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## Strategic Planning Of Agro-Tourism for Sustainable Development of Farm Families and Rural Areas

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### ABSTRACT:

India is a rural nation, with around half of its communities experiencing extremely low socioeconomic conditions. 70% of people, according to the 2011 Census, reside in rural communities. One key aspect that can have a good impact on regional development in rural areas is tourism. The tourism industry is a vital one that generates substantial contributions to both the GDP and Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE) of the nation. In addition to being a catalyst for economic progress, tourism has the ability to reduce poverty and promote equitable growth. Large-scale employment and extra revenue streams for both skilled and unskilled workers can be produced by the tourism industry. Conventional tourism has a different meaning today. Several novel tourism types have surfaced. One type of rural tourism is agro-tourism, which is an inventive agricultural activity that combines tourism and agriculture. It has a big potential to give the framers new career possibilities and sources of revenue. However, agrotourism needs to be encouraged and favorable development conditions must be established, individual entrepreneurs' plans and the strategic management of agrotourism are crucial to the success of this industry.

**KEYWORDS: Agro-Tourism, Employment, Rural Tourism, Rural Areas, Strategic plan, Sustainable development**

### INTRODUCTION:

According to Mahatma Gandhi, "India lives in its villages". The aforementioned remark remains true in both literal and social, economic and political senses to this day, 70% of people, according to the 2011 Census, live in rural areas. India is a rural nation, with around half of its communities experiencing extremely low socioeconomic conditions. Since the country's independence, deliberate attempts have been undertaken to raise the average rural population's level of living. The standard of living experienced by residents in urban and suburban areas ought to be equalized for those living in rural areas. Furthermore, slums and the ensuing social and economic tensions that show as urban poverty and economic deprivation are caused by the cascading impacts of poverty, unemployment, and poor and inadequate infrastructure in rural areas on urban centers.

As a result, sustainable rural development—which addresses social justice and economic growth—becomes crucial for raising rural residents' standards of life by meeting their basic requirements and ensuring they have access to sufficient social services. Through creative wage and self-employment programs, the current rural development plan primarily aims on reducing poverty,

improving livelihood options and providing basic utilities and infrastructure. Sustainable development is built around three pillars: social progress, environmental preservation and sustainable economic growth. The region's development objectives are productivity and competitiveness, which will be attained by proactive, deliberate, and strategic implementation. One of the key objectives is the strategic development of rural areas. Thus, strategic planning is the main instrument for promoting social and economic growth. The plan is an important document, and a lot of things can have a positive or bad impact on a strategic plan like this. In addition to strategic planning, it is critical to have the backing of small and medium-sized businesses and the ability for these entrepreneurs to network. They affect the economics and standard of living in an area by generating and maintaining new jobs. These subjects may also be tourist entrepreneurs.

"Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes" (UNWTO Translation). The tourism industry is a vital one that generates substantial contributions to both the GDP and Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE) of the nation. Thanks to its interconnectedness with various economic sectors such as transportation, construction, handicrafts, manufacturing, horticulture, agriculture, etc., tourism has the potential to not only stimulate the economy but also serve as a useful instrument for mitigating poverty and promoting equitable growth. Large-scale employment and extra revenue streams for both skilled and unskilled workers can be produced by the tourism industry.

Conventional tourism has a different meaning today. There are a few recently developed types of tourism that fall under the category of alternative tourism. One type of alternative tourism is agro-tourism, which is creative agriculture that combines tourism with agriculture. It has a big potential to give the framers new career possibilities and sources of revenue. However, agrotourism needs to be encouraged and favorable development conditions must be established; individual entrepreneurs' plans and the strategic management of agrotourism are crucial to the success of this industry.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

This paper is based on the following main objectives.

1. To comprehend the notions of agrotourism and alternative tourism.
2. To start the resource evaluation process for the growth of agrotourism.
3. To research the networking of stakeholders in the development of agrotourism.
4. To research how agrotourism affects rural communities and farming families in order to promote sustainable development.
5. To conduct a SWOT analysis of the agrotourism industry.

#### **METHODOLOGY:**

The study's focus is on comprehending the idea and suitability of agrotourism for rural areas' sustainable development. The report covers the advantages and drawbacks of agrotourism as well as a SWOT analysis of the industry and a suitable framework for its growth. The current Agro-Tourism study was built on secondary data. The information gathered from relevant

publications, studies, reports, and the Indian government's 11th Plan Document. Data on the development of tourism was also gathered from various websites.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

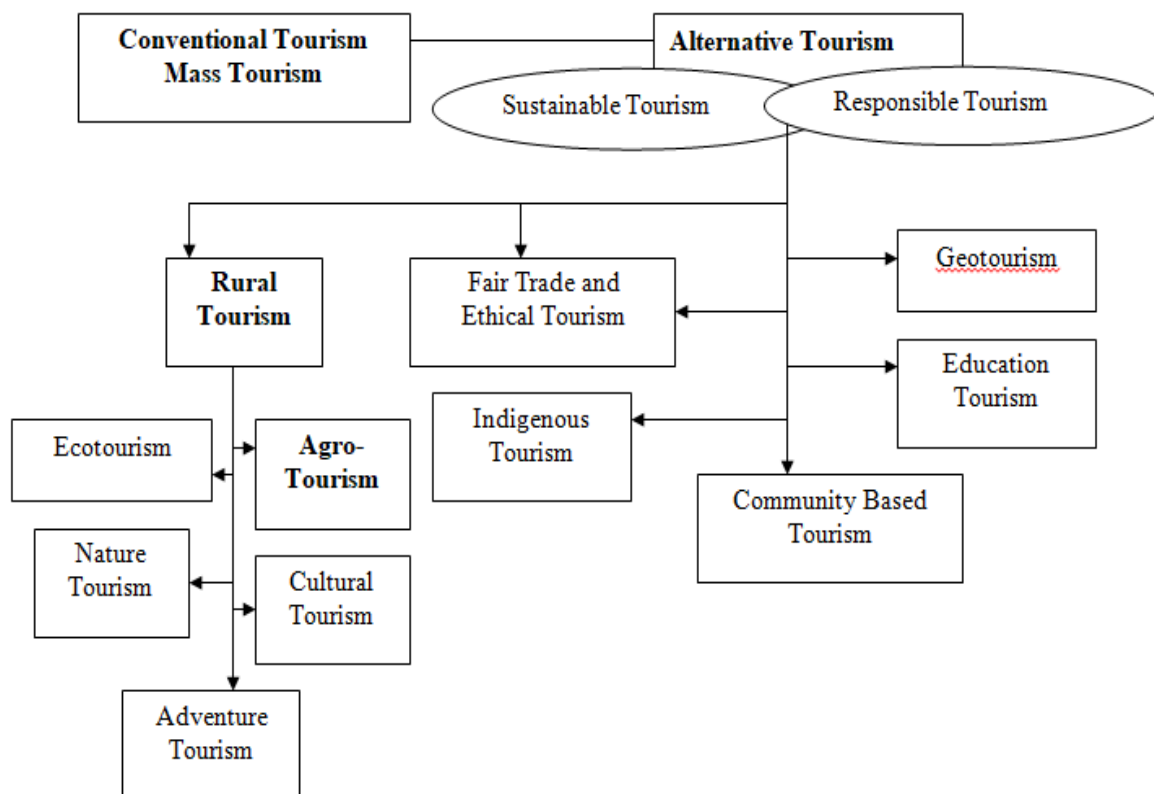
Public awareness of the notion of this type of business is essential for assessing the contribution of agrotourism to sustainable rural development. It is crucial to develop the idea of agro-tourism in comparison to traditional tourism in this area.

#### **CONCEPT OF ALTERNATIVE TOURISM:**

Mass and alternative tourism combine to form tourism. A big number of people looking for vacation spots in well-known resort areas that are appropriate to their culture is what defines mass tourism. Often understood to relate to alternative types of travel, alternative tourism is also known as "special interest tourism" or "responsible tourism." According to Edington and Smith (1992), alternative tourism is a type of travel that is in line with social, cultural, and natural values and that enables both hosts and visitors to have fulfilling interactions and shared experiences.

The search for alternative tourism is being spearheaded by three powerful figures. The first is the understanding of the detrimental effects that traditional tourism has on the local ecology and way of life. The second is the emergence of development ideologies, which primarily highlight the drawbacks of capitalism, modernization, urbanization, and "growth oriented development." Humanitarian considerations and the acknowledgement of local populations' rights to oversee community improvements come last.

Alternative tourism can be viewed as a response to mainstream tourism as well as a vision for the future. According to these standards, alternative tourism takes into account social, cultural, and economic factors in addition to the physical environment, which is the hallmark of agro-tourism. As a result, alternative tourism and the idea of sustainable tourism development are equivalent (Holden, 2000). The goal of alternative tourism is to replace traditional travel with ethical and sustainable travel experiences. The various types of alternative tourism are depicted in the accompanying picture, which makes it evident that agro-tourism is a specific type of rural tourism.



**Figure 1: Different forms of Tourism**

In essence, rural tourism is any activity that occurs in a rural area. It has several facets and might include eco-tourism, adventure tourism, nature tourism, farm/agricultural tourism, and cultural tourism. Unlike traditional tourism, rural tourism is characterized by a few common features such as being experience-driven, taking place mostly in natural settings, being closely aligned with seasonality and local events, and being founded on the preservation of culture, heritage, and traditions. There are numerous potential advantages for rural communities from rural tourism (Frederick, 1992).

#### **CONCEPT OF AGRO-TOURISM:**

Agro-Tourism comprises a variety of services, activities, and amenities offered by farmers and rural residents to draw tourists to their region and supplement their income. According to Virginia law, agritourism is "any activity carried out on a farm or ranch that allows members of the general public to view or enjoy rural activities, including farming, wineries, ranching, historical, cultural, harvest-your-own, or natural activities and attractions, for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes." Whether or not a person receives payment for their participation, an activity qualifies as agritourism (Code of Virginia).

Agro-Tourism is a type of rural tourism that has a strong connection to the natural world, the rural countryside, and agricultural activities. It's important to distinguish between rural tourism and agrotourism. It is best to refer to Agro-Tourism as "rural tourism" rather than "agro-tourism" in regions where farming production is highly specialized and segmented, and where intimate relationships within the rural community may be observed. One method of

developing tourism in a responsible and sustainable manner is agro-tourism. By generating jobs and opening up markets for local goods, this creative endeavor contributes to improving the socioeconomic status of the rural community.

### **UNIQUENESS OF AGRO-TOURISM**

Since agro-tourism is a type of alternative tourism, it is distinct from traditional tourism in the following ways.

- The ability to meet human requirements in a rural family's and a rural community's daily lives by actively participating in the food production process. The visitor gets the opportunity to engage in the life of a farm family in addition to helping with food processing and plant and animal production.
- The ability to satiate human cognitive needs through ethnography or farmland production.
- Agrotourism offers an opportunity to discover more about the habits and way of life of those living in rural areas.
- The ability to meet emotional requirements, such as the need to experience the perfect countryside and the readiness to interact directly with domestic animals, plants, animal products, and processed goods.
- A major contributing reason to city dwellers' increased curiosity about the origins and production processes of food.

### **AGRO-TOURISM RESOURCE ASSESSMENT:**

Inventorying the farm's agritourism resources is the first step in launching an agritourism business. Knowing what is already valuable is necessary to set up an agritourism plan. Resources with potential or current cash value are referred to as "assets" in this section. Financial assets, or cash and savings, and real assets, or the value of real estate, machinery, labor, and livestock, are the two main categories into which corporate assets can be separated. Liquid assets, or those that will probably be sold within a year, are included in both of these categories. The term "human assets" describes the willing volunteers, whether they are paid or unpaid staff.

Farm management specialists highlight that every farm has natural free resources, such as lodging, food, labor, land, and environmental resources, which can be used to generate additional revenue for farmers. Agrotourism can leverage these resources, which can be categorized as physical, natural, inherited, or a mix of the three. Natural assets are naturally occurring features, while physical assets are tangible elements or materials with multiple uses, while heritage assets have historical, cultural, artistic, or educational significance.

Following table no. 1 explain the features of Agro-tourism destination and the different activities to entertain and educate the visitors.

The next crucial step after evaluating the destination's various features is to think about the location of the agrotourism industry. While various features will grow the agrotourism industry, the right location will grow a strong business, so the following factors should be taken into account when choosing a location for the enterprise.

- The marketing area, which is where potential customers come from.
- Similar businesses: Being near similar businesses does not automatically imply rivalry; there may be advantages as well.

- Services and amenities that are essential for tourists, such as retail stores, places to eat and drink, lodging, transit, and other attractions

**Table 1:  
Features of Agro-Tourism Destination and Related Activities as an  
Agro-Tourism Product**

<b>Asset Type</b>	<b>Assets Classification</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Agro-tourism Activity</b>
Natural	Scenery and atmosphere	Views, quiet areas	Hiking, meditation
	Wildlife and insects	Big game, small game, waterfowl, butterflies	Bird watching
	Livestock	Horses, sheep, goats, cows, buffaloes	Trail rides, sheep shearing, petting zoo, milking demonstration
	Hydrology	Lake, stream, creek, pond, waterfall	Swimming, fishing, or related activities
	Topography	Elevated area, cave rock formation, lookouts	Rock climbing, rappelling, photography
	Vegetation	Forest, grassland, crops	Corn mazes, crop identification, u-pick
	Climate and seasons	Precipitation, weather patterns, growing season, planting season, harvest season	Star gazing,
Physical	Residential	Main house, bunk house, cabin	Guest rooms, bed and breakfast
	Non-residential	Pen, barn, out building, machine shop	Gift shop
	Other function	Pavilion, play area, trails	Corporate cook outs, family reunion, geo-caching course
	Transportation	Wagon, tractor	tractor pull, farm tour
	Space	Parking area, camping area, seating area	Corn maze, u-pick, concert location
	Decorative	Silo, bridge, windmill, gazebo, greenhouse, garden, water tower	Practically any activity involving scenery.
Heritage	Built heritage	Historic barn, civil war site, mine shaft, dam	Architectural tour, photography safari, reenactment, sightseeing
	Cultural heritage	Food, crafts, music, cemetery,	Bakery, candle making, art gallery, music festival, escorted walking tour
	Natural heritage	Scenic gorges, rolling hills, lakeside views	Interpretive trail, nature photography, hosting art classes

## STAKEHOLDERS NETWORKING FOR AGRO-TOURISM DEVELOPMENT.

### Stakeholders in tourism Industry:

The term “stakeholder” -referring to the various interests who participate in a business- has commonly been used since 1980s from the landmark book in the business literature of Freeman’s Strategic Management. The stakeholder concept was defined as “those groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist” and originally includes shareowners, employees, customers, lenders and society. The most famous and frequently cited definition was given by Evan and Freeman in their essay namely that the “stakeholders are those groups who have a stake in or claim on the firm.” (Yilmaz, Burcu Selin and Gunel, Ozgur Devrim 2008)

A critical aspect of sustainable tourism planning, therefore, is to identify and understand the major stakeholders and to understand their point of view, goals, and motivations. The following are some of the examples of stakeholders.

**1) National, State and Local Government:** Government policy tools, including environmental impact studies and management plans, help ensure appropriate development in the tourism industry, even if private sector-driven. Communication and consistency between agencies are crucial for tourism growth.

**2) Scientific and Educational Organizations and Institutions:** Scientific and Educational Institutions play a crucial role in sustainable tourism development by identifying tourist destinations, conducting research, and providing technical consultancy.

**3) Financial Institutions:** Financial Institutions provide capital for small and medium tourism enterprises, ensuring the success of rural tourism projects in villages.

### **4) Local community:**

The local community, including various economic classes, clans, ethnic groups, genders, and special interest groups, is crucial in coastal resource management. It should be recognized and respected, participating in all planning stages, identifying problems, and defining actions. Independent observations are essential to verify perceptions of resources. Community representatives should be at the forefront of public activities related to planning or management.

### **5) Local Institutions:**

**1) Cultural institutions:** Participate in educating tourists and allowing them to experience the local way of life. The rural culture is preserved by these institutions.

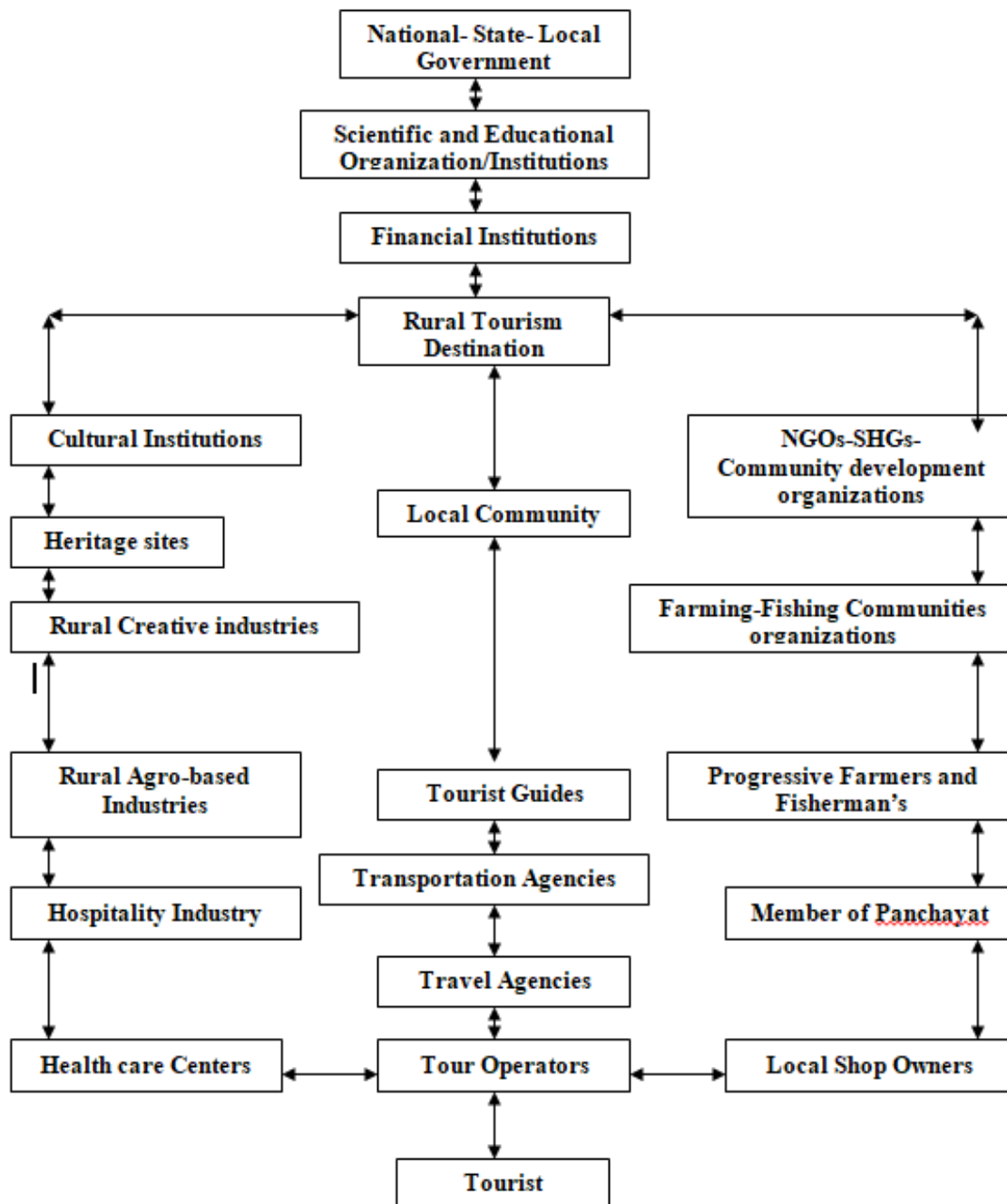
**2) Historic places:** Promote rural tourism with an emphasis on historical sites.

**3) Agro-based and rural creative industries:** These sectors give rural impoverished people jobs and give their products access to markets right outside their door.

**4) Hospitality industry:** By offering hospitality services to visitors, this industry may control the influx of more people to particular rural tourism destinations.

**5) Health care facilities:** A significant local partner with regard to visitors' health.

Figure 1  
Networking of Agro-Tourism Stakeholders



#### 6) Local Travel and Tourism Industry:

This sector consists of hotels, tour companies, travel agents, and transportation companies. They possess independent networks. This network is in charge of the flow of visitors to rural tourism destinations, the marketing of these products, the promotion of these activities, etc. This sector offers useful information such as Market, potential information Suggested guest preferences for accommodations, cuisine, transportation, and attractions, Investing in a local sustainable tourism business, training local tour guides and entrepreneurs, marketing, offering services to help visitors access and appreciate the place, running a sustainable tourism business. This network needs to be connected to



the other parties involved in rural tourist development, as previously mentioned, in order for it to flourish sustainably.

#### **7) Tourist:**

The final player in bringing sustainable tourism to life is the traveler. The initiative will fail if visitors do not want to visit the remote location or do not want to pay the costs associated with supporting sustainable tourism. Two main elements are typically involved in luring travelers to sustainable travel.

- Informing visitors about the existence of rural tourism and its features.
- Pressuring travelers to choose eco-friendly travel over traditional travel. If a visitor wants to see a sustainable location instead of going somewhere else that offers a less eco-friendly experience, they could have to pay a price.

#### **IMPACT OF AGRO-TOURISM ON FARM FAMILIES AND RURAL AREA:**

Agro-Tourism is very important for the communities both urban and rural. It can have several positive impacts on rural community.

##### **1) Positive Social impact:**

The positive social impact of this initiative includes gaining new skills, experiences, and professions, learning foreign languages, and forming new capacities in tourism. It encourages social initiatives and opportunities for rural women, fosters new contacts and social ties, and promotes the revival of rural traditions and culture, allowing for the full utilization of community centers and sports facilities.

##### **2) Positive Economic impact:**

The expansion of accommodation facilities, production maintenance, and service quality can facilitate direct sales of farm produce, contribute to market development, create employment, reduce unemployment rates, provide additional income for farmers, and benefit businesses, communes, and local governments. This not only reduces dependence on farming but also diversifies the local economy, making it less vulnerable to market fluctuations.

##### **3) Positive Spatial and Environment impact:**

Agritourism, a tourism industry that uses natural elements, contributes to the quality of surroundings and living standards of local communities. It enhances environmental care, creates a friendlier environment, develops local infrastructure, improves the aesthetic value of villages, utilizes old, derelict buildings, and counters mass migration and depopulation. This development also enhances the aesthetic value of villages, preserves rural cultural heritage, and contributes to the overall quality of life.

#### **SWOT ANALYSIS OF AGRO-TOURISM BUSINESS:**

An additional source of revenue for farmers is agrotourism. As was previously mentioned, this type of activity affects rural communities and rural areas directly and indirectly, which promotes sustainable development on a broad scale. Farmers will use agrotourism as their primary source of income if the right policy framework is created. Because Agro-tourism is a rapidly growing sector of the agricultural industry, a SWOT analysis is included here.

##### **Strengths:**

The Strength of agro-Tourism are the area boasts an unpolluted environment, protected areas, rich cultural heritage, favorable climate conditions, and a diverse flora and fauna.

##### **Weaknesses:**

The Weaknesses of agro-Tourism are Poor infrastructure, neglected natural and cultural heritage, lack of financial resources, lack of standards for rural accommodation, lack of awareness among stakeholders, and lack of professional human capacities are weaknesses in this sector.

**Opportunities:**

Agro-tourism promotes local, organic and traditional products, diversifies tourism, repositions offer, provides international aid funding for rural development, and fosters entrepreneurship in rural areas.

**Threats:**

The development of mass tourism products is dominated by environmental pressure, lack of proactive approaches, dependence on external resources, lack of regional cooperation, competition, short training, and financial isolation creating insufficient credit opportunities.

**CONCLUSION:**

If a proper strategic planning is done for Agro-Tourism, it could bring lot of benefit to our society. It could be a sustainable revenue generating project for rural development. It can help inflow to resources from urban to the rural economy. It can prevent migration of rural people to urban. Both short term and long term planning, implementing and monitoring are vital in avoiding damage to rural areas. Environmental management, local involvement, sound legislation, sustainable marketing and realistic planning are crucial for development of Agro-Tourism. Agro-Tourism is emerging as an important instrument for sustainable human development including poverty alleviation, employment generation, environmental regeneration and development of remote areas and advancement of woman and other disadvantaged groups in the country apart from promoting social integration and international understanding. The government should promote Agro-Tourism to ensure sustainable economic development and positive social change.

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