



**STUDY OF AGRITOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTIONAL AGENCIES CONSIDERING
AGRITOURISM POLICY OF MAHARASHTRA 2020**

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Abstract:

Maharashtra is a state which pioneered agritourism business in India. under the guidance of experts like Mr Pandurang Taware agritourism has been flourishing in Maharashtra. the government of Maharashtra and non governmental agencies have actively participated in support of agritourism business right from its nascent stage. and in the year 2020 in month of September Maharashtra agro tourism policy was declared. the policy is for the encouragement of agritourism business across the state. the current study is conducted to take a review of work of agritourism development and promotional agencies which proved as a referral for agritourism policy.

Key words: Agritourism , Agritourism developmental Corporation , Maharashtra agritourism policy Maharashtra Agri and Rural Tourism Cooperative Federation

Introduction

Maharashtra is among the leading producers of a variety of agricultural products enjoyed by residents in the state and beyond. Rural families are mainly engaged in farming and to some extent in agri-related businesses.

Agriculture faces significant challenges in responding to the changing global agribusiness scenario. Because of lack of economies of scale, small-scale farmers have been thrown out of the farming partially or completely and forced to search for business other than farming as alternative sources of revenue.

Since, now days the major development in Agritourism is taking place all around the world, different forms of Agritourism are seen. Agritourism integrates agriculture with pleasure and gives the benefit of agriculture and tourism activities to the tourists that deliver economic benefit to concerned farmer and villagers.

Although a considerable amount of work has been carried out on tourism, study of Agritourism is still at its infancy. Also Agritourism is immense potential business form. It will resolve many problems of farmers, rural population as well urban tourists.

The first adoption of the concept of agritourism in the state was tried at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) of Baramati in Pune district. Although there were few projects before 2005 in the Region, they were mainly on lines of ethnic or rural tourism. Mr Taware, an entrepreneur from farmer family who had experience of working in Hospitality and Tourism industry, conceived the idea of agritourism in 2004, conducted a feasibility study and started the 'pilot agritourism project' at KVK Baramati in 2005. After successfully running this pilot project for two years, Agri Tourism Development Company (ATDC) launched Maharashtra State 'Agri Tourism Vistar Yojana (scheme) 2007'. Under this initiative, 44 farmers were selected to start Agri-tourism centres across the state.

Objectives:

1. To study various Agritourism development and Promotion agencies in Maharashtra



2. To study the promotional measures, like Vistar yojana of ATDC
3. Studying the highlights of Agritourism Policy 2020 of Government of Maharashtra

Scope and Limitation of Study:

The scope of study is limited to study of role played by the agritourism development and promotion agencies operating in Maharashtra state only. The agencies included in study are Agritourism development Corporation (ATDC), Maharashtra Agri and Rural Tourism Cooperative Federation LTD (MART) and Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC).

Research Methodology:

The study focuses on the concept of Agri tourism, the services and functioning of Agri Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC), Maharashtra Agri and Rural Tourism Cooperative Federation LTD (MART) and Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC). It also reveals Vistar Yojana of ATDC and Agritourism Policy 2020 Policy of Government of Maharashtra. The research method adopted is the case study method for which secondary data is used. Secondary data is collected from the books, & Internet.

Agritourism Development and Promotion Agencies

In order to help the farmers and agri-entrepreneurs to understand the concept, mechanism and prospects of the agritourism business, the agritourism development and promotion agencies i.e. ATDC and MART were initiated. These agencies also provide a platform to promote the agritourism centres affiliated with them.

MTDC which is a governmental body for development of tourism in the state also intends to promote the concept and the centres, which adds to the range of tourism products of the state.

Agri Tourism Development Corporation

ATDC incorporated in 2005 and owns the pilot Agri tourism project of 28 acres in Palshiwadi, tal Baramati Dist Pune 70 kms from Pune city. The main activities include operating its Agri tourism centre along with encouraging more farmers to take up Agri tourism, conducting training and research programs. This is an umbrella platform wherein most of the tourist reservations are booked and then tourists are sent to different centres. After successfully running this pilot project for two years, ATDC launched Maharashtra State 'Agri Tourism Vistar Yojana (scheme) 2007'. Under this initiative, 44 farmers were selected to start Agri-tourism centres across the state. With the practical experience of the operating the agritourism centre, ATDC started organising 'agritourism training programmes' for the interested farmers. This was followed with 'Agri Tourism Yojana' 2008 and 2009, within which more farmers were associated with ATDC through the scheme.

Mission and Vision of ATDC:

To promote agriculture tourism to achieve income, employment and economic stability in rural communities in India, help boosting a range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract urban tourists to their area, thus providing opportunity for urban people to get back to the roots. To promote and develop the concept all over the country.

ATDC's Contribution:

ATDC's Motto is to keep 'the farm in the family and the family on the farm'. ATDC believes that the benefits of agritourism are of manifolds. It not only provides the weekly additional income to the farmer but also on the long run it will reduce the migration of farmers farming as well as from the villages to urban areas in search employment. With



agriculture becoming a more strenuous and less profitable sector for the majority of the Indian farmers, ATDC has adopted and developed the concept that is leading the way towards sustainable livelihoods for farmers and their families.

ATDC has demonstrated, that with the right approach, farmers from all income levels can become part of Agritourism concept and gain benefits from it to make agriculture more viable. Rather than relying on traditional approaches of high capital oriented supplementary agribusinesses, farmers can generate additional income and employment from agriculture-based tourism.

ATDC focuses on ‘training and capacity building service to farmers to facilitate them to start and operate the Agritourism centre in their village. Till date, they have organised numerous training programmes to benefit over 1500 agritourism entrepreneurs.

ATDC has established close networking links with Maharashtra state and has been instrumental in securing a preferential loan policy for agri-tourism farmers from the Pune District Cooperative Bank. With the strict guidelines and regulations for getting registered with the agency, the centres associated with ATDC are required to maintain the set standards of their service.

Furthermore, it pools the farmers' marketing activities and organises an annual award programme for its agritourism centres. Since its inception, the ATDC has motivated, helped, trained and developed more than 200 successful agritourism centres all over the state.

The success model has also attracted attraction of governments of other states and agri-entrepreneurs from other countries as well.

The ATDC aims to associate with more than 1000 entrepreneurs from different parts of the country, to start and operate Agri Tourism Centres in next 10 years.

One of the biggest contributions of ATDC in Agritourism is getting the recognition from the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) for ‘World Agri Tourism Day’. It was due to ATDC’s efforts that UNWTO declared 16th May as the ‘World Agri Tourism Day’ from the year 2008.

Maharashtra Agri and Rural Tourism Cooperative Federation LTD (MART)

Due to the financial and other limitations, there was a possibility that, the 80 % farmers who have marginal land holdings, may be left out of the agritourism benefits. Thus, after successfully operating the pilot project for few years and replicating it into the farms of more than 50 farmers, Mr. Taware suggested the route of cluster agritourism development under co-operative basis.

The concept of the co-operatives is very well rooted in the state, in fact, Maharashtra was at the forefront of the ‘cooperative movement’ of the twentieth century. Further, when the cooperatives of rural and agritourism were established, it was essential to bring all those agri and rural tourism cooperatives under one umbrella. An apex body, to guide, train, build capacity, sell and promote agri and rural tourism concept in urban cities was required.

Thus Maharashtra State Agri & Rural Tourism Cooperative Federation Ltd (MART) was registered on 12th Dec 2008, with the agenda to coordinate the activity of planning, financing, marketing and liaison with various State and Central governmental agencies.

The governing body of Federation has 12 representatives from agri & rural tourism co-operatives along with women directors from the individual farmers. The Agri-tourism co-operative societies get financed from National Bank for



Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). The loan is utilised in creating infrastructure facilities in the village to support the tourism. MART celebrates the World Agri Tourism Day with felicitating the best performing centres with various awards.

Mission of MART:

- To spread awareness and provide information about Agri and Rural tourism to farmers in Maharashtra. To produce trained manpower for Agritourism.
- To develop farmers and co-operative organisation. To manage collaborative marketing for all associated agritourism centers.
- To Guide, train and inspire farmers for Agri & rural tourism.
- To coordinate with banks, central and state government for economical help in agritourism.
- To boost women empowerment in rural areas through tourism development.
- To protect and conserve the natural environment by implementing responsible tourism ethos.
- Over a span of 12 years, MART has developed its network quite extensively. They have affiliated around 140 agritourism centres in different parts of the state.

Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC)

Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) is a company, established by Government of Maharashtra, for the systematic development of tourism on commercial lines. The Corporation receives financial assistance in the form of share capital and grants from the State Government. The State Government has delegated all commercial and promotional tourism activities to this Corporation. MTDC has, since 61 its inception, been involved in the development and maintenance of the various tourist locations of Maharashtra. MTDC owns and maintains resorts at all key tourist destinations.

Mahabhraman:

In last few years, the travel trends are changing towards 'Experiential tourism'. Various experimental projects are being implemented in the state's tourism sector. This involves Agri-tourism, Rural tourism, Food / Cuisine tourism, Educational tourism, Nature-based tourism, Social tourism, Ethnic tourism and so on. Taking these changing trends into consideration, MTDC launched the 'Mahabhraman' scheme, to bring these projects under one roof. The main objective of this scheme is to encourage people from various sectors to provide a unique experience to the tourists, help them in marketing and promote these projects

MTDC claims to provide following benefits to the registered centres:

- Promotion through the publications, print advertisements and website of MTDC.
- Online booking facility
- Featuring the centre on MTDC's website and use of the MTDC logo in the own promotional material will create a better perception about the standard of quality among the tourists.
- Employment generation and platform to sell the agri-products

Overall, being the Governmental agency, the MTDC has the infrastructure and capacity to promote and develop the concept as well as the associated agritourism centres on different levels.



Highlights of Agritourism Policy of Government of Maharashtra 2020

The Maharashtra state cabinet has cleared Agritourism policy on 6 September 2020. For last 2 decades the government has been keeping a number of organizations associations and individual for independent policy on agritourism which include ATDC, MART, MTDC. These organizations with Directorate of tourism played a vital important role in this

Purpose of Agritourism tourism policy

- To give tourist pleasure of farming and village
- To promote agribusiness
- To develop villages through agritourism
- To provide a rightful platform for agriculture products
- Ensuring market for agriculture products
- Encouraging agro based business
- To provide environmental friendly and prosperous tourism experience
- To create an alternative source of income for the farmers
- To provide employment opportunities to women and budding youth of village
- To promote folk art and traditions
- Giving tourist an experience of actual farming
- To create pollution free tourism for tourist
- Giving experimental enjoyment of agritourism
- Utilization of Paddy and gyran lands of village
- To experience natural environment

Who can setup agritourism centers

- individual farmers
- Agricultural cooperative societies
- Agricultural science and research centers in the state
- Agricultural colleges
- Agricultural universities
- Farmers partnership institution
- Any company
- Organic farmer
- Farmers engaged in any agribusiness

Conditions of set up:

There should be 2 to 5 acres of farmland with ownership of farmer or his family member

Residential arrangements Rooms and Dormitory specified as per tourism policy 2016 (Condition applied is possibly with eco-friendly construction material)

Facilities for meal and kitchen

Services like Play area for kids, adventure games, village games

Camping facility if possible (Tents)



Product sales: Agricultural products, Value added agricultural products

Can have services like Green house, Poultry, dairy, Fishery, Nursery, Wine tourism, Horticultural Production. If adventure Tourism (with permission from concerned authority)

Initial cost of registration 2500, Renewal fees after 5 years ₹1000

Benefits to farmers:

- Certificate of registration from Department of tourism
- Bank loans available to agricultural practitioners
- Benefit under Power Distribution
- Benefit under GST
- Benefit for Green House, Fruit production, Horticultural Products, Processing Units
- Benefit for digging artificial water reservoir
- LPG connection will be charged for domestic rate rather than commercial rates for Kitchen at centre
- Training will be provided to farmers for starting and running centre. Also training for maintaining hygiene safety security of tourists. Farmers will be trained for marketing of centres. The training will include visit to successful model Agritourism centers
- For Promotion and Marketing of centre will be done via appropriate medium, as well through MTDC website.

Finding and Conclusion:

The Agritourism agencies like ATDC and MART non-governmental organisations working for more than a decade has shouldered the responsibility of development and promotion of Agritourism in Maharashtra. Due limitations in scope and reach these organisations facilities were accessed by farmers belonging to nearby areas more. Hence one can find the development of Agritourism in Western Maharashtra pocket more. Though these organisation in possible capacity played a key role in starting and promoting Agritourism, still many support and facilities were missing. Now with Maharashtra Agritourism Policy 2020, government of Maharashtra can make this service and facility available to more farmers across state. Also under policy with support of other governmental facilities and services, Agritourism will receive more comprehensive push and promote. This policy is a ray hope for agri entrepreneur as well small and marginal farmers to get support for generation of additional revenue.

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