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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Prospects and Problems of Agri-Tourism in Punjab State

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#### Abstract

The present paper analyses the prospects and problems of agri-tourism in Punjab state, India. The study was undertaken by randomly selecting 15 registered farmers from Punjab Heritage and Tourism Promotion Board. The data was collected by self interviewing the respondents and through mailed questionnaire. Majority of the respondents were satisfied from agri-tourism venture and perceived that there is high to medium prospects of agri-tourism development in Punjab. Insufficient fund for publicity, lack of government support, insufficient literature related to agri-tourism practice and lack of training for agri-tourism were the major problems reported by the farmers. Among the board employees the major problems were insufficient fund for advertisement, unwillingness of the farmers to renew their registration and placing of tourists. Provision of a complete tourism package, provision of sales and marketing support, more awareness programmes, developing contacts with the schools, colleges, NGOs, clubs and other organizations, provision of license to farmers for lifetime and training had been suggested.

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#### Introduction

From the 1950s through the 1980s, farmers in developed nations experienced a tremendous shift within the agriculture industry. Globalization, free-trade, falling commodity prices, oversupply of goods, changes in subsidy policies, and increased reliance on technologically intensive production all impacted the livelihoods of farmers (Che et al 2005). These global economic restructuring has created a climate in which many local economies have to adjust, in order to maintain or enhance their socio-economic viability. Butler et al (1998) noted that economic and social forces operating at the global level are determining both the nature and form of the rural landscape and how we value and use it. These changes, coupled with new ideas and approaches to leisure and recreation time are encouraging tourism development in rural areas at an ever increasing pace. Agri-tourism which has branched out as an offshoot of rural tourism has immense scope in India. Since agriculture is the main occupation of the people in India and other developing countries, specifically Asian economies, there is a need for these countries to think of allied income generation strategies with agriculture, one of which is agri-tourism (Chada and Bhakare 2012). Klaze (1994) defined Agri-tourism as "A range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract tourists to their area in order to generate extra income for their business."

Agri-tourism has been identified as a possible way for rural landscapes to diversify their economies to maintain a rural or agricultural way of life (Kokko 2011). In 1978, the organization for economic co-operation and Development (OECD) reported that between 40 to 60 per cent of farmers in developed countries were now classified as 'part time farmers' since the majority of their incomes came from non- agricultural sources (Dernoi 1983). As such, governments and policy makers tend to view tourism related diversification as an extreme positive, and have come to establish agri-tourism as a pillar to revive economies in rural areas and farms (Maude and Van Rest 1985). Further farmers feedback has revealed that there has been a minimum of 33 per cent income rise to basic agriculture income (Chadda and Bhakare 2011). Although, agri-tourism is an innovative idea for fostering the farmers'

efficiency and economic status but, financing is still a major problem for entrepreneurs. Government should take the initiative for helping them and offer proper trainings to the entrepreneurs (Singh 2010). Similar findings were reported like the lack of government support, lack of funds for publicity and advertisement of farm-tourism, lack of knowledge and skill on the part of the proprietor, less numbers of visitors, lack of technology, lack of motivation, inadequate price for farm products and activities were major constraints in establishing agri-tourism (Lane 1994; Colton and Bissix 2005; Shehrawat 2008).

Despite these shortcomings farmers must have commercial mindset and some marketing techniques for the success. For the better success in the agri-tourism farmers should be encouraged to give a wide publicity of the tourism centre by newspapers, television etc and use all possible advertisement means as far as possible and develop contacts with the schools, colleges, NGOs, clubs, unions, organizations. It is also a must to understand about the customer's wants and their expectations and serve accordingly (Kumbhar 2010). As agri-tourism has wide range of customers and stakeholders, an effective management of business can achieve the success in less cost and enjoy the benefit of the industry. A study conducted on Agri-tourism entrepreneurship suggested that for the enterprise to be successful should develop good relationship with tourists and always inform the visitors for special occasion. Further it is important to provide good standard cultural accommodations for tourists according to their needs. It was also suggested that agri-tourism farm should be always near to main roads and highways and agri-tourism entrepreneurs should have contact with tourism agencies of cities or metros (Singh 2010).

Punjab, the land of people with golden hearts, lush fields and free flowing rivers, with its rich history, green surroundings and diverse culture, is an ideal location for agri-tourism as it has everything to keep tourist from across the world enthralled. Also with tourism and agriculture being one of the two major thrust areas of the state government it is quite evident that prospects of agri-tourism are quite seen in the state. So there is large scope and great potential to develop agri-tourism in Punjab as it not only provides natural elements of beauty but also the local traditions, customs and foods. Also the cost of food, accommodation, recreation and travel is least in agri-tourism which widens the tourist base. Therefore in order to get scientific evidences regarding farmer's view points about agri-tourism, the researcher in this study explore the prospects and problems of agri-tourism in the state.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

A total of 18 farmers were registered under Punjab Heritage and Tourism Promotion Board. From that list, 15 farmers were selected randomly. It includes: i. Mr. Rajpal Singh Gandhi of village Pojewal ,Nawanshahar ii. Mr. Kanwaljit Singh Brar of village Ranjitpura, Roopnagar. iii. Mr. Deepinder Singh of village Bharatgarh, Roopnagar iv. Mr. Naib Singh of village Barri, Roopnagar v. Mr. K. S Sidhu of village Majra ,Mohali vi. Dr. Karamjit Singh of village Swara, Mohali vii. Mr. G. S Mann of village Tungwali, Bathinda viii. Mr. Narinderjit Singh of Village Rajeval, Amritsar ix. Mr. Ravdeep Singh of village Heir, Amritsar x. Mr. Manjit Singh of village Niki-Niko Sarai, Gurdaspur xi. Mrs Satwant Sangha of village Nawapind Sardara, Gurdaspur xii. Mr. B. P Singh of Bakarpur, SAS Nagar xiii. Mr. Hardhir Singh of village Pohlo Majra, Fatehgarh sahib xiv. Major Adesh Sandhu of village Ghallu, Fazilka xv. Mr. Vishal Jyani of village Katehra, Fazilka. In addition to these out of five employees, three employees of Punjab Heritage and Tourism Promotion Board belonging to the district Chandigarh, Patiala and Ludhiana were selected purposively as they were actively involved in promoting agri-tourism in the state.

Data were collected personally as well as through email with the help of structured research instrument. In addition distributed questionnaire approach was used to collect information from the selected employees of Punjab Heritage and Tourism Promotion Board. The data were analysed with the help of statistical tools such as frequency, percentages, range methods and cumulative cube root method.

## **RESULTS**

### **Prospects of agri-tourism in Punjab State**

Prospects of agri-tourism were studied in terms of farmer's willingness to increase facilities and promotional activities in agri-tourism as a means of increasing their socio-economic benefits. Further the willingness of the farmers was studied in terms of future plans of the farmers regarding the various types of agri-tourism activities they were willing to provide and offered the agri products which were of interest to the tourists. It was measured on a three point continuum i.e. willing, somewhat willing and not at all willing and score of 2, 1 and 0 was assigned respectively.

The data presented in Table 1 relate to the frequency and extent of willingness to add facilities to the agri-tourism unit and increasing promotional activities for chain publicity and expansion of the unit as expressed by the farmers. As evident from Table 1, more than half of the respondents intended to increase area under agri-tourism

and majority i.e. 93.33 per cent of the respondents were willing to improve accomodation facilities at the same place, make agri-products available at reasonable price and all the respondents were willing to maintain tourists' comment book for future business followed by improving transport facilities and providing of pick and drop facilities. Whereas in terms of promotional activities all the respondents intended to developed good relations with the tourists for chain publicity while 93.33 per cent of the respondents were willing to develop their own website and keeping it updated from time to time followed by provision of information about Punjabi culture (86.67%), developing contact with schools, colleges, NGOs, Club, Union and other organisation and developing contact with travel agencies (73.33%) and arrangement of cultural programmes (66.67%).

**Table 1: Prospects as perceived by the respondents in practising agri-tourism:**

(n =15)

Sl. No	Category of prospects	Various aspects of Prospects	W		SW		NW	
			f	%	F	%	f	%
1.	Adding facilities to the agri-tourism unit	Increase/expand area under agri-tourism	8	53.33	1	6.67	6	40
		Incorporate more interesting activities	7	46.67	3	20.00	5	33.33
		Improve accommodation facilities at the same place	14	93.33	1	6.67	-	-
		Offer rural Indian cuisine for breakfast, lunch and dinner	13	86.67	2	13.33	-	-
		Provide better medical facilities	13	86.67	2	13.33	-	-
		Offers more recreational activities that excites the tourist	9	60.00	1	1.67	5	33.33
		Make agri-products available at reasonable prices	14	93.33	1	1.67	-	-
		Maintaining of tourists' comment book	15	100	-	-	-	-
		Improve transport facilities	11	73.33	4	26.67	-	-
		Providing pick and drop facilities	13	86.67	2	13.33	-	-
2.	Increasing promotional activities	Developing contact with travel agencies	11	73.33	1	1.67	3	20
		Advertisement of the farm house unit	5	33.33	4	26.67	6	40
		Development of own website and update from time to time	14	93.33	1	1.67	-	-
		Developing contact With Schools, Colleges, NGOS, Club, Union and other Organisation	11	73.33	3	20	1	1.67
		Arrangement of cultural programme	10	66.67	2	13.33	3	20
		Opportunity to participate in rural games	7	46.67	4	26.67	4	26.67
		Provision of information about Punjabi culture	13	86.67	2	13.33	-	-
		Development of good relationship with the tourist	15	100	-	-	-	-
		Development of different agro-tour package for different type of tourist	9	60.00	4	26.67	2	13.33
		Availability of agri-tourism related literature	15	100	-	-	-	-

W: Willing; SW= Somewhat Willing; NW: Not at all Willing

It is clear from the data given in Table 2 that the overall prospects of agri-tourism venture in the state was high as reported by 46.67 per cent of the respondents while equal percentage (26.67%) reported medium and low overall prospects. The findings were in line with the findings of (Rich and Thomas, 2011; Barbieri and Tew 2009). Similarly in terms of increasing promotional activities 46.67 per cent of the respondents reported high prospects and 40 per cent of the respondents were willing to add facilities to the agri-tourism unit thereby indicating great prospects of agri-tourism venture in the state.

**Table 2: Overall prospects as perceived by the respondents in practising agri-tourism (n=15)**

Sl. no	Prospects	Category	F	%
1.	Over all prospects	Low (11-14) Medium (14-17) High (17-20)	4	26.67
			4	26.67
			7	46.67
a.	Adding facilities to the agri-tourism unit		4	26.67
			5	33.33
			6	40.00
b.	Increasing promotional activities		4	26.67
			4	26.67
			7	46.67

#### Problems faced by the respondents.

Problems referred to the difficulties encountered by the individual respondent in taking up agri-tourism as an entrepreneurial venture as well as the obstacles faced by the board employees while promoting agri-tourism among the farmers. Dichotomous response was taken in the form of Yes or No and score of 1/0 was assigned accordingly. The problems faced by the farmer respondents while practising agri-tourism as well as the problems reported by the board employees while promoting agri-tourism are presented in Table 3 and 4 respectively.

#### Problems faced by the farmer respondents

Open ended responses of the farmer respondents regarding problems faced while practising agri-tourism were taken and are presented in Table 3. It was revealed that majority i.e. 80 per cent of the respondents reported lack of training (1<sup>st</sup> rank) as the major problem followed insufficient literature related to agri-tourism practice (80%) which rank 2<sup>nd</sup>. While 73.33 per cent of the respondents reported insufficient fund for publicity and advertisement (3.5<sup>th</sup> rank) and lack of government support (3.5<sup>th</sup> rank) as major problems in agri-tourism venture followed by more than 60 per cent of the respondents reported lack of knowledge and skills and weak communication skills as problems of agri-tourism venture. The findings were in line with the findings of Chadda and Bhakare, 2011; Malkanthi and Routry (2011). Other problems reported by the respondents were lack of mindset for commercial approach (40 per cent), Inability to introduce more activities (33.33%). Unfavourable weather condition and complexity in getting license from the government were reported in equal percentage of (26.67%) as problems faced while practising agri-tourism and a minimum of 20 per cent reported non willingness of the tourists to purchase farm products which secured the last rank i.e. 11<sup>th</sup> rank as problem faced by them in agri-tourism venture.

**Table 3: Problems faced by the respondents in practising agri-tourism**

Sl. No	Problems	f	%	Rank
1.	Insufficient fund for publicity	11	73.33	3.5
2.	Lack of knowledge and skills	10	66.67	5
3.	Lack of government support.	11	73.33	3.5
4.	Weak communication skills.	9	60.00	6

5.	Lack of mindset for commercial approach.	6	40.00	7
6.	Unfavourable weather condition.	4	26.67	9.5
7.	Insufficient literature related to agri-tourism practice	12	80.00	2
8.	Non willingness of the tourists to purchase farm products.	3	20.00	11
9.	Inability to introduce more activities	5	33.33	8
10.	Lack of training for agri-tourism.	13	86.67	1
11.	Complexity in getting license from the government	4	26.67	9.5

### Problems faced by the board employees while promoting agri-tourism

Data presented in Table 4 shows that all the board employees reported insufficient fund for publicity and advertisement, unwillingness of the farmers to renew their registration and placing of tourists as some of the major problems followed by lack of co-operation from the farmers (66.67 per cent) in promoting agri-tourism among the farmers.

**Table 4: Problems faced by the board employees in promoting agri-tourism among farmers (n=3)**

Sr. No.	Problems	f	%
1.	Lack of fund for publicity and advertisement of farm tourism.	3	100
2.	Unwillingness of the farmers to renew their registration.	3	100
3.	Lack of co-operation.	2	66.67
4.	Placing of the tourists	3	100

### Suggestions given by the farmer respondents

Various suggestions given by the farmer respondents for promoting agri-tourism in Punjab is presented in Table 5. All the respondents suggested that a complete tourism package should be provided through initiation by the local government, more awareness programme should also be organised to make the people aware of the concept of agri-tourism, there should be provision of sales and marketing support, developing contacts with the schools, colleges, NGOs, club and other organisations and the license which is issued to the farmers for two years should be for lifetime. Then majority i.e 93.33 per cent of the respondents suggested that there should be coordination and cooperation among centre and state government to motivate the agri-tourism entrepreneurs, wide publicity of the agri-tourism centre and training for understanding the customers' behaviour should be provided by the Punjab Heritage and Tourism Promotion Board followed by more than 80 per cent of the respondents suggesting that training must be provided in various aspects of agri-tourism, Conduct and coordinate tours from urban areas to the farms and provision of subsidy by the government for agri-tourism development.

**Table 5: Suggestions of the respondents for promoting agri-tourism**

(n=15)

Sl. No	Suggestions	Agree (f)	%	Disagree (f)	%
1.	Need to provide complete tourism package by the government	15	100	-	-
2.	Provision of subsidy by the government for agri-tourism development.	12	80.00	3	20.00
3.	Required coordination and cooperation among centre and state government	14	93.33	1	6.67
4.	Support and participation of local government	12	80.00	3	20.00

5.	More Awareness programme	15	100	-	-
6.	Training in various aspects of agri-tourism.	13	86.67	2	13.33
7.	Provision of sales and marketing support.	15	100	-	-
8.	Conduct and coordinate tours from urban areas to the farms.	13	86.67	2	13.33
9.	wide publicity of the agri-tourism centre	14	93.33	1	6.67
10.	Developing Contacts with The Schools, Colleges, NGOs, clubs and other organizations	15	100	-	-
11.	Training for understanding the customers' behaviour	14	93.33	1	6.67
12.	The license issued to the registered farmers should be for lifetime	15	100	-	-

## DISCUSSIONS

A critical look at the results indicates that the farmer respondents perceived high to medium prospects of agri-tourism in the state. The discussion with them during the course of the study revealed that all the respondents had adopted agri-tourism due to their personal interest and nearly three fourth of the respondents were satisfied from this venture. During the investigation it was revealed that the two broad aspects of prospect i.e. adding facilities to the agri-tourism unit and increasing promotional activities had equal importance as both the aspects were equally essential for success of the agri-tourism venture. The study also revealed that half of the respondents intended to increase the area under agri-tourism as they were satisfied from this venture and moreover it provided them with a source of additional income from their existing assets. More importantly they revealed that it provided them with an opportunity to interact socially with various kinds of visitors, elevating their social status and enriching their lives and those of the community in general. All the respondents maintained tourists' comment book for chain publicity of the business. And during the discussion it was found that the farmhouse even though it is well maintained received less number of visitors annually due to their location as it was not easily accessible by the tourists. So in order to avoid this inconvenience, majority of the farm owner were willing to provide pick and drop facilities to the interested tourists. However the investigation revealed that various problems were faced by the farmer respondents while practising agri-tourism in the state. Availability of fund and finances for agri-tourism development was a major constraint along with the factor of human resources as trained manpower was also not available for the tourism industry. It was found that the concerned authority gave training only for the registration purposes and other aspects like the communications skill development, hospitality training, management of agri-tourism farm etc. were lacking. Thus weak communication skills sometimes on the part of the farmers and shortage of trained manpower hamper the business as the success of agri-tourism venture totally depends on the quality of service provided to the tourists. Furthermore insufficient literature related to agri-tourism practices were not available and as results of which agri-tourism owners they had to depend only on internet sources which may sometimes be misleading. Lack of government support and heavy taxes imposed upon the farm owners by the local government also discouraged the respondents from further expanding the business. Thus the government should take the initiatives for helping them and offer proper training to the prospective farmers willing to take up agri-tourism venture.

During the course of investigation it was revealed that the Punjab Heritage and Tourism Promotion Board (PHTPB), in addition to each farm's own promotional activity, act as a promoter of farm tourism show casting it as a major attraction of India's leading agricultural state. It promotes farm accommodation and activities in partnership with the private sector. The quality of services offered by the farm houses were verified by PHTPB. It then enrolled them into the scheme and provides training, as well as development and operational advice and undertakes promotional activity for farm tourism via the internet, publications and media relations.

Further the board also ensures:

- Support system from District Administration for local issues.
- Excise and Taxation Policy to serve liquor at subsidized liquor license fee.
- Facilitate standardization of establishments
- Marketing and Promotion at domestic and International level.
- Facility of electricity and water charges at domestic rates.
- The registered Farm owners get an opportunity to get free space to promote their Product at various fairs nationally and internationally where PHTPB participates.



During the investigation it was found that the board employees who actively participate during various promotional activities in the state face various problems. They revealed that sometimes the farmers were unwilling to come up for the renewal of the license and pay their registration fee. In addition during various training organised by the board they failed to come up and attend the training. Further they revealed that sometimes placing of tourists was a headache for them as majority of the outside state and foreign tourists, come in large numbers and accommodating them all in the same farmhouse was quite impossible as the farm owners have limited number of rooms.

## CONCLUSION

Thus it can be concluded that there is high to medium prospects of agri-tourism development in Punjab as perceived by the respondents. However the study also revealed various problems like insufficient fund for publicity, lack of government support, insufficient literature related to agri-tourism practices and lack of training for agri-tourism as major problems faced by the farmer respondents.

Thus, there is a need for intervention by the concerned authorities to look into the matter and take up necessary steps for success of agri-tourism venture in the state.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are given:

1. More awareness campaigns, seminars and workshop, specialised training programmes regarding various aspects of agri-tourism should be organised to make people aware of the concept of agri-tourism.
2. Literature regarding agri-tourism should be published in local language as well as English and made available to the farmers.
3. Efforts should be made towards involving more extension personnel in promotional activity of agri-tourism in the state.
4. There should be collaboration and cooperation between the state agricultural universities and Punjab Heritage and Tourism Promotion Board while conducting agri-tourism seminars, workshop and organising training for the farmers for the success of agri-tourism venture and to develop on larger scale.
5. Government should provide subsidy to farmers for agri-tourism development.

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