



## Opportunities and challenges of Agro-tourism in India

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### Abstract

Agri-tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in India, with great potential for rural development, employment, environmental conservation, agricultural sustainability and tourism growth. Yet in addition to these promising prospects, these opportunities present many challenges. The present paper attempts to examine the opportunities and challenges in the agri-tourism sector in India. Through a comprehensive review of various literatures, opportunities such as diversification of income sources for farmers, sustainable agriculture and preservation of rural culture, as well as challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited marketing activities and regulatory barriers, lack of policies at the government level hinder the growth of the agritourism sector. For agri-tourism development, it underscores the need for a sound policy to overcome these barriers, including investment in infrastructure, sound management and implementation of effective marketing strategies.

**Keywords:** Agrarian economy, agrotourism, opportunities and challenges in agrotourism

### Introduction

India is an agricultural country. According to the 2011 census, 60 percent of the population lives in rural areas and the main occupation is agriculture. But due to the uncertainty of weather, dependence on rainfall, agriculture is no longer a profitable business for small farmers. Also, due to the increasing selfie and money-centric approach in the city, the growing mentality of city dwellers to get bored of city life and spend some time in the closeness of nature gave birth to agritourism. This provided an additional business to the farmers, while the citizens of the city got an opportunity to experience the rural life through agri-tourism. And today the gap between the demand and supply of this tourism is increasing day by day, due to the increasing demand new opportunities are available to those in this business, but at the same time many challenges are also created to meet the increasing demand or to create a balance between demand and supply. In the present paper an attempt has been made to find out what are the new opportunities and challenges in agritourism

### Rationale of study

Agritourism is an emerging sector in India, with huge new opportunities as well as various challenges. There does not seem to be enough research in this field in India. Therefore, an attempt has been made to understand the complexities of the subject by researching the opportunities and challenges in agritourism

### Objectives

1. To understand the base of agrarian economy.
2. To understand the opportunities and challenges of Agro-tourism in India.
3. To understand the importance of Agro-tourism for sustainability of rural economy.
4. To understand the role of government about Agro-tourism.

### India is an agrarian country

Before independence i.e. before 1947, under the British rule, agriculture accounted for more than 90% of the national

income while nearly 95% of the total population was dependent on agriculture. There was a slight decrease in this and according to the 1951 census, 70 percent of the total population remained engaged in agriculture. Similarly, as per the 2011 census, 54.6 percent of India's total population was dependent on agriculture, of which 61.5 percent of the rural population had agriculture as their main occupation. As the development progressed, the size of the village also continuously changed. According to the 2011 census, there are 649,481 villages in India and their main source of livelihood is agriculture. Although the dependence on agriculture seems to have decreased in this way, its importance in the economy has not decreased, on the contrary, the agriculture sector has worked to accommodate the additional people in the rural areas. A comparative study of the dependence of people on agriculture in developed countries and people in India shows that India is still a country of villages and agrarian country.

### Agrotourism

Rural culture and urban tourists come together with the help of agritourism. Agritourism usually involves consuming local foods, imagining picking fruits from trees, experiencing bullock carts, driving tractors, experiencing various rural culture and agricultural activities, cooking meals with self-collected ingredients. Agritourism is important because it supports the rural economy, preserves traditional practices and promotes environmental sustainability. Connecting travellers with farming communities increases cultural exchange, raises awareness of food systems, and promotes responsible travel. It provides income diversification for farmers, promotes conservation of natural resources and promotes local development. Furthermore, agritourism fosters an appreciation for the interconnectedness of food, culture and the environment, fostering mutual respect and understanding between different communities. In short, agritourism plays an important role in enhancing economic, social and environmental well-being for both rural areas and the wider tourism industry.

## Review of literature

According to Krishna D K, N V Kumbhare J P Sharma, D U M Rao and Arpan Bhowmik on his research paper titled as "Challenges and Strategies for Promotion of Agritourism: (2019) A Multi-dimensional Study" Loans and subsidies for low-cost agritourism farms can attract young farmers, while government price policy mechanisms, market information and market surveys in urban areas can prevent losses and identify potential consumers for agritourism and agro-products.

According to Hollas, Chadley and Chase, research paper titled as "Agritourism: Challenges and opportunities for the rural future" (1012), Agritourism, a form of tourism led by individuals, can significantly benefit rural communities by fostering social interaction, fostering community goodwill, providing family employment, and increasing revenue for existing farm enterprises.

According to, K.B. Ramappa, R.C. Srivastava, Birendra Kumar, A.R. Shrivanthi, Mohit Sharma and Rajasekhar Karjagi, Opportunities & Challenges of Agritourism 2022, The promotion of Agritourism in India is crucial, involving both public and private sectors. The development of professionals in the field should be a central focus in the tourism department's policy framework. Universities should improve their linkage with the state tourism department and upgrade the skills of employees in departments like KVKs and State Agricultural Universities (SAUs). Engaging various stakeholders in Agritourism leads to successful development.

According to Vikas Dangi, The Scenario of Agro - Tourism in India: An Overview (May 2018) Agro-tourism in India faces challenges and requires a well-defined strategy for development at national and state levels. This includes proper recognition, government-supported policy structures, farmer education, financing solutions, liability and risk management programs, and product and service quality improvement. A Public Private Strategic Partnership Development Model could also be created.

According to, M. Sunitha, role of Agrotourism in Rural Developmenta (April 2021), Agrotourism development in rural areas relies on factors like low farm income, city expansion, urban population redistribution, and local government policies. Agrotourist farms require material resources, promotional activities, mutual cooperation, initiative, and risk-taking. Top-down solutions at various government levels should address emerging opportunities and create incentives for addressing obstacles. Support for initiatives in rural areas, especially at the local level, is crucial to reduce load and address barriers associated with lower natural environment values.

According to Mr. Sandip The Scenario of Agri-tourism in India: an overview, April 2018, Agro-tourism is a growing market in India, generating rural employment and poverty alleviation. The government is developing infrastructure to promote agro-tourism in various regions. This leisurely activity helps tourists discover rural destinations and reconnect with nature, benefiting farmers, local communities, and tour operators. However, there is a urgent need to develop a full-fledged tourism market to enhance the agro-based economy.

According to, Chandra Shekhar, Agro -Tourism (January 2022), India has significant potential for agro-tourism due to its diverse products and rural lifestyle. This industry can thrive in concentrated areas. The government should promote agro tourism and provide financial aid to organizations involved in this field.

## Research Methodology

The study is exploratory based on secondary data source collected from various reference books, academic journals, government reports, international organizations, academic journals, statistical databases, newspapers and various websites.

## Opportunities and challenges in agrotourism in India

### Opportunities of Agri-tourism

Agritourism is an emerging business for India's rural economy. If there is proper cooperation among the stakeholders of agritourism, many new opportunities will arise in this sector as follows:

### Supplementary income

Agri-tourism started to provide supplementary income to the farmers in the rural areas. Their dependence on agriculture has reduced. India is a culturally diverse country and people from urban areas are very curious to know about it, so this business can be easily started anywhere in rural areas with less capital and reduce their dependence on agriculture.

### Preservation of Traditions

It promotes the preservation of traditional agricultural practices thereby preserving the good traditions carried on in rural areas. The cultural heritage is kept alive forever, from that the cultural values of that society are understood by all the society and their benefits become a guide for the country and the next generations.

### Rural Development

Agritourism creates employment opportunities. As people's income increases, a new mentality starts to emerge, like rural people understand their problems, so they start using their income properly and carefully. At the government level, agriculture tourism also starts to be taken into account and as a result, the system of roads, electricity, water supply, communication starts increasing and rural development gets currency.

### Promotion of Rural Culture and Heritage

It provides a platform to showcase the rich cultural and historical heritage of rural areas, attracting tourists interested in authentic experiences.

### Sustainability of rural economy

Agritourism promotes sustainable development by supporting rural livelihoods, conserving local natural resources and preserving local traditional knowledge systems, these make more sustainability of rural economy for better livelihood.

### Empowerment of rural economy

Agritourism make more empowers to rural economy by generating different sources of earnings, creating larger scale of employment opportunities and reducing problems of rural migration to city areas, thereby promoting inclusive growth and rural community development.

### Availability of Technology

availability of modern technology connects more consumers via online booking platforms as well as new agitech innovations and easy availability of resources to adopt digital marketing strategies can increase operational efficiency, customer engagement and market reach for agritourism businesses.

### Government support

Government initiatives promoting all types of rural tourism like as availability of bank loan, registration certificate, public private partnership, research and development as, Rural Tourism Development Project (RTDP) and the National Agri-Tourism Policy, provide support and incentives for agritourism development which reduce the hurdles of agrotourism.

### Challenges of Agri-Tourism in India

As many new opportunities are emerging in this field, many challenges are constantly emerging. There are many hurdles an entrepreneur has to overcome to keep his business running. The challenges for agrotourism are as follows:

#### Lack of Infrastructure

Many rural areas lack basic infrastructure such as roads, accommodations, and basic amenities like electricity, toilet facilities as well as problems of conversation required to support agri-tourism activities.

#### Limited Marketing Initiatives

Agri-tourism often suffers from inadequate marketing efforts, from the government side as well as entrepreneurs due to limited skill for campaigning or less availability of funds, resulting in low awareness among potential urban tourists.

#### Regulatory problems

Complex regulations and bureaucratic processes can hinder the development of agro-tourism projects. Lack of a clear regulatory framework and policies specific from the local, state and central governments to agritourism can lead to regulatory hurdles, permit delays and uncertainty for entrepreneurs and investors.

#### Seasonality and Weather

Agri-tourism activities are often dependent on seasonal factors and weather conditions, tourist give preparation to summer and winter season due to security purposes and entire monsoon season rarely visited by the tourist which can impact visitor numbers and revenues of the entrepreneurs.

### Conclusion

Agri-tourism in India is creating many opportunities for rural development along with agricultural sustainability. This will have a positive impact on rural life, but there is a collective responsibility to meet the challenges emerging in the sector to keep rural entrepreneurship alive through this opportunity, otherwise the benefits from this sector will not accrue to the rural economy. Therefore, the government should plan positive policies at the government level that will benefit the farmers, entrepreneurs, investors and consumers associated with the rural economy. All these efforts can lead to continuous development of rural economy

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