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Promotional Strategies and Policies for Agro-ecotourism Development in Different Parts of Chitwan

Keshav Bhusal¹, Subodh Pokhrel², Subash Bandari^{3*}

¹Department of Agri-economics and Agribusiness Management, Agriculture and Forestry University, Chitwan, Nepal

²Tropical Aquaculture, Can Tho University, Vietnam

³Agriculture and Forestry University, Chitwan, Nepal

Abstract

Nepal is an agricultural country with diversified ecosystem and equally a prolific tourism hub. Nepal has numerous quality to endorse tourism and attract tourist. Diverse agro-ecology, favorable climatic condition, richness in flora and fauna, unique culture and traditional practice adhered by the peace and pastoral paradise are the features which can firmly attract tourists from various countries. In such circumstances, agro eco-tourism can be a tool for branding local, organic and traditional products developing the entrepreneurship in rural areas, creating job opportunities capitalizing the youth for development of nation which can be the mere source of satisfaction and glory. With the diversified agro-ecological zones the diversification of tourism sector can be done to build the national economy. Majority of people adopts subsistence farming due to lack of innovativeness, transformation and the proper utilization of the available resources. The forthcoming collective approach of agriculture, ecology and the tourism can bring the sustainability of the enterprises and widens the employment opportunities. In this article authors has summarized all of the policies implemented and suggests the promotional strategies for agro-ecotourism with an extent to help the Nepalese government for the celebration of "Visit Nepal year 2020"-a life time experiences for the development of tourism industry in Nepal.

Keywords: Agro-tourisms; entrepreneurship; national economy; opportunities

Introduction

Agro-ecotourism, a combination of agro-tourism and ecotourism, plays a critical role in Nepal by using diversified resources, both natural and man-made, landscapes, biodiversity and cultural heritages. Agro-tourism can be used to motivate and encourage farming communities to raise their crops in an eco-friendly manner and to conserve the biodiversity of farms (Dangol and Ranabhat, 2007). Socio-economic development of Nepal relies on harnessing the potential of tourism, handicrafts, non-timber forests and high value low volume agricultural products, and human resources.

Tourism and agriculture in Nepal are major elements in this development acting as revenue generating industries with multiplier effects on the economy and significant employment capacity, which significantly contributes to

GDP and rural income generation (Pandey and Pandey, 2013). Nepal has plenty of natural resources which have helped to make agro-tourism more popular and fascinating among tourists. Agro-tourism allows visitors to come in close contact with the inhabitants of small, rural village and to be involved in the traditional way of agriculture still existing in this age. In agro-tourism tourists can find the answers to their questions about different indigenous agricultural practices, such how crops are harvested, graded and preserved, how vegetables can be grown organically, how freshly picked fruits are converted into delicious marmalade and so on (First Environmental Trekking, 2010).

Nepal is known as an agricultural country in the world. The statistics show that more than 66% of its population involve in farming. However, the farmers are not able to get expected benefits due to lack of modern technology and ideas. Farming systems and crop production in Nepal vary

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^{1*}Corresponding author

Subash Bandari,
Agriculture and Forestry University, Chitwan, Nepal
Email: Subashbandari1995@gmail.com

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across the agro-ecological region of plain, hills and mountains. Rice-based cropping systems, with wheat or maize as a secondary crop, are predominant in the plains and hill regions, whereas in the high hill mountains maize, millet, barley and buckwheat are cultivated (Pandey and Nakagawa, 2008). Agro-tourism allows close connection with the inhabitants of small rural villages who have been involved in traditional way of agriculture. Nepalese economy consists of agricultural business, ecotourism and industry, hydro-electricity and information technology (IT) services with semi-skilled human resources working abroad (GATS). Among these sectors, agriculture and ecotourism contribute 33% and 8% to the national GDP, respectively (NPC, 2007).

However, the contribution of agriculture sector is decreasing compared to tourism sector contributing about 16% to the National GDP. These last contributors have the potential for growth. Nepalese economy is now transiting from agricultural to an early-stage industrial track. Nevertheless, there is no one sector that contributes significantly to the economy thus far, except agriculture. The per capita GDP increase in production per year averages only 3%. In comparison to the population growth rate (2.25%), the average annual economic growth rate is (2.8%) still low (MOF, 2009).

Development of Agro-Tourism in Nepal

In Nepal, agriculture sector includes forestry, fishery, hunting and farming and the Nepali industrial activity also mainly the processing of agricultural products, including pulses, jute, sugarcane, tobacco, and grain and it is major pillar of the Nepalese economy, employing 70% of the labor forces and generating 38% of the total GDP. Agro-tourism is the way of responsible and sustainable tourism development. This advanced activity helps to lift up the socio-economic condition of the rural area by creating employment opportunities and the additional market for the rural product and area traditional culture as well. The agro-tourism can be alternative economic element for the country whose economy is largely dependent in agricultural and recreational tourism. In general, the agro-tourism is the practice of attracting to visitors in the areas which are used for agricultural purposes. Agro-tourism can be many things, vegetable farming, fruit picking, organic farming, horse riding, visiting and overnight stay at farming, harvesting, bed and breakfast, special events and traditional food festival celebration, bow hunting, fishing, etc.

Chitwan National Park as a Prime Destination of Ecotourism in Nepal

Chitwan National Park is Nepal's primary park established in 1973. The park became a popular destination in the country ever since, and in 1984, the park was granted the status of world heritage site. The park is located in Churiya

hills at the south-central part of Chitwan district. It has an area of 932 square kilometers, with an altitude of 100 meters. The park is located in an ecologically diverse area which is home to more than 300 endangered species in Asia, such as the one-horned rhinoceros making it a prime destination of ecotourism in Nepal. The far reaching are safeguards the glorious vegetation of Nepal's subtropical forests, 70% of which is embodied indigenous Sal forests. Underneath the Himalayas staying in the base of thick Gangetic plain and Chitwan National Park overflows with these great looking trees, and additionally vines, air plants and creepers. Other than Sal Timberland, Chitwan boosts of water swamps and surging fields. (Chitwan tourism, 2011).

Fulbari Village Development Committee of Chitwan, Nepal as Potential Destination for Agro-Tourism Business

Institute for social and Environmental research, Milk collection center, Schools, Health Centre, Shrines and temples are the main places to visit for tourists to promote agro-ecotourism in Vulgarity Village Development Committee of Chitwan. Other places that appeal tourists are the upland and lowland fields, poultry farms, fishing farms, banana plantations and irrigation canals (Dangol, 2008).

Capacity building is a tool that catalyzes individual and organizations to understand, plan and conduct activities such as training, research and development. Thus it is necessary to build capacity for the organizations as well as individuals in agro-tourism to promote Vulgarity VDC for rural development through agrotourism business (Dangol, 2008).

Golaghat and Shivaghat as a Potential Sport Fishing Center

Sport fishing involves the sport of catching fish by means of rod, line or hooks. Fishing was found to be started from the ancient Greek, Assyrian, Roman and Jewish and these days fishing for sport has remained one of the most popular outdoor recreation.

Golaghat where the river Narayani and the Rapti meets is famous for sunset viewing and night camps in beach can also be developed as sport fishing center and Shivaghat lies in the bank of Narayani which is famous for tasty fish locally can be developed as a fishing recreational site. Narayani is rich in fish fauna with abundance of 108 fish species (Jha, 2014).

Existing policies and strategies in Nepal related to agro-ecotourism

Tourism Policy, 2009

- Promotion of Nepal in global scenario as an attractive, secured destination by conserving and

promoting natural, cultural and biological resources.

National Agriculture Policy, 2004

- Improvement of degraded forests and natural water bodies for biodiversity conservation as well as utilisation and development of agroforestry system.

Nepal Tourism Board Act, 1997

- Development of tourism business while conserving and promoting natural and cultural heritage and environment of the country.

Agriculture Perspective Plan, 1995

- Envisioning increasing agricultural productivity through the delivery of agricultural inputs and services.

Nepal-National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2014-2020)

- Preparation of a 35-year vision of conservation of biodiversity for sound and resilient ecosystems and national prosperity.

Promotional Strategies for The Development of Agro-Tourism in Chitwan

Ecosystem Services and Ecological Processes

- Promotion of forest conservation and restoration of degraded areas for sustaining ecosystem services including carbon sequestration.
- Conservation of watershed conservation for healthy ecosystem services.

Forest and Other Land Uses

- Management of plant species with non-timber forest product (NTFP)/medicinal and aromatic plant (MAP) values.
- Conservation of endemic, rare and threatened plant species, critical habitats for endemic species and habitat specialist.
- Promotion of organic farming and integrated pest management for the conservation of ecosystem and biodiversity.

Economic Prosperity

- Promotional of both innovative and traditional livelihood opportunities based on sustainable resource use, tourism, and green enterprise for economic prosperity, equity and social justice.
- Reducing climate change and natural disaster risks.

Promotional Policies for The Development of Agro-Tourism in Chitwan

- **Policy 1:** The participation of the private sector will be encouraged to the maximum extent for development and diversification of tourism products in Chitwan districts.
- **Policy 2:** The involvement of government will be primarily directed towards infrastructure development. Apart from this, Nepal government will maintain its role as coordinator and motive for the growth of agro-ecotourism development in Chitwan district of Nepal.
- **Policy 3:** Linkages will be established between tourism and agro-based as well as cottage industries.
- **Policy 4:** Participation of local people in the integrated manner will be carried out for environmental conservation programs which contribute to sustainable tourism development.
- **Policy 5:** Existing tourism infrastructure and facilitates will be upgraded. Priority will be given to developing new tourist destinations, particularly in rural areas.
- **Policy 6:** Chitwan will be developed as a centre for agro-ecotourism.
- **Policy 7:** Tourist services and facilities will be encouraged to upgrade in quality. Special efforts will be made to make Chitwan a secure place for tourists.
- **Policy 8:** Due attention will be paid to improving regional imbalances while developing tourism.
- **Policy 9:** Competitive tourism promotional and marketing will be launched in tourist originating markets to establish Chitwan as a major tourist destination.
- **Policy 10:** Tourist investment will be diversified and channelled for the creation and improvement of infrastructure in some new destination areas.
- **Policy 11:** The private sector will be motivated to make systematic and effective use of existing infrastructure in order to develop sightseeing packages of culture, religious along with agro-ecological sites in integrated fashion.
- **Policy 12:** Services and facilities will be expanded in identification sites with agro-ecotourism importance to attract more domestic tourists on the one hand, while attempting to develop such sites as international sites to celebrate agro-festivals on the other.
- **Policy 13:** Coordination will be maintained with neighbouring countries to enhance cross-border agro-tourism activities like celebration of field transplanting of rice as muddy festivals based on mutual benefits.
- **Policy 14:** Programs developed at different levels will be implemented for the awareness of people on tourism.

- **Policy 15:** National environment guidelines for tourism will be formulated and subsequently adopted to minimize adverse environmental impacts from tourism.
- **Policy 16:** Local environmental codes will be designed in conformity with prevailing international conventions and national guidelines pertaining to the environment.
- **Policy 17:** Land with the high tourism potential under the ownership of the government will be leased out to private entrepreneurs for development of creating agriculture demonstration blocks.
- **Policy 18:** Tourism entrepreneurs will be encouraged to adopt codes of conduct through their respective professional associations for enhancement of quality in the services and facilities they offer.

Conclusion

The concept of agro eco-tourism is the advance and developed form of utilization of the diversified resources, both the natural and man-made, landscapes, biodiversity, unique culture and tradition as well as the human labor. Nepal is primarily based on fragile agrarian economy, two third of population involving in agriculture related activities producing only one-third of total GDP. It is for sure that the subsistence farming and the migration of the youth cannot bolster Nepalese economy. Nepal has gone through various ups and downs; the decade long civil war, political instability and the transitional period during the formulation of new constitution has severely hampered the economic growth and development. Now the country have gone through the political stability and way to prosperity the best

way to enhance the pace is to incorporate Agriculture, Ecology and tourism.

Nepal Government, the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA) has planned to celebrate year 2020 as “Visit Nepal Year-lifetime experiences” with an aim to bring 2 million tourists. No doubt, agro eco-tourism will foster Heritage sites visit, Trekking, Mountaineering expedition, furious jungle safaris and adventure nurturing the economy and employment for the country. Thus, Chitwan being the prolific tourism center and a high potential area, aforementioned promotional strategies and policies are suggested through a study.

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