

Agri-Tourism as a Sustainable Adaptation Option for Climate Change Impacts on Small Scale Agricultural Sector

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Abstract : The global climate change has become one of the imperative issues for the smallholder dominated agricultural sector and nature based tourism sector in Sri Lanka. Thus addressing this issue is notably important. The main objective of this study was to investigate the potential of agri-tourism as a sustainable adaptation option to mitigate some of the negative impacts of climate change in small scale agricultural sector in Sri Lanka. The study was carried out in two different climatic zones in Sri Lanka namely Low Country Dry Zone and Up Country Wet Zone. A case study strategy followed by structured and unstructured interviews through cross-sectional surveys were adapted to collect data. The study revealed that there had been a significant change in the climate in regard to the rainfall patterns in both climatic zones resulting unexpected rains during months and longer drought periods. This results the damages of agricultural production, low yields and subsequently low income. However, to mitigate these adverse effects, farmers have mainly focused on using strategies related to the crops and farming patterns rather than diversifying their business by adopting other entrepreneurial activities like agri-tourism. One of the major precursor for this was due to lesser awareness on the concept of agri-tourism within the farming community. The study revealed that the respondents of both climatic zones do have willingness and potential to adopt agri-tourism. One key important factor identified was that farming or agriculture was the main livelihood of the respondents, which is one of the vital precursor needed to start up an agri-tourism enterprise. Most of the farmers in the Up Country Wet Zone had an inclination to start a farm guest house or a farm home stay whereas the farmers in the Low Country Dry Zone wish to operate farm guest house, farm home stay or farm restaurant. They also have an interest to open up a road side farm product stall to facilitate the direct sales of the farm. Majority of the farmers in both climatic zones showed an interest to initiate an agri-tourism business as a complementary enterprise where they wished to give an equal share to both farming and agri-tourism. Thus this revealed that the farmers have identified agri-tourism as a vital concept and have given the equal importance as given to farming. This shows that most of the farmers have understood agri-tourism as an alternative income source that can mitigate the adverse effects of climatic change. This study emphasizes that agri-tourism as an alternative income source that can mitigate the adverse effects of climatic change on small scale agriculture sector.

Keywords : adaptation, agri-tourism, climate change, small scale agriculture

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