

Rural Tourism Development: Constraints and Possibilities
with a special reference to Agri Tourism
A Case Study on Agri Tourism Destination –
Malegoan Village, Taluka Baramati, District Pune, Maharashtra

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Introduction

Global economic restructuring has created a climate in which many local economies have to adjust, in order to maintain or enhance their socio-economic viability. As Butler et al. (1998) note economic and social forces operating at the global level are determining both the nature and form of the rural landscape and how we value and use it. These changes, coupled with new ideas and approaches to leisure and recreation time are encouraging tourism development in rural areas at an ever increasing pace (Williams 1998: Reid et al. 2000).

Rural tourism development in areas not traditionally considered tourism destinations per se occurs incrementally; either as a result of entrepreneurs developing businesses that attract visitors or as a result of visitors discovering the area and thereby generating a demand for tourism related activities to which local entrepreneurs respond. The development of tourism in a rural area is not simply a matter of matching tourist demands with local product supply but a matter of evaluating local suitability and acceptability.

The Indian Agriculture and Tourism Industry Scenario

India is known as “Land of villages”. More than 77 crore farmers live in 5.5 lakhs of village (2001). Agriculture contributed about 18.5% of the national income (2006-07) as compared to a high 50% in 1950. 85% of population of India still depends on Agriculture hence Agriculture is not mere business, but is still the “True Culture of India”.

Indian Agriculture Scenario

Today the Indian Agriculture has to face tremendous competition because of the driven global trends. To add to this the agriculture crop growth is also weakened due to the uncertain climatic conditions. There is no minimum support price guarantee also. These changes have altered the form and practices of farming operation. Farmers are looking beyond traditional farming to generate income via various forms of direct on farm marketing and farm based non-agriculture business.

Indian Tourism Industry

The Indian Tourism sector contributes 5.3 percent of India’s GDP 2006-07. The tourism industry shows that India had 367 million domestic tourists and 3.92 million international tourists. The Forex earnings from the tourism industry were 25,000 crores. The tourism industry created 38.8 million direct and indirect jobs. The tourism trend shows as per the 10th five year plan Indian government is willing to spend over Rs.2900 crores in the next five years to boost the growth in this sector. It is also seen that domestic tourism has displayed greater buoyancy and resilience. The centre has committed to contribute 765 crores for the state tourism development.

Domestic Tourism Growth

India has achieved great prosperity in tourism as a product. India being the home to many leading religions of the world has many important pilgrim sites of different religions scattered throughout the country. Besides the average Indian is also an avid sightseer. As per the study report of FICCI A.F. Ferguson and Co. 2004, every additional Rs.10 lakhs invested can create 47.5 direct jobs and each direct job can create 11 indirect jobs. It also stated that every 30 million additional tourist translate into Rs.4300 crores in revenue. It also stated that farm tourism if developed along unique indigenous lines could have a multiplier effect and high revenue capital ratio.

Within last 15 years, domestic tourism has grown by more than 304 million from 63 million in 1990 to 367 million in 2005 registering a growth of 20% p.a. (Source: Study conducted by ATDC).

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The World Travel and Tourism Council has rated India as one of the five fastest growing tourism economies in the world.

Tourism potential in Maharashtra

Maharashtra is the third largest state of India, both in area and population. It is located on the West Coast of India with a 720 km long coastline along the lush green Konkan region of Maharashtra, with its dense forests is home to several wild life sanctuaries and nature parks. Maharashtra abounds in numerous tourist attractions ranging from ancient cave, temples, unspoiled beaches, ancient forts and monuments, forest and wild life unique hill stations, pilgrimage centres, a rich tradition of festivals, art and culture. The tourism market in Maharashtra is estimated to be around 250 million domestic tourists in 2005 (Source: ATDC – Pune).

Objectives of the study

With the growing importance of Agri-tourism and the thrust given by the government to promote tourism this paper:

- 1) examines the key issues involved in the development of Agri-tourism in India
- 2) the challenges faced by Agri- tourism industry
- 3) suggest recommendations for the success of this industry

The Agri- tourism industry being a very vast subject and also considering the several diversities of the Indian sub-continent, it was physically not possible to study the Agri-tourism market for the whole country. Consequently, a study was conducted in Malegaon, Baramati district of Maharashtra.

Research Methodology

The research methodology involved both the desk research and the field research which was widely used to understand the concept of Agri tourism and the various aspects that are involved in the successful development of Agri tourism.

For the field research, a questionnaire was used comprising of both open-ended questions as well as close-ended questions. The sample size used for the study was 100. The sample was selected in a random manner and the respondents were personally interviewed by the authors. Additionally discussions were also held with the officials of the district and other taluka levels to understand the government policies etc. The subject being vast, we have limited the study to the project at Malegaon, Baramati, Maharashtra.

Defining Rural Tourism

The definition of rural tourism has been the subject of many debates in the literature without arriving at any firm consensus (Pearce 1989; Bramwell 1994; Seaton et al. 1994). First of all, rural areas where rural tourism occurs are difficult to define since criteria used by different nations vary enormously; secondly, not all tourism which takes place in rural areas is strictly “rural” – it can be urban in form, and merely be located in a rural area; thirdly, different forms of rural tourism have developed in different regions and hence it is hard to find characteristics that are common to all of the countries; fourthly rural areas are in a complex process of change due to the impact of global markets, communications and telecommunications that have changed market conditions and orientations for traditional products. Besides, though some rural areas have experienced depopulation there are many of them that are experiencing an inflow of people to retire or to develop new non-traditional businesses.

- Rural tourism and agri-tourism (each of these categories is a derivative of the subsequent one, like concentric circles).
- Tourism is termed rural when the rural culture is a key component of the product on offer. Depending on the primary activity component of this product, the terms used are agri-tourism, green tourism, gastronomic, equestrian, nautical, hunting, adventure, historical/ cultural tourism and so on.

Tourism activities revolving around large holiday home developments, big hotels, golf courses are difficult to integrate into the concept of rural tourism. The distinguishing feature of tourism products in rural tourism is the wish to give visitors personalized contact, a taste of the physical and human environment of the villages and, as far as possible, allows them to participate in the activities, traditions and lifestyles of local people. There is also a strong cultural and educational element in this form of leisure tourism.

Hence a rural tourist destination could be defined as a wider area dominated by the natural and/or farmed/forested environments where specific natural, economic and socio-cultural features, such as tradition, local cooperation, trust and reciprocity are harmoniously embedded and as such create a unique tourist product that is predominantly small scaled, nature friendly, “ethno-cultured”, in other words ‘sustainable’.

Since tourism is predominantly a consumer activity, most of the studies are demand driven, concentrated on the visitors and their needs and motivation. Hence the motives attracting people to the villages are seen as a reflection of a growing interest in the outdoors, and a number of other general trends of tourist motivation. The attractiveness of rural areas for tourism and recreation can first be associated with the image of rurality. Here rurality is closely related to the traditional and romantic idea of the “good old days” pure and simple lifestyle, intact nature and perfect integration of man in his natural environment. Thus nostalgia of the origins, the need for recuperation of the lost link with nature and the basics of life in an increasingly complex, highly organized, anonymous, congested, stressful urban and inhumane surrounding constitutes the principal attraction of rural area (Kastenholz, Davis, Paul 1999).

The importance of rural tourism as a part of the overall tourism market depends on each country’s recreation/ tourism resources, infrastructure image, market access and the presence of other types of tourism products. Even if rural tourism may be minor in relation to the overall tourism market of many countries its importance to the development of specific rural areas may be critical. Thus, the multiplier effect is often more impacting in rural areas where the entire rural lifestyle is looked for a main attraction.

Rural tourism includes: -

1. Agri – Tourism: Tourism on the farms enables farmers to diversify their activities while enhancing the value of their products and property. Farm tourism also helps to reconcile farming interests and environmental protection through integrated land management in which farmers continue to play a key role. Tourists who choose farm accommodation rather than other kinds of accommodation facilities look for genuine rural atmosphere where they can share intimacy of the household they live in, learn traditional crafts and skills with their hosts, make friends which is a quality, modern times have almost forgotten and above all enjoy home made food and drinks. Some specific food labels can help consumers establish a local produce and can be used as a selling point to tourist who want to taste home grown quality food and drink.
2. Heritage and cultural Tourism in rural areas comes in a wide range of forms most of which are unique to an individual local and a valuable component of the rural tourism product. Heritage and cultural tourism includes temples, rural buildings but may be extended to local features of interest including war remnants, monuments to famous literary, artistic or scientific people, historic remains, archeological sites, traditional parkland etc.
3. Eco Tourism: Many tourists visit rural areas for the purpose of bird and animal watching and learning about local flora and fauna.

Rural tourist destination as a product is definitely very fragile in ecological, social and cultural sense. Its development requires very specific approach that could help it remain sustainable in the long term.

Rural Tourist Destination – A Product

There are some critical factors responsible in the evaluation and development of rural tourism as a product. Some of these are –

- Changes in the preferences and needs of visitors.
- Destination of the natural and manmade environment.
- Change or disappearance of those attractions, which brought tourists to the area.
- Identification of potential consumer.
- Understanding the rural tourists buying behaviour.

To be competitive rural tourism destination must possess basic tourist requirements

- Such as hygienic accommodation and catering.
- It should be connected with the farm accommodation.

Defining Agri Tourism

Agri Tourism is defined as travel, which combines agricultural or rural settings with products of agricultural operations all within a tourism experience. The product can be “experience itself”. Agri-tourism can be defined as “A range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural

people to attract tourist to their area in order to generate extra income for their businesses”. (Gannon, 1988 in Klaze, 1994).

Status of Agri-Tourism Internationally with specific focus on Europe

Most of the European countries pay lots of attention to rural tourism. The growth of rural tourism is difficult to quantify because few countries collect statistics in a way, which separates purely rural from other forms of tourism. The concept of Agri-Tourism developed in 80's in Europe, the participating farms have doubled in countries like Italy, the United Kingdom, and France. The number of agri-tourism accommodation units exceeds 600.00. In the middle of the 90s, 12 European countries (Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Ireland, Great Britain, Italy, Austria, France and Germany had more than 100.00 farm enterprises involve with different tourism activities. It is obvious that most of the European countries have positive attitude towards rural tourism development because of the advantages this strategy has on rural areas and their overall development. (Refer Annexure I).

Agritourism in India: Innovative Income generating activity for Enterprising Farmers

Agriculture is backbone of Indian economy. This sector's contribution towards GDP is decreasing and farmers are finding it difficult to carry the agricultural activities without an additional income. Whereas tourism is termed as an instrument for employment generation, poverty alleviation and development, Agri-Tourism brings in together the declining and booming sector.

Advantages of Agri-Tourism:

1. It brings major primary sector Agriculture closer to major service sector tourism expected to create win-win situation for both the sectors.
2. Tourism sector has the potential to enlarge.
3. Agriculture sector has the capacity to absorb expansion in Tourism sector.

Scope of Agri-Tourism:

1. An inexpensive gateway: The cost of food, accommodation, recreation and travel and tourism is low, widening the scope of tourism.
2. Curiosity for the urban about farming industry and life style:
Agri-tourism, which involves villages and agriculture, has the capacity to satisfy the curiosity of the urban segment by providing scope for re-discovering the rural life, which is rich in diversity.
3. Strong family oriented recreational activities: through rural games, festivals, food, dress.
4. Finding solace with nature friendly life style: Peace and tranquility are in-built in Agri-tourism.
5. Nostalgia for their roots on the farm: For tourists it is like returning back to their roots.
6. Educational value of Agri-Tourism spreading knowledge about Agriculture science where urban students are moving with the pace of technology.

Basic Principles of Agri-Tourism

1. Have something for visitors to see: Animals, birds, farms, culture of the village, dress and festivals.
2. Have something for visitors to do: Participating in agricultural operations, riding camel, buffalo, cooking and participating in the rural games i.e. gillidanda, gotti (marble etc.).
3. Have something for visitors to buy: Rural crafts, dress materials, farm gate fresh processed food are few items.

Three important factors, which contribute to the success of Agri-Tourism as service:

Detailed discussions with various knowledgeable persons indicated the following three factors:

1. Farmer: Majority cases farmer is less educated, less exposed and innocent for him outsider as guest is (like god) and is treated wholeheartedly without any commercial motive. He entertains the guest while entertaining himself in the process he fills all the service gaps . This makes him a natural businessman.
2. Village: Village being located far from the city lacks urban facilities but is rich in natural resources. The investment is the natural resources itself.
3. Agriculture field: Each field is unique which adds to the attraction of the urban population. This is the incentive wealth of the rural people.

The discussions also revealed that for the success of any agri-tourism venture, the following factors play a major role:

Connectivity
Attractions
Accommodation
Outdoor recreational activities
Entertainment programs
Meals for tourists
Safety and security aspects
Medical facilities
Risk and liability in case of accidents

Agri-Tourism Destination:

Malegaon Village, Taluka Baramati, District Pune, Maharashtra, India



Two phases can distinctly be identified:

Phase I: Formation of the Agricultural Development Trust, Malegaon, Taluka Baramati and formation of the Agricultural Tourism Development Corporation.

Phase II: The Agri Tourism Destination Malegaon village; Taluka Baramati; Dist. Pune, Maharashtra, India. (Pilot Project)

Phase I

- 1) Formation of the Agricultural Development Trust, Malegaon Taluka Baramati.
- 2) Formation of the Agricultural Tourism Development Corporation

Formation of the Agricultural Development Trust, Malegaon Tal. Baramati

Baramati today is considered as the hub of Co-operative Sugar factories and a place, which receives a strong political back up. But that is not all; 40 years back Baramati tehsil was a drought prone area.

Facts 40 years back

- Only 22 villages in the tehsil received water from Neera river left bank canal, and few more villages were fed water from Karha River which presents a picture of prosperity and happiness.
- In glaring contrast to this, there were 43 villages which were at the mercy of fate and famine with neither any hope of river nor any water resource around.

Year 1967:

- Group of farmers came together to do some concrete rural development work in the Baramati tehsil.
- Their development work was construction of percolation tanks, providing loans for digging wells, blasting units, supply of seeds and fertilizers of improved variety and also agricultural equipments.
- Baramati receives on an average, just 16 – 18” of rainfall for the whole year. Further the entire water is lost due to poor storage/ reservoir facilities.
- Farmers were restless, they started exploring the ways and solutions and thus the idea of “percolation tanks” came up.
- Drought sufferers came forward to share the dream of self-sufficiency.

Year 1968

Tandulwadi village: 1st percolation tanks were constructed providing irrigation to thousand areas of agricultural land. 250 percolation tanks were executive and computed.

To give an impetus to the work accomplish by these group of former, the trust was formed on June 22, 1971 (Agriculture Development Trust).

The objective of the Agriculture Development Trust was :-

- To popularize and spread the actual demonstration and cultivation of new varieties of crops.
- To test and spread the use of improved seed varieties.
- To improve methods of crop cultivation.
- To develop vocations supplementary to Agriculture.
- To undertake various projects of water supply.
- To train the farmers for the vocational projects.
- To undertake afforestation in barren and fallow land.
- To spread the use of cross bred cows.
- To educate and provide facilities to poor, promising and deserving women for earning their livelihood.
- Agricultural research laboratory to guide farmers to built library providing books to update farmers knowledge.
- To organize seminars, workshop related to agricultural activities.

Year 1970: The year 1970 was a landmark for Malegaon, Baramati it came with the Model Demonstration Farm.

The trust did not rest on its laurels, to prove that an uncultivable rocky land of 110 across was converted into a fertile track of cultivable land on which grows various crops, fruits, fodder for cattle. This was initiated by Dr. Appasaheb Pawar and is now followed by Mr. Rajendra Pawar who is the present President of the trust.

Today the Model Demonstration farm encloses:

- Horticulture Unit.
- Dairy Division.
- Sericulture unit.
- Bee Hive Unit.
- Alternative Energy Unit.
- Krishi Vigyan Kendra.
- Analytical Laboratory – Provides farmers about weather, forecast, velocity of wind, and maximum and minimum temperature and undertakes analysis of soil, water, fertilizers animal.

As years passed by Agriculture as a business was becoming more and more expensive that many farmers were not able to afford it. To add to this there was gradual loss of fertility of land giving the farmers to brainstorm to meet the expense by retaining the farm and opening a supplementary business unit.

Formation of Agri-Tourism Development Corporation.

ATDC’s mission is “To promote agriculture tourism to achieve income, employment and economic stability in rural communities in India. To help boosting a range of activities, services and amenities

provided by farmers and rural people to attract urban tourists to their area. Thus providing opportunity to urban people to get back to the rural roots”.

ATDC's Role in Agri-Tourism:

- Prepare Agri Tourism project report and business plan for each applicant agriculture farm.
- Help to facilitate the financial support from Nationalize banks, institutes and government agencies to built agri and rural tourism facilities and infrastructure like accommodation, sanitation, approach road etc.
- Conduct Agri Tourism Business Training Program.
- Conduct Seminars and conferences on agri-tourism business.
- Provide sales and marketing support.
- Co-ordinate tours from urban areas to the farms.

The trust decided to experiment Agri-Tourism concept on a pilot scale on its own 110 acres model farm, Malegaon, Baramati.

Prior to setting up the successful Pilot Agri and Rural Tourism Project in Maharashtra, Malegaon, Baramati Taluka, Dist. Pune in October, 2005 a market survey was conducted by ATDC with sample size of 2,440.

The analysis of the survey was:

- 35% do not have relatives in village.
- 43% never stayed or visited village.
- 57% never visited dairy farm.

This survey promoted to experiment Agri-Tourism in the 110 acre model farm of the agriculture development trust.

Phase-II

The Agri Tourism Destination Malegaon village, Taluka Baramati, Dist. Pune, Maharashtra, India (Pilot Project)

This Agri Tourism destination belongs to “Agricultural Development Trust Malegaon”. The detailed study has helped in bringing to light the following facts about the model project at Malegaon, Baramati.

Connectivity

The Agri Tourism Unit in Malegaon is well connected by Airways; Railways and Roadways.

Nearest International Airport : Pune Airport 102 kms.

Nearest Railhead : Baramati 10 kms.

Roadways : Mumbai – Pune – Hadapsar – Saswad – Jejuri – Morgaon – Karhawagaj Chowk – Malegaon Kurd – Agri Tourism Destination; (Malegaon Sheti Farm) (ADTM) total distance: 95 kms. Driving time is approx: 2 hrs.

The nearest bus stop is just 1 km from the farm and main bus station is just 5 kms at Baramati Town wherein there is regular non-stop bus service to Pune every after 30 min that reaches to pune in just 2 hrs. In case very emergency event the Agri Tourism Development Corporation will organize private transport facility (at extra cost)

Attractions

Agri Tourism activities include farm tours; tractor and bullock cart rides; grapes, mangoes, and other horticulture farms and by-product farms; birds and animal farms; There are lot of things the visitors or guests can enjoy in this agri tourism unit/farm.

Total area under cultivation here is of 110 acres, primarily use for agricultural purposes, out of which 65 acres is used for Horticultural plantations and cultivation, consisting of various seasonal fruits farms. The added attractions here are the poultry farm; dairy farm; goat farm; and most visited point silk processing unit. The visitors here can also visit the gram panchayat village office and school; village fairs and markets, near by Jaggery making unit; Emu bird Farm; Sugar factory; Taluka Milk Collection Centres and some of the oldest religious temples and also Museum.

Accommodation

The over night stay arrangement is at the farm itself, there are 12 rooms and 1 big hall. The occupancy is quadruple sharing every room having 4 single beds. One Room is allotted to each Family. The accommodation facilities are basic but very hygienic neat and clean. Two toilets (one western style) and one bathroom attached to block of every three rooms, this arrangement is purposely kept to experience the joint family atmosphere. The Solar Water heaters at the rooftop are fitted to provide the running hot water for bathing in the morning. There is also the facility of dormitory hall, wherein more than 250 people can easily accommodate.

Outdoor Recreational Activities

The outdoor recreational activities for children and adults during daytime are farm tours and agricultural education programs, how to grow sugarcane, grapes, pomegranate, guava, watermelon, other fruits and what are the food values of each fruits, how to take care of the cattle, nature education programs, domestic animals and emu bird farms visits and education of the different trees, demonstrations such as goat and cow milking, honey making, silk making, jaggery making, rural games that they can play as gotya; bovhra; surparanbhya; vittidandu; Buffalo ride; bullock cart ride; tractor rides; watching domestic animals; clay molding; painting the nature scenery; tree climbing or simply run with the cycle tree.

Entertainment Programs

The Evenings are generally fun filled, star gazing activity and the rural Maharashtra folk dances and folk song programs is organized. Bonfire/campfire during winter seasons, family games, children games, and lots of fun filled programs.

Meals for Tourists

The food served is pure vegetarian Maharashtrian style, for breakfast Poha, Upma, or Shira, for the lunch usually jawar or bajra bhakri, chapattis, rice, varan, pickle, papad, kurdaya, bhaji, thecha, wangeche bharit, jhunka/pitla, any fresh green vegetable sabji, matki/ chawli usual shabji, etc.

Safety & Security Aspects

The Agri Tourism unit at Malegaon is very safe and secure for all the guests and visitors, there is only one main entrance gate, during daytime almost 400 people work in the farm, plus the entire area of 110 acres is barbed wire fenced and over and above there is adequate 24 hours security persons at the main entrance gate and for the entire area.

Medical Facilities

This Agri Tourism unit is just 1 km from the Malegaon village. Apart from the onsite medical doctor there are specialist doctors available 24 hours on call.

Risk And Liability In Case Of Accidents

ATDC has examined the risks associated with some of the activities of agri-tourism. For example: one may decide to ride the bullock cart ride or tractor tailer ride which is not risk free, since there is always a possibility that a guest will fall off the bullock cart or the tractor tailer, however ATDC has established rules and regulations that protects the guests from potential risks.

Sometimes accidents cannot be avoided during agri tourism visits at the farms, However, ATDC makes sure that the operations and the farm activity and the sight seeing tours at the farm and outside the farms to sugar factory, jaggery making unit is safe as possible and they have taken appropriate safety precautions.

Discussions

Based upon a detailed analysis of the case, the following positive outcomes at the Malegaon Village Khurd, Baramati Taluka can be highlighted:

1. Lives of the farmers changed considerably with the agri-tourism destination venture.
2. The farmers today have developed themselves into entrepreneurs.
3. They have learned soft skills to handle customer service and to market their product.

4. The entire agri-tourism venture has raised the self-esteem of the farmers.
5. The agri-tourism venture has a positive effect among the community from a drought prone area where the suicide cases were increasing.
6. Today the Agri-Tourism destination has more than 4,300 tourists from urban cities every year from 2005. Besides the year end of 2006 also saw Korean companies coming to enjoy the destination.
7. Efficient utilization of the existing natural resources.

A careful analysis and observation of the Case Study of Baramati brings to light certain issues and challenges which need to be addressed by any agri-tourism development body. These are:

1. Danger of over exploitation of natural resources.
2. Uncertainty of demand for agri Tourism especially in the light of the fact that other types tourism are becoming popular.
3. Providing and maintaining hygienic conditions in the agri-tourism destination.
4. Danger to Plant life in the form of infectious diseases.
5. Lack of sufficient government support.
6. Training the farmers.
7. Large scale power-cuts.
8. Security aspects.
9. Accessibility and approachability of the area with respect to basic facilities like (medical facilities, transport facilities, availability of water etc.)
10. Marketing Agri-Tourism as a product effectively and consistently.

The study indicated that the critical factors involved in the successful development of the rural tourism industry are:

1. Establishment of a rural environment especially an Indian rural environment. Many of the tourists wanted to establish their roots in India.
2. The setting of the destination should indicate a rural bias including cultures and artifacts.
3. Hygienic accommodation and catering is a must.
4. It should be connected with the farm accommodation.
5. Attitude of the Central and the State Governments especially with respect to the seed money required, subsidies required or even tax exemptions. This aspect is very important as can be seen through the tax exemptions etc given in European countries.

The success or failure of any tourism in the ultimate analysis depends on the involvement of the local community and also the deep routed networking requirements not only at the local levels but also the state levels. This networking is one of the key issues in making rural tourism sustainable in the long run.

The study with special reference to the Agri tourism destinations at Malegoan, Baramati district of Maharashtra indicated that for the Agri tourism to succeed, the following are a MUST:

Creation of a Model Demonstration Farm Unit

- Co-ordinated tours from urban areas to the farms.
- Connectivity by both land, air (as well as sea if possible)
- Attractions
- Outdoor Recreational activities
- Accommodation
- Good Meals (preferably a typical Maharashtrian or a Local meal, of course tempered for suitability of the foreign tourists—less spicy etc)
- Hygienic Conditions
- Medical Facilities
- Security, etc.

Looking ahead: The Agri-Tourism Development Corporation has identified 25 new destinations in Maharashtra for initiating Agri-Tourism and has also framed a full fledged training programme module for the farmers.

Suggestions and Recommendations

For any agri-tourism venture to be successful some important pre-conditions need to be fulfilled. These are:

- A complete tourism package can be provided through initiation by the local government bodies of activities such as beautification campaigns, sponsorship of special events that tie in with local tourist attractions and participation of all businesses in the area.
- Good community leadership; Successful tourism promotion and development requires good leadership by open minded and enthusiastic persons from local government, community groups, the business community and non-profit organisations such as chamber of commerce and convention and visitor bureaus.
- Support and participation of local government; The role of local government is especially important in the following areas; funding for tourism development and promotion, creating and maintenance of infrastructure necessary for tourism, zoning and maintenance of the community so that it looks clean and appealing to tourists and educational support for farmers.
- Sufficient funds for tourism development; Most of the rural communities depend on public funds that are very often insufficient to cover all the needs of the rural community; private funds are something that most often can't be reached since local people do not have sufficient incomes by themselves to invest; therefore it is very important to explore for other sources of funding and assistance.
- Strategic planning; Planning is fundamental for the efficient and effective use of resources and funds, especially in rural areas that have few funds and resources. Good planning for tourism development and promotion can help develop and support local businesses connected to tourism. Planning for tourism development should be integrated into a community's overall economic strategy because of the interdependence of the community and key aspects of tourism development and promotion. Hence, planning for tourism requires the involvement of various stakeholders in the community.
- Coordination and cooperation between businesspersons and local leadership; for tourism development and planning to work, coordination and cooperation between local government and entrepreneurs is crucial. While strength of rural communities is their strong personnel networks, coordination and cooperation between local government and the business community do not always occur easily, if at all.
- Coordination and cooperation between rural tourism entrepreneurs; Tourism requires different types of businesses to work together because, by its nature; tourism has intertwined relations between different types of business such as shops, accommodation facilities, restaurants and tourist attractions. They may create different types of networks, both formal and informal. Tourism network allows for a standardized, yet high quality, business management, which small enterprises lack. Strategic planning and tactical decisions such as pricing, product differentiation and yield management can be handled much better by a qualified management. A tourism network can substantially improve small tourism business performance by transforming their sporadically scattered products into a one-stop-shop selling a wide variety of functionally interrelated tourism products.
- Information and technical assistance for tourism development and promotion; Different types of information for tourism development and promotion are especially important to agri-tourism development because small communities usually cannot afford to hire experts To this end the role of the above explained networks is also of the utmost importance.
- Widespread community support for tourism; Community support for tourism development and the attitudes and hospitality of local tourism workers are important for successful tourism.

It is obvious that management and marketing of tourism often require a community effort because of the nature of tourism; the community as a whole and its image must be marketed, not just one attraction.

Conclusion

Development of agri-tourism in Maharashtra rural areas is still in its nascent stage. Maharashtra has perfect opportunities to enhance its agri-tourism offer and it also represents one of the few states, which unifies different climates, natural characteristics and socio-cultural entities. Though there has not been much initiative by the state government for agri-tourism development, it has been successfully initiated through the farmers' efforts.

For the Agri tourism to succeed, it is imperative that the tourists must have:

1. Something to see: Animals, birds, farms, culture of the village, dress and festivals.
2. Something to do: Participating in agricultural operations, riding camel, buffalo, cooking and participating in the rural games i.e. gillidanda, gotti (marble etc.).
3. Something to buy: Rural crafts, dress materials, farm gate fresh processed food are few items.

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ANNEXURE 1
Europe: Government Efforts/Incentives w.r.t. Farm Tourism Development

Country	Kind of incentive/ help given by different sources aimed at rural/ farm tourism development.
Belgium	Regional governments subsidize accommodation facilities to up to 30% of the total cost of the project.
Denmark	Government subsidies National association for agri-tourism development with a fixed amount of money per year.
France	Regional governments give incentives to the new entrepreneurs in rural areas; they also give professional help in marketing activities and making up feasibility studies; departments, regions and national government subsidise different rural tourism associations with the fixed annual amounts.
Greece	Rural tourism projects in the region Petra Kesvos have been subsidized by the government, local authorities and the EU.
Ireland	Agency for development of tourism in the rural areas “Ballyhoura Failte Society” is financed by the government, local authorities and the EU. (http://www.dotars.gov.au/regional/summit/program/submissions/warner_sub.reg)
Italy	Agritourist Association has been financed by the national government on an annual basis.
Netherlands	Some associations (such as “Vereniging Recreatie by de Boer”) have been financed by their regional governments.
Germany	Incentives aimed at rural tourism development are distributed from different levels; Bayern has been financed by the national government. Niedersachsen by the regional government, Hessen – regional government, Baden Wurtemberg – by the regional government, Rheinland Pfalz-region and other sources, Schleswig- Holstein-regional government and other sources.
Portugal	General tourist office has developed a system of subsidizing initial tourist investments in rural areas
Spain	Galice – investment subsidizing (to upto 30% of the total cost of investment), Asturias – 30% of the total cost of the investment, Catalogue and Canaries – subventions for the preservation of cultural and etno heritage in the localities that have less than 2,000 inhabitants, Agrotourism Basque Association has been financed by EU (the level of subsidy has reached 25-50% of the total amount subsidized by region).
Great Britain	There is a strong involvement of national and regional governments into development of rural areas; under Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) so called “Rural white paper” has been introduced with different development schemes that also include rural tourism development (help includes education, grants and subsidies aimed at different projects (see in more details; http://www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/erdphome.htm).
Austria	Government gives subsidies or loans with no interest rates for the new investors; there are also tax allowances.
Slovenia	Government has subsidized first phase – implementation of the tourist facilities on farms (to upto 50% of the total amount of project, while in the second phase, when a farm started to deal with tourism activities, two thirds of the necessary amount were given by the government and local communities while the rest has to be secured by an entrepreneur.

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Food For Thought

- Aathiti devo Bhava is more practiced in rural India than any where else.
- An experience one cannot have anywhere in the world.
- Diversity of culture, language, food and craft is the experience.
- Coming back to nature.
- It is freshness in food ingredients.
- It is a unique shopping experience.

Source: FICCI Conference, Udaipur, Sept 7-8, 2001