



Problems and Prospects of Agro Tourism Industry in Maharashtra

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Abstract

Agro Tourism industry in India is one of industry having a lot of potential to develop the rural India. This report gives an overall perception of Agro Tourism, its opportunities, challenges and the role of Extension & Advisory services in promoting Agro Tourism in India, Especially in Maharashtra. There are some problems in the process of agro-Tourism development in Maharashtra however proper training and awareness among farmers regarding Agro Tourism Industry are best solutions for growth of this industry. No doubt like any other newly developing field, Agro Tourism sector has some challenges and hurdles to face. The major issues like sustainability, economic feasibility, guest host relationship are some of them. Many developing countries has adopted Agro Tourism sector as prime source of earning foreign exchange income. This sector has a direct impact on the host culture and rural community as a whole. But Agro-Tourism Industry is facing many problems. Proper training and awareness among farmers regarding Agro Tourism Industry are best solutions for growth of this industry.

Keywords: Agro Tourism, Maharashtra, Opportunities, Problems

Introduction:

Agriculture is a most important occupation in the India including in Maharashtra. But today it's becomes unprofitable due the irregular monsoon, prices fluctuations of Agro-products and a few internal weakness of the agriculture sector. Agro Tourism represents a significant form of strategy that supports the rural communities and enhancing the sustainable rural development. Over the years, technology has changed the character of business transactions between the consumers and suppliers of products and services. As within the other industry, changes driven by technology pose a serious challenge in Agro Tourism especially to farmers that don't have access to and knowledge about available technologies in Agro Tourism.



Travelling to some other parts of the world is gaining more importance because of various reasons; therefore, several effective changes are taking place in the supply of Tourism sector all over the world. The definition is derived as the sector which has evolved from the primary traveling activities to today's contemporary popular facilities in recent years through the new demands.

Objectives of Study:

- 1) To study the concept and nature of Agro Tourism and its related aspects.
- 2) To study the scope of Agro Tourism in Maharashtra.
- 3) To study the Problems of Agro Tourism in Maharashtra.
- 4) To suggest necessary measures for growth of Agro Tourism in Maharashtra.

Research Methodology:

The methodology adopted for present study is descriptive. For the secondary sources of data collection viz. Various Magazines, Journals and internet websites have been accessed.

Concept of Agro Tourism:

Agro Tourism is defined as the activity which involves any agriculturally-based operation or activity that brings visitors to a farm or ranch. Agro Tourism involves a wide variety of activities including buying produce direct from a farm stand; navigating a corn maze; picking fruit; feeding animals; or staying at a B&B on a farm. Worldwide scenario states that, farmers across the globe are recognizing the need and desire to diversify their farm products and services to supplement their agriculture income. Farmers across Maharashtra have a good opportunity to diversify their agriculture business into Agro Tourism so as to increase the sustainability of farming by offering value added products and services to the farm tourists.

Need and Scope for Agro Tourism Industry in Maharashtra:

Agriculture as business is becoming more and more expensive and many farmers cannot have the funds for it. Agriculture business is becoming more unsecured in Maharashtra due to the irregular monsoon; unsecured product prices. Many farmers cannot afford it and have a problem of indebtedness. Due to the agricultural problems some farmers are committed to suicide in various districts of Maharashtra. This agro tourism activity offers several potential benefits to farm operators. Maharashtra has a great potential in Agro Tourism industry due to the basic infrastructures and beautiful natural sites.



Various forms of Agro Tourism are from complete destinations to attractions serving in ancillary or supporting roles in a broader package of area travel destinations. For the Agro Tourism entrepreneur; this means that their level of involvement can range from small to very large in terms of investment in time and money. In either case; there is a need to create markets and promote the standalone destinations with programmed activities and unique attractions as well as travel services such as restrooms; safe parking; and food services that appeal to visitors. A temporary attraction; such as a special event in rural areas without infrastructure; short duration events that depend on temporary structures can be huge attractions.

Special events are very appealing to rural areas because they can generate the drawing power for travelers but do not need the sustained services and labor that might not otherwise be available. An example of a multi-attraction agricultural destination might be farmers working together to each offer different agricultural products and experiences for the traveler. By working together; they can create a larger; more attractive destination that will have greater drawing power and presumably generate more profits for everyone. The goal of that area would be to position itself as an Agro Tourism destination conversely; an area known for a different type of Tourism experience could benefit from new Agro Tourism attractions that offered more in the way of diversity for the visitor.

- 1) Opportunity to sell products grown and harvested in your agricultural operation.
- 2) Opportunity to share your passion of agriculture with others.
- 3) The necessities such as health; education; sports organizations; religion; shopping; trade and so on are providing new directions to Tourism sector through the possibilities of globalization of knowledge and more efficient traveling facilities.
- 4) Since Tourism sector is one of the crucial instruments for the economic growth; especially in the developing countries; it tends to describe and develop various types of Tourism activities.
- 5) The ability to bring the main primary industry i.e. agriculture industry and the major service sector i.e. Tourism together;
- 6) Cash flow during the off season.
- 7) Opportunity to sell the “experience” of your agricultural venue.



Benefits of Agro Tourism Centers:

Agro Tourism Industry has the ability to change the economic face of traditional agriculture system. The benefits of Agro Tourism development are uncountable and diverse. It would directly and indirectly benefits to the farmers and people in rural area. Major benefits are outlined as follows:

- 1) Farmers can improve their standard of living due to the contacts with urban people.
- 2) Benefits to the urban people; they can understand about the rural life and know about the agricultural activities.
- 3) It supports for agricultural as well as rural development process.
- 4) Help to the reduce burden on the other traditional tourist centers.
- 5) Employment opportunities to the farmers including farm family members and youth
- 6) Additional income source for the farmers to protect against income fluctuation.
- 7) Cultural transformation between urban and rural people including social moral values

Problems of Agro Tourism in Maharashtra:

- 1) Presence of unorganized sector in the Agro-Tourism industry.
- 2) Ensuring hygiene and basic requirements considering urban visitors Lakhs of farmers have small size holding, low quality land and little or no access to credit or irrigation. Have to negotiate with
- 3) Consistent drought.
- 4) Lack of perfect knowledge about the agro-Tourism
- 5) Weak communication skill and lack of commercial approach of the small farmers
- 6) Lack of capital to develop basic infrastructure for the agro-Tourism
- 7) Ignorance of the farmers regarding to the such type of activities

Key Techniques and Recommendations for Success for Agro Tourism:

Agro-Tourism is a one of the business activity. It is necessary that farmers should adopt some marketing techniques and commercial mind for the success. Following are some key techniques or recommendations for development of Agro Tourism Industry.



- 1) Use all possible advertisement means.
- 2) Develop contacts with the schools; colleges; NGOs; clubs; unions; rganizations etc.
- 3) Train your staff or family members for reception and hospitality understand about the customers wants and their expectations and serve Charge optimum rent and charges for the facilities/services on the commercial base
- 4) Do the artificially use local resources for the entertainment and serve to tourist.
- 5) Develop your website and update time to time for attract foreign tourist
- 6) Take their feedback and comments about the service and suggestions to more development and modification
- 7) Develop a good relationship with the tourist for future business and chain publicity
- 8) Develop different agro-tour packages of for different type of tourist and their expectations.
- 9) Give a wide publicity of your Tourism centre by new papers; television etc
- 10) Preserve a address book and comments of the visited tourists for future
- 11) Small farmers can develop their agro-Tourism centers on the basis of cooperative society.
- 12) Farmers should take training about Agro Tourism through MART or ATDC;
- 13) Farmers should also conduct a feasibility study to know the potential for Agro Tourism development at their farms. (Considering the options available for developing Agro Tourism activities, tourists potential);
- 14) Farmers should also take care in conserving the integrity and developing the unique nature of the center (Develop a set of offerings and services that create a unique experience)
- 15) Farmers should plan facilities and services with care considering needs of tourists;
- 16) Basic principles of Agro Tourism should be taken into account i.e. developing something to see, something to do and something to buy.
- 17) Farmers should complete the procedure of Agro Tourism development and submit the documents required to get the license from MART for starting Agro Tourism business.
- 18) Tourism business Behave sincerely with the tourists and participate with them / him



Conclusion:

Agriculture is the main sector of Indian Economy. It is well known fact that more than 65 percent of the population in India is directly or indirectly dependent of agriculture in addition to that around 13 percent GDP out of total GDP comes from agriculture sector. Providing additional income generating activities to existing agriculture would certainly increase contribution of agriculture to national GDP. Agro Tourism will serve this purpose. Promotion of Agro Tourism needs conceptual convergence with rural Tourism, health Tourism and adventure Tourism. Agro Tourism is termed as instrument for employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable human development. The world Tourism organization has estimated that the Tourism industry is growing at the rate of 4 percent a year. Indian Tourism industry is growing at rate of 10.1 percent. This rate is 2.5 times more than the world rate. In over 150 countries Tourism is one of the five top export earners, and in 60 it is the number one export category.

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