

# The theoretical basis of agritourism



Agritourism can be explained as a farm enterprise operated for the enjoyment and education of the public that may also generate additional income for the farmer by promoting farm products and experiences and giving many opportunities to local community to enhance their living standards (Wilson et al., 2006). The concept is gaining popularity and it's providing a great escape for people in urban environment from their high-paced, strenuous and many times monotonous lifestyle. At the same time it's helping the new generation to get first-hand experience of the rural life, which otherwise is limited only to the books for them. Spending time on the farms, interacting with the local people and farmers to get an insight into their day-to-day work and their traditions, participating in the local fairs and festivals, doing the actual work on the farm, milking the cow, riding a bullock cart, are some of the activities that can be enjoyed on an agritourism outing.

### **3. 2. 1 Theoretical basis of agritourism**

Agritourism is multifunctional and cooperative strategy (Sidali et al., 2011; Wilson, 2007; Essex, et al., 2005; Schmitt, 2010; Mason, 2000). The post-productivits agricultural system is the new approach in agricultural development. It is very complicated than subsistence and productivits agriculture systems (Topcu, 2007). Post-productivits agriculture system is a broad concept and the five main tasks of it are qualitative priorities in food production, alternative income sources for farmers and sustainability of agricultural lands, conservation of environment and new employment opportunities. Agritourism can easily link with these new aspects of agricultural development. Moreover, agritourism can be performed in five important sectors such as agricultural economic, socio-cultural,

environmental and educational context in an effective manner. Further, since it is highly involved with the gender factor, agritourism as a gender approach is also having higher importance (Topcu, 2007; Sidali, Spiller and Schulze; 2011; Wilson, 2007; Essex, et al., 2005).

### **3. 2. 2 Definitions of agritourism**

Before 1990, only a little information has been published on agritourism. This lack of information was one of the reasons for the absence for the commonly accepted definition (Lack, 1997). However, after 1990, the research literature on agritourism has flourished and several number of definitions are available now (McGehee and Kim, 2004). Some selected definitions of agritourism are as follows.

Agritourism can be defined as the practice of engaging in activities, events and services that has been provided to consumers for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes at a farm, ranch, or other agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operation in order to allow consumers to experience, learn about, and participate in various facets of agricultural industry, culinary pursuits, natural resources, and heritage (Colorado Agritourism Research Project, 2010).

Tew (2010) cited The Agribusiness Development Division of the Missouri Department of Agriculture (2010) defines agritourism as, “ visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operation for the purpose of appreciation, enjoyment, education, or recreational involvement with agricultural, natural or heritage resources”

Agritourism as an innovative agricultural activity related to tourism and agriculture both in which has capacity to create additional source of income and employment opportunities to the farmers and local communities (Maruti, 2009).

Agritourism can be characterized as a business or activity that invites visitors to come on-farm or into a rural community to enjoy agriculture, its produce and the natural environment in which it exists. Agritourism is generally an additional enterprise added to the farm, integrating tourism into agri-business (Porcaro, 2009).

An activity, enterprise or business which combines primary elements and characteristics of agriculture and tourism and provides an experience for visitors which stimulates economic activity and impacts both farm and community income (Bruch, 2008).

Tourism on a working farm in which visitors can experience a direct connection with the host farm, rural life and/or the local environment”.

There is not a consistent definition of agritourism in the literature, and it has been used interchangeably with other terms. For example, some studies have previously been synonymously linked to rural tourism, farm tourism, agro-tourism, agricultural tourism and farm based vacation (Seong-woo and Sou-yeon, 2006; Ilbery, 1998; Ilbery, 1991). However, the main idea of all of these definitions is more or less similar. As a whole, agritourism can be explained as an interaction among agricultural producers, visitors, and local residents. Operators (mainly farmers) can earn extra income from the farm,

visitors can get real knowledge and experience on farming and local residents can enhance their living slandered in several ways.

### **3. 2. 3 Working definition for agritourism in the study**

For the purpose of this study, agritourism is defined as “ tourism activities that conduct in working farm and surrounding, for enjoyment, education, recreation of visitors, hoping an additional income for the operator from farm resources in special and sustainable local development in general”. This is the working definition for agritourism in this study that is suitable in Sri Lankan context. After having strong theoretical knowledge and practical experience in agritourism sector, this was developed, including considering the main purposes of agritourism visitors, motivation of agritourism operators and expectations of local residents for rural development. Economic, social, environmental dimensions have been included in this definition.

### **3. 2. 4 Activities involved in agritourism**

Normally, agritourism activities are the tourism activities take place in agricultural lands and surrounding rural environments. The number of agritourism activities mainly depends on the size of the farm and nature of the farming activities. These activities are important for the visitors to enjoy and learn agriculture. Blacka et al (2001) has divided agritourism activities in Virginia, into six categories as lodging and camping (bed and breakfast, camp sites, youth camp, farm vacation, weddings and honeymoons), special events and festivals (music festivals, haunted house, holiday celebrations, harvest festivals) Off the farm (farmers’ markets, roadside produce stands), recreational activities and events (fee fishing, hiking, rock climbing,

horseback riding, skeet shooting), tourism related direct marketing (pick your own fruits/vegetables, sell processed food on the farm, sell herbal organic products) and youth and or adult education (Organized tours, agricultural educational programs, demonstrations). Lack (1995) divided agritourism British Columbia, into three groups as retail sales/ direct marketing (goods produced on-site, customer harvested produce and goods produced off-site), Tours (tour of processing facilities, scenic tours and tours of production facilities) and activities (accommodation, cultural activities, recreation and educational or hands on experiences). It is important to include all the possible agritourism activities because it helps to increase the length of stay and satisfaction of the visitors. In European countries, in a farm there are activities for visitors even for several days. However, the number of agritourism activities is lower in Asian countries. Further, activities in agritourism and rural tourism haven't clearly categorized yet and most of the time they are used interchangeably.

Briefly, a successful agritourism operation should have three aspects. They are the need to have things for visitors to see (educational tours, historical recreations, festivals/special events, crop arts), things for visitors to do (educational activities, petting zoos, hay rides, pick your own) and things for visitors to buy (food and drinks, farm products, souvenirs). Things to see and do are often offered free of charge. But, money can be earned by selling things to the visitors (Adam, 2001). Agritourism can be used as primary, supplementary or complementary enterprise. As a primary enterprise, agritourism would be the main activity in the farm. Agritourism could be a minor activity in supplementary enterprises and it would share equal footing

in complementary enterprises (Blacka et al., 2001). Agritourism can consist of different alternatives such as temporary attraction or special event, part of a large agriculture-oriented destination, part of a huge non-agriculture-oriented destination, and full agritourism operation.

## **Different forms of agritourism business**

Farmers can incorporate agritourism activities to their farms in various ways according to the situation. Three possible ways are; as a supplementary, complementary or primary enterprise. To fulfill the final objective of agrotourism; farmer must think creatively and arrange it properly. (Mnguni, 2010).

### **Supplementary enterprise**

In a supplementary enterprise, agritourism is a minor activity that would help the other products on the farm. For example, if the primary enterprise is crop production, educational and training programs can be introduced with marketing facility of value added crop products.

### **Complementary enterprise**

In a complementary enterprise, agritourism activities have equal share with other enterprises in the farm product mix. For instance, if there is a grapes production enterprise on the farm, if the farmer wants to sell half of the grapes to a whole seller and the remainder to "pick-your-own" operations for visitors on the farm, then the two enterprises would be complementary enterprises.

## **The primary enterprise**

In the primary enterprise, agritourism would be the major activity on the farm. For example, if a farmer hopes to begin a winery in the farm. He will definitely invite guests to have that experience by tasting the product. As a part of that package, he can offer an overnight accommodation in a cottage which is in the farm. And also the farmer can produce grapes in his own farm and use them to wine tasting activities. Here agritourism is the main part of the farm product mix and it becomes the primary enterprise (Bernardo, Valentin and Leatherman, 2007; Blacka, et al, 2001).

## **Link the relevant sections with chapter 2**

### **3. 2. 5 Issues and challenges of agritourism development**

As agritourism is a business activity, lots of requirements are essential for the successfulness of it. However, as agritourism it is conducted mainly in rural areas by farmers, presence of several issues and challenges is a common phenomenon. For example, a study by Lack (1995) in British Columbia, has discovered that, lack of training, marketing knowledge, quality control, finance, appropriate insurance, excessive regulations, personal challenges for farm families, conflict with primary agricultural production, distance from markets, infrastructure limitations and farm disease are the challenges of agritourism development in that country. Agritourism in Nova Scotia has some obstacles. Many agritourism operators face the problem of lack of assistance and the knowledge required to produce market-ready products as Nova Scotia Tourism. Culture is reluctant to include and to enhance agritourism in their marketing campaigns. This lack of support hinders the development of agritourism products and services resulting poorly



developed and marketed products by farmers. So, farmers could not develop many skills required to operate an effective tourism business (Colton and Bissix, 2005).

A study in Haryana, India has reported that the Lack of funds for publicity and advertisement, less number of visitors, Lack of technology to develop farm tourism, lack of motivation of farmers, inadequate price for farm products/activities as major constraints in establishing agritourism (Shehrawat, 2009).

In Sri Lanka, issues and challenges in agritourism are small size farm lands, lack of required skills for the operators, poor level of processing of agricultural products, low level of publicity and promotion are the significant factors. Furthermore, lack of visitors, environmental pollution, poor condition on infrastructure, are the common problems for all the operators (Malkanathi and Routray, 2011b). Although there are few differences, most of the issues and challenges are common for many countries. As issues and challenges are negatively affect for the growth of the sector, finding solutions is utmost important.

Global warming is one of the prominent environmental issues and mass tourism has negative impacts on the environment. In mass tourism, large number of people gather to a same place and enjoy the tourism. Mass tourism indicates that the holiday is standardized, packaged rigidly and nonflexible. Due to the negative impacts of mass tourism, people have started to concern about the quality of the environment and the future of the

tourism industry and also due to that has begun to focus on alternative forms of tourism. (Mairesse, 2007/2008)

By showing importance of reality the rural environment reveals itself as an exceptional because it is far from the standard large-scale hotel chains. Rural Tourism needs a help for rural development without trespassing limits, an unseen entrance. Currently the issue of rural tourism is its sustainability. Only from the sustainable tourism can have an area of authentic countryside existence. Rural Tourism development should be totally different from the seaside tourism development which builds artificial villages and big holiday resorts without any identity. Currently the coastal lines have destroyed because the rural spaces are exceeding by urbanization. (Randelli, Romei, Tortora, Mossello, 2011)

### **3. 2. 6 Sustainability in agritourism operations**

Through Sustainable tourism development it is expected to protect and enhance the future opportunities while fulfilling the needs of current tourists and host regions. It is further explained as managing resources as fulfilling the economic, social, aesthetic needs, while maintaining cultural truthfulness, vital ecological processes, bio diversity and life carry systems (World Tourism Organization, 1999) Therefore, for long term sustainability, should have proper balance between environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects which is also known as principles aspects of Agro tourism development.

Same as other tourism destinations, sustainability of agritourism destinations are very important in long run. Although most of the destinations that are

feasible in short run, face difficulties in survival in long run. So, economic feasibility, social acceptability and environmental friendliness of tourism operations are equally applicable to agritourism as well. World Tourism Organization (2001) , defines sustainable development as “ convene the requirement of present tourists and host regions as caring and improving opportunity for prospect. Its management of resources satisfies in way of economical, social and aesthetic needs satisfying while maintaining cultural integrity necessary for ecological processes, biological diversity and existence support system”. Markandya, et. al, (2003) have reported that the three main linkages among tourism and sustainable development are economic, social and environmental.

Given tourism’s importance in the global challenges of climate change and poverty reduction, there is a need to urgently adopt a range of policies which encourages truly sustainable tourism

that reflects a ‘ quadruple bottom line’ of environmental, social, economic and climate responsiveness. (Sharpley, 2009)

Tourism can kill itself if we mismanage the tourism activities and places (Yalcin Kuwan and Perran Akan, 2001). Unspoiled natural environment is an asset of the industry. It will create the competitive advantage to the industry (Cater, 1993). The implementation and success of policies of sustainability, in employing tourism income to support social and cultural development and wild life conservation, require strategy framework which guides tourism development in a balanced and coherent way (Hall, 1998).

Agritourism focus for increasing rural vitality and stimulating new economic opportunities through the diversification of farm operations and increased revenue on-site and near the operations (Geisler, 2008; Jensen, Lindborg, English, & Menard. 2006). As a means to support the growth and development of the agritourism industry, Extension education can aid in the necessary programming for and education of community leaders and business operators. (Norby, Retallick, 2007)

For sustainable Agritourism operations should minimize the environmental impacts by considering both local and global environmental impacts. Deforestation, water and air pollution etc should be minimized. And also through Agritourism can minimize the damage by conserving natural areas, habitats and wild life. One of the best ways of reaching to sustainability is through achieving a clear sense of difference from other competing destinations. By using local history, industry, culture, lifestyle and natural resources attraction can be done genuinely. And the operations should be done by representing the past, present and future aspirations of the local community as reflecting the values of the community. With proper understanding of target market can offer the products and services with added values. Agritourism is a kind of an operation which provides mutual benefits for visitors and hosts while acting as a economic and community development tool. Ultimately, good tourism businesses get involved with the community and collaborate with other businesses and stakeholders and help to build local capacity.

Enhancing the production can be done through combination of agricultural and non-agricultural options. Increasing the productivity of labor, risk

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reducing and improving assets can be done through diversification. Linkages between the countryside, towns and cities can augment productivity and sustainability of production by creating employment, revenue and investment.

Finance and investment involves the way of mobilization of resources from taxation, central government, the private sector, foreign direct investment and remittances from abroad. It also includes how resources are invested.

Through proper strategic, Agro-Tourism could bring lot of advantages to the society. It could be a sustainable revenue producing product for rural market and can help inflow to resources from urban to the rural economy. It can avoid moving of rural people to urban. By using this particular form of rural tourism, it is feasible to fully discover the untapped potential of rural market. Both short term and long term preparation, implementing and monitoring are very important in avoiding harm to rural areas. Environmental management, local involvement, sound legislation, sustainable marketing and realistic planning are essential for Agro-Tourism development. Agro-Tourism is emerging as a vital instrument for sustain human development including poverty reduction, employment production, environmental renewal and development of remote areas and improvement of woman and other underprivileged groups in the country separate from promoting social integration and international consideration. The government should encourage Agro- Tourism to make sustainable economic growth and positive social change.

In developing countries tourism has been greatly used for, and linked directly with reduction of rural poverty especially in developing countries. However, the application, and to a degree the principles, of the widely used organizing framework for considering reducing the poverty. Household income sustainability is applied the individual or family level, while tourism sustainability is applied to the industry and destinations at broad, more macro level scales.

### **Economic feasibility**

As one element of destination's economy, tourism must support a viable economic base. A healthy economy enables a country, region or city to pursue initiatives designed to enhance the quality of its residents (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003). Traditional way of management of tourism destination was rather productive and resource-centered. But since there are limits in adapting to the market, the present strategy is combined supply and market let approach. In this context, management of demand is highly responsible for the sustainable tourism development (Kastenholz, 2004). So, instead of profit maximization of a destination by damaging the environment in short term, now the principle is to obtain the optimum profit.

Economic benefits are positively related with the number of visitors. Further arrangement of traditional and cultural events is cost effective with this large number. However, as agritourism is a niche market, socio-culturally and environmentally sustainable, cooperation of cultural activities is very important.

## **Socio-cultural feasibility**

Tourism operations must be compatible with the existing socio-cultural condition of the area where it is located. It is essential to test the social acceptability of tourism destinations (Gonzalez and Falcon, 2003). There should be a respect for the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance by the tourism operators and especially by outside visitors. Then it is easy to work together by the tourism operators, visitors and the local community.

This is a common for agritourism also. Since agritourism is mainly a service industry in rural areas, goodwill and cooperation of local communities are essential to make it successful (Cole, 2006; Knowd, 2006). Agritourism should be able to offer more positive socio-cultural impact than the negative impacts for the local community. This way agritourism can enhance the socio-cultural feasibility. Sharpley (2002) said that socio-cultural growth includes population of remote areas, development and maintenance of public services, renewal of local craft, customs and cultural recognition.

## **Environmental feasibility**

Tourism destination should less damage to the surrounding environment; especially it should be free from serious environmental pollution activities. So, it should match with environmental rules and regulations and followed by Environment Impact Assessment (United Nations, 1999). However, the literature reveals that little evidence is there regarding environment being considered by farmers, planners and tourism professionals (Kline et al. 2007).

Although it is difficult and expensive, agritourism development should follow the sustainable tourism procedures to obtain the real benefits of it forever. However, most of the operators in many countries mainly emphasize only on short term economic advantages without social and environmental benefits. This is the reason for the breakdown of many tourism operations including agritourism, within a short time period.

## **Participatory approach in Agro tourism and rural development**

The variety mentioned above may be explained by a brief analysis of some of the proposed

definitions of participation.

With regard to rural development, participation includes people's involvement in decision-making processes, in implementing programmes, their sharing in the benefits of development programmes and their involvement in efforts to evaluate such programmes (Cohen and Uphof, 1977).

Participation is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them (World Bank, 1994).

Participation in spatial planning denotes the co-decision capability of the affected citizens and institutions of the civil society in diverse stages of the decision-making process. When some citizens are affected directly, the



participation right is assured by law. In many cases, it is optional. But there are good reasons why optional forms of participation are being applied.

Areas with an enduring high out-migration, the left over population often tends to act passively. The huge social changes, the harder it is to generate fulfill edged participation through the differences of education, local hierarchy, social position and political direction. Intraregional co-operation can be expected as a “ market place” of potentials. Each of the groups or individuals integrated in the process of contribution brings in some kind of potential formal political power, informal power of opinion ideas, financial means, and ownership of land, contacts or just personal dedication. The position of the individual within the decision-making procedure is hugely determined by the extent to which the specific potential is esteemed according to objective and subjective criteria.

Participatory approaches are used in order to start up novel development paths and to interpret ideas and concepts into action. At the commencement, however, the competing behavior of the actors prevails. One temporary goal of participatory approaches is therefore to stress common interests and to help compromises which are not pressed through by local things, but at least suitable to all.

Participation typology

## **Type of Participation**

### **Some Components and Characteristics**

Passive Participation

People are told what is going to happen or has

already happened. Top down, information shared belongs only to external professionals

Participation in information giving

People answer questions posed by extractive

researchers, using surveys etc. People not able to influence the research

Participation by consultation

People are consulted and external agents listen to their views. Usually externally defined problems and solutions. People not really involved in decision making. Participation as consultation.

Participation by material incentives

Provision of resources, e. g. labor. Little incentive to participate after the incentives end, for example much farm research, some community forestry.

Functional Participation

Groups are formed to meet predetermined

objectives. Usually done after major project decisions are made, therefore initially dependent on outsiders but may become self dependent and enabling. Participation as organization.

Interactive Participation

Joint analysis to joint actions. Possible use of new local institutions or strengthening existing ones. Enabling and empowering so people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.

#### Self-Mobilization

Already empowered, take decisions independently of external institutions. May or may not challenge existing inequitable distributions of wealth and power. Participation as empowering

(Source: Pimbert and Pretty, 1994).

### **3. 2. 7 Government policies in agritourism**

In general local government is the most important authority in establishing tourism development policies (Perce, 1989). However, the types and the content of its involvement vary from country to country based on the political, economic, and constitutional systems. In many European countries governments' have supported the growth of the agritourism sector.

There are national policies for the support and development of agritourism in a number of countries for a long time. For instance, in France, state financial aids to support the renovation of redundant farm buildings into accommodation facilities were introduced in 1954. Farms in Italy, Germany and Denmark also have long benefited from national support for the development of tourist facilities (Frater, 1983; Nilsson, 2002). In Britain, Scheme offering financial incentives and advices about diversification, together with partial relaxation of planning restrictions, have facilitated the development of farm-based tourism. The farm diversification Grant Scheme

introduced by the ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in 1988, was one of the first measures offering grants to farmers to help them develop diversification schemes (Walford, 2001).

According to Douglas and Douglas, (2001); Fernando, Rebollo and Biadal, (2003), it is important to develop policies in a proactive nature to lay the foundation and capture the development potential of tourism for rural communities. So, the national rural tourism strategy of a country must emphasize on infrastructure development, product development, accreditation and industrial standards, education and training, market analysis and the role of government authorities and industrial leaders in further developing the rural tourism product. Ritchie and Crouch (2003) reported that policy is an important factor which ensures the success of tourism destination. It also creates a friendly environment among stakeholders.

Therefore, the main objectives of agritourism policy are to minimize and alleviate negative environmental, social and cultural impacts; optimize revenue for industry and re-invest in conservation; optimize the active involvement of, and equitable distribution of economic benefits to, local communities; educate visitors and citizens about the importance of conserving natural and cultural heritage; promote ethical behavior and responsibilities towards the natural and cultural environment; manage operations such that there are long term benefits to the resource, industry and the local residents; deliver high quality, value-for-money, enlightens and participatory natural resources and culture-based experience for visitors; encourage travel in a spirit of humanity, respect and learning about local

hosts, their culture and the natural environment etc. Victorious farm-based tourism mostly depends on policy makers, government officers at the local or countrywide level (Beus and Dunlap, 1993).

Brohman (1996) has clearly explained the importance of government involvement in rural development in his study for the third world development, there are necessary new paths.

“ Though the third world tourism has developed fastly, it has encountered many troubles common to outward-oriented development strategies such as extreme foreign dependency, the formation of separate enclaves, the strengthening of socioeconomic and spatial inequalities, environment destruction and increasing cultural separation. To avoid those troubles, institutional mechanisms require to be formed to give confidence active state and participation of community in tourism planning”.

Ritchie and Crouch (2003) reported that the following aspects are important as government policies of the sector. Infrastructure policy (Can make destination safer and attractive for the visitors), Local zoning policy/by-laws (Can restrict or encourage tourism facility development), Land use and land assignation, Water resource management, Heritage conservation, Credit facility (granting reduced-interest loans to business and enterprises Affects costs and therefore profitability), Tax and subsidies (Tax concessions for investments, Can affect the growth of the industry negatively and positively and finally for the profitability of the destination), Minimum wage policy (Can affect labor markets), Agricultural policy (Organic farming, Soil conservation), Welfare policy (Can influence the nature and behavior of the

work force), Education, extension and Training policy (Can affect the quality of the workforce), Marketing policy, Environmental policy (Limits growth and access to attractive but sensiti