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Viksit Bharat 2047 and Agri-Tourism: An Economic Analysis of Rural Employment and Income Generation in Maharashtra

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Abstract

Viksit Bharat 2047 aims to make India a developed, inclusive economy. Creating jobs and transforming the rural economy are crucial elements of this vision. Agri-tourism has become a significant conduit between agriculture and the service sector in Maharashtra, offering chances for local employment, rural entrepreneurship, and income diversification. The economic potential of agritourism in Maharashtra is examined in this study, with a focus on employment and revenue generation in rural areas. The Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024, government publications, tourism statistics, the Maharashtra Economic Survey, and pertinent policy documents are the sources of secondary data used in this study. In 2024, Maharashtra registered 37.05 lakh foreign visitors and 1,893.7 lakh domestic visitors, demonstrating the state's robust tourism demand. The Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024 prioritises rural and agro-tourism while envisioning about 18 lakh direct and indirect employment opportunities and ₹1 lakh crore in private investment over ten years. The paper makes the case that agritourism may increase farm income, create local jobs, and provide rural women and youth with opportunities. However, infrastructure, expertise, digital marketing, funding, and trustworthy industry-specific data continue to be significant obstacles. The study concludes that Viksit Bharat 2047's broader goals and rural economic development can be significantly aided by an agri-tourism model that is market-oriented, skill-based, and community-linked.

Keywords: *Viksit Bharat 2047, Agri-Tourism, Rural Employment, Rural Income, Maharashtra, Rural Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Development.*

Introduction

India's goal of becoming a developed country by 2047 calls for inclusive, employment-focused, and geographically balanced economic growth. Because a sizable portion of the population still depends either directly or indirectly on agriculture, rural India plays a crucial role in this change. However, relying solely on agriculture could not give all rural people access to sufficient

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and reliable sources of income. As a result, diversification of rural economic activity has grown in significance.

One such option is agri-tourism. By giving tourists the chance to experience farming, rural culture, regional cuisine, customs, and scenic landscapes, it unites agriculture and tourism. This gives farmers a chance to make money from agricultural resources other than selling their produce. It can generate jobs in the hospitality industry, transportation, food processing, local goods, and other auxiliary services for rural towns.

Maharashtra's varied agricultural regions, rich cultural legacy, rural scenery, and thriving tourism industry make it a promising destination for agri-tourism. Additionally, rural and agro-tourism have been acknowledged as significant sectors for tourism development in the state's tourism policy. The Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024 aims to generate over 18 lakh direct and indirect jobs and draw in about ₹1 lakh crore in private tourist investment over ten years. These are not job estimates particular to agritourism; rather, they represent targets for the tourism sector as a whole.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the economic role of agri-tourism in Maharashtra.
2. To analyse its contribution to rural employment generation.
3. To assess the potential of agri-tourism for supplementary rural income.
4. To identify opportunities and challenges of agri-tourism towards Viksit Bharat 2047.

Research Methodology

Based on secondary data, the study is analytical and descriptive in character. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Economic Survey of Maharashtra 2025–2026, Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024 as amended in 2025, Maharashtra Tourism Department, and NITI Aayog publications are the sources of the data and information gathered. The study examines the connection between employment, income diversification, rural entrepreneurship, and tourism growth using basic trend analysis and qualitative economic interpretation. The lack of an official, regularly updated state-level statistical series that expressly measures employment and income created by agritourism is one of the study's limitations.

Tourism Potential of Maharashtra

Maharashtra has a strong and diversified tourism economy. Its tourism resources include historical monuments, forts, religious destinations, beaches, wildlife, hill stations, cultural

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attractions and rural landscapes. The growth of tourism provides a broader market within which niche sectors such as agri-tourism can develop.

Table 1: Tourist Visits in Maharashtra (Lakh)

Year	Domestic Tourist Visits	Foreign Tourist Visits
2022	1,113.0	15.10
2023	1,613.6	33.80
2024	1,893.7	37.05

Source: Economic Survey of Maharashtra 2025–26

Ministry of Tourism

The table shows that Maharashtra's tourism industry has significantly recovered and grown. From 1,113.0 lakh in 2022 to 1,893.7 lakh in 2024, domestic tourist visits increased by around 70.2%. During that time, the number of foreign visitors rose from 15.10 lakh to 37.05 lakh. This expansion suggests that there is a sizable potential tourism market. However, ensuring that a larger share of tourism-related spending reaches small businesses and rural farmers is an economic problem. By integrating visitors straight into rural production and consumption processes, agri-tourism can create this kind of connection.

Agri-Tourism and Rural Economic Diversification

The potential of agri-tourism to create value from resources already present in rural regions is what gives it its economic relevance. A tourism product may include elements of agricultural land, farm produce, traditional food, animals, local culture, and rural scenery. Agricultural output is the main source of revenue for a farmer who relies solely on crop sales. The same farm may be able to make extra money through agri-tourism through farm tours, lodging, local cuisine, leisure activities, direct sales of agricultural goods, and cultural experiences. Therefore, a move from a single-source agricultural income model to a diversified rural income model is represented by agri-tourism. In an environment where farmers must contend with output risks, price swings, and seasonal revenue fluctuations, this diversity is especially important.

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Agri-Tourism and Employment Generation

The Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024 aims to create about 18 lakh direct and indirect jobs in the tourism sector over ten years. The policy also identifies rural and agro-tourism as sectors that require development and investment. Direct employment may arise in hospitality, cooking, guiding, farm activities, and visitor management. Indirect employment may emerge through local transport, food supply, handicrafts, agricultural product sales, and other services. The employment effect is strengthened when agri-tourism centres are connected to nearby villages.

Agri-Tourism and Rural Income Generation

The ability to create additional revenue without totally giving up agricultural production is the main economic benefit of agri-tourism. Direct sales of farm goods to tourists can lessen reliance on middlemen. While traditional goods and handicrafts can increase household income, local cuisine can offer value. Another form of income is provided by lodging and leisure services.

The economic relationship may therefore be represented as:

Agriculture → Agri-Tourism → Tourist Expenditure → Local Products and Services → Additional Income → Employment → Rural Economic Growth

This process can increase the economic value of agricultural assets and strengthen local economic linkages.

Role of Rural Youth and Women

Young people from rural areas have the potential to be a valuable human resource base for agritourism. Educated rural youth can work in digital marketing, online booking, photography, social media promotion, hospitality management, and tourism guiding. By offering locally based entrepreneurial opportunities, this can provide an alternative to migration. Through regional cuisine, food processing, handicrafts, farm products, lodging, and self-help group businesses, women can also play a significant role in agri-tourism. Agri-tourism can support women's economic engagement and household income diversification when these activities bring in money for rural households.

Thus, agri-tourism can create a transition from rural youth as employment seekers to rural entrepreneurs, while providing women with opportunities to convert traditional household skills into marketable economic activities.

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Policy Support for Agri-Tourism in Maharashtra

Maharashtra has developed a specific policy environment for agri-tourism and rural tourism. The Directorate of Tourism currently lists Agri Tourism Policy and Rural Tourism among its tourism policy initiatives. Attracting private investment, creating trained human resources, enhancing tourist infrastructure, and promoting specialised tourism experiences are all priorities of the revised Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024. It expressly acknowledges the necessity for qualified personnel throughout the tourism value chain. This policy direction is crucial since the quality of the tourism experience is just as critical to the long-term success of agri-tourism as the availability of farms.

Challenges

Maharashtra's agri-tourism industry faces a number of obstacles despite its potential. The sector's expansion may be hampered by inadequate rural infrastructure, a lack of professional hospitality skills, poor digital marketing, limited financial access, and a lack of cooperation between tourism, agriculture, and rural development organisations. Another issue is seasonality. Demand from tourists may change based on holidays, weather, and agricultural seasons. Without institutional backing, small farmers may also find it challenging to make investments in housing, sanitation, safety, and other amenities. The data gap is another significant issue. There is no official data system that is sufficiently thorough and updated on a regular basis to track agri-tourism businesses, visitor trips, employment, and revenue produced by the industry. For evidence-based policy, this database must be strengthened.

Findings

Maharashtra has a robust tourism demand base and a conducive legislative environment for the growth of agri-tourism, according to the report. The post-pandemic period has seen a large increase in tourist arrivals, opening up potential for tourism product diversification. The state's Tourism Policy 2024 acknowledges rural and agrotourism as crucial areas of development and offers an institutional framework for investment and job creation.

Maharashtra Tourism

The study further finds that the economic importance of agri-tourism lies not simply in attracting tourists but in retaining tourism expenditure within rural communities. The strongest

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potential exists when agri-tourism centres are connected with local farmers, women, self-help groups, youth entrepreneurs, artisans and local service providers.

Suggestions

Instead of concentrating just on individual farm tourism units, the growth of agri-tourism should shift toward a cluster-based and market-linked paradigm. Agri-tourism clusters at the district level might incorporate farms, regional cuisine, handicrafts, cultural events, and neighbouring tourist destinations. Additionally, a specific state-level agri-tourism database should be created to track visitor numbers, employment, turnover, women's involvement, and revenue. This would make it possible for policymakers to evaluate the sector's true economic impact. More focus should be placed on skill development, especially in the areas of hospitality, food safety, digital marketing, customer service, and finance. Women's self-help groups can be incorporated into food, handicraft, and local product value chains, and rural adolescents can be trained as digital and tourism entrepreneurs. Market access might be greatly enhanced by the development of a single digital platform that links agritourism facilities, online reservations, regional goods, travel, and visitor experiences.

Viksit Bharat 2047 and Agri-Tourism

- The relevance of agri-tourism to Viksit Bharat 2047 can be understood through the process of rural economic transformation. Viksit Bharat requires not only expansion of large urban industries but also productive and diversified rural economies.
- Agri-tourism can contribute by creating additional value from agricultural resources, encouraging entrepreneurship and retaining expenditure within rural communities. It can also connect agriculture with the service economy and create new opportunities for youth and women.

The desired development pathway can therefore be expressed as:

Agricultural Resources → Agri-Tourism → Income Diversification → Employment → Rural Entrepreneurship → Local Economic Development → Inclusive Growth → Viksit Bharat 2047.

This makes agri-tourism a potential bridge between agricultural development and the service-led rural economy.

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Conclusion

- A rural development plan that generates sustainable local economic possibilities, diverse income, and productive employment is necessary for Viksit Bharat 2047. Agri-tourism has the potential to play a significant role in this approach in Maharashtra.
- A suitable foundation is provided by the state's sizable tourism market, varied agricultural resources, and encouraging tourism policies. Strong market potential is indicated by the notable rise in tourist visits between 2022 and 2024, and the Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024 offers a more comprehensive institutional framework for employment, investment, and rural tourism development.
- However, the quantity of tourist destinations should not be the sole indicator of the future of agritourism. Increased farm income, high-quality employment, the development of local businesses, women's involvement, and the percentage of tourist spending kept in rural areas should all be used to gauge its true economic impact.
- Agri-tourism can be transformed into a more robust rural economic ecosystem by a concerted effort involving the Tourism Department, Agriculture Department, local governments, financial institutions, educational institutions, and rural businesses.
- Agri-tourism therefore has the potential to move beyond being a supplementary tourism activity and emerge as an instrument of rural economic diversification, employment generation and inclusive growth in Maharashtra's journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047.

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