

The Concept of Agri-Tourism and the Traditional Farming in Manipur

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INTRODUCTION

Any agriculturally based operation or activity that brings visitors to a farm may be termed as Agritourism. It has different definitions in different parts of the world, and sometimes refers specifically to farm stays. It includes a wide variety of activities, including buying products direct from a farm stand, picking fruit, feeding fish and animals, or staying at a farm stay, similar to home stayⁱ. Agricultural tourism is an excellent opportunity for many people to experience and learn about a lifestyle that is quite different than their own, often times in beautiful, peaceful, rustic settings. It is a type of tourism that has seen a boost in popularity within recent years. It includes a set of economic and social activities that occur and link travel with the products, services, and experiences of agriculture.

Table 1: Global Agritourism Market Assessment

Attributes	Description
Historical Size, 2023	USD 3,22,387.2 million
Estimated Size, 2024	USD 3,57,205 million
Projected Size, 2034	USD 5,36,423.8 million
Value-based CAGR (2024 to 2034)	4.1% CAGR

Sources: <https://www.futuremarketinsights.com/reports/agritourism-market#:~:text=The%20agritourism%20industry%20will%20cover,just%20attracts%20those%20interest%20groups.>

Table 2: Annual growth rate of India's agritourism industry

Market for Agritourism	Global Growth Rate	India's Growth rate
	\$42.46 billion in 2019	20% annual growth rate
	\$62.98 billion by 2027	20% annual growth rate

<https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/agritourism-in-india/>

Agritourism may shortly be summarised as a commercial enterprise at a working farm, or agricultural plant conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates supplemental income for the ownerⁱⁱ. This form of tourism is a relatively new market for tourists. Including Australia, Canada, United States, and the Philippines, agritourism is a form of niche tourism that is considered a growth industry in many parts of the world. Other

terms associated with agritourism are "agritainment", "value added products", "farm direct marketing" and "sustainable agriculture"ⁱⁱⁱ. It is becoming an important tourism development opportunities and more of the village people at sometime in their life have moved to the city and have lost their connection to where agriculture is produced.

Hectic life schedule and boring city life often create curiosity to run away from their workplace or home to a nearby place and relax. Here agricultural tourism is a worldwide trend, which offers to break out urban concrete and re-discover their rural roots. It allows people to stay at fully functioning farms in order to observe the work routines and activities that are undergone in the agriculture business on a day-to-day basis. Interacting with farmers and observing their activities is itself a learning process for the urban people which may not interact with on any level at any time.

Agritourism in India

Agriculture Tourism is operational in India since 2004. It started in Baramati Agri Tourism Center under the guidance of Pandurang Taware. Agri Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) is pioneer in the development and marketing of agritourism concept in the country. Till June 2024, ATDC attracts more than 80 lakh tourist. ATDC helps in protecting the nature and saving the flora and fauna and especially the soil and insects that helps the farmers a lot in doing agriculture. It is popularly known as India is an agrarian country. The revenue from agritourism is increasing at a pace of 20% annually in the country. According to the 2019 Business Economics study, India's agritourism industry is seeing a 20% annual growth rate. The market for agritourism was estimated to be worth \$42.46 billion globally in 2019 and is anticipated to grow to \$62.98 billion by 2027, with a CAGR of 13.4% between 2020 and 2027^{iv}.

AGRI-TOURISM AND THE TRADITIONAL FARMING IN MANIPUR

Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has launched a Central Sector Scheme named "Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region" (MOVCDNER) for implementation in the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura during 2015-16 to 2017-18. The scheme aims at development of certified organic production in a value chain mode to link growers with consumers and to support the development of entire value chain starting from inputs, seeds, certification and creation of facilities for collection, aggregation, processing, marketing and brand building initiative.

Around 85 percent of the Indian population is directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture and allied activities. In Manipur, 70 per cent or more of the total population is directly or indirectly engaged in agricultural activities. In the state, the existing area under cultivation of different crops is 2,85,000 hectares as against the available potential area of 3,25,500 hectares. In 2021, the Soil and Water Conservation Division (I) of the State Forest Department, Government of Manipur initiated Sub-Mission on Agroforestry (SMAF), in order to introduce suitable agro forestry models with combinations of trees and crops for the state with different soil types and altitude gradients.

Thanga, Moirang, Kakching, Wabagai, Wangoo, Nambol are some of the traditional farming areas of Manipur. Here in the above places, farm recreation are carrying out throughout the year without exactly having the consciousness of Tourism. The activities conducted on these private agricultural lands include overnight stays, educational activities, etc. This category of tourism is a subset of a larger industry known as agritourism.

Agritourism and Traditional Farming Enterprises might include:

1. Outdoor Picnic/Recreation
2. Educational Tour
3. Harvest Festivals
4. Farm stays
5. On-farm Marketing

Rural Tourism differs from agritourism in two ways. First, rural tourism enterprises do not necessarily occur on a farm or at an agricultural plant, they do not generate supplemental income for the agricultural enterprise.

In Wabagai, every seasonal vegetable are available at a cheaper but with larger quantity. Nambol also produces many farm products which are cheaper at rate than in the city. Moirang and Thanga are perfect examples for Tourist Favourite with Farm Marketing. Pineapple Festival at Andro and Orange Festival at Tamenglong are also perfect harvest festival to mention. Thangjing Festival at Nambol, though organised at a local and very smaller scale is also started making noise with every passing year. Strawberry farm at Yairipok and Kabowakching and Apple farm at Laipham Lotnung Kakching are gaining popularity and attracting tourist at larger number.

City people have become more interested in how their crop is produced. They want to meet farmers and processors and talk with them about what goes into crop production. For many people who visit farms, especially children, the visit marks the first time they see the source of their food, be it a fish or dairy cow, strawberry or corn growing in a field, or an apple they can pick right off a tree. So, farmers use this increasing interest of the people and started to develop traffic at their farm, and interest in the quality of their products, as well as awareness of their products.

Agritourism Challenges in Manipur

Some of the challenges of the farmers that are faced while increasing agritourism:

1. Not all farmers are aware of the potential benefits of agritourism.
2. Poor accessibility and connectivity to village areas deter tourists.
3. Inadequate infrastructure is the biggest hindrance to the farmers.
4. Farmers lack the skills needed to manage tourism activities.
5. Friendly regulations and procedures are needed for small-scale farmers.
6. Awareness for Tourism activities with the sustainability of the agricultural ecosystem is needed.

Agritourism Solutions for Manipur

The following are probable solutions to increase agritourism:

1. Joining hand with the state government, private sector, and local communities can lead to more effective development and marketing of agritourism.
2. Decision-making processes must involve local communities to ensures agritourism development.
3. Increasing awareness to the tourist about the villages and make them respects local culture and traditions.
4. Increasing variety of activities like, farm work to cultural experiences.
5. Increasing of availability of bookings, virtual tours, and marketing can enhance the reach and efficiency of agritourism ventures.
6. Creating networks among agritourism providers with knowledge sharing and collaborative marketing efforts.

CONCLUSION

Tourism has become one of the most important sectors for generating income and employment opportunities in Manipur. Agri-tourism is a new initiative for the development of the tourism industry in the state. Agritourism will surely help in increasing the city people's awareness of rural life and knowledge of agricultural activities. It gives students of colleges at Imphal city the chance to gain practical experience in agriculture. It would be an useful tool for teaching and training agricultural and line department officers as well.

Today everyone makes an effort to work harder in a variety of ways to earn more money and enjoy modern amenities. Peace is therefore a forgettable subject in his system. It is possible to find a quiet environment through tourism. In agritourism, lodging, meals, entertainment, and travel costs are the lowest. Thus tourism base is widened by this and rural people got a chance to earn more. Traditional farming, which was done with indigenous knowledge, land use methods, traditional equipment, natural resources, and organic fertilizer etc is now by large started withdrawing for quick bucks. But by this concept of agritourism may help farmer resume, becoming a way to teach younger generation the farmers' cultural values with earning as well as a way of healthy life.

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ⁱ <https://nationalaglawcenter.org/overview/agritourism/>

ⁱⁱ <https://nationalaglawcenter.org/overview/agritourism/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://oklahomaagritourism.com/producers/getting-started/agritourism-definitions#:~:text=Agritourism%20is%20a%20form%20of,%E2%80%9D%20and%20%E2%80%9Csustainable%20agriculture.%E2%80%9D>

^{iv} <https://www.geeksforgoeks.org/agritourism-in-india/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%202019%20Business,13.4%25%20between%202020%20and%202027.>