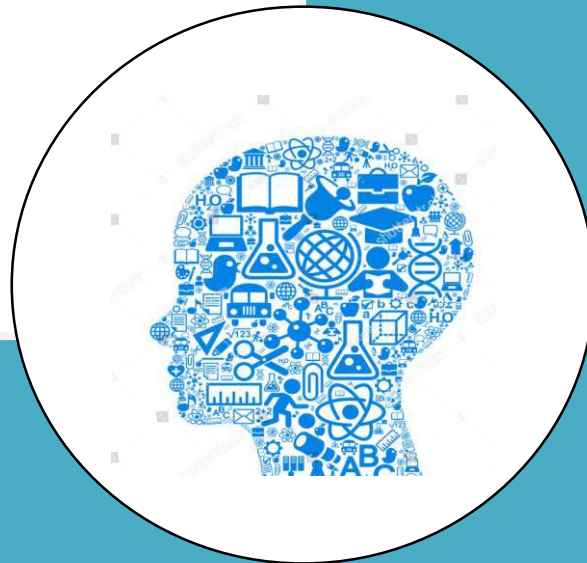


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		<b>Dr. P.B .Achole, Mr. .Swami B.M</b>	
31	Advantages and Disadvantages of Special Economic Zones	<b>Dr.Bapu Bhima Raut</b>	172-177
32	Types of Rural Settlement in Solapur District: A Geographical Analysis	<b>Dr. Bhosale Govind Jalindar</b>	178-182
33	Female Education A model And Impact In Siwan District	<b>Megha Sharma</b>	183-185
34	Sustainable Rural Development with Self- Help Group	<b>Dr. Kotgire Manisha Arvind</b>	186-190
35	Impact Of Covid-19 On Educational System Of India	<b>Dr.Sangameshwar Annarao Nimbargi</b>	191-196
36	Seismic Vulnerability Assessment of Existing Public School Buildings of Himalayan Foothill Region : A Case Study of Ramnagar Town,India”	<b>Abhilasha Kannaujia</b>	197-203
37	Irrigation system in Dharwad District: A Geographical analysis	<b>Dr. I. A. Mulla</b>	204-209
38	Perspectives Role of Agro – Tourism With Special Reference To Mapro Gardens, Mahableshwar	<b>Dr. A. G. Nimase</b>	210-214
39	Status of Water Resource & Water Harvesting	<b>Dr. Anurag Srivastava</b>	215-217
40	A Study on Contribution of Vikram Seth and His Works to Indian Writing in English	<b>Ramkumar Varma Dammalapati</b>	218-221
41	भारतातील घन कचरा प्रदूषण	<b>डॉ. हरी साधू वाघमारे</b>	222-226



## Perspectives Role of Agro – Tourism With Special Reference To Mapro Gardens, Mahableshwar

**Dr. A. G. Nimase**

Assistant professor, Department of Geography, Chhatrapati Shivaji College, Satara

[Email-abhimannimase@gmail.com](mailto:Email-abhimannimase@gmail.com)

**Abstract** The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines rural tourism (Agro-tourism) as tourism that gives to visitors a personalized contact, a taste of physical and human environment of the countryside and as far as possible, allows them to participate in the activities, traditions and lifestyles of local people. In the most recent 30 years of the twentieth century the term Agritourism showed up in worldwide writing. There exists a parallel word Agro-Tourism. Agro tourism offers a unique opportunity to combine aspects of the tourism and agricultural industries in order to provide tourists, producers and communities with a number of financial, educational and social benefits. Agro tourism provides producers with the opportunity to generate additional income and avenue for consumers to market directly. This paper describes the significance of agro tourism for the farmers, towards improvement of standard of living of people involved in agro tourism and overall development of our Indian economy. This research paper also analyzes the reasons for the growth of agro tourism in India. The research objectives are to investigate the contribution of Mapro gardens as a place to visit in promotion of agro tourism at Panchgini, Mahableshwar.

**Keywords:** Environment, Tourism, , Agro tourism, Visitors

### Introduction

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. About 65 – 70 percent of the population is dependent on agriculture directly or indirectly and generates their livelihood. About 16 – 17 percent of total GDP comes from agriculture. It would certainly increase the contribution of agriculture to national GDP by providing additional income generating activities for existing agriculture. Agro tourism is the latest concept in the Indian tourism industry that usually takes place on farms. It offers the opportunity to experience the real enchanting and authentic contact with rural life, taste genuine local food and learn about the various agricultural tasks during the visit. It offers a welcome escape from everyday hectic life in a peaceful rural setting. It gives the chance to relax and revitalize in the pure natural environment, surrounded by magnificent setting. Simply put, agro - tourism can be seen as a crossroads between tourism and agriculture. More technically specified, agro - tourism can be defined as a form of commercial enterprise that links agricultural production and / or processing with tourism to attract visitors to a farm, ranch or other agricultural business for the purpose of entertaining and / or educating visitors and generating income for the owner of the farm, ranch or business. Whatever the exact definition or terminology, the following four factors should be included in any definition of agro - tourism:

1. designed to increase farm income ; and
2. Provides visitors with recreation, entertainment and/or education.
3. combines the essential elements of the tourism and agricultural industries ;
4. attracts members of the public to visit agricultural operations ;

The present paper is an attempt to understand significance of agro tourism in India in terms of its contribution towards raising the standard of living of people associated with agriculture, generating employment and overall development of our economy. The paper tries to analyze significance of Mapro garden as a destination for agro tourism as well.

### Statement Of The Problem

This research paper aims to probe into, the significance of agro tourism towards raising standard of living or contribution towards economic growth. The researcher has tried to analyze the opinions of the tourists visiting the agro tourism places towards their experiences and purpose of their visits at such places. To understand in an elaborative way about the agro tourism a case study of Mapro gardens at Panchgini, Mahableshwar is also highlighted.

### Objective Of The Study

Present study aims to examine the significance and reasons for the growth of agro-tourism development. In this broader framework, an attempt is made to achieve the following specific objectives: To examine the importance of agro-tourism in the development of farmer's livelihood.

- To describe the significance of agro-tourism development
- To understand the reasons for the growth of agro tourism in India
- To identify the problems of the agro-tourism and make suggestions to establishment and operations of agro-tourism
- To discuss the case study of Mapro gardens at Panchgini, Mahableshwar.

### Scope Of The Study

The benefits of agro-tourism development are manifold. Agro tourism is an inexpensive gateway as it takes travel and tourism to the larger population, widening the scope of tourism due to its cost effectiveness. Employment opportunities to the farmers including farm family members and youth is increased many folds and the additional income source for the farmers act as shield to protect against income fluctuation. It enhances the tourism industry by increasing the volume of visitors to an area and the length of their stay. Agro tourism also provides communities with the potential to increase their local tax bases and new employment opportunities. Additionally, agro tourism provides educational opportunities to the public, helps to preserve agricultural lands, and allows states to develop business enterprises.

### Limitations Of The Study

1. Case study of only Mapro gardens has been considered for the study as a place of agro tourism.
2. From among the total number of tourists visited agro tourism places 100 sample respondents are interviewed.

### 3. Review Of Literature

Agro-Tourism has the potential to change the economic face of traditional agriculture. Examine the importance of agro-tourism development in Maharashtra. To define a suitable framework for the of agro- tourism centers in the view of marginal and small.

Literature has it that Agritourism started in the United States in the early 1800s (Karabati et al., 2009). A number of countries of the world have transformed their economies through agro-tourism activities. The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) has been promoting agritourism in the Caribbean since 2005 to strengthen links between tourism and agriculture (IICA, 2011). In Thailand, it has been used as one of the main medium to attract tourists from all over the world. Since the advent of agritourism in Thailand in 2002, agro tourism has created a great impact by having a record of more than half a million tourists visiting farm areas in a national scheme (Taemsaran, 2005). In Europe, agritourism has become a way of life for Europeans as a large percentage of Europeans take farm holidays (Frater, 1983). Agro-tourism industry is gaining ground in Malaysia as the country has a wealth of products for visiting tourists (Hamzah, 2011).

- Naidu (2016)<sup>2</sup> The paper aims to study the ongoing Agro-tourism initiative & existing schemes to promote agro tourism in the country. It also highlights Documentation of existing business models in Agro-tourism – suggesting viable model. Further research aims to find out the strategic role of extension and advisory services in sustenance of Agro-tourism.

Privitera (2015) the research paper aims to differentiate agro tourism and organic agro tourism definitions specifying the principal characteristics. It tries to investigate the role of organic-agro tourism, as a tool for development of the landscape and attraction for sustainable tourism.

The purpose of this paper was to identify and examine those factors that have helped rural communities successfully develop agro tourism, in particular organic agro tourism and its entrepreneurship opportunities.

Upadhye (2015) examines the importance of agro-tourism development in Western Maharashtra. The research paper focuses on various factors instrumental enhancing agro tourism in Maharashtra. The paper analyzes the various products provided by Agro Tourism in Maharashtra and also discusses the problems of agro tourism industry in Maharashtra.

#### Methodology & Data Sources Of Data Collection

##### 1. Primary data

The study is based on primary and secondary data. In order to achieve objectives of the study and to test the hypothesis, moreover, 100 sample respondents are contacted and interviewed.

##### 2. The secondary data

The data is gathered from relevant research journals, websites, published and unpublished sources etc. Some data has furnished from the websites of the government of India and Maharashtra, as well as Ministry of agriculture. Some ideas have been taken from the Tourism Development Corporation of Maharashtra.

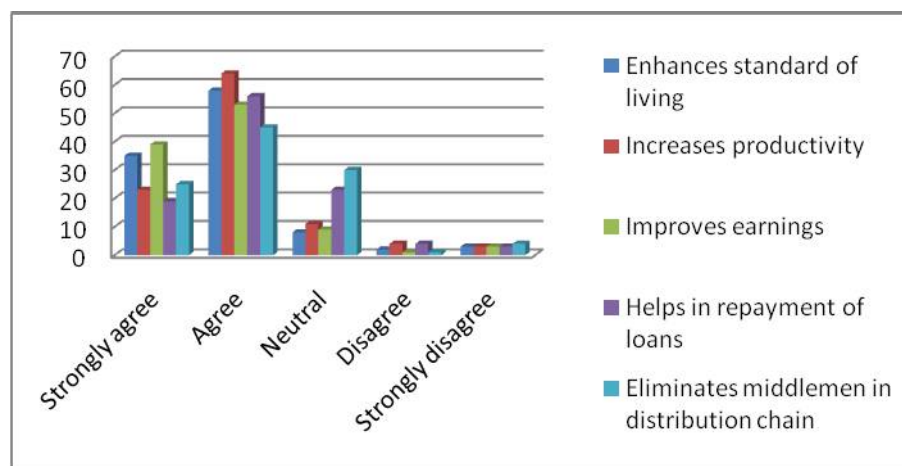
#### Results & Analysis:

The opinions of tourists respondents have been analyzed in terms of:

- Significance of agro tourism for the farmers
- Benefits of agro tourism
- Reasons for the growth of agro tourism in India
- Opinions towards visit to Mapro gardens in terms of purpose to visit, the most preferable liking at Mapro
- Mapro gardens a contributor towards growth of agro tourism

**Table: 1-Beneficial to the Farmer**

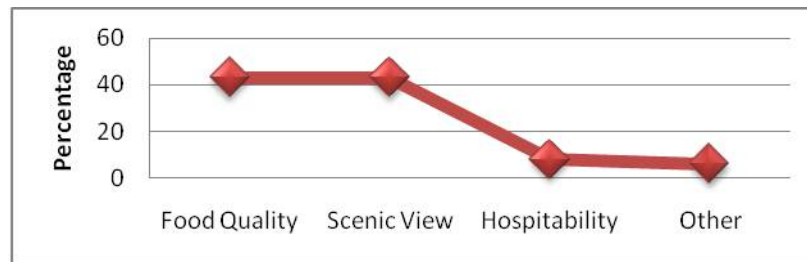
Particulars	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Enhances standard of living	35	58	8	2	3
Increases productivity	23	64	11	4	3
Improves earnings	39	53	9	1	3
Helps in repayment of loans	19	56	23	4	3
Eliminates middlemen in distribution chain	25	45	30	1	4



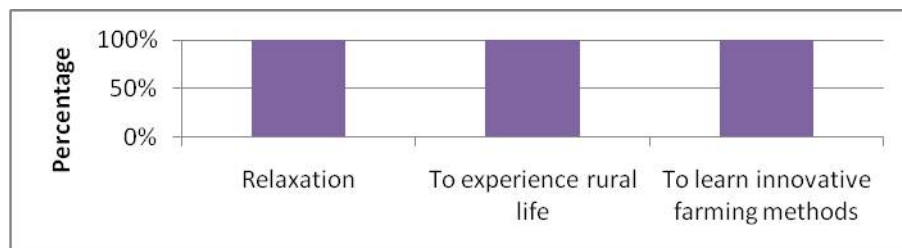
It can be noted from the chart that there are mainly five ways in which agro tourism benefits the farmers. Majority of the people agree to these ways being beneficial to the farmers. Agro tourism helps the farmers to generate more income and attain a better standard of living. Around 85-90% respondents believe that it enhances standard of living, increases productivity and improves earning. 65 - 75 % respondents are in opinion that it helps in repayment of loans and eliminates the middle men.

**Table: 2-The most preferable Thing at Mapro Garden**

Reasons	Percentage
Food Quality	43
Scenic View	43
Hospitability	8
Other	6

**Table: 3-The purpose of Visit of Mapro Garden**

Reasons	Percentage
Relaxation	52.5%
To experience rural life	18.75
To learn innovative farming methods	13.75



More than 50% of the people visit the Mapro Garden for relaxation. They find an escape in this garden away from their busy lives. 15% people visit the garden to learn about new innovative farming methods and experience rural life. Among the population size of 100 around 15 are interested to visit such place to be the first hand learners by experiencing the innovative methods at such places.

### Findings & Conclusion

The 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. Few problems researcher could come across while doing the survey. Major challenges and problems are as follows;

- Lack of perfect knowledge about the agro tourism Weak communication skill and lack of commercial approach of the small farmers
- Lack of capital to develop basic infrastructure for the agro-tourism
- Ignorance of the farmers towards the hospitality for the urban tourists
- Presence of unorganized sector in the agro-tourism industry
- Ensuring hygiene and basic requirements considering urban visitors.

**SUGGESTIONS**

Agro-Tourism is a one of the business activities. So, farmers must have commercial mindset and some marketing techniques for the success. For the better success in the agro-tourism farmers should follow the following things;

- Train your staff or family members for reception and hospitality Understand the expectations of tourists and try to reduce the gap between their expectation and perception
- Charge optimum rent and charges for the facilities/services on the commercial base
- Do the artificially use local resources for the entertain / serve to tourist
- Develop a good relationship with the tourist for future business and chain
- Develop different agro-tour packages for different type of tourist and their expectations.
- Preserve an address book and comments of the visited tourists for future tourism
- Small farmers can develop their agro-tourism centers on the basis of cooperative society
- Participation in training and skills development programs with Maharashtra State Development corporation

**Conclusion**

Agro tourism is still a developing sector in India. There is a lot of scope for growth in this sector but necessary steps should be taken by the government for the same. With appropriate policies, agro tourism can generate tremendous revenue for the government and can be one of the sought after vacation options.