

Agri Tourism: The paradigm shift Towards Rural Development in India

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Abstract

Agriculture play a crucial role in the Indian economy. About 65 percent of the rural population are dependent on agricultures as it contributes 13 percent of GDP and is biggest source of employment in rural areas. Due to low agriculture productivity and poor condition the Indian farmers have to face miserable life. Providing additional income generating activities to existing agriculture would certainly increase contribution of agriculture to national GDP. Agro – Tourism will serve this purpose. Agro tourism is the latest concept in the Indian tourism industry. It gives an opportunity to experience the real enchanting and authentic connection with real life. It has a direct impact on host culture and rural community creating needed employment and opportunities for development . Therefore this research paper attempt to understand the growth of agro tourism in India and its benefits to the farmers.

Key words: Agro tourism, Rural development

Introduction

In today's world of liberalisation and globalisation travel and tourism is extensively recognised as an important civil industry worldwide which provides major potential for economic growth and development. For many developing countries it is one of the main sources of foreign exchange income and the number one export category creating much needed employment and opportunities for development. But the concept of traditional tourism has been changed. Some new areas of the tourism have emerged like Agro tourism. Agro tourism is an innovative agricultural activity related to tourism. it has a great capacity to create additional source of income and employment opportunities for farmers. Maharashtra is one of the major tourist centre in India. It gives an opportunity to the tourist to experience the real enchanting and authentic contact with the rural life, taste the local genuine food and get familiar with the various farming task during the visit. Tourist can relax and revitalise in pure natural environment. Due to the hectic and busy city life such form of tourism connect people with nature. According to the business economic study India's agritourism industry is seeing exponential growth of 20 percent annually. The market for agritourism was estimated to be worth \$42.46 billion globally and is anticipated to grow to \$62.98 billion by 202. In Indian agritourism revenue is increasing at the pasc of 20 percent annually. Today Agro tourism business has spread in different part of India like Kerala, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand.

Agro tourism enables the tourist to experience rural life and see the agriculture activities. It includes opening up farms to tourist coming from urban areas and from abroad and letting them to take the experience of rural life. Apart from telling them about the crop and their varieties agro tourism exposes tourist to traditional village food, handicraft, culture, folk dance, bullock cart ride, milking cows and goat and picking farm fresh fruits and vegetables. This creates win win situation for the farmers who can earn better from such innovative resources and tourist can also enjoy village life at affordable prices.

Objectives of the study

1. To understand the concept of agro tourism in India.
2. To understand various forms of agro tourism.
3. To identify the benefit that agro tourism can provide to the farmers.
4. To recommend suitable course of action for creating awareness towards agro tourism.

Review of Literature:

P Singh and Manoj Kumar (2016) had studied the role of agro tourism in India and they also through their studies had accepted it as the innovative practices that farmers can adopt and practice to increase the revenue. According to them agro tourism has the great potential to develop rural areas of India.

Kumbhar V.M (2010) in his study of Maharashtra has pointed out tourism is now well recognised as an engine of growth in the various economies in the world. Therefore Agrotourism has great capacity to generate large scale employment and good income to the skilled and unskilled sector. It creates new employment opportunities in rural areas in farming sectors.

Karri Gopal (2019) in his research study Scope of agrotourism in India has studied the growth prospects of agro tourism in with case study of Maharashtra. He has undertaken swot analysis and studies the role of extension and advisory services in promoting agrotourism in India.

Research Methodology.

The study is based on secondary data collection method by referring various reports on agro tourism, news articles and research articles available on web based resources

Concept of Agro Tourism

World Tourism Organisation (1998) defines agro tourism as “ involves accommodation being offered in the farm house or in separate guest house, providing meals and organising guest activities in the observation and participation in the farming operation”.

McGehee, Kim, Jennings(2007) explains agro-tourism as “rural enterprises which incorporate both a working farm environment and a commercial tourism component”

Essentials for developing agro tourism

In order to develop agro tourism the centre should have to arrange following activities:

- Cultural festival where the tourist can enjoy religious places like temple, fort, stage play, rural games, bullock cart race, camel ride in which tourist can take part and enjoy
- Rural safari is an activity there tourist get to see the forest area, bird watching, fishing activity which can be though elephant ride.
- Rural exhibition can also be a part of agro-tourism package where there rural farms can organise farm equipment exhibition, craft exhibition, handloom exhibition fresh agriculture product market, processed food which the tourist can get attractive to and would be interest to purchase for their stores.
- Traditional food katta would be one of the initiatives where the rural farmer can serve traditional delicacies like traditional breakfast, lunch, traditional drink; traditional sweets and snacks can also be displays in this food zone.

Therefore through such innovative concepts related to agriculture and other non agricultural activities the agriculture tourism has a great capacity to create additional source of employment to the farmers.

As the agriculture is completely depended on monsoon which is uncertain in India such agro tourism can prove to be the one of the solution to diversify the farm activity and earn money.

Benefits of Agro-Tourism

Generating employment and additional source of income: Agro tourism revolves around displaying the village life their hard ship and culture which world wide tourist are curious about. With the arrangement of various facets of farmers product these farmer get engaged in additional activities of earning which will keep them busy motivate them to excel in their field.

Revenue to the government: Agro tourism will be the great source of opportunities to the government as they can earn in dollars from foreign tourist who are keen to study India flora and fauna. Such money can be utilised in providing loan to these farmers for their extension activities like village festival, craft stores etc.

Recreation for stressed urban population: Due to busy work life in the urban areas most of the urbanites are living a stressful life where they look out new destination for holidays and weekends. Agro tourism can be one of destination with peace and tranquillity which is not possible in resorts of over crowded cities. Due to medical advices more of the urban population are leaning towards nature. Proximity to nature through birds, animals, mountains, crops, village etc. provides an atmosphere to urban people where they can forget their busy urban life.

Educative value: The agro tourism would create awareness about the life of the rural farmers. They will understand the ground reality which is never highlighted in media. Students who are in the field of agriculture science or those doing study on agriculture will get hands on experience about the agriculture activities that are carried on to produce crop which will make them aware about the importance of food and would avoid such wastage. Agro tourism enhances the social value of rural life and the challenges which they face every day.

Poverty alleviation and less suicides: Agro tourism help to reduce poverty as its creates additional sources of earning for the farmers who are jobless when there is no cultivation. This will reduce less suicides cases and such activities can be supported by the entire family and this will improve their standard of living which will lead to the community development.

Recommendation to improve agro- tourism in India

Wide Publicity. The government should initiate awareness campaign by promoting through various social media platforms like face book, Instagram etc which will provide global awareness toward agro tourism.

Organising workshops and seminars: The government agency should conduct workshop and seminars giving information to state nodal agency, or to farmers about the requirement to start the agro tourism in the respective states.

Effective Agro tourism Policies: To encourage the development of effective agro-tourism policies and regulations, as well a consistent interpretation of their intent.

Funding provision from various banks: The bank should provide necessary funding to these farmers as lack of funds has been one of the reason for less growth of agro tourism. With availability of loan at the concessional rate farmers will be motivated to diversified their activities.

Conclusion

Agro tourism is considered as complimentary to traditional agricultural activities. It is an opportunity for farmers to use the available resources in a diversified and innovative ways. It creates win win situation for farmers and tourist. Farmers can earn better form such innovative use of available resources and the tourist can enjoy village life and nature in an affordable price. Some cases of agro tourism in Maharashtra in District Raigad, Pune, and Satara have proved that agro tourism not only bring development to farmers but to the village as a whole from socio and economic angle. To initiate growth the government should give priority to agro tourism business through appropriate policy measures.

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