



## 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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