

A Study on Challenges and Suggestions of Farmers to Promote Agro Tourism Centres in Karnataka

Abstract

Agriculture in India is facing acute problems from production till marketing of the produce. Hence, it is needed to supplement the income of rural folk and the Indian farmers should find an alternate means of livelihood and agro tourism is one such approach. It also has the capacity to generate a marginal or supplementary source of income and also creates employment opportunities to the farmers. The study was conducted in four selected districts viz., Bangalore, Chikmagalur, Hassan, and Madikeri districts of Karnataka state. In total 120 farmers were interviewed personally to understand the challenges the farmers face in promotion of ATC and also sought their suggestions to overcome the challenges. The study revealed that, high cost of labour (83.33 %) and High Maintenance cost (79.16 %) were the financial challenges. Lack of mindset for commercial approach (83.33 %) and weak communication skills of the farmers (75.00 %) were human resource challenges, insufficient literature for agro tourism practice (87.50 %) was a major technical challenge, less tourists during peak agricultural activities (80.00 %) and Lack of governmental support (89.16 %) were the situational and policy challenges faced by the farmers respectively. Complete tourism package should be provided to encourage ATC (79.16 %), ministry of tourism should support and promote ATC (75.83 %) and provide sales and marketing support (75.00 %) were few of the suggestions given by the farmers to overcome the challenges. If ATCs are promoted and widely adopted, it will provide supplementary income to the farmers and helps in generating the employment at the rural ecosystem.

Keywords: *Agriculture, Agro tourism, Farmers, Challenges, and Suggestions*

Introduction:

India is known as “Land of villages”, agriculture contributes about 18.00 % of nations GDP by providing an employment to about half (50.00 %) the population of the country. Indian Agriculture has to face tremendous competition because of the driven global trends. Similarly, Tourism in India is undoubtedly an important sector for the country's economy and is growing

hastily. (Gopal *et. al.*, 2008). Agritourism is slowly emerging as a distinct form of recreational activity in the basket of options available with the tourist while selecting tourism destinations (Rauniyar *et. al.*, 2020). The World Travel and Tourism Council calculated that tourism generated INR13.2 lakh crore (US\$170 billion) or **5.8%** of India's GDP and supported 32.1 million jobs in 2021.

Tourism industry in India has started exploring the concept of Agro tourism. Agro tourism is the concept of visiting an agricultural, horticultural, animal husbandry or agri-enterprise operations for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation. In general, agro tourism is the practice of attracting visitors to an area used primarily for agricultural purposes. It could be described as Rural/Agricultural Environments + Farm Commodities + Tourism Services = Agro tourism. Agro tourism is basically a subset of rural tourism where tourism concept is invoked in the agriculture activities. (Kartik and Gajanand, 2019). In the broader sense, Agro-Tourism culture which includes set of activities or operations that makes use of land of an artist or farmer to attract visitors. Agro tourism provides an opportunity to the tourists to have an authentic and enchanting practical experience of local foods, agricultural implements, practices and acquainted with the various fields and communities in the region (Chandra Shekhar, 2022).

Gannon., (1994) defined Agro tourism as “A range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract tourists to their area in order to generate extra income for their business.” In general, agro tourism is defined as any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations thereby benefitting the local community economically and socially and enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience (Krishna, 2020).

The concept of agro tourism emerged due to urbanization, as many people are not aware of rural background and the culture, production of grain, fruits, and vegetables etc. Agro tourism not only provides opportunity to the visitors to involve in the activities such as visit to farmer's markets to purchase farm fresh products, taking part in orchard and floral garden tours, bullock cart rides, tractor rides, agricultural operations, pottery making, using farm bed and breakfast, accommodation, wineries, aquaculture, petting farms, and participating in other such agricultural activities.

Today agriculture sector in India is facing acute problems like of infrastructure, warehousing, climate change, excessive rains, drought, no irrigation facilities, availability of inputs, finance and effective marketing etc., Agriculture in India is most uncertain depending on monsoon with less avenues from irrigation. Hence it is needed to supplement the income of rural folk and the Indian farmers should find an alternate means of livelihood. Since agriculture is the main occupation of the people in India there is a need to think of allied income generation strategies with agriculture, one of which is agro tourism (Chada and Bhakare, 2012)

Karnataka is one of the prominent agricultural producing state and it is one of the top ten domestic tourism destinations in India, Ranking IV among the states (Hamsa *et al.*, 2015) and there is a large scope and great potential to develop agro-tourism. Many Agro Tourism Centres (ATC) already established in different parts of Karnataka. These Agro tourism approach has got lot of potential to transform and develop a rural economy into a modern economy by utilizing the local resources to its fullest potential. It also has the capacity to generate a marginal income or supplementary source of income and also employment opportunities to the farmers. Hence it is a means and ways of livelihood security to the farmers in ATCs. However, these agro tourism centres face certain challenges in operating the centres. Which have hindered their effectiveness in fulfilling the objectives and generate lucrative income. In this background an effort has been made to enlist the constraints faced by ATC and their suggestions to overcome the same.

Methodology:

Locale of the study:

The current study was carried out in four selected districts *viz.*, Bangalore, Chikmagalur, Hassan, and Madikeri districts of Karnataka state, as these districts having highest number of Agro Tourism Centres.

Selection of the respondents:

The primary data was collected from 40 Agro Tourism Centres (ATCs) of four selected districts, consists of 10 ATCs from each district. The total sample size consists of 120 farmers working in ATCs, three farmers from each of the selected ATCs were considered. The respondents were selected by employing simple random sampling technique. Ex-post facto research design was adopted to carryout the research work.

Results and Discussion:

The financial challenges faced by the farmers in promotion of ATC is presented in Table 1. It could be observed from the Table 1 that, high cost of labour was the major challenge expressed by majority (83.33 %) of the farmers, since the farmers and the labourers are engaged in plantation crops and other business activities. Followed by, High Maintenance cost (79.16 %), since, the ATC need to be kept clean and tidy with proper arrangement of activities of ATC to attract the visitors, so the maintenance cost was high. High cost of land development and initial investment (75.00 %) it might be due to the fact that, the initially the farmers need to invest to establish ATC centre. Lack of awareness about credit and subsidy facilities for ATC (72.50 %), Low profits from the products (62.50 %) and the last constraint expressed by the farmer was No insurance coverage (55.83 %).

Table 1: Financial challenges faced by the farmers in promotion of ATC

(n=120)

| I | Financial challenges | Frequency | Percentage | Rank |
|----------|---|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 1. | High cost of labor | 100 | 83.33 | I |
| 2. | High cost of land development and initial investment | 90 | 75.00 | III |
| 3. | High Maintenance cost | 95 | 79.16 | II |
| 4. | No insurance coverage | 67 | 55.83 | VI |
| 5. | Low profits from the products | 75 | 62.50 | V |
| 6. | Lack of awareness about credit and subsidy facilities for ATC | 87 | 72.50 | IV |

The human resource challenges faced by the farmers in promotion of ATC is presented in the Table 2. It could be observed that, majority (83.33 %) of the farmers expressed that, lack of mindset for commercial approach as the investment may or may not yield the returns, due to this fear, the farmers lacked mindset for commercial approach. This was followed by weak communication skills of the farmers (75.00 %) as the business require good communication skills to attract and satisfy the visitors with the detailed information. Non willingness of the tourists to purchase farm products (73.33 %) as the products at ATC were organic and of good quality ones, the price of the products were high hence the visitors did not purchase the product. Lack of organized effort like Farmer organizations was expressed by exactly two third (66.66 %) of the farmers and poor management skills was another constraints as expressed by 63.33 per cent of the farmers.

Table 2: Human resource challenges faced by the farmers in promotion of ATC

(n=120)

| II | Human resource challenges | Frequency | Percentage | Rank |
|-----------|--|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 7. | Lack of mindset for commercial approach. | 100 | 83.33 | I |

| | | | | |
|-----|--|----|-------|------------|
| 8. | Weak communication skill | 90 | 75.00 | II |
| 9. | Lack of organized effort like Farmer organizations | 80 | 66.66 | IV |
| 10. | Poor management skills | 76 | 63.33 | V |
| 11. | Non-willingness of the tourists to purchase farm products. | 88 | 73.33 | III |

Table 3 indicates the technical challenges faced by the farmers in promotion of ATC and it was observed that, good majority (87.50 %) of the farmers expressed that, insufficient literature for agro tourism practice was a major challenge. This might be because of the reason that, the concept is emerging and hence, there were less researchers and other literature regarding agro tourism. This was followed by, the challenges like, Lack of transportation to interior rural places (76.66 %), Inability to introduce more activities (74.16 %), non-availability of inputs (65.00 %) and Lack of medical facility (64.16 %) were the other technical challenges faced by the farmers in promotion of ATC.

Table 3: Technical challenges faced by the farmers in promotion of ATC

(n=120)

| III | Technical challenges | Frequency | Percentage | Rank |
|------------|---|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 12. | Insufficient literature for agro tourism practice | 105 | 87.50 | I |
| 13. | Inability to introduce more activities | 89 | 74.16 | III |
| 14. | Lack of transportation to interior rural places | 92 | 76.66 | II |
| 15. | Lack of medical facility | 77 | 64.16 | V |
| 16. | Non-availability of inputs | 78 | 65.00 | IV |
| 17. | Lack of training in hospitality and management | 73 | 60.83 | VI |

The situational challenges faced by the farmers in promotion of ATC are listed in the Table 4 and the majority (80.00 %) of the farmers expressed that, less tourists during peak agricultural activities was the major situational challenge as it would be easy to explain the various crops and their activities in the season, and if the visitors do not come during that time farmer need to take extra effort in maintaining the crops for the off seasons. This was followed by, equal proportion (68.33 %) of the farmers said that, unfavourable weather conditions and limited and irregular power supply were the other situational challenges.

Table 4: Situational challenges faced by the farmers in promotion of ATC

(n=120)

| IV | Situational challenges | Frequency | Percentage | Rank |
|-----------|---|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 18. | Less tourists during peak agricultural activities | 96 | 80.00 | I |
| 19. | Unfavorable weather conditions | 82 | 68.33 | II |
| 20. | Limited and irregular power supply | 82 | 68.33 | II |

Lack of governmental support was the major challenge as expressed by vast majority (89.16 %) of the farmers, this was followed by almost three fourth (75.83 %) of the farmers expressed that, no specific policy for promotion of agro tourism (74.16 %) are presented in the Table 5. The probable reason for the above mentioned challenges might be that, since, the concept has emerged in the recent past, the proper research works have not been undertaken the policy recommendations have not been put forth before the government.

Table 5: Policy resource challenges faced by the farmers in promotion of ATC

(n=120)

| V | Policy challenges | Frequency | Percentage | Rank |
|-----|--|-----------|------------|------------|
| 21. | Lack of government support | 107 | 89.16 | I |
| 22. | Complexity in getting license from Govt | 89 | 74.16 | III |
| 23. | No specific policy for promotion of agro tourism | 91 | 75.83 | II |

The suggestions as perceived by the farmers to overcome the challenges are enlisted in the Table 6 and it is evident that from the table that, more than three fourth (79.16 %) of the farmers suggested that, a complete tourism package should be provided to encourage ATC. Followed by, Ministry of tourism should support and promote ATC (75.83 %), Provide sales and marketing support (75.00 %). Maintaining an address book and comments of the visited tourists for future tourism business (74.16%), majority (71.66 %) of the farmers suggested to develop contacts with the schools, colleges, NGOs, clubs, organizations etc., to increase number of visitors to ATC, Develop different agro-tour package for different type of tourist and their expectations (70.83 %). Further equal (69.16 %) proportion of the farmers suggested that, organising tours from urban areas to the farms and adequate training should be provided to the farmers regarding various aspects of agro tourism. These suggestions were given by the farmers based on their experience and expectations.

Table 6: Suggestions as perceived by the farmers to overcome the challenges

(n=120)

| Sl. No. | Statements | Frequency | Percentage | Rank |
|---------|--|-----------|------------|-------------|
| 1. | A complete tourism package should be provided to encourage ATC | 95 | 79.16 | I |
| 2. | Provide sufficient fund for agro tourism development by Government | 74 | 61.66 | XVII |
| 3. | Coordination and cooperation among Centre and state | 78 | 65.00 | XIII |

| | | | | |
|-----|--|----|-------|--------------|
| | government to motivate agro-tourism entrepreneurs | | | |
| 4. | Support from local institutions for promotion establishment and maintenance of infrastructure for agro tourism | 85 | 70.83 | VI |
| 5. | Ministry of tourism should support and promote ATC | 91 | 75.83 | II |
| 6. | Improved communication skills on the part of the farmer | 81 | 67.50 | XI |
| 7. | Adequate training should be provided to the farmers regarding various aspects of agro tourism | 83 | 69.16 | VIII |
| 8. | Provide sales and marketing support | 90 | 75.00 | III |
| 9. | Organising tours from urban areas to the farms | 83 | 69.16 | |
| 10. | Promote a wide publicity of the agro tourism centre by newspaper, televisions and all possible advertisement means | 79 | 65.83 | XII |
| 11. | Develop contacts with the Schools, Colleges, NGOs, clubs, organizations etc., to increase visitors | 86 | 71.66 | V |
| 12. | Understand the customers wants, their expectations and serve them | 67 | 55.83 | XIX |
| 13. | Developing own website and update from time to time to attract the tourists | 82 | 68.33 | X |
| 14. | Developing a good relationship with the tourist for future business and chain publicity | 77 | 64.16 | XV |
| 15. | Develop different agro-tour package for different type of tourist and their expectations | 85 | 70.83 | VII |
| 16. | Maintaining an address book and comments of the visited tourists for future tourism business | 89 | 74.16 | IV |
| 17. | Transport facilities should be improved | 73 | 60.83 | XVIII |
| 18. | Planning and making arrangements to address the situational problems | 75 | 62.50 | XVI |
| 19. | Narration about special activities of the ATC to the visitors | 80 | 66.66 | IX |

Conclusion:

Majority of the Indian rural population depends mainly on agriculture for their livelihood. Agro tourism which is an emerging concept in the tourism industry and contributes to the GDP of the country and it creates an employment opportunity to the rural youths and their sustainable human development. The present study is instrumental in understanding the challenges faced by the farmers and their suggestions to overcome the challenges. The study revealed that, the majority of the challenges faced by the farmers were categorised into five domains viz., financial, human resource, technical, situational and policy challenges. Further, the suggestions put forth by the farmers were enlisted for the consideration by the experts and policy makers in the field of tourism industry. In this regard, government and all stakeholders including

the local communities and concerned institutions in a country need to work together so that the ATCs are promoted to the fullest potential and the rural population generate lucrative income.

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