

Horticulture Policy of Government Fostered Agritourism Development in Ratnagiri District M.S., India

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Abstract

India adopted the new economic reforms such as liberalization and globalization in 1991. The establishment of World Trade Organization in 1995 and economic liberalization led to the structural changes in the agriculture sector which opened up agricultural trade to the international competition by exploiting competitiveness of comparative territorial advantage. This has been reflected in the National Agriculture Policy of India. Government identified the significance as well as potential of export oriented horticulture products and introduced horticulture development policy. The Government of India also set up National Horticulture Board in 1984 to promote horticulture development.

On this background, the State Government of Maharashtra took some concrete steps to harness the comparative territorial advantage and established separate department for Horticulture development in 1980-81 and introduced in 1990-91, Employment Guarantee scheme linked Horticulture Development policy has been implemented in Maharashtra state which introduced high value crops, tried to conserve natural resources, poverty alleviation, decrease non cultivable land, provide food security for the farm households.

The Government of Maharashtra had identified the potential of Ratnagiri district and declared this district as "Horticulture District" in 1990. The paper attempts to study how horticulture development policies have fostered horticulture based agritourism in economically backward Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra state. Agritourism is the act of visiting working farm for recreation and educational purpose. Western countries have successfully adopted agritourism as the strategy to curb rural-urban migration, to alleviate rural poverty by creating off farm employment. Generally it is practiced by the farm households located at disadvantaged regions to supplement their income. The study concludes that horticulture based agritourism development has assisted to fulfill the goals of government.

KEYWORDS: Ratnagiri district, Horticulture, Agritourism

Introduction

India adopted the new economic reforms such as liberalization and globalization in 1991. Further establishment of World Trade Organization in 1995 and economic liberalization brought structural changes in the agriculture sector and opened up agricultural trade to the international competition. These changes are well reflected in the National Agriculture Policy of India. The Government of India identified significance of export oriented horticulture products and set up National Horticulture Board in 1984 to promote horticulture development with introduction of horticulture development policy.

On this background, the State Government of Maharashtra took concrete steps to harness the comparative territorial advantage and established separate department for Horticulture development in 1980-81. In 1990-91, government introduced Employment Guarantee scheme linked Horticulture Development policy in Maharashtra state; under which 100 percent subsidy was sanctioned for plantation of horticulture. It emphasized on plantation of horticulture by introduction of high value crops, conservation of natural resources, poverty alleviation, and decrease of fallow and non cultivable land, and provided food security and nutrition supply for farm households. As a result, Nagpur district became famous for oranges, Nashik for grapes, Jalgaon district for banana, Thane for Chikoo plantations, Sindhudurg district for Cashew nuts and Ratnagiri district for Alphonso mangoes.

1.2. Objective of the Study

- To study the impact of horticulture development policies of government in promotion of agritourism development in the Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra state.

1.3. Rational of the Study

“Agritourism” is the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operation for enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation. Tourists enjoy bullock cart ride, plucking fruits, buying value added products. It provides an opportunity to earn additional income to the farm households by offering bed and breakfast, farm stay, farm tour and farm visits to the urban tourists. Konkan region of Maharashtra State is known as fruit bowl due to its peculiar agro climatic conditions.

The paper attempts to study how horticulture development policies of government impacted the agritourism development in Ratnagiri district of Konkan from Maharashtra state of India.

1.4. Research Methodology

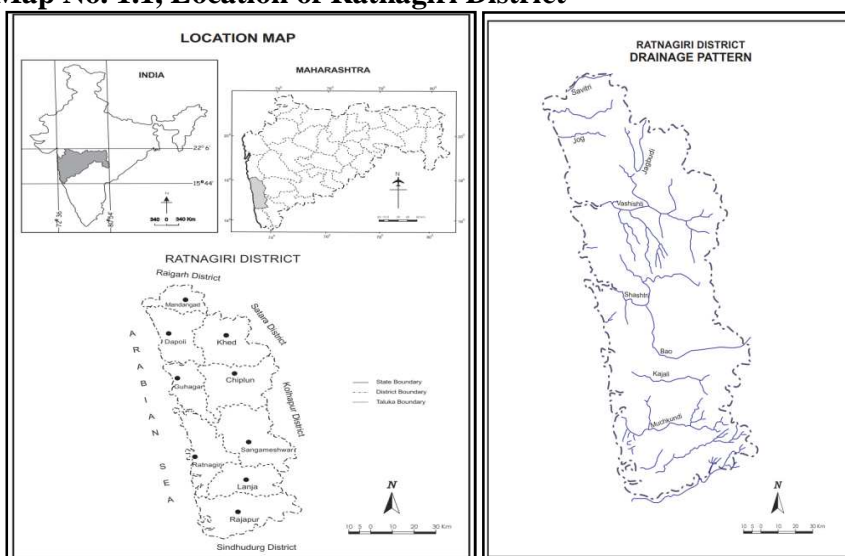
The study employs primary data. The study uses field survey method by employing the close ended questionnaire as a tool. Agritourism is still in the nascent stage in the study region and there is no readily available list of the agritourism centres from the district. Hence purposive snowball method was used to reach to the 48 agritourism centres from the study region.

The study also furnishes the secondary data by using books, online journals, Ph D thesis, government reports, Population census, Agricultural census, District Statistical Abstract, Ratnagiri District 2011, Socio-Economic Survey Reports of Maharashtra (for Ratnagiri district)– 2007 to 2013, Government Publications, Online e-journals, online reports, online Ph. D thesis, online dissertations, Conference proceedings, Gazetteer of Ratnagiri district.

1.5. Study Region

Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra state is one of the rural maritime districts. It is geographically located between the Arabian Sea to the west and the Western Ghats to the east; Raigad district to the north and Sindhudurg district to the south. The district has rugged topography, warm humid

Map No. 1.1, Location of Ratnagiri District



climate, and receives annual rainfall ranging from 3000 to 4000 mm but short swift rivers and sloppy terrain results in scarcity of water during summer (Gazetteer of Ratnagiri district). Agriculture is the mainstay of livelihood of 63 percent population. Rain fed agriculture is characterized with

single farming season dominated with Rice. More than 84 percent population of the study region resides in the rural area (Population Census, 2011). The district has rich tourism potential.

1.6. Horticulture based Agritourism in Ratnagiri District

Ratnagiri district is characterized with rural region. Agritourism is the sub sector of rural tourism. Moreover due to seasonal nature of subsistence agriculture, unemployment, chronic poverty, lack of sources of off-farm activities, less productivity due to uneconomic rain fed agriculture, poor infrastructure and economic backwardness of the district has induced out migration which has been reflected by the negative population growth (- 4.1 percent) of the district in 2011. Therefore, there is urgent need to explore an alternative source of off farm activities to supplement income.

Agro climatic conditions of Ratnagiri district from South Konkan region are conducive for development of significant export oriented horticulture products Alphonso mango, Cashew nuts contributing to the export basket of India. The Government of Maharashtra has identified the potential of Ratnagiri district and declared this district as “Horticulture District” in 1990 and in 1991 the district is included in Agricultural Zone Export category (AZE) for Alphonso mangoes. The district also has Dr. Balasaheb Sawant Agriculture University at Dapoli tahsil. Therefore Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra state has been

selected to study how horticulture development policies of government indirectly fostered the horticulture based agritourism.

1.7. Findings of the Study

Analysis of 48 agritourism centres revealed following findings:

1.7.1. Agritourism in Ratnagiri district started in 90's

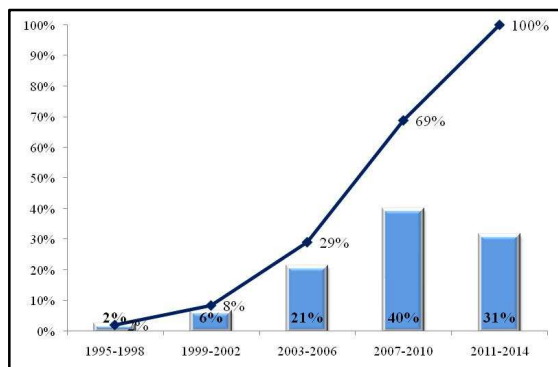


Fig.1.1, Year wise Agritourism Development

The first agritourism centre was initiated in 1995-1998 at Dapoli tahsil, the owner claims to be the first to start agritourism centre in the district. The graph shows (Error! Reference source not found.) steady and sharp increase in agritourism centres since 1995 to 2012. This is indicative that Agritourism is the product of horticulture development policies of government in 1991. This is indicative that horticulture based agritourism is the product horticulture development policies of government in

1991.

1.7.2. Marginal and small farmland holders started agritourism centres

Ratnagiri district is characterized by 85 percent rugged topography, Small size farm lands with single short rain fed season of agriculture. The district has the highest number of joint ownership in the Maharashtra state (Agriculture Census, 2010). The subsidy is granted for maximum for 2

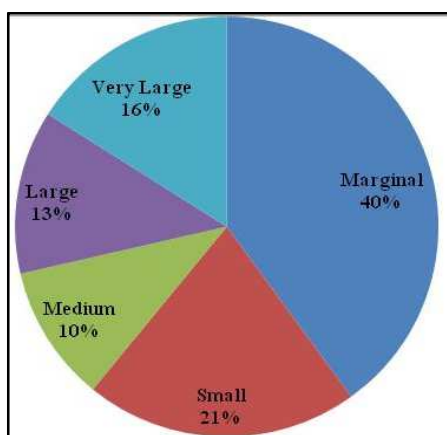


Figure 1.2: Percentage of Farm Holding of Agritourism centre Owners

hectare; but for Konkan the minimum limit for each fruit crop is 0.10 hectare. Fragmented small farm holdings of the district are the result of the division of the farmland as per the generations into heirs thus 80 percent farmers form of the district have uneconomic small or marginal land holdings. As per this policy, Small or marginal farmers could avail 100 percent labour and material costs. Thus to sustain farming lifestyle, to earn supplementary income through uneconomic farm holdings and subsistence nature of agriculture farm households from Ratnagiri district started agritourism for earning off farm income.

1.7.3. Horticulture is the main farm product of agritourism centres from Ratnagiri district

Field observations have brought to the notice that all 48 surveyed agritourism centre owners have taken benefit of ECG linked horticulture development program. Hence

the main horticulture product was Mango, followed by Cashew, Coconut, Betel nut Jackfruit and Kokam. Mango is the major farm products of ninety percent agritourism centres thought the study region, coconut is the main farm product of agritourism centres located in the coast, and cashew cultivation is restricted to foot hill side tahsils like Lanja and Sangameshwar. Horticulture products need less labour supply compared and yields high returns per hectare compared to food crops. Thus farm households preferred to shift from food growers to the fruit growers as it was lucrative alternatives for the farm households.. But horticulture products starts yielding after 5to 7 years and though they yield high value products still are seasonal in nature. Therefore in order to survive during the long waiting period farm household started agritourism.

1.7.4. Fruit processing units are attached to agritourism centres

Field investigation showed that nearly 25 percent agritourism centres from the study region had fruit processing units (Fig.No.1.3). These agritourism centre owners are the beneficiaries of scheme of development of agro/ fruit processing industries sponsored by the Central government. They have started fruit processing units and are preparing non perishable value added products for direct sale such as Mango Squash, Panhe (Juice of green unripe mango), tender coconuts, Mango pulp, Amala (Gooseberry) juice, Amala candy, fried pieces

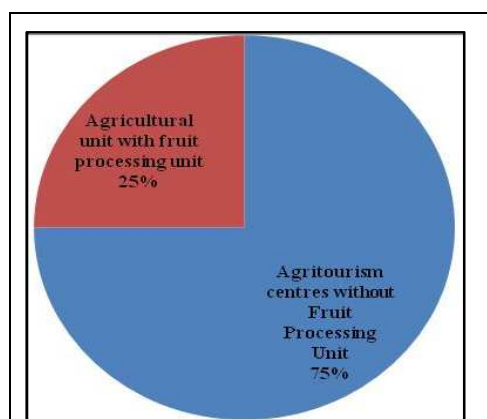
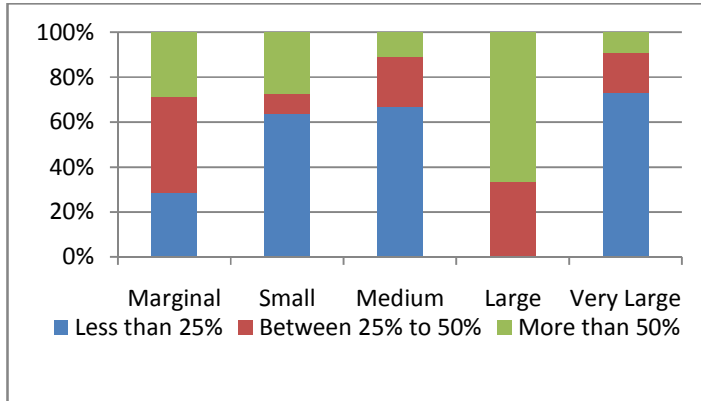


Figure 1.3: Agritourism Centres with/without fruit processing units

of jackfruits, Kokam (*Garcinia indica*) sarbat (Juice), Kokam Agal (Syrup), Amba poli (piece of dried and crushed mangoes with added sugar), Cashew nuts, and so on. Selling value-added products to the tourist adds to the income and increase tourist satisfaction.

1.7.5. Horticulture based agritourism has supplemented income of small and marginal farmers



The analysis shows that (Figure No. 1.4) marginal, small and large agritourism centres have earned substantial income from agritourism centres by supplementing their income by providing bed and breakfast, farm stay, direct stay of farm fresh and so on.

Fig. 1.4, Agritourism increased income of Marginal and Small farm households

1.7.6. Horticulture based Agritourism

provided employment to the local people

The data analysis shows that 44 percent of agritourism centres have provided employment opportunities to the local people. Figure no. 1.5 shows that agritourism centres from Ratnagiri district has provided both on permanent basis and temporary basis to the local people have provided employment for plantation, harvesting, fruit processing, cooking, housekeeping and hospitality purpose. The findings are matching with Joshi K (2015) who concluded that one agritourism centre generates direct employment to at least five people for at least seven to eight months. The western countries have adopted agritourism as the strategy to curb rural- urban migration, to alleviate rural poverty by creating off farm employment. Hence it is practiced by the farm households located at disadvantaged regions to supplement their income.

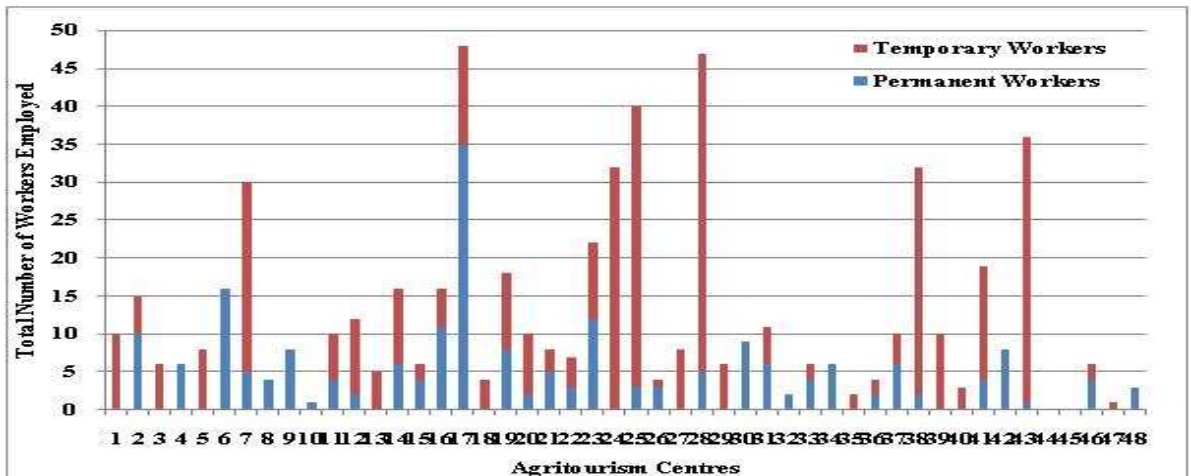
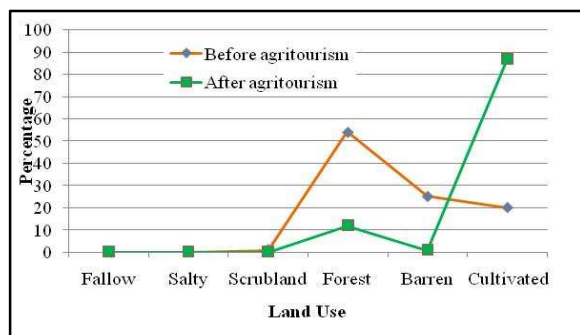


Fig. 1.5, Agritourism centres provided employment to the local people

1.7.7. Decrease in Fallow and uncultivable land



The field investigation showed that the proportions of Fallow land, Salty land, Barren land have declined and area under cultivated has been increased. The farm households developed cashew plantations on the private forest land hence the proportion of forest

Fig. 1.6, Decrease in Fallow and uncultivable land

1.8. Conclusion

This study concludes that horticulture development policy has fostered the agritourism development in disadvantaged region like Ratnagiri district. The findings of the study indicates that horticulture based agritourism in Ratnagiri district has definitely helped the marginal and small land holder farmers to sustain farming, provided employment to the landless and marginal farmers, decreased the proportion of uncultivated land and thus fulfilled the goals of government.

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