

AGRITOURISM: A NEW EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy. It supports the livelihood of more than 50 per cent of the farming community. Agro tourism is a recent offshoot of tourism sector that has grown up to be a potential business in its own space and it is one of the latest concepts to revolutionize the India travel industry. Buoyed by the growing popularity of homestays in India, farm stays (essentially a homestay on a farm) are blossoming across the country. Tourism in India is important for the country's economy and is growing rapidly. The World Travel and Tourism Council calculated that tourism generated ₹16.91 lakh crore (US\$240 billion) or 9.2% of India's GDP in 2018 and supported 42.673 million jobs, 8.1% of its total employment. The sector is predicted to grow at an annual rate of 6.9% to ₹32.05 lakh crore (US\$450 billion) by 2028 (9.9% of GDP). Over 10.93 million foreign tourists arrived in India in 2019 compared to 10.56 million in 2018, representing a growth of 3.5%.



WHY AGRI TOURISM?

Urban population is increasing day by day, today urban children's world is restricted in the closed door school, classes, cartoon programs on the television, video games, chocolates, soft drinks, spicy fast food, computer, internet, and so on, and they see mother nature only on television screen. Moreover out of people living in the cities 35% do not have relatives in villages and 43% never visited or stayed in village.

WHAT IS AGRICULTURE TOURISM

Agriculture tourism is an enterprise which combines elements of agriculture and tourism. It is a combination of natural settings and products of agricultural operations combined within a tourism experience. It includes providing tourists with opportunities to experience a broad spectrum of agriculturally based products and services.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF AGRI – TOURISM



SOME OF THE SUCCESSFUL RUNNING MODELS OF AGRI – TOURISM

Arts & Crafts Demonstrations, Farm Store:

Exhibition of farm equipment's, Roadside Stand selling fresh farm products and craft items, Demonstration of Agri-activities, Sheep Shearing, Wool Processing, Fee fishing/hunting, Farm Vacations, Bed and Breakfast, Farm Tours, Horseback Riding, Cross-country skiing, Bad weather - like desert, snow fields, heavy rainfall also attract Agri-tourists, Picnic Grounds, a shady spot for visitors to rest – like a big banyan tree , Educational Tours for school children, officers and progressive farmers, Farm Schools to teach a particular skill, Outdoor Schools which are mobile in nature teaching agriculture, Herb Walks.



Socio-Economic Impacts of Agro-Tourism

Rural tourism contributes positively to the increase in employment and income levels of the youths. Traditional attires, especially of women are found to a delightful attraction for incoming tourist both domestic and outsiders. People often found to be interested in purchasing the garments, which is helping in gearing up the production of local handloom products. Tourism in local areas helps in preserving the rural eco system, since it forms the base to the tourism sector, also a part of the development funds are used in creating social forests and preserving existing forest. Employment avenues created by tourism demands help in earning domestic income. Tourism avenues have a given a due introduction to this almost hidden but old culture. Tourist interaction has provided the proper exposure to the world outside.

Benefits of Agro-Tourism Centre's

It provides employment opportunities to the farmers including farm family members and youth. It can act as an additional source of income for the farmers to protest against income fluctuation. It can help in improving the standard of living of farmers. Urban people can understand about the rural life and know about the agricultural activities. It supports and promotes the rural and agricultural development process. It helps in reducing the burden on other traditional tourist centres and attracts tourists. Agri tourism has the capacity to create a win situation for both the farmers as well as the tourists.

Some Barriers in Agro-Tourism

Language problem in the locality have been found to be one of the barriers in the enhancement of the tourism potential. Proper financial support can enhance the tourism potential of the region, which would help the folks to preserve the local culture, traditions, heritage, art forms etc. that showcases the uniqueness of the place in the proper manner. There should be proper transport and communication facility i.e. better road connectivity, mobile and telephone network for better commutation and convenience of the tourists. Though initiative attempt have been taken by the local youths, yet the professionalism is lacking. They are lacking proper training to project in the manner from tourism perspective. Some regions have great potential as an upcoming agro tourist spot. But, in order to bring it to a greater platform, sound business planning has to be made. The region needs proper enhancement of its beauty and resources skilfully to bring itself to light.



KEY STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS OF AGRO-TOURISM

Use all possible advertisement means. Develop contacts with the schools, colleges, NGOs, clubs, unions, organizations etc. Train your staff or family members for reception and hospitality of the agro tourists. Understand about the customer's wants and their expectations and serve them accordingly. Charge optimum rent and charges for the facilities/services on the commercial base. Do the artificially use local resources for the entertainment/ service to tourists. Develop your website and update time to time for attract foreign tourist. Take their feedback and comments about the service and suggestions to more development and modification. Develop different agro-tour packages for different type of tourist and their expectations. Maintain an address book and comments of the visited tourists for future tourism business and reference.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATION

Rural tourism and agri tourism can significantly contributes to the GDP of any country and is a crucial tool for employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable human development. Indian tourism industry is growing at the rate of 10 %, which is two and a half times more than the growth rate at global level. In India of late the unique tourism arteries that have gained momentum are health tourism (medical tourism), religious tourism, sports tourism, educational tourism etc. Agri tourism is now an additional artery of the tourism sector in India. Though at present it is in nascent stage, with proper government incubation it can gain flight. There by introducing agro tourism concept all over India not only the present growth rate can be sustained but it is also a value addition and can accelerate further growth.

