

Agritourism-A New Avenue for Sustainable Development in Rural India

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ABSTRACT

Agritourism is a rapidly growing sector that combines agriculture and tourism, offering visitors opportunities to experience rural life, farming activities, and local culture. By giving farmers more money, producing jobs, and encouraging sustainable tourism, it is a successful rural development model in India. Farmers, local communities, and visitors all gain from agritourism, which also protects the environment and cultural heritage. The industry has enormous development potential despite obstacles like bad marketing, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of training. Growing market forecasts show that agritourism can be a key factor in boosting rural economies and encouraging sustainable agricultural growth. Rising market projections indicate that agritourism can play a vital role in strengthening rural economies and promoting sustainable agricultural development. The industry has enormous development potential despite obstacles like bad marketing, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of training. Growing market forecasts show that agritourism can be a key factor in boosting rural economies and encouraging sustainable agricultural growth.

INTRODUCTION:

In recent years, global tourism trends have changed significantly. Tourists now a days mostly preferring authentic, immersive, aesthetic and sustainable experiences. In response to this shift, a unique form of tourism, agritourism, has gained popularity around the world (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015; UNWTO, 2023). The combination of agriculture and tourism, has given rise to dynamic sector called Agri-tourism, which is vibrant and growing sector in India. It allows visitors to connect with rural style of living, take part in farm activities, and gain a better understanding of cultural heritage and local agricultural practices (Philip *et al.*, 2010). As urbanization continues to transform landscapes and diminish the boundaries between rural and urban areas, agritourism acts itself as a bridge that rekindles people with the land, encourages appreciation for agricultural cultural heritage, and supports sustainable rural economies.

Agritourism has its origins in centuries old customs of people visiting farms for celebrations, agricultural education, and cross-cultural interactions. However, the current upsurge in agritourism's appeal is a reaction to shifting travel tastes and a greater desire among travellers to get away from the chaotic metropolitan busy lifestyle in quest of genuine, outdoor experiences (McGehee & Kim, 2004). Agritourism has developed into a vibrant and diverse industry, offering everything from educational field tours exhibiting sustainable agricultural methods to getaways for families on actual farms. Agritourism has emerged into a diverse and thriving sector.

Agritourism in India

In the Indian tourism industry, agro-tourism is an innovative concept that allows visitors to engage in agricultural activities such as milking cows, ploughing fields, enjoying well baths, and harvesting fruits from the field. This

gives them the flavour of authentic village life and local food (Ministry of Tourism, 2024).

Around 2004, the Baramati Agri Tourism Centre launched agro-tourism in India, a nation renowned for agriculture. This centre, guided by **Pandurang Taware**, was recognized by the President of India with a National Tourism Award for its innovation. (Taware, 2013). The Agri-Tourism Development Corporation in India is leading the way of advancing this concept, working with 200 affiliated farmers to operate agro-tourism centres in Maharashtra. This enables tourists to get an honest look at farming and rural life. (ATDC,2004)

Scope of Agritourism:

Agritourism blends activities like sheep shearing, fishing, and horseback riding with agricultural businesses including machinery use, produce sales, and product processing. It provides tastings of regional food, crafts, and farming. Key components include skill-based training, agricultural schools, and educational trips. Its popularity is increased by seasonal attractions like the monsoon and winter experiences. The visiting experience is enhanced by cozy natural rest areas (Mahaliyanaarachchi, 2016).

Affordable getaway:

Agri-Tourism offers a cost-effective option for travellers as it involves lower expenses for food, accommodation, recreation, and travel. This affordability attracts a broader range of tourists, making tourism more accessible to a larger population (Sharpley & Vass, 2006).

Fulfilling curiosity

People with urban backgrounds, especially those with rural roots, have always been curious about the origins of food, plants,



animals, and various rural aspects like raw materials, handicrafts, languages, culture, traditions, and clothing. Agri-Tourism, which focuses on farming, villages, and agriculture, caters to this curiosity and provides insight into rural life.

Recreation for families

Villages offer recreational activities that cater to diverse age groups and interests, making it a family-friendly destination. From rural games and festivals to traditional food and attire, there's a wide range of entertainment options for everyone.

Eco-conscious and health-promotive: With the urban population becoming more health-conscious and seeking a connection with nature, Agri-Tourism capitalizes on this trend. The stress of modern living and reduced lifespans have led people to seek natural, holistic approaches like Ayurveda, which has its roots in village culture. The indigenous medical knowledge of rural communities holds value in this context.

Pursuit of Peace: Modern life is marked by hectic routines and multitasking, leaving individuals with little peace. Agri-tourism presents a solution as it is located away from urban hustle and bustle, providing a serene and close to nature environment. For those searching for tranquillity, Agri-tourism serves as a means to find solace in peaceful surroundings.

Promotion of well-being through Agri tourism

Farmers well-being

- Agritourism helps farmers by providing an alternative source of income and raising their standard of living.
- The expansion of consumer markets would increase employment in rural areas.

- Farmers would be able to expand their farming operations.
- Young farmers in rural areas will receive guidance in entrepreneurship and management techniques.
- FPO's can choose this as a revenue generating activity and can raise good income

Well-being for Communities

- People will become more aware of the significance of agricultural land, particularly those who live in cities.
- The creation of employment opportunities will boost the rural economy.
- This promotes cross-cultural and cross-regional communication.
- Promoting local agriculture products and services is feasible.
- Indian traditional knowledge can be preserved and promoted.
- Even in isolated areas, tourism will increase, boosting the local economy and creating jobs.

Tourist well-being

- It will provide visitors with an opportunity to engage with nature, learn about the importance of their surroundings.
- And it gives firsthand understanding of the various farming operations performed on a farm.
- Provides information about locally produced agricultural products and helps educate tourists and other visitors about rural living.

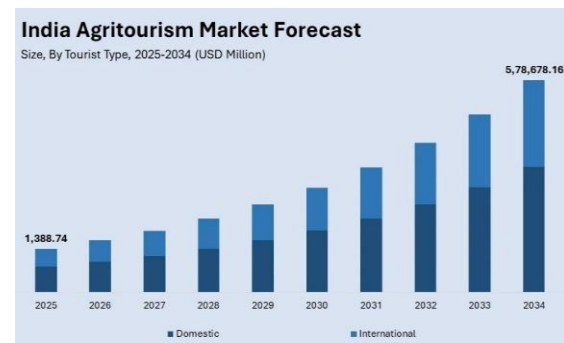
Advantages of Agritourism

- Reduces reliance on conventional agriculture and diversifies farmer sources of income.
- Encourages the growth of local businesses and the creation of jobs in rural areas.
- Aware people about traditional farming methods and agricultural traditions.
- Offers farming and sustainability education possibilities to tourists.
- Strengthens bond of people with environment.
- Promotes cross-cultural interaction between rural and urban areas.
- Promotes regional goods, such as handicrafts and fresh produce of rural areas
- Promotes local involvement and community bonds.
- Extends the travel season crates high demand for tourism.
- Provides entertainment and leisure activities suitable for families.
- Promotes healthy living through outdoor and agricultural activities.
- Creates jobs in a variety of industries and reduces unemployment.
- Boosts tourism-related income for regional economies.
- Aids in reducing crowding in metropolitan tourist locations.
- Encourages environmentally friendly behaviour in people (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008).

Limitations:

- Lack of training in tourism, ignorance of agritourism, ignorance of the concept of agritourism,
- Lack of knowledge about the educational backgrounds of farmers
- Lack of direction in marketing and customer interaction
- Inappropriate marketing strategies for agrotourism
- Inadequate methods for risk management
- Adverse weather, farmer personal struggles; limited infrastructure.

Current trend of Agri-tourism in India



Source: IMARC Group (2026). India Agritourism Market Size, Share, Trends and Forecast by Tourist Type, Activity, Booking Channel, Sales Channel, and Region, 2026-2034.

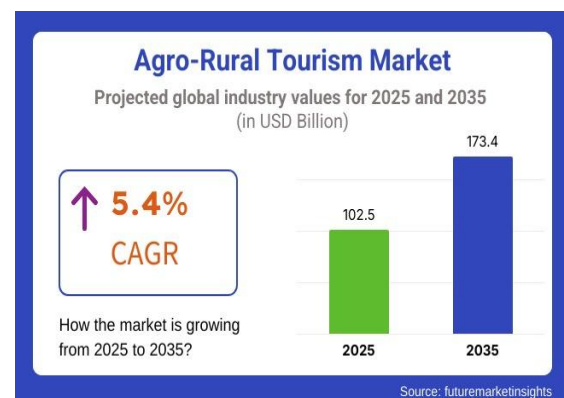


Fig. Source: Future Market Insights (FMI), *Agro-Rural Tourism Market: Projected Global Industry Values for 2025 and 2035.*

CONCLUSION

Agritourism is an innovative and sustainable approach that benefits farmers, rural communities, and tourists alike. It increases understanding of agriculture and rural life, diversifies farmers' sources of income, generates jobs, and fosters cross-cultural interaction. The growing demand for genuine rural experiences and positive market growth patterns point to a promising future for agritourism in India, despite ongoing infrastructure, training, and marketing obstacles. Agritourism has the potential to greatly enhance rural prosperity and sustainable development with sufficient funding and assistance.

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