

# STUDY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF FARMERS THROUGH AGRO TOURISM IN AHMEDNAGAR

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## Abstract

Agro tourism is complimentary to traditional agricultural activities. It is an opportunity for farmers to use the available resources in a diversified and innovative way. It creates a win –win situation to farmers as well as tourists. Farmers earn better from innovative use of available resources and the tourist can enjoy village life and nature in affordable prices. Not only that, the village is also getting benefited due to the development of agro tourism. Agro tourism not only brings development of farmers but to the village as a whole from social and economic angle. In spite of growing agro tourism, the fact remains that the government support through appropriate and conducive policies for agro tourism development is lacking and government should give priority to agro tourism business in Maharashtra through appropriate policy measures. The researchers had gathered data from 6 agro tourism centers and 60 tourists visiting agro tourism centers in Ahmednagar district for study the objectives set by them, which is been represented in the study. The study has shown positive and actual situations of the agro tourism centers in the study area chosen. There is lot of scope found for many other farmers who would like to get into the business of agro tourism to uplift their life socially and economically.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Agro tourism, Agro tourism centers, Socio-economic development, Farmers, Employment.

## I. INTRODUCTION:

### Tourism:

Tourism is now well recognized as an engine of growth in the various economies in the world (Kumbhar Vijay Maruti, 2009). Several countries have transformed their economies by developing their tourism potential. Tourism has great capacity to generate large-scale employment and additional income sources to the skilled and unskilled.

Today the concept of traditional tourism has been changed. Some new areas of the tourism have been emerged like Agro-Tourism. Promotion of tourism would bring many direct and indirect benefits to the people.

Agro-tourism is an innovative agricultural activity related to tourism and agriculture both. It has a great capacity to create additional source of income and employment opportunities to the farmers. (Vijay, 2009).

Maharashtra is one of the major tourist centers in the India and there is large scope and great potential to develop agro-tourism. Agricultural tourism has grown to be a Rs. 13.14crore industry in Maharashtra, despite not getting any financial or marketing assistance from the government. There are 136 set-ups across the state offering tourists a chance to experience a slice of rural life (findings of the survey carried out by ATDC, Baramati, Pune).(ATDC)

### Agro Tourism:

**Concept of Agro tourism:** Agro tourism is the latest concept in the Indian tourism industry, which normally occurs on farms. It gives an opportunity to the tourists to experience the real enchanting and authentic contact with the rural life, taste the local genuine food and get familiar with the various farming tasks during the visit. Tourists can relax and revitalize in the pure natural environment. The urban life is becoming more hectic and complex. The corporate world has provided good employment avenues but along with this it has increased the stress level and the complexity. With the experience of Agro tourism the people can get relaxation. Because of the urbanization, many children as well as the adults do not have an idea about the rural life and the agriculture. Agro tourism provides them a chance to experience rural life and see the agricultural activities.

Agro tourism includes opening up farms to tourists from urban areas and from abroad, and letting them to take experience of rural life. Apart from telling them about the various crops and how they are sown and harvested, agro tourism exposes tourists to traditional food, handicraft, culture, music and language. Tourists can get an experience of rural activities such as bullock cart rides, milking cows and goats and picking farm fresh fruits and vegetables etc.

**Elements of Agro-Tourism:**

1. Farmer – In majority of the cases, farmers are less educated, less exposed and innocent. For a farmer, any outsider is a guest and is treated wholeheartedly without any commercial motive. Treating guests is pleasure for the villagers than pain. The farmer entertains the guest while entertaining himself in the process. He is not like an exploitative natured businessman which itself facilitate a clean tourism atmosphere.
2. Village – Villages, located far from the city lack urban facilities, but are blessed with natural resources. Investments are made by nature in the form of water bodies, fields, forest, mountains, deserts and islands. The community structure is more homogenous and treating guests is part of the culture rather than a professional activity leading to natural environment required for such form of tourism.
3. Agriculture – Rich resources in agriculture namely land, water and plants are unique from place to place bringing diversity and creating curiosity. Each field is unique which adds to the attraction of tourists. The way of cultivation and the products are great attraction to the urban population. Indigenous knowledge of rural people is a wealth, which adds to the novelty and the curiosity of urban population. Combination of farmer, village and agriculture creates a wonderful situation which provides unlimited satisfaction to the tourist especially from urban areas.

**Significance of study:**

- Problems in agriculture today – Huge investment and limited earnings due to human created barriers and natural calamities
- An opportunity to the marginal and small farmers to improve their
  - Economic upliftment
  - An additional source of income
  - Generation of employment
- Base for future research in the field of agro tourism

**Aim:**

To Study Socio-Economic development of farmers through agro tourism in Ahmednagar

**Research Objectives:**

The objectives of this research are as follows:

- To know the conditions of growth of agro tourism in Ahmednagar
- To find the importance and role of agro-tourism in the development of farmers to improve their socio-economic status
- To identify future opportunities of agro-tourism

**Hypothesis:**

1. The agro-tourism is an additional co-activity for the farmers. It provides additional income source and employment opportunity to the farmers and rural peoples. It gives new look for the agri-business.
2. There is a significant relationship between agro tourism and infrastructural development.
3. There is a significant relationship between agro tourism and services provided by the agro tourism centre.
4. There is a significant relationship between agro tourism and the satisfaction of the visitors.

**Limitations:**

- The study was limited to the agro tourism centers located in Ahmednagar
- Sample size was limited to 8 agro tourism operating farmers' and 100 tourists visiting agro tourism centers out of which researcher was able to meet 6 agro tourism operating farmers and 60 tourists visiting agro tourism centers. Thus the questionnaires were completely filled by the 6 farmers & 60 tourists included for the study.
- Time, Money and energy were the three major constraints.

**STUDY AREA:**

- The study was limited to the agro tourism centers located in Ahmednagar district
- Ahmednagar is the largest district in the Maharashtra state. The first sugar factory on cooperative basis was established in Ahmednagar district.
- Ahmednagar has great historical importance as it was the capital of Nizam Shah.
- Ahmednagar has famous Ahmednagar Fort situated on Land and monument like Farahbagh, Salabat Khan Tomb, etc.
- Ahmednagar has world famous pilgrimage city of Shirdi, Newasa, Shani Shinganapur, Meherabad, Anand dham, Siddhatek and many more.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Agritourism is a form of niche tourism that is considered as a growth industry in many parts of the world, including Australia, Canada, the United States, Srilanka, and the Philippines. (Wikipedia, Agritourism – evolution, 2012). Agritourism overlaps with ecotourism, geotourism, and culinary tourism. Other terms associated with Agritourism are "agritainment", "value added products," "farm direct marketing", and "sustainable agriculture".

Laurie S. Z. Greenberg (2006) noted about Agritourism business in U.S. that, Nature tourism and Agritourism are the two fastest growing segments of the tourism market in the U.S., with 30% growth expected in the period 1997-2007.

HyungsukChoo (2012) and Ilsson PA (2002) noted that overall, rural tourism, where Agritourism is a subset, experienced an annual growth rate of 6% in North America as well as Europe from 2002 to 2004. According to one nationwide study conducted by Barry JJ, Hellerstain D. in 2004, 62 million Americans visited farms one or more times in 2000, which corresponds to almost 30% of the population.

Dan Bernardo, Luc Valentin, and John Leatherman (2004) mentioned that, Agritourism and other forms of on-farm diversification have grown into an increasing requirement for financial stability in farm businesses across Western Europe. About one-third of all farm businesses in the United Kingdom are now engaged in non-traditional agricultural enterprises, and farmer involvement in Agritourism in France and Italy is even higher. Belinda Xarba, HidajetShehu (2011) noted importance of Agritourism development in European countries. Stating the need of Agritourism they point out that, Structural changes in economies are causing severe stress in many rural areas especially for those with a high dependence on agriculture.

As noted by Dr. S.M.P Senanayke, Rev. Dr.WijitapureWimalaratana (2005) and S.H. P. Malkanthi and j. K. Routry (2011) Agritourism sector of Sri Lanka is still in its initial stages.

The remarkable increase in the interest surrounding the concept of agro-tourism of other countries is influencing the development of Agritourism in Sri Lanka.

Tourism is a very significant contributor to the GDP of any country and is a crucial tool for employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable rural development. India basically being a rural economy, rural tourism and agri tourism hold an important place in facilitating development.

As per the census 2011 data, population of India is 1.21 billion. It means it has increased by 870 million since independence. India accounts for 17.5 % of the world's population, whereas it has an area of 3,287,240 sq. km i.e. only 2.4 % of the total surface area of the world. The agricultural land is getting divided and subdivided per generation which has increased the number of marginal farmers and low land holders (Agriculture Census Report 2015-16). Because of globalization and industrialization the existence of agriculture is threatening. This forces farmers to look for additional income via job or business so as to sustain their household income.

### Research methodology:

#### Data Collection:

The Researcher collected Primary data by administering separate questionnaires for farmers practicing agro tourism and the tourists visiting.

- Research design: Descriptive research
- Sample size: The total sample size was:
  - 1) Farmers / Owners of 6 agro tourism centers in Ahmednagar
  - 2) 60 tourists visiting at agro tourism centre

The secondary data was also collected to augment the study. Before the actual data collection the researcher collected introductory information from various research articles on Agro tourism available in books, journals, magazines and through internet.

#### Results and Discussions:

Findings of the data collected in the form of the questionnaire from the respondent farmers and the tourists visited the agro tourism centers. The questionnaire was properly filled in by conducting interviews of farmers running agro tourism centers and tourist visited.

#### A. Results of the respondents –Owners / Farmers of agro tourism centers

1. Respondent first heard and practiced Agro Tourism:

The researchers found that, all the respondent farmers and land owners were having very less knowledge and heard about the concept of Agro tourism for more than 5 years span of time. All have started their agro tourism centers in their lands as they found that this is one way they could survive in the agriculture and this will be one way to keep the earning going on.

## 2. Tourism related activities available in farm:

The agro tourism centers have provided facilities of varying nature. Most of them provide basic entertainment facilities, various games for the children to attract tourists. The same are included in the packages provided by the farm. This includes entry fee, welcome drink, breakfast, lunch, evening tea and all the entertainment facilities. Most of the packages are offered for one day from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Vishwakirti and Laxmiagri tourism centers also offer 24 hours packages at different rates for the travellers wish to stay overnight, to conduct conferences, small get together, meetings, etc. Two agro tourism centers provide agriculture education to tourists. Animal husbandry is also a part of activities for the tourists who are interested to actually do and learn the agricultural activities.

## 3. Manpower engaged in agro tourism activity at the farm:

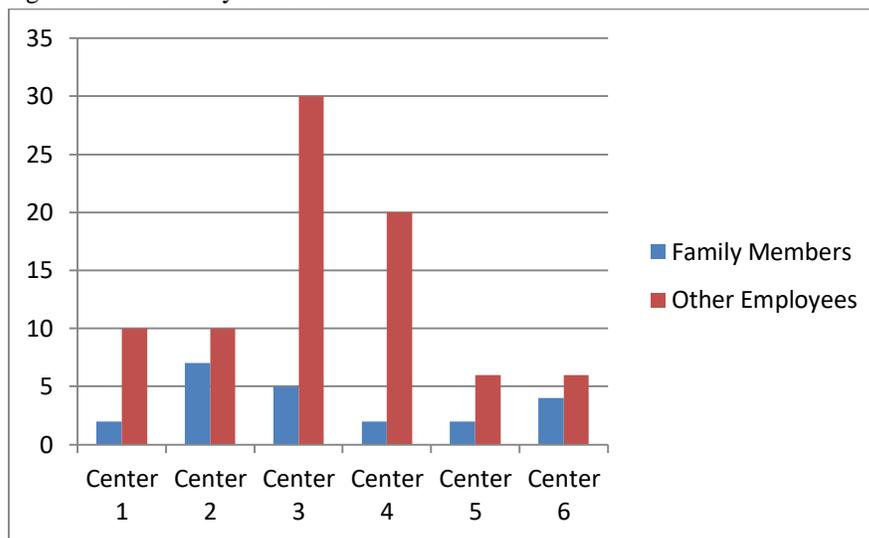


Fig.- Manpower engaged

From the above chart, it is crystal clear that, agro tourism is an opportunity to create employment for self and others to get additional source of income. It is a helping hand for the farmers who suffer losses from agricultural resources due to natural calamities and manmade barriers.

## 4. Expenses on salary to other employees (in Rs.)

Sr. No.	Respondent	No. of Employees	Salary given (Per Month per employee)	Total Expenses on salary
1	Vishwakirti Agri Tourism Center	10	6000/-	60000/-
2	Ranwara Sahal Kendra	10	5000/-	50000/-
3	Laxmi Agri Tourism Holiday Homes	30	7500/-	225000/-
4	Saiban Agro Tourism Center	20	7500/- to 9000/-	150000/- to 180000/-
5	Agatya Agri Tourism Center	6	5000/-	30000/-
6	Sundarbag Agri Tourism Center	6	6000/-	36000/-

Table 1. Expenses on salary to other employees

From above table 1, it clearly shows an agro tourism activity generates an amount of employment which definitely help many families to get definite income. Laxmi and Saiban agro tourism firms have majority of employees employed and paying good salaries to a member.

5. Monthly sales of agro tourism centers:

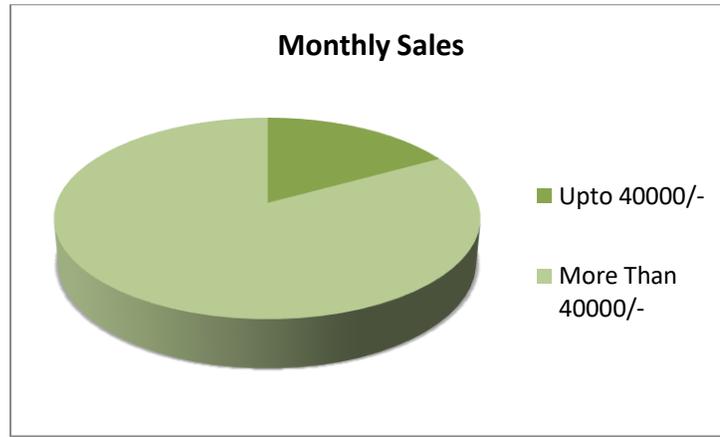


Fig.- Monthly sales

From the above chart, researcher find that almost 83.33 % of farmers drawn more than Rs. 40000/- sales from their agro tourism centers, which is quiet enough to get extra income.

6. Monthly net profit:

Sr. No.	Respondent	Net Profit (in Rs.)
1	Vishwakirti Agri Tourism Center	Up to 100000/-
2	Ranwara Sahal Kendra	30000/-
3	Laxmi Agri Tourism Holiday Homes	10000/-
4	Saiban Agro Tourism Center	10000/-
5	Agatya Agri Tourism Center	10000/-
6	Sundarbag Agri Tourism Center	20000/-

Table 2. Monthly net profit

Table 2. shows, the figures of monthly net profit a farmer makes through agro tourism activity. This clearly shows that after deducting all the expenses they could make out something to them, which is impossible to make from agricultural resources if the conditions are not in favour. The farmers even get less than they put into agriculture products.

7. Income drawn from agricultural resources before running agro tourism centre:-

Many farmers have not disclosed their earning from agricultural resources they were drawing. However all were agreed to the fact that they are getting good income from agro tourism center. A center even made more than 10 lakhs of sales yearly which was double the income drawn from agricultural resources.

From all the above responses recorded, the researchers have come to the result that more farmers should come into this business and start their own agro tourism centers to upgrade their life, creating employment to others and become an employer.

8. Drawing more value than market price to the products sold

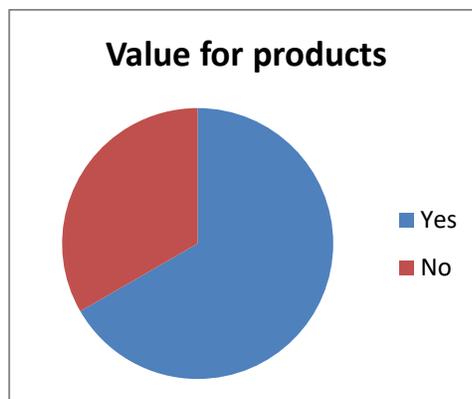


Fig. - More value for products

From above chart, researcher came to know that 66.67 % of agro tourism centers selling agricultural products earn better prices than market rates and that to at their own place, which reduces the costs of labor, transport, porter, etc. This definitely saves on these costs and gives better prices to the goods sold.

9. Promotional activities carried out to advertise farm tourism

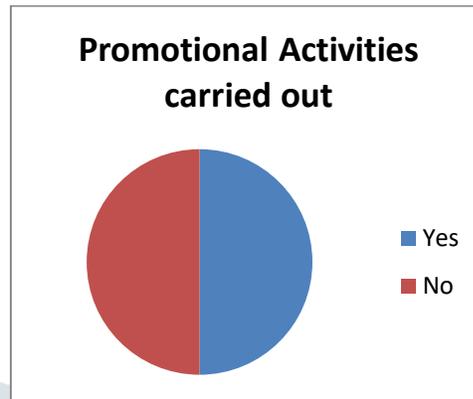


Fig. - Promotional activities

Chart shows that, only 50% of agro tourism centers have done promotional activities to market their places. This included hoardings, banners, posters, local TV and FM news channels, etc. Others were getting the tourists only through mouth publicity by the tourists who have been to their farms earlier. Most of them have repeat customers.

10. Support from Govt. and Government agencies:

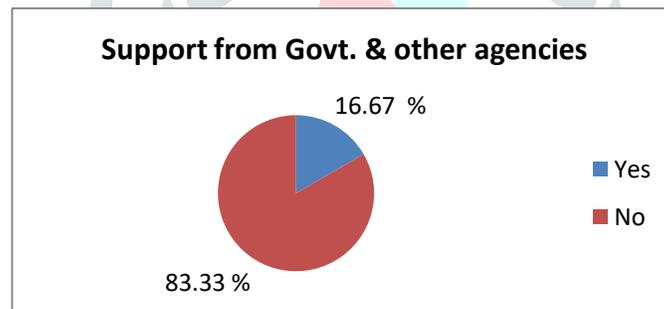


Fig. - Support from Govt. and Government agencies

The result of the chart depicts that, a majority of respondents believed that there is no support from the government and other agencies to agro tourism in Maharashtra, 83.33% of the respondents are of the above opinion. Only 16.66 % respondents believed that there is a support by the Government that to for permissions and licenses issued to the agro tourism centers.

However the Government of Maharashtra and the Tourism department should work together to promote agro tourism and attract most of the farmers to this activity in order to make agro tourism very popular with all good facilities and services to give the farmers a better quality of life and to enrich rural tourism through agro tourism activity.

**B. Results of the respondents – Tourists visiting agro tourism centers**

1. Tourists information about the concept of Agro-tourism

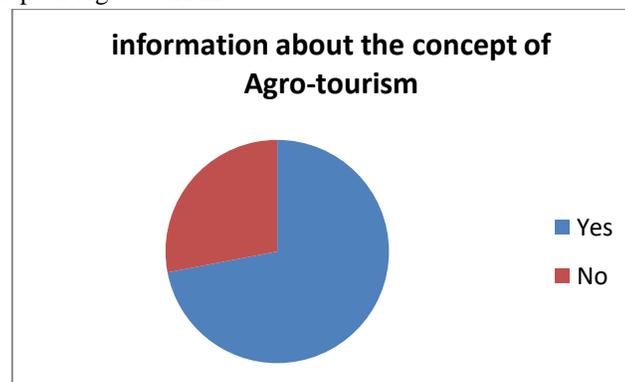


Fig. - Tourists information

Above chart shows that, 71.66 % of tourists knows the concept of agro tourism. This represent the awareness of the people towards agro tourism as a source of their enjoyment, to experience rural tourism far away from their daily routine. Only 28.34 % of respondents not knowing agro tourism thoroughly as they are less interested in this subject.

2. The tourists will visit such site in future?

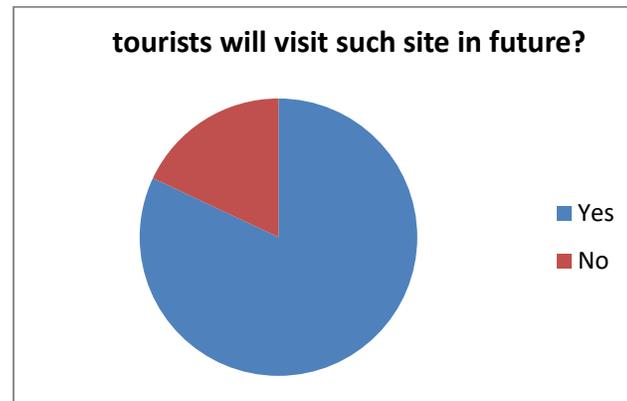


Fig.- tourists will visit such site in future?

The above chart shows that, there is tremendous opportunity for the agro tourism to grow as 81.66 % of tourists shown positive interest for visiting an agro tourism sites in future course of life. This represents the scope of agro tourism to flourish more and more day by day.

3. Why people visit an agro-tourism activity:

Sr. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
1	Urban Pressures	06	10
2	Tensions	06	10
3	Utilize holiday	25	41.66
4	Need to be close to nature	10	16.66
5	Adventure	03	5
6	Any other	10	16.66
	Total	60	100

Table 3. Why people visit an agro-tourism activity

Table 3 shows, the reasons for attending agro tourism activity by the tourists. 41.66 % tourists have been to an agro tourism sites to utilize their holidays with their family and friends. As they get time to spend with their family. Instead of TV shows, mobiles and other entertainment in home tourist give preference for outing. 16.66% people wanted to be close to the nature, to get relaxed and refresh themselves in the presence of natural surroundings which are readily available at the agro tourism centers. 10% people want to come out of their daily life pressures as job, assignments, targets, completions, etc. 5% people would like to go for adventure sites.

## 4. Tourists enjoy being in the agro-tourism activities:

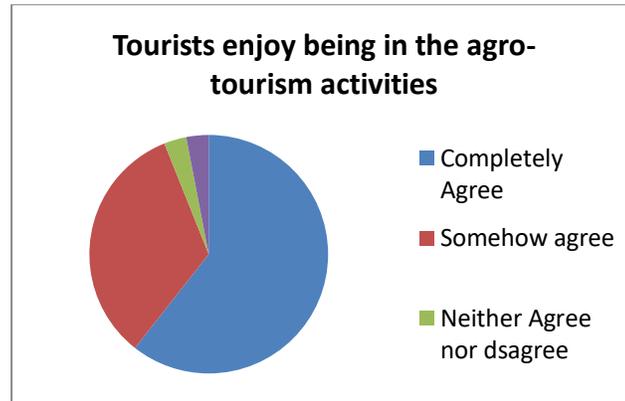


Fig.- Tourists enjoy being in the agro-tourism activities

Above chart shows that 60% tourists enjoy at agro tourism centers, as they are close to nature, see birds and animals in farm, see the rural culture, taste the rural food and drinks, participate actually in agricultural works, play rural games, etc which create interest among tourists in agro tourism. More than 33% visitors are also accepting the above things.

## 5. Response for the services in the agro-tourism activities:

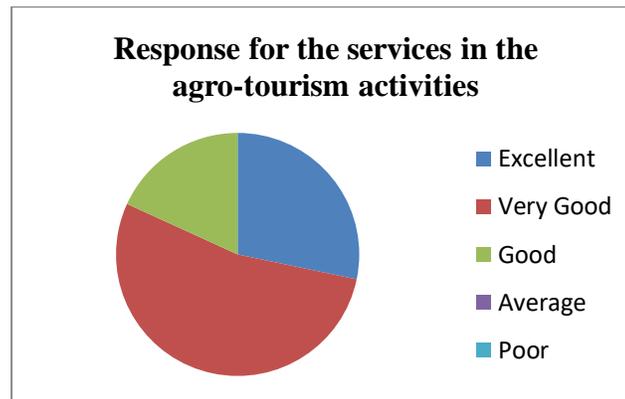


Fig.- Response for the services in the agro-tourism activities

Above chart shows that, more than 50 % of visitors are satisfied with the services in the agro tourism centers which helped them to enjoy their holidays and fulfill their purpose of visit. The services of food, accommodation, stay, activities at the farm place plays an important role in increasing the level of satisfaction of visitors. 28.33 % visitors have rated these services as excellent and are fully satisfied. These visitors are the regular visitors of agro tourism site.

## 6. Response for stay in agro-tourism center

Sr. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
1	One day	51	85
2	Two days	08	13.33
3	More than two days	01	1.66
	Total	60	100

Table 4: Response for stay in agro-tourism center

The table 4 shows that, the visitors have enjoyed their holidays at farms for one day. 85% visitors have visited an agro tourism sites for one day, which is sufficient for them to get refreshed and spend time with family. 13.33% visitors have been to the farms for 2 days with overnight stays.

### 7. Response for accompanying with:

Researcher found that 46.66 % visitors had visited ATC's with their family, followed by individuals and group. The size of family members included 1 - 2 adults and 1 - 2 children. The visitors with their friends visited were in a group of 3 - 10 numbers. While there were few couples also visited in a number of 1 - 2.

### 8. Total expenditure of the day / stay:

The agro tourism centers have packages offered to the visitors. One day package includes entry fee, welcome drinks, breakfast and /or lunch, various activities at the farms as rides, boating, swimming, entertainments, etc. The basic charges for these facilities were ranging on an average price from Rs. 500/- to Rs. 600/- for adults and Rs. 400/- to Rs. 500/- for the children of between ages of 4 years to 12 years, below 4 years are free.

Thus on an average a family of 2 adults and 2 children were spending Rs. 500/- to 2000/-. The family staying in the farms for 2 days or overnight stays need to pay minimum charge of Rs. 2000/- to 4000/- for the entire stay, which provides an option for a family to enjoy together.

9. Experience of the tourists at the farm: Two third of visitors had great experience at the agro tourism sites, which made their purpose of visiting the sites and they will be sharing the experiences with friends & colleagues. This shows that there is a strong demand among people for such kind of places. 97% tourists also would like to visit the agro tourism places again and again in future as it is the best way to come together with family and friends to get refreshed and relaxed.

## III. HYPOTHESIS TESTING:

### Hypothesis –

1. The agro-tourism is an additional co-activity for the farmers. It provides additional income source and employment opportunity to the farmers and rural peoples. It gives new look for the agri-business.
2. There is a significant relationship between agro tourism and infrastructural development.
3. There is a significant relationship between agro tourism and services provided by the agro tourism centre.
4. There is a significant relationship between agro tourism and the satisfaction of the visitors.

Table 1. A Chi- square test (type of non-parametric hypothesis test) is used, to determine the significant relationship between agro tourism and infrastructural development, service provided as well as satisfaction of the visitors.

The formula for the chi-square statistic used in the chi square test is:

$$x^2 = \sum (O - E)^2 / E$$

Step 1: To find value of Chi square by preparing table of observed and expected values as follows:

Observed Value (O)	Expected Value (E)	O - E	(O - E) <sup>2</sup>	(O - E) <sup>2</sup> / E
17	17.14	-0.14	0.0196	0.0011
32	17.14	14.86	220.8196	12.88
11	17.14	-6.14	37.6996	2.19
31	17.14	13.86	192.0996	11.2076
13	17.14	-4.14	17.1396	0.999
15	17.14	-2.14	4.5796	0.267
01	17.14	-16.14	260.4996	15.1983
120	119.98	0.02	732.8572	42.743

Table: Hypothesis Test - Chi Square Test

From the above table, we find the value of Chi square.  $x^2 = 42.783$

Step 2: Level of Significance 0.05% ,

Step 3: Degree of Freedom

$$= n-1$$

$$= 7-1$$

$$= 8$$

Step 4: The critical value is 15.51

From the above table 4.3.1 it is inferred that after applying the chi-square test for Hypothesis Testing, the calculated value is 42.743 which is more than the Chi- square Table value which is 15.51, this concludes that there is significant relationship between agro tourism and infrastructural development, service provided as well as satisfaction of the visitors.

#### **SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

During research work researcher collected the various facts and analysed them and findings were outlined. There are few suggestions researcher would like to recommend:

##### **For the Farmers:**

Agro-Tourism is a one of the business activity. So, farmers must have commercial mind and some marketing techniques for the success. For the better success in the agro-tourism farmers should follow the following things:

- Farmers should start agro tourism centers to develop their economic, social and overall growth
- Create all the required facilities if possible to attract maximum tourists to the centers.
- Understand the customer's wants and their expectations and serve accordingly.
- Shall provide agriculture education and actual working in their farms.
- Shall do the marketing on a large scale as there are very less promotion done by the centers.
- Should have up- to-date website and information included, as most of the tourists first check the sites and then decide to visit the spot or not
- Develop contacts with the schools, colleges, NGOs, clubs, unions, organisations etc.
- Train their staff or family members for reception and hospitality
- Take visitors feedback and comments about the service and suggestions to more development and modification

##### **For the tourists:**

- Should visit agro tourism centers at their convenience to the agro tourism centers
- Help farmers to promote their agro tourism centers through word of mouth as well as social media, this act will definitely help others to know about it and people may think to visit such centers

##### **For the Government and Tourism Development Corporation of Maharashtra:**

- The researcher suggests that Government should support Individual farmers with financial schemes to develop their agro tourism centers including safety and security, accessibility to agro tourism centers, good infrastructural facilities, etc.
- Tourism Department of Maharashtra should set up their unit or office at Ahmednagar for farmers to connect them easily for any help they want
- Government should come up with some sort of marketing and promotional activities to promote agro tourism nationally in India, as this is the neglected area by the government

#### **IV. CONCLUSION:**

##### **Agro-Tourism Centers:**

Agro-Tourism has the potential to change the economic face of traditional agriculture. The benefits of agro-tourism development are many folds. It would bring many direct and indirect benefits to the farmers and rural people. Some of the benefits are following:-

##### **Benefits to farmers:**

- **Economic Development:** Agro tourism generates additional income source for the farmers and their family to protect against income fluctuation.
- **Opportunities:** Agro tourism generates employment opportunities to farmers family members and others
- **Social Development:** It creates social respect in the society thus social development of farmers is achieved
- **Improved life style:** Agro tourism helps to improve the quality of life of a farmer: Farmers can improve their standard of living due to the contacts with urban peoples.
- **Sell Agri Produce:** Agro tourism is good opportunity to sell agriculture produce to the visitors and earn more value than market value
- **Cultural transformation:** Agro tourism helps in cultural transformation between urban and rural peoples including social moral values
- **Conservation and enhancements of natural environment:** Agro tourism helps in conservation and enhancements of natural environment in the rural areas

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