

## **A STUDY ON AGRO-TOURISM IN INDIA**

**Mr. Rinkeshkumar G. Mahida**

Research Scholar, & Asst. Professor- Piyuni Goswami College of Arts, Vahelal, rinkeshmahida@gmail.com

### **ABSTRACT**

*Traveling to farms, ranches, and other agro-cultural locations to experience rural life and discover agro-cultural practices is known as agro-tourism. Thanks to its ability to boost rural economies, create jobs for locals, and raise public awareness of agro-cultural techniques, it is growing in popularity in India (Jagdish, Agri Farming, 2021). There are numerous advantages to agro-tourism for farmers, local communities, travel agencies, and non-farmers. It gives farmers an extra money stream and aids in revenue stream diversification (Jagdish, Agri Farming, 2021). Communities can benefit from it by creating new jobs, fostering regional growth, and preserving local customs and culture (Jagdish, Agri Farming, 2021). It can benefit travel agencies by bringing in more business, boosting revenue, and promoting environmentally friendly travel (Jagdish, Agri Farming, 2021). It can offer a rare chance for those who don't live near farms to experience rural life, learn about agro-culture, and establish a connection with the natural world (Jagdish, Agri Farming, 2021). This article's objectives are to examine the advantages of agro-tourism in India, the difficulties it faces, the effects agro-tourism has on the country's environment and economy, sustainable agro-tourism in India, and government programs and policies related to agro-tourism in India. Secondary data were used to conduct the current investigation. In this study, descriptive research methods were employed.*

**Keywords:** agro-tourism, environment, economic development, sustainable, government scheme and policy, and India.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Agro-tourism is a type of travel where travelers visit and engage with rural communities and agricultural practices. Benefits like income diversification, cross-cultural interaction, environmental awareness, and rural development can be enjoyed by both farmers and tourists. In India, agro-tourism is becoming more and more popular, with numerous well-known locations throughout the nation.

### **DEFINITION OF AGRO-TOURISM**

Agro-tourism is the practice of tourists or visitors coming to a farm to have an intimate and exclusive experience with agriculture (TeamMahuli, 2020). It's a chance for city people to relax and spend a few days away from the bustle of the city, learn something new, and enhance their mental well-being (TeamMahuli, 2020). Because farm owners preserve and care for their lands, increasing biodiversity and safeguarding the flora and fauna, agro-tourism also contributes to environmental conservation (TeamMahuli, 2020). Farmers can use it as a way to increase and diversify their revenue (ORCA). Agro-tourism includes a broad range of activities, including hospitality, education about agriculture, direct-to-consumer sales, and leisure (Wikipedia, 2023).

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To become familiar with agro-tourism in India
- To learn about the advantages of Indian agro-tourism
- To comprehend the difficulties that India's agro-tourism industry faces
- To investigate the implications of agro-tourism on the environment and the economy
- To comprehend the significance of eco-friendly agro-tourism in India
- To be aware of India's agro-tourism policies and programs

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

For this study, the researcher utilized a descriptive research design. The information required for the study was obtained through secondary data.

### **ADVANTAGES OF INDIAN AGRO-TOURISM**

- **Diversification of income:** Agro-tourism gives farmers access to a second stream of income in addition to a direct marketing avenue for customers. Additionally, it increases the number of tourists and their average length of stay in a particular area, which benefits the tourism industry (Jagdish, 2021).

- **Cultural exchange:** One excellent way to discover the genuine and varied facets of Indian rural life is through agro-tourism. It gives guests the chance to discover agricultural methods, regional cuisine, celebrations, handicrafts, and customs, as well as to enjoy the rich history and culture of rural India (Kalyan Mandi, 2019). Agro-tourism is a type of rural tourism that promotes the social and economic well-being of the surrounding communities by revealing the rural life, culture, art, and heritage in rural areas (Kalyan Mandi, 2019). Farmers can use it as a way to increase and diversify their revenue (Shamrao)
- **Environmental awareness:** By encouraging visitors to respect and preserve the natural resources, biodiversity, and ecology of rural areas, agro-tourism fosters sustainable and ethical travel. Additionally, it aids in mitigating the adverse effects of mass tourism on urban areas, including traffic jams, pollution, and crowding (Bhatti, 2022).
- **Development in rural areas:** Through the creation of jobs, the improvement of skills, and the support of different services like lodging, entertainment, and transportation, agro-tourism promotes rural development. Additionally, it motivates farmers to cultivate otherwise unusable land and to showcase their goods, abilities, and expertise to tourists (Travel Dairy, 2023).
- **Real rural existence:** Travelers can experience authentic and varied facets of Indian rural life through agro-tourism, including farming methods, regional cuisine, celebrations, handicrafts, and customs. It also aids in their appreciation of rural India's rich cultural legacy (Tour my India) (Cook, 2020)
- **Tourism that is ethical and sustainable:** By encouraging visitors to respect and preserve the natural resources, biodiversity, and ecology of rural areas, agro-tourism fosters sustainable and ethical travel. Additionally, it aids in mitigating the adverse effects of mass tourism on urban areas, including traffic jams, pollution, and crowding (Tour my India) (Trivedi, 2013)
- **Farmers' livelihood and empowerment:** Agro-tourism empowers and improves the livelihood of farmers by providing them with an additional source of income, employment, and market access. It also helps them to showcase their products, skills, and knowledge to the tourists, and to learn from their feedback and suggestions (Tour my India)

### **DIFFICULTIES FACED BY AGRO-TOURISM IN INDIA**

Agro-tourism is a type of travel where travelers visit and engage with rural communities and agricultural practices. Benefits like income diversification, cross-cultural interaction, environmental awareness, and rural development can be enjoyed by both farmers and tourists.

- **Issues with human resources:** Some farmers lack the communication skills necessary to engage with tourists and the mindset required for a commercial approach. They might also struggle to balance their time and resources between farming and tourism (H. Vishwanath, 2022).
- **Technical difficulties:** The literature and guidelines about agro-tourism practices in India are inadequate. The farmers may lack the necessary expertise to offer the visitors high-quality facilities and services. They might also not have access to the infrastructure and technology needed to market and run their agro-tourism businesses (H. Vishwanath, 2022).
- **Situational and policy-related issues:** Seasonal variations impact agro-tourism, as fewer visitors may be present during periods of high agro-cultural activity or unfavorable weather. In India, agro-tourism is also not given the backing or acknowledgment it deserves from the government. Obtaining licenses, permits, subsidies, and incentives for their agro-tourism operations may present challenges for the farmers (H. Vishwanath, 2022) (Sivakumar, 2020).

### **DIFFICULTIES OF PROMOTING AGRO-TOURISM IN INDIA**

In India, agrotourism promotion is not without difficulties. The Indian Society of Ecological Economics found that some of the biggest obstacles to effectively managing agrotourism include the high cost of land development and initial investment, staff members' poor communication skills, the inability to add new activities, and the absence of specific policies for agrotourism promotion (Krishna D K, 2019). In addition, India's agro-industry faces several difficulties, including small and dispersed landholdings, low productivity, insufficient irrigation resources, and the consequences of climate change (Sehgal Foundation, 2023). Farmers may find it difficult to invest in agro-tourism and draw visitors to their farms as a result of these difficulties. Agro-tourism, however, can support sustainable travel, protect regional culture, and boost rural economies despite these difficulties (Sehgal Foundation, 2023). To encourage agro-tourism and agro-cultural development, the Indian government has introduced several programs, including the e-NAM, the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana, and the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (Sehgal Foundation, 2023). India can have a prosperous agro-tourism industry with the correct laws and assistance.

## **DIFFICULTIES FACED BY AGRO-TOURISM PROJECTS IN INDIA**

- **Lack of Knowledge:** Farmers frequently lack the essential understanding of agro-tourism and how to carry out such initiatives successfully (Naidu, 2018).
- **Training Opportunities:** Farmers who want to learn about agro-tourism and gain the skills necessary to oversee tourism operations on their properties have few opportunities for training (Naidu, 2018).
- **Infrastructure and Policy Support:** The lack of infrastructure and policies that encourage it can be a significant barrier to the growth of agro-tourism initiatives (Naidu, 2018).
- **Marketing:** Agro-tourism initiatives may not receive as much attention or be as successful as they could due to difficulties in marketing farm-based products and drawing tourists to rural areas (Praharee, 2021).
- **Entrepreneurial Proficiency:** Farmers may lack the entrepreneurial abilities needed to oversee and advance agro-tourism as a business endeavor (Todd, 2018).
- **Monetary Assistance:** It is frequently difficult to obtain funding and investments for the development of agro-tourism amenities and services (Todd, 2018).

## **IMPACT OF AGRO-TOURISM ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

- **Maintaining Biodiversity:** Agro-tourism promotes the preservation of the region's wildlife and plants. Visitors learn about local wildlife, plants, and ecosystems firsthand. Travelers who value biodiversity also become advocates for its preservation.
- **Ecological Farming Methods:** Agro-tourism presents environmentally friendly agro-cultural practices. Crop rotation, organic farming, and soil health are prioritized. Visitors observe the fine line that exists between environmental stewardship and human needs.
- **Promoting Agro-Ecology:** Sites for agro-tourism frequently incorporate agro-ecological concepts. Agroforestry, integrated pest management, and water conservation are a few of these. These procedures maximize output while reducing their negative effects on the environment.
- **Breaking Down on Food Miles:** Local produce is emphasized in agro-tourism. Travelers eat fresh food from farms, which lowers the transportation sector's carbon footprint. This strengthens the bond between sustainability, food, and land.
- **Learning about Climate Change:** Adaptation techniques and crops resistant to climate change are taught to visitors. Sites dedicated to agro-tourism illustrate how farmers adjust to shifting weather patterns. Climate-conscious behavior and well-informed decision-making stem from awareness.
- **Balancing Tourism Pressure:** Sustainable agro-tourism guarantees that the volume of visitors does not degrade delicate ecosystems. Conscious actions stop habitat destruction, water pollution, and soil erosion.

## **AGRO-TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

An important factor in the revitalization of rural areas is agro-tourism. Its beneficial effects on rural areas' social and economic development are clear.

- **Income Diversification:** Agro-tourism offers a substitute source of income as rural residents' living standards deteriorate and agro-cultural profitability declines. Agro-tourism is a common way for farming families to augment their income.
- **Utilization of More Compact Agro-Cultural Areas:** Agro-tourism makes effective use of the smaller agro-cultural areas found in homes. It enables farmers to produce better, healthier food, giving visitors unique opportunities to engage with the local way of life, customs, and cultural heritage.
- **Increasing the Visibility of Rural Areas:** Through exhibiting traditional crafts, rural buildings, and rural values, agro-tourism attracts visitors looking for unusual leisure activities.
- **Growth in Revenue and Employment:** A multiplier effect occurs when local communities actively engage in agro-tourism. This results in lower unemployment, more jobs being created in industries that cater to tourists, and higher living standards.
- **Close Collaboration:** Collaboration between service providers and local authorities is necessary for agro-tourism to succeed. It is essential to raise community awareness of the advantages of this non-agro-cultural source of income. Agro-tourism strengthens rural communities, promotes sustainable development, and increases economic resilience. By connecting tourism and agro-culture, we can create opportunities that are advantageous to both industries (Sunitha, 2021) (Zerihun, 2018) (Elbek Togaymurodov, 2023). Recall that the combination of tourism and agro-culture has the potential to promote sustainable practices, improve rural populations' quality of life, and achieve inclusive growth on a global scale (Zerihun, 2018).

## **CONTRIBUTION OF AGRO-TOURISM TO INDIA'S GDP**

- **Contribution to GDP:** With agriculture accounting for 15% of India's GDP, it is a crucial industry (Verma, 2020). A growing and specialized market, agro-tourism contributes to this economic environment. The agro-tourism industry is expected to reach \$62.98 billion by 2027, growing at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 13.4% between 2020 and 2027 from an estimated \$42.46 billion in value in 2019 (Verma, 2020) (Bhatti, 2022).
- **Annual Growth Rate:** A 2019 Business Economics study claims that the agro-tourism sector in India is growing at a remarkable 20% annual rate (Bhatti, 2022). This expansion is a reflection of travelers' growing interest in sustainable practices and rural experiences.
- **Worldwide Effect:** The tourism sector expanded globally in 2019 at a rate of 3.5%, exceeding the 2.5% growth rate of the global GDP. 10.3% of the world's GDP came from tourism, which also contributed \$8.9 trillion and about 330 million jobs (Sivakumar S. S., 2020).
- **Sustainable Development:** Agro-tourism, which encourages sustainable practices and rural livelihoods, is in line with the goal of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, or an independent India. It gives farmers the chance to increase their revenue while protecting the environment and local culture (Government of India Ministry of Tourism, 2021).

## **SUSTAINABLE AGRO-TOURISM IN INDIA**

A type of tourism known as "sustainable agro-tourism" involves traveling to and participating in rural communities and agro-cultural pursuits while honoring and protecting the area's natural and cultural resources. Benefits like income diversification, cultural exchange, environmental awareness, and rural development can be enjoyed by both farmers and tourists.

- **Spreading knowledge and awareness:** Both visitors and farmers must understand the idea of sustainable agro-tourism, its advantages, and how to engage in it ethically and responsibly. Online platforms, media, workshops, and campaigns can all be used to accomplish this. Sharing successful stories, best practices, and difficulties related to agro-tourism in India and other nations can also be a part of education (Chettri, 2023) (Business APAC, n.d.)
- **Creating policies and guidelines:** Clear and uniform rules and regulations are required for agro-tourism in India to guarantee the sustainability, safety, and high caliber of the facilities and services provided by the farmers. The government, trade associations, or other interested parties may create these standards and guidelines, which can address issues with waste management, pricing, marketing, infrastructure, and hygiene (Rai, 2019) (Sivakumar S. S., 2020)
- **Offering assistance and rewards:** Farmers and local communities that participate in agro-tourism can receive assistance and incentives from the government and other organizations, including funding, subsidies, tax breaks, recognition, and training. These can assist them in overcoming the difficulties and dangers associated with agro-tourism as well as enhancing their infrastructure, income, and skill set (Rai, 2019) (Sivakumar S. S., 2020).
- **Encouraging networking and cooperation:** Collaboration and networking between farmers, visitors, service providers, researchers, and policymakers can improve agro-tourism. Synergies, knowledge exchange, and access to new markets and opportunities can all be facilitated by doing this. Platforms, gatherings, and associations that bring together the different agro-tourism stakeholders can foster cooperation and networking (Chettri, 2023) (Business APAC, n.d.).

## **POTENTIAL FOR AGRO-TOURISM IN INDIA BY STATE**

- **Diverse geographic areas:** A state with a diversity of climates, ecosystems, and landscapes can provide a range of agro-tourism experiences, including beaches, islands, hill stations, forests, and deserts. For instance, the varied topography of Kerala, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal draws tourists (Tractor Karvan, 2023).
- **Diversity in agro-culture:** A state can showcase its agro-cultural heritage and culture to tourists if it has a diversified and rich agro-cultural sector, with crops, livestock, and high-value, unique, or organic products. For instance, the unique agricultural practices and goods of Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, and Punjab draw tourists (Pashudhan Praharee, 2021).
- **Policy support:** The development and expansion of this industry can be aided by a state that offers an agro-tourism policy environment that is both supportive and favorable, with well-defined and uniform standards, guidelines, incentives, and recognition. For instance, Maharashtra is the first state to create a policy on agro-tourism to develop rural areas (dhyeya IAS, 2022).
- **Participation of stakeholders:** A state can develop synergies, exchange knowledge, and gain access to new markets and opportunities if its agro-tourism stakeholders farmers, tourists, service providers, researchers,

and legislators are highly engaged and collaborative. Gujarat, for instance, intends to establish a Center of Excellence for agro-culture Tourism, educate and train farmers, and create policies and guidelines for agro-tourism (Government of India Ministry of Tourism, 2021).

### **THE GOVERNMENT SCHEMES RELATED TO AGRO-TOURISM IN INDIA:**

- **Swadesh Darshan Scheme:** The creation of tourism thematic circuits is the main goal of this project. Its goal is to develop agro-tourism destinations as well as other tourist-friendly infrastructure in rural areas. Promoting environmentally friendly travel while highlighting regional heritage and culture is the aim (Ministry of Tourism).
- **PRASHAD Scheme:** Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive is referred to as PRASHAD. Although it is mainly concentrated on pilgrimage sites, by enhancing general infrastructure and connectivity, it also helps agro-tourism (Ministry of Tourism).
- **Capacity Building for Service Providers (CBSP) Scheme:** The skills of service providers including those in agro-tourism are improved by this program. It offers workshops, capacity-building initiatives, and training to enhance visitor experiences and service quality (Ministry of Tourism).
- **Adopt a Heritage- Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan:** This initiative encourages public and private organizations to adopt heritage sites, though not just for agro-tourism. By protecting cultural and natural resources, it can help rural communities indirectly (Ministry of Tourism).
- **Loan Guarantee Scheme for Covid Affected Tourism Service Sector (LGSCATSS):** This program, while not specifically focused on agro-tourism, aids in the tourism industry's recovery from the pandemic. It offers loan guarantees to providers of tourism services, including those situated in remote areas (Ministry of Tourism).
- **Central Financial Assistance to Institutes:** Financial support is provided to agro-tourism-related institutions to foster skill development and capacity building (Ministry of Tourism).
- **Market Research Professional Services Scheme:** This program provides data and insights into the tourism industry, which helps agrotourism inadvertently (Ministry of Tourism).

### **GOVERNMENT POLICY SUPPORT ON AGRO-TOURISM**

- **India's National Strategy & Roadmap for Rural Tourism:** India's Ministry of Tourism has developed a thorough plan to boost rural travel. This program is in line with Aatmanirbhar Bharat's mission (Government of India Ministry of Tourism, 2021). The strategy acknowledges that there are many different aspects of rural tourism, such as adventure, nature exploration, cultural experiences, and agro-cultural tourism (Government of India Ministry of Tourism, 2021). To strengthen rural communities' economic standing and empower them, it places a strong emphasis on sustainable and ethical tourism practices (Government of India Ministry of Tourism, 2021).
- **State-Level Evaluation and Ordering:** States are able to evaluate and rank the potential for rural tourism. This procedure is a tool for creating policies and increasing capacity. It is possible to create model policies tailored to rural tourism by taking inspiration from international and national best practices (Government of India Ministry of Tourism, 2021). Partnerships between the public, business, and community are essential to putting effective policies into action (Government of India Ministry of Tourism, 2021).
- **Digital Technologies:** Digital technologies play a crucial role in advancing rural tourism. These technologies improve visibility, make reservations easier, and give travelers information (Government of India Ministry of Tourism, 2021). By utilizing digital channels, travelers can connect with rural locations and have unforgettable experiences.
- **Initiatives at the State Level:** State governments ought to set up committees to develop agro-tourism regulations. These rules might address things like safety precautions, forbidden substances, and client welfare (The Hindu business line, 2022). Providing distinct licenses for agro-tourism can qualify companies for tax breaks and loans (The Hindu business line, 2022).
- **Global viewpoints:** The policies and incentives for agro-tourism vary amongst nations. These consist of financial, legal, political, and advertising tools (Grillini G, 2022). For example, Indonesia creates agro-tourism commissions, certifies agro-tourism guides, and controls cross-sectoral cooperation (Roslina Roslina, 2022).
- **Monetary support:** The Indian Ministry of agro-culture, Food, and Fisheries indirectly funds agro-tourism through programs such as financing for small farmers, subsidies for horticultural cultivation, and financing for food processing (Taware). Collaboration with other ministries, such as rural development and tourism, further strengthens the ecosystem (Taware).

## THE FUTURE OF AGRO-TOURISM IN INDIA

- **Sustainable Rural Development:** Because it creates jobs, particularly for locals and farmers, agro-tourism can play a major role in rural development. Agro-tourism can keep people in rural areas and discourage migration to cities as urbanization continues.
- **Increasing the Variety of Income Sources:** Crop failures, market volatility, and climate change all pose risks to farmers. One more source of income is agro-tourism. In addition to traditional agro-culture, farmers can make additional revenue by providing guided tours, workshops, and farm stays.
- **Learning Opportunities:** Agro-tourism raises public awareness of organic farming, sustainable farming methods, and biodiversity preservation. Agro-culture, animal husbandry, and rural life can be taught directly to families, schools, and colleges.
- **Preservation of Heritage and Cultural Exchange:** Travelers can experience regional cuisine, customs, and traditions through agro-tourism. It guarantees the survival of indigenous knowledge, crafts, and artistic expressions by preserving them.
- **Policy Framework and Government Support:** The Indian government has started initiatives to promote agro-tourism because it understands its significance. Policies that encourage farmers to engage in agro-tourism require more work.
- **Difficulties to Handle:** It is essential to develop the infrastructure (roads, sewage, and electricity) in rural areas. To avoid overexploitation, tourism and ecological conservation must be balanced.

## CONCLUSION

According to the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation's Second Advance Estimates of National Income, 2022–2023 (MoSPI) report, India's agriculture industry is a crucial one, accounting for 18.3% of the nation's GDP (Kalyan Mandi, 2019). Agro-tourism and rural tourism are essential for creating jobs, reducing poverty, and promoting sustainable human development in rural areas (Kalyan Mandi, 2019) (Vikramaditya, 2023). Agro-tourism is a type of rural tourism that promotes the social and economic well-being of the surrounding communities by revealing the rural life, culture, art, and heritage in rural areas (Kalyan Mandi, 2019). Farmers can use it as a way to increase their revenue and diversify (Vikramaditya, 2023). In India, agro-tourism is a crucial field of study because it can boost eco-friendly travel, protect regional culture, and boost rural economies (Jagdish, Agri Farming, 2021). The future of agro-tourism in India rests on cooperation between farmers, decision-makers, and travelers. It can improve rural livelihoods, protect cultural heritage, and provide tourists with unique experiences if it is managed sustainably.

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