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**EXPLORING THE POTENTIALS OF AGRO-TOURISM
AS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR WUKARI,
TARABA STATE**

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ABSTRACT

Agro tourism is the practice of utilizing the art and science of producing crops and animals for aesthetics and pleasure. It could take people including farmers to attraction centres like game reserves, dams, festivals/exhibitions, farm sites/structures, among others. Wukari is headquarters to Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba state and is an agrarian area producing large quantity of agricultural crops such as rice, corn, yam, cassava, guinea corn, millet, water melon, beans, soya beans bambara nuts, groundnuts, varieties of cattle and have a number of agriculture-related festivals that could attract foreign and local tourists; thereby generating income to improve household revenue earnings. In spite of this there is still high level of poverty and unemployment, thereby posing a serious threat to peace. Available records however indicate low level of performance or non-performance in agro tourism in Wukari. With the ultimate aim of introducing agro tourism practice, policy and development, the focus of this study was to highlight the potentials in agro tourism as a viable alternative to rural development. The potentials include the promotion of entrepreneurship, industrialization, economic advancement, education and good health of the citizen. It was recommended that for effective operation of agro tourism, nominal compilation of actual and potential agro tourism sites/farms in Wukari, should be undertaken in addition to launching extension education campaign on agro tourism. In addition, the national policy on tourism should be reviewed to be trendy with modern tenets. Also, private initiative and involvement in tourism should be encouraged.

KEY WORDS: *Agro tourism, Potentials, Rural development, Entrepreneurship.*

INTRODUCTION

Wukari Local government area is basically an agrarian area with about 80% of the population engaged in active farming. Wukari is endowed with great agricultural potentials ranging from fertile soils to good climatic conditions. Greater portion of her land mass is arable and much of the hectares are put under crop cultivation annually. Crops that thrive well and which can be cultivated in commercial quantity and developed as agro-tourism in Wukari, include cereals (Maize, Millet, Sorghum, and Rice), roots and tubers (Yam, Cassava and Sweet potatoes), Legumes (Sesame, Groundnut), tree crops (Mango, Orange, Oil Palm, Guava, Cashew). Livestock such as cows, goats, sheep, pigs and rabbits, also plays a vital role in the lives of the people (Umar, Nyameh & Jauro, 2014).

However, the conditions under which the people live, just like in other less developed countries' rural areas, is unimaginable and as a result, they are perceived by many as synonymous with deprivation and destitution. Ijere (1992), Chambers (1983) and Peil (1975), observed that the rural area is characterised by features such as poverty, low income, poor infrastructure, increasing population, low productivity, low entrepreneurship, homogenous culture, illiteracy, agricultural economy, traditional practices and poorly utilized natural resources. As a result of these indices, the gap in possession and access to resources between the majority (the poor) and the few (the privileged), has continued to widen.

Rural development according to World Bank, (1975), is the process of rural modernization and the magnetization of the rural society leading to transition from traditional isolation to integration with the national economy. Diejomaoh (1973), also conceptualized rural development as the process of not only increasing the level of per capita income in the rural areas, but also the standard of living of the rural population. In the same vein, Olayide (1979), defined rural development as the process whereby concerted efforts are made in order to facilitate significant increase in rural resource productivity in rural communities. Rural development therefore entails general improvement in all facets of rural living- resource utilization, productivity, monetization, income, food, nutrition, health, education, among others.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

There are practical reasons for considering agro-tourism as an alternative to rural development. First, past and present governments in Nigeria designed and tried various policies and programmes aimed at emancipating the rural poor from the pangs of backwardness without success. Some of these programmes included National Accelerated Food Production Programme, 1972; Agricultural Development Project, 1973; Operation Feed the Nation, 1975; Green Revolution, 1980; Peoples' Bank of Nigeria, 1987; National Agriculture Land Development Authority, 1991; Growth Enhancement

Support Scheme, 2013; etc. (Nnadi & Akwiwu, 2005). Unfortunately, these policies and programmes have not made appreciable and resounding impacts on rural conditions and livelihood.

Secondly, in view of the failure of most of these policies and programmes aimed at rural transformation, there is urgent need to explore alternative strategies. One of these alternative strategies necessary to ensure effective and efficient improvement of rural communities for profitable utilization of the abundant natural resources is agro-tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Agriculture is defined as the science of cultivating the ground, including the harvesting of crops and the rearing and management of livestock, tillage, husbandry and farming. In other words, it is the production of crops, livestock, fishery, or poultry and the diverse process of finance, research, education, communication, engineering, conservation, processing, storage, distribution and marketing (The English Dictionary, 2005).

Tourism on the other hand is the act of travelling or sightseeing, particularly away from one's home. Okoroafor, (1995), remarked that a visitor remains a tourist whether the objective of his mission is to transact business, participate in sports, appreciate the culture of his host destination, visit the people's museum and monuments for his intellectual enrichment, participate in conferences, conduct research, fulfil religious obligations, visit a friend or relative, observe unique flora and fauna in natural habitats or simply to have a good time. In the same vein, Taiwo, (2015), defined tourism to include the provisions of information, accommodation, transportation and other services to the tourist.

By combining agriculture and tourism, agro-tourism builds on and around the resources of the immediate environment. It exploits and harmonises for attraction and appreciation by mankind, the agricultural resources of the environment (Nnadi & Akwiwu, 2005). It offers rural experiences to urban residents and economic diversification to farmers.

It is a business model that is growing in popularity among farmers in many economies of the world, who recognized a need to diversify their operations and supplement their farm incomes. In addition, there is a growing public desire to engage in rural experiences and outdoor recreational activities.

Hatch (2006), argued is a business venture located on a working farm, ranch, or agricultural enterprise that provides an "experience" for visitors while generating supplementary income for the owner. Experiences provided to visitors usually take the form of educational or entertainment discovery and learning in a nature or agricultural based environment. For this reason, he likened it to "agro-entertainment".

In the meantime, Nnadi & Kwivu (2005), remarked that agricultural exploits and potentials can

create a scenery at markets, horticultural and floricultural gardens, game reserves, dams, festivals, farm sites, structures and many others; which could glue the sight of a passer-by for hours and entertain him to the extent of forgetting his worries and troubles permanently or temporarily.

Jansen-Verbeke(1990), identified a distinguishing feature of agro-tourism product, “to give visitors personalised contact, a taste of the physical and human environment of the countryside and allow them to participate in the activities, traditions and lifestyles of local people”. He further said one major reason agro-tourism strive is that people are looking for an authentic experience that might link them to their past or that teaches them something new, wanting to get away from the stress of everyday life and experience a seemingly simpler life. He summarized the essence of agro-tourism to include:

- a) necessity to fulfil people’s emotional needs of participation in food production and processing,
- b) necessity to fulfil emotional needs for direct contact with animals, plants and rural atmosphere,
- c) necessity to fulfil human needs for participation in real life of a rural family and a rural society.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study is the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA). The sustainable livelihoods concept first surfaced in the 1987 Brundtland Report (Our Common Future), and has since been adopted by international development agencies like DFID, CARE, World Bank, CIDA, UNDP, SIDA, etc. A livelihood is a combination of the resources used and the activities undertaken in order to live; and a livelihood is sustainable when it is capable of continuously maintaining or enhancing the current standard of living without undermining the natural resource base (DFID, 2001). The SLA considers assets as vital as antidote to the view of the poor as passive or deprived (UNDP, 2000). Access to and use of assets is influenced by policies, organizations and relationships between individuals and organizations.

The SLA is seen as complementary to more traditional approaches to development (Ashley and Carney 1999, Rakodi 2002). In particular, it aims at putting people and their households in which they live at the centre of the development process, starting with their capabilities and assets rather than with their problems. It is an important contribution to the conceptual framework for adoption of livelihoods ideas to the peculiarities of rural transformation and poverty reduction. The SLA requires a realistic understanding, through a holistic and participatory appraisal of the assets available to the poor with which they pursue their livelihoods. The SLA provides a sustainable development policy framework for sustainable human and environmental

development, hence the choice of agro-tourism. The SLA also has advantages over the traditional anti-poverty development programmes. For instance, Ghai(1980 and Ogwumike, 1991), argued that, whereas they sought to tackle poverty by identifying and addressing people’s perceived needs, the SLA seeks to improve people’s lives by building on what they already have, i.e. their assets (DFID, 1999 & 2001). Also, SLA is concerned with participatory development that recognizes working with the people, for the people and by the people (Rennie and Singh, 1995). Finally, UNDP (2000) and DFID (2001), believe that SLA integrates economic, social and environmental issues into a holistic framework for analysis. The adoption of SLA has implications for policies and actions for rural poverty reduction which Rakodi (2002), calls ‘win-win scenarios’. The author advice that such policies and actions which must be people-oriented, responsive and participatory, should improve the access of the poor to livelihoods assets. The SLA is conceptually appropriate and of more practical use for achieving rural poverty reduction and enhancement of rural household’s revenue generations in relation to policies designed to enable farmers and tourists have better access to infrastructure and social services (Lloyd-Jones, 2002).

THE STUDY AREA

Wukari is the headquarters of Wukari Local Government Area in Taraba State. It lies between the coordinates of 9.47 East and 7.5 North and is bounded in the north by Gassol LGA, northeast by the Donga Local Government Area; northwest by Ibi LGA and in the south by Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State. It has an area of 4,308 km² and a population of 241,546(2006 census). The main tourists’ attractions in the study area is the rituals of the crocodile shrine, others such as the annual Nwonyo fishing festival, boat and canoe racing, diving, swimming, traditional dancing are in the neighboring Ibi Local Government Area, where prizes are usually given to the heaviest fish catchers.

The area is basically an agrarian settlement with about 80% of the population engaged in active farming. Wukari is endowed with great agricultural potentials ranging from fertile soils to good climatic conditions. Greater portion of her land mass is arable and much of the hectares are put under crop cultivation annually. Crops that thrive well and which can be cultivated in commercial quantity and developed as agro-tourism in Wukari, include cereals (Maize, Millet, Sorghum, and Rice), roots and tubers (Yam, Cassava and Sweet potatoes), Legumes (Sesame, Groundnut), tree crops (Mango, Orange, Oil Palm, Guava, Cashew) Livestock such as cows, goats, sheep, pigs and rabbits, also plays a vital role in the lives of the people (Umar, Nyameh & Jauro, 2014).

SCOPE FOR AGRO-TOURISM

Sharma & Vyas (2014), argued that agro-tourism has great scope for the following reasons: as

an inexpensive gateway, as the cost of food, accommodation, recreation and travel are minimal; as it revolves around the farmers, villages and agriculture, it has the capacity to satisfy the curiosity of this segment of the population; agro-tourism has strong demand for wholesome family oriented recreational activities at cheaper costs, such as for children, young, middle and old age, male and female; the health conscious urban population looks towards pro-nature villages to make life more peaceful; peace and tranquillity are inbuilt in agro-tourism as it is away from urban areas and close to nature; agro-tourism brings busy urban population leaning towards nature, as they watch birds, animals, crops, mountains and water bodies; it provides an opportunity to urban homesick who visit villages and spend time with family; it provides varieties of recreational activities, which always add value to entertainments, such as festivals and handicrafts, village lifestyle, dress, languages and culture/traditions and agro-tourism could create awareness about rural life and knowledge about agriculture science.

POTENTIALS OF AGRO-TOURISM IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

In view of the failure of past strategies aimed at developing the rural areas in Nigeria and the hardship the people are persistently undergoing, the current call by the Federal government for individuals and other tiers of governments to diversify opportunities available to them becomes appropriate. Nnadi&Akwiwu (2005), argued that agro-tourism has a multifarious contributions to make to rural development and identified some of the agro-tourism potentials in rural development to include as an invisible trade, rural-urban integration, promotion of entrepreneurship and industrialization; economic advancement; education and good health of the citizen.

As an invisible trade, agro-tourism is a good source of foreign exchange, since people attracted to these centres are both nationals and internationals. These visitors pay to have access to the sites and sometimes purchase of the produce or products of the centres thereby putting the economy on a stronger footing. According to Ovation (2000), the great foreign exchange potentials of tourism necessitated the establishment of International Tourism Exchange Centre in Berlin, Germany. In Nigeria, Okoroafor (1995), reported that between 1986 and 1989, tourism provided foreign exchange to the tune of \$249 million to the federal government and \$1187m to Africa. By implications, with proper policy planning and management, agro-tourism would contribute more meaningfully to the economy; thus, help to improve the standard of living of the citizens.

Rural areas are mostly agrarian and most agro-tourism centres are located in rural environments, but more of urban dwellers patronize these centres than rural dwellers. Nnadi&Akwiwu (2005), attributed this to the fact that the rural

dwellers have been with these centres all through their lives and that urban dwellers appreciate recreation more than rural dwellers. In the process, rural-urban integration is established, as urban dwellers moves to the rural areas where the centres are located to recreate themselves. This integration fosters unity and promotes mutual understanding as urban dwellers interact with rural people and their environment. Apart from the urban dwellers, the rural communities themselves interact thereby creating a peaceful co-existence by the virtue of tourism location. In addition, religious, communal, ethnic, and inter-tribal clashes are drastically reduced. The ensued peace is indispensable for economic growth, greatness and also provides the enabling environment for the development of the countryside. According to Hatch (2006), tourism is a major way in which money is circulated from wealthy and developed areas to areas that are undeveloped whether within or outside the country. For example, Okoroafor (1995), reported that out of a total 19,490 visitors to Yankari National Park in 1992, 74% (14,512), were Nigerians while 25.5% (4,978), were foreigners. In the light of the above, agro-tourism fosters urban-rural migration against rural-urban migration, which has been a major problem to Nigeria agricultural development.

On the promotion of entrepreneurship and industrialization, the authors observed that business activities with monolithic income sources and ostentatious products, commonly found in Nigeria, suffers terribly during depressions. To curtail the effects of these depressions, agro-tourism business becomes necessary. Agro-tourism has many and varied components, the income sources are diverse and the products are mostly consumptive. Cai (2003), reported that agro-tourism has become more important than agriculture in terms of employment and income generation in some park in Beijing. In processing agricultural products, the visit of tourists to these centres for aesthetics, the produce and products of the centres are sold for cash to the tourists. This in turn promotes and sustains entrepreneurship, while some people are offered employments; since most of the investments do not require extensive capital outlays, it is adequate for rural development.

AGRO-TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES IN RURAL AREA

Agro-tourism product can be characterised as a single good or a set of goods given by nature, history, human activity and is demanded by tourists (Wiatrak 1998, Sikora 1999, Gaworecki 2000). Moreover, agro-tourism products and services are usually supplemented with "experiences" (Roberts and Hall 2001), "adventures" and "imponderables", i.e. incommensurable values, in particular related to agro-tourism space (beauty of rural landscape, fresh air, tranquillity and silence, rural architecture, etc). Imponderables are neither services nor products, but they enable or facilitate the marketing process of agro-tourism products and

services. These services according to Roberts and Hall (2001), include:

- Agro-Accommodation services, which comprise various kinds of accommodation in rural areas;
- Agro-Catering businesses, which the integral part of agro-tourism, is connected with source of food products, number and time of meals and places of serving meals; Real Agro-tourism which comprise of observation of agricultural production process, participation in the process of plant production, animal production and processing, animal demonstration or shows (cow milking) or direct contact with domestic animals;
- Rural and agro-retail business, which involves direct sales to tourists who watch or participate in the production process and are willing to buy products that they observed or produced themselves;
- Agro-therapy, where health services or health related products are offered;
- Agro-recreation which boils down to spending free time away from home, on a farm or in rural accommodation and
- Agro-Entertainment which covers big range of activities directly tied to farms and rural areas. They include agro sports, games, folk songs and folk dance.

As the urbanites participate and recall the traditional culture of their country, additional income is being generated by the rural farmers.

BENEFITS OF AGRO-TOURISM

The potential benefits of agro tourism development, according to the authors, extend to farmers, rural communities, and tourism operator

Benefits for Farmers

For farmers, agro tourism is a potential way of :

- expanding farm operations;
- using farm based products in new and innovative ways;
- improving farm revenue streams;
- developing new consumer market niches;
- increasing awareness of local agricultural products;
- increasing appreciation of the importance of maintaining agricultural land;
- channelling additional on-farm revenues directly to family members;
- improving farm living conditions, working areas and farm recreation opportunities;
- developing managerial skill and entrepreneurial spirit; and
- Increasing the long term sustainability for farm businesses.

Benefits for Communities

From a community perspective, agro-tourism can be a vehicle for :

- generating additional revenue for local businesses and services from tourists;

- upgrading / revitalizing community facilities for residents and visitors;
- increasing protection of rural landscapes and natural environments for tourists and residents;
- helping preserve and revitalize local traditions, art and craft;
- promoting inter-regional, inter-cultural communication and understanding;
- increasing awareness of agricultural issues and values among the public;
- promoting the on-going use of local agricultural products and services;
- helping to diversify and strengthen the rural economy via job and income creation;
- and
- providing a more energetic business environment for attracting other businesses and small industries.

Benefits for Tourism Operators

From a tourism industry viewpoint, agro-tourism can be a means of:

- diversifying the mix of tourism products and services available to visitors;
- increasing tourism flows into attractive rural regions;
- increasing season length during traditionally off-peak business periods;
- uniquely positioning rural regions in key tourism markets; and
- bringing more non-local currency to local businesses.

STARTING AGRO-TOURISM BUSINESS

Deciding to be involved in agro-tourism is not the best choice for every agricultural operation. Operators of the business must understand that not all businesses are suitable for the entry of visitors due to convenience of location, parking availability, employee availability, increased regulations that must be followed, and time commitment involved. When a business is open to the public environmental, health, and safety regulations must be strictly followed. Operating under the eye of the public can sometimes bring about more stress for the business. Agricultural businesses should analyse their finances prior to engaging in an agro-tourism operation because diversifying activities can require high start-up costs. It is best that the agricultural business understands their personal situation as well as the current market situation before the decision is made to engage in an agro-tourism operation. Government programs and outside organizations can have an immense impact on ensuring that research and educational programs are available to farmers seeking involvement in agro-tourism.

Anyone planning to start an agro-tourism venture should look at the venture as a business. First ask yourself, what type of agro-tourism business do I want to operate? Will it be:

(1) Providing supplemental cash flow during lean months can help agricultural owners meet the demand of payroll and keep competent workers year-round.

(2) Ventures expecting to make a profit must make sure that expenses are less than the income generated and that profits are sufficient to satisfy the supplemental income needs of the owner and still allow for reinvestment dollars to expand or

(3) Ventures that provide fun and enjoyment to others without the burden of making a profit still require capital to operate and must have cash flow to continue operation even though their mission is not to make a profit. Few people have the funds to operate entirely for free.

With the emergence of agro-tourism, farm operators have begun to think beyond crop development and create an experience to sell at a retail price directly to the consumer. The following section discusses some of the potential pitfalls to consider prior to entering an agro-tourism operation.

In order to successfully interact with the public, an agro-tourism enterprise requires refined interpersonal relations skills as well as professional written and oral communication skills. More labour and the need for employees may also result from operating an agro-tourism business. Increased marketing may interfere with normal farm activities, and hosting visitors requires dealing with the public, which increases risk and liability. The business operator must be well informed of the many aspects surrounding the safety and liability of starting a new operation or expanding an existing one. Such aspects include understanding and following local, state, and federal regulations regarding zoning, signage, food service, animal exhibits, and health. In order to begin a successful agro-tourism business, protocol must be met and laws must be carefully followed throughout the lifespan of the business.

FUNDING OF AGRO-TOURISM BUSINESS

Various funding entities can potentially provide monetary support and other resources to bring your farm vision to life. In Nigeria, different schemes and programs have been set up by the Federal Government to provide funds in terms of loans and grants to large and small-scale farmers. These credit facilities are made available by the federal government to the public, and cover a range of agricultural practices including crop cultivation and livestock rearing. There are a number of avenues the government has provided for individuals and corporate bodies to access agricultural loans. They include; Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) agricultural loan to farmers in Nigeria and Bank Of Agriculture (BOA) loan. Apart from these two, there are other means of acquiring agricultural loans and include, some selected Commercial Banks; the Youth Empowerment in Agricultural Programs (YEAP); All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) and FADAMA.

However, to access these loans and grants, you must fulfil some conditions, and this is where it becomes difficult for small scale farmers especially. Notwithstanding, small scale farmers could obtain soft loans through their cooperative societies to start agro-tourism farms.

PROBLEMS OF AGRO-TOURISM

The problems of agro-tourism especially in developing countries include:

- Lack of perfect knowledge about agro-tourism
- Weak communication skill and lack of commercial approach of the small farmers
- Lack of capital to develop basic infrastructure for the agro-tourism
- Ignorance of the farmers regarding type of activities involved in agro-tourism
- Presence of unorganised sector in the agro-tourism industry
- Ensuring hygiene and basic requirements considering urban visitors
- Most of the farmers in Wukari, as in other rural areas in Nigeria have small size holding, low quality land and little or no access to credit facilities or irrigation, and so have to depend on the natural rainy season

RECOMMENDATION

Specifically, we recommended that for effective operations of agro tourism in Wukari, nominal compilation of actual and potential agro tourism sites/farms in Wukari, should be undertaken in addition to launching extension education campaign on agro tourism. In addition, the national policy on tourism should be reviewed to be trendy with modern tenets. Also, private initiative and involvement in tourism should be encouraged. Other recommendations include:

Agro-tourism Industry Recognition

Agro-tourism industry should have enough recognition by all, of its enormous development potentials. In fact potential members can also become members of the national tourism associations in order to participate in broader tourism marketing initiatives. Sharma & Vyas (2014), reported that in India, The Nation's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries is currently the primary government agency providing indirect support to agro-tourism (small farmers finance scheme, fresh water fisheries development finance, to farm water lake, install drip irrigation plants, horticultural cultivation subsidies, food processing finance support, etc); assisted by the Ministry of Rural Development (Clean village scheme), MTDC-Mahabraman Scheme and bed and breakfast scheme.

Supportive Agro-tourism Policies and Regulations

A broad range of policies and regulations affect the operations and viability of most farms operations. In Nigeria, the main policy and regulation that challenges agro-tourism in particular are as follows:

- Currently, there are no concrete policies and regulations concerning the operations of agro-tourism industry.
- Where they exit, there is a lack of understanding concerning how existing regulations and policies impact agro-tourism operations.
- No policies and regulations defined the appropriate size of facilities and the use of land for agro-tourism.
- Policies are perceived to be developed without consultation with farm operators and without an analysis of the potential impacts on agro-tourism operations.
- There is lack of consistency in regulation interpretation by government administrators.
- There is limited awareness and understanding of existing agro-tourism policies and regulations amongst farmers, as many of them are unaware of how to obtain information on these regulations and how to apply them to their specific operations.

Supportive Agro-tourism Financing

The main challenge for agro-tourism operators in Nigeria is accessing funds provided by financial institutions. Sharma & Vyas (2014), believed these challenges exist because:

- There is lack of farmers' awareness of how to approach financial institutions.
- There are problems obtaining the necessary "equity" position to acquire funding.
- Financial institutions have limited awareness of the value and benefits of agro-tourism.
- Related value added processing businesses are often reluctant to support funding in these sectors.
- Within the farming community, there is some intimidation about applying to financial institutions for agro-tourism funding.

Effective Training Programmes

It is necessary to engage farmers, including agro-tourism and value-added processing business into training that relate to customer service and marketing as well as tourism business management practices as required. Sharma & Vyas (2014), emphasised it is critical to success as it will properly manage good employees.

Liability and Risk Management Programmes

Agro-tourism farmers are obligated to take measures to insure that no reasonable harm occurs to their customers invited and encouraged to their farms to purchase products and services. In India, farmers involved in agro-tourism are encouraged to develop and use a comprehensive farm risk management and liability protection programme. The key challenge, as observed by Sharma & Vyas (2014), is related to liability management is high cost and availability of liability insurance. The authors maintained that

farmers need a stronger understanding of why risk management programmes are needed and how initiatives can help to reduce insurance costs.

Product and Service Quality Control

Just as other consumers, tourists visiting farms are equally concerned with getting good value for their money. It is therefore important for agro-tourism operators to strive for the highest products and/or service quality that can be delivered. To achieve this, agro-tourism operators must:

- Have information on visitors' expectations of agro-tourism product quality.
- Be aware of the benefits of meeting expectations for product quality standards.
- Aware of appropriate pricing and its relationship with quality standards.

Marketing Programmes

Most farmers in the rural areas, because they do not have experience in marketing a service business, do overlook its function. In addition to the development of strategic partnerships, other critical marketing challenges facing agro-tourism industry include:

- Use of available channels of distribution.
- National tourism awareness of the sector's potential.
- Marketing abilities of many farm operators.

CONCLUSION

Following the above review one can conclude that agro-tourism may offer almost unlimited number of products, services that can facilitate the transformation of Wukari in particular and Nigeria at large. Nigeria tourism is growing at a rate of about 8%. Agro-tourism as an additional artery of Tourism sector in Nigeria, can sustainably develop our rural areas. Thereby introducing agro-tourism concept in all the rural communities in Nigeria will not only promote sustained growth rate but also act as value addition that can accelerate further growth. Agro-tourism is emerging as an important instrument for sustainable human development including poverty alleviation, employment generation, environmental regeneration and development of remote areas and advancement of women and other disadvantaged groups in the country. It also promotes social integration and international understanding. It does not require any huge changes on the agricultural landscape, but builds easily on the existing resources on the farm. The concept therefore, needs to be inculcated into the minds of every farmer in Nigeria. The government should promote agro-tourism to ensure sustainable economic development and positive social change.

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