

Agri-tourism: A Model to Develop Rural India

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ABSTRACT

The urban-rural divide is at its highest in the current times. The farmers and their families move to urban place in search of job opportunities, better health services, education facilities etc. For the rural people, the urban areas are the places of opportunities for better life styles and enhanced living standards. Central as well as State Governments have been trying to bridge the gap between the rural and urban divide and one of the answers to this problem is Agri-tourism. Agri-tourism is a tool for connecting most ancient Agri-economy of India with tourism. It can be defined as attracting the tourist at agriculture farms located in rural areas where the tourists can enjoy the environment of village, enjoy the stay, food and the culture of these places.

Agri-tourism provides opportunity to the farmers to increase their current income, enhance the employment opportunity for the rural people and also helps in building infrastructure at these remote rural places. Many State Governments like Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh are extending help towards these rural entrepreneurs who are willing to promote Agri-tourism at their places. This paper concentrates on studying the successful models currently prevailing in India and suggests a model for developing Agri-tourism in India.

Keywords: Agri-tourism, Urban Rural Divide, Agri-economy

INTRODUCTION

India is an agriculture-based economy yet the news of farmers killing themselves is heard repeatedly. According to the National Crime Report Bureau (NCRB), 11,379 farmers in the year 2016 committed suicide. In one of its reports, NCRB indicated that 948 farmers commit suicide every month, or it could be said that 31 suicides take place every day. Though the current figures in 2018-19 have seen decline but the figure of 10 farmers committing suicide is still a matter of concern for the Government of India. If we overlook the statistics of suicide among the farmers the poor conditions of the farmers, their condition can be very well understood by a report which highlights that every minute 25-30 rural people from the small villages are migrating to urban places in India in search of options for better livelihood and lifestyles for themselves as well as for their families.

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Such problems are not only putting pressure on the urban places of India in form of problems of providing employment, planned shelters, transportation etc but are also giving a setback to the families living in rural areas due to lack of manpower when it comes to agriculture production. Indian government is trying to provide various schemes and facilities to stop such migration with the help of schemes such as NAREGA, MANAREGA, providing subsidies directly to the farmers and even deferring the debt of the farmers who are poor and are unable to pay the debts. But, despite of all the schemes and policies adopted by the central and the state government the only way to deal with all the above stated problems is 'rural development'. Rural Development paves the way to identify the factors that can lead to reduce the urban migration of poor farmers and to provide them opportunity to earn a better living standard, better education facilities, hospitalization and other health facilities for their families. In the series of rural development, Agri-tourism lays a concrete base for the development of people belonging to small rural towns. For this the concept of 'Agri-tourism' needs to be understood.

Agri-tourism: A Way to Rural Development

Agri-tourism is a combination of agriculture and tourism. The idea of Agri-tourism is to promote agriculture and associated activities of people of rural areas to attract tourists in villages, fields, ranches etc. It is the process of attracting tourists to rural areas for entertaining, educating the visitors about agriculture and rural culture, selling agriculture based products, and thus generating income for the rural people. The factors included in Agri-tourism are:

- It includes all the charm of tourism and affiliation with agriculture.
- It involves attracting tourists to visit villages and farms.
- It should add to the income of the rural people, so that it can solve the issues of migration and income generation in the villages.
- It provides entertainment, learning, recreation and Agri-products to the visitors.

The concept of Agri-tourism was initiated in Europe and North America, and after that many countries adopted the concept. In India, the concept was brought under execution by Agri Tourism Development Company (ATDC) in a village of Maharashtra, Baramati in the year 2005. As the name suggests, the ATDC is a company that develops Agri-tourism in rural villages of India. It helps the farmers by training them to set up an Agri-tourism center. These Agri-centers become the developing centers for the rural areas by generating income for the farmers throughout the year. It provides an opportunity for additional income to the farmers and helps them to raise their living standards.

Operations undertaken in Agri-tourism

According to the facilities and the capability of Agri-tourism center, these centers can perform Agri-tourism operations ranging from small operations that can operate on a

seasonal basis and offer limited consumer services to large operations that operate throughout the year and provide numerous consumer services. The Agri-tourism operations can be divided under following heads:

Educational activities: The educational activities include farm visit with guide, observing fruit plantation, vegetable plantation, ayurvedic and medicinal plants, unique variety of plants and flower, flower plantation, polyhouse, vermiculture farm equipments, drip irrigation, traditional and modern technology of farming, water storage tank, vermi wash project, goat farm, poultry farm, cow farming, organic farming, honey bee project, water irrigation system, agriculture research center. Tourists of different age groups such as elderly people, family groups and school trips are attracted to agri-tourism.

Entertainments activities: The entertainment activities include Children Park, boating, rain dance, bullock cart ride, tractor ride, open jeep ride, horse cart ride, archery, music system, rural games, outdoor games, magic show, tattoo, rain dance.

Sightseeing: Tourists can be taken for sightseeing at places such as forest garden, polyhouse, sugar industry, jaggery making, village temple, dairy industry etc.

Adventure activities: Agri-tourism can be promoted by adding adventure activities on the farm such as zip - liners, rope bridge, crossing the wooden beam bridge, crossing the wooden block hanging bridge, crossing the nylon net bridge, crossing the hanging tires bridge, walking on wire rope, crossing the net, crossing the tire ladder, trampoline spider net crossing the net, mini merry go round, slides, swings, beach swings, sea – saw and many more.

Stay and Food: One of the most important attractions that is added to the agri-tourism is the facility for the tourists to live in village like houses and get the experience of living in villages with the nature. They can enjoy the food of villagers at the time of their stay at the centers.

Agri-tourism: A Model to Develop Rural India

The paper suggests the model for the development of agri-tourism centers for increasing the income of people belonging to rural areas and small villages for raising their standard of living. The development of agri-tourist center in such small places can help in providing employment to people of the area and helps in reduction of migration of rural people to urban areas. The suggested model for developing agri-tourism centers in rural areas is given in figure 1.

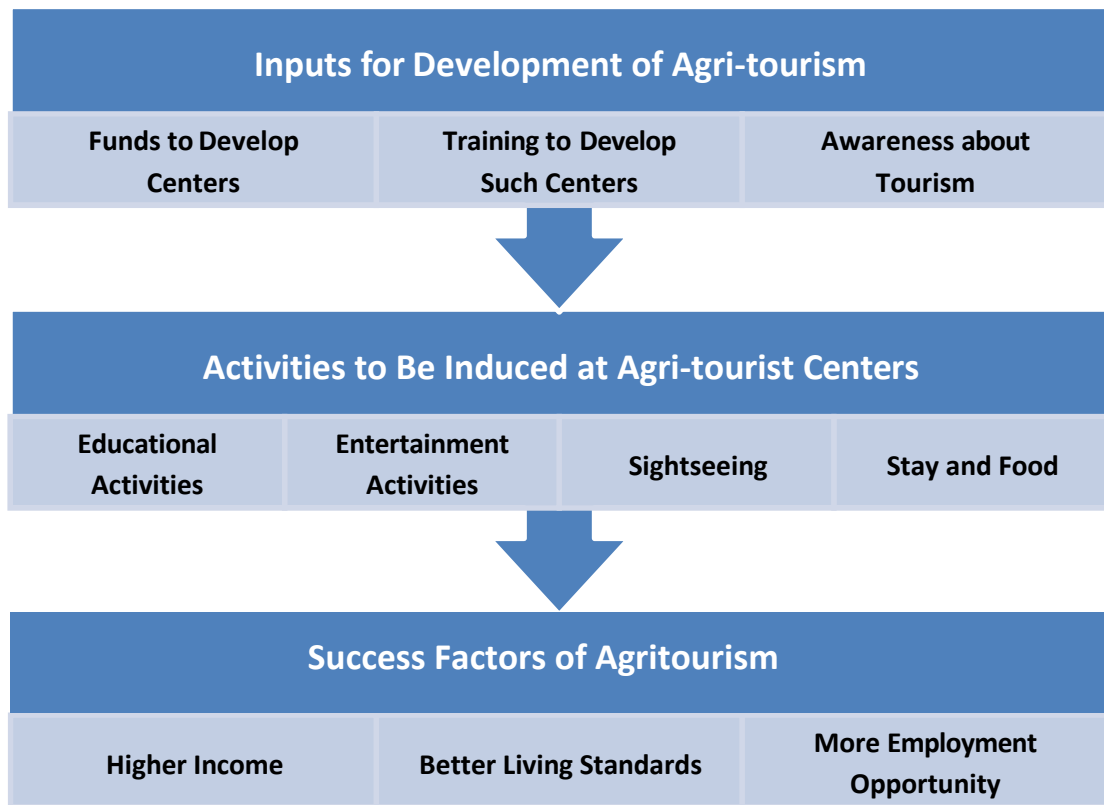


Figure 1: Agri-tourism model

If the above suggested model is accepted and adopted by the State and the Central Government of India, then, the development of rural areas will become easier. It is the process of empowering the poor and the needy farmers who are backbone of the Indian Economy.

CONCLUSION

The agri-tourism may look like a new concept but it is widely accepted in the western countries. In spite of the fact that Indian economy is agriculture-based economy still this concept is new to the Indian scene. The Government is trying to develop self-sustained villages and agri-tourism centers in small places and villages to help the people living in villages. Higher Income, more employment opportunities, better education, better health services, better living standard and many more benefits are going to follow along with the tourists in these small rural areas. This concept is beneficial to the villagers as well as to the tourists who can get the feel of small villages, live with the nature and culture of these places.

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