

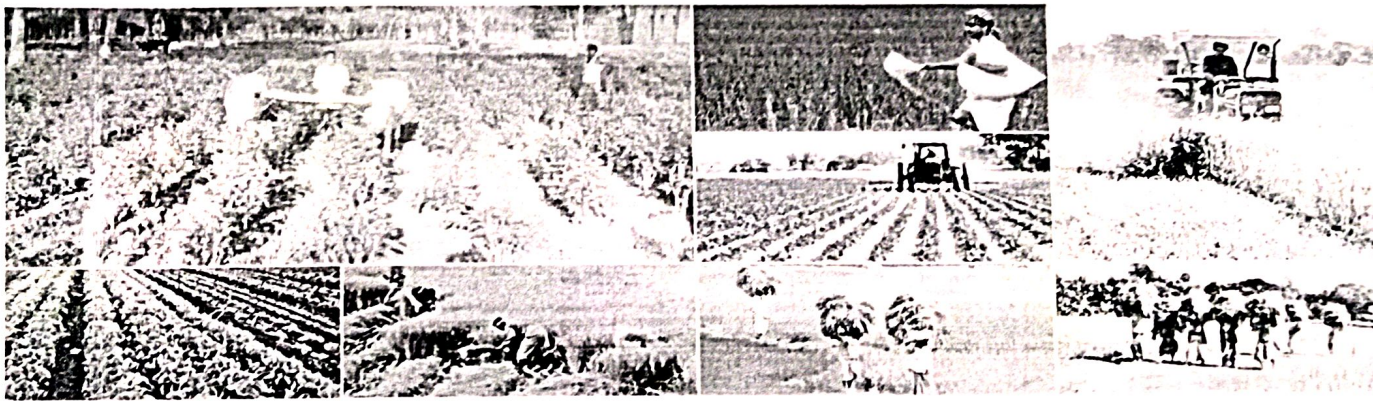


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Agritourism A Supplementary Income Source in Rural Development

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ABSTRACT

Agritourism business is becoming more unsecured in India due to the irregular monsoon, unsecured product prices and market fluctuations. Many farmers cannot afford it and have a problem of indebtedness. Hence, there is need for start any of allied or supplementary agri tourism to support their farming create additional income source. In order to encourage farmers to establish small and viable agro-business activity, like Agri-Tourism it offers several potential benefits to farm operators.

This paper will explore how to agritourism marketing as well as rural development.

Key Words : Agritourism; Tourism Marketing; Rural Development

INTRODUCTION

India is an agricultural country and most of its people live in villages. These villages are generally cut off from the cities and have a different kind of life. The Villages live a healthy, peaceful life. Establishment of Agri-tourism units will promote live hood security through improving the diversity and security of resources, skills and technologies that are available to agricultural communities. It will help to achieve income, employment and economic stability in rural communities In India. It would help boosting a range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural people attract urban tourists to their area. Thus agritourism is a way of sustainable tourism development in rural areas.

WHAT IS AGRI-TOURISM?

Agri-Tourism is the practice of attracting visitors to an area used primarily for agricultural purposes it could be described as Rural/Agricultural Environment +Farm Commodities + Tourism Services = Agri-Tourism

Agri-Tourism or agricultural tourism is one alternative for improving the incomes and potential economic viability of small farms and rural communities.

BENEFITS OF AGRI-TOURISM

Agritourism has the potential to change the economic face of traditional agriculture up to certain extent if it properly. The benefits of Agri-Tourism are manifold. It would bring many direct and indirect benefits to not only to the farmers and rural people but also to the tourists at their destination. Some of the benefits are as following

- Employment opportunities to the farmers including their family members and other local youths.
- Provides supplementary income source to the farmers.

- Cultural transformation between urban and rural people including social moral values.
- Farmers can improve their standard of living due to the contacts with urban people.
- Urban people can understand about the rural life and know about the agricultures of ATCs.
- It supports to rural and agricultural development process by maintaining traditional features of ATCs.
- Helps to reduce the burden on the other traditional tourist centers as ATCs provide some education with entertainment.

PRESENT STATUS OF AGRO-TOURISM IN INDIA

Agri-Tourism successfully implemented in states like Maharashtra, Kerala, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. It has become a new avenue for earning income for rural farmers. In Maharashtra, rural areas have formed an organization named Maharashtra State Agri and Rural Tourism (MART). There are about 150 Agri-tourism centers in the state working without financial assistance of the government schemes. In Kerala, the government has played a key role in boosting rural and health tourism. Rajasthan is one of the preferred ventures to attract the foreign visitors. In Himachal Pradesh, the state government is motivating promoting the rural people to create required facilities in rural areas for tourism purpose.

SUPPORTS TO THE AGRI-TOURISM IN MAHARASHTRA

Identification of Agritourism Activities and Sample Selection:

A total list of 71 active or running Agritourism centers/ owners was received from MART office. The list contains the name and location of each Agritourism center. Questionnaire were sent to all ATCs out of which 22 centers responded. The selection of Agritourism centers for field interview and observation was guided by recommendations provided during interviews with leaders and experts. The researcher used judgmental sampling type of non-probability sampling to identify Agritourism centers for personal visit. Agritourism centers out of 22 were contacted personally visited for observing the facilities at centers and for the purpose of tourists' survey. The primary criterion used to select the center was number of years completed by Agritourism center from its establishment, size of Agritourism business i.e. small, medium and large and the area.

Agriculture Tourism Development Corporation-(ATDC) is the main promoter of this activity in the Maharashtra. ATDC is promoting agriculture tourism for achieving employment, income and economic stability in rural areas. ATDC is now providing following to the farmers of Maharashtra:

- Prepares Agri-Tourism project report and business plan of the each applicant farmer.
- To Build 'Agri-Tourism' and 'Rural tourism' it helps by financial support through the Nationalized Banks, some other institutes and government agencies and provide infrastructure like accommodation, sanitation, approach road etc.

- Conduct seminars and conferences on Agri-Tourism business.
- Conducts Agri-Tourism business training programs.
- Arranges national as well as international ATC's study tours.

CONCLUSIONS

Agri tourism has a great potential to increase income source in the development of the rural areas. As we know 45 percent of the population live in the urban areas. So people would like to spend some time in rural area to enjoy the rural life also. That is why the present study can help to show that Agri-tourism plays very important role in the development, economically as well as socially.

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