

### Full Length Research Paper

## AGRO-TOURISM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT: AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR RURAL FARMERS, A STUDY OF MOBA LOCAL GOVERNMENT, EKITI STATE.

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**ABSTRACTS:** Rural development is defined as improving living standard of the masses of the low income population residing in rural areas and making the processes of their development self sustained (Lele 1979). It is also a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people in the rural area. Tourism is conceptualized as business of providing travel, accommodation, and food entertainment for people who are on travel, tour, trade. etc. (Mohammed 2007). Tourism has great capacity to generate large scale employment and additional income sources to the skilled and unskilled. Today some new areas of tourism have emerged like agro- tourism in which this unit of tourism, if promoted would bring many direct and indirect benefits to the people in rural areas. It is a travel that combines agricultural or rural setting with products of agricultural operations all within tourism experience. (Indiastat.com 2009). According to Kumbhar (2009) Agro-tourism has the potential to change the economic face of traditional agriculture. Some of these benefits are: Employment opportunities to the farmers including the family members and youth, Additional income source for the farmers to protect against income fluctuation, Cultural transformation between urban and rural people, Improvement of standard of living of rural farmers, Urban awareness of the rural life and their agricultural activities. The method used for data collection observation and the use of related material. It is found out that Moba Local Government has great potentials for the development of agro-tourism because of natural endowment and different types of agricultural products as well as variety of rural traditions, festivals. It was also gathered that if requirement for the take of agro-tourism could be met it will go a long way in meeting and improving the living standard of farmers in rural populace.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Agro-tourism, Opportunity Rural development.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Rural development has been defined in various ways to mirror the circumstances and the objectives of deferent authors. Lele (1979) defined rural development as improving living standard of the mass of the low income population residing in rural areas and making the processes of their development self sustaining. According to her, this has three important features with substantial implications for how rural development programs are designed and implemented namely: Improvement of the living standard of the subsistence population, this involves mobilization and allocation of resources to a desirable effect.

Resources be allocated to low income regions and classes for the products and social services to actually reach them. In summary rural development means a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people in the rural area. Williams (1985) opined that one element of rural development is increased opportunity arising from changes in social and economic structures, institutions, relationships and processes. However this could be achieved through the diversification of economy to tourism sector. Tourism in this sphere could be conceptualized as business of providing travel, accommodation, and food entertainment for people who are on travel, tour, trade. etc. (Mohammed 2007). It is well recognized as an engine of growth in the various economies in the World. Several countries have transformed their economies by developing their tourism potentials. Tourism has great capacity to generate large scale employment and additional income sources to the skilled and unskilled. Today some new areas of tourism have emerged like agro- tourism in which this unit of tourism, if promoted would bring many direct and indirect benefits to the people in rural areas. It is an innovative agricultural activity related to tourism and agriculture. It has a great capacity to create additional source of income and employment opportunities to farmers. (Kumbhar 2009).This study however would want to study agro-tourism development in respect of Moba Local Government.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The main objectives of this paper are:

- ✓ To examined the significance of agro-tourism development in Moba Local Government
- ✓ Design a suitable framework for the agro- tourism centers

### 315. J. Agric. Res Nat Resources

- ✓ To identify likely problems of agro-tourism development in the Local Government and proffer possible solutions to the problems.

#### **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The scope of this study is limited to examine the benefits of agro-tourism and its applicability to Moba Local Government area of Ekiti state. The study also focuses on the benefits and problems of its applicability in the study area as well as the framework regarding its development.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The method used to gather information on this study is through secondary data. The data has been furnished from the related article, research papers, and reports. Data was also collected from the websites.

#### **CONCEPT OF AGRO-TOURISM AND ITS BENEFITS**

Agro-tourism is a farm based business that is open to the public.[ Indiasstat.com] As agro-tourism destination generally offer things to see, things to do and produce or gift to buy and open to the public. It is a travel that combines agricultural or rural setting with products of agricultural operations all within tourism experience. (Indiastat.com 2009). Agri-business activity when native farmers or person of the area offers tours to their agriculture farm to allow a person or tourist to view them growing, harvesting and processing locally grown foods, such as cocoa , kola nut, cassava and yam plantation or any agricultural produce the person would not have encountered in their cities or home countries. Often the farmers would produce a home-stay opportunity and education. It is a way of sustaining tourism development and multi- activity in the rural areas through which the visitor has the opportunity to get aware with agricultural area, agricultural occupations, local products, traditional food and the daily life of the rural people as well ad the cultural elements and traditions. These activities bring visitors closer to nature and rural activities in which they can participate, be entertained and feel the pleasure of touring.

According to Kumbhar (2009) Agro-tourism has the potential to change the economic face of traditional agriculture. The benefits of agro-tourism development are manifold. It would bring many direct and indirect benefits to the farmers and rural people. Some of these benefits are:

- ✓ Employment opportunities to the farmers including the family members and youth.
- ✓ Additional income source for the farmers to protect against income fluctuation.
- ✓ Cultural transformation between urban and rural people.
- ✓ Improvement of standard of living of rural farmers.
- ✓ Urban awareness of the rural life and their agricultural activities.

According to Wicks (2003) It is very likely that agro-tourism development in rural area can be successfully integrated into local economies and rural lifestyle without great destruction. It is critical to the economic health of rural community and the sustainability of family farms (<http://www.ibrc.indiana.edu/IBR/2006/fall/article3.html>).

## **LOCATION AND REQUIREMENTS OF AGRO-TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

The location of agro-tourism centre is very important for its success. Its location must be easily accessible with natural background which urban tourists are found interesting. The centre must have historical relevance and where tourist used to visit. Kumbha (2009) identify some requirements for the agro-tourism center which include the following:

### **Infrastructure**

- ✓ Farmhouses, which has the rural look and feel comfortable along with minimum required facilities
- ✓ Rich resources in agriculture namely water and plants at the place
- ✓ Cooking equipments
- ✓ Emergency medical cares with first-aid boxes
- ✓ The well or lake or swimming
- ✓ Telephone facility
- ✓ Transport facilities
- ✓ Introduction of rural games
- ✓ Security
- ✓ Local music and dances.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS**

Agriculture business is becoming more unsecured and unreliable in Moba Local Government due to the rural urban migration and sad product prices. Many families cannot afford this situation and its indebtedness hence there is need for starting any

### 317. J. Agric. Res Nat Resources

allied agricultural business to support their farming and create allied income sources from farms.

#### **AGRO-TOURISM POTENTIALS IN MOBA LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Moba local government consist of towns and villages that are located on undulated land surface with the upland zone rising over 1105sq. Moba land is physically located north west part of Ekiti state. Moba local government enjoys tropical climate with two distinct seasons. These are raining seasons which covers the period of March, October and dry season, which predominate in the month of November to mid-march. The temperature ranges between 21<sup>o</sup>c to 280<sup>o</sup>c with high humidity. The month of December is usually cold due to the prevalence of dry hamattan. The population according to 1991 census was put at 101,744. Moba local government area are purely an an agrigrarian economy with about 75% the population engage in faming activities. The main cash crops are cocoa, kola nut, oil palm, and cashew. The major food crops are yam, cassava, maize, plantain, banana and sugar cane. However people in Moba also involve in local craft works such as blacksmithing, bakery, mat-making and weaving.

The following industries are noticed in Moba Local Government, which are;

Ikun Diary Farm

Saw Malling Industry in Otun

Cassava processing industry Osun Ekiti

Gaari Processing Industry in Otun Ekiti

#### **TOURIST ATTRACTONS IN MOBA LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

There are a numbers of tourist centers in Moba Local Government like: Ero-Dam, Oore Monumental Palace, Eyemojo Grove at Osan Ekiti, Egi Hill at Igogo Ekiti and Egungun [masquerade] festival.

#### **SOCIAL AMENITIES AND SERVICES**

A modern digital telephone exchange of the Nigeria Telecommunication Limited [NITEL] is under construction beside satellite mobile phones being used the Local Government. Moba local Government is connected with regular water supply through the water corporation of Ekiti state with regular power supply.

## **PROBLEMS OF AGRO-TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN MOBA LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Moba Local Government has a greater potential of the development of the agro-tourism centers due to the good national climatic conditions but there are some problems in the process of agro-tourism development in Local Government. The major challenges and problems are;

Lack of perfect knowledge of agro-tourism

Probable communication skill and lack of commercial approach of the rural farmers

Lack of capital to develop basic the infrastructure at the agro-tourist sites.

Lack of credit facilities for the rural farmers.

## **SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS OF AGRO-TOURISM IN MOBA LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

- ✓ Wide publicity about the centers is required
- ✓ Development of contact with institutions like schools, clubs, unions, organizations for awareness.
- ✓ Identify the needs of visitors in a way of meeting their needs
- ✓ Accommodation should be provided with Local resources for entertainment.
- ✓ Development of good relationship with the tourists

Local authority should give loan to would be investors.

Charges must not be high accommodation and facilities used.

## **CONCLUSION**

Moba Local Government has great potentials for the development of agro-tourism because of natural endowment and different types of agricultural products as well as variety of rural traditions, festivals. Since more than 45 percent of population live in urban cities and would want to enjoy rural life and know much about the rural life, it is a good opportunity to develop agro-tourism business in the area provided the problems above could be solved for the betterment of rural economic and living standard of rural farmers.

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