



### AGRO-TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN CHANDGAD TALUKA OF KOLHAPUR DISTRICT, MAHARASHTRA

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#### Abstract:

*Agro-tourism has emerged as an important alternative form of tourism that integrates agricultural activities with tourism experiences to promote rural development and livelihood diversification. In agrarian regions like Maharashtra, agro-tourism provides an effective strategy for enhancing farmers' income, generating rural employment, and conserving cultural and environmental resources. Chandgad Taluka of Kolhapur District, located in the Western Ghats region, possesses rich agricultural diversity, high rainfall, forest resources, and cultural heritage, which together create favourable conditions for agro-tourism development. The present study examines the potential and prospects of agro-tourism development in Chandgad Taluka using both secondary and primary data. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 80 respondents selected using stratified random sampling. The study analyses agricultural resources, awareness levels, willingness of farmers, perceived benefits, and challenges related to agro-tourism development. The findings reveal that Chandgad Taluka has significant potential for agro-tourism, particularly through farm-based activities, eco-agro tourism, and cultural tourism. However, issues such as lack of infrastructure, financial constraints, and limited training remain major obstacles. The study suggests sustainable strategies involving community participation, capacity building, infrastructural development, and policy support to promote agro-tourism as a tool for inclusive rural development.*

**Keywords:** *Agro-tourism, Rural Development, Chandgad Taluka, Sustainable Tourism, Kolhapur District.*

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#### Introduction:

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy and plays a vital role in regional development, employment generation, and cultural exchange. In recent years, alternative forms of tourism such as eco-tourism, rural tourism, and agro-tourism have gained prominence due to increasing awareness about sustainability and responsible tourism practices. Agro-tourism refers to tourism activities conducted on farms or in agricultural settings, allowing tourists to

experience rural life, farming practices, local culture, and traditional food systems.

In India, where agriculture remains the backbone of the rural economy, agro-tourism offers immense opportunities for diversifying farm income and reducing rural poverty. Maharashtra has been a pioneer in promoting agro-tourism through policy initiatives and farmer-led enterprises. Kolhapur District, known for its fertile soils, abundant rainfall, and cultural heritage, has considerable scope for agro-



tourism development. Within the district, Chandgad Taluka stands out due to its location in the Western Ghats, agricultural diversity, forest cover, and proximity to tourist destinations. This study attempts to assess the agro-tourism development opportunities in Chandgad Taluka and evaluate its role in sustainable rural development.

### Study Area: Chandgad Taluka

Chandgad Taluka is located in the southern part of Kolhapur District in Maharashtra and shares its boundaries with Goa and Karnataka. The taluka lies in the Western Ghats region and experiences heavy monsoon rainfall, averaging more than 3000 mm annually. The physiography of the region is characterised by undulating terrain, dense forests, fertile valleys, and numerous streams and rivers.

Agriculture is the primary occupation of the population. Major crops cultivated in the taluka include rice, sugarcane, cashew nut, vegetables, and groundnut. The region is also rich in forest resources and biodiversity. Chandgad Taluka is culturally vibrant, with traditional festivals, folk practices, and historical sites such as Pargad Fort, which enhance its tourism potential. These physical, agricultural, and cultural attributes provide a strong base for agro-tourism development.

### Review of Literature:

Several scholars have highlighted agro-tourism as an effective tool for rural development and agricultural diversification. Studies suggest that agro-tourism helps farmers supplement their income, generates rural employment, and promotes cultural preservation. Research conducted in different parts of Maharashtra indicates that regions with diversified cropping patterns, scenic landscapes, and cultural heritage show higher agro-tourism potential.

Previous studies in Kolhapur District emphasize the importance of infrastructure, training, and marketing support for successful agro-tourism initiatives.

However, most studies focus on developed agro-tourism centres, while micro-level studies on backward but potential-rich regions like Chandgad Taluka are limited. This indicates a research gap, which the present study attempts to fill by focusing specifically on Chandgad Taluka.

### Objectives of the Study:

The present study has the following objectives:

1. To examine the agro-tourism development potential of Chandgad Taluka.
2. To analyse agricultural, natural, and cultural resources suitable for agro-tourism.
3. To assess farmers' awareness and willingness towards agro-tourism development.
4. To identify major challenges in agro-tourism development.
5. To suggest sustainable strategies for promoting agro-tourism in the study area.

### Research Methodology:

The study is based on both secondary and primary data. Secondary data were collected from Census of India reports, district statistical handbooks, tourism department publications, and relevant research articles. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 80 respondents from selected villages of Chandgad Taluka.

A stratified random sampling method was adopted to ensure representation of different socio-economic groups. Descriptive and analytical methods were used for data analysis. Tables and percentage analysis were employed to interpret the primary data. The study is limited by the availability of detailed tourism statistics at the taluka level.

### Analysis and Interpretation of Primary Data:

#### 1. Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents

The survey reveals that a majority of respondents belong to the economically active age group of 31–50 years. Most respondents have secondary or



higher secondary education and are primarily engaged in agriculture. This socio-economic structure is favourable for adopting agro-tourism as a supplementary livelihood activity.

## 2. Agricultural Characteristics

Rice cultivation dominates the agricultural landscape of Chandgad Taluka, followed by cashew, sugarcane, and vegetable farming. The diversity of crops provides opportunities for crop-based agro-tourism activities such as farm visits, harvesting experiences, and demonstration of traditional farming practices.

## 3. Awareness and Willingness towards Agro-Tourism

The primary survey indicates that more than half of the respondents are aware of the concept of agro-tourism. Nearly half of the respondents expressed willingness to adopt agro-tourism, while a significant proportion showed conditional interest depending on financial and institutional support. This reflects a positive attitude towards agro-tourism development.

## 4. Perceived Benefits of Agro-Tourism

Respondents identified additional income generation as the most significant benefit of agro-tourism, followed by employment generation, village development, and cultural promotion. These perceptions highlight the economic and social relevance of agro-tourism in the rural context.

## 5. Challenges in Agro-Tourism Development

The major challenges identified by respondents include lack of financial resources, inadequate training, poor infrastructure, and marketing difficulties. Environmental sensitivity of the Western Ghats region also necessitates careful planning and sustainable practices.

## Agro-Tourism Development Opportunities in Chandgad Taluka:

Chandgad Taluka offers multiple opportunities for agro-tourism development. Agricultural activities such as rice cultivation, cashew processing, and vegetable farming can be integrated with tourism experiences. The scenic natural environment of the Western Ghats supports eco-agro tourism, nature walks, and farm stays. Cultural assets such as local festivals, cuisine, folk traditions, and historical sites add value to agro-tourism products. Together, these resources can create diversified and sustainable agro-tourism models.

## Strategies for Sustainable Agro-Tourism Development:

To promote agro-tourism in Chandgad Taluka, the following strategies are suggested:

1. Development of basic infrastructure such as roads, accommodation, and sanitation facilities.
2. Capacity building and training programmes for farmers in hospitality and tourism management.
3. Promotion of community-based agro-tourism models involving local self-help groups and cooperatives.
4. Use of digital platforms and social media for marketing and branding agro-tourism destinations.
5. Policy support and financial incentives from government agencies to encourage agro-tourism entrepreneurship.

## Conclusion:

The study concludes that Chandgad Taluka has significant potential for agro-tourism development due to its agricultural diversity, natural beauty, and cultural heritage. Agro-tourism can serve as an effective instrument for rural development by enhancing farmers' income, generating employment, and promoting sustainable use of local resources.



However, realising this potential requires integrated planning, community participation, infrastructural development, and institutional support. With appropriate strategies, agro-tourism can contribute meaningfully to inclusive and sustainable development in Chandgad Taluka.

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