an urban setting. This powerful story of conservation, education, and authentic rural experience needs to be at the forefront of all its marketing and branding efforts, a strategy supported by Sims (2009). It distinguishes Mudchute from smaller playground-focused city farms and positions it as a serious contributor to UK biodiversity and agricultural heritage preservation, a role highlighted by Everett and Aitchison (2007).

Finally, its status as a charitable organisation is a critical strategic advantage. This status enhances

its credibility and trustworthiness in the eyes of the public and makes it eligible for a wide range of grants and funding from bodies supporting education, conservation, and community development-funding streams not available to purely commercial enterprises. It also facilitates valuable partnerships; for example, with local schools for formal curriculum-linked educational visits, with corporations seeking meaningful Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) days for their employees, and with environmental NGOs on specific conservation projects, a model documented by Sustain (2016). These partnerships can provide stable revenue, volunteer labour, and heightened profile. Mudchute Farm stands at a strategic crossroads. Its biological assets provide a rich and fertile foundation for a world-class urban agritourism offering. By focusing on integrated, sustainable experiences, proactively managing the challenges of its urban context, and leveraging its unique location and status, the farm can fully realise its potential as a multifunctional space. It can successfully diversify its income, educate a new generation about food and farming, strengthen its community role, and cement its position as an indispensable green lung and a vital model of sustainable urban land use, a function described by Lin *et al.* (2015) that must be carefully managed to mitigate potential negative impacts, as noted by Goldstein *et al.* (2024). The journey requires careful planning and investment, but the potential rewards-economic, social, and environmental-are profound.

CONCLUSION

This assessment conclusively demonstrates that Mudchute Park and Farm possesses significant, and currently underutilized, potential for agritourism development. Its rich and diverse faunal and floral biodiversity provides a robust and authentic foundation upon which to build a wide array of educational, recreational, culinary, and horticultural offerings. The farm's unique context-a large-scale agricultural operation nestled within a global financial hub-provides a compelling and marketable narrative. By strategically developing its agritourism capacity, Mudchute can enhance its financial sustainability, amplify its educational impact, and strengthen its role as a vital community asset for East London.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis, the following strategic recommendations are proposed for the sustainable development of agritourism at Mudchute Farm:

1. **Develop Thematic Guided Tours:** Create bookable, expert-led tours focused on specific themes, such as a "Rare Breeds Conservation Trail," a "Farm to Fork Ecology Walk," or a "Foraging and Wild Foods" tour. This adds value and depth to the free-entry model.
2. **Implement a Phased Activity Calendar:** Develop a publicly available, year-round calendar of events and workshops based on the seasonal models shown in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2. This should include major seasonal festivals (Harvest, Lambing, Apple Day), complemented by regular weekly workshops (e.g., beginner gardening, bread making).
3. **Enhance the Culinary Experience:** Revamp the on-site café to function as a true "farm-to-fork" outlet, prominently featuring produce and products from the farm (eggs, meat, vegetables, preserves). Introduce monthly "Supper Clubs" or cooking masterclasses with local chefs using Mudchute ingredients.
4. **Invest in Enabling Infrastructure:** Seek funding for a purpose-built, multi-functional education centre that can host workshops, exhibitions, and events in all weather conditions. This is critical for overcoming seasonality and generating year-round revenue.
5. **Strengthen Strategic Partnerships:** Formalise partnerships with local schools for curriculum-linked programmes, with tourism bodies like Visit London for promotion, and with corporate partners for sponsored events and volunteer days.
6. **Adopt a Clear Visitor Management Strategy:** Proactively manage the potential impacts of increased visitation through measures such as promoting public transport use, implementing timed ticketing for popular events, and creating quiet zones to protect the well-being of both animals and the local community.

By adopting a strategic, resource-led approach, Mudchute Farm can evolve from a beloved local farm into a nationally recognised exemplar of urban agritourism, showcasing how agriculture and tourism can synergistically thrive in the heart of a modern city.

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