

Agri-tourism in Rural Asia and the Pacific: Opportunities and Challenges

Sreenath Dixit¹

ABSTRACT

Agri-tourism, an emerging sector in Asia and the Pacific, bridges agriculture and tourism by offering authentic rural experiences. It enhances sustainable rural development, provides alternative income for farmers, and preserves traditional agricultural practices. The sector has grown significantly due to increasing global interest in eco-tourism and experiential travel. Countries like Japan, India, Thailand, and the Philippines have successfully integrated agri-tourism into rural economies, showcasing farm stays, crop harvesting, and culinary experiences. Despite its potential, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, climate change vulnerabilities, and lack of business skills hinder widespread adoption. Government policies, technological advancements, and community involvement are key drivers of growth. The future of agri-tourism lies in balancing economic benefits with environmental and cultural sustainability. With strategic investments in infrastructure, skill development, and responsible tourism, agri-tourism can play a pivotal role in transforming rural livelihoods while fostering deeper connections between consumers and food producers.

Keywords: Agri-tourism; Sustainable rural development; Farm-based tourism; Rural entrepreneurship; Eco-tourism; Community engagement

INTRODUCTION

Agri-Tourism

Agri-tourism, also referred to as farm tourism, involves travelling to rural areas where visitors can experience farming activities firsthand. It is a form of tourism that brings together agriculture, culture, ethnicity, and nature, offering visitors the chance to connect with the land, the food they consume, and the people who grow it. This type of tourism typically includes activities such as farm stays, crop harvesting, cooking classes using local produce, and more. Unlike traditional tourism, agri-tourism emphasizes sustainability and community engagement, offering tourists an authentic experience of rural life

¹ *International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Patancheru, Telangana, India*

and agriculture. Its objective is to provide the tourists with experience rather than site-seeing-place-hopping, which are the characteristics of traditional tourism.

Agritourism is one of the emerging areas of entrepreneurial engagement for agriculturalists to cope with the economic risks posed by climate change. It essentially involves diversifying income streams from agricultural activities and the associated value chains. In a broader sense, agritourism envisages visits to a working agricultural setting for leisure, recreation, or education purposes (Arroyo et al., 2013). These engagements range from farm-based ventures to well-organized agro-technology parks (Mahaliyanaarachchi et al., 2019). Agritourism in its various formats has been reported to be strengthening resilient building engagements from locations across the countries. However, the spread of agritourism is fraught with gaps in awareness, level identification, and networking of viable agritourism spots, etc. (Mahaliyanaarachchi et al., 2019).

Global Trends in Agri-Tourism

Globally, there has been a significant shift towards sustainable tourism. As travellers become increasingly conscious of the environmental and social impact of their travels, Agri-tourism has gained popularity. From the demand side, this sector is growing due to increased awareness among travellers about environmental concerns that have led to the need for conscious tourism practices. From the supply side, this sector is seen as offering an alternative source of income to smallholder farming, which is in distress due to globalisation. It is also seen as a way of promoting sustainable tourism by supporting small-scale, family-owned farms, encouraging organic farming practices, and preserving rural traditions. New-age travellers are keener on personalized travel experiences, and Agri-tourism offers a unique opportunity to engage with local cultures, food systems, and environments. The trend toward eco-tourism and experiential travel has led to a rise in Agri-tourism ventures around the world.

The global agritourism market size was valued at USD 69.24 billion in 2019 and is projected to reach USD 197.37 billion by 2032, exhibiting a CAGR of 8.88% during the forecast period based on our analysis in the existing report. Europe dominated the agritourism market with a market share of 47.07% in 2019. The shift of behaviour towards entrepreneurship among farmers around the globe is significantly influencing the agritourism sector. In addition, the global market is expanding rapidly on account of the rising adoption of relevant strategies by the governments of various economies to boost the revenue from agriculture, as well as the tourism industry. The growing consumer demand for economical, nature-based, and sustainable tourism among tourists is acting as a crucial driving force for the market. Moreover, the increasing initiatives by

governments, private organizations, and associations to develop a strong industry by launching agritourism projects and programs will further boost agritourism market growth (Fortune Business Insights, 2024).

Importance and Scope of Agri-Tourism in Asia and the Pacific

Agri-tourism in Asia and the Pacific offers diverse and unique attractions for travellers seeking authentic, nature-based experiences. In Asia, highlights include rice terraces in Southeast Asia, tea plantations in India, Sri Lanka, and China, and coffee farms in Indonesia and Vietnam. Visitors can also explore traditional farming practices in Japan and Thailand, or fruit orchards and agricultural festivals across the region. The Pacific islands offer attractions such as coconut and taro farms in Fiji, sustainable organic farms in Vanuatu, and coffee and cocoa plantations in Papua New Guinea. Traditional agricultural practices, community-based Agri-tourism, and coastal farming also provide unique opportunities for cultural immersion. Tourists engage in hands-on experiences like harvesting, cooking, and participating in local festivals. Agri-tourism in both regions promote environmental sustainability, supports rural communities, and fosters cultural understanding while offering travellers a deeper connection to the landscapes and agricultural heritage. India, one of the most diverse in the region, showcases its diverse ecosystems, offering unique experiences across the country. In the northwest, visitors can explore desert farming practices in Rajasthan. The east features rice paddies in Odisha and West Bengal. The southern regions offer coffee, tea, and spice plantations in Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu. The drylands focus on millet farming, while the Himalayan valleys are known for apple, peach, plum, and saffron cultivation in states like Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh (Galvez, et al., 2023).

Asia Pacific is expected to be the fastest-growing region in the global market. This can be attributed to the presence of Agri-dominant countries such as China and India within the region. The governments of the countries and other Southeast Asian countries are intensifying their efforts to develop the agritourism business to improve the agricultural and tourism economy remarkably. High government investment in the sector, coupled with the increased involvement of private and semi-government organizations in this business, can fetch abundant success to the industry of Asia Pacific in the upcoming years (Fortune Business Insights, 2024).

Agri-Tourism in Rural Asia

- 1. Overview of Rural Asia:** Rural Asia spans a vast and diverse region, from the expansive agricultural plains of China to the fertile valleys of Southeast Asia. Agriculture is a significant part of the economy, particularly in countries like India, China, Vietnam, and Thailand. Farmers in these regions

grow a wide range of crops, from rice and tea to fruits, vegetables, tea, coffee, rubber and spices. Despite the rapid urbanization in many Asian countries, rural areas remain the backbone of agriculture and continue to preserve rich cultural and agricultural traditions. Many rural communities are dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods, but they also face challenges like limited access to markets, infrastructure, and financial resources.

Asian farming communities are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, facing increasing threats from unpredictable weather patterns, rising temperatures, and more frequent extreme events like floods and droughts. These environmental shifts disrupt crop production, reduce agricultural yields, and undermine food security, leaving farmers with limited resources to cope. The region's dependence on rain-fed agriculture makes these communities especially susceptible to changing rainfall patterns. With many farmers already struggling to make a living from traditional farming, the need for alternative sources of income is critical. Promoting sustainable farming practices, improving access to climate-resilient technologies, and providing financial support can help strengthen livelihoods. Empowering these communities with alternative income options can reduce their dependence on climate-sensitive agriculture, ensuring long-term resilience in the face of climate change. In this backdrop, diversification into non-agricultural activities, such as Agri-tourism, can be a viable alternative, particularly for smallholder farmers. Agrifood-tourism linkages can create income-generating opportunities for farmers and tourism operators, boost employment and stimulate overall economic growth, promote the development of sustainable agrifood systems, prevent rural youth outmigration and help preserve culinary and agricultural heritage (Gálvez, et al. 2023)

2. Current Landscape of Agri-tourism in Asia: In Asia, Agri-tourism has seen varying degrees of development depending on the country. Japan is perhaps leading the region where Agri-tourism has become a booming industry, with visitors flocking to rural villages to experience traditional farming practices, such as rice planting and tea picking. Other countries of the region will need a lot of catch-up to be able to achieve the standards Japan has at present. Similarly, in countries like Thailand and Vietnam, tourists engage in activities such as rice paddy tours, cooking classes using local ingredients, and homestays on farms. India has also seen a rise in agri-tourism, with states like Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra offering farm tourism packages that include organic farming experiences and rural heritage tours. Southeast Asia, with its rich agricultural heritage, is seeing increasing demand for agrarian travel experiences that emphasize sustainability and cultural immersion.

The tourism business in the Philippines is booming, and the country is looking into the possibility of agritourism as a replacement. The country has shown commitment by ranking among the top eight agritourism destinations worldwide. Agritourism-related farms in Taiwan showed an increase in farm income, which aided in the prosperity of the family, according to a study by Chang et al (2019). The family members preferred working on the farm over working outside.

Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC) region consists of five countries in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) and three in the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia). CAC have a unique ecology of desert, steppe and mountain complemented by a kaleidoscope of ethnic cultures (Beniwal, et al. 2010). Despite being challenged by a harsh climate characterized by low and unpredictable rainfall and extremes of temperature, CAC is rich in plant genetic resources and encompasses centre-of-origin crops of global significance, including cereals, legumes, fruits, and vegetables. As one of the region's key suppliers of agricultural products such as wheat, cotton, fruits, and vegetables, and with its high bio-physical potential for agricultural development, there is an immense opportunity to sustainably increase CAC's agro-pastoral productivity by integrating Agri-tourism in this region the potential remains largely untapped. For instance, a study conducted in Uzbekistan reported that many rural residents lack the knowledge and business skills to implement agritourism practices. Only 12% of farmers were familiar with agritourism, and 41% did not know anything about it (Patterson and Aslam, 2024).

3. Opportunities for Agri-tourism in Rural Asia: Agri-tourism presents several opportunities for rural communities in Asia:

Economic Growth and Job Creation: By attracting tourists to rural areas, agri-tourism creates new job opportunities, from hospitality to guiding and farm management. It also helps small farmers diversify their incomes by opening new avenues like farm tours, organic product sales, and cooking workshops.

Preservation of Traditional Practices: Many rural communities in Asia rely on traditional farming techniques passed down through generations. Agri-tourism can help preserve these practices by introducing visitors to ancient agricultural methods such as terraced rice cultivation, sustainable farming, and organic food production.

Sustainable Tourism Models: Agritourism can serve as a model for sustainable tourism. By promoting small-scale, low-impact travel experiences, it encourages environmental stewardship and reduces tourism's carbon footprint. Tourists are also more likely to appreciate locally sourced food and support organic farming practices, which are central to agritourism initiatives.

Cultural Exchange and Education: Agri-tourism creates opportunities for cultural exchange. Visitors learn about the food and farming traditions of rural communities, which fosters respect for cultural diversity and supports the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

4. Challenges in Agri-tourism in Rural Asia: Infrastructure: One of the primary challenges facing Agri-tourism in rural Asia is poor infrastructure. Remote rural areas often lack the necessary road networks, transportation options, and communication facilities that tourists require. This can make it difficult for travellers to access these areas, thus limiting the growth of Agri-tourism. Besides, there could be a trade-off between the connectivity and sustainability of the enterprise, as those having better infrastructure may initially flourish and then lead to over-exploitation, causing the whole business to become unsustainable over time.

Capacity Building: Many rural communities lack local expertise in hospitality and tourism management. Without training in customer service, marketing, and guiding, local communities may struggle to meet tourists' expectations. Currently, there is not much institutional support to train and build the capacity of rural entrepreneurs in Agri-tourism.

Environmental Impact: While Agri-tourism is generally seen as more sustainable than conventional tourism, it can still pose environmental challenges, such as the overuse of local resources (water, soil, etc.) and damage to delicate ecosystems. Over-tourism in some regions may also stress local agricultural systems. Agri-tourism in fragile ecosystems must be strictly guided by the carrying capacity of not just the farm but the entire system, which supports the resource requirement for this enterprise.

Cultural Sensitivities: Agri-tourism can sometimes clash with local cultural values. For instance, some rural communities may be reluctant to open their private farms to outsiders, or they may find the commercialization of their traditions challenging. Equipping agritourists about the cultural sensitivities of their target destination may help visitors appreciate and be mindful of the dos and don'ts during their travel and sojourn.

5. Cases of Best Practices: Japan: In rural Japan, Agri-tourism has become a vital part of rural development. The “Furusato” (hometown) program encourages urban dwellers to visit the countryside for farm experiences, fostering a deeper connection to rural traditions. Visitors participate in activities like rice planting, tea picking, and local festivals. The program has contributed to both economic revitalization and cultural preservation.

Thailand: In Thailand, Agri-tourism is growing rapidly, with farmers offering tourists the chance to participate in rice planting and harvesting. The country's Agri-tourism efforts also include cooking classes using local produce, enhancing visitors' appreciation of Thai cuisine.

India: States like Maharashtra and Kerala have embraced agritourism. For example, the “Green Kerala” project promotes farm tourism by offering visitors the opportunity to stay in eco-friendly homestays and participate in farming activities. It also exposes tourists to the nearby trekking and hiking attractions. Maharashtra was the first state in India to promote agritourism. The state established the Agri-Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) in 2005, which is a unique initiative, and it owns a 28-acre pilot project in Palshiwadi, Pune district. The Konkan division of Maharashtra alone has 33 Agri-tourism centres (Wanole, et al, 2020). The Agri-tourism model has been replicated in 328 Agri-tourism centres across 30 districts in Maharashtra, which has helped to conserve and enhance the village environment, village traditions and culture, customs, village arts and handicrafts. The Agri-tourism model gives authentic experiences to the visitors by showcasing village culture, agriculture, and traditions that have helped gain sustainable supplementary income sources and generated local employment (FAO, 2020).

Philippines: Local farmers invite tourists to participate in agricultural activities like vegetable harvesting, strawberry picking, and purple yam processing. This practice allows tourists to learn about the value of farmers' produce and promotes a connection between farmers and tourists (Tugade, 2020).

Vietnam: Community-based tourism (CBT) has been pushed as one of the strategies for poverty alleviation, particularly in marginalized regions and communities of Vietnam. *Hoi An* village, a heritage destination, ranked high on sustainability, while the culture-society score exceeded its potential sustainability score. However, critical factors such as community development policies, capacity building, full community participation and institutional support, and environmental sustainability are identified as key growth factors for replicating the success of *Hoi An* village (Ngo and Creutz, 2022).

Brunei: Agri-tourism farms have adopted strategies to mitigate tourism revenue loss, including, diversifying economic activities to expand agribusiness and innovative products, using digital transformation, such as virtual tourism, social media, and contact tracing apps and encouraging community capacity building by training and upskilling local farmers (Chin & Musa, 2021).

Agri-Tourism in the Pacific Islands

1. Overview of the Pacific Islands' Rural Communities: The Pacific Islands consist of over 20,000 islands spread across the Pacific Ocean. Agriculture is a key economic activity in these island nations, with crops such as coconuts, bananas, coffee, and tropical fruits being staples. Many communities in the Pacific Islands are still relatively isolated and rely on subsistence farming for their livelihoods. However, tourism is becoming an increasingly important source of income for these communities, and Agri-tourism is an emerging sector. The Pacific Islands offer a unique

Agri-tourism experience, combining tropical landscapes, indigenous cultures, and a focus on sustainability.

2. Current State of Agri-tourism in the Pacific: Agri-tourism in the Pacific is in its infancy, but it is beginning to show promise. In countries like Fiji and Samoa, visitors are invited to experience the local agricultural way of life, including coconut harvesting, traditional farming methods, and cooking classes. In Fiji, tourists can visit farms that produce organic produce, learn about traditional horticulture, and even participate in cooking lessons using locally grown ingredients. Similarly, in Papua New Guinea, Agri-tourism ventures allow tourists to visit coffee plantations and experience the production of the island's famous coffee beans.

3. Opportunities in Agri-tourism in the Pacific: Sustainable Tourism Development: Agri-tourism in the Pacific provides an opportunity for the region to develop sustainable tourism practices. By emphasizing eco-tourism and promoting sustainable farming practices, Agri-tourism can help reduce the environmental impact of mass tourism.

Cultural Preservation: Agri-tourism in the Pacific Islands can help preserve indigenous farming traditions. Visitors are often drawn to the rich cultural heritage of the Pacific, and Agri-tourism offers a way to showcase traditional farming practices, cooking techniques, and local lifestyles.

Economic Diversification: For small island nations, Agri-tourism offers a way to diversify the local economy. Many Pacific nations rely heavily on traditional industries like fishing and agriculture, and Agri-tourism provides an alternative income stream for rural communities, helping to alleviate poverty.

4. Challenges in Agri-tourism in the Pacific: Climate Change Vulnerabilities: The Pacific Islands are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels, cyclones, and droughts. These environmental changes threaten both agriculture and tourism, making it difficult to maintain stable Agri-tourism operations.

Infrastructure Constraints: The lack of infrastructure on many islands poses a significant challenge for Agri-tourism. Remote locations with limited road networks, electricity, and communication make it hard to attract and accommodate tourists.

Small Scale and Limited Resources: Many Agri-tourism operations in the Pacific are small-scale, often run by families or small community groups. These enterprises may lack the resources and capital to expand and promote their businesses effectively.

5. Case Studies and Best Practices: Fiji: Agri-tourism sector is gaining traction, with several eco-friendly farms offering tours of organic farms and

traditional cooking classes in Fiji. The success of these ventures has spurred interest from other Pacific nations to adopt similar Agri-tourism models. However, there is still a long way to go as most tourists seemed interested in agritourism but presently were unaware of the existence of such venues in Fiji. Tourists preferred a short stay at working farms offering value for money experience. In terms of importance, hospitality followed by entertainment, were the two main desired services for an agritourism venue (Shah et al., 2019).

Samoa: In Samoa, Agri-tourism is integrated into community-based tourism initiatives, where visitors participate in cultural farming activities and learn about the local agricultural heritage. But, Agritourism in Samoa is a growing field that connects agriculture, culture, and tourism. It can offer unique visitor experiences and opportunities for the local agriculture industry. However, agritourism in Samoa is still in its early stages and faces challenges such as climate change, limited labour, and a lack of coordination between the public and private sectors

Comparative Analysis of Agri-tourism in Rural Asia and the Pacific

- 1. Shared Opportunities:** Both regions share common opportunities, such as the potential for sustainable rural development, the preservation of traditional agricultural practices, and the diversification of rural incomes through tourism. These regions have a long agrarian culture and history with unique characteristics that offer exquisite tourist experiences.

Growing awareness and the need to generate additional income from agriculture are motivating smallholder farmers to venture into agritourism. Agritourism can also contribute to environmental sustainability by promoting organic farming and eco-friendly tourism practices, making it a win-win for both regions.

- 2. Unique Challenges:** Both regions face challenges related to infrastructure and capacity building and a conducive policy environment. The Pacific Islands are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and hence need to be cautious in promoting Agri-tourism in vulnerable ecotopes. Rural Asia often grapples with issues of over-tourism, resource depletion and harsh climatic conditions.

Cultural differences also play a role, with Pacific Island nations prioritizing indigenous traditions and Asia's diverse cultures influencing Agri-tourism models.

- 3. Lessons Learned:** Cross-regional learning is vital. For instance, the successful community-based Agri-tourism initiatives in the Pacific Islands could be adopted in rural Asia, while Asia's well-established Agri-tourism infrastructure could benefit Pacific nations seeking to expand their tourism

offerings. Successful models have emerged in both regions, and these could be contextualised to local conditions and scaled further. There is a lot to learn from the late starters from those countries where Agri-tourism is in advanced stages, especially from the sustainability viewpoint. Opportunities for cross-learning exists for all stakeholders of Agri-tourism - entrepreneurs, investors, trainers, communities, travellers and governments alike.

Key Drivers for the Growth of Agri-tourism in Asia and the Pacific

- 1. Global and Regional Travel Trends:** The rise in demand for authentic travel experiences, sustainability, and cultural immersion is a significant driver for Agri-tourism. Both regions are experiencing this shift, where tourists are seeking unique, meaningful, and educational experiences. Asia Pacific Agritourism Market Size, Share and Industry Trends report that the Asia Pacific agritourism market will witness a growth of 11.5% CAGR during the forecast period from 2022 to 2028, indicating a robust expansion in the region (Anonymous., 2023). Modern travellers increasingly seek meaningful and sustainable experiences. Unlike traditional tourism, Agri-tourism offers authentic cultural interactions and opportunities to engage with rural life. Visitors can participate in farm activities, taste fresh local produce, and understand traditional agricultural practices. This trend aligns with the broader global push toward eco-friendly travel, where reducing environmental footprints and promoting local economies are paramount.
- 2. Government Policies and Support:** Both regions are receiving increasing attention from governments, with policies that support rural development, promote sustainable tourism, and incentivize local communities to engage in Agri-tourism. Government-backed initiatives to link agriculture and tourism to promote farm tourism are also fuelling Agri-tourism demand. A study by FAO of the UN on Linking Agriculture and Tourism to Strengthen Agrifood Systems in Asia and the Pacific emphasizes that agrifood-tourism linkages can create income-generating opportunities for farmers and tourism operators, boost employment, and stimulate overall economic growth (Galvez, et al. 2023). Many governments in Asia and the Pacific have recognized Agri-tourism as a tool for rural development and economic diversification. Countries like Thailand, India, and the Philippines offer subsidies to farmers to diversify into tourism, provide infrastructure support, and establish policy frameworks to facilitate this growth. For example, India's "Rural Tourism Development Scheme" and Thailand's "One Tambon One Product (OTOP)" initiative promote rural tourism and Agri-tourism alike. International organizations such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) actively promote sustainable tourism practices in rural areas. These organizations provide guidelines, funding, and platforms for collaboration

between nations, ensuring that Agri-tourism aligns with broader sustainable development goals (SDGs). Their emphasis on sustainability fosters responsible tourism that benefits both host communities and the environment.

- 3. Technological Innovations:** Digital platforms have transformed agritourism by enabling easier booking systems, virtual farm tours, and marketing. Technology plays a significant role in bridging the gap between rural areas and global tourism markets. Tanina et al. (2021) argue that the adoption of digital technologies enhances the development and marketing of agritourism offerings and helps create tourist products in Russia. Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok have played a transformative role in promoting Agri-tourism. Visual content showcasing serene farm landscapes, hands-on agricultural activities, and unique rural experiences has captivated audiences, driving interest in these destinations. Influencers and travel bloggers further amplify the appeal by sharing their personal stories, creating a ripple effect in attracting new visitors. Innovative technologies like virtual reality (VR) and mobile applications are enhancing the Agri-tourism experience. Virtual tours allow prospective tourists to explore farms and rural settings before booking, while mobile apps provide navigation, itinerary planning, and real-time updates during their stay. Additionally, advancements in sustainable farming techniques showcased during farm visits highlight the synergy between innovation and tradition, further enriching the visitor experience.
- 4. Community and NGO Involvement:** NGOs play a key role in supporting Agri-tourism by providing capacity-building programs and facilitating community-driven development. Local communities are increasingly being engaged in decision-making processes, ensuring that Agri-tourism initiatives benefit everyone. A study explored how NGOs support in Costa Rica. NGOs also play a crucial role in facilitating community involvement in tourism, providing microcredit, and creating economic opportunities for local populations (Bernardo, 2008). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been instrumental in fostering Agri-tourism as a means of rural development. Projects led by NGOs focus on improving infrastructure, offering micro-financing to rural entrepreneurs, and promoting sustainable tourism practices. For instance, organizations like the Asia Foundation and local grassroots NGOs often collaborate with governments and private sectors to ensure that the benefits of Agri-tourism are equitably distributed

Strategies for Overcoming Challenges in Agri-tourism Development

Infrastructure Development: Investment in rural infrastructure, such as road networks, communication systems and digital infrastructure, and sustainable energy, is essential for the growth of Agri-tourism.

Capacity Building and Skill Development: Training programs for locals in hospitality, tourism management, and sustainable agricultural practices are crucial to the success of Agri-tourism initiatives.

Sustainability Practices: Implementing eco-certification schemes, promoting organic farming, and integrating sustainability into all tourism activities can help mitigate environmental impacts.

Collaboration and Partnerships: Collaborations between government bodies, private sector businesses, local communities, and NGOs can help scale Agri-tourism initiatives effectively and sustainably.

CONCLUSION

- 1. Summary of Opportunities and Challenges:** Agri-tourism offers numerous opportunities for rural development, cultural preservation, and sustainable tourism in Asia and the Pacific. This can be an alternate source of income for smallholder farmers who find it difficult to meet a reasonable standard of living in comparison to their urban counterparts. It will also help retain youth back in the rural setting thus aiding in curbing migration to urban centres. However, this has many challenges too. Inadequate infrastructure such as electricity, road and digital connectivity, rudimentary entrepreneurial capacity, and environmental sustainability are major bottlenecks that need addressing.
- 2. Prospects:** The future of Agri-tourism is bright, with increasing global interest in sustainable travel and rural experiences. Both Asia and the Pacific have significant potential to expand their Agri-tourism sectors, which can drive economic growth while preserving agricultural traditions and local cultures. With many governments prioritizing rural infrastructure and connectivity, besides the increased spending power of the younger generation seeking new experiences, the trends are quite encouraging in the Agri-tourism space.
- 3. Sustainability Concerns:** Notwithstanding the potential of Agri-tourism, there are growing concerns concern about the sustainability of the current models being pursued. While Agri-tourism is being seen as an alternative to conventional tourism which has reached saturation point in most popular tourist destinations, Agri-tourism must be promoted with utmost sensitivity to the local ecology, culture and tradition. Recent disasters due to large-scale landslides in popular tourist destinations like Madikeri and Wayanad in the western ghat areas of south India and Uttarakhand in the fragile Himalayan ecosystem are a stern caution against over-promotion of tourism in ecologically sensitive areas.

4. **Final Thoughts:** The growth of Agri-tourism in Asia and the Pacific is underpinned by a combination of global travel trends, supportive policies, technological advancements, and community-driven initiatives. By integrating these elements, the region has positioned itself as a vibrant hub for Agri-tourism, offering travellers a blend of authenticity, sustainability, and innovation. With continued support and collaboration, Agri-tourism is set to play a pivotal role in sustainable rural development across the region. A strategic, holistic approach to Agri-tourism, one that prioritizes community involvement, capacity building, incentivizing responsible tourism and sustainable practices, and infrastructural development, will be key to realizing its full potential in Asia and the Pacific regions.

Difference between Agri-tourism and Rural Tourism

Agri-tourism and **rural tourism** are related but distinct concepts, both focused on providing visitors with experiences tied to the countryside and nature. Here's the key difference between the two:

Agri-tourism (Agricultural Tourism):

- **Focus:** Agritourism revolves specifically around the agricultural sector and farming activities. Visitors participate in or observe farming operations, such as crop harvesting, animal husbandry, winemaking, and farm-to-table experiences.
- **Experiences:** Tourists may engage in activities like:
 - Picking fruits or vegetables
 - Participating in farm work (e.g., feeding animals or milking cows)
 - Visiting wineries or dairies
 - Staying in farmhouses or agritourism accommodations
 - Learning about sustainable farming practices
- **Goal:** It seeks to educate visitors about agriculture and support farmers economically by diversifying their income through tourism.
 - farming or agricultural practices, whereas rural tourism may not necessarily involve farming activities but can include broader experiences like cultural immersion or nature-based recreation.

Both types of tourism contribute to the rural economy, but agri-tourism has a more specific focus on agriculture, while rural tourism offers a broader exploration of rural life.

Rural Tourism

- **Focus:** Rural tourism is broader and encompasses a wide range of tourism activities in rural areas. It is not limited to farming but includes the entire rural lifestyle, culture, history, and natural landscapes.
- **Experiences:** Visitors may:
 - Explore small rural villages and towns
 - Hike, bike, or engage in outdoor activities like fishing or birdwatching
 - Experience local traditions, festivals, and handicrafts
 - Stay in rural accommodations such as cottages, inns, or bed-and-breakfasts
 - Enjoy local food, culture, and rural architecture
- **Goal:** Rural tourism highlights the slower pace of life in the countryside, offering visitors a chance to disconnect from urban life and experience traditional cultures, landscapes, and lifestyles.

Activities: Agri-tourism involves direct engagement with

Key Differences

- **Scope:** Agri-tourism is a subset of rural tourism, specifically focused on agriculture, while rural tourism covers a wider array of rural life experiences, including cultural, historical, and natural activities.
- **Activities:** Agri-tourism involves direct engagement with farming or agricultural practices, whereas rural tourism may not necessarily involve farming activities but can include broader experiences like cultural immersion or nature-based recreation.

Both types of tourism contribute to the rural economy, but agri-tourism has a more specific focus on agriculture, while rural tourism offers a broader exploration of rural life.

Unique Agri-tourism Attractions in Asia

1. Rice Terraces of Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, China)

- **Highlight:** Majestic, centuries-old rice terraces like those in the Philippines (e.g., Banaue Rice Terraces), Vietnam (Sapa), and Indonesia (Bali) offer visitors the chance to see ancient agricultural practices in breathtaking landscapes. These terraces are not only stunning to view but provide tourists with the opportunity to participate in rice planting, harvesting, and other farming activities.
- **Experience:** Tourists can stay in local homestays, interact with indigenous farming communities, and gain insight into sustainable rice farming practices.

2. Tea Plantations (India, Sri Lanka, China, Taiwan)

- **Highlight:** Countries like India (Darjeeling, Assam), Sri Lanka, China (Hangzhou), and Taiwan offer expansive tea plantations that are both scenic and historically significant. Visitors can explore lush tea gardens, learn about the tea production process, and take part in tea tasting and picking.
- **Experience:** Tourists can hike through terraced tea plantations, visit historic tea factories, and enjoy traditional tea ceremonies, immersing themselves in a unique cultural and agricultural experience.

3. Coffee Plantations (Indonesia, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea, India)

- **Highlight:** Indonesia (Sumatra), Vietnam (Central Highlands), Papua New Guinea, and India (Coorg, Chikmagalur) offer extensive coffee plantations. Agri-tourism in these areas allows tourists to witness the coffee cultivation process from seed to cup.
- **Experience:** Coffee farm tours, hands-on participation in harvesting, roasting demonstrations, and tastings of different coffee varieties attract tourists keen on experiencing the world of coffee production.

4. Traditional Farming and Organic Agriculture (India, Thailand, Japan)

- **Highlight:** Countries like India, Thailand, and Japan offer agri-tourism experiences focused on traditional, organic farming methods. For example, in Japan, visitors can learn about rice farming techniques passed down for centuries, while in India, organic farming tours educate tourists about sustainable agriculture.
- **Experience:** Travelers can participate in planting, harvesting, and cultivating local crops, gaining an understanding of eco-friendly practices and the significance of local agriculture to the community's cultural heritage.

Table Contd...

5. Traditional Farming and Organic Agriculture (India, Thailand, Japan)

- **Highlight:** Countries like India, Thailand, and Japan offer agri-tourism experiences focused on traditional, organic farming methods. For example, in Japan, visitors can learn about rice farming techniques passed down for centuries, while in India, organic farming tours educate tourists about sustainable agriculture.
- **Experience:** Travelers can participate in planting, harvesting, and cultivating local crops, gaining an understanding of eco-friendly practices and the significance of local agriculture to the community's cultural heritage.

6. Fruit Orchards and Farm Stays (China, Thailand, Taiwan, Malaysia)

- a. **Highlight:** Seasonal fruit harvesting in countries like China (peaches, apples), Taiwan (lychees, pineapples), and Thailand (durian, mangosteen) provides tourists with unique hands-on experiences. Tourists can visit orchards, pick fruits, and enjoy farm stays with fresh produce and meals.
- b. **Experience:** Fruit festivals, guided tours of orchards, and tastings of exotic fruits offer a fun and educational experience for visitors interested in food systems and agricultural diversity.

7. Flower Farms and Agricultural Festivals (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, China)

- a. **Highlight:** Countries like Japan and Taiwan are known for their flower farms, especially during cherry blossom season (sakura) or lavender blooming festivals. Agricultural festivals celebrating harvest seasons, such as the rice planting festivals in Japan or South Korea's harvest festivals, are great attractions.
- b. **Experience:** Travelers can enjoy the sight of fields blanketed in colorful flowers, learn about plant cultivation, and partake in vibrant cultural festivals that celebrate agriculture.

8. Aquaculture Tourism (China, Thailand, Vietnam)

- a. **Highlight:** In countries such as China, Thailand, and Vietnam, aquaculture (fish farming) plays a significant role in local economies. Agri-tourism experiences in these regions allow tourists to visit fish farms and learn about sustainable fish farming, shrimp farming, and seaweed cultivation.
- b. **Experience:** Visitors can engage in fishing activities, understand the challenges and benefits of aquaculture, and enjoy fresh seafood at the source.

Unique Agri-tourism Attractions in the Pacific

1. Coconut and Taro Farms (Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu)

- **Highlight:** Coconut and taro are essential crops in the Pacific Islands, and visitors can explore vast coconut plantations in Fiji, Samoa, and Vanuatu, learning about traditional farming techniques and their cultural significance. These islands also boast unique agri-tourism experiences related to tropical food culture.
- **Experience:** Guests can participate in coconut harvesting, learn how to make traditional coconut-based dishes, and explore local food markets to taste freshly harvested produce.

2. Coffee and Cocoa Plantations (Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands)

- **Highlight:** The Pacific Islands, especially Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and the Solomon Islands, are renowned for their high-quality coffee and cocoa. Visitors can tour coffee and cocoa farms, where they can see how these crops are cultivated, processed, and prepared for market.
- **Experience:** Agri-tourists can experience the entire journey of coffee from seed to cup, visit local chocolate factories, and participate in chocolate-making workshops.

3. Sustainable Organic Farms (Fiji, New Caledonia, Vanuatu)

- **Highlight:** Organic farming is becoming increasingly important in the Pacific region, with countries like Fiji and Vanuatu offering tours of sustainable, organic farms. These farms focus on local produce, permaculture, and eco-friendly farming methods.
- **Experience:** Visitors can tour farms, join organic gardening workshops, and understand how local farming practices contribute to preserving the environment and supporting healthy communities.

4. Traditional Agricultural Practices (Samoa, Fiji, Solomon Islands)

- **Highlight:** Agri-tourism in the Pacific often emphasizes the preservation of traditional agricultural practices, such as the cultivation of taro, sweet potato, and other indigenous crops. These practices are closely linked to the islanders' way of life.
- **Experience:** Travelers can engage in traditional farming activities like planting, harvesting, and cooking, as well as participate in local agricultural festivals celebrating harvests and agricultural bounty.

5. Marine and Coastal Agriculture (Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Cook Islands)

- **Highlight:** Agri-tourism in some Pacific Island nations also includes experiences focused on coastal and marine agriculture, such as seaweed farming, fishpond cultivation, and shellfish harvesting.
- **Experience:** Travelers can visit coastal farms to witness how seaweed and other marine products are cultivated, offering a unique intersection of aquaculture and agriculture.

6. Community-Based Agri-tourism Experiences (Fiji, Samoa, Tahiti)

- **Highlight:** Community-run agri-tourism initiatives allow visitors to stay with local families on traditional farms, where they can help with everyday agricultural tasks and experience the island lifestyle first hand.
- **Experience:** Homestays, cultural exchanges, and learning about sustainable farming practices from indigenous people offer a rich, authentic experience that supports rural communities and preserves cultural heritage.

7. Island Eco-Farming Retreats (New Zealand, Tahiti, Fiji)

- **Highlight:** Eco-tourism combined with agri-tourism is a growing trend in the Pacific Islands. Retreats in places like New Zealand and Tahiti offer travellers the chance to stay on organic farms that focus on sustainability, permaculture, and holistic farming techniques.
- **Experience:** Guests can engage in farm-to-table dining experiences, take cooking classes with local chefs, and enjoy nature walks through organic gardens, all while learning about eco-friendly farming methods.

REFERENCES

- Anonymous. (2023). *Asia Pacific Agritourism Market Size, Share & Industry Trends Analysis Report by Activity, Sales Channel, Country and Growth Forecast, 2022-2028*. <https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/5673767/>
- Arroyo, C. G., Barbieri, C., & Rich, S. R. (2013). Defining agritourism: A comparative study of stakeholders' perceptions in Missouri and North Carolina. *Tourism Management*. (37) 39-47.
- Beniwal, S. Maru, A. Khalikulov, Z. & Ahmadov, H. (2010) *Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Challenges, Opportunities, Priority Needs and Actions Required for Improving Agricultural Research for Development*. FAO.
- Bernardo, T., Wen-Chi, H. & Chiang, N. (2008). The Role of NGOs in the Development of Community-Based Rural Tourism in Costa Rica. *Journal of Rural Tourism Research*. (2): 63–76.
- Chang, H. H., Mishra, A. K., & Lee, T. H. (2019). A supply-side analysis of agritourism: Evidence from farm-level agriculture census data in Taiwan. *Australian Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics*, 63 (3), 521-548.
- Chin, W. L., & Pehin Dato Musa, S. F. (2021). Agritourism resilience against Covid-19: Impacts and management strategies. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2021.1950290>.

- FAO. (2020). *Agri Tourism Development Corporation - Agri-tourism India*. <https://www.fao.org/family-farming/network/network-detail/en/c/177631/>
- Fortune Business Insights (2024, 16 December). Agritourism Market Size, Share & COVID-19 Impact Analysis, By Type (Direct-market, Education & Experience, and Event & Recreation), and Regional Forecast, 2020-2032. Report ID: FBI10329. <https://www.fortunebusinessinsights.com/agritourism-market-10329>
- Galvez, E. Bennett, A. & Casari, G. & Puntsagdavaa, A. (2023). *Linking agriculture and tourism to strengthen agrifood systems in Asia and the Pacific*. Bangkok, FAO10.4060/cc7124en.
- Gálvez Nogales, E., Puntsagdavaa, A., Casari, G. & Bennett, A. (2023). *Linking agriculture and tourism to strengthen agrifood systems in Asia and the Pacific*. Bangkok, FAO.
- Mahaliyanaarachchi, R.P., Elapata, M.S., Esham, M., & Madhuwanthi, B.C.H. (2019). Agritourism as a sustainable adaptation option for climate change. *Open Agriculture*. (4): 737-742
- Ngo, T. H., & Creutz, S. (2022). Assessing the sustainability of community-based tourism: a case study in rural areas of Hoi An, Vietnam. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2116812>
- Patterson, I., & Aslam, M. U. (2024). Agritourism as an Emerging Sustainable Tourism Industry in Uzbekistan. *Sustainability*, 16(17), 7519. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16177519>
- Pratt, S., Magbalot-Fernandez, A., & Ohe, Y. (2022). Motivations and constraints of developing agritourism under the challenges of climate change: The case of Samoa. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 24(4), 610-622.
- Shah, C., Gibson, D., Shah, S., & Pratt, S. (2019). Exploring a market for agritourism in Fiji: Tourists' perspective. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 45(2), 204-217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2019.1685180>
- Tanina, A. Konyshv, E. & Tsahaeva, K. 2021. *Proceedings of the 02nd International Scientific Conference on Innovations in Digital Economy*. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3444465.3444518>
- Tugade, L. O. (2020). Re-creating farms into Agritourism: Cases of selected micro-entrepreneurs in the Philippines. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 9(1):1-13.
- Wanole, S. N., Kadam, J.R. & Sawant, P. A. (2020). Scope and Challenges of Agri-tourism Centers in Konkan Region of Maharashtra State. *International Journal of Current Microbiology and Applied Sciences (Special Issue-11)*1306-1314.