



Case Study 1 : Agro-tourism YATRA-Farm Tourism Venture

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India | North East Region | Assam | S.S.Botanicals | Samir Ranjan Initiative Overview

Venture: Samir is promoting organic farming and providing advisory services in the north eastern states since 2005 and has successfully motivated about 500 farmers to take up organic farming. To enhance the income of the organic growers, he started a venture called "Yatra" in 2010. The whole approach is based on creating organic model farmers, model villages and introducing farm tourism.

Agripreneur: Immediately after completion of B.Sc. (Agri), Samir joined the corporate sector. However, in 2003, he left the job with the ambition to start a venture of his own. After getting AC&ABC training for 2 months, he took an initiative to start chemical free vegetable production process and in the process gained support from farmers and the common man. Several activities are going on under his venture, including consultancy service, organic farming and input supply to agricultural farm, vermi-compost production, agro-tourism and associated activities.

His activities are spread over upper Assam and few pockets of NE states but he is well known in his filed. About 500 farmers have benefitted and he has 22 employees working with him.



“Rural people of north eastern region are benefitted out of Agro- tourism”

Samir Ranjan
Bordoloi”

Challenges

- Farmers' doubt over drop down production
- Livelihood is not planned
- Marketing of farm based products
- Lack of entrepreneurial skills
- Lack of financial support

Solutions

- Creating model villages and farmers
- Working with NGOs
- Establishment of biggest organic farms
- Training MSW students
- Use of social media

Results

- Self-sustainability
- Organic Brand in North East
- 3000 school children trained on farm entrepreneurship
- 5600 farmers trained on low cost farming methods
- International tourists and activist support the initiative

Detailed description of venture established

The whole approach is based on creating organic model farmers, model villages and introducing farm tourism in those farms and farmers. Ten farm tourism spots have been developed under the initiative and is supporting about 125 farmers involved with the initiative. Ten youths are directly employed and many other youth are involved indirectly with the project. Many tourists from the country and abroad are supporting the venture by visiting to enjoy the organic farms and the hospitality of the people here. The agri clinic trains farmers on organic farming methods and also on tourism management. It partners with the farmers in implementing farm tourism venture. Many tourists like to experience the raw nature of rural India and prefer living in the village farm houses.





YATRA is a package for tourists where they can have the experience of staying in an organic tea garden, manufacture hand-made green tea, pluck tea leaves, live in bamboo made huts, sail in bamboo boats, stay in the bamboo village, help farmers plough, make compost and vermicompost and taste the ethnic food and culture of the north east. The package also has provisions to work in a big organic dairy and perma gardening farm. Most of the tourists also become messenger of the need of organic farming among the farmers and thus travel for a cause. The package includes tracking in bamboo village and forests of Assam and also meet the Forest man of India, Padmashree Jadav Payeng in his forest. YATRA conducts educational tourism where school children are exposed to farming activities in these organic farms.

YATRA is a full agro-tourism travel package covering Assam and Nagaland villages, visiting organic farmers of the region. North east is abundant in beautiful flora and fauna, and people have a diverse culture, living styles and food habits. Encashing on the strength of the region, YATRA ensures profit for the agri clinic and the farmer members, in terms of earning through farm tourism and also providing a direct access to the member farmers for sale of their organic products.

The components of the package are :

Organic Tea Tourism at Basanti Organic Tea farm at Gandhiagaon village of Panitola

YATRA takes the tourist to this beautiful organic tea garden owned by a member farmer, Suresh Chetia, who was trained on organic tea production by Samir Ranjan Bordoloi in 2009 and in 2010, farm stay was developed in the garden. Tourists from Canada, Colombia, Australia and other countries have visited the initiative and got hands-on training on green leaf plucking in the morning, green tea making experience during the day and in the afternoon the tourists visit different small tea growers, trained by the agri clinic. At night, the visitors get to experience night-fishing in the farm pond and have a camp fire. Interested visitors also volunteer to motivate nearby farmers on organic farming.

- **Bamboo Village in Majuli**

Majuli is the World's largest river island and is the land of Satras (monestries of the Vaisnavites). Lots of tourist come to visit this beautiful island. The agri clinic, in partnership with model farmer Beda Dutta, has developed a bamboo village. Bamboo is the most climate-friendly plant and thus, YATRA is trying to build the economy of the poor farmers of a remote village of Majuli named Kalama, where visitors can explore nature, unlimited. YATRA has developed bamboo cottages for the tourists to stay. During day time, apart from going to the bamboo village, visitors also visit the forest created by the Forest man of India, Padmashree Jadav Payeng. The visitors get the taste of tribal food and culture of the Mising tribe of the island. The visitors also motivate the tribal women to take up organic farming under the agri clinic.

- **Organic Farm, Jorhat**

Samir Ranjan Bordoloi and Murlidhar Gattani have developed a large Organic Farm and Farm Tourism Centre at Jorhat. This modern organic farm has a 250 cow dairy unit, a 600 tons vermicomposting production unit with perm gardening of organic vegetables with protected cultivation and bio intensive raised beds. The farm has 3 star hotel facilities rooms and day long on-farm activities for the visitors. It facilitates lots of educational tourism groups from different schools across the country.

- **Charaimari Organic Model village**

Motivating 12 rural youths in the village, Samir Ranjan Bordoloi created this model village where 70 households grow organic vegetables in their homestead gardens and visitors spend their day moving around the village and have a picnic on the banks of river Doyang, which is a beautiful sight. The ladies from the village process the traditional fruits and offer them to the visitors. This is an example of a village that has been developed with no monetary support but only through motivating farmers to depend on on-farm resources.

- **Dhansirimukh Model village in Kaziranga**

Kaziranga is the heart line of Assam. YATRA takes visitors to the National Park to witness the pride of Assam: the one-horned rhino and makes visitors stay in Farm stay at Dhansirimukh Model Village.

Constraints faced

- Farmers' doubt over the drop in their production on converting to organic farming. They fear drop in income as a result of converting to organic farming.
- Farmers' livelihood is not planned based on the regions strength: its natural resources.
- Marketing of farm produce is the biggest problem in the region.
- Lack of entrepreneurial skills among the farmers.
- Lack of financial support.

Lessons learned

- Market led extension and fair trade with farmers helped create big business with low financial inputs.
- Risk bearing capacities of the farmers is very low, so they perform best when they come together to do agribusiness.
- Use of local resources in farming and agro-tourism lowers the cost of cultivation and ensures profit, inspite of giving the products at affordable prices to the visitors.
- Agro-tourism helps create market demand for the farmers' produce.
- Planning on local resources gives an international identity to the effort.

Overcome obstacles

Introducing agro-tourism with organic farming has ensured greater profit to the farmers and it is now becoming easy to replicate the same model in other places. Creating an umbrella of like-minded people helped overcome the obstacle of lack of funds and within a short period, more works could be accomplished. Working with community based organizations helped mobilize resources for the development of the associated farmers.

Initiatives taken

- Involving the farmer's children through the flagship programme 'Farm Preneur'. Using school children as extension agents by training them in schools. It's an activity based learning programme for the students of Govt. schools of Rural Assam. It bagged the North east Social Impact Award, 2015.
- Continuous mentoring of model farmers and developing farming techniques based on local resources which are low cost.
- Working with NGOs and establishing NGO 'Farm2Food Foundation' and training farmers on the whole value chain.
- Establishing the biggest organic farm of the North east to motivate farmers by leading by doing.
- Trained MSW students of Bosco Institute and TISS, Guwahati to motivate more villages to become model villages.
- First creating organic model farmer, then model village and then introduce agro-tourism.
- Creating model villages and success stories and then promoting them by the help of Government schemes, advocating at the policy level.

Innovations to resolve constraints

- Farmers' participation in organic farming increased by incorporating farm tourism concept with organic farming to give more income to the farmers.
- Dependence on local resources and their sustainable use, lowered the costs. For example, building bamboo cottages in the farms hastened the works and created more demand in the market. Lots of indigenous techniques and profitable techniques were developed like the bamboo made bio intensive beds, bamboo framed protected cultivation structures, herbs based pest repellent extracts etc., and these ensured more participation and adoption at farmer's level without depending on subsidies.

- Agro-tourism helped create a market for the farmers. The intervention helped develop hand-made processing techniques and processed products packed in traditional and ethnic packaging materials. Hand-made green tea, Rosella herbal tea, dehydrated powder of nutraceutical plants are being successfully marketed and even exported through Fair trade.
- Creating farm and food entrepreneurs of the future through the Farm Preneur programme
- Partnership with model farmers and farmer groups and entrepreneurs helped overcome the fund crisis.
- Use of social media to promote the activities.

Results

Impact

- Self-sustainability of farmers attached with the project achieved.
- The initiatives established the Agripreneur as a brand in the North east in the field of organic farming and agro-tourism.
- Appointed as a Member of the Board of Management of Assam Agricultural University.
- ACABC, apart from providing a good livelihood also earned lots of respect for the agripreneur in the society.

Outcomes

- Lots of farmers are earning a sustainable livelihood through the efforts.
- More than 3000 school children are being trained on farm entrepreneurship.
- The Farm Preneur programme is now incorporated under the Assam Sarba Shiksha Mission of the Govt. of Assam.
- The efforts in Jorhat is now spread to the whole of North east and thus, established an organization called SPREAD NE and under this, it is planning to establish a Centre for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development near Guwahati.
- Gaining lots of support from International tourists and activists coming forward to support the initiative.
- In 2015 and 2016 , trained 5,600 farmers on low cost organic farming methods; established 225 model farmers; created 3 model villages ; trained about 5000 school kids on low cost composting and vermicomposting, establishing 150 farm preneur schools and 10 agrotourism ventures established

Conclusion

With the motto of self-development through dedicated services to the farmers, more farmers have to be reached in the coming years. Organic farming and agro-tourism model is the best way to sustain farmers in the North east India. Local resources, local people and local culture combined, can create a Northeast brand internationally and as an agripreneur under MANAGE, the agripreneur will try to create a successful model to be incorporated into the Government extension mechanism, to lead a market led extension services to make it profitable for the farmers and stop migration of rural youths to urban areas.



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