

**Two Days National Conference in Geography
on 13th & 14th October, 2018**

Organized by

**Department of Geography
Ajintha Education Society's
Sant Dnyaneshwar Mahavidyalaya, Soegaon**

Proceeding Book

**Agriculture : Irrigation
Processing Industries & Market System**

Chief Editor

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Creation's Publication, Aurangabad

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A Study of Agro-Tourism in Maharashtra

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1.0 Abstract:-

Maharashtra State abounds in natural and cultural attractions ranging from unique hill stations, wild life, forest, unspoiled beaches, forts, temples, and rich tradition of fairs & Festivals. In this state we found good connectivity through communication and transport facilities. Agriculture is the backbone of Maharashtra economy. But today agriculture becomes unprofitable due to natural as well as manmade problems. Agro tourism is complimentary to traditional agricultural activities. Agro-Tourism is a new face of tourism sector. It is an agriculture based industry. It is helpful to the both farmers and urban peoples. Farmers can earn better from innovative use of available resources and the tourist can enjoy village life and nature in an affordable prices.

Keywords: Agro-Tourism, Rural development, Economic development, problems of agro-tourism.

2.0 Introduction: -

Maharashtra State abounds in natural and cultural attractions ranging from unique hill stations, wild life, forest, unspoiled beaches, forts, temples, ancient cave temples and rich tradition of fairs and festivals. It is home to several wildlife sanctuaries and national parks. In this state there is good connectivity through communication and transport facilities. Fruits, flowers and vegetables

High-Tech agro farming are found in various area of state.

Agriculture is the backbone of Maharashtra economy. But today agriculture becomes unprofitable due to irregular mansoon, prices fluctuations of agro products and other internal weaknesses of the agriculture sector. Hence, there is need of the hour to do some innovative activities in the agriculture which will help to farmers, rural people. On the other hand there is growing urbanization in Maharashtra. Today peoples from rural area are going to city in search of jobs. Density of population in Metro cities is increasing day by day. Today urban people's world is restricted in the closed door home and offices or workplace. Because of urban work culture and urban lifestyle they occasionally visit villages or rural area. But by instinct human being attracts towards nature. Therefore urban peoples want to visit rural area for leisure through tourism. Agro-Tourism is a part of travel and tourism industry. It is complimentary to traditional agricultural activities. It is helpful to the both farmers and urban peoples. Farmers can earn better from innovative use of available resources and the tourist can enjoy village life and nature in a affordable prices. Agro-Tourism has provided an additional income source to the farmers and employment opportunity to the family members and rural youth.

3.0 Objectives of the Study: -

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To know the scope for rural development through Agro-Tourism.
2. To know the economic development through Agro-Tourism industry.
3. To study the problems of Agro-Tourism industry in Maharashtra.

4.0 Research Methodology:-

The present study is based on the purely secondary data. The data has been furnished from related research papers, articles, reports. Some data has been furnished from the websites of the Agri-Tourism, Govt. of India and Maharashtra.

5.0 Meaning and Definition of Agro-Tourism:-

In Agro-Tourism we found symbiosis between tourism and agriculture. It is the form of tourism which capitalizes on rural culture as a tourist attraction. It is a key element of an environmentally and socially responsible tourism. In other words in agro-tourism tourist can enjoys and participates in various activities of agriculture such as in agricultural operations, bullock cart riding, participating in rural games, They can see farms, nature, animals, birds, rural culture, dress, rural festivals, artisans display, mehndi, folk music and dance. Tourists can buy rural crafts, dress materials, fresh agricultural products, processed foods etc.

Agro-Tourism is defined as "Travel that combines agricultural or rural settings with products of agricultural operations- all within a tourism experience." According to Mr.PandurangTavare (ATDC, Pune), "Agro-Tourism is that agri-business activity, when a native farmers or person of the area offers tours to their agriculture farm to allow a person to view them growing, harvesting and processing locally grown foods, such as coconuts, pineapple, sugarcane, corn or any agriculture produce the person would not encounter in their city or home country."

In nutshell Agro-Tourism includes :

- * Agro-Tourism include the local supply of products, labour and tourism services.
- * It increases involvement of local communities.
- * It can promote regional development.

- * Agro-Tourism can contribute to the development of local economy and poverty reduction.
- * In Agro-Tourism tourism is centred around agriculture.

6.0 Rural Development through Agro-Tourism :-

Individual farmers, agricultural co-operatives institute, NGOs, Agricultural universities and agricultural colleges may start their Agro-tourism centres. Grampanchayats can start such centres in their operational areas with the help of villages and farmers. Agro-Tourism makes rural peoples mentality professional towards agriculture. They views towards their agriculture as an income generating source. All peoples of society can participate and earn income in agro-tourism. There is scope for farming, cattle rearing, traditional food processing, preservation of local culture and tradition. Peoples can earn income by selling their art, craft, dress material, fresh agricultural products. There is demand for local transports, hotels, restaurants, banking and tourism services. Agro-Tourism helps to develop education, health services in rural areas. Dairy, poultry, fisheries, bee-keeping profession develops with the help of agro-tourism. In Maharashtra State Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) has started Mega Mobile Scheme to advertise agro-tourism centres, to know lifestyle of farmers, farming, how to collect fruits from trees and how to cut vegetables. Now a days near about 400 to 450 agro-tourism centres runs in Maharashtra.

7.0 The Economic Development through Agro-Tourism Industry:-

Maharashtra is one of the states that have largest forest cover in India. The scenic 720 km long coastline is main attraction of tourist. The State has recognized tourism as a major thrust area for economic growth. Maharashtra

ranks 5th in domestic tourist arrivals in year 2011 with 6.50% total tourist visits. Maharashtra ranks 1st in foreign tourist visits with a share of 24.70% tourists in year 2011 and hence there is remarkable increase in budgetary allocation for promotion of tourism in the state.

In Maharashtra we found several hill stations and water reservoirs. It is rich with varied biodiversity ranging from forests, wetland, and grassland to coast and evergreen forest. The state abounds in natural and cultural attractions, such as forest, unique hill stations, wildlife, forts, temples, forts, ancient caves, fairs and festivals. Today agriculture becomes unprofitable due to natural as well as manmade problems. Hence there is need to do something innovative to survive agriculture and farmers. Agro-Tourism is a new face of tourism sector. It is an agriculture based industry. Farmers, group of farmers can begin agro-tourism centre in their area. Government has sanctioned as agriculture based industry to Agro-Tourism. As per Maharashtra Govt. Tourism Policy 2016, in Agro-Tourism they can build maximum 8 rooms for tourist living and farmer can develop agro-tourism centre on 20 per cent of his total land. There is no need of Non-Agriculture term. There is compulsory for high schools to visit agro-tourism centres. In 2017 Maharashtra Government declared separate Maharashtra Agri-Tourism Policy to develop and strengthen agro-tourism centres. Now NABARD, nationalised banks, district banks, cooperative banks and cooperative societies providing loan facility to begin agro-tourism profession. Thus through agro-tourism rural area can be developed. It can generate additional income for farmers and contribute to the conservation and development of the whole region. Through agro-tourism there is availability of market for agricultural commodities, employment generation will

open to women, and useless land for agriculture can be used to develop agro-tourism centre. Agro-Tourism will check migration of rural people to cities for finding job opportunities, by providing employment and agro-business opportunity. It will be potential business to improve the socio-economic status of the all rural people.

8.0 Problems of Agro-Tourism Industry :-

Majority rural peoples are low educated; uneducated and untrained therefore they are unable to present their products in a professional way. Urban people wants rustic life, rural various products but do not compromise regarding hygienic condition for stay and food. In rural areas staying facilities are not in well condition. In many villages there is lack of entertainment services, rental services, swimming pools.

Today in Maharashtra majority of farmers have limited land holding, low per capita income, lack of water resources. So they cannot create/ develop new products for agro-tourism. The process of establish agro-tourism is critical process. There is need of government assistance to agro tourism enterprises regarding technical, financial, marketing support. Small farmers have lack of perfect knowledge about agro-tourism. They have weak communication skill, lack of capital to develop basic infrastructure. They have less courage to undertake entrepreneurial task. Majority farmers have small size holding, low quality land and no access to credit or irrigation. Majority talukas in the state are consistently facing drought.

9.0 Conclusion:-

Maharashtra state abounds in rural and manmade attractions. It has unique hill stations, forest, forts, temples and rich tradition of fairs and festivals. In this state urbanization is increasing day by day. Domestic and

foreign tourists visits are increasing. There is scope for agro-tourism industry. Now a days agro-tourism industries are increasing in Maharashtra. But still there is various obstacles in establishing agro-tourism industry. There are various problems facing agro-tourism industry in Maharashtra.

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