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AN INNOVATIVE CONCEPT TO EARN AN EXTRA INCOME FROM AGRI TOURISM-THE CASE OF AN AGRI-TOURISM CENTRES IN MAHARASHTRA, INDIA**Laxman M Ahire¹ Ch Srinivasa Rao² Venkata Kumar R³ P Vijender Reddy⁴***1 Assistant Chief Technical Officer & In-Charge Training Unit**ICAR-National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM), Hyderabad**2 Director, ICAR-NAARM, Hyderabad**3 Principal Scientist and Head, Division of Social Sciences and Training, IIHR, Bangalore**4 Chief Technical Officer & In-Charge Training & PGS Unit, ICAR-NAARM, Hyderabad***Abstract**

This study was conducted by using case study research method and it is restricted to two Agri Tourism Centres only. Both the cases are from Pune District of Maharashtra State of India. First case called as Mauli Krushi Paryatan Kendra operated by Mr. Janardhan Thopte and the second case is Mayur Krushi Paryatan Kendra operated by Mr. Maruti Govind Ukirde. In this study the issues related to operate the Agri-Tourism centres are discussed in depth. Mainly focused on scope to operate Agri Tourism, challenges, implications and sustainability were discussed. As a case study method of investigation main focus was to get the first hand information from the Agri-Tourism Operators mainly on types of services provided such as stay facilities, ethnic food, activities undertaken at the centres, to know the rural culture and sustainability of the Agri-Tourism centres to get an extra income out of the farm activities and look beyond as entrepreneurship.

Regarding the first case i.e. Mauli Krushi Paryatan Kendra started by Mr Thopte in the year 2009 on 8 acres of land without taking financial aid. Mr Thopte engaged 8 people to work for tourism and farming activities and out of tourism activities he is able to get net income of Rs.1,30,000 in a year whereas the income from agriculture is only Rs.50,000. The second case called as Mayur Krushi Prayatan Kendra owned by Mr Ukirde started on 6 acres of land since 2006 and his net income from tourism activities is Rs.1.00 lakh only in nine months from June to December as summer is very hot in this area due to very low rainfall.

In both the cases major constraint is a marketing and to get the popularity of their centres among the urban visitors. Both the Agri Tourism operators taking help from the Agro Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) and Maharashtra State Agri and Rural Tourism Co-Operative Federation Ltd (MART) for advertising the centres.

Keywords: *Agri-Tourism, Subsidiary Income, Service Providers, Tourists, Scope*

Introduction

Agri-Tourism is a concept and leisurely activities in the rural setup for sustainable livelihood for the rural people / farmers as subsidiary income source. Agri-Tourism helps a person to understand and appreciate the land and the people who live on it. The work environment of cities and life style / urbanization is also an important factor which forces the urban people to go out and get rid from their routine busy life schedule to relax from the work stress and peace of mind. People from urban areas and children will get exposed in the Agri-Tourism centre with the rural life and they can enjoy the natural environment in these centres. Agri-Tourism is a way of travel to farm visit and usually offers the opportunity to help with on-site farming. It is a purposeful visit with a producer of agricultural commodities or land-based products and services with multiple activities. Agri-Tourism is not only to stay in a village and enjoy the village based food but this is an opportunity to be close to where the 75% of Indians live. One of the best things about staying on a farm is that guests can contribute to the place through their involvement. Agri-Tourism is an idea to make tourists to feel life like a villager, right from milking the cow, ploughing the field, bathing in an open well to climbing a tree, plucking fruits, flowers, vegetables and several other agricultural practices and activities. Agri-Tourism is defined as travel, which combines agricultural or rural settings with products of agricultural operations all within a tourism experience. Agri-Tourism can be defined as "A range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural IIMK Part XII-Tourism Other Sectors IIML Conference on Tourism in India – Challenges Ahead, 15-17 May 2008, IIMK 515 people to attract tourist to their area in order to generate extra income for their businesses". (Gannon,1988 in Klaze, 1994).

Commercialization in every field and the high standard of living forced the farmers to utilization every inch of land not only to produce the higher yields but also to utilize their waste land or unproductive lands for Agri-Tourism activities as subsidiary business for sustainable livelihood. Agri-Tourism has given a chance to the rural farmers to share their work with the masses. It is also an opportunity to the guests to buy agricultural and horticultural produce grown on the farm. Many children grow up without knowing the

actual facts of the rural life. Agri-Tourism, therefore, gives an opportunity to the children from urban/ city areas to learn something from the rural people about their life, hardship of their day today agriculture based activities.

The concept, Agri-Tourism was formally launched at Agri-Tourism Development Corporation, Baramati, Maharashtra on May 01, 2004. The concept of Agri-Tourism envisages involvement of private sector, the farmers / Agri-Tourism Service Providers based on Public Private Partnership (PPP). The Agri-Aourism Service Providers act as guides as well to hosts for the tourists. The Agri-Tourism Centre needs to have cleanliness, hygiene environment and surroundings with modern facilities for safety and comfort of the tourists. The preference is given to farms which have agricultural land attached to the centre. The Agri-Tourism Service Provider is needs to provide home cooked food, stay facilities at the centre and to show the agricultural practices to visitors such as cultivation of flowers, harvesting of agricultural crops or fruits, bee keeping, dairying and several other agricultural operations etc. and introduction about the village, life of villagers their culture, societal norms and the way of life through various participatory practices. The tourists can enjoy the natural environment, fresh air and atmosphere at the centre. The tourist should get an exposure about the local community, their life style which means attending a panchayat meeting, exposure of local traditional songs, traditionally celebrated festivals, dances, art, crafts, etc. Maharashtra stands third in India for population and area. It lies on the west coast of India with a 720 km long cost-line along the green Konkan region. Western Ghats and Sahyadri mountain ranges have several hill stations and water bodies with semi-evergreen and deciduous forests. There are several tourist centres in Maharashtra which are the supporting natural environment for the Agri-Tourism Centres in the state. Almost 43 per cent of population lives in urban areas in Maharashtra. Even the outside from the state and countries the tourists are visiting in the state. The well-developed infrastructure such as connectivity to the roads, communication facilities, connectivity to the air ports and well spread network of trains are some of the advantages to reap the potential tourists at these centres is added advantage.

Based on these facts and contributing to the development of Agri-Tourism Centres in Maharashtra, some of the Agri-Tourism Centres operated by the individual farmers selected for the study and to know the practical impact among the farmers and scope to capture attention of the urban / foreign tourists to visit these centres which will be helpful to the farmers for better livelihood and it is a great experience to the tourists to get exposed with the rural life, this enforced to the investigators to take up this study to know the personal profile of the Agri-Tourism Service Provider & salient features of the selected Agri-Tourism Centres.

Methodology

The researcher critically and logically reviewed the experience of agricultural transformation by complementing with agro based tourism as case studies from the state of Maharashtra, India. Other multiple sources were also used by the researcher for data collection as it was also defined by Robert K. Yin that the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1984, p. 23). The

Results And Discussion

Case-1. Mauli Krushi Paryatan Kendra

The Mauli Krushi paryatan Kendra was established by Mr Janardhan Thopte in the year 2009 at Chincholi Morachi a small village in Pune District of Maharashtra. Morachi Chincholi or (मोराची चिंचोली), by name itself means a village of tamarind trees (Marathi: चिंच chinch) and town of dancing peacocks (Marathi: मोर moar) all around. It is situated near Pune-Ahmednagar Highway about 55 km from Pune. Even today one can find a lot of peafowls in the village. This area comes under totally dryland belt and rocky soils with very low rainfall.

According to Mr Thopte he has completed his high school level education only. Due to low and erratic rainfall with un-economical agricultural production forced him towards the innovative concept of

primary data was collected from the selected Agri-Tourism Centres and the owners of agri tourism operators were interviewed personally with in depth discussions.

The present investigation was conducted by using case study research method during the year 2012-13. Maharashtra State was purposively selected as a Home State for the investigator and he is also well versed with the local language (Marathi) which was helped him to build the rapport with the Agri-Tourism Service Providers and get the first-hand information for document the word of mouth experiences of the Agri-Tourism Service Providers. Investigator has visited two Agri-Tourism Centres selected randomly to document as case studies. The vast network, scope and potential of Agri-Tourism Centres in Maharashtra specially in Pune district in support of Agriculture Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC, Pune) which is the main organization promoting this activity for achieving income, employment and economic stability in rural areas. Based on these special features and wide network of Agri-Tourism Centres in Pune and nearby areas the Pune District was selected by the investigator for the study purposively. The study is limited to two Agri-Tourism Centres from Pune district of Maharashtra.

Agri Tourism. After going through the several channels and hiccups involved in establishing the Agri Tourism Centre in spite of having good network of ATDC in Maharashtra he has established his own Agri Tourism Centre without borrowing loan from any bank in the year 2009 named as Mauli (Meaning-Mother) Krushi Paryatan Kendra on his 8 acres of land. He has engaged 8 workers for Agri Tourism and farming activities. They will work for at-least 8 hours a day, on wages ranging from Rs.100-150 per day. According to Mr Janardhan, his annual earnings from Tourism activities are Rs.3,50,000. and expenses are Rs.2,20,000. The net earnings are Rs.1,30,000/- per annum whereas, the income from farming activity is only Rs.50,000/- per annum. Mr Thopte says that his 80 per cent income comes from Agri Tourism activity whereas only 20 per cent revenue was generated through the farming activity.



Investigato with Mr. Janardhan Thopte at Morachi Chincholi Village, Pune

During discussion Mr Janardhan and investigator went around the farm and he said that there are no rains since last 8 years in this region and if there is a rain than also it is very low. There are two open wells in his farm out of which one is totally dried and one tube well is there for irrigation purpose. There is also a watershed pond constructed under the scheme Farm Ponds on Demand operated by Govt of Maharashtra for which subsidy facility is also there for farmers. The pond was constructed in the year 2010 with the cost of Rs.82,200. The size of pond is 30 X 30 X 3 meters which is a good source for harvesting water during rainy season and it is also use to fill the water by using tube well and open well water to avoid the shortage of electricity for irrigation purpose. There is a drip irrigation

system is also installed in his farm for irrigating orchards and vegetable crops. He has also introduced Gappi fishes in the farm pond to reduce the mosquito breeding as these fishes eats the eggs laid by the mosquitoes.

The entire 8 acres of land is under cultivation with Mango, Custard apple, Guava, Sweet lime, Orange, Kagzi lime, Jack Fruit and he has also planted one or two saplings of Apple as an experiment. All types of vegetables are grown in his farm and pick and harvest facility is also provided for the tourists as they can by the fresh vegetable as well as fruits available in the farm. Mr Janardhan is a very innovative farmer uses organic farming practices also uses mulching sheets

under the fruit orchards and vegetables to avoid the heavy moisture loss during the summer season. Mixed farming systems opted by Mr Janardhan to avoid losses as one crop fails the other crop can be harvested which is an innovative idea of advanced farming practices.

The open space between two rows of orchard is also utilized for cultivation of vegetable crops in this centre for getting an extra income and also helpful to reduce the weeds.



Farm pond constructed under the scheme Farm Pond on Demand implemented by Govt. of Maharashtra

Table 1: Personal profile of the Agri-Tourism Service Provider

Criteria	Features
Name of the Agri-Tourism Centre with address	Mauli Krushi Paryatan Village: MorachiChincholi, Tahsil: Shirur, District Pune-412218 Mobile: 9960663530
Year of establishment	2009
Name of the owner	Mr. Janardhan Thopte
Age	38 Years
Education	SSC
Landholding	08 Acres
Land under Agri-Tourism	08 Acres
Approval	ATDC & MART

The special features of Mauli Krushi Parayatan are one-day stay with home based pure vegetarian ethnic food, tractor ride, bullock cart ride, pick-n-harvest facility, information about variety of orchards,

Case-2. Mayur Krushi Paryatan Kendra

Mayur Krushi Paryatan Kendra is started by Mr. Maruti Govind Ukirde at Village: Chincholi Morachi in the year 2012 newly established in this area and in the process of getting the approval from ATDC and MART. According to Mr Maruti he has established this centre on 6 acres of land which is only 9 months old. All the 4 family members are engaged in the Agri Tourism as well as farm activities involved for 8 hours in a day. As explained by Mr Maruti, actual season as Agri Tourism activity starts from June and ends with February (around 9 months) due to hot summer in this area of dry region during March to May there will be no visitors. The main income source for the family is from Tourism activity which is Rs.1.0 lakh as this centre is in its budding stage and it is a hope that in future they will get good business in the years to come out of the tourism activities as they are working in ATDC and MART for obtaining approval. Since the inception of this centre for a period 9 months around 500 tourists have visited and after getting approval the number of

vegetables, medicinal plants and their usages and site visit of entire village by bullock cart.

visitors will be more and there is chance to increase the annual income from tourism activities as well they are also receiving 3-5 lakhs of income from agricultural activities by selling the farm produce.



Researcher with Mr Maruti Ukirde and Mr Janrdhan Thopte

Since this centre is not approved by the ATDC and MART for which Mr Maruti is trying and as soon as the inspection process is completed by the officials from ATDC, the centre will get approval and it is helpful for us advertising and marketing.

At this centre all the 6 acres of land is under cultivation of fruit orchards such as Pomegranate, Mango, Sapota, Sweet lime, Oranges and some of the vegetables are also cultivated. All the modern package of practices followed by Mr Maruti for cultivation of orchards and vegatable crops as his daughter completed her diploma in agriculture. Mr Maruti's son is working in Indian Army service and also helping the parents to develop this centre as modern as possible in the years to come.



Watershed farm pond at Mayur Krushi Paryatan Kendra

The fruits grown at this centres are available for the tourists to pick and harvest mode on payment basis, they will also enjoy with the freshly harvested fruits and also be an excitement of harvest. There is an open well at this centre, one tube well and also a farm pond for irrigation of all fruit and vegetable crops.

At this centre one can experience to go so close to nature, rural life, animals, birds and agricultural activities and best quality ethnic food



on cheapest rate and try to live life for one or two days in the purely pollution free environment. Tourists will be glad at this centre by watching animals, birds and peacocks. This area is a very silent and good for even meditation, hillocks is also the beauty of this area. One can also find some love birds, cows, buffalo, ducks, rabbits, backyard poultry birds at this centre. Food is also prepared here on Chulha in a desi style with Jowar and Bajra Roties with few curies and Chutinies



Stay facility for tourists at Mayur Krushi Paryatan Kendra

Visitors will experience about village culture, rural setup, their lifestyle, how farmers are producing grains, vegetables, milk etc. How people live together and how they share their pains and gains. You can also find the domestic animals at this centre which are useful to farmer how they ride Bullock Cart, how they plough the land, how biogas (gobargas) unit functions, how people using domestic fuels, how the national birds (peacocks) are safe in this village and live in drought conditions. There is an awareness among the villagers not use the pesticides in their fields for safeguard of peacocks.

This centre is full-fledged with several facilities such as accommodation best quality ethnic food and safety norms. Regarding the facilities, one can enjoy with the Bullock Cart ride and tractor ride around the farm. Watch the peacocks in morning and evenings during their feeding time. The food is served in the desi style of veg and non-veg. children can go for outside activities such as traditional games like gotya (marbles) gilli danda, kabbadi, flying kites etc.

The best time to see peacocks is morning hours and evening hours (6.00 am – 9.00 am & 5.00 - 7.30 pm) one can see beautiful peacocks with opened feathers. According to Mr Maruti, the peacock dances to attract peahen and breeding takes place only once in a year, peahens lay 5-6 eggs and it takes 30-32 days to hatch. Many times, lack of rains peahen not getting safe place to lay eggs and some wild birds and animals damage their eggs and chicks, due to that the population of peacocks decreasing day by day and it is worry some for our village. In oral conversion Mr Maruti expressed his feeling as when I was young I found my village full of fruit gardens and tamarind trees but due to drought condition people losing their gardens, cattle and interest in farming. It is hurting to me and it is responsibility of every citizen of India to safe guard the climate and nature ultimately helps to save the planet.

The average charges for the visitors are as follows for the tourists who wish to visit the centre.

Item	Rate (Rs.) / Specification
Breakfast	100 for adult & child
Lunch	Adult-275 for non-veg 300: Child-175
Night meal	Adult-275; Child-175 & for non-veg food is Rs.300/-
Room charge	500 per day with adequate water & best quality linen

Table 2: Personal profile of the Agri-Tourism Service Provider

Criteria	Features
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Name of the Agri-Tourism Centre with address	Mayur Krushi Paryatan Village: Morachi Chincholi, Tahsil: Shirur, District Pune-412218 Mobile: 7875992279, 9226223364
Year of establishment	2012
Name of the owner	Mr. UkirdeMarutiGovind
Age	58 Years
Education	Primary level
Landholding	6 acres
Land under Agri-Tourism	6 acres
Approval	Not yet approved by any Institution

Special features at Mayur Krushi Paryatan are traditional welcome to every tourist, bullock cart ride around the village, stay facility for 1 day + day and night, visit to farm and information about cultivation of Mango, Guava, Sapota and Pomegranate, facilities such as pick and harvest of fruits, vegetable and flowers etc., on payment basis. Homemade food is served to tourists. Water shed pond is also one of the attraction at this centre. Rabbits, backyard poultry bird, love birds, peacocks and ducks are also major attractions of this centre.

Conclusion

While conclusions drawn from the case study inevitably require some caveats, our research highlights how Subsidiary Income Evolution can be seen as a simple and, hence, systems thinking provides a preliminary understanding of how this evolve. In doing so, we provide insights into this framework may be useful to others in order to explore and exploit opportunities with significant ambiguity.

In both the cases it was observed that one can buy the fresh vegetables, fruits and flowers, simultaneously tourist can enjoy the harvesting of all type of produce available at the farm. Tourist can know about the cultivation practices opted by the at these centres and they will also get the first hand information about the various crops. Tourists will take part in various activities such as bullock cart and

tractor rides, play with domestic animals, experiencing rural games and folk dances. Tourist can also enjoy by watching the water harvesting farm ponds, local tree plantation and various facilities provided by these centres. Similar Study was also conducted by Gopal, Varma and Gopinathan (2008). Similar study was also conducted by Hamilpurkar (2012).

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