

AGRO TOURISM – AN INSTRUMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MAHARASHTRA)

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Abstract : Tourism is now well recognized as an engine of growth in the various economics in the world. Several countries have transformed their economics by developing their tourism potential. Tourism has great capacity to generate large scale employment and additional income source to the skilled and unskilled. Today the concept of traditional tourism has been changed. Some new areas of the tourism have been emerged like Agro-Tourism. Promotion of Tourism would bring many direct and indirect benefits to the people. Tourism is also well recognized as an engine of growth in the various economics in the world. Several countries have transformed their economics by developing their tourism potential. Tourism has great capacity to generate large scale employment and additional income source to the skilled and unskilled.

Agro tourism will bring the primary sector agriculture closer to the service sector and will attract more attention to development of rural infrastructure. Agro tourism is defined as “Travel that combines agricultural or rural settings with product of agriculture operations all within a tourism experience.” India is already established as one of the top tourist destination in the world. Value addition by introducing novel products like afro tourism would only strengthen the competitiveness of Indian tourism industry in global market. Agro Tourism is an innovative agricultural activity related to tourism and agriculture both. It has a great capacity to create additional source of income and employment opportunities to the farmers. Maharashtra is one of the major tourist centers in India.

Keywords: Tourism, innovative, Potential, Tradition, Agro

1 INTRODUCTION

Maharashtra has diverse culture and geography which provide ample and unlimited scope for the growth of Agro tourism business. There are an increasing number of tourists preferring non-urban tourist spot. Hence, there is scope for promotion of non-urban tourist spots in interior villages by establishing Agro tourism centers. Tourism is a pleasure giving activity in which a tourist spent for visiting the place and someone earn money. Tourism consist many innovative concepts like rural tourism, health tourism, ecotourism, adventure tourism, agro-tourism, religious tourism, monsoon tourism etc. Agro-tourism is the specialized area of tourism. It is related to innovative agriculture and tourism (Service) sector. As per MTDC in the coming years, agro- tourism would evolve as one of the fastest growing segments of service sector of economy. It has great capacity to generate large-scale employment and additional income sources to the skilled and unskilled farmers especially in Maharashtra.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Shri Pandurang Taware, manager, Agriculture Tourism Development Corporation, pune explained that running an agro-tourism centre can be a great source of supplementary income for farmers. The Times of India (27 Sept. 2013) highlighted that one survey carried out by the Baramati Agro and Rural Tourism Training, R and D Center. The survey has shown result that agricultural tourism has grown to be rs 13.14 crore industries in Maharashtra.

Dr. R. Gopal, Ms. Shilpa Varma and Ms. Rashmi Gopinathan, “Rural Tourism Development Constraints and Possibilities with a special reference to Agro Tourism- “A Case Study on Agro Tourism Destination-Malegoan village, Taluka Baramati, District Pune, Maharashtra” described the history of development of Baramati and also explained setting of the successful pilot Agri and Rural Tourism project and contribution of project.

Prof. A. Ramakumar and Prof. Dr. Rajashree Shinde, “Product Development and Management in Rural Tourism (with Reference To Maharashtra)” highlighted that the product development in agriculture tourism and management through case study analysis at two selected sites in Maharashtra. The paper also highlighted overview the challenges in agro-tourism sector.

Kumbhar Vijay Maruti, “Agro – Tourism: Scope and Opportunities for the Farmers in Maharashtra” Focused Maharashtra has a great potential to the development of agro – tourism, because of natural conditions and different types of agro products as well as variety of rural traditions, festivals. The case study published on www.tourismfortomorrow.com brought into light ATDC’s effort to develop and promote agricultural tourism as a potential vehicle for diversifying and stabilizing rural economies by creating jobs, increasing community income, providing a broader market base for local business and attracting tourists to the area.

CONCEPT OF AGRO TOURISM-

Agro tourism is the latest concept in the Indian tourism industry, which normally occurs on farms. It gives you the opportunity to experience the real enchanting and authentic contact with 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.

Agro Tourism is an innovative agricultural activity related to Tourism and agriculture both. It has great capacity to create additional source of income and employment opportunity to the farmers. Maharashtra is one of the most tourist centers in India and there is large scope and great potential to develop agro tourism.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the impact of agro – tourism in Maharashtra region.
2. To identify potentialities and the limitations of the agro- tourism in Maharashtra.

METHODOLOGY-

This paper is based on secondary data collection. All the data used for the purpose of this research has been sourced from various sources like research paper, newspaper, Paper Articles, websites and books.

REQUIREMENTS TO AGRO-TOURISM CENTERS.

The individual farmer can start agro tourism that have minimum two hector land, farm house, water resource and is interested to entertain the tourists. Apart from the individual farmer, agricultural co-operatives institute, non government organizations, Agricultural universities and agricultural colleges may start their centers. Even Grampanchayata can start such centers in their operational areas with the help of villagers and farmers. To develop an agro-Tourism in their farm, the farmers must have basic infrastructure and facilities in their farm as follows.

- ◆ Farmhouse which has the rural look and feel comfortable along with minimum required facilities.
- ◆ Rich resources in agriculture namely water and plants at the place.
- ◆ Farmers should offer to see and participate in the agriculture activities.
- ◆ Offer authentic rural Indian/ Maharashtra food for breakfast lunch and dinner (zunka bhakar, thali peeth, puran poli, modak, peethali bhaat etc)

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- ◆ Offer an opportunity to participate in the rural games to the tourists.
- ◆ Provide information them about the culture dress arty crafts, festivals, rural traditions and also give possible demonstration of some arts.
- ◆ Offer bullock carts for riding and horse riding. In the water fishing facility in your ponds or nearest lake.
- ◆ Offer fruits, corns, groundnut, sugarcane and other agro products as per availability.
- ◆ Show local birds, animals and waterfalls etc.
- ◆ Must provide pollution free environment and safety to tourists.
- ◆ Arrange folk dance programme shekoti folk songs, bhajon, kirtana, lezim dance, dhangari gaja etc.
- ◆ Available some fresh agro products to purchase to the tourist.

SOCIAL IMPACT OF AGRO TOURISM CENTERS

Agro tourism is also a tourism business but it is different from the common tourism because it has a base of agriculture and rural lifestyle. Generally tourism has provided to see and enjoy the natural places as well as some heritages. But Agro Tourism is a Tourism which includes experiences, education and culture transformation. Agro Tourism follows the concept

“Come, pluck a fruit, smell a flower, run in the fields, lie on the hay and be lost in rural India.”

Agro Tourism centers provide the following social and cultural environment to the tourists.

- ◆ Cultural transforming between urban and rural people including social moral values.
- ◆ It provides pollution and noise free sites for travel and tourism at rural backgrounds.
- ◆ The cost of food accommodation, Recreation and travel is minimum in agro tourism.
- ◆ A family environment at the tourist place is one of the most important characteristics in the agro tourism.
- ◆ Agro Tourism can satisfy the curiosity of urban people about sources of food plants, animals and industrial agro raw materials.
- ◆ It provides information about the rural handicraft languages, culture, traditional dresses and lifestyle.
- ◆ In agro Tourism, Tourists not only see and watch agriculture farms but also they can participate in the agriculture activities and experiences the farming.
- ◆ It provides natural situation to watch, birds, water bodies etc.
- ◆ Agro Tourism could create awareness about rural life and knowledge about agriculture.
- ◆ It also provides opportunities for education through experiences of farming and knowledge about the rural life including entertain. Agro Tourism in an instrument of Urban-rural connectivity through the tours.

AGRICULTURE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION-

ATDC has the main promoter of this activity in the Maharashtra. ATDC is promoting to agriculture tourism for achieving income, employment and economic stability in rural areas. Help boosting a range of activities, services and amenities, provided by farmer and rural people to attract urban tourists to their area thus providing opportunity to urban people to get to the rural roots. ATDC is now providing following facilities to the farmers of Maharashtra.

- ◆ Prepare Agro Tourism project report and business plan of the each applicant agriculture farm.
- ◆ Help facilitate the financial support from nationalize banks, Institutes and Government Agencies to built Agro and Rural Tourism facilities and infrastructure like accommodation, sanitation, approach road etc.
- ◆ Conduct Agro Tourism Business Training Programme.
- ◆ Conduct seminars and conference on agro tourism business and also lectures of the successful National and International farmers in agro tourism business.
- ◆ Provide sales and marketing support.
- ◆ Conduct and coordinate tours from urban areas to the farm.
- ◆ Arrange National as well international Agro Tourism center study tours.
- ◆ ATDC has entertained National as well as International visitors.

District wise/ Region wise Tourism centre (Mar-2013)

District/ Region	Centers
Pune	74
Satara	15
Kolhapur	02
Solapur	7
Ahamadnagar	5
Thane	16
Nashik	6
Sangli	2
Vidharb	8
Marathwada	11
Konkan	32
Total	178

Source- www.mart.com

LIMITATIONS OF THE AGRO TOURISM IN MAHARASHTRA

The Maharashtra has a greater potential of the development of the agro tourism centers due to the good natural and climate conditions. But there are some problems in the process of agro tourism development in the state. Major challenges and problems are follows.

- ◆ Ignorance of the farmers regarding to the type of activities.
- ◆ Presence of unorganized sector in the agro tourism Industry.
- ◆ Weak communication skill and lack of commercial approach of the small farmers.
- ◆ Many farmers have small size holding, low quality land and little or no access to credit or irrigation. Have no negotiated with consistent drought.
- ◆ 148 of the 355 talukas in the state are consistently drought prone.
- ◆ Lack of capital to develop basic infrastructure for the agro tourism.
- ◆ Ignorance of the farmers regarding to the type of activities.
- ◆ Ensure hygiene and basic requirement considering urban visitors.

AGRO-TOURISM POTENTIAL IN MAHARASHTRA

Agro-Tourism has the potential to change the economic face of traditional agriculture. Agriculture business is becoming more unsecured in Maharashtra due to the irregular monsoon, unsecured product price. Many farmers cannot afford it and have a problem of indebtness. Due to the agricultural problems some farmers are committed to suicide in various districts in Maharashtra. Maharashtra has a great potential to the development of agro Tourism because of natural conditions and different types of agro products as well as variety of rural tradition, festivals. More than 45 percent of population is living in the urban areas and they want enjoy rural life and to know about the rural life. Total 22368 thousand hector area under the agriculture and 36122 thousands of Livestock. It is a good opportunity to develop an agro tourism business.

Economic capital of India Mumbai is state capital of Maharashtra. It has connected railheads, roadways and many more state highways. There is an enough road and rail connectivity in urban – rural areas to travel in rural areas. Maharashtra has several communities belonging to different religions, and a number of festival. Some of the popular festivals that are celebrated are Ganesh festival, Gokul Ashtmi, Makar Sankrant, Holi, Gudi Padwa, Dasara etc. The food served for the lunch in the Maharashtra usually Jowar, Bajari, fish, chapattis, rice, varan, Pickle, papad, bhaji. Maharastra region bounds in numerous tourist attraction ranging from ancient temples, Beaches, Waterfalls, ancient forts and monuments, forests, unique hill station and a rich tradition of festivals, art and culture. Various locations have been identified in this region as agro-tourist destination. Some of the popular folk dances in rural Maharashtra are Lavni, Dhangari Gaja, Povadas, Koli dance, and Tamasha. Culture of Maharashtra is very glorious with a great variety. It gives a unique identity to the rural Maharashtra. This region diverse Agro climate conditions, diverse croups, people deserts, mountains which provide scope for promotion of all season. Thus, Maharashtra region has agro-tourism potential. Farmer can earn up to two or three lakh in a year. There is potential to develop 3-4 centers per taluka.

CONCLUSIONS-

Maharashtra has a great potential to the development of agro tourism, because of natural conditions and different types of agro products as well as variety of rural traditions, festivals. It is good opportunity to develop an agro tourism business in Maharashtra but there is a problem of low awareness about this business in the farmer and problem of the finance and proper view in the farmers of Maharashtra. Hence the agriculture department of the districts and Agriculture University should try to give orientation about it and provide some innovative ideas regarding to the Agro tourism.

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