

## THE IMPACT OF AGRI-TOURISM ENTREPRENEURSHIP ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROWTH OF RURAL AREAS IN THE PUNE DISTRICT

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### Abstract

*Agri-tourism entrepreneurship has become popular in Maharashtra in the last decade to boost rural development and improve farmers' livelihoods. This study focuses on the Pune district to understand how Agri-tourism impacts the socio-economic growth of rural areas. The research has three main objectives: (1) To study how Agri-tourism creates jobs and increases income for rural communities, (2) To examine its role in improving the socio-economic conditions of farmers, and (3) To identify the challenges and opportunities in Agri-tourism for sustainable rural growth. The study tests two hypotheses: the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) states that Agri-tourism has no significant impact on rural socio-economic growth, while the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) claims that it does have a significant impact. Data was collected through surveys with farmers and Agri-tourism entrepreneurs in the Pune district, and secondary data from different reports and studies. The findings show that Agri-tourism has helped rural communities by providing additional income, creating employment, and promoting sustainable farming practices. However, challenges like lack of infrastructure, limited marketing skills, and insufficient government support need to be addressed. The study concludes that Agri-tourism plays a vital role in transforming rural economies if, supported properly. It suggests that policymakers, entrepreneurs, and local communities work together to overcome challenges and maximize the benefits of Agri-tourism. This research highlights the potential of Agri-tourism as a tool for sustainable rural development in India.*

**Keywords:** *Agri-tourism entrepreneurs, rural communities, socio-economic development, sustainable development, rural growth, farmer income level.*

### Introduction:

Rural development has always been a critical area of focus for policymakers, economists, and social scientists in Maharashtra state, where a significant portion of the population resides in rural India, and depends on Agriculture for their livelihood. The traditional Agricultural practices in rural communities are insufficient to address the growing socio-economic issues faced by rural communities. They face enormous challenges like unemployment, low income, and migration to urban areas (Kumbhar, V. M. (2012). In recent years, Agri-tourism has emerged as a promising avenue to complement Agriculture and substitute for rural development. Agri-tourism combines Agriculture and tourism and offers, a unique opportunity to increase income sources, create employment, and promote sustainable growth in rural areas. This research focuses on the Pune district of Maharashtra, which has a rich Agricultural heritage and growing Agri-tourism potential, to discover the impact of Agri-tourism entrepreneurship on the socio-economic growth of rural areas (Sgroi, F., Marino, G., & Donia, E. (2018). Agri-tourism refers to activities that combine traditional farming with tourism-related services, offering visitors an immersive experience in rural life and generating additional income for farmers (Phillip et al., 2010). This model helps to strengthen the financial

stability of depriver rural farmer communities and contributes to employment generation, infrastructure development, and environmental conservation. In India, and specifically in the Pune district of Maharashtra, Agri-tourism has gained momentum as a tool for socio-economic growth in rural areas.

### Literature Review:

Agri-tourism is a subset of rural tourism that involves tourists engaging in farming activities, staying on farms, and participating in cultural experiences linked to Agriculture (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008). It allows farmers to generate alternative income while promoting sustainable Agricultural practices. Across the globe, countries such as Italy, the United States, and France have successfully integrated Agri-tourism into their rural economies, leading to increased farm incomes and community development (Flanigan et al., 2015). In India, Agri-tourism has been promoted as a way to strengthen rural economies, particularly in states like Maharashtra, where Agriculture remains the primary occupation for a significant portion of the population: The Government of Maharashtra launched the Agri-Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) in 2005, recognizing the potential of Agri-tourism to enhance farmers' livelihoods. The Pune district has a diverse

Agricultural landscape and proximity to major urban centers like Mumbai and Pune city, which has become a leading destination for Agri-tourism initiatives. Farmers in Pune have leveraged Agri-tourism to showcase their farms, offer farm-to-table experiences, and educate visitors on organic and sustainable farming methods. These initiatives have not only improved income levels but have also contributed to rural employment and infrastructure development.

**The Role of Agri-Tourism Entrepreneurship in Employment and Income Generation:** One of the primary objectives of this study is to examine the role of Agri-tourism entrepreneurship in employment and income generation for rural communities in the Pune district. Agri-tourism creates direct and indirect employment opportunities by engaging farmers, rural artisans, tour guides, and hospitality service providers. Studies have shown that Agri-tourism can significantly boost rural employment by providing job opportunities in sectors such as lodging, food services, and handicrafts (Tew & Barbieri, 2012).

Agri-tourism has helped farmers diversify their income sources, reducing their dependence on seasonal Agricultural produce. In Pune, many farmers have adopted tourism-based business models, offering farm stays, agro-based adventure activities, and cultural experiences. This diversification has enhanced rural financial resilience, particularly in regions facing climate-related Agricultural uncertainties (Kumbhar (2012). Research highlights that farmers involved in Agri-tourism earn 30–40% more income than those solely dependent on farming, demonstrating the economic benefits of this entrepreneurial model (Barbieri, C., & Mshenga, P. M. (2008).

**Agri-Tourism and Socio-Economic Development of Farmers:** Agri-tourism extends beyond economic benefits, playing a crucial role in the overall socio-economic development of farmers. It fosters community engagement, enhances the standard of living, and preserves rural heritage. Through interactions with tourists, farmers gain exposure to new business strategies, marketing techniques, and sustainable farming practices (Carpio et al., 2008). These interactions often lead to knowledge exchange, enabling rural communities to innovate and adapt to modern economic trends.

Agri-tourism enhances women's participation in rural entrepreneurship. Studies indicate that agrarian tourism provides employment opportunities for women in hospitality, local cuisine preparation, handicrafts, and farm management (Sgroi et al., 2018). In the Pune district, many women-led Agri-tourism initiatives

have emerged, empowering rural women financially and socially.

While Agri-tourism presents significant opportunities, several challenges hinder its widespread adoption. Limited awareness, inadequate infrastructure, and regulatory constraints are among the key barriers to Agri-tourism development in Pune (Das & Rainey, 2020). Many farmers lack the financial resources and business knowledge required to establish and sustain Agri-tourism ventures. Additionally, inadequate transportation facilities and poor digital marketing strategies further limit the reach of rural tourism initiatives.

However, with the right policy interventions and support systems, Agri-tourism can play a pivotal role in achieving sustainable rural growth. Government subsidies, capacity-building programs, and digital marketing initiatives can help farmers overcome these barriers and maximize the potential of Agri-tourism entrepreneurship. Studies suggest that integrating technology, such as online booking platforms and social media marketing, can significantly enhance the visibility and profitability of Agri-tourism enterprises (Liu et al., 2019).

## **Research Methodology:**

### **Research Design**

The study adopts a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to assess the socio-economic impact of Agri-tourism entrepreneurship in the rural area of Pune District, specifically Junnar and Ambegaon Tahsils.

- **Quantitative parameters:** Various measures used as economic indicators (effect on income levels, employment generation, increase in business revenue, standard of living).
- **Qualitative parameters:** used to discover perceptions, challenges faced, and community experiences about Agri-tourism through interviews.

### **Study Area**

The research focuses on rural areas of Pune District, Maharashtra, where Agri-tourism centres are operational. The key areas, like Junnar and Ambegaon, where Agri-tourism centres were selected.

### **Sampling Technique**

A stratified random sampling method was employed to ensure representation from different stakeholders, like Agri-tourism entrepreneurs and residents.

**Sample Size:** Approximately 165 respondents, Agri-tourism entrepreneurs.

## Data Collection Methods

### Primary Data Collection

- Survey Method: structured questionnaires with a Likert scale and a few open-ended questions for entrepreneurs were used.

### Secondary Data Collection

- Government reports, journals, articles, and previous studies on Agri-tourism and rural development.

## Objectives of the study:

- To study the role of Agri-tourism entrepreneurship in employment and income generation for rural communities in the Pune district.
- To study Agri-tourism's role in farmers' socio-economic development in Pune district.
- To study the challenges and opportunities in Agri-tourism entrepreneurship for sustainable rural growth.

## Hypothesis of the study:

- Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** Agri-tourism entrepreneurship has no significant impact on the socio-economic growth of rural areas in the Pune district.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** Agri-tourism entrepreneurship significantly impacts the socio-economic growth of rural areas in the Pune district.

## Significance of the Research

This study helps to understand how Agri-tourism can improve farmers' income levels and generate alternative income sources by reducing dependency on traditional farming.

The findings of this research highlight the role of Agri-tourism in employment generation, infrastructure development, and overall quality of life in rural communities.

This research provides insights for policymakers to formulate strategies that support Agri-tourism as a tool for sustainable Agricultural and rural economic growth.

## Data Analysis:

### Role of Agri-Tourism Entrepreneurship in Employment and Income Generation:

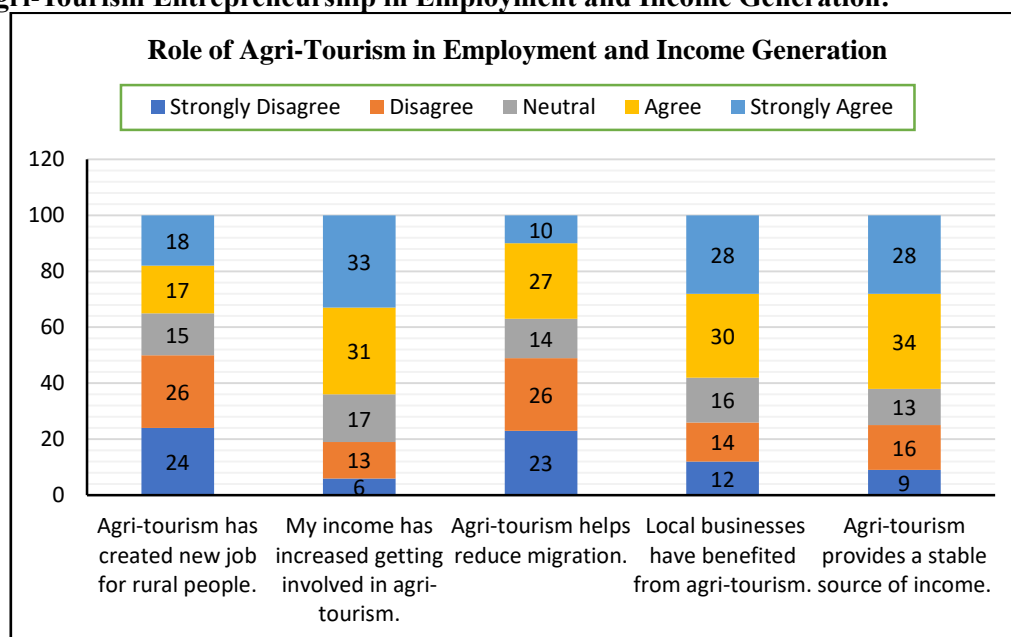


Fig.No.1 Role of Agri-Tourism in Employment and Income Generation.

The data shown in the above figure respondents' opinions on different socio-economic impacts of Agri-Tourism using a Likert scale.

### Employment Generation:

A majority of respondents (50%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that Agri-tourism generate new jobs, while 35% respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

This means that, Agri-tourism generate some employment, it is not significant area which generates the job in rural areas.

### Agri-Tourisms impact on income:

The significant respondents (64%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the income has increased, whereas 19 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

This is observed that Agri-tourism creates positive impact on their income those directly involved in it.

### Impact on Migration:

This is observed that 49% respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that Agri-tourism impact on migration of youth from rural to urban, while 37% respondents agreed or strongly agreed towards positive impact.

Agri-tourism may control the migration of youth which is not enough, it means that the impact of Agri-tourism on migration is uncertain.

### Benefits to Local Businesses:

The significant respondents (58%) agreed that Agri-tourism benefited local businesses like shops, transport, and handicrafts, whereas 26% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Interpretation: This suggests that Agri-tourism positively impacts the rural economy beyond farming, benefiting local enterprises.

### Role of Agri-Tourism in Farmers' Socio-Economic Development:

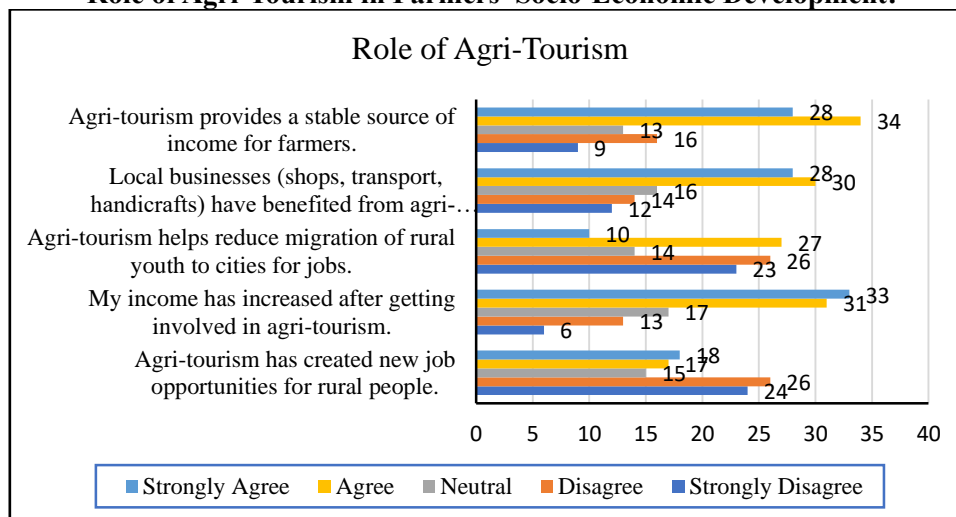


Fig.No.2 Role of Agri-Tourism in Employment and Income Generation.

The above figure represents the responses on the impact of Agri-tourism on rural communities, which were categorized under five statements. The responses were distributed at five levels: Strongly Disagreed, Disagreed, Neutral, Agreed, and Strongly Agreed. The numbers in the figure represent the percentage of respondents for each category.

### Employment Generation:

Most of the respondents, 43% (24 + 26), disagreed that Agri-tourism can create new jobs in rural areas. Whereas many respondents, 35% (17 agreed + 18 strongly agreed), those who got the job and think positively were on the side of Job creation by Agri-tourism. The significant portion indicates that employment opportunities may be limited.

### Income Growth

A majority of respondents (64% (31+ 33)) agreed that Agri-tourism enhanced entrepreneurial income, whereas the respondents (19%) were on the side of negative responses and it was due to new entrants in Agri-tourism. This shows that the financial and economic conditions of farmers who engaged in Agri-tourism were improving.

### People Migration

Significant respondents (49%) disagreed with; Agri-tourism benefits in reducing migration of the rural youth towards urban and industrial areas. On the other side some of the respondents (37%) were on the side of agreement, that it helps retain rural youth. Observation was that Agri-tourism could prevent rural youth migration, but may not be a sufficient solution to rural unemployment.

### Benefits to Local Businesses

Most of the respondents (58%) said that local businesses (shops, transport, handicrafts) benefit from Agri-tourism, whereas some of the respondents (26%) were disagreed with the benefits of Agri-tourism to local businesses. The majority of Agri-tourism entrepreneurs believe that their activity positively affects local businesses and generates more income.

### Income Stability

A significant respondents (62%) agreed that Agri-tourism provides stable and secondary income to farmers through their centres. On the other side (25%), respondents feel the neutral impact on the income of farmers. This means that Agri-tourism can be the source of supportive and stable income to farmers.

### Challenges and Opportunities in Agri-Tourism for Sustainable Rural Growth:

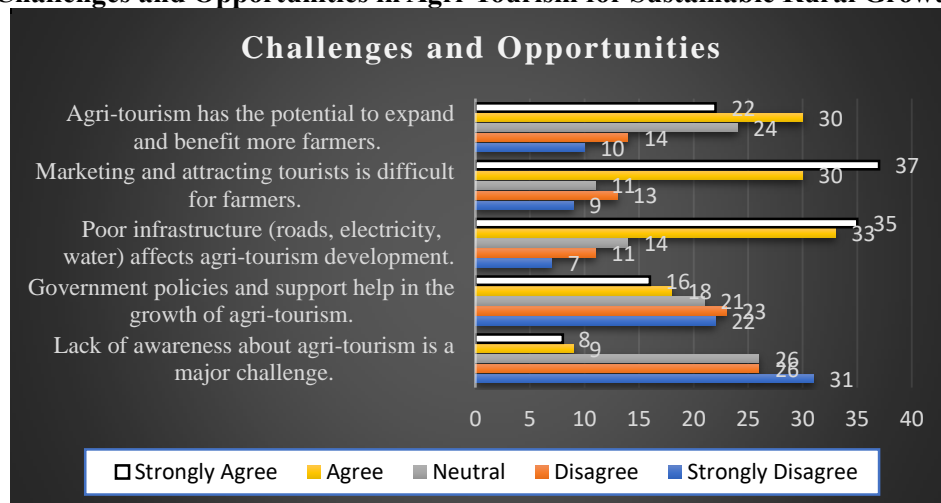


Fig.No.3 Challenges and Opportunities in Agri-Tourism.

The Above figure represents survey responses collected from 165 respondents regarding perceptions of Agri-tourism, with five statements rated on a scale from "Strongly Disagreed" to "Strongly Agreed." The numbers in the figure represent the percentage of respondents for each category.

#### Lack of awareness of Agri-tourism.

A majority of respondents (57%) disagreed that awareness is the primary challenge for Agri-tourism. Whereas only 17% of respondents agreed with this statement. That means awareness might not be the barrier to Agri-tourism development.

#### Government policies and support.

Significant respondents gave mixed opinions. 45% of respondents disagreed that government policies and support are helpful, while (34%) agreed with the government support. and 21% were neutral. Agri-tourism entrepreneurs have different opinions, but most of them were doubtful about government support.

#### Effect of infrastructure.

A significant proportion (68% = 33% + 35%) of respondents agreed that poor infrastructure was a prominent barrier to Agri-tourism development. Only 18% of respondents disagreed, with poor infrastructure as a barrier.

#### Difficulties of Marketing and Attracting Tourists.

A majority of respondents (67%) agreed that marketing and attracting tourists is a challenge for farmers. Whereas 22% of respondents disagreed, with marketing and tourist attractions being difficult for farmers. This highlights a significant difficulty in the promotional aspect of Agri-tourism.

#### Potential of Agri-tourism to farmers.

A majority of respondents (52%) believed that Agri-tourism had the potential to expand and benefit more farmers, while 24% (10% + 14%) of

respondents disagreed with the statement. This shows a generally positive outlook on the potential of Agri-tourism, though not overwhelmingly so.

#### Hypothesis Testing:

##### Chi-Square Test for Independence

*Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):* Agri-Tourism Entrepreneurship has no significant impact on socio-economic growth factors.

*Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ):* Agri-Tourism Entrepreneurship significantly impacts socio-economic growth factors.

##### Chi-Square Test Results:

Test Statistic ( $\chi^2$ )	Degrees of Freedom (df)	p-value
14.85	16	0.535

Table No. 1 Chi-Square Test Result

Each element in the table represents a key aspect of the Chi-Square test:

*Test Statistic ( $\chi^2 = 14.85$ ):*

The Chi-Square statistic ( $\chi^2$ ) is calculated by comparing the observed frequency of responses in each category with the expected frequency if there were no association between Agri-Tourism and socio-economic growth.

A higher chi-squared value would indicate a stronger deviation from independence, meaning a stronger association between the variables.

*Degrees of Freedom ( $df = 16$ ):*

Degrees of freedom in a Chi-Square test are determined using the formula:

$$df = (r-1) \times (c-1)$$

where  $r$  is the number of rows (categories of responses) and  $c$  is the number of columns (levels of agreement).

In this case, we have 5 socio-economic factors and 5 response levels (Likert scale categories: Strongly Disagreed, Disagreed, Neutral, Agreed, Strongly Agreed), giving us:



$$df=(5-1)\times(5-1)=4\times4=16$$

*p-value (0.535):*

The p-value represents the probability of observing a test statistic as extreme as 14.85 if the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ : no association) were true.

A p-value greater than 0.05 ( $0.535 > 0.05$ ) suggests that the observed data does not provide strong enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

*Justification:*

Since the p-value (0.535) is much greater than the common significance level (0.05), we fail to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ).

This indicates that there is no statistically significant relationship between Agri-Tourism Entrepreneurship and socio-economic growth factors in the

The observed variations in responses could be credited to random chance rather than a systematic impact of Agri-Tourism.

#### ANOVA Table

F-Statistic	Degrees of Freedom (Between Groups)	Degrees of Freedom (Within Groups)	p-value
0	4	20	1

Table No.2 ANOVA Test Result

Each value in the table corresponds to a key aspect of the ANOVA test:

*F-Statistic ( $F = 0.00$ )*

The F-statistic is calculated as the ratio of the variance between groups to the variance within groups:

- A high F-value suggests a significant difference between the group means, whereas an F-value close to 0 suggests no significant difference.
- In this case,  $F = 0.00$ , indicating that the variance between the different socio-economic factors is almost non-existent compared to the variance within groups.
- This suggests that the responses across different socio-economic factors are virtually identical in terms of variability.

*Degrees of Freedom (Between Groups) = 4*

The degrees of freedom (df) between groups are given by:

$$df_{\text{between}} = k - 1$$

where  $k$  is the number of groups (i.e., the five socio-economic factors).

$$df_{\text{between}} = 5 - 1 = 4$$

*Degrees of Freedom (Within Groups) = 20*

The degrees of freedom within groups are given by:

$$df_{\text{within}} = N - k$$

where  $N$  is the total number of observations and  $k$  is the number of groups.

Here, we have 5 groups, each with 5 responses, so  $N = 5 \times 5 = 25$ .

$$df_{\text{within}} = 25 - 5 = 20$$

*p-value = 1.00*

- The p-value represents the probability of obtaining an F-statistic at least as extreme as the observed one, assuming the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is true.
- A p-value greater than 0.05 ( $1.00 > 0.05$ ) suggests that there is no significant difference between the means of the five socio-economic factors.
- A p-value of 1.00 means that the observed data is entirely consistent with the null hypothesis, and there is absolutely no difference among the groups.

*Justification*

- Since the p-value is 1.00, we fail to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), which states that there is no significant difference between the socio-economic factors in terms of responses.
- The F-statistic being 0.00 means that the group means are essentially identical, confirming that Agri-Tourism Entrepreneurship has no significant variation across the socio-economic factors in this dataset.

#### Key Findings:

1. Mixed responses were observed on whether Agri-tourism had created new job opportunities for rural people. 35 respondents agreed or strongly agreed, a larger number (50) disagreed or strongly disagreed. This indicates that Agri-tourism's role in job creation is not strongly evident.
2. A significant number of respondents (64) agreed or strongly agreed that their income has improved after getting involved in Agri-tourism, whereas only 19 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that Agri-tourism has a positive financial impact on those engaged in it.
3. The responses regarding whether Agri-tourism helps reduce rural-to-urban migration are mixed. While 37 respondents agreed or strongly agreed, 49 disagreed or strongly disagreed. This implies that the impact of Agri-tourism on preventing migration is not very convincing for many.
4. A majority (58 respondents) agreed or strongly agreed that Agri-tourism has benefited local businesses such as shops, transport, and handicrafts. This indicates that Agri-tourism contributes positively to the rural economy beyond farming.
5. Most respondents (62) agreed or strongly agreed that Agri-tourism provides a stable source of income for farmers, while only 25 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

This highlights the potential of Agri-tourism in ensuring financial security for farmers.

6. There was a mixed response about whether Agri-tourism created new job opportunities. While 35 respondents agreed or strongly agreed, 50 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. This indicates that the perceived impact of Agri-tourism on job creation is uncertain.
7. A significant number of respondents (64) agreed or strongly agreed that their income had increased due to Agri-tourism. Only 19 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that Agri-tourism positively impacts financial growth.
8. Most of the respondents (49) disagreed or strongly disagreed that Agri-tourism helps reduce rural-to-urban migration. 37 respondents agreed or strongly agreed. This suggests that Agri-tourism's role in reducing migration is not widely accepted.
9. The majority (58 respondents) agreed or strongly agreed that Agri-tourism benefits local businesses such as shops, transport, and handicrafts. This indicates a positive economic impact beyond just farmers.
10. The majority (62 respondents) agreed or strongly agreed that Agri-tourism provides a stable income source to farmers, while only 25 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. This highlights Agri-tourism as a reliable financial source for farmers.
11. Most respondents do not see a lack of awareness as a significant challenge for Agri-tourism entrepreneurship. This suggests that the concept of Agri-tourism may already be relatively well-known among the surveyed group.
12. The strongest consensus is that poor infrastructure (roads, electricity, water) significantly hinders Agri-tourism development, with 68% agreeing.
13. A majority (67%) of Agri-tourism entrepreneurs find marketing and attracting tourists to be difficult for farmers, indicating a gap in promotional strategies or resources.
14. There's no clear agreement on whether government policies and support are effective, with 45% disagreeing and 34% agreeing. This suggests dissatisfaction or inconsistency in government efforts.
15. Despite the challenges, 52% of respondents are optimistic about the potential of Agri-tourism to expand and benefit more farmers, though 24% remain doubtful.

### Suggestions:

- Government support and skill-based training for youth in tourism management may help to generate more employment in rural areas.
- More awareness programs and success stories should be shared to encourage more farmers to adopt Agri-tourism as a supplementary income source.
- Agri-tourism playing a role in reducing migration is not strongly perceived; it should be integrated with other rural development schemes must initiate to make village-based livelihoods more attractive.
- Given the strong positive response regarding the benefits to local businesses, steps should be taken to further promote rural entrepreneurship.
- Financial institutions should introduce farmer-friendly loans, incentives, and subsidies to help farmers develop and sustain Agri-tourism Entrepreneurships.
- As Agri-tourism is not a strong job generator, stakeholders should create more employment opportunities through government support and private investments.
- More promotional efforts are needed to encourage more participation in Agri-tourism that could demonstrate financial benefits to uncertain farmers.
- Though Agri-tourism does not help to reduce migration, policymakers should integrate Agri-tourism with other rural employment schemes.
- Initiatives should be taken to develop rural entrepreneurship through training and investment in tourism-related enterprises that could benefit local businesses.
- As Agri-tourism is seen as a stable income source for farmers, financial institutions should facilitate access to loans and subsidies to help farmers develop their Agri-tourism businesses.
- Governments and local authorities should invest in improving rural infrastructure, such as better roads, reliable electricity, and access to clean water. These improvements will make Agri-tourism destinations more accessible and appealing to tourists.
- Develop training programs and workshops for farmers on marketing strategies, including digital marketing, social media promotion, and branding. Partner with tourism boards to create campaigns that highlight Agri-tourism experiences.
- Governments should review and improve policies to better support Agri-tourism, such as offering subsidies, tax incentives, or grants for farmers transitioning to Agri-tourism. Clear

communication of these policies is also essential to build trust.

- Use the optimism (52% agreement) about Agri-tourism's potential to encourage collaboration between farmers, local communities, and tourism agencies. Create success stories and case studies to inspire more farmers to participate.
- While awareness isn't a major issue for most (57% disagreed), targeted campaigns in regions or demographics where awareness is low could still be beneficial. Focus on educating potential tourists about the unique experiences Agri-tourism offers.

### Conclusion

This research on "Agri-Tourism Entrepreneurship and its Impact on the Socio-Economic Growth of Rural Areas in the Pune District" identified opportunities and challenges in Agri-tourism. This study shows that Agri-tourism has significantly enhanced farmers' income, offered financial stability, and acknowledged its positive economic impact. Local businesses, including transport and handicrafts, had also benefited. But the role in job creation and reducing rural-to-urban migration remains uncertain.

This has been observed that farmers face different barriers to Agri-tourism development, which include difficulty in marketing, poor infrastructure, and unreliable government support. Although awareness is not a main issue for entrepreneurs, they struggle to attract tourists. Though Agritourism entrepreneurship faces these challenges, it may remain very optimistic about the future expansion of Agritourism.

To improve the impact of Agri-Tourism, policymakers should focus on improving infrastructure, providing targeted financial incentives, and developing strong marketing strategies to attract more tourists. Strengthening training programs for farmers in hospitality and tourism management can also maximize the potential of Agri-tourism as a sustainable driver of rural economic development.

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