



Agritourism in India

For Prelims: [Agri-tourism](#), [Indigenous Knowledge](#), [Dekho Apna Desh](#), [Agriculture Infrastructure Fund](#), [Banni Grasslands](#), [Swadesh Darshan Scheme](#), [Ashok Dalwai Committee](#).

For Mains: Agritourism and its potential in India, Associated challenges and way forward.

[Source: BL](#)

Why in News?

Himachal Pradesh (HP) is promoting [agri-tourism](#) to strengthen its economy where **tourism** contributes around **7%** to the State's GDP.

Agritourism Opportunities in HP

- **Orchards:** Himachal can grow high-value crops like **tulips (Kangra region)**, **saffron**, and **medicinal herbs**.
- **Educational Agritourism:** Students can explore farms to learn about **food and sustainability**, while farmers can host educational tours for a fee.
- **Nutraceutical Farming:** Himachal can promote **Himalayan herbs**, attracting **nutraceutical tourism** focused on health and organic farming.
- **Cultural Connection:** Engage local youth to **share farm stories** and develop agritourism sites showcasing traditional farming and culture.

What is Agritourism?

- **About:** Agritourism is a form of **commercial enterprise** that connects **agriculture with tourism**, attracting visitors to **farms for education or entertainment** while providing **additional income** to farmers.
- **Benefits:**
 - **Boosting Rural Economy:** It provides farmers with **alternative income** through **farm/home stays, tours, and hands-on experiences**, reducing reliance on uncertain crop yields and stabilizing finances.
 - It creates jobs for **artisans, guides, cooks, and transport providers**, offering rural women and youth new employment opportunities.
 - **Sustainable Tourism:** It promotes [organic farming](#), [water conservation](#), and **eco-friendly stays**, unlike mass tourism, which strains resources.
 - **Preserving Agricultural Heritage:** It helps preserve [traditional farming](#), **crafts, folk music, and indigenous knowledge, allowing tourists to experience and support rural heritage.**

- It preserves **folk arts, pottery, weaving, and traditional food processing/cuisine** and organic produce.
 - **Builds Social Capital:** It builds **social capital** by fostering connections between **rural and urban communities** through **shared experiences, knowledge exchange, and economic interactions**.
 - **Educational Experiences:** It educates visitors on **organic farming, animal husbandry, and environmental conservation**, with schools and universities organizing farm visits for hands-on learning.
 - **Aligning with Government Policies:** Schemes like [Dekho Apna Desh](#), and [Agriculture Infrastructure Fund](#) support farmers in agri-tourism by improving infrastructure, marketing, and training.
- **State-Level Initiatives:**
- **Maharashtra:** Maharashtra was the **first state** to promote agritourism, establishing the **Agro-Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC)** in 2005.
 - ATDC runs a 28-acre pilot project in **Baramati, Pune**, with **328 agritourism centers** across 30 districts.
 - E.g., **Vineyards (Nashik, Pune) and mango (Ratnagiri, Raigad)** orchards in Maharashtra.
 - **Karnataka:** Karnataka's Coorg offers **coffee plantation stays** where visitors experience coffee production from **picking to brewing**.
 - **Kerala:** Launched the **Kerala Agro-Tourism Network** that offers visitors a chance to explore **aromatic gardens**, learn about **spice cultivation**, and buy **organic spices**.
 - **Sikkim:** Sikkim, India's first organic state, offers agri-tourism with farm visits, **sustainable agriculture lessons**, and farmer interactions.
 - **Punjab:** **Tractor rides**, traditional meals (**sarson da saag and makki di roti**), and folk performances showcase and preserve **rural culture**.
- **Potential:**
- **Bihar:** Muzaffarpur's **litchi orchards** offer agri-tourism, while Nalanda's **organic farms** attract wellness tourists.
 - **Rajasthan:** Rajasthan's **desert agriculture, camel farming**, and Bishnoi village stays offer insights into rural life, sustainable farming, and wildlife conservation.
 - **North-East India:** North-East has **rich biodiversity and traditional farming** methods that can attract **eco-conscious travelers**.
 - E.g., **Wet Rice Cultivation** by Apatani tribe in **Ziro Valley** (Arunachal Pradesh), **Bamboo Drip Irrigation** (Meghalaya).
 - **Chhattisgarh:** Tribal farm tourism in Bastar allows visitors to experience traditional **Mahua brewing and organic farming**.
 - **Gujarat:** Kutch's [Banni Grasslands](#) offer pastoral tourism with the **Rabari community**, while **Anand** features dairy tourism with **Amul**.
- **Government Policies & Initiatives:**
- **Swadesh Darshan Scheme:** Develop **theme-based tourism circuits** to boost local economies by showcasing India's culture, heritage, and natural resources. E.g., **Tribal Circuit**.
 - **PMJUGA:** As a part of [Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan \(PMJUGA\)](#), **1,000 homestays** are being developed in tribal areas to **boost tourism and livelihoods**.
 - **Dekho Apna Desh Scheme:** It boosts domestic tourism, encouraging Indians to **explore lesser-known destinations**.
 - **National Strategy for Promotion of Rural Homestays, 2022:** Prepared by the Ministry of Tourism, it supports agritourism as part of the **Atma Nirbhar Bharat** initiative.
- **Agro-Tourism Destinations in India:**

Agro-Tourism Destinations



What Challenges are Associated with Agritourism?

- **High Competition:** Low awareness and competition from **eco, cultural, and adventure tourism** limit agro-tourism growth.
- **Poor Accessibility:** Poor **roads, transport, and healthcare** deter tourists, while financial limits hinder farmers' investment in accommodation, training, or marketing.
 - E.g., Agro-tourism sites in Uttarakhand remain **inaccessible during monsoons**.
- **Land Use Conflict:** Agri-tourism can divert land from farming, with farmers **prioritizing tourism over crop production** as **income from tourism through** homestays, resorts, and restaurants is **more profitable** and provides **immediate cash flow**.
- **Monoculture:** Monoculture dominated by **wheat and rice** in northern states like Punjab, Haryana, UP, MP etc **discourages agritourism** as tourists prefer **interactive farming activities** like **horticulture, floriculture, and livestock rearing**.
- **Seasonal Dependency:** Agri-tourism income **fluctuates with seasons**, peaking during crop harvests but declining in off-seasons or due to **harsh weather events**.
 - E.g., **Rajasthan's** desert farms face **low summer tourism due to heat**, while **Assam's** tea estates see declines in **monsoons due to floods** and **roadblocks**.
- **Security Concerns:** Remote agro-tourism sites face risks like **theft, wild animals, and limited emergency services**. E.g., Wild elephant threats in Karnataka.
- **Lack of Skills:** Farmers and rural entrepreneurs **lack training in customer service, tour management, and accommodation**, making visitor engagement challenging.
 - **Poor planning** further hampers the balance between **farming and tourism**.

Way Forward

- **Infrastructure Development:** Improve rural connectivity by investing in better roads, transportation, water supply, and electricity for easy access.
 - E.g., develop dedicated agrarian tourism circuits to enhance visitor experience.
- **Accommodation Facilities:** Promote sustainable, affordable farm stays with financial support for farmers to develop eco-friendly accommodations.
 - Further, it needs to be **registered** and in **compliance with rules and regulations** of the local authorities to **address security concerns**.
- **Skill Development:** Train farmers and youth as **tourist mitras** in hospitality, customer service, and farm management by collaborating with **agriculture universities** and **private**

firms under **PPP** to provide hands-on training in agritourism.

- **Community Participation:** Form FPOs for collective agritourism management and involve tourism boards, investors, and NGOs for infrastructure and skill development.
 - **Empower Gram Sabhas** to develop and promote **rural tourism**, linking their **Finance Commission grants** to the success of such initiatives.
- **Regulatory Framework:** Create clear agritourism policies with defined activities and safety norms, and implement single-window clearance for faster approvals.

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss the role of agritourism in boosting rural economies and employment in India. What measures can be taken to enhance its growth?

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year's Questions (PYQs)

Mains

Q. How can the mountain ecosystem be restored from the negative impact of development initiatives and tourism? (2019)

Q. The states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand are reaching the limits of their ecological carrying capacity due to tourism. Critically evaluate. (2015)

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