

Potentials of Agro-tourism in Karnataka

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ABSTRACT.

Agro-tourism is increasingly recognized as an important strategy that can contribute to agricultural development through diversification of farming activities and providing opportunities to rest, relax, enjoy and study about farming for the visitors. At present, agro-tourism is promoted by most of the countries in the world aiming at sustainable rural development. This paper has tried to investigate the potentials of agro-tourism in the Karnataka state.

Introduction

Agriculture is the backbone of Indian Economy. Around 85 percent of the population is directly or indirectly dependent on Agriculture and almost 26 percent of India's GDP comes from Agriculture. 90 million farmers are dwelling in 6.25 lakh villages producing more than 200 MT of food grains feeding the country. The importance of agriculture is very high in Karnataka state also. A paradigm shift has been started in Karnataka also from pure agriculture to agriculture based tourism. There are a number of agro-tourism destinations in the state. It is a breakthrough of the conventional agriculture and tourism in the state.

Agro-tourism

Agro – tourism comprises two concepts, - agriculture and tourism. The Chambers Universal Learners Dictionary (1980) simply defined tourism as the industry dealing with tourists. Tourists were defined as people who travel for pleasure.

Okoroafor (1995) remarked that a visitor remains a tourist whether the objective of his mission is to transact business, participate in sports, appreciate the culture of his host destination, visit the people's museum and monuments for his intellectual enrichment, participate in conferences, conduct research, fulfill religious obligations, visit a friend or a relative, observe unique flora and fauna in their natural habitats or simply to have a good time. Agriculture on the other hand is the science or art of cultivating land to raise crops; farming: the production of crops, livestock, fishery or poultry and the diverse processes of finance, research, education, communication, engineering, conservation, processing, storage, distribution and marketing (Onweagba, 2000).

Agricultural exploits and potentials could be showcased for aesthetic values and attraction. The scenery at markets, horticultural and floricultural gardens could glue the sight of a passerby for hours and entertain him to the extent of forgetting his worries and troubles permanently or temporarily. Agro-tourism by mere logic is the practice of agriculture for tourism. It is the practice of utilizing the art and science of producing crops and animals for aesthetics and pleasure. It is the process of creating imagery and ornaments from agriculture for the appreciation of mankind. Agro-tourism could take people including farmers to attraction centres like game reserves, dams, festivals / exhibitions, farm sites / structures, among others. Indeed, agro-tourism holds prospects for the economy.

Advantages of agro-tourism

- It brings major primary sector agriculture closer to major service sector tourism. This convergence is expected to create win-win situation for both the sectors.
- Tourism sector has potential to enlarge.
- Agriculture sector has the capacity to absorb expansion in tourism Sector.
- To generate additional revenue.
- Create employment opportunities and empowerment of local people

Scope of agro-tourism

Agro-tourism has great scope in the present context for the following reasons:

1. **An inexpensive gateway.**
The cost of food, accommodation, recreation and travel is least in agro-tourism. This widens the tourist base. Present concept of travel and tourism is limited to urban and rich class which constitutes only a small portion of the population. However, the concept of agro-tourism takes travel and tourism to the larger population, widening the scope of tourism due to its cost effectiveness.
2. **Curiosity about the farming industry and life style.**
The urban population having roots in villages always have had the curiosity to learn about sources of food, plants, animals, raw materials like wood, handicrafts, languages, culture, tradition, dresses and rural lifestyle. agro-tourism which revolves around farmers, villages and agriculture has the capacity to satisfy the curiosity of this segment of population.
3. **Strong demand for wholesome family oriented recreational activities.**
Villages provide recreational opportunities to all age groups i.e. children young, middle and old age, male, female, in total to the whole family at a cheaper cost. Rural games, festivals, food, dress and the nature provides variety of entertainment to the entire family.
4. **Health consciousness of urban population and finding solace with nature friendly means.**
Modern lifestyle has made life stressful and average life span has come down. Hence, people are in constant search of pro-nature means to make life more peaceful. Ayurveda which is a pro-nature medical approach has roots in villages. Indigenous medical knowledge of villagers is respected. Organic foods are in greater demand in urban areas and foreign countries. In total, health conscious urban population is looking towards pro-nature villages for solutions.
5. **Desire for peace and tranquility.**
Modern life is a product of diversified thinking and diversified activities. Every individual attempts to work more, in different directions to earn more money to enjoy modern comforts. Hence, peace is always out of his system. Tourism is a means for searching peaceful location. Peace and tranquility are inbuilt in Agro-Tourism as it is away from urban areas and close to nature.
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7. **Interest in natural environment.**
Busy urban population is leaning towards nature. Because, natural environment is always away from busy life. Birds, animals, crops, mountains, water bodies, villages provide totally different atmosphere to urban population in which they can forget their busy urban life.
8. **Disillusionment with overcrowded resorts and cities**

In resorts and cities, overcrowded peace seekers disturb each other's peace. Hence, peace is beyond cities and resorts. Even though efforts are made to create village atmosphere in the sub urban areas through resorts, farm houses, it looks like a distant replica of the original.

9. Nostalgia for their roots on the farm

Cities are growing at the cost of villages Villagers are migrating to cities in search of jobs and to seek the comforts of modern life. Hence, yesterday's villagers are today's suburbanites. Deep in the heart of urbanites lies the love and respect for their ancestors and villages. Hence, visit to villages satisfies their desire. This is also expressed through the hatred of urbanites to flat culture and love for farmhouses. Located in the outskirts of cities. Any opportunity to visit villages and spend time with family is dream of any urbanite. But, minimum decent facilities are always problem. Agro-tourism attempts to overcome this problem

Agro-tourism potentials Karnataka

Many farmers in Karnataka, especially those who have small-scale family owned farm lands, have understood the necessity to supplement their insufficient agricultural income and find new ways and means of generating income. Similarly, some small investors in rural areas in the region are exploring investment opportunities in areas where they permanently settled down. They have vocational specific vast experience in agriculture and related activities. Big investors in tourism are also interested in diversifying their investment portfolios as well as their tourism products by investing in rural agricultural areas. The following are the important agrotourism destinations in Karnataka. In government sector it is hardly seen any endeavor in this sector.

Table No. 1 Agro- tourism destinations in Karnataka

SI No.	Name of the firm	Destination
1.	Coorg Jewel Home Stay	Sirimangala, Virajpet, Karnatak
2.	MakkiThitta Home Stay	Hanbal Post, Sakleshpur, Karnataka
3.	Gundimane Home Stay -	Sagar-Shimoga, Karnataka
4.	Kadama Kolli Home stay -	Virajpet, Karnataka
5.	BB Estate Hoe stay Plantation Stay	Kadagadalu, Madikeri, Karnataka
6.	The Silver Oaks Home Stay	onnampet, Virajpet, Karnataka
7.	The Grand Oak Home Stay	Ponnampet, Virajpet, Karnataka
8.	The Coffee Bean Home Stay	Chikmagalur, Karnataka
9.	River View Farm Stay Harakere	Thirthahalli - Shimoga , Karnataka
10.	Bananki Homestay - Devangi	Thirthahalli – Shimoga, Karnataka
11.	Silverbook Estate - Homestay	Madikeri, Karnataka

12.	The Coorg Nest Homestay	Gonikoppa, Virajpet, Karnataka
13.	The Malnad Times - Plantations	Nelagahalli - Sakleshpur - Hassan , Karnataka
41.	Farm Home Stay - Farm Stay	Madikeri, Karnataka
15.	Hullimakki Home Stay - Coffee Plantation	Sakleshpur, Karnataka
16.	Kolavara Heritage Homestay	Theerthahalli, Karnataka
17.	Cuppa Creek Homestay	Madikeri, Karnataka,
18.	Coorg Hideout Rural Homestay	Madhenad Post - 571201, Madikeri, Karnataka
19.	Madikeri Misty Honestay	Madikeri, Karnataka
20.	Coorg Shell Homestay - Madikeri	Madikeri, Karnatakaaa
21.	Coorg Classic Home Stay	Madikeri, Karnataka
22.	Vindhyas Homestay	Madikeri, Karnatak
23.	Inchara Homestay - Mandagadde	Theerthahalli, Karnataka

It is found from the careful analysis and observation of Karnataka's agro-tourism brings to light certain issues and challenges which need to be addressed immediately. The challenges are -

1. Danger of over exploitation of natural resources.
2. Uncertainty of demand for agro-tourism especially in the light of the fact that other types Tourism are becoming popular.
3. Providing and maintaining hygienic conditions in the agro-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. Differentiating Tourism and agro-tourism, and

11. Marketing agro-tourism as a product effectively and consistently.

CONCLUSIONS

Karnataka has a great potential to the development of agro-tourism, because of natural conditions and different types of agricultural products as well as variety of rural traditions and festivals. It is a good opportunity to develop an agro-tourism business in Karnataka. But there is a problem of low awareness about this business in the farmer and problem of the finance and proper view in the farmers of the Karnataka. Though the hurdles seem many the potential for economic growth along with environmental protection is highly acceptable. Karnataka is the Information technology Hub of India hence it can also be agro-tourism tourism hub of India. It can utilise and implement technological tools to improve effectiveness and efficiency of agro-tourism (Online booking, services etc). There is a need for required support from local community and government for a sustainable growth in this sector as opportunities need to be exploited in strategically planned manner.

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