

## Agri tourism: a bonanza for farming communities

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It's not just the 'who' and 'where' of travel that's changing, it's also the 'how'.

The new prototype in consumerism is environmental friendly, which will continue to sway the tourism industry in near future. Instead of just hanging out, consumers want unique and local experiences which give them the opportunity to enjoy self-development, or discover new perspectives. Tour operators should expect bigger pressure to follow more sustainable activities, and if they do, they should expect new customers.



Researches show that consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable ways, if offered. However, environmentally sustainable options take up only a small amount of the total tourism market share.

This gap between supply and demand means there are business opportunities for those operators who are interested in supplying green options. Marketing local tourism could also be a potential way to couple low-carbon travel with sustainable accommodation. This opens the door for Agri tourism.

**Why agri tourism?**

Agri tourism or agro tourism includes any operation or activity focused on agriculture that brings visitors to a farm or ranch. It comprises of outdoor recreations (e.g., hunting, horse riding), educational experiences (school visit to a farm or nursery), entertainment (harvest festivals), hospitality services (farm stays, guided tours) and on-farm direct sales. So basically, Agri tourism intent interaction of visitor with the farmer, where the visitor will take part in various farming activities, purchase farm produces, have local cuisines and experience the rural life along with the farmer. This facilitate in creating additional income to the farming community.

Agriculture being the backbone of Indian economy, where 70 percent of its rural households still depends primarily on agriculture for their livelihood, with 82 percent of farmers being small and marginal<sup>1</sup>. Its contribution to national income decreased steadily from 18.2 percent in 2014-15 to 16.5 in 2019-20, representing the phase of growth and structural change in the economy<sup>2</sup>. Agriculture is the culture of India, more than a profession or a business. Therefore, adding additional income-generating activities to existing agriculture would definitely increase agriculture's contribution to the national GDP. In this direction, serious efforts need to be made and one such endeavour is Agri tourism.



The success of green tourism can be understood with examples like the Blue Yonder (India), the Living Tisza Trademark (Hungary), Transhumance (Poland), Hostetín – model village (Czech Republic), National Eco-Tourism Strategy (Botswana, National Tourist Council (Bulgaria), etc.

### Agri tourism benefits

The potential benefits of Agri tourism extend to farmers, local communities and tour operators.

**For farmers:**

- Expanding farming operations
- Increase in revenue of farm
- Developing niche market
- Improvement in entrepreneurship and management skills
- Creating an awareness about local farm produces

**For local communities:**

- Supplementary income for local business
- Employment opportunities
- Enhancement in standard of living
- Advancement in infrastructural facilities
- Promote inter regional and inter cultural communication
- Conservation of the landscape for attracting tourist
- Strengthening rural economy

**For tour operators:**

- Diversifying the mix of tourism and products and services in rural areas
- Stretching the season length during off season business period

## Remind

While planning to start an Agri tourism venture, ensure the destination have something for the visitors to;

- see
- do
- buy

## Agri Tourism In India

Maharashtra is the pioneer state to develop and promote Agri tourism in India. AGRI TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION incorporated in 2005 and owns the pilot Agri Tourism project of 28 acres in Palshiwadi, Tal Baramati District, Pune<sup>3</sup>. The main activities consist of operating its tourism activities along with encouraging more farmers to take up Agri tourism by conducting training and research programmes. The state also launched a boat club and grape park in Nashik recently.

Apart from Maharashtra, Agri tourism is being practised in all parts of our country.

Hideout Farm (Maharashtra), Montana Farmstay (Sikkim), ROSE (Uttarakhand) Farm of Happiness (Maharashtra), Dewalokam Farmstay (Kerala), Off The Grid Farm (Goa), Prakriti Farm (Punjab), Konyak Tea Retreat (Nagaland), Citrus County (Punjab), Dana Pani Organic Farmstay (Uttarakhand), Banyan Tree Farmhouse (Tamil Nadu), Enchanted Forest Farm (Sikkim) etc; are some of the famous Agri tourism destinations in India.



## Promotion of Agri Tourism

Farm operators must adopt sustainable strategies on their farms in order to be successful, but they must also welcome customers and deliver activities that are of interest to them. For both activities, seasonality comes into question, with some farms providing many attractions during the year and some farms providing just one or two options in a limited period of time. So the destination must be able to cope with the seasonality changes in order to keep the business engaged.



In the sense of solving the problem of farmers, this model would make agriculture more viable in three phases, in which training must be provided ideally to those farmers with small land holdings, Agri-tourism centres must be built with the available resources on site with the assistance of local people and artisans, and finally the most critical aspect is to promote consciousness and infrastructure facilities.

Strategies to be followed:

- Product – Offering a unique and unmatched experience
- Pricing
  - Customer centric: domestic and foreign tourists could be priced differently as the capacity to pay is different.
  - Location pricing: price according to the destination and importance.
  - Time pricing: according to the season.
- Place – place where tourist are accommodated. If the tourists are accommodated with the farmer in villages themselves, the charge can be lower, whereas accommodation

in farms costs high.

Challenges to be addressed:

- Publicity
- Accessibility
- Accommodation - Safe and clean accommodation is must in Agri-tourism.
- Networking
- Capacity building of farmers
- Safety and security
- Public private partnership - With the support of farmers, government and tour operators, agri-businesses, farmers' associations, cooperatives, NGOs and agribusiness companies may take up these projects.

## Conclusion

Mother Nature is an open school without brick walls, carefully watching, discovering the secret gems and knowing something or the other, and India is a country of agriculture, so we are supposed to be well conscious about it. As a sector, agriculture has become more and more costly and cannot be afforded by many farmers. Along with this low productivity make the situation even worse. They have to find alternative ways to create income. In such scenario, Agri tourism is bonanza for farming communities.

