
POTENTIAL FOR AGRITOURISM DEVELOPMENT: EVIDENCE FROM SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

Agritourism is increasingly recognized as an important strategy that can contribute to agricultural development through diversification of farming activities and providing opportunities to rest, relax, enjoy and study about farming for the visitors. At present, agritourism is promoted by most of the countries in the world aiming at sustainable rural development. Since Sri Lanka is an agricultural country, it is the time to analyze the potential of this strategy under local conditions. Thus the main aim of this research is to study the possibility of application of agritourism in Sri Lankan context. The study was conducted in five districts of the central part of the country using a field survey and some group discussions with farmers and respective state officials of these districts. Results revealed that there are several possibilities for the establishment of agritourism in the country. However, there are few problems militate against the success of the agritourism development. Provision of solutions for these main problems related to; infrastructure development, relevant training and education for the farmers, access to farm credit, proper measures to waste management as well as suitable environment protection methods in those areas will enhance the benefits of agritourism as a sustainable rural development strategy.

Key words: Agritourism, farm diversification, rural development, Sri Lanka

INTRODUCTION

Agritourism, farm tourism or agricultural tourism is the process of attracting visitors and travelers to agricultural areas, generally for educational and recreational purposes (Lamb, 2008; Veeck et al. 2006). Because of economic difficulties and changes in the farming and livestock industries in many countries in the world, many farmers especially those who have small-scale, family-owned farms have understood the necessity of supplement their agricultural business model and find new ways of generating income. Agritourism can contribute to the overall income, cash flow and profitability of a

farm by providing alternative income via farm products, and farming activities (Colton and Bissix, 2005; Huybers, 2007; Keith et al. 2003; Sharply, 2002).

Further, agritourism can also be explained as a holiday concept of visiting an agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education or involvement in the activities of the operation. This includes you-pick operations, corn mazes, hay rides, pumpkin patches, dairy tours, and more (Adam, 2004). Therefore, agritourism may be any form of farm-based tourism operation that provides economic benefit to the farm owner(s) and

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provides on-farm entertainment, activity, or product for the visitor. Normally, agritourism is small-scale, low-impact and in most cases, it is mainly focused on education (Wicks, and Merrett, 2003; Wall, 2006). In agritourism a native or local farmer offers tours to their agriculture farm to allow visitors to view them growing, harvesting, and processing locally grown crops such as maize, sorghum or any produce the person would not come across in their areas. Often the farmers would provide farm-stay opportunities including educational programs and recreational activities (Nilsson, 2002; Weaver and Fennell, 1997). Small diversified farms may very much be suitable for agritourism. Unlike the large-scale farms which produce bulk commodities, the small farm can recreate an earlier, simpler and human-scale vision of farming. The main qualification for the rural farmer who expects to make a living from the land through agritourism is the willingness and the ability to cater to visitors and meet their expectations of a farm visit (Nuntsu, et. al, 2004; Adam, 2004). Currently, more visitors than ever are enjoying at the diverse opportunities provided by agritourism, as the distance between the production and consumption of agricultural products grow (Lamb, 2008; Sharplay and Vass, 2006). Visitors are highly interested to know how crops are cultivated and livestock are raised. Moreover, they want to remember the traditional agricultural practices as well.

Important advantages of agritourism are 1) the ability to bring the main primary industry (agriculture) and the major service sector (tourism) together, by creating win-win situation for both sectors, 2) enhancing the possibility of the enlargement of the tourism sector and 3) the ability to absorb the expanding tourism sector (Singh, 2007). Moreover, scope of the agritourism in the present context can be summarized as providing an inexpensive gateway for all the categories

of visitors, giving solutions for the curiosity about the farming and farm life, meeting the increasing demand for wholesome family oriented recreational activities, provision of health conscious nature friendly tourism opportunities, providing a peaceful tranquility, interesting and natural tourism place for the visitors, and facilitating less crowded original conditions in rural areas for visitors to enjoy and be aware farming activities (Singh, 2007; Roberts and Hall, 2001). Many agritourism activities need only a small team of farm labors in order to be successful. For example, farm tours, farm stay with bed and breakfast, tractor or bullock cart rides, picking of grapes, mangoes, and other horticulture items, farm zoos, and many other activities may be operated with little additional expenditure on labor (Agritourism Development Organization in India, 2008; Taware, 2009).

According to Griver, (2009), agricultural tourism is a global trend which provides city dwellers an opportunity to escape from urban concrete environment and re-discover their roots in rural areas with farming. Furthermore, visiting farmers, agronomists and other agricultural experts can evaluate worldwide developments in agriculture which have been highly influenced by modern agricultural technology and management (School of Travel Industry Management, 2007). Agritourism and ecotourism are closely related, but, in reality agritourism is farm attractions, which visitors are encouraged to partake in farming and agricultural activities, while ecotourism seems to have been green washed by the tour companies (Crete, 2009).

Based on the above literature, agritourism is an important alternative for rural farmers including small-scale farmers in many countries of the world, as an extra source of income. There should be basic facilities to start and operate an agritourism

destination and it has ability to generate lots of benefits for the owner and the surrounding community. However, as the economic, socio-cultural, environmental, geographical conditions are varying country to country, country wise analysis of the feasibility of agritourism development is an important attempt to understand the reality of application of agritourism in the Sri Lankan scenario.

Sri Lanka and its agriculture sector

The island of Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) lies three degrees north of the equator, 82 degrees east of Greenwich and 32 km southeast of India. Sri Lanka is in the Indian Ocean situated south and slightly east of the southernmost point of India, separated by the 23 km wide Palk Strait. Including 870 km² of inland water, Sri Lanka has a total land area of 65,610 km² (Wikipedia, 2010). The central and south-central regions are hilly and mountainous, while the rest of the island is mainly flat. The climate in Sri Lanka is tropical and monsoonal, but varies from warm in the coastal plains and lowlands to temperate in the hills and mountain regions (Atlappedia online, 2010). Sri Lanka's economy has traditionally been dominated by agriculture. It produces various plantation crops, including tea, rubber, coconut, cocoa and spices for the export market. However, it is presently undergoing diversification as other sectors, such as manufacturing, are also making significant progress. The agriculture sector constituted 12.6% of GDP in 2010 and provided employment to about 32.7% of the labor force (World Factbook, 2011). An estimated 1.8 million families are engaged in farming. In Sri Lanka, agriculture is dominated by smallholders as over 64% of the farming families cultivate holdings of less than 0.8 hectares. Around 40% of the cultivated area is occupied by plantation crops, tea, rubber and coconut (UNESCAP, 2006). Out of the total land area of 6.5 million hectares 1.5 million (24 %) are recognized as agricultural land;

13.96% of the land is arable, 15.24% is used for permanent crops and 70.8% for other uses (Department of Census & Statistics, 2006). Sri Lanka is considered as a valuable repository of crop germplasm and agro-biodiversity. It has a rich treasure of rice genes and over 2,800 varieties have been recorded in the country. Besides rice, germplasm of the country is also rich in cereals, legumes, bananas and other fruit crops, root and tuber crops, medicinal plants, leafy and other vegetables, spice crops etc. Selection and cultivation of crop plants over several thousands of years by various traditional and modern farming practices and the country's eco-edaphic variability are two reasons for high genetic diversity of crops in Sri Lanka (Living Heritage Trust of Sri Lanka (2009).

Moreover, Sri Lanka has started organic farming which is having a very high attention of the health concerned consumers. According to IFOAM & FiBL (2006), there are 15,215 hectares of land under organic management, with a share of total agricultural land of 0.65% and a presence of around 3,300 organic farms. According to UNESCAP (2006), Sri Lanka is one of the major organic producers in Asia and one of the leading sources of organic tea. The organic market in the country has been described as a "niche market" (International trade centre, 2008). A number of organic products are increasingly being sold in major supermarkets. The main certified organic products are tea, desiccated coconut, cashew nuts, spices (cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg, pepper, clove and ginger), fruits (mango, papaya and passion fruit), and herbs (citronella and lemon grass). Most of these organic products are exported.

Agritourism in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is a tourist's paradise. It is one of the favorite travel destinations in south Asia. It is endowed with an abundance of tourism resources of considerable diversity, including beaches along its

coastal line, natural/ecological and wildlife attractions, indigenous culture, Buddhist heritage, and remnants left by Arabs, Portuguese, Dutch and British seafarers. From the beginning Sri Lanka has enjoyed a growing number of visitors and gradual growth in the tourism industry.

However, agritourism sector of the country is in its' initial stage. Only a few agritourism destinations are operating at present with general facilities and services. With, the remarkable increase in the interest surrounding the concept of agritourism of other countries is influencing the development of agritourism in Sri Lanka. It is a suitable destination for agritourism. It has diverse agro-climatic conditions suitable for growing different types of crops, fruits, vegetables and trees. Sri Lanka's complex paddy cultivation systems (developed over the course of 2500 years), huge very old irrigation tanks, many tea and rubber plantations, milking cattle on dairy farms, having a go at plucking tea leaves using the traditional 'bag-on-the-head' method, rubber tapping under expert guidance, or even working in many scenic paddy fields (engaging ploughing using bullocks, work on paddy nurseries, transplanting seedlings in muddy fields) of Sri Lanka are just some examples of its diverse agricultural developments of the country (Advisory panel on community based sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka, 2008).

Nevertheless, farmers are simple and hospitable. Sri Lankan villages and farms can offer unique experiences including local food and accommodation. Rural areas are rich with traditional things and cultural activities. Thus agritourism can cater to a niche market of agritourists.

Objectives of the study

The broad objective of this study was to determine the possibility of agritourism development in Sri Lankan context. The specific objectives were assessment of the

important information on farming population and farm lands, identify the profile of farming community and identify the attractive features of the area for tourists. Conducting a SWOT analysis for agritourism sector of the country to study the important factors for the agritourism development was also another specific objective of this study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

As agritourism is relatively a new concept in Sri Lanka, this study represents an exploratory approach with the intension of understanding the potential of agritourism development of the country. This study covered five districts (Badulla, Kandy, Moneragala, Nuwara Eliya and Ranapura) in the country. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. Primary data were gathered from the farmers of these five districts through a field survey. The total sample size was 100 farmers as 20 (5 small-scale, 10 medium-scale and 5 large-scale) farmers from each district. Stratified random sampling technique based on the scale of farming (Small (<2 acres), medium (2-5 acres) and large (>5 acres)) was used to select the farmers for the survey. In addition to the survey, ten group discussions were held with farmers, as two from each district. Further, ten interviews with respective officials of Central, Sabaragamuwa and Uva provincial councils were conducted to learn about their views on agri tourism, farm facilities and conditions, and conditions for agritourism in these areas.

In this study, agritourism is defined as any activity, enterprise or business which is designed to increase farm and community income through combining the essential elements of the tourism and agriculture industries. As the study was exploratory in nature, data analysis was limited only for simple descriptive techniques. Calculation

of some total, percentage and average values have been done in appropriate places. Secondary data such as total, rural and farming populations in each district were collected from the department of Census and Statistics and data regarding farm lands, profile of farmers were obtained from Planning Divisions of the Central, Sabaramamuwa and Uva provincial councils. Primary data collected from the field survey were used to assess the attractive features of the five districts and SWOT analysis of Agritourism development in the country. Group discussions and interviews were used to cross check and verify the information given by farmers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results are arranged under five sections as population information, information on

farm lands, profile of farming population, attractiveness of the areas for visitors, and SWOT analysis for agritourism in these districts. Discussions are followed by results

Population information

These five districts are located in the middle of the country having various geographical and agro ecological conditions. They are favorable for various agricultural activities, and have unique features that are very much important for tourism industry. The total populations of these districts were varied from 435,000 to 1,415,000. In these five districts, majority of the population (average of the five districts was 72%) was in rural sector. Out of the rural population a significant number (28%) was farmers (Table 1). They have cultivated of different crops and reared various livestock.

Table 01: Population information of the districts

| District | Total population | Rural population | | Farming population | |
|---------------|------------------|------------------|-----|--------------------|-----|
| | | Number | (%) | Number | (%) |
| Badulla | 874,000 | 664,240 | 76 | 297,160 | 34 |
| Kandy | 1,415,000 | 962,200 | 68 | 297,150 | 21 |
| Moneragala | 435,000 | 317,550 | 73 | 126,150 | 29 |
| Nuwara Eliya | 755,000 | 566,750 | 75 | 181,200 | 24 |
| Ratnapura | 1,113,000 | 779,100 | 70 | 356,160 | 32 |
| Average Value | | | 72 | | 28 |

(Source: Department of Census & Statistics, 2009)

Information on farm lands

As mentioned in the Table 2, this study was done for farmers, excluding plantation cultivators in these districts. Highest and lowest number of farm families (59,360 and 21,025) were in the Ratnapura and Moneragala districts respectively. Number of farms in different districts varies in between 29,435 and 89,040. Majority of the farmers in all the districts had only one farm while very few farmers had two or three. Most of the farms (about 80%) were

below three acres. Since a lot of lands were under plantation crops, land extents for other farming activities were very low in these districts. This is a very serious problem in the agriculture sector of the rural areas of the country. Nevertheless, very few farms (0.21%) had essential infrastructure facilities (water, electricity, and road) with them. Most of the farm lands are in rural and remote areas especially on hills and mountains where these facilities not available. Also, some of

these farm lands are the lands encroached catchments by the farmers. But, some successful agritourism destinations in other Asian countries for example Malegaon in India, Chocochai farm in

Thailand and Desaru Fruit Farm in Malaysia have land extends larger than 100 acres, all the essential facilities and connected by airways, railways or roadways.

Table 02: Important information of the farm lands

| District | Number of Farm families | Number of farms/ lands, except plantations* | of farm except plantations* | Farms having 3 acres or above** Number | 3 farms having 3 acres or above** (%) | farms having 3 acres or above** and also with water, road and electricity facilities Number | (%) |
|---------------|-------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|--|---|------|
| Badulla | 49527 | 79243 | | 21396 | 27 | 34 | 0.16 |
| Kandy | 49525 | 54478 | | 7627 | 14 | 21 | 0.28 |
| Moneragala | 21025 | 29435 | | 6181 | 21 | 12 | 0.18 |
| Nuwara Eliya | 30200 | 39260 | | 5104 | 13 | 11 | 0.22 |
| Ratnapura | 59360 | 89040 | | 19588 | 22 | 37 | 0.19 |
| Average value | | | | | 19.4 | | 0.21 |

(Planning Divisions of Central, Sabaragamuwa and Uva Provincial Councils, 2009)

* This study is conducted only for the farms except plantations.

** Under Sri Lankan situation, minimum requirement of land extent for an agritourism destination/ farm stay (except the network situation) is three acres. (based on the discussion with the farmers having agritourism destinations, 2008)

Profile of farming population

Relevant information is presented in the Table 3. According to this information, in all the districts adult and young farmers were greater in number than the elder farmers. It indicated that there is enough human resource for agricultural activities. When the education is considered, most of the farmers in all the districts had a secondary education or at least primary education. Thus these farmers had basic education about farming and also they are in a position to enhance their knowledge through training and education. Further, as most of the farming families in these districts were at medium size, they have a

significant level of family labor to use in a business like agritourism.

However, large-scale farms were comparatively lower. This mean our farm lands are small in size. There is a doubt about the success of diversification of small size farms. Very few features of activities can be incorporate in such a farm and most of the time it is not enough to attract visitors.

Table 03: Profile of farming population

| Character | District | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-----|--------|-----|------------|-----|--------------|-----|-----------|-----|
| | Badulla | | Kandy | | Moneragala | | Nuwara Eliya | | Ratnapura | |
| | Number | P | Number | P | Number | P | Number | P | Number | P |
| Age composition of farmers | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20-35 (Young) | 5717 | 27% | 2172 | 23% | 4224 | 30% | 4645 | 25% | 5625 | 24% |
| 36-50 (Adult) | 8894 | 42% | 4438 | 47% | 6195 | 44% | 8361 | 45% | 10781 | 46% |
| 51-65 (Older) | 6564 | 31% | 2833 | 30% | 3661 | 26% | 5574 | 30% | 7031 | 30% |
| Education level | | | | | | | | | | |
| No education | 1906 | 09% | 472 | 05% | 986 | 07% | 1486 | 08% | 1406 | 06% |
| Primary education | 9741 | 46% | 3399 | 36% | 5914 | 42% | 8732 | 47% | 8671 | 37% |
| Secondary education | 8046 | 38% | 4438 | 47% | 6195 | 44% | 7617 | 41% | 11249 | 48% |
| Diploma or similar | 847 | 04% | 755 | 08% | 704 | 05% | 557 | 03% | 1406 | 06% |
| Tertiary education | 424 | 02% | 578 | 04% | 282 | 02% | 186 | 01% | 703 | 03% |
| Family size | | | | | | | | | | |
| 03 - 05 members (Small) | 5717 | 27% | 3116 | 33% | 3520 | 25% | 3902 | 21% | 5390 | 23% |
| 06 - 08 members (Medium) | 8682 | 41% | 3682 | 39% | 6054 | 43% | 10033 | 54% | 11952 | 51% |
| 08 -10 members (Large) | 6776 | 32% | 2644 | 28% | 4506 | 32% | 4645 | 25% | 6039 | 26% |
| Scale of farming | | | | | | | | | | |
| Small-scale (<2acres) | 29320 | 37% | 26149 | 48% | 22914 | 33% | 21986 | 56% | 25822 | 29% |
| Medium-scale (2-5acres) | 35659 | 45% | 21247 | 39% | 33328 | 48% | 15311 | 39% | 40068 | 45% |
| Large-scale (>5 acres) | 14264 | 18% | 7082 | 13% | 13193 | 19% | 1963 | 05% | 23150 | 26% |

(Planning Divisions of Central, Sabaragamuwa and Uva Provincial Councils, 2009)

Attractiveness of the area for tourists,

There were important and attractive features in these districts for the visitors. Among them, presence of various religious places such as temples, kovils, churches, mosques were very common (Table 4). Natural attractions such as rivers, water falls, hills, forests, caves and parks were predominant. When the cultural attractions were concerned various festivals, ruins of civilizations and kingdoms and ancient livelihood strategies were important. Since a large number of these attractions and other tourism destinations (for instant Worlds End, Horton Plains, Sinharaja Forest, Adams Peak, Adism Banglow, Lipton seat, Diallyma water fall, Dunhida waterfall, Mountain Pituruthalagala etc) were there in each and every district, there was a very high potential to attract visitors for these districts.

SWOT analysis for the initiation of agritourism in these districts

Analysis of the internal and external environment is an essential task in agritourism development. Positive and negative factors within the internal environment referred strengths and weaknesses while positive and negative factors in the external environment referred as opportunities and threats. Accurate SWOT analysis can help to find the solutions for the existing issues and challenges of the destination and also possible support and assistance from the stakeholders. As such, this SWOT analysis shows strengths and weaknesses and the potential opportunities and threats viewed as essential for the development of agritourism in Sri Lanka (Table 5).

Table 04: Categories of tourist attractive features of the areas

| District | Number of religious places | Number of natural attractions | Number of cultural attractions |
|--------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Badulla | 86 | 46 | 22 |
| Kandy | 167 | 32 | 36 |
| Moneragala | 92 | 27 | 28 |
| Nuwara Eliya | 64 | 31 | 19 |
| Ratnapura | 79 | 38 | 26 |

(Field survey 2009)

Table 05: Important factors identified through SWOT analysis

| Strengths |
|---|
| <p>Availability of a significant number of farmers with private property. Presence of attractive agricultural landscapes including unique features for most of the areas. Availability beautiful natural landscapes with clean and healthy environment. Presence of knowledgeable and energetic farming community. Availability of significant level of family labor. Presence of traditional farming activities including, chenna cultivation, Organic farming. Availability of traditional cultural activities including various livelihoods, Sri Lankan cuisine. Availability of preserved environment due to the absence of industrial activities.</p> |
| Weaknesses |
| <p>Lack of large-scale farms. (80% of the farms are below three acres) Low awareness of agritourism with farmers in terms of tourism and its attractiveness. Poor level of entrepreneurship and management, skills with the farmers. Low level of processing (value addition) of farm products. Insufficient infrastructure for the purposes of tourism (rural road system, public water supply system, power supply and waste management system). Shortage of finances and low accessibility of external resources necessary for building renovation for agritourism purposes. Unavailability of rules, regulations and policies to improve agritourism</p> |
| Opportunities |
| <p>Availability of a number of tourist attractive locations. Presence of mutual co-operation of farmers with other organizations in these areas. Availability of a large number of unemployed youth, that can employee in the agritourism sector. Initiation of emphasis on sustainable rural tourism development by the government. Gradual increase in the demand for agritourism by the visitors.</p> |
| Threats |
| <p>Lack of government concern on agricultural problems of these areas. Competition from other traditional holiday destinations. Accumulation of non-decaying waste in farming areas. Difficulties in environment protection due to gradual damage to the environment. Urbanization of rural places via changing the natural landscape of the area.</p> |

(Field Survey, 2009)

Lots of important factors regarding agritourism development were identified with the help of the SWOT analysis. When the strength points are concerned; some of the farmers have farm land/s and other requirements for farming on their own. These farms have area specific crops, trees and livestock species contributing a unique agricultural landscape for the area. Beautiful natural landscapes consisted of forests, mountains, and grass lands provide a high value for the environment. Farmers of these areas have good knowledge about farming activities. These young farmers can work hard through out the year with out any problem as there is no seasonal difference in the country. Availability of family labor at a significant level is also a positive point for agritourism. Farmers practice both traditional farming activities together with new farming techniques. Currently, there is a trend towards organic farming. Moreover, these areas are rich in traditional (cultural) such as pottery making, cane weaving, art and craft industry as well as, Sri Lankan cuisine with various spices. Still these rural areas have clean environment and relatively low pollution due to the absence of industrial emission.

Few weaknesses of these districts were also found. Most of the farm lands are small in size (it needs at least three acres to start an agritourism destination including basic agricultural activity with some livestock and accommodation facilities for 6-8 visitors). Although basic knowledge about agriculture is with the farmers, also they have low awareness of benefits of agritourism and related aspects. Especially they have poor level of entrepreneurship, leadership, management and decision making skills that are important in agribusiness activities. According to Colton and Bissix in 2005, this is a problem in Nova Scotia too. Furthermore, farmers don't engage in processing (value addition) of farm products in most of the time and sell unprocessed products at

lower prices. This is a common problem for many of the rural areas in other countries as well. Colton and Bissix in 2005, have reported about the lacking of concern for agritourism products and their quality standards. The level of infrastructure facilities such as road system, water and power supply are not sufficient for the purposes of tourism destinations. There should be a proper method for the waste management as well. Another problem is that the shortage of finances for the farmers and low accessibility of external resources required for arrangement of facilities for agritourism activities. Furthermore, there are no relevant rural, regulations and policies for the development of agritourism industry in the country yet. But, countries having developed agritourism industries have important policies for the development of the sector. For example, in Greece agritourism has been officially introduced through European Union subsidies to their farmers.

Following factors can be considered as main opportunities. It is easy to attract visitors, due to the presence of large number of tourist attractive locations in these areas. They are rich with religious, cultural and natural attractions. Moreover, mutual co-operation among farmers and other organizations in these areas shows the social capital that can be used for the development of agritourism industry. Owing to presence of lots of other tourism destinations in these areas (ecotourism, culture tourism, adventure tourism, health tourism etc), mutual benefits can be obtained by having close relationships with them. According to Veeck et al. (2006), agritourism can generate new sources of income through horizontal linkages with other tourism-based activities. Since unemployment of the youth of these areas is high, these unemployed people can be employed. This is a very good solution for both unemployment problem as well as rural-

urban migration. According to Egbali et al, (2010), rural tourism (agritourism is one aspect) is a new and important way of enhancing employment opportunities and creating capital. Further, breaking rural social isolation and refilling rural areas with lost people are very important by products of it. Since the sustainable rural tourism development is one of the prime objectives of the present government, emphasis on agritourism is getting high. Also, agritourism is gradually getting popular among the urban dwellers as a recreational and educational opportunity.

Few threats for agritourism were also found. Although the government plans for the development of agriculture in these areas, lack of commitment (specially provincial and local level) is obvious. Also it is difficult to get better results due to the problems with bureaucrats as well as in implementing the programs. This is a common problem for some other countries. For example, in Nova scotia, signage and zoning bylaws were noted as significant government obstacles to agritourism development (Colton and Bissix in 2005). There may be a competition with other traditional holiday areas to attract visitors. A need to apply proper waste management procedures in order to maintain clean surrounding is essential. In this regard 3R technique (Reduce, reuse and recycle) of waste and production of compost from the decaying waste are important. Other difficult thing is the environment protection of tourism destinations. This is a rather difficult task. Other than the waste management, careful use of forest cover, management and protection of catchments, top soil etc are very crucial factors at present even in rural areas. It needs proper rules and regulations. In 2006, Veeck et al have viewed agriculture as the key to food production/security, rural landscape and environmental protection. Unnecessary urbanization of rural youth can affect the rural culture badly. Dressing pattern, food

habits, language, behavior etc of urban visitors are different from local people.

CONCLUSIONS

The five districts selected for the study have lots of potential for the introduction of agritourism industry which could have positive effect on the development of local people. Out of the total population, there are significant number of farmers with farm lands and some other facilities that are important in agritourism development. Most of the farmers also have basic knowledge and skills required for farming. Further, different important features of these areas are able to attract visitors in a great deal. Also, the extent of agritourism will never overlap with other rural tourism operations.

However, in most of the farms, infrastructure facilities are not sufficiently available. This is one of the factors that determined the success of the industry. Therefore, provision of basic infrastructure such as road facilities, clean water, and electricity is very important. Moreover, there is low awareness of agritourism and its attractiveness with farmers. Making farmers well aware of agritourism and creating a positive attitude towards opportunities of agritourism is essential in order to have agritourism operations. Although farmers have basic knowledge and skills in farming, they are poor in business management skills namely entrepreneurship, management skills interpersonal and communication skill etc. So that, education and training on these areas are very much important for the successful agritourism operations. Also, another important aspect for the successful agritourism operation is to make arrangements to get necessary financial facilities for the farmers to renovate and arrange agritourism destinations in an attractive manner. This activity needs lots of money and effort. If farmers can have access to credit or loan facilities under

concession rate, it would be an ideal solution.

Finding proper remedies for the above mention problems is an essential prerequisite as the potential entrepreneurs

will face difficulties to star a business without external support. After that, introduction of agritourism in these areas would be of great significance and would improve the overall economic, social, cultural, and aesthetic level of the areas.

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