

## AGRO-TOURISM: A NEW WAY OF FARMERS' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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### Abstract

This paper discusses the potential and development of agro-tourism in India with special reference to Maharashtra. Agro-tourism has emerged as an innovative model of sustainable rural development, providing farmers with additional income, employment opportunities for rural youth, and unique experiences for tourists. The paper explores the policy framework, successful practices, challenges, and highlights a brief database of prominent agro-tourism centers across India.

### INTRODUCTION:

Tourism has long been recognized as an engine of growth in various economies. With its potential to generate large-scale employment and income, tourism has evolved into diverse forms. One such emerging area is agro-tourism, where visitors engage with agricultural life, rural traditions, local food, and farm-based activities. Agro-tourism not only connects urban populations with rural life but also ensures sustainable development by providing farmers with supplementary income and reducing migration pressures.

#### Agro-Tourism Policy in Maharashtra

Maharashtra has pioneered agro-tourism in India. The state government introduced an agro-tourism policy that enables farmers, cooperatives, and agricultural universities to establish certified agro-tourism centers. These centers provide alternative sources of income, promote local culture, and offer tourists authentic rural experiences such as farm stays, bullock cart rides, and traditional cuisine. At present, there are more than 300 agro-tourism centres across 30 districts in Maharashtra.

#### Sports Agro-Tourism in India

Sports agro-tourism is a unique form of tourism that combines:

Agricultural Experiences – farming activities, crop harvesting, cattle rearing, fruit picking, etc.

Sports & Adventure – rural games, modern outdoor/indoor sports, and adventure sports conducted in a farm environment.

#### Examples of Sports Activities in Agro-Tourism

Traditional & Rural Sports: Kabaddi, Kushti (wrestling), Kho-Kho, Gilli-Danda, Tug of War, Kite Flying.

Adventure Sports on Farms: Tractor Safari, Bullock Cart Rides, Rope Climbing, Zipline, Rock Climbing, Archery, Air Rifle Shooting.

Recreational Sports: Cycling in farms, Horse Riding, Swimming in farm ponds, Fishing, Nature Trails, Bird Watching.

Festival-Based Sports: Hurda Party Games (Maharashtra), Bullock cart races (Tamil Nadu & Maharashtra), Camel races (Rajasthan).

### Successful Agro-Tourism Centres in Maharashtra

Baramati Agro Tourism (Pune): Fruit farming, tractor rides, rural games, sugar industry tourism.

- Solitary Agro (Kolhapur): Cane, cashew, and mango plantations with jungle safaris.

- Nashik Agro Centers: Vineyards, pomegranate farms, bullock cart rides, and proximity to Trimbakeshwar Temple.

#### Agro-Tourism in India: Key Centers

Agro-tourism is growing across India, with states adopting innovative farm-based tourism initiatives. Below is a brief database of notable centers:

Popular States Promoting Sports Agro-Tourism  
 Maharashtra – Baramati, Nashik & Kolhapur centers offer bullock cart racing, hurda parties, rural sports competitions.

Punjab & Haryana – tractor races, kabaddi tournaments, wrestling in village melas.

Rajasthan – desert sports + farm stays (camel cart rides, archery).

Kerala – paddy field sports, boat racing linked with farm stays.

Karnataka & Tamil Nadu – bullock cart rides, village sports, horse riding, eco-sports on coffee/paddy farms.

#### Benefits of Sports Agro-Tourism

Promotes rural culture and indigenous games. Attracts urban tourists seeking physical activity and adventure.

Provides extra income to farmers. Increases youth participation in sports & rural employment.

Promotes eco-friendly and healthy tourism.

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Agro-Tourism Center	State	Key Activities/Highlights
Baramati Agro Tourism	Maharashtra	Fruit farms, bullock cart rides, and jaggery making
Solitary Agro	Maharashtra	Cane, cashew & mango plantations, jungle safari
Punjab Agro Village	Punjab	Tractor rides, rural stays, Punjabi food
Gujarat Agro Farmstay	Gujarat	Groundnut farming, folk art, cotton fields
Kerala Spice Farm Tourism	Kerala	Spice plantations, backwater tours, eco-stays
Rajasthan Desert Agro Camp	Rajasthan	Camel rides, millet farming, folk dance
Madhya Pradesh Rural Retreat	Madhya Pradesh	Organic farming, pottery, and forest treks
Sikkim Organic Village Tourism	Sikkim	Tea gardens, mountain farming, eco-stays
Karnataka Coffee Agro-Eco Farm	Karnataka	Coffee plantations, areca nut farms, homestays
Tamil Nadu Paddy Farm Tourism	Tamil Nadu	Paddy farming, bullock cart races, village culture
Odisha Tribal Agro-Tourism	Odisha	Millet, tribal handicrafts, and cultural immersion

### Challenges in Agro-Tourism Development

Despite its potential, agro-tourism faces several challenges: a lack of awareness among farmers, limited infrastructure,

inadequate marketing and seasonal dependence. Financial support, training programs, and effective promotional strategies are required to make agro-tourism a sustainable model across India. times.

economically, promotes cultural preservation, and provides enriching experiences for tourists. Sports Agro-Tourism can become a big attraction in India's rural tourism policy, combining fitness, fun, and farm life.

Maharashtra has set an example in agro-tourism development, and similar initiatives are expanding across India. With proper support, agro-tourism can become a vital component of rural economic development and sustainable tourism.

### CONCLUSION

Agro-tourism bridges the gap between urban tourists and rural farmers. It supports farmers

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