

Threats and Opportunities of Farmers and Development of Agro-tourism in Bangladesh

Malay Sarker

Department of Hotel Management and Tourism, Royal University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

Abstract - Naturally, Bangladesh has tremendous potential for both agricultural and tourism development. The present study reviewed literature in the sphere of Agro-tourism development, particularly in Bangladesh. Agricultural areas in this country have many tourist attractions which can form the basis for relaxation, enjoyment and education of tourist. In addition, the synergistic effect on national income would have resulted if both agriculture and tourism is practiced in an integrated approach. The study was undertaken to realize agro-biological aspects of Tourism, prospects, importance, challenges, and suggestion for the improvement in the present scenario of agro-tourism in Bangladesh. Agro-tourism in Bangladesh is in its very beginning and there are many weaknesses, challenges, and threats that retard the successfulness of Agro-tourism which need to be solved soon. Bangladesh has a lot of options when it comes to promote the concept of Agro-tourism and find new means that can contribute to its overall economy. After analyzing the relevance of Agro-tourism in Bangladesh, the possible promotional strategies have been suggested.

Keywords - Agriculture, Tourism, Local community, Income, Employment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is one of the major tourist destinations in the South Asian region and there is large scope and great potential to develop Agro-tourism by which farmers may enhance their income mentionably. Not only that but also this sector will pave the way of employment opportunity for agricultural labor simultaneously the basket of rural economy will be changed significantly. But it will not ignore that some obstacles are existing in the sector that will be discussed in near future.

Agro-tourism is a way of sustainable tourist development and multi-activity in rural areas through which the visitor has the opportunity to be aware with agricultural areas, agricultural occupations, local products, traditional food and the daily life of the rural people, as well as the cultural elements and traditions. Moreover, this activity brings visitors closer to nature and rural cultures in which they can participate, be entertained and feel the pleasure of touring.

II. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Agro-Tourism benefits to the both rural as well as urban people. It also acts as an additional source of economic development to the rural people and creates an enormous employment opportunities to the family members and its young generations. Therefore, the government of Bangladesh

and other related authorities should try to support these activities for the rural development and increase income level of the farmers. Agro-tourism is an innovative agricultural activity related to tourism and agriculture both. It has a great capacity to create additional source of income and employment opportunities to the farmers, fishermen, etc.

III. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are presented below:

- To examine the importance of Agro-tourism development in Bangladesh.
- To identify the threats of farming sector and minimize the threat associated with agriculture and ensure the farm income throughout the year
- To identify the problems of the Agro-tourism and make suggestions to establishment and operations of Agro-tourism.
- To provide a supplementary income for the farm, to increase its total profit.
- To eradicate unemployment among unemployed people.

IV. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The present study was conducted on the Agro-tourism is based on secondary data. The data has been collected from the related articles, research papers, reports and from the websites of the government of Bangladesh, as well as ministry of agriculture. Some ideas have been taken from the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism (MOCAT), Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB), Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC).

V. LIMITATION

Due to pandemic situation, I had to face various unavoidable problems to collect relevant secondary data along with more exiting literature.

VI. LITERATURE REVIEW

Agro-tourism is the practice of attracting visitors to an area used basically for agricultural purposes. It attracts tourists to rural communities for a form of relaxation that follows the growing trend of tourism that is both educational and recreational. Also it is another option for farmers wanting to diversify their farming operations that will bring more economic activities to rural areas [1].

In the literature, there are several terms such as agro-tourism, farm tourism, farm based tourism, and rural tourism that are often used instead with Agro-tourism [2],[3],[4]. Literature reveals multiple definitions for Agro-tourism based on range of characteristics. However, there is not a generally accepted one definition. Barbieri and Mshenga defined Agro-tourism as any activity developed on farm with the intent of attracting guests [2]. According to Marques Agro-tourism is a type of rural tourism in which the hosting house must be incorporated into an agricultural estate, allowing visitors to participate in agricultural activities [5]. American Farm Bureau Federation made a definition of the concept as an enterprise at a working farm conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates income for the owner [6]. Hence Agro-tourism as an innovative activity in agriculture create extra source of income and employment opportunities for farmers and local community [7].

Agro-tourism as a new concept is gaining popularity in Bangladesh since this country is rich in agricultural resources. Agro-tourism is activity that offers opportunities to visitors to visit agricultural villages and to understand the culture of the country with providing social-economic benefits for local communities [9]. Agro-tourism is the amalgamation of tourism and agriculture. Agro-tourism is constantly hybridizing and evolving which promotes excitement, discovery, and anticipation [10]. It is one of the most extensive and influential forms of tourism in Austria[11], Germany[12], Norway[13], Greece, Poland, and China[14] and other parts of Europe and America.

Agro-tourism is specifically defined by Man has as “travel which combines agricultural or rural settings with products of agricultural operations, all within a tourism experience or a range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers”. He also calls it “innovative income generating activity for enterprising farmers” [20]. After considering all points, the modified typology for Agro-tourism is proposed as in figure 1.

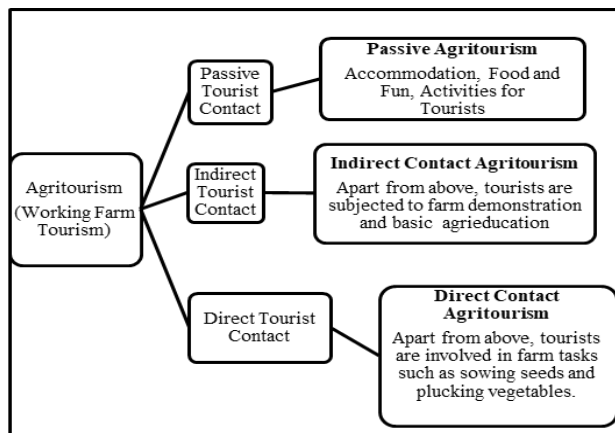


Figure 1: Modified Typologies of Agri-tourism [24]

According to Veeck et al. [21] defining agricultural tourism is something akin to the blind men and the elephant, but there is general agreement that Agro-tourism incorporates visits to farms for the purposes of on-site retail purchases, enjoyment, and education [22]. Participating farmers hope for significant and steady retail sales, but the components of entertainment and education that are also provided make Agro-tourism more than simply a relocation of retail sales to a family farm.

Advantages of Agro-tourism

The advantages of Agro-tourism development are manifold. It would bring many direct and indirect benefits to the farmers and rural communities. Some of the benefits are following:-

- Employment opportunities to the farmers including farm family members and youth
- Additional source of income for the farmers to protest against income fluctuation.
- Cultural transformation between urban and rural people including social moral values
- Farmers can improve their standard of living due to the contacts with urban people.
- It supports for rural and agricultural development processes.
- Continuous cash flow all around the year including the off- season.
- Opportunity to sell products grown and harvested in the farmer’s agricultural operation.
- Managing the risk in farming occurred due to uncertainties of production and marketing [24].

Agro-tourism and Conventional tourism

Agro-tourism also a tourism business but it is different from the conventional tourism because it has a base of agriculture and rural lifestyle. Generally tourism has provided to see and enjoy the natural places as well as some heritages. But, Agro-tourism has a tourism with includes experience, education and cultural transformation. It varies special from general tourism in the following manner:

- It provides pollution and noise free sites for travel and tourism at rural background.
- The cost of food, accommodation, recreation and travel is minimum in Agro-tourism.
- Agro-tourism can satisfy the curiosity of urban peoples about sources of food, plants, animals, and industrial agro-raw materials.
- It provides information about the rural handicrafts, languages, culture, tradition, dresses and lifestyle.
- A family environment at the tourist place, is one of the most important characteristics in the Agro-tourism
- In the agro-tour, tourists not only see and watch agriculture farms but they can also participate in the agricultural activities and experience the farming.

- It provides natural situations for watching birds, animals, water bodies etc.
- Agro-tourism creates awareness about rural life and knowledge about agriculture

It also provides opportunity for education through experience of farming and knowledge about the rural life including entertainment. Agro-tourism is an instrument of urban-rural connectivity through the tours.

VII. MAJOR THREATS OF THIS SECTOR

Farming activities are involved with a wide range of threats due to biological, physical and economic environment in which farming operates. Most of these threats are specific to agriculture and they affect to the overall production and economic efficiency of agricultural production system. Further, these threats cause of fall of farm incomes, welfare of agricultural workers with potential to constraint future investment and growth of farm production. Therefore, it is important to understand how the presence of risks in agricultural production affects the economy and how these threats can be mitigated [25].

The main threats in farming can be classified as follows [25]:

- 1) Production or yield threat : this is uncertainty about the volume or quantity of agricultural production due to weather related factors such as heavy rains, floods, droughts, cyclones and typhoons, tornadoes, frosts, heavy snow falls, hails, etc , crops and livestock diseases, pest outbreaks and change of technology.
- 2) Market or price threat: uncertainty and fluctuations of prices of both inputs and outputs (agricultural production) due to market instabilities, trade policies of the governments, new markets, etc
- 3) Regulatory threat: unexpected changers of national agricultural policies, environmental regulations, provincial government laws, and trade policies. This may happen due to change of rulers or any other political reasons
- 4) Financial and management threat: changers of bank policies and its credit facilities, change of interest rates, fluctuations in the share market, international and national financial crisis, management change
- 5) Personal threat: personal hazards such as illness, death, theft, injuries, family crisis, etc

VIII. OPPORTUNITIES OF AGRO-TOURISM IN BANGLADESH

Bangladesh has the opportunity to establish culturally acceptable and economically viable agro-tourism industry at grass-root level. To develop this sector, we have to explore agro-entertainment resources within different districts in Bangladesh. Economics of Agriculture is the lifeblood of Bangladesh Economy and powerful driver of poverty reduction in Bangladesh. In rural Bangladesh, the factors behind the agriculture sectors growth are: irrigation expansion, improved technology, more efficient market and finally widespread mechanization. The agricultural sector

accounted for 90 per cent of the reduction in poverty between 2005 and 2010. More than 70 per cent of population and 77 per cent of its workforce lives in rural areas. Nearly half of all Bangladeshi workers and two-thirds in rural areas are directly employed in agriculture, and about 87 per cent of rural households rely on agriculture for at least part of their sources of income.

In Bangladesh, now there are 15 million agro-based families mostly are marginal farmers those own average less than 1 acre land. What the main functions play is 'choice of technique' such as power pump, tractor(35 thousands), power thrasher(4 lakh), digital plant roping system, ripper, non-deep tube well(15 lakh), deep tube well (35 lakh), power tiller(7 lakh) and combined harvester.\

As well, it transpires farmers in rural area now to acquire knowledge on indigenous vegetable production system and that is indispensable part of Agro-tourism in rural Bangladesh. However, this growth is due to policy support, incentive to farmers and adoption of hybrid seeds and home gardening. The grain production has increased more than tripled between 1972 and 2014, from 9.8 to 34.4 million tons. Apart from that, highly nutritious crops significantly reduce malnutrition. It triggers more rural economic growth, and has become a powerful source of employment generation, especially for youth and women.

In addition, various World Bank projects are ongoing among them integrated agriculture productivity plan is designed to improve resilience of agriculture production, particularly in northern and southern areas. And these areas are affected by flash floods, drought and salinity intrusion. The social investment program builds and strengthens community institutions that support poor and extreme poor people, livelihood, nutrition awareness and agricultural production knowledge.

The national agriculture technology program helps the Government of Bangladesh to ensure food security, encourage climate change adaptation and enhance nutrition through safer and more diversifies foods. I think these figures may produce rural entrepreneurs to increase Agro-tourism markets aided by modern communication system. Pros and cons of Agro-tourism Products in Rural Bangladesh is an extreme sufferer of atmospheric and land based degradation.

International and national Agro-tourists can exchange views with local farmers on how to reduce climatic impacts on land, water, forest, health and fish resources. Land of Kushtia is fertile for tobacco, Mymensingh for paddy, Chandpur and Barisal are known for fish, Sathkhira for prawn, Jessore for flowers, Dinajpur for wheat, and so on.

So, Bangladesh has a lot of options when it comes to promote the concept of agri-tourism and find new means that can contribute to its overall economy. In general, trekking the mountains of hilly rural areas of Rangamati, Khagrachari or Bandarban, wildlife safari into the jungles of Sundarbans and

Chittagong division with properly trained tourist guide might add a new dimension in the development of tourism sector of Bangladesh.

In addition, there are many pre-harvest festivals for protecting crops. Post-harvest festival include in nabanna. People or indigenous farmers celebrate the new harvest with pitha, chira, muri and other foods. Folk culture and various local fairs may highlight our agro-entertainment at rural area. Researchers and agro-tourists often share their experiences among indigenous farmers about climate change, global warming, crisis related to extract more ground water, arsenic pollution, importance of vermin-composting, bio-fertilizers. It is necessary to cultivate our land in sustainable ways in order to have an organic future.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

As per above discussion one may suggest the following recommendations:

Proper marketing strategies should be taken to present the destination areas and enhances customer satisfaction for the tourists. Internet can be used effectively for many purposes of tourism marketing and customer support. Bangladesh tourism authority needs to consider the effective use of this technology for the promotional activity of this industry.

Furthermore, different tourist attraction of the country can be advertised in television, radio, newspaper and magazines publishing persuasive message to attract the potential visitors. For example: some persuasive and attractive advertisements like "Beautiful Bangladesh/Beautiful Rural Bangladesh" can be presented. In this sphere, it will better to accommodate further research findings.

If Bangladesh wants to compete with the other member countries of SAARC, it must formulate a comprehensive strategy and look to involve the farmers and other local people. Bangladesh can easily increase its Agro-tourism by a substantial margin, with the right kind of marketing initiatives and promotional methods. And with that, turn the tourism sector into a significant contributor to our GDP

Through Geographical information systems (GIS), the tourism authorities can easily sell Agro-tourism products and indigenous farming tools, show suitable localities for the incorporation of various plants and animals, elucidate geo-demographic characteristics and put in plain words, the cultural variety and socio-economic conditions of our rural farmers, fish collectors, poultry managers and indigenous peoples. Bangladesh is on the way of middle income country by the year of 2021. It implies she needs more land security of marginal people, housing security of homeless people, health, food, education and pure water security for all. Here, it is very relevant to note that this issue deserves further better investigation.

The government may take up projects to represent the indigenous capacities of our farmers to protect land,

environment and ecology, among international tourists, in order to attract them which may enrich our agro-tourism industry in return. The Bangladesh academy for rural development may take this opportunity to promote agro-tourism.

We should recall that without proper infrastructure and relevant facilities no peasant can able to establish and develop Agro-tourism farm. They should establish accommodation facilities with rural look and all minimum required facilities. Some other facilities could be arranged for the tourists additionally such as, offer authentic local foods, arrange to see and participate in the agricultural activities, organize to participate in the rural games, festivals, culture and traditions, arrange folk dance program, and make available some agro-product to purchase for the tourists.

X. CONCLUSIONS

Bangladesh is a gift of nature. 70 percent of the people are directly and indirectly dependent on agriculture. We have some agro-ecological zones suitable for sustainable farming. Apart from that, some enterprises have established local farms—poultry, goat, buffalo and cow to eradicate poverty. It's a lesson worth learning as to how one should go about farming in an eco-friendly way. The Bangladesh has three major revenue generating sector - industry, agriculture and services. Tourism is a major part of the service sector. It can ensure economic development, but only if political will and proper marketing strategies are implemented. Although the discussion of Agro-tourism is not something new in Bangladesh, people have been participating in farm-based activities for a considerable length of time. Present day circumstances, however, make diversifying farm based operations a necessity. Agro-tourism is an obvious alternative and Bangladesh is well positioned to offer authentic Agro-tourism experiences incorporating a wide variety of activities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

None

REFERENCE

- [1] Nadeesha, S. (2018). Promotion of Agrotourism in rural areas in Galle district in Srilanka. *MOJ Curr Res & Rev.*1(4):170– 173. DOI: 10.15406/mojcr.2018.01.00027
- [2] Barbieri C, Mshenga P M (2008). The role of the firm and owner characteristics on the performance of agritourism farms. *Sociologia Ruralis.* 48:166-183
- [3] Roberts L, Hall D (2001). *Rural tourism and recreation: Principles to practice.* Cambridge: CABI Publishing.
- [4] Wall G (2000). Agrotourism. In J. Jafari (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of tourism* (pp. 14 London: Routledge.
- [5] Marques H (2006). Searching for complementarities between agriculture and tourism—the demarcated wine-producing regions of northern Portugal. *Tourism Econ.* 12:147–155.
- [6] American Farm Bureau Federation (2004). Annual meeting highlights, 2004. <http://www.fb.org>.
- [7] Maruti KV (2009). Agro-tourism: Scope and opportunities for the farmers in Maharashtra. *Socio – economic voice.* <http://www.indiastat.com/article/09/kvm/fulltext.pdf>.

- [8] Rilla E (1999a). Unique niches: Agritourism in Britain and New England. University of California Small Farm Center, Cooperative Extension. <http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/agritourism/insidecov.html>.
- [9] Shubi A (2007). Agri-Tourism as a tourism asset. 50 years of Malaysian agriculture (transformational issues challenges and directions. University Putra Malaysia.
- [10] Ogidi and Odiba (2014). Benchmarking as a tool of TQM in the delivery of quality one. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 10(4): 47-80, services/products. *SCSR Journal of Business and Entrepreneurship*, 1(3): 52-63.
- [11] Sharpley, R. and Vass, A. (2006). Tourism, farming and diversification: an attitudinal study. *Tourism Management*: 1040-1052, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2005.10.025>
- [12] Oppermann, M. (1995). Holidays on the farm: A case study of View publication statsView publication stats German hosts and guests. *Journal of Travel Research*: 63-67, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F004728759503400108>
- [13] Haugen, M.S. and Vik, J. (2008). Farmers as entrepreneurs: the case of farm-based tourism. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 6(3): 321-337.
- [14] Upadhyaya, R. (2006). Agro-tourism outlook. *Nepal Travel Trade Reporter*, 20(26): 209.
- [15] Tew, C.; Barbieri, C. The perceived benefits of agritourism: The provider's perspective. *Tour. Manag.* 2012, 33, 215–224. [CrossRef]
- [16] Bramwell, B. Rural tourism and sustainable rural tourism. *J. Sustain. Tour.* 1994, 2, 1–6. [CrossRef]
- [17] Ghereș, M. Agroturism, de la Tradiție la Ofertă Comercială; Editura Risoprint: Cluj-Napoca, Romania, 2003.
- [18] Brezuleanu, S.; Brad, I. Considerații privind activitățile agroturistice din landul Baden-Württemberg, Germania. *Lucr. st., USAMV Iași. Seria Agronomie.* 2001, vol. 44. Available online: http://www.uaiasi.ro/revagrois/PDF/pdf_2001_fdf99a5620d83e128992e72b54a04713.pdf (accessed on 7 March 2019).
- [19] Iorio, M.; Corsale, A. Rural tourism and livelihood strategies in Romania. *J. Rural Stud.* 2010, 26, 152–162. [CrossRef]
- [20] Manhas PS. Sustainable and responsible tourism: trends, practices and cases. PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd. 2012.
- [21] Veeck G, Che D, Veeck A. America's changing farmscape: A study of agricultural tourism in Michigan. *The Professional Geographer.* 2006; 58(3): 235-248. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9272.2006.00565.x
- [22] Small Farm Program. Agritourism 2004. University of California. 2017.
- [23] Mahalyanaarachchi R. Agri tourism as a risk management strategy in rural agriculture sector; with special reference to developing countries. *J Agricul sci.* 2016;II(1):1–12.
- [24] Shembekar PS. Scope and Challenges of Agritourism-Literature Review. *J Advances in Bus Management.* 2017; 3(2): 52-56.
- [25] Organisation for Economic Corporation and Development (OECD). An assessment of risk exposure in agriculture: A literature review. Part of the Trade and Agriculture Directorate project on Risk Management in Agriculture; 2008.
- [26] <https://reports.weforum.org/travel-and-tourism-competitiveness-report-2017/countryprofiles/#economy=BGD>
- [27] <https://wttc.org/About/News/Press-Releases>
- [28] <https://mocat.gov.bd>
- [29] <http://tourismboard.gov.bd/>
- [30] <http://parjatan.portal.gov.bd/>