



"A STUDY OF AGRI TOURISM AS AN EMERGING BUSINESS FOR RURAL INDIA, IN BORDERLESS WORLD"

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ABSTRACT:

India has a great potential for agri tourism development. Agri tourism affords an opportunity to local farmer of augmenting his earnings and improving his standard of living along with bringing sustainability to his agricultural operations. It is always said that market requirements are to be assessed before launching new product in the market and market always promotes such business and policy which will solve social problems in a nation. Specifically, considering the borderless business world, Indian agri tourism can show magical growth, subject to some provisions and promotion of Agri Tourism business at government level. Agri tourism can contribute substantially to Educating rural citizens for systematic, ecological and technological rural development, Ecological and systemic urbanization to face the challenge of Global warming, Promoting agri-research and its importance for food self-sufficiency, Commercial Farming by way of being an excellent ancillary business with an avenue of earning valuable of foreign exchange. This study is an attempt to address these issues and providing solutions. Hence, "A Study of Agri Tourism as an emerging business for rural India, in borderless world"

KEYWORDS: Agri Tourism, Borderless Business, Rural Development

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry is at a vantage point in the borderless business world. India is blessed by nature with its equated seasons. Tourism in India is growing at a faster rate; foreign tourists are attracted towards India for its fascinating historical, natural, cultural, and rural heritage. Tourism industry is also emerging in rural India. Considering the natural cycle told in Malthusian theory tells logic that 'everything gets reverted back to its origin'. The origin of human being is in the nature and its creations finally will get back to it again. Now days' human beings have realized the importance of nature and natural activities. The heavy industrialization has made a man successful in such a way that human beings have forgotten its origin. In a way to fulfill the requirements of industrialization we forgot to give importance to agriculture and natural activities. Food problem, water problem, global warming etc. are outcomes of it. The importance of agriculture and its effective impact on food sufficiency and healthy environment have been understood internationally. Various ancillary businesses are practiced by farmers e.g. dairy, poultry, fishery, goat farming, etc. Agri tourism is a newly developed concept which can be a solution to these problems.

Visits of foreign tourists to Indian agri tourism are growing at an attractive rate. Countries like Australia, Malaysia, Israel, Thailand, Switzerland, New Zealand, France, Netherlands, and Indonesia etc. have witnessed the role of agri tourism, its growth and contribution to national economic development. Agri tourism has given a trailer of its potential in all developed countries and has shown its existence as a leading contributor in economic documents since 2000.

India has a great potential for agri tourism development. Agri tourism affords an opportunity to local farmer of augmenting his earnings and improving his standard of living along with bringing sustainability to his agricultural operations. It is always said that market requirements are to be assessed before launching new product in the market and market always promotes such business and policy which will solve social problems in a nation.

Specifically, considering the borderless business world, Indian agri tourism can show magical growth, subject to some provisions and promotion of Agri Tourism business at government level. Agri tourism can contribute substantially to:

- (1) Educating rural citizens for systematic, ecological and technological rural development.
- (2) Ecological and systemic urbanization to face the challenge of Global warming.
- (3) Promoting agri-research and its importance for food self-sufficiency.
- (4) Commercial Farming by way of being an excellent ancillary business with an avenue of earning valuable of foreign exchange.

2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Rural India is facing economic problems, such as insufficient growth in agricultural income, scarcity of water, weak education and knowledge about new technologies, low additional income from farming, increasing demand for land for constructions and urbanization, unpredictable nature, global warming has reduced the agricultural productivity, increasing gap between rural and urban cultures, as well as relationship.

Agri tourism can be a better solution which will bring the ecological awareness. It will change the attraction for urbanization in to attraction for nature. Agri tourism will also give the additional income to its farmers as an ancillary. It is proven at international level that agri tourism can be a good solution for most of the rural problems.

This study is an attempt to address these issues and providing solutions. Hence, "A Study of Agri Tourism as an emerging business for rural India, in borderless world"

3. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

- 3.1.** To study the challenges of borderless business world for rural India.
- 3.2.** To study the potentials of Agri Tourism as a business in borderless world.
- 3.3.** To Study measures for developing Agri Tourism as a tool for strengthening farmers to face the emerging challenges.
- 3.4.** To study the policies to be designed by government for promotion of Agri tourism.
- 3.5.** To suggest organizational model for successful Agri tourism in current agricultural scenario.

4. METHOD AND LIMITATION OF STUDY

This Qualitative Study is based on secondary data from published books, newspaper articles and some published research papers, case studies as well as primary data collected through interviews of three Agri tourism businessmen, and ten agri tourists. The study is limited to primary data collected in Pune District.

5. CHALLENGES OF BORDERLESS BUSINESS WORLD FOR RURAL INDIA

Technology has brought the world closer and communication from any corner is possible to any corner within fractions of seconds. Developed countries had taken a support of secondary sector (Industrial sector) to grow and develop at a faster rate. India started its real development after independence and secondary sector as well as tertiary sector has shown remarkable growth in past 11 plans.

Agriculture was concentrated but only for increasing food self-sufficiency. Development aspect was lagging while concentrating rural development. This has given a rise to heavy attraction towards industrialization, urbanization which is indeed westernization.

Table 1

Table 1 :GDP Calculations at Factor Cost 2011 (₹ Crores)							
Industry	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
1. Agriculture, forestry & fishing	565426	594487	619190	655080	654118	656975	700390
2. Industry	829783	910397	1021170	1119863	1168920	1261999	1361263
3. Services	1576255	1749332	1925651	2124015	2339471	2574769	2816190
GDP at Factor Cost	2971464	3254216	3566011	3898958	4162509	4493743	4877843
Percentage							
Industry	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
1. Agriculture, forestry & fishing	19.03	18.27	17.36	16.80	15.71	14.62	14.36
2. Industry	27.93	27.98	28.64	28.72	28.08	28.08	27.91
3. Services	53.05	53.76	54.00	54.48	56.20	57.30	57.73
GDP at Factor Cost	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

(Source: "Agricultural Statistics At a Glance 2011" from: www.agricoop.nic.in/agristatistics.htm)

Table 1 Show the GDP (factor Cost) and its percentage in primary, secondary and tertiary sector. It can be observed that GDP of Primary industry has increased from 565426 to 700390 crores but % in GDP of agriculture is decreasing from 19.03% to 14.36% in last 7 years.

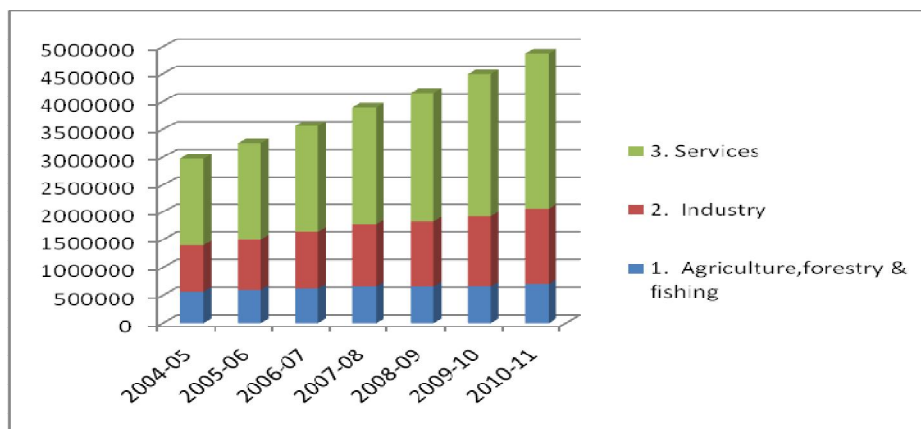


Fig 1 tells us that the GDP contribution of Agriculture and allied businesses is constant rather growing with decreasing rate but the rise in GDP is contributed by tertiary sector i.e. service sector. Service sector is growing at a faster rate in India; accordingly attraction towards income from tertiary sector is also increasing at a faster rate.

Agri Tourism is a service sector activity which will give additional and attractive income source to rural India. A bit success can be achieved to face challenges of borderless business world.

5.1. CHALLENGES OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Borderless business creates more attraction towards industrialization and service sector. Farmers in India has major problems to be systematically solved, like financial, unpredictable natural resource, labor, technology education, outdated customs etc. We are not in a position to fight with imported agro products unless we address all these issues. Quality of agro product in India is satisfactory; agricultural revolutions has

taken place in India but they could not spread to all agricultural cultivation processes e.g. Green Revolution 1963 has brought the change in quality as well as quality of agro product like wheat only. Revolution for overall agro products is awaited for chasing the challenges of borderless business world.

5.2. CHALLENGES TO SELL AGRO PRODUCTS

The threat in FDI in retail market is behind the curtain of foreign exchange availability.

Indian retail market will be dependent on foreign country, Indian farmers will always has to produce what the purchaser want, there is probable possibility of monopoly in purchasing farmers goods, Indian culture and its origin will be forgotten, as retail sector closely relates to the cultural habits of society, employment will be generated by foreign companies for Indians, but we will kill our budding entrepreneurs. This will take the nation to financial dependence on developed countries.

5.3. CHALLENGES OF TECHNOLOGY KNOWLEDGE

Technology in India is really doing remarkable job at international level, but the use of technology for agriculture is still waiting for its runway to start. Countries like Israel have shown a way to ignite the agricultural growth by use of suitable technology.

India is exporting all raw materials produced from agriculture and importing its finished goods back. Rural population is afraid of use of technology because they are unaware about use and benefits of technology. Lack of suitable technological education to rural India has created this trait.

Table 2 : India's Imports and Exports of Agricultural Commodities vis-à-vis

Total National Imports/ Exports						
Year	Agriculture Imports	Total National Imports	%age Agriculture Imports to Total National Imports	(Value ₹ Crore)		
				Agriculture Exports	Total National Exports	%age Agriculture Exports to Total National Exports
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2000-01	12086.23	228306.64	5.29	28657.37	201356.45	14.23
2001-02	16256.61	245199.72	6.63	29728.61	209017.97	14.22
2002-03	17608.83	297205.87	5.92	34653.94	255137.28	13.58
2003-04	21972.68	359107.66	6.12	37266.52	293366.75	12.70
2004-05	22811.84	501064.54	4.55	41602.65	375339.53	11.08
2005-06	21499.22	660408.90	3.26	49216.96	456417.86	10.78
2006-07	29637.86	840506.31	3.53	62411.42	571779.28	10.92
2007-08	29906.24	1012311.70	2.95	79039.72	655863.52	12.05
2008-09	37183.03	1374435.55	2.71	85951.67	840755.06	10.22
2009-10	59528.34	1363735.55	4.37	89341.33	845533.64	10.57
2010-11	56196.20	1605314.63	3.50	120185.48	1148169.56	10.47

Source: - Director General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics, Ministry of Commerce, Kolkata.

Table 2 tells us that currently our agricultural import is 3.50% of total imports and agricultural export is 10.47 % of total Exports, agricultural export is nothing but export of raw material like cotton, jute, tobacco,

fruits, tea leaves etc. of which finished goods are imported in India back. Proper technology of agro processing will lead to additional income generating business models for rural India.

5.4. CHALLENGES OF SMALL FARMERS

Due to heavy population India is 2nd largest country with over 121 crores. Still majority of population depends upon agriculture sector and average size of land holding has decreased to 1.33 hectors in 2001. Present situation of small and marginal farmers is such that they can not invest more in agriculture to increase their production. Since their holdings are small, educational level is low and their assets are meager they are unable to get financial assistances in adequate amount.

5.5. CHALLENGES OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CLIMATE CHANGES

Climate change may alter the distribution and quality of India's natural resources and adversely affect the livelihood of its people. With an economy closely tied to its natural resource base and climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, water and forestry, India may face a major threat because of the projected changes in climate.

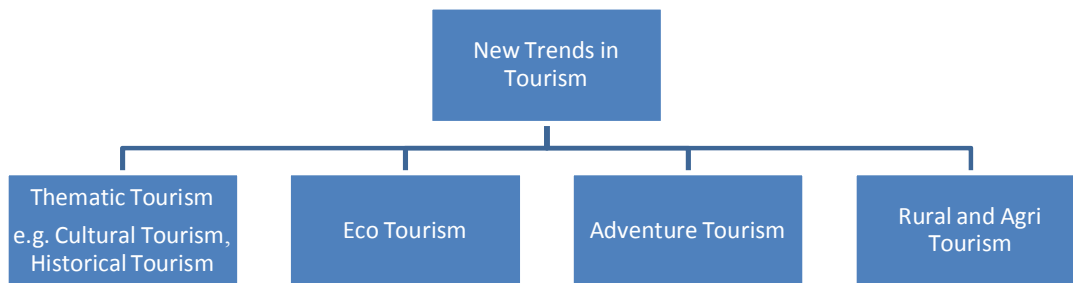
In charting out a developmental pathway which is ecologically sustainable, India has a wider spectrum of choices precisely because it is at an early stage of development. Our vision is to create a prosperous, but not wasteful society, an economy that is self-sustaining in terms of its ability to unleash the creative energies of our people and is mindful of our responsibilities to both present and future generations.

6. AGRI TOURISM CONCEPT, FEATURES AND BENEFITS

Agri Tourism can give a partial solution to the situation of farmers in India. In the phase of being a part of borderless business world, it is important to take care of survival and growth of India's primary sector. Agri tourism is utilization of cluster of primary and tertiary sector i.e. agriculture and tourism.

6.1. AGRI TOURISM CONCEPT

Tourism is an emerging industry and can be called as most beneficiary industry in the borderless business world. Dynamism has not left Tourism industry aside, Tourism industry also has left its traditional path and new trends are developed according to the taste and preferences of tourists. Agri Tourism is an outcome of heavily transformed urbanized life and attraction towards nature and agriculture.



The concept of Agri Tourism is a direct expansion of ecotourism, which encourages visitors to experience agricultural life at first hand. Agri Tourism is gathering strong support from small communities as rural people have realized the benefits of sustainable development brought about by similar forms of nature travel.

(Source: definition of agritourism by bohuslava boučkováat agritournet 's hertogen bosch march 2008)

Agro Tourism is when a **native person or local of the area** offers tours to their Agriculture Farm to allow a person to view them growing, harvesting, and processing locally grown foods, such as coconuts, pineapple, sugar cane, corn, or any produce the person would not encounter in their home country. Often the farmers would provide a home-stay opportunity and education (*Source: www.hobotraveller.co/*)

India has entered amongst the top 10 tourist destinations list (*Source:-Conde Nast Traveler - A leading European Travel Magazine*). Value addition by introducing novel products like Agri-tourism would only strengthen the competitiveness of Indian tourism industry in global market. India has diverse culture and geography which provide ample and unlimited scope for the growth of this business. India has diverse Agro-climatic conditions, diverse crops, people, culture, deserts, mountains, coastal systems and islands which provide scope for promotion of all season, multi-location tourism products.

There is increasing number of tourists preferring non-urban tourist spots (*Article published in financial express dated 15th Jan 2010*).

Hence, there is scope for promotion of non-urban tourist spots in interior villages by establishing Agri-tourism centers. Only the requirement is adequate facilities and publicity must promote such centers.

6.2. FEATURES OF AGRITOURISM

It refers to the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation.

Agri tourism is a style of vacation in which hospitality is offered on farms. This may include the opportunity to assist with farming tasks during the visit. Agri tourism has often been proposed as a means to prop up a local agricultural economy when local producers are no longer economically competitive otherwise.

Agri tourism is the form of tourism which capitalizes on rural culture as a tourist attraction. It is similar to ecotourism except that its primary appeal is not the natural landscape but a cultural landscape. If the attractions on offer to tourists contribute to improving the income of the regional population, agri tourism can promote regional development. To ensure that it also helps to conserve diversity, the rural population itself must have recognized agro biodiversity as valuable and worthy of protection."

(1) **Easy Availability of Agri Tourism Services:** - Food, accommodation, recreation and travel is available at low cost in Agri-Tourism. Due to the low cost price of enjoyment also effects to be less, hence is affordable.

(2) **Curiosity about the farming and rural life:** - Heavy urbanization has brought the condition to the urban citizens to find their roots at villages, and go at such places where children will understand the farming techniques and rural life. As Agri Tourism is attached with other events which are rare in urban life the interest about the rural and agri tourism is increasing. It is a means for providing training to future farmers. It would be effectively used as educational and training tool to train agriculture and line department officers. This provides unique opportunity for education through recreation where learning is fun effective and easy.

(3) **Family oriented entertainment and recreation:** - Agri Tourism is a full entertainment for whole family i.e. children, youngsters, and senior citizens of family. It has an attraction for all family members as it finds roots for all age groups. Modern lifestyle has made the life stressful; hence people are in constant search of pro-nature means to make life more peaceful. Ayurveda which is pro-nature medical approach has roots in villages. Organic foods are in greater demand in urban areas and foreign countries. In total, health conscious urban population is looking towards pro-nature villages for solutions. Modern life is the product of diversified thinking and diversified activities. Peace and tranquility are inbuilt in Agri-tourism as it is away from urban areas and close to nature.

(4) **Overcrowded resorts and tourism cities:-** In resorts and cities, overcrowded peace seekers disturb each other's peace. cities and resorts are out of peace. Even though efforts are made to create village atmosphere in the sub urban areas through resorts, farm houses, artificial and original has a difference.

(5) Some successful entertainment farming enterprises and techniques in Agri-tourism - International experiences.

They are

1. Wineries with Friday happy hours.
2. Arts & Crafts Demonstrations.
3. Farm Store : Exhibition of farm equipments
4. Processing of farm products and sale.
5. Demonstration of Agri-activities.
6. Sheep Shearing.
7. Wool Processing.
8. Free fishing / hunting.
9. Farm Vacations.
10. Bed and Breakfast
11. Farm Tours.
12. Horseback Riding.
13. Camping.
14. Bad weather - like desert, snow fields, heavy rainfall also attract Agri-tourists Picnic Grounds.
15. Educational Tours for school children, officers and progressive farmers
16. Farm Schools to teach a particular skill
17. Outdoor Schools which are mobile in nature teaching agriculture
18. Workshops on interesting, emerging agriculture topics
19. Festivals with wide publicity and sponsorship
20. Cooking Demos to satisfy housewives.
21. Pick-Your-own Pumpkin Patch.
22. Moonlight activities.
23. Speakers who can attract Agro-tourist narrating Agricultural experiences.
24. Regional Themes like tribal coffee of Kerala, Andaman spices etc
25. Crop Art.
26. Pizza Farm.
27. Historical Recreations like highlighting a oldest farm etc. . like Antique Villages. Miniature Village.
28. Collection of old farm Machinery.
29. Farm Theme like Fantasyland, apple town etc
30. Playground for Children.
31. Gift Shop: - antiques crafts, crafts demonstrations, food sales lunch counter etc.

(6) **Educational value of Agri Tourism:** Agri-Tourism could create awareness about rural life and knowledge about agriculture science among urban school children. It provides a best alternative for school picnics which are urban based. It provides opportunity for hands on experience for urban college students in agriculture. It is a means for providing training to future farmers. It would be effectively used as educational and training tool to train agriculture and line department officers. This provides unique opportunity for education through recreation where learning is fun effective and easy. Seeing is believing, doing is learning. This experience based concept is the USP of Agri- Tourism.

6.3. BENEFITS OF AGRICULTURE TOURISM TO FARMERS, SOCIETY

6.3.1. Additional Income to farmers: Agri Tourism business is an ancillary to agriculture where farmers will get satisfaction by appreciation from tourists as well as financial benefit, farmers can sell their farm produces directly to the customers who visits their farms. This can be one of the role playing activity to the development of rural economy.

6.3.2. Bridging the gap between urban and rural population: Agro Tourism will bring the urban citizens to village and the attraction towards the rural lifestyle. Presently the cultural, educational, economical gap between these two groups is very wide and bridging the gap is a need of overall and balanced development of a nation. These gaps can be filled by Agri tourism.

6.3.3. Improvement in standard of living of rural population: Increasing income of farmers will lead to improved standard of living; the skills, education and standards will be an attraction created by their observation towards urban population coming to them, the cultural exchange of these two groups will be facilitated by Agri tourism.

6.3.4. Promotion of Agri research and innovations: Tourists are attracted only towards new and innovative practices. Farmers have to learn the new techniques of farming, new products and variation in cultivation process so that they can retain these tourists as a repeated customers. This will increase farmer's education, research aptitude and income. The win-win situation will be achieved.

6.3.5. Satisfaction from rural hospitality, small events of happiness to tourists: Tourists travelling to rural tourism center or agro tourism center will get the rural hospitality featured by affection, emotions, and love of farmers for them. It involves the true picture of Indian culture, festivals and rural traits. Small events as listed above will give a joy and happiness to the tourists.

6.3.6. Cost saving tourism with organic and fresh food: compared to the other tourism industries agro tourism is much cost effective. Agri tourism tour will cost nearly half than any other tour visit spot. The most important benefit is the fresh food and organic food which tourists will get at farms.

7. AGRITOURISM AS A TOOL TO FACE GLOBAL CHALLENGES OF BORDERLESS BUSINESS WORLD

7.1. Educating rural citizens for systematic, ecological and technological rural development: Agri Tourism will increase the income of farmers and rural economy will be benefited. Tourism at rural parts of the country will ask the government to improve the infrastructural facilities at villages. Agriculture sector will need technological backup to grow at a faster rate, improving financial status will bring the power of technology to rural economy and the prosperity benefit circle will get activated. Education to rural India will also be accelerated by the prosperity circle. In the borderless economic world this will bring strength in farmers to chess the challenges.

7.2. Ecological and systemic urbanization to face the challenge of Global warming: Attraction to rural parts for urban population can be converted to attraction towards ecological environment. It has been observed that the ecological residential schemes in urban parts have a heavy demand. Rural development can be done by ecological and systematic plans; this will make India able to face global warming challenges. Farmers will be in a capacity to maintain their ecological environment by the improved and capable rural economy.

7.3. Promoting agro-research and its importance for food self-sufficiency: Promotion of agro research will be possible, if attraction towards agriculture business is sustained. Agri tourism as a tool of improving earning potential in agriculture can create attraction towards agro business for young generation in rural area. Research in agriculture will definitely increase the agri production and food self-sufficiency can be achieved. The cost effective agriculture is also possible if agro research is promoted. Research is only a single tool which can give strength to chess the borderless business to India.

7.4. Commercial Farming by way of being an excellent ancillary business with an avenue of earning valuable of foreign exchange: Farming is known as a business of livelihood in India, due to decreasing size of land holding the 'economies to scale' is lost and cost of production for small farmers has gone out of reach. Agro tourism will change the farming structure and it has a potential to make it 'Commercial farming'. Foreign tourists have attractions of Indian ecology, which can be utilized for agro tourism and valuable foreign exchange can be generated to chess the borderless business world.

8. SUGGESTIONS

India has already become a part of borderless business world. Indian economy is imbalanced, due to uneven growth at various sectors. It is undoubted that India has a great economic base which will make India survived in borderless business world with the rule of 'survival of the fittest'. Balanced growth and strengthening rural India will survive the nation as a whole. Farmers in India are part of rural economy; rural economy in India is growing at a slow rate and is influenced by the attraction of urbanization. The monetary attraction of urbanization for farmers will lead to reduction of cultivable and operational lands. To facilitate the problem for solution it is necessary to take some corrective actions.

- 8.1** Specific policy is to be announced for Agri Tourism by government, as Agri tourism has no statutory status as an ancillary business.
- 8.2** Apex body is to be formed for facilitating and regulation agri tourism business and promoting the same for attracting foreign tourists in Indian agri tourism.
- 8.3** Agri Tourism is to be promoted by govt while promoting the state tourism corporations.
- 8.4** Collective agri tourism is to be thought upon as a structure of business in the present condition of low size of operational land holding.
- 8.5** Financial facilities are to be provided from NABARD schemes for development of an agri Tourism centers.
- 8.6** Agri Tourism awareness programs should be arranged by government to create awareness among the farmers, about Agri tourism as a business with proper training of agri tourism is to be given to interested group of farmers.
- 8.7** Agri research centers should be made researchable for farmers; Agri research centers should also facilitates farmers by establishing their campuses at villages and allowing farmers to use their research free of cost.

9. CONCLUSION

Agri tourism can be a solution to the problem of rural economy, migrations from rural to urban can be stopped by giving attracting income avenues at villages itself. The world is now borderless for business. Especially tourism industry has a great potential in borderless business world, there can one single way of solution which will give strengths to rural India for chasing the challenges of borderless business world. It is well known that all MNCs have estimated the potential customers in villages. Agri tourism will also enlighten the rural villages as an opportunity to identify the potential of this borderless business world to grow and develop.

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