



Concept and Components of Agri Tourism

N. B. Ubale^{1*}, M. A. Laichattiwar² and C. K. Sharma³

¹Associate Professor (Horticulture), ²Assistant Professor (Entomology) and ³Dean and Principal College of Agriculture, Faculty of Agriculture, Parul University, Limda, Dist- Vadodara, Gujarat

Corresponding author*: nitin.ubale91083@paruluniversity.ac.in

ABSTRACT

Establishment of agri tourism units will promote livelihood security through improving the diversity and security of resources, skills and technologies that are available to agricultural communities. It would help boosting a range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract urban tourists to their area thus provide opportunity for urban people to get back to the roots. The present article envisions the concept and components of agri tourism business.

INTRODUCTION

Agri-tourism is multifaceted and may entail farm tourism or rural tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism and eco-tourism (Butler *et al.* 1998). Agri-tourism is designed to involve visitors in agricultural activity to recreate in an agricultural environment and offers tourist an opportunity to live a rural life (Raghuandan, 2010). More over this, agri-tourism in India is under the guidance of the Agri Tourism Development Corporation which is gradually developing, thus having great potential to increase the competition and productivity of the Indian tourism industry and enable farmers to diversify their activities while enhancing the value of their products. The Agro tourism philosophy aims to increase farmers' incomes and the quality of life of rural society (Stela *et al.*, 2013).

Agri tourism in India

Indian policy makers had traditionally neglected tourism industry as it was considered to be a luxury segment benefiting only few. As then, the Indian economy depended a lot on agriculture, the government policies had always aimed to develop agriculture and other allied areas. Tourism was always viewed as an industry serving the elite instead of being accepted as a means to provide employment with good “multiplier effect”. The Union Budget granted the tourism industry much needed “Infrastructure – Status.” As a result of boosting rural development from tourism point of view and encouragement of tourism infrastructure development in rural areas by state governments,

Agri- Tourism Development Corporation was established on 16th May 2004 in Maharashtra. “Its aim is to promote Agro Tourism to help rural youth to earn good respectable living in the village and on the farm itself. First ever International Agri-Tourism day was celebrated on 16th May, 2008 in Pune.

Concept of Agritourism

India’s tourism industry is experiencing a strong period of growth in high spending foreign tourists and coordinated government campaigns to promote ‘Incredible India’. Tourism is termed as an instrument for employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable human development. Promotion of Agri-tourism needs conceptual convergence with Rural Tourism, Eco-Tourism, health Tourism, adventure Tourism and culinary adventure. A novel concept of additional revenue is by developing farms into vacation ventures with hospitality facilities.

World Tourism Organization (2001) defines agri tourism as “involves accommodation being offered in the farm house or in a separate guesthouse, providing meals and organizing guests’ activities in the observation and participation in the farming operations.”

It could be described as – Rural / Agricultural Environments + Farm Commodities + Tourism Services = Agri tourism (Ubale and Borate, 2012).

Basic Principles of Agri tourism:

Agri - Tourism should ensure the following three basic principles.

1. **Have something for visitors to see** - Animals, birds, farms and nature are few things which Agri-Tourism could offer to the tourist. Apart from these, culture, dress, festivals and rural games could create enough interest among visitors in Agri-Tourism.
2. **Have something for visitors to do** - Participating in agricultural operations, swimming, bullock cart riding, camel riding, buffalo riding, cooking and participating in the rural games are few activities to quote in which tourists can take part and enjoy.
3. **Have something for visitors to buy** - Rural crafts, dress materials, farm gate fresh agriculture products, processed foods are the few items which tourist can buy as memento for remembrance.

Features of Agri tourism:

The establishment of agri tourism units in the heart of India i.e. in rural places will have an impact on upliftment of socio-economic and livelihood status of the farmers. It will provide opportunities for-

- Conservation of plant biodiversity

- Conservation of forest areas
- Generation of additional revenue
- Bringing economic diversity
- Relationship building
- Improve understanding of local farmers and their families
- Upliftment of traditional business
- Improving socio-economic status of farmers
- Make a positive contribution
- Promote local development
- Increase environmental awareness
- Provide visitors with personal experience of nature and culture.

Some successful entertainment farming enterprises and techniques in Agri tourism:

Agri-tourism is a viable income generating activities in many developed counties which would provide lead to promote the same with modifications suiting to our conditions. Some of the successful running models of Agri tourism are:

- Arts & Crafts Demonstrations
- Farm Store : Exhibition of farm equipment
- Roadside Stand selling fresh farm products and craft items
- Processing of farm products and sale
- Demonstration of Agri-activities
- Sheep Shearing
- Wool Processing
- Fee fishing / hunting
- Farm Vacations
- Bed and Breakfast
- Farm Tours
- Horseback Riding
- Cross-country skiing
- Wineries with Friday happy hours
- 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
- Outdoor Schools
- Herb Walks.
- Workshops on interesting, emerging agriculture topic
- Festivals with wide publicity and sponsorship
- Cooking Demos to satisfy housewives.
- Pick-Your-own
- Rent –a --tree.

- Pageants
- Moonlight activities.
- Speakers who can attract Agro-tourist narrating Agricultural experiences.
- Regional Themes like tribal coffee of Kerala, Andaman spices etc
- Crop Art.
- Pizza Farm.
- Historical Recreations like highlighting an oldest farm etc.
- Log Buildings.
- Antique Villages.
- Collection of old farm Machinery.
- Miniature Village
- Farm Theme Playground for Children
- Fantasy land
- Gift Shop
- Antiques
- Crafts.
- Crafts Demonstrations
- Food Sales
- Lunch Counter
- Cold Drinks
- Restaurant
- Theme (apple town, etc.)

Agri tourism Resources:

- Natural resources: Wildlife, Water, Vegetation, Flora and fauna, Climate and Landscape
- Built cultural resources: Industrial heritage, Ancient monument & Religious building.
- Agri tourism event resources: Sport, Historical and Cultural.

Scope of Agri tourism:

1. An inexpensive gateway
2. Curiosity about the farming industry and life style -
3. Strong demand for wholesome family oriented recreational activities
4. Health consciousness of urban population and finding solace with nature friendly means
5. Desire for peace and tranquillity -
6. Interest in natural environment
7. Disillusionment with overcrowded resorts and cities
8. Nostalgia for their roots on the farm
9. Rural recreation
10. Educational value of Agri-Tourism

Benefits of Agri tourism for Communities:

From a community perspective, agri tourism can be a vehicle for-

1. Generating additional revenue for local businesses and services from tourists.

2. Upgrading / revitalizing community facilities for residents and visitors
3. Increasing protection of rural landscapes and natural environments for tourists and residents.
4. Helping preserve and revitalize local traditions, art and craft
5. Promoting inter-regional, inter-cultural communication and understanding
6. Increasing awareness of agricultural issues and values among the public
7. Promoting the on-going use of local agricultural products and services.
8. Helping to diversify and strengthen the rural economy via job and income creation.
9. Providing a more energetic business environment for attracting other businesses industries.
10. Providing avenue for employment of men, women and youths.

CONCLUSION

Agri tourism can be an effective tool and technique to educate consumers about local agriculture. Agri tourism also showcases the diversity and uniqueness of local agriculture, thereby increasing the visibility and the appeal of locally grown products. Promotion of agri tourism requires conceptual convergence like other tourisms e.g. rural tourism, eco-tourism and adventure tourism for better growth. Agri tourism is truly an inventive business venture hence the opportunities in this sector can boost the rural economy.

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