



# AGRI-TOURISM IN INDIA: A WAY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Sukanta Sarkar\*

“As the Spanish proverb says, “He who would bring home the wealth of the Indies, must carry the wealth of the Indies with him.” So it is in travelling; a man must carry knowledge with him, if he would bring home knowledge”

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), British author

## Abstract

*The study makes an attempt to assess the impact of agri-tourism on economic life of farmers in rural areas. The result indicates that agri-tourism may be a source of additional income for farmers. Farmers are now-a-days facing more problems for maintaining their livelihood because agricultural productions in India are fluctuating for monsoon. Therefore they needs source of additional income and in this case agri-tourism may be the possible alternative. Agri-tourism helps for increasing interaction between rural and urban peoples. Agri-tourism involvement in agricultural operations creates joyful experience to the tourist. Agri-tourism could create awareness about rural life and knowledge about agriculture science among urban school children. Thus, the paper suggests that the agri-tourism has the capacity for creating income opportunity for farmers and shows new path for rural development.*

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\* Faculty of Management, ICFAI University Tripura, Agartala.

## Introduction

Leisure and tourism came into being as a dimension of life in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tourism is one of the growth sectors of the global economy. Nature-based tourism encompasses a broad spectrum of activities and enterprises. Agri-tourism is a new concept in India. Agriculture forms the backbone of the Indian economy and despite concerted industrialization in the last five decades, agriculture occupies a place of pride. Being the largest industry in the country, agriculture provides employment to around 65 per cent of the total work force in the country. Agri-Tourism is based on agricultural activity. Tourism is termed as an instrument for employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable human development. The growth of agri-tourism is not a phenomenon unique to India. Agri-tourism activities can create positive interactions between non-farmers and farmers and raise awareness about agriculture. This understanding ultimately benefits farmers because it may help reduce right to farm conflicts and garner public support for farm retention policies. In India there are many departments are present which are working for developing agri-tourism like as, Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management, Tourism Development Corporations, Travel Agencies Association of India, Indian Association of Tour Operators, Indian convention promotion beureau and Pacific Asia Travel Association. Agriculture Promotion of Agri-tourism involves some more important stakeholders namely Ministry of and line departments at state and central governments and farmers. Promotion of Agri-Tourism needs conceptual convergence with Rural Tourism, Eco-Tourism, Health Tourism, Adventure Tourism and culinary adventures. Agri Tourism is however not all about staying in a village and relishing the food, this is an opportunity to be close to where the 75 % of Indians live.

## What is Agri-tourism?

Agri-tourism is variously referred to as "agricultural tourism," "agri-tainment," "farm recreation," "entertainment agriculture," and other rubrics. While there is no universal definition of agri-tourism, there is relative consistency in the view that the term comprises a wide range of on-farm activities that are offered to the public for educational or recreational purposes. Examples of definitions of agri-tourism are as follows: At the 2004 annual meeting, American Farm Bureau Federation advanced the following definition of agri-tourism as "an enterprise at a working farm, ranch or agricultural plant conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates income for the owner". The University of California's Small Farm Center offers the following definition of agricultural tourism as "the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation." Most

definitions reviewed by the research team were generally consistent in the specification that agri-tourism occurs on a “working farm” or “commercial farm”. Agri-tourism overlaps with geotourism, ecotourism and culinary tourism. Other terms associated with agri-tourism are “agritainment”, “value added products,” “farm direct marketing”, and “sustainable agriculture”.

Agri-tourism has not been the subject of extensive study in India. The depth of the available literature does not seem to reflect the surge of attention agri-tourism has received in recent years in both the popular media and within the agricultural community. Similarly, the current economic importance of agri-tourism in India is largely unmeasured. Formal tracking and monitoring of agri-tourism is not routinely conducted in India under the auspices of the Census of Agriculture. Efforts have been made to quantify the impacts of agri-tourism in relatively localized geographic ranges; however a systematic assessment of the economic opportunity remains lacking. Agri-tourism describes the activity of holidaymaking in rural areas, specifically for those seeking a rural experience. Activities can include wine tours, outdoor sports, participation in the rural lifestyle and local community, enjoyment of the natural environment and the opportunity to enjoy truly locally produced food.

In addition, agri-tourism contributes to and enhances the quality of life in communities by expanding recreational opportunities, diversifying economic bases and promoting the retention of agricultural lands. In North-India and elsewhere, working agricultural landscapes reflect the efforts of generations of farm families and often provide a defining sense of culture, heritage, and rural character. Agri-tourism provides educational opportunities for school children and adults to learn about the state’s agrarian heritage, the production of food and resource stewardship. Finally, many agri-tourism operations provide consumers with direct access to fresh and locally-produced farm products.

The basic objectives of this paper are to analyze the possibility of agri-tourism in India and its impact on rural development.

## Agro-Tourism: Global Perspectives

Agri-tourism is a form of niche tourism that is considered as a growing industry in many parts of the world, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the Philippines. Agri-tourism is widespread in America. Agritourists can choose from a wide range of activities that include plucking fruits and vegetables, riding horses, tasting honey, learning about wine and cheese making, or shopping in farm gift shops and farm stands for local and regional produce or hand-crafted gifts.

## Agri-Tourism in India

Agri-tourism is the latest concept in the Indian tourism industry, which normally occurs on farms. It gives the opportunity to experience the real enchanting and authentic contact with the rural life, taste the local genuine food and get familiar with the various farming tasks during the visit. It provides the welcome escape from the daily hectic life in the peaceful rural environment. It gives the chance to relax and revitalize in the pure natural environment, surrounded by magnificent setting. In general, Agri-Tourism is the practice of attracting travelers or visitors to an area or areas used primarily for agricultural purposes. However, Agri-Tourism is small-scale, low-impact, and, in most cases, education-focused. Many agri-tourism activities require only a small farm crew in order to be successful. For instance, farm tours, bed and breakfasts, tractor or bullock cart rides, grapes, mangoes, and other horticulture farms, by product farms, birds or animal zoos and many other activities may be operated with little additional investment in labor. Farmer's markets, wine tourism, cider houses and corn mazes all constitute examples of agri-tourism. Some agri-tourism experiences allow guests to buy food products grown on the farm or hand-crafted products made by the farmers' families; purchasing these goods helps provide ranchers who rely on their land with another source of income. The tourism sector at present is plagued by a number of factors which include government's apathy, poor infrastructure, law and order problems, tough visa regulations and poor sanitary conditions.

### Basic Principles

Agri-tourism should ensure the three basic principles: (i) Animals, birds, farms and nature are the few things which agri-tourism could offer to the tourist to see. Apart from these, culture, dress, festivals and rural games could create enough interest among forest in Agro-tourism, (ii) Participating in agricultural operations and swimming, bullock cart riding, camel riding, buffalo riding, cooking and participating in the rural games are the quote in which tourist can take part and enjoy and (iii) Rural crafts, dress materials, farm gate fresh agricultural products, processed foods are the few items which tourist can buy as memento for remembrance.

There are various advantages of Agro-Tourism,

1. It brings major primary sector Agriculture closer to major service sector tourism. This convergence is expected to create win-win situation for both the sectors.
2. Tourism sector has potential to enlarge and grow to a greater extent.
3. Agriculture sector has the capacity to absorb expansion in Tourism Sector.

## Important Factors

Three important factors which contribute to the success of Agri-Tourism, (i) Farmer is an important component of it. Majority of the cases, farmers is less educated, less exposed and innocent, (ii) Village is the second important factor of agri-tourism. Village, which is located far from the city, lacks urban facilities, but blessed with natural resources and (iii) Rich resources in agriculture namely land, water and plants are unique from place to place bringing diversity and creating curiosity.

## Opportunities in India

Indian tourism industry is increasing at 10.1%. The World Tourism Organization has expected that the tourism industry is mounting at the rate of 4% a year and that by the year 2012 there will be more than one billion tourist visit various parts of the world. But Indian tourism industry is rising at the rate of 10% which is 2 times higher than that the expansion rate at global level. By introducing Agri-tourism idea, not only present growth rate is continued but also this value addition contributes to further growth. India has entered amongst the top 10 tourist destinations list. Value addition by introducing novel products like Agri-tourism would only strengthen the competitiveness of Indian tourism industry in global market.

India has various culture and geography which offer abundant and boundless possibility for the growth of this business. India has varied Agro-climatic conditions, diverse crops, people, culture, deserts, mountains, coastal systems and islands which provide opportunity for promotion of all season, multilocation tourism products. There are a growing number of tourists preferring non-urban tourist spots. Hence, there is scope for endorsement of non-urban tourist spots in backward villages by establishing Agri-tourism centres. But, adequate facilities and publicity are must to promote such centres.

Agri-tourism encourage people how their food is produced. They want to meet farmers and processers and talk with them about what goes into food production. For many people who visit farms, especially children, the visit marks the first time they see the source of their food, be it a dairy cow, an ear of corn growing in the field, or an apple they can pick right off the tree. Agri-tourism gives public the opportunity to breathe fresh air, learn about land, ride horses, milk cows and work up a sweat. Some types of agri-tourism include working on coffee plantations or in wineries, going on nursery or garden tours, picking fruits and vegetables or visiting petting zoos. Busy lifestyle in large metros has made the life of people so miserable and they are seeking peace in more relaxed environment. Urban educational

institutions are looking to the village educational field trips. Rural communities have opportunity to capitalize on this revenue stream and also offer people their adorable hospitality. Little efforts by public and private stakeholders may shape the niche industry. The investments are relatively small but it bolsters rural livelihood while keeping the urban and rural communities connected and let new generations learn the real India.

There are many ways through which Agri-tourism can be developed,

1. Fruit Plantations Tour, Fruit Food Values etc.
2. Cow Farm Tour, Cow milking, visiting the taluk milk processing units near by getting insight of how milk and cow dung by product are made.
3. Sheep and Goat Farm Tour, goat walking, milking
4. Silk Farming and producing with retail counter to buy silk cloth and silk sarees
5. Farm Equipment Museum
6. Medicinal Plantation Tour, understanding the uses of plants in day to day life
7. Practical demonstration of various experiments on crops and fruits.
8. Various Modern methods of water irrigation demos
9. Rural Games like vittudandu, gotya, bhavra, bullocks cart and tractor rides
10. Bee Hive Demo Farm

## Rural Development

India has a global edge in its potential to offer unique experiences, particularly linked to rural India, which has tremendous wealth in its rich tradition, lifestyle, culture and wisdom. Agri-tourism activities can help generate jobs in rural areas and can reduce large-scale migration from villages to cities. Two-thirds of India's population lives in villages, and agriculture is their mainstay. But unfortunately agriculture is facing under-investment.

Out of three economic sectors in India, condition of agricultural sector is not good. After 63 years of independence yet Indian agriculture is dependent on rainfalls. Population is increasing rapidly in rural areas and their livelihood i.e. agriculture depends on monsoon. If monsoon not come in right period then they are unable to cultivate and it is very hard for them to collect two-square-meal. Therefore, farmers need additional income for their own and family purpose. Agri-tourism gives them opportunity for earning additional income.

Poor agriculture commodity prices coupled with rising input costs are slowly but substantially eroding small farm incomes in India. Further forces such as globalization, industrialization, and development encroachment are threatening the agriculture. As a result in farmers acquiring second job or leaving their farms altogether in order to sustain their household income. In many regions across the globe, farmers are recognizing the need and desire to diversify their farm products and supplement their agriculture income, with an agriculture economy that has decreased to just 2% or remained stagnant for last 10 years. Farmers across India have tremendous opportunity to diversify their list of products and service offerings with agriculture tourism. Agri tourism increases the potential for higher margins on farm sales of value added products and services. Agri-tourism attracts urban tourists to rural villages for a form of relaxation that follows the growing trend of tourism that is both educational and recreational. It is another option for farmers wanting to diversify their farming operations that will help bring more economic activity to rural areas of India. Agri-tourism shows new hope to farmers. The Central Government has a scheme on rural tourism, as part of which various activities, such as improvement of infrastructure are being conducted in a big way. The focus of the scheme is to tap the resources available under different schemes of the Department of Rural Development and State Government. Setting up an agri-tourism farm does not cost of earth. It can be developed in a village where farmers are willing to showcase their culture and tradition.

Demand for agri-tourism products and services continues to grow as trends in the tourism industry move more towards cultural, heritage and culinary tourism adventures. To promote agriculture tourism, to achieve income, employment and economic stability in rural communities in India, helps in 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

## Concluding Observation

The Indian farming industry is facing decreasing profitability because of declining returns to production agriculture. The future sustainability of many farm operations is linked to the ability of farmers to generate supplemental income from existing farm resources. Agri-tourism is a strategy to promote agricultural economic development in India. It is intended to inform policy makers and farmers about the nature of agri-tourism activities and the extent to which these activities enhance agricultural viability.

Farmers, over the years, have adopted a large number of agri-tourism activities. They continue to modify existing activities in response to changing market opportunities and are enthusiastic about developing new ones in order to achieve the most suitable agri-tourism attractions for their farm operations.

Agri-tourism is a means for diversifying farm products and market channels and generating additional income. In many cases, agri-tourism enables farmers' children to remain on the farm. The development of agri-tourism in India represents a natural progression in the evolution of many farm operations and is consistent with past and current state policies to support the farming industry. Equally as important, agri-tourism is a natural complement to production agriculture. Tremendous opportunity exists to cultivate agri-tourism development in the country through proactive policy and strategic investment of resources that alleviate constraints faced by farmers interested in providing on-farm recreational or educational activities to the public.

Therefore, agri-tourism shows new rays of hope to farmers for earning additional income and it will be helpful for rural development at a glance which help c the economy of India to climb the steps of success in this sector as well.

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