
16. Agri-Tourism and Farm to Table Movements

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Abstract:

India is the country having large number of villages where we can see real India. In our country most of the people were dependent on agriculture and contributes to countries GDP. There is a need to develop farmers in our country for the development of Country. For improving income of farmers recently concepts like Agro-Tourism and Farm to Table Movement emerged. These concepts helped in establishing direct linkage of farmers with suppliers directly reducing middleman and increasing the farmers share in consumers rupee. Agro-Tourism can be defined as an act to visit agricultural farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for enjoyment, education or active participation. (Lobo,n.d.). It is an alternative way of using agricultural resources in different way. The states like Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Nagaland and Haryana have Agro-Tourism. Shri Pandurang Taware, the father of Agro-Tourism in India founded Agro-Tourism Development Corporation for elevating farmer's income and establishes market linkage to their products and creates opportunities. Maharashtra is the state having first Agro-Tourism Policy. In India, agro-tourism industry showed the growth rate of 19.9% between 2023 and 2028. Farm to Table Movement is the movement of procuring produce from producers and serving local foods to restaurants & cafeteria. It is also known as Farm to Fork Movement. Initially this movement was considered as trend later it became important for maintenance of agricultural sustainability. It also helps in protection of environment with clean water and fertile land. By maintaining strong linkages between producers, restaurants and chefs they promote best practices and supply healthy food. Farm to table movement also helps in improving our immune system, reducing cancer, asthma, diabetes and heart diseases. Healthy fresh food contains fibers, antioxidants and more nutrients which are beneficial to body. False authenticity, high food cost, lack of regulatory certification, seasonal challenges and consumer misconception was the major challenges to Farm and Table Movement.

Keywords:

Agro-Tourism, Farm to Table Movement, Farm to fork, Restaurants, Tourism

16.1 Introduction:

India is the country having large number of villages where we can see real India. In our country most of the people were dependent on agriculture and contributes to countries GDP. There is a need to develop farmers in our country for the development of Country. So rural tourism has large potential in developing farmer's income and employment creation to rural youth and women in our country. Rural Tourism is an activity which mainly focuses on rural art, culture, heritage and rural life in non- urban areas.

In rural tourism visitors get the chance to explore wide variety of products and services linked to nature. Major rural tourism activities concentrate on areas having less population, landscape and dominated agriculture or forestry land. There are mainly five forms of rural tourism.

- Natural Tourism- preference is given to recreation.
- Cultural Tourism- It mainly deals with archaeology, culture and history of the area.
- Eco-Tourism- It represents mainly natural resources along with maintaining values and local population welfare.
- Village Tourism- Visitors live and enjoy the life of peasants.
- Agro-Tourism- Visitors visit and participate in agricultural operations without destroying ecosystems.

Tourism is the developing industry in recent times. In terms of Travel and tour commitment, India stood on 11th position out of 184 countries. Most of the people in the recent times are interested to escape from noise cities and spend their quality time in rural areas by participating in rural activities. In late 20th century the concept of Agro-Tourism emerged. Agro-Tourism can be defined as an act to visit agricultural farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for enjoyment, education or active participation. (Lobo,n.d.). It is an alternative way of using agricultural resources in different way.

It helps farmer in getting income in different ways. It is an alternative enterprise that links with value added or non -traditional agricultural products and markets. (Maetzold). Agriculture and Tourism can be merged to form Agro-Tourism. The states like Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Nagaland and Haryana have Agro-Tourism. Dubai Agri Hub is the largest agrotourism site in world.

A. Agro-Tourism Development Corporation:

Shri Pandurang Taware, the father of Agro-Tourism in India founded Agro-Tourism Development Corporation for elevating farmer's income and establishes market linkage to their products and creates opportunities. In 2008, Tourism Department of Government of India gave National Tourism Award to Agro-Tourism Development Corporation. Maharashtra is the state having first Agro-Tourism Policy. In India, agro-tourism industry showed the growth rate of 19.9% between 2023 and 2028. Through Agro-Tourism, farmers can get economic benefit during non-season of crops and serves as additional income to farmer. Due to the rush of visitors to this area there will be boost to that area in economic terms.

Objectives of Agro-Tourism Development Corporation

- Supports local arts and music.
- Creates awareness regarding local farm products.
- For growth of rural economies, boosts agro-tourism through training and projects.
- Helps in Raising farmers income, market expansion, Job creation and creates work on farm.

B. Types of Agro-Tourism:

- Direct market Agro-Tourism – In this type farmers sell local products and services directly from farm to customer without any middlemen in between them. This benefits farmers by receiving larger share in consumer's rupee. Farmers offers variety of products to visitors like fruits, vegetables etc.
- Experience and Education Agro-Tourism – Urban people experience rural life by involving in fruit picking, wine tasting and living directly in farm.
- Event and Recreation Agro-Tourism – The farms host harvest festivals, country weddings and recreational facilities like horse riding, archery, camping and providing facilities like sale of farm products to visitors.
- Harvest Agro-Tourism- In a country like India where there is mix of culture with crop cycle and nature. There will be enthusiasm among people in the month of January in certain states like Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu as crops reaches farmer's home. At this time all people pray and express their gratitude to Almighty for his blessings.

C. Agro-Tourism activities:

- Farm based activities- Fruit picking, growing your own food, farm tours, tasting wine etc.
- Cuisine and Accommodation- Special dining experiences, special arrangements like serving organic foods in the farm & picnic areas.
- Entertainment and Educational activities – Facilities like boating, festivals, fairs, museums etc.
- Selling of farm products - Direct and Indirect sale of products.
- Supplementary products and activities- Village handicrafts sale and wildlife photography.

D. Requirements to start Agro-Tourism farm:

For starting a Agro-Tourism farm there is no need for large infrastructure. We can start a Agro-Tourism farm with very minimalistic infrastructure. A farm with rich natural resources in easily locatable area and Good Accommodation facility with clean water, sanitation, kitchen staff preparing local dishes. These farms should depict the traditional and indigenous practices by growing local crops, rearing local breeds, cultivating local medicinal crops. These farms should be free from cities noise and pollution and provide recreation facilities like local songs and dance.

Before starting any Agro-tourism farm farmer must check whether their farm could attract visitors with good road connectivity, network services and comforts to visitor like health facilities, restaurants etc. After checking their farm attractiveness, they should check for their family member's motivation and characteristics to communicate with visitors along with their ability to provide recreation facilities to their visitors. They try to provide unique experience to visitors by the elements like horse riding, jogging, bicycling and engaging visitors in agriculture activities like gardening, fruit picking, animal rearing, preparation of local foods etc.

E. Reasons for considering Agro-Tourism in the Present scenario:

- Any guest can visit Agro-Tourism spots at low cost than any other tourist place and create lot of unique experiences.
- Urban population having their roots in rural areas always craves for rural foods, clothing, culture and tradition. This purpose can be served by Agro-Tourism which centers on farmer communities.
- In present days all people want peace and tranquility after gaining cash from their hard work.
- Hotels and Resorts in Urban areas were overloaded and congested which hampers the peace and calmness of other visitors.
- In Urban areas people live far from natural environment. With Agro-Tourism, living in rural farms provides unique experience to them.
- Agro-Tourism provides education to urban people about rural life and Agro-Tourism.
- Raised awareness of people regarding development hampering normal life and calmness of life.
- Creation of recreation facilities like local songs, dance, horse riding etc entertains entire family of all ages.

16.2 SWOT Analysis of Agro-Tourism:

- Strengths**-Involves different ways of life, Services of high quality, peace and security activities.
- Weakness** - Lack of training, additional supply, high cost and lack of proper legislation.
- Opportunities** - Preserves local customs and culture, new employment opportunities and alternate market for local products.
- Threats**- Less political awareness, No proper planning and concrete goals and massiveness risk.

Business Opportunities Created by Agro-Tourism.

A. Importance of Agro-Tourism in India:

- Improving farmer's income by visitors visit to farms.
- Creates worldwide market linkage by attracting visitors in huge number.
- Sale of farm products throughout the year.
- Generates Employment to women and local farmers.
- Boosting young minds to include in agriculture and allied sectors.
- More support to Tourism department, Government of India.

B. Agro-Tourism in different Countries:

a. United Arab Emirates:

Launch of United Arab Emirates Agro-Tourism Programme allowed tourists to visit rural farms and experience agricultural practices leading to increased demand to local produce.

A pioneer plan in 2023, tried to change agricultural industry creating opportunity to farmers improve their income in different ways.

b. United States:

In California, under small Farm Centre of University of California various Agro-Tourism enterprises developed including fairs and festivals. All the information regarding existing Agro-Tourism places and entrepreneurs in the state is provided by University of California Small farm Centre under California Agro-Tourism database.

c. United Kingdom:

Agro-Tourism has been developed as an alternative income to farmers in Northwest England since 2011.

d. India:

In a country like India where agriculture is main occupation to majority of people there is a need to develop alternative sources of income to farmers. In India major Agro-Tourism centers are present in states like Maharashtra and Kerala.

e. Armenia:

In Armenia, Agro-Tourism played a major role in the development of rural areas. The main activities taking place in Armenia were winemaking, carpet weaving and organizing fairs and festivals like Dolma, Barbeque and Gota festivals.

f. Pakistan:

In a natural resource rich country like Pakistan there will be large opportunity to develop Agro-Tourism in that country. Visitors can visit farmer's farm and participate in local agricultural activities.

g. Italy:

In Italy Agro-Tourism was regularized under state law from 1985 and amended in 2006. From 2013 onwards country classified farms based on their accommodation under sector trademark Agriturismo Italia.

C. Advantages of Agro-Tourism:

- Creates extra money to farmer.
- Generates Employment
- Preserves local customs and culture.
- Helps in regional growth.
- Brings more business to travel agencies.

- Promotes environmentally friendly travel.
- Preserves wildlife and biodiversity.

16.3 Farm to Table Movement:

It is the movement of procuring produce from producers and serving local foods to restaurants & cafeterias. It is also known as Farm to Fork Movement. Farm to Table is a system in which production, processing, distribution and consumption are integrated to improve health of a particular place. The farm to table movement gained importance after change started in people's mind about food freshness, safety etc. Many issues in 21st century such as climate change, food safety, security and exploitation of farm and farm workers can be addressed with this movement. Promotion of local foods is done in Farm to table movement. We can see Farm to Table movement as a shift from commercialization to sustainable way of living. Many restaurants in America started following this movement. Many restaurants which were interested to provide best dining experience to their customers with best ingredients started this movement. The basic motivation behind this movement to restaurant is the quality and freshness of food. Farmers send produce within hours to restaurant after harvesting. In some cases, farmers may be committed to such an extent that they produce crops that are specially requested by restaurants or chefs.

A. Importance of Farm to Table Movement:

Through this movement the gap for bulk and processed products were closed. This movement helps in improving reputation of restaurant by providing fresh products in place of fast foods. Farm to table movement drastically reduce the food wastage cost. This movement also reduces greenhouse gas emissions by reducing inputs like fertilizers and pesticides. It also helps in reducing water usage and genetic modification of crops. Through this movement there will be chance for farmer to get maximum share in consumer's rupee as there is no middleman between them. Difference in nutrition is possible by linking local farmers with local restaurants. Initially this movement was considered as trend later it became important for maintenance of agricultural sustainability. It also helps in protection of environment with clean water and fertile land. By maintaining strong linkages between producers, restaurants and chefs they promote best practices and supply healthy food.

B. History of Farm to Table Movement:

While talking about Farm to Table Movement we must talk about history of processed foods. From 1940 onwards, people started moving away from their farms and started losing their connection with their food source. Later the rise of innovations in food processing industries and storage facilities led to increased production of processed or packaged products. This pattern continued till 1970. From 1971 onwards major changes started like Alice Waters, a champion in local & sustainable agriculture opened legendary chez panisse, Certified organic farmers formed in California, non -profit organic grown formed in Oregon, Slow food organization in Italy till 1986. In 1990 s people started demanding for organic, local and fresh foods which improved the markets of farmers. From 2000 onwards schools started lunch programmes with local foods. Non-GMO label and Organizations were formed in 2007 due to the demand from people to get rid of GMOs from our food.

Later in 2010, the terms like plant based and plant centric foods entered into restaurants. Alice Waters, Chez Panisse, Jerry Traunfeld were pioneers in Farm to Table Movements.

16.3.1 Principles of Farm to Table Movements:

a. Proximity:

The main principle behind this Farm to Table Movement is proximity which means all the stakeholders of this movement should live close to each other reducing the transportation cost and effect of transportation on environmental health.

b. Self-reliance:

Farm to Table Movement also helps communities to become self- reliant reducing the interference of outside resources and transportation.

c. Sustainability:

Sustainability is meeting the needs of present generation without affecting the future generations. With the help of Farm to Table movement we can achieve sustainability.

d. Food Security:

Farm to Table Movement also improves the food security by maintaining proper supply chain looking at large communities and focusing on low-income people.

A. Farm to Table Restaurants:

In Farm to Table Restaurant, they receive ingredients to their restaurant from local farmers either small or large farmers. Suppliers may be local vegetable farmers, dairy farmers, fisherman or local meat suppliers. Chefs design their own signature special dishes by maintaining supply network with farmers. Chefs enjoy freshness of ingredients and relationship with farmers while guests enjoy fresh food.

16.3.2 Main Challenges to Farm to Table Movement:

a. False Authenticity:

Many restaurants were falsely accusing that their restaurants serving farm to table.

b. Lack of Regulatory Certification:

At present there is no proper certification agency to regulate the standards of farm to table restaurants which was falsely accusing.

c. Seasonal Challenges:

As most of the Agricultural products are seasonal there is need for restaurants to change their menu according to their seasonal produce.

d. High Food Cost:

High production costs in farm by small farmer may affect the prices in restaurant.

e. Consumer misconceptions:

Many customers think that this movement starts with small operation, but this part also includes large growers and shippers.

Benefit of Farm to Table Movement to Health:

Many processed foods contain chemicals loaded in it which cannot be digested in our body. So more fresh foods we consume more will be the benefit to our body. Farm to table movement also helps in improving our immune system, reducing cancer, asthma, diabetes and heart diseases. Healthy fresh food contains fibers, antioxidants and more nutrients which are beneficial to body.

16.4 Conclusion:

In 21st century, due to busy and noisy urban life people are thriving to go back to their roots and enjoy natural and village life. Agro-Tourism and Farm to Table Movements are helping people to enjoy natural life by involving them in farm operations and serving fresh food. Now a days cost of production was high due to high seed, fertilizers, pesticides and labor cost there is need for farmers to improve their income in alternative ways for maintenance of their farm operations. which can be done by Agro-tourism and Farm to Table movements.

By this movements income of farmer can be improved by removing middleman between him and consumer. Similarly, clients can also enjoy nature by living close to it and enjoying fresh food from farms relieving from their busy and noisy urban life. There is need for government to regularize standards for farm to table movement and provide financial aid to organizations involved in Agro-Tourism for its promotion. As per Mahatma Gandhi Villages are backbone to a country, so there is a need for development of rural life which is possible through this movements.

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