

Horti-Tourism: A Value Added Approach for Economically Strengthening Farmers

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Received: 20.06.2017 | Revised: 28.06.2017 | Accepted: 29.06.2017

ABSTRACT

In India, the level of urbanization increased from 27.81% in 2001 to 31.16% in 2011 census mainly due to migration of people in search of opportunities for their better livelihood. The concept 'Horti-tourism' arises from people's perception in urban areas to live closely with nature during leisure or holidays after hanging out their hectic schedule, city traffic and polluted atmosphere to observe various farm operations. They aspire to pluck nature fresh horticultural commodities and relish the fresh taste. Horti-tourism can be defined as "the act of visiting a working horticultural farm (fruit orchard or vegetable garden or ornamental garden) or horti-business operations for the purpose of enjoyment, education, recreation or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation." It is an enterprise that combines the commercial constraints of regional tourism geography and economics, family tourism, rural diversification. For most of the farmers in India, income is a critical component as the fruit orchards gain economic yields after 3-5 years of age. Horti-tourism may provide an income stream to overcome the family property and provide opportunities for succeeding generations. Further we can say horti-tourism is a value added approach before harvest and strengthen farmers economically.

Key words: Horti-tourism, Farm operations, Education, Recreation.

INTRODUCTION

Horti-tourism is a commercial enterprise that combines horticulture and tourism on a working farm, ranch, or other agribusiness operation. Horti-tourism can be defined as "the act of visiting a working horticultural farm (fruit orchard or vegetable garden or ornamental garden) or horti-business operations for the purpose of enjoyment, education, recreation or active involvement in

the activities of the farm or operation. It can be also referred to as "entertainment farming" or horti-tourism" is a means of diversifying the farm and adding value (i.e. the farm experience) to products already produced on the farm. This is a hospitality business that requires strong public relations and skills. It also necessitates the cooperation of the entire farm family.

Cite this article: Kuchi, V.S., Salma, Z. and Kabir, J., Horti-Tourism: A Value Added Approach for Economically Strengthening Farmers, *Int. J. Pure App. Biosci.* 5(3): 793-795 (2017). doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18782/2320-7051.5014>

Briefly, people are taking more and shorter trips, doing more traveling by car, combining business travel with vacations, looking for new experiences, adding diversity to their experiences, traveling as a family, and looking to "get back to their roots." In most cases, one family member has a grandparent who grew up on a farm/ ranch or in a rural community. These are the "roots" tourists want to visit².

In India, most of the farmers are small or marginal farmers. They keep huge hopes on returns and invest on fertilizers, pesticides and hybrid seeds. But failure of crops at the time of harvest due to natural calamities is very common. Spreading of cities and certain definite income are driving reasons for migration of people to bigger cities and where farming is miserable. Several other methods like integrated farming, water harvesting, subsidizing seeds, fertilizers and pesticides have been implemented in several villages to promote farming by government. Horti-tourism concept may help farmers and give additional returns before harvest apart from farm produce.

SITE SELECTION AND BUILDINGS

Reaching the remote horti-tourism spots is the greatest challenge due to lack of approach roads and poor transportation facilities in rural areas in India. Transport facilities enable frequent visits by tourists. When they discuss with the neighbors about the trip and transport facilities, itself gives promotion of the farm.

In the orchard or farm, buildings should be constructed away from farm animals and crop. Construction of buildings or small huts with straw, wood and stone creates rural environment.

The orchard or farm should have wide or diversified varieties of crops. Vegetables that can be grown in all the seasons in small areas (supplies vegetables for kitchen), flowers and turfing to add aesthetic value to farm or orchards and suitable horticultural crop that can be grown in that region on large area. Kitchen may be supplied with milk from cattle for morning tea or coffee. Continuous supply of vegetables to kitchen for breakfast, lunch and dinner can be made from farm.

SANITATION AND HYGIENE

Cattle and other animals like sheep, poultry birds (of local origin) should not enter in to the farm. Toilets and necessary provisions should be provided for farm labour and tourists separately. Proper sanitation and hygiene, supply of clean water, prevents contamination and helps tourists to visit frequently.

ADDS VALUE

For most of the farmers in India, income is a critical component as the fruit orchards gain economic yields after 3-5 years of age. Growing of different vegetables as intercrops in young orchards can meet the requirement of cuisine for tourists. Horti-tourism may provide an income stream to overcome the family property and provide opportunities for succeeding generations. Providing basic amenities what tourism requires, farmers can be profited with good returns as it doesn't require huge investments. In fact, horti-tourism is a less expensive entrepreneurship to start with and may end with profitable returns. The cost of food, accommodation and travel is less in tourism point of view.

EDUCATION

Indian farmers are basically not well educated but he knows to give hospitality for a guest since every tourist is a guest as he comes from distant place. People residing in cities especially students in present era are not well experienced with rural life. Tourists gain knowledge about cultural, rural and farm operations by involving with farmers. This provides unique opportunity for education through recreation where learning is fun effective and easy. Seeing is believing and doing is learning. In the process of interacting with people and sharing the experiences with tourists, farmers will gain knowledge.

PROMOTION

To promote the horti-tourism enterprise a marketing strategy is critical. Before the starting the nature enterprise promotional activities should be done well before. Good relations with neighbours, local businessmen and community members are essential to the success of horti-tourism. Creating a logo or catchy slogan can give better promotion of

enterprise¹. Copies of recipes and news of upcoming crops can be made in a pamphlet and distributed along with business cards to tourists and visitors.

TOURISM

Cities are growing at the cost of villages. Villagers are migrating to cities in search of jobs and to seek the comforts of modern life. Hence, yesterday's villagers are today's urbanites. Deep in the heart of urbanites lies the love and respect for their ancestors and villages. Hence, visit to villages satisfies their desire. This is also expressed through the hatred of urbanites to flat culture and love for farmhouses located in the outskirts of cities. Any opportunity to visit villages and spend time with family is dream of any urbanite. But, minimum decent facilities are always problem. Horti-tourism attempts to overcome this problem.

SALE COUNTERS

Counters can be made available for the sale of fruits, cut flowers, processed products (indigenous recipes), propagation materials of flowers, fruits and local handicrafts at the site.

After a pleasant stay and participating in farm activities, tourists pay to get a product as a symbol of memory of the trip.

CONCLUSION

Horti-tourism will be Successful when there is something to see, do and buy for tourists at farm. It is an inexpensive way where curiosity about farming related operations and rural life may be well known by tourists living in the farm. Farmers are benefited with additional returns by providing basic amenities to tourists. It brings major primary sector closer to major service sector, tourism. This convergence is expected to create healthy environment for both the sectors.

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