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AGRI-TOURISM: INNOVATIVE INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITY FOR ENTERPRISING FARMERS

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Abstract

The Agri-tourism ventures were started by the Ministry of tourism in 2003 with the objective of showcasing rural life, art, culture and heritage of farming locations and it includes exhibition of art, craft, traditional textiles, customs, games, unique ways of preservation of rural heritage, farming and agro based products in that location. The objective is to generate revenue, and elevate the rural community, socially and economically. In one farm in Malegaon, near Baramati, in Maharashtra state (maintained by Agriculture Development Trust, Malegaon), total area under cultivation was about 110 acres, primarily used for agricultural purposes, out of which 65 acres were being used for Horticultural plantations consisting of various seasonal fruits farms. The added attractions there were the poultry farm, dairy farm, goat farm and most visited point was a silk processing unit.

Keywords: Agri-Tourism, Rural Life, Farmers, Income, Traditional culture

1. INTRODUCTION

“As said, with every 12 miles we cross the water changes, the culture changes and the food habits change in India. So at every 12 miles there can be an Agri-tourism project”

Pandurang Taware [Father of Agri-tourism in India]

Agricultural tourism is the holiday concept of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operations for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm. In general Agri-tourism is the practice of attracting travelers or visitors to an area having an agricultural importance.

Agri-tourism activities include farm tours; tractor and bullock cart rides; visit to farmers houses, visit to orchards having grapes, mangoes, and other horticulture farms, birds and animal farms. There are lots of things the visitors can enjoy in an Agri-tourism farm. In one farm in Malegaon, near Baramati, in Maharashtra state (maintained by Agriculture Development Trust, Malegaon), total area under cultivation was about 110 acres, primarily used for agricultural purposes, out of which 65 acres were being used for Horticultural plantations consisting of various seasonal



fruits farms. The added attractions there were the poultry farm, dairy farm, goat farm and most visited point was a silk processing unit. The visitors here can also visit the village fairs and markets, Jaggery making unit, Emu bird farm, sugar factory, some of oldest religious temples and also a museum where a display of history of agriculture development in that area is arranged.

2. ATTRACTIONS OF A AGRI-TOURISM PROJECT

- Fruit plantations tour, understanding the growth cycle pattern, fruit food values etc.
- Cow farm tour, includes visiting the milk processing unit, use of milk and its by-products
- Sheep and goat farm tour, milk production and marketing.
- Silk farming (plantation of mulberry and silk worm rearing unit) and silk weaving/production unit.
- Farm equipment museum.
- Medicinal plantation tour, understanding the uses in day to day life.
- Demos on various modern methods of irrigation.
- Large nursery of mother saplings and various methods of propagating plants.
- Fertilizers and animal feed mixing units.
- Rural games including bullocks cart ride and tractor ride.
- Bee hiving demo farm, keeping of honeybees for honey production and for cross pollination purpose.
- Looking at alternative energy resources like solar, wind mill, bio gas and other unconventional modes of energy generation.
- Emu/ ostrich bird farm

3. ADVANTAGES OF AGRI-TOURISM

Agri-tourism has great merits in the present context for the following reasons;

1. The concept of Agri-tourism takes travel and tourism to the larger population, widening the scope of agriculture.
2. Agri- tourism revolves around the farmers, villages and agriculture, has the capacity to satisfy the curiosity of urban population.
3. Rural games, festivals, food, dress and the nature provides variety of entertainment to the visitors.
4. Agri-tourism is birds, animals, crops, mountains, water bodies, and villages provide totally different atmosphere to urban population in which visitors can forget their busy urban life.
5. Farmers lifestyle, dress, languages, culture / traditions which always add value to the entertainment. Agriculture environment around farmers and the entire production process could create curiosity among urban taught.



6. Places of agriculture importance like highest crop yielding farm, highest milk yielding farm, farm product processing units, farms where innovations are successfully attempted will add attraction to the tourists.
7. Agri-tourism could create awareness about rural life and knowledge about agriculture science among urban children. It provides unique opportunity for education through recreation where learning is effective, easy and full of fun.

4. 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 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 public for units catering Agri-tourism.

2. Have something for visitors to do:-

Participating in agricultural fair, butterfly catching, seeing different worms, pests affecting farms, seeing good quality yields in various field crops, horticulture crops, bullock cart riding, camel riding, cooking and rural games are the few activities to quote in which tourist can take part and enjoy.

3. Have something for visitors to buy:-

Rural crafts / artifacts, dresses, fresh agricultural products, organic foods, processed foods are the few items which tourist can buy.

5.FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESSFUL AGRI-TOURISM

1. **Farmer:** He educates the guest while educates himself in the process. He is not like any businessman, but at the same time quite skilled and knowledgeable. He exhibits clean and transparent personality which is liked by any discernable tourist.
2. **Village:** Which is located far from the city lacks urban facilities, but blessed with natural resources. The investment is made by nature in the form of water bodies, fields, forest, mountains, deserts and islands. Community is more homogenous and treating guest is part of their culture rather than a profession leading to natural environment required for urban tourist.
3. **Agriculture:** Rich resources in agriculture namely land; water and plants are unique from place to place bringing diversity and creating curiosity. The way of cultivation and the products are great attraction to the urban population. Indigenous knowledge of rural people is a wealth, which adds to novelty and curiosity of urban population.



6. SCOPE AVAILABLE FOR AGRI-TOURISM ENTERPRISES TO THRIVE IN INDIA

As India has diverse culture and geography which provide ample and unlimited scope for the growth of Agri-tourism business. India has diverse Agro-climatic conditions, diverse crops, people, culture, deserts, mountains, coastal systems and islands which provide scope for promotion of all season, multi-location tourism products. There is an increasing number of tourists preferring non-urban tourist places to visit. Hence, there is scope for establishing Agri-tourism centers in interior villages.

Agri-tourism is now growing in a big way. However, it may take some time before it starts to grab a major share of the revenue generated from tourism related activities. There is huge scope of developing various pockets of Agri-tourism in the country, as India is a country of extreme diversity. There will be lot of advantages accruing for the people and the government alike as the venture would give support for sustainable development and eco-system, improves the agrarian economy.