



Doubling Farm Income through AGRO-Tourism Centers (ATCS) in Pune District (M.S.)

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Abstract

Maharashtra states the pioneer to develop and promote the Agri-tourism in the country. The main activities include operating its Agri-tourism centre along with encouraging more farmers to take up Agri tourism, conducting training and research programs. Keeping this in view, the present study was carried out to An Economic Analysis of Agro-tourism in Pune District of Maharashtra. Based on data collected by personal interview method from 3 Agro tourism responsive centers were selected purposively from the district, it was observed that the total income from all sources was to the tune of Rs. 48 lakh in Mulshi Agro-tourism Centre. However, the Net returns were observed higher in Pawar Agro-tourism (₹ 37.47 Lakh) with the Benefit cost ratio 7.68, indicating its economic viability at variable costs level. The per hectare net returns were maximum in Mulshi Agro-tourism Centre (₹ 19.76 Lakh). The reasons of higher net returns could attributed to the higher no. of activities, higher service years, no. of visitors, and adjacent to Pune city. The major problems faced of the ATCs owner were reported as, high Initial Investment to start the ATC, lack of pre-trainings institutes regarding starting of ATC, complex license procedure, needs entrepreneurship skill, less availability of skilled labour at Peak season, irregular electric power supply and electricity charged on Commercial basis, high seasonal variations in visits of tourists, high labour wages due to adjunct urbanized area and lack of government subsidy to start the agro-tourism.

Key words : *Doubling farm income, agro-tourism, Maharashtra.*

Introduction

Agro-tourism is considered as the fastest growing sector in the tourism industry. The concept has been successfully implemented in states like Maharashtra, Kerala, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. It has become a new avenue for earning the income for the rural farmers. Maharashtra states the pioneer to develop and promote the Agri-tourism in the country. Agri-tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) incorporated in 2005 and owns the pilot Agri tourism project of 28 acres in Palshiwadi, Tal. Baramati Dist. Pune, 70 kms from Pune city. The main activities include operating its Agri-tourism centre along with encouraging more farmers to take up Agri tourism, conducting training and research programs. This is an umbrella platform where in most of the tourist reservations are booked and then tourists are sent to different centres. This saves on the marketing cost of the farmers. The origin of novel concept Agro-tourism was taken in the Maharashtra, near the city Baramati by the progressive farmer Shri. Pandurang Taware, known as father of Agro-tourism in India. They started a polite project of Agro-tourism at Baramati, with some farmers and this was a milestone in the area of agro-tourism not only in Maharashtra but also in India. This model becomes inspiring to the farmers. Later on they give an organized shape to all Agro-tourism Center in Maharashtra by establishing Agro-tourism Development Corporation, Pune (ATDC). The ATDC, the umbrella organization for

the Agri- Tourism, only provides a helping hands. In 2007, ATDC launched Training and Skills Development programs with Maharashtra State Agri-tourism Vistar Yojana, first 52 farmers were selected in Maharashtra and the story continues. This Agri- Tourism model has been replicated in 328 Agri tourism centres across 30 Districts in Maharashtra, which has helped to conserve, enhance the village environment, village traditions and culture, customs, village arts and handicrafts. Agri-tourism model gives the authentic experiences to the visitors by showcasing village culture, agriculture, traditions that has helped gain sustainable supplementary income source and generated local employment.

Maharashtra State Agri and Rural Tourism Co-operative Federation Limited (MART), set up in 2008, is a federation of agriculturalists and their co-operatives. The MART is the apex body for co-operatives related to agriculture based tourism belonging to Maharashtra, located at Baramati in Pune district. The MART in partnership with NABARD has undertaken training and certification programs for farmers. Every year, MART celebrate May 16th as 'World Agro Tourism Day'. On this occasion, farmers and entrepreneurs who have did notable work in the field of Agro-tourism are honored. Policy makers think that Agro-tourism will bring a new perspective to rural development in the state, thereby widening the scope of development of entire state. In new Tourism Policy of the Maharashtra (2016), the

Table-1 : Agro-tourism Centres selected for study.

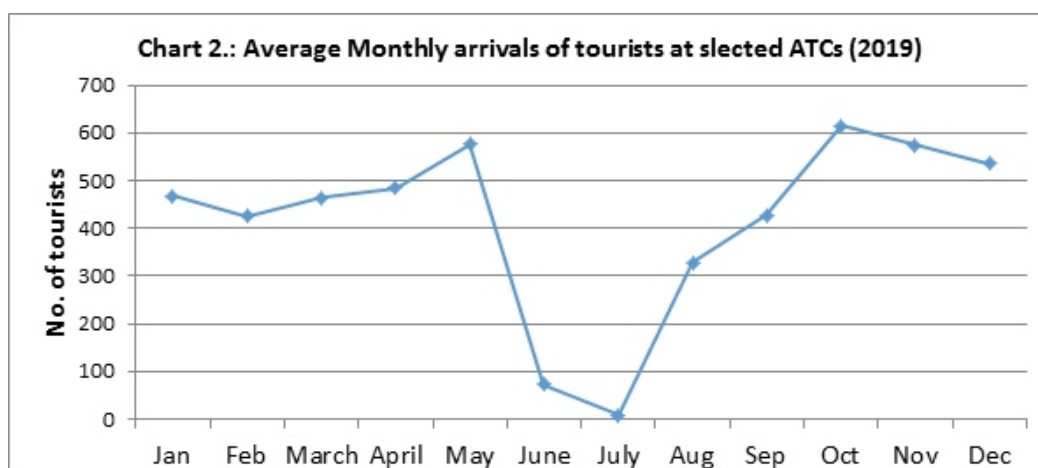
S. No.	Name and Address of selected ATC	Year of Establishment	Distance from Pune city (km)	Land Area (ha)
1.	Mulshi Agro-tourism, Name of owner: Mrs. Savita Ramchandra Bhumkar At.Post- Ambadwet, Tal. Mulshi, Dist. Pune (Pune-Ghotawade Road, Near Mula Bridge)	2008	32	1.72
2.	Pawar Agro-tourism, Name of owner :Mrs. Bhagyshri Sunil Pawar, At. Post: Nandur Khamgaon Road, Tal. Daund, Dist. Pune, Pune-412202	2018	45	6.04
3.	Saee Farmstay Agro Tourism Name of owner: Mrs. Kalpana Vilas Lawande, At-Shindewadi, Post-Ashtapur, Tal- Haveli, Dist- Pune	2017	35	2.00

(Source : Primary Data)

Table-1 : Monthly arrivals of Tourists at selected ATCs (2019). (No. of tourists)

Sr. No.	Month	Mulshi Agro-tourism	Pawar Agro-tourism	Saee Farmstay Agro-tourism	Average
1.	Jan.	750	376	280	468.67
2.	Feb.	854	390	30	424.67
3.	March	662	642	90	464.67
4.	April	682	680	90	484.00
5.	May	871	730	130	577.00
6.	June	218	0	0	72.67
7.	July	24	0	0	8.00
8.	Aug.	570	415	0	328.33
9.	Sep.	699	462	120	427.00
10.	Oct.	985	457	380	607.33
11.	Nov.	984	407	330	573.67
12.	Dec.	863	383	360	535.33
	Total	8162	4942	1810	—
	Average	680.17	411.83	150.83	414.28

(Source : Primary data)



Government has underlined the practice of rural tourism (Agro-tourism).

The State has 55 percent rural landscape, of its total area, which provides wide scope to Agro-tourism. This will lead to a balanced and far reaching growth in the state, thus, improving the economic situation at the village level. The objectives of rural tourism are also to educate public

on the concept and provide a rural experience to urban residents, promote farm products and generate additional income, and allow diversification of income opportunities to farms and ranches that can help buffer fluctuating markets. More than 44 percent population of the state is living in the urban areas, which are the customers of the Agro-tourist centers, located in the rural areas. Maharashtra has a great potential for the development of

Table-2 : Profitability of selected Agro-tourism Centres.

Sr. No	Particulars	Mulashi Agro-tourism	Pawar Agro-tourism	Saeer Agro-tourism	Average
(A)	Area under ATC (ha)	1.75	6.04	2.00	3.26
(B)	Total Income generated				
(1)	Tourist Activities	4621450	3762900	1583000	3322450
(2)	Crop Production/ Nursery	175000	471000	745000	463666.7
(3)	Livestock Production	0	75000	230000	101666.7
	Total Income	4796450	4308900	2558000	3887783
(C)	Expenditure incurred	1338185	561000	2032010	1310398
(D)	Net Income	3458265	3747900	525990	2577385
(E)	Per hector net returns	1976151	620513	262995	789801
(F)	Benefit -Cost Ratio	3.58	7.68	1.26	2.97

Agro-tourism, because of plenty of natural surceases and variety of agro-products as well as variation in rural traditions. It is golden opportunity to develop a curiosity among tourist and farmers about agro-tourism business in Maharashtra. The farmers about Agro-tourism. Hence, if the constraints in road of Agro-tourism are removed by the government, NGO and Agricultural Universities then the Agro-tourism will sustainable source of income to farmers. In view of this, the present study entitled "An Economic Analysis of Agro -Tourism in Pune District".

Objectives

To study the income from tourists of selected Agro-Tourism centres.

To study constraints faced by Agro-Tourism Centres and suggest measures there on.

Research Methodology

The Pune district was selected purposively for the study, considering two reasons. Firstly, this district is among the major tourism destinations in Maharashtra, especially for historical and educational tourism which has close linkages with agro-tourism. Secondly, agricultural activities are greatly diversified in this district. A list of active Agro-tourism centers with the names and address of each were taken from the official website of MART (Maharashtra State Agriculture and Rural Tourism Co-Operative Federation Ltd.). Nevertheless, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic crises, the Agro-tourisms in the district are badly suffered. Most of the Agro-tourism centers are closed. However, 3 Agro tourisms responsive centers were selected purposively from the district (Table-1).

Due to the lockdowns declared by the government under Covid-19 pandemic situation, the primary data for the year 2019, was collected from ATCs owner's record and personal contact to the manager (may be of memory bias), staffs, members of MART, to visitors etc. In addition, with this, secondary data were collected from websites such as MART, World Tourism website, books,

newspapers etc. The collected data were analyzed to compute averages, percentages, benefit costs ratio and constraints faced by Agro-Tourism Centers.

Results and Discussion

Arrivals of tourists in selected Agro-Tourism centers :

The number of tourists across the country have visited the selected ATCs. Most of tourists were from the urban and sub-urban areas like Pune and Mumbai cities. Monthly arrival tourists in study year i.e. 2019 for selected ATCs are shown in Table-1.

There were seasonal fluctuations in monthly arrivals of tourists at ATCs due to many reasons for that such as, schooling days, examinations, unfavorable/ favorable environment, holidays, festive seasons, etc.

The Mulshi Agro-tourism Centre have the highest no. of visitors (8,162 tourists) whereas, Sai Farmstay Agro-tourism have fewer visitors (1810 tourists) during the year 2019. This may be because of the lesser number of activities, location of the ATC, etc. It is observed that during the month of April- May and October, November, the magnitudes of the arrivals of the tourists were higher and it ranged between 484 to 607 tourists per month. This may be credited to summer holidays in April and May and Diwali Holidays in October –November. Due to the rainy seasons and off agricultural season, the least number of visitors were recorded in month of June and July. The arrivals of tourists/ visitors are greatly influenced by the agricultural seasons, crops stand, etc. It is observed that the average arrival of tourists was maximum in winter season (1638 tourists), followed by in summer season (1462 tourists) and then in rainy season (627 tourists). Seasonal variations in this business is the main obstacle for owners.

Profitability of selected Agro-tourism Centres : The profitability of the selected Agro-tourism Centres is estimated at variable cost level and the same is presented in Table-2.

Table-2, revealed that the selected ATCs were profitable with average net returns of ₹ 25.77 Lakh with Benefit-cost ratio 2.97, at variable cost. Amongst the selected ATC, the Pawar Agro-tourism Centre has obtained annual net returns of ₹ 37.47 Lakh with Benefit-cost ratio 7.68. The lowest returns and Benefit-cost ratio was observed in Sae Farmstay Agro-tourism. The per hectare net returns were maximum in Mulshi Agro-tourism Centre (₹ 19.76 Lakh), followed by Pawar Agro-tourism Centre (₹ 6.20 Lakh) and Sae Agro-tourism Centre (₹ 2.62 Lakh). The reason of higher net returns in the case of Mulshi Agro-tourism Centre could attributed to the higher no. of activities, higher service years, no. of visitors, etc.

Constraints faced by selected ATC owners while establishing and running ATCs : Maharashtra has a greater potential of the development of the agro-tourism centres due to the good natural and climatic conditions. But there are some problems in the process of agro-tourism development in the state. The selected ATCs' owners were exposed for the opinions towards the problems in establishing and running the Agro-tourism centers. They expressed the following general problems. These problems listed as below :

High Initial Investment to start the ATC ,Lack of pre-trainings institutes regarding starting of ATC, Complex license procedure, Needs entrepreneurship skill, less availability of skilled labour at Peak season, Irregular electric power supply and electricity charged on Commercial basis, High Seasonal variations in visits of tourists, High labour wages due to adjunct urbanized area, Lack of government subsidy

Conclusions and Suggestions

Maharashtra has a great potential to the development of agro-tourism, because of natural conditions and different types of agro products as well as variety of rural traditions, festivals. More than 45 percent of population is live in the urban areas and they want enjoy rural life and to know about the rural life. It is a good opportunity to develop an

agro-tourism business in Maharashtra. 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 Maharashtra. Hence, the agriculture departments of the districts?, Agriculture Universities should try to give orientation about it and provide some innovative ideas regarding to the Agro-Tourism. Bank should provide optimum financial help for the agro-tourism activities in the Maharashtra. Union of the agro tourism service providers is also another need of these farmers which helps to the agricultural tourism network in the India including Maharashtra. The government should try to provide optimum financial aids to the agro-tourism activities in the Maharashtra by the grants and institutional finance.

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