

# Farm Tourism Entrepreneurship: A Mechanism for Rural Development in Kerala

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**Abstract:** *Farm Tourism is a new trend in Kerala's tourism sector. Kerala, being an agriculture dominated state, has tremendous potential for developing Farm Tourism in a big way without much additional investment. Farm Tourism could create awareness about rural life and knowledge about agriculture science among urban school children. Treating guests is pleasure for the villagers than pain. The farmer entertains the guest while entertaining himself in the process. He is not like an exploitative natured businessman which itself facilitate a clean tourism atmosphere. There is an increase in the number of tourists preferring non-urban tourist spots. Hence, there is scope for the promotion of non-urban tourist spots in interior villages by establishing Farm-based Tourism centers. Organic Farming and its development give tremendous impetus to Farm Tourism. Farm tourism Entrepreneurship is a new concept for farmers to get into enterprise and business system. Entrepreneurship development through Farm tourism may be a useful tool for the development of rural areas in Kerala. The purpose of this study is to explore the scope of farm tourism entrepreneurship in Kerala. This study also investigates the socio-economic contribution of farm tourism entrepreneurship to the rural development of Kerala.*

**Keywords:** farm tourism, eco-tourism, entrepreneurship, organic farming, socio-economic contribution

## I. INTRODUCTION

Farm tourism means any agriculturally based operation or activity that brings visitors to farm areas. Farm tourism has different definitions in different parts of the world, and sometimes refers specifically to farm stays, as in Italy. Elsewhere, Farm tourism includes a wide variety of activities, including buying produce direct from a farm stand, navigating a corn maze, slopping hogs, picking fruit, feeding animals, or staying at a bed and breakfast (B&B) on a farm. Farm tourism is a form of niche tourism that is considered a growing industry in many parts of the world, including Australia, Canada, the United States, and the Philippines. Farm tourism Entrepreneurship may be a new concept for farmers to get into an enterprise business system. Entrepreneurship development through Farm tourism is not yet found in farm areas of rural India. Indian Agriculture is still a away from tourism exposure. A few states in India like Rajasthan, Assam, Haryana, U.P and Kerala, are attracting tourism to their villages but there is still no concept centered on Farm tourism. Farm tourism Entrepreneurship may be a useful tool for the development of rural areas in India.

### 1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- Explore the scope of farm tourism entrepreneurship in Kerala
- Investigates the socio- economic contribution of farm tourism entrepreneurship to the rural development of Kerala.

### 1.2 THE CONCEPT OF FARM TOURISM

The concept of farm tourism envisages farmers / farm house owners providing a rural tourism experience to visitors. As farm tourism operations are small businesses with limited promotional resources the public-sector assists with operational guidelines and publicity in partnership with them. The farm house owner acts as both host and guide to the visiting tourists. The farm houses provide a clean, hygienic environment with modern facilities for the comfort of

visitor's preference is given to farms which have agricultural land attached. The farm house owner should provide home cooked food, comfortable accommodation and show the visitor the local agricultural practices such as floriculture, harvesting, bee keeping, dairying etc. and introduce the rural way of life to him through various participatory activities. The visitors must be able to enjoy the natural surroundings in fresh air. Apart from the farm experience the visitor should get exposure to local community life, which may mean attending a panchayat meeting, exposure to local songs, food, dances, arts and crafts, etc. A village tour should be included such as visiting the local artisans like the carpenter, blacksmith, etc. The visitors may also experience festival occasions such as marriages and local melas. They can also see the important fairs and festivals being organized in the area along with visits to important monuments, havelis, historical sites, etc. Each farm can aim at developing a unique selling point; some specializing in organic farming, others in floriculture, natural health management etc. (Anshumali Pandey, 2015)

## II. METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on secondary data. The data has been collected from the related articles, research papers and reports. Some data has been furnished from the website of the Ministry of Tourism, the Government of India and of Kerala.

### 2.1 TOURISM POTENTIAL IN KERALA

Kerala is considered as a 'tourists' paradise. Tourism in Kerala is non-seasonal in nature. The flagship of tourism industry in Kerala is Department of Tourism (DoT), Government of Kerala. Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC), Bakel Resorts Development Corporation (BRDC), Tourist Resorts (Kerala) Ltd. (TRKL), District Tourism Promotion Councils (DTPCs), Kerala Institute of Travel and Tourism Management Studies (KITTS), Kerala Institute of Hospitality Management Studies (KIHMS), Thenmala Eco-Tourism development Agency, and a host of government departments such as Forests and Wildlife, Irrigation, Museum, Zoo and Archaeology are the other important state sponsored institutions which play a key role in the tourism sector of Kerala. Considering the vast and varied potential of tourism in the state and its impact on the economic, social and cultural environment of the state, a detailed study is found to be relevant and imperative. Besides, there are several other agencies working in the semi-government and private sector for promotion of tourism in Kerala.

Kerala initiated tourism development programmes by establishing an international beach resort at Kovalam in 1976 under the patronage of the central government. Realizing the economic potential, Government of Kerala declared tourism as an industry in 1986. Within a short span of two and a half decades, Kerala succeeded in establishing its own brand of tourism in the international market. The first tourism policy of the state was announced in 1995 underlining the importance of Public- Private Partnership. Tourism has come a long way since then, capturing new markets with its innovative products and marketing strategies. Total employment generated from tourism is estimated to be 1.2 million.

### 2.2 GLOBAL TOURISM AND INDIAN TOURISM

Global tourism is a US\$ 919 billion business. It has increased by US\$ 67 billion registering a growth rate of 5% in 2010. The world tourist arrival which was a mere 25 million in 1950, reached 924 million in 2008. The UNWTO provisional estimate shows that the international tourist arrival has reached 940 million in 2010 registering a growth rate of 6.6% compared to the previous year. The total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP, including its wider economic impact is 9.1% in 2010. The total employment created is worked out as 258 million which forms 8.8% of global employment. These achievements are attributed to a synergy created by Public Private Partnership and community interface. India is relatively a newcomer in global tourism business. Though we receive less than one percent of global tourism (US\$ 11.39 billion) and arrivals (5.58 million), it has become a vibrant segment in the national economy. International tourist arrivals in India increased from 1.6 million in 1991 to 5.58 million (provisional) in 2010, registering 8.1% annual growth.

### 2.3 AGRICULTURE SECTOR IN KERALA

Agriculture remains the largest sector of the Indian economy. The state has witnessed a remarkable transformation in the agricultural sector since its formation. The implementation of Land Reforms Act in 1963 founded the knell of

feudalism and became a landmark in Kerala's agricultural sector and a stepping-stone for further reforms in this field. Cash Crops like coconut, rubber, tea, coffee, pepper, cardamom, areca nut, ginger, nutmeg, cinnamon etc. and food crops like paddy, tapioca etc. give the agricultural sector of Kerala a distinct flavor. The agro climatic conditions in Kerala suit the cultivation of a variety of seasonal and perennial crops. Fifteen principle crops (Rice, pulses, coconut, rubber, tea, coffee, pepper, cardamom, areca nut, ginger, nutmeg, cinnamon, paddy tapioca and other plantations) are cultivated from the net areas sown of 21,11,471 hecter in the State. Paddy cultivation is part and parcel of our culture and it is the State's major food crop. Despite these facts, the area and production of paddy continues to decline over the years. Though 50 percent self-sufficiency in rice cultivation was achieved during 1974-75, the area and production of paddy had declined at an alarming rate in the later years. Such that in the year, 2005-06 the area and production of rice was only 2, 75,742 hectares and 6,29,987 metric tonnes respectively resulting in imports from other States for meeting the rice requirement of the State.

#### 2.4 HISTORY OF FARM TOURISM/ AGRI-TOURISM

The history of Agri-tourism dates back to the late 1800's when people began leaving the city to visit relatives in their farmsteads for short stays away from city life. After the invention of the automobile in the 1920's it became easier for people to travel to the rural areas. In the 1930's and 1940's, the Great Depression and World War II gave rise to the first significant interest in rural recreation. In the 1960's and 1970's horseback rides and farm petting zoos became popular. In the 1980's and 1990's, farm vacations, overnight stays at bed and breakfasts, and commercial farm tours became popular. Today, the demand continues to grow for Agri-tourism. (Mahaliyanaarachchi, 2015)

#### 2.5 ATTRACTIONS OF FARM TOURISM

They are: -

- Farm visitor centres
- Farm museums and farm shops
- Self-guided farm trails
- Educational visits and demonstrations
- Nature studies and workshops on interesting or emerging agriculture topics
- Farm Store : Exhibition of farm equipments
- Roadside stands selling fresh farm products and craft items
- Processing of farm products and sale
- A shady spot for visitors to rest – like a big banyan tree
- Farm Schools to teach a particular skill
- Collection of old farm Machinery
- Miniature Village
- Farm Theme Playground for Children

Apart from the above, several different activities, including horse-riding, fishing and shooting, are widely available on farms. There is a large potential market for farm tourism especially for foreign tourists in Kerala. (James, Farm based rural tourism in Kerala, 2012)

#### 2.6 SCOPE OF FARM TOURISM

The scope of farm tourism can be discussed based on Agricultural dominance of Kerala

- **Cost effectiveness**– This widens the tourist's base as tourists can enjoy their holidays at affordable prices with a wide range of products for their enjoyment.
- **Live experience of rural life**– Farm tourism revolves around village life, culture, crops, animals, village crafts, festivals etc,
- **Family oriented recreation activities**-Villages provide a wide range of recreational activities to all age groups through a variety of entertaining and recreational activities.

- **Preference for peaceful destinations and tranquility** –Work more and earn more is the ‘Mantra’ of urban life. This demands a change in life at weekends and holidays freefrom worry and hurry. Farm tourism can be one of the destinations to avail the peace and tranquility which is not possible in resorts of overcrowded cities.
- **Interest in nature and environment**– Urban population is leaning towards nature. Proximity to nature through birds, animals, mountains, crops, village etc. provides an atmosphere for the urban people where they can forget their busy life.
- **Rural recreations**– Various festivals and celebrations in rural areas provides recreation to tourists. Various forms of agro tourism like – Agri- shopping, culinary tourism, health tourism etc. are examples for the same.
- **Educational Value of Agro –tourism**– Agro tourism could create awareness about rural life and knowledge about agricultural science among urban school and college children. It provides an opportunity for hands on experience for urban students in agriculture.(Upadhye, 2015)

### III. FARM TOURISM ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Farm tourism is complimentary to traditional agricultural activities. It is an opportunity for farmers to use the available resources in a diversified and innovative way. It creates a win –win situation for farmers as well as tourists. Farmers earn better from innovative use of available resources and the tourist can enjoy village life and nature at affordable prices. Also the Villages are benefited due to the development of Farm tourism.Farm tourism needs conceptual convergence with rural tourism, eco-tourism, medical tourism and culinary adventures .In the era of globalization entrepreneurship development in the rural context is a challenge .According to 2011 census 68.84% of the people are living in rural areas of India. Rural entrepreneurs are suffering from various problems like fear of risk, lack of finance, illiteracy and competition from urban entrepreneurs. Farm tourism entrepreneurship plays an important role in rural development. Agriculture continues to be the back bone of rural society.(Kumar, 2016)

### IV. BENEFITS OF FARM TOURISM ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- Farm tourism will create employment for the rural people and generate income for them.
- They will have an additional source of income along with their agricultural income.
- Farm tourism provides better standard of living for the rural people
- Through the increased flow of tourists, small, local businessmen will be benefited. The rural people will learn to develop healthy environment with proper sanitation, roads, electricity, telecommunication, etc.
- Rural people will learn to preserve the natural habitats, bio-diversity and historical monuments.
- Market for agro products and handicrafts will develop in rural areas and the farmers and artisans will develop a direct contact with the customers
- Promotes organic farming
- Provides cash flow during off season and develop a market for agricultural products

### V. SOCIO ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF FARM TOURISM

Farm tourism development is bringing about changes in agricultural practices, earnings of the farmers etc. It will be interesting to see the socio economic changes taking place in rural area due to Farm tourism. The economic impact can be discussed as follows

Increases the income of the local community – Backward and forward linkages of Farm tourism business will become instrumental in enhancing the income of the local community without any additional investment.

Intensified and diversified economic activities – Economic activities in rural areas get intensified due to interlinks between Farm tourism and various income generating activities such as:

- Farm stay Accommodation
- Homely Food
- Transport and excursion
- Tour Operators
- Tourist Guides

- Market for village craft items
- Opportunity for traditional and cultural programs conducted by village artists
- Employment opportunities – With diversified and intensified economic activities new and innovative employment and self-employment opportunities get generated leading to enhanced earnings for the villagers.
- Poverty alleviation – Enhanced earnings of the community leads to alleviation of poverty in rural areas. (Upadhye, 2015)

#### VI. THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF FARM TOURISM ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Farm tourism programs can help in community development. It helps building pride and confidence in the rural community.

- Better quality of life - Intensification and diversification of economic activities through agro tourism enhances the purchasing power of the community. No doubt, this improves the standard of living and ultimately the quality of life in a rural area.
- Cultural transformation – Cultural transformation is possible through interaction with various guests / tourists of different castes, creeds and communities.
- Strengthening the community - Also it is possible that farm tourism will strengthen the community leading to better networking and leadership.

The services like schools, library, health care, ICT centers, public transportation etc. also get developed due to farm tourism.

#### VII. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Foreign Tourist arrival to Kerala during the year 2016 is 1038419 and it shows an increase of 6.23% over the previous year's figure of 977479.
- Domestic tourist arrival to Kerala during the year 2016 is 13172535. It shows an increase of 5.67% over the previous year's figure 12465571.
- Foreign exchange earnings for the year 2016 are Rs. 7749.51 crores which recorded an increase of 11.51% over the previous year.
- Total revenue (including direct and indirect) from tourism during 2016 is Rs.29658.56 crores showing an increase of 11.2% over last year's figure.
- Share of agriculture and allied sectors toward GDP in India and in Kerala shows a decreasing tendency.
- With regard to Kerala, growth performance of the agriculture and allied sectors has been fluctuating across the Plan period. It witnessed a growth of 1.8 percent in X<sup>th</sup> Plan period but a negative growth rate of -1.3 percent in XI<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan.
- In the Twelfth Plan based on the new series brought out by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics (DES) with 2011-12 as base year, the agriculture and allied sectors recorded a growth rate of 1.43 per cent in the first year (2012-13), and a negative growth rate of -2.13 per cent in the second year (2013-14).
- In 2014-15, the sector has recorded a negative growth rate of -4.67 per cent. Consequently, the share of agriculture and allied sectors in the total GSDP of the State has also declined from 14.38 per cent in 2011-12 to 11.6 per cent in 2014-15.
- From 2004-05 to a new series with 2011-12 as base has resulted in higher share of agriculture and allied sectors in the total GSDP of the State, showing an increase from 8.83 per cent to 12.9 per cent for 2013-14.
- Farm tourism entrepreneurship is an emerging trend in Kerala, being an agriculture dominated state there is high potential and wide scope for the sustainable growth of farm tourism.
- Farm tourism entrepreneurship provides a means for additional income generation to the rural people and farmers who depend on agriculture as a major source of income finally resulting in rural development
- Farm tourism protects and saves our nature and environment.



### VIII. CONCLUSION

Development of Farm tourism entrepreneurship is an opportunity for farmers to use the available resources in a diversified and innovative way. Farmers earn better from innovative use of available resources and the tourist can enjoy village life and nature at affordable prices. Farm tourism entrepreneurship provides alternative economic opportunities in rural areas. The trend towards farm tourism is enhanced by increasing levels of the awareness on tourism, growing interest in heritage and culture, its improved accessibility and better environmental consciousness. Farm tourism entrepreneurship provides better rural development through socio-economic contribution to the society at large. In the developed countries, this has resulted in a new kind of tourism of visiting village settings to experience and live a relaxed and healthy life. It also aims at local community empowerment, eradication of rural poverty and unemployment and revitalisation of development programmes. Government can boost up agricultural sector as new facet of farm tourism entrepreneurship in innovative potential of Kerala tourism.

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