

Agritourism and Agrifac Farm Stay- Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

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Do you ever been to an agritourism place? or Do you ever experience agritourism? Most of you will say “NO”. But it will be a remarkable experience, if you have been experienced a tour in a farm stay with bed and breakfast, tractor or bullock cart rides, picking of grapes, mangoes, and other horticulture items and many other activities rather than staying in a luxurious hotel. Even you may not have heard about agritourism in some cases. Because of agritourism is not much popular in Sri Lanka and agritourism sector of the country is in its' initial stage. As a developing nation, Sri Lanka is in the emerging markets in the agritourism industry. Therefore agritourism is a new experience for the Sri Lankan people.

Agritourism industry is a hybrid concept which is evolved by combining two different disciplines-agriculture sector and tourism sector.

Agriculture sector and tourism sector of Sri Lanka

Sri Lankan agriculture sector is really blessed with diverse agro-climatic conditions (the tropical and monsoonal climate), enough amounts of land area, favorable temperature, and sufficient amount of rain and water supply. Other than that, Sri Lanka's complex traditional and modern cultivation systems (traditional paddy cultivation is developed over the course of 2500 years) and huge ancient irrigation tanks develop the Sri Lankan agriculture sector further. Sri Lankans still use both traditional and modern farming practices



for their production. Plucking tea leaves using the traditional “bag-on-the-head” method, rubber tapping under expert guidance and even working in many scenic paddy fields (engage ploughing using bullocks, work on paddy nurseries, and transplanting seedlings in muddy fields) of Sri Lanka are just some examples of its various traditional agricultural practices.

As the result of these resources agriculture sector significantly contributes to the Sri Lanka's economy. Therefore Sri Lankan economy has traditionally been dominated by agriculture. It produces various plantation

crops, including tea, rubber, coconut, cocoa, and spices for the export market. Other than that cereal, legumes, fruit crops, root and tuber crops, medicinal plants, leafy and other vegetables, cash crops, foliage, cut flowers and many livestock productions are included in agriculture sector. Therefore it plays a vital role in Sri Lankan GDP and it provides job opportunities to the Sri Lankan labor force too.

Moreover, Sri Lanka has started organic farming which is having a very high attention of the health concerned consumers. According to UNESCAP (2006), Sri Lanka is one of the major organic producers in Asia and one of the leading sources of organic tea. The organic market in the country has been described as a “niche market” (International trade centre, 2008). The main certified organic products are tea, desiccated coconut, cashew nuts, spices (cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg, pepper, clove and ginger), fruits (mango, papaya and passion fruit), and herbs (citronella and lemon grass). Most of these organic products are exported (Malkanthy *et al*, 2011).

Other than that, Sri Lanka is also considered as a tourist's paradise. It is one of the favorite and attractive travel destinations in South Asia and also Sri Lankans are more popular in hospitality. Furthermore it is endowed with an abundance of tourism resources and Sri Lanka has enjoyed a growing number of visitors and gradual growth in the tourism industry.

Agritourism

The above facts show there is a great potential to develop the agritourism sector in Sri Lanka and Sri Lanka is a suitable destination for agritourism.

Agritourism is a subset of larger industry called tourism and it is a part of rural tourism activities. Therefore most of the time rural



communities engage with agritourism. It is basically attracting visitors to agricultural areas where practicing agriculture activities and farming. It attracts tourists to rural areas for a form of relaxation and most of the visitors like to experience simple farm life. Agritourism facilitates this necessity. Therefore agritourism has increasingly recognized as one of important strategies that can contribute to rural development. Now it becomes a global trend which provides city dwellers an opportunity to escape from urban concrete environment and rediscover their roots in rural areas with farming.



Agritourism can simply define as a commercial enterprise on a working farm, ranch, or agricultural plant conducted for the enjoyment and recreation of visitors that generates supplement income for the owner. Therefore it is a new way of generating extra income for farmers and rural communities. It helps to uplift living standards of those farmers

and rural communities also. According to the holiday concept, agritourism facilitates many operations with the purpose of enjoyment, education and recreation. It involves visitors in the agriculture activities and operations. Agritourism activities might include recreation activities (fishing, hunting, wildlife study, horseback or pony back riding, bird watching, hiking, biking), educational experiences (cannery tours, cooking classes, wine tasting), entertainment (harvesting festivals, camping), hospitality services (farm stays, guided tours, catering), on- farm direct sales (u-pick operations, roadside stands, fairs, farmer markets).

In addition to that there are other operations such as planting, harvesting, nursery practices, milking, feeding, fish therapy, foot therapy and herbal therapy. It provides economic benefit to the farm owner(s) while providing on-farm entertainment, activity, or product for the visitor.



Within the farm tour, there are things to see, things to do and things to buy.

Under things to see, visitors can experience farm tours (aware different types of crops and cultivation practices, harvesting methods, farm animals and animal husbandry methods), historical re-creations (displaying real or

models of traditional agricultural implements, techniques and technologies eg. old farm machinery and equipments (sickle), seeds of traditional crop varieties, traditional and environment friendly farm buildings, transportation modes, and photographs of old and traditional farming techniques and systems), processing demonstrations (food processing on farm such as milling eg. traditional *kurahan gala*, curd, yogurt and cheese production, homemade moju, pickles and sauce production), crop art and crop landscaping, natural features (waterfalls, a jungle, a stream, or a spectacular view of mountains), petting zoos (farm animals and pets such as ponies, goats, sheep, chickens, ducks, geese, rabbits, and many more).

Under things to do, visitors can engage with educational activities (give learning opportunity through half day classes or short term workshops to full-scale, accredited courses of study on cooking, arranging flowers,

and making herbal medicines), U-pickups / pick U own (visitors are allowed to harvest their own produce such as fruits, vegetables and flowers), petting zoos/ children's enjoyments/ pony back riding/ hayrides, BBQ by own and therapy such as fish therapy, foot therapy and herbal medicinal therapy. Further, visitors can buy foods and beverages, gifts and souvenirs, fresh and processed food stuff within the tour.

Sri Lankan villages and farms offer a unique experience including local food and accommodation. Rural areas are rich with traditional things and cultural activities. In this way agritourism cater to a niche market (Malkanthi *et al*, 2011). The visitors always like to feel the simple rural lifestyle also. Therefore within the concept of agritourism old traditional accommodations such as *katumati pala* and *tree houses* with general facilities are provided rather than luxurious hotel rooms.

Important advantages of agritourism are

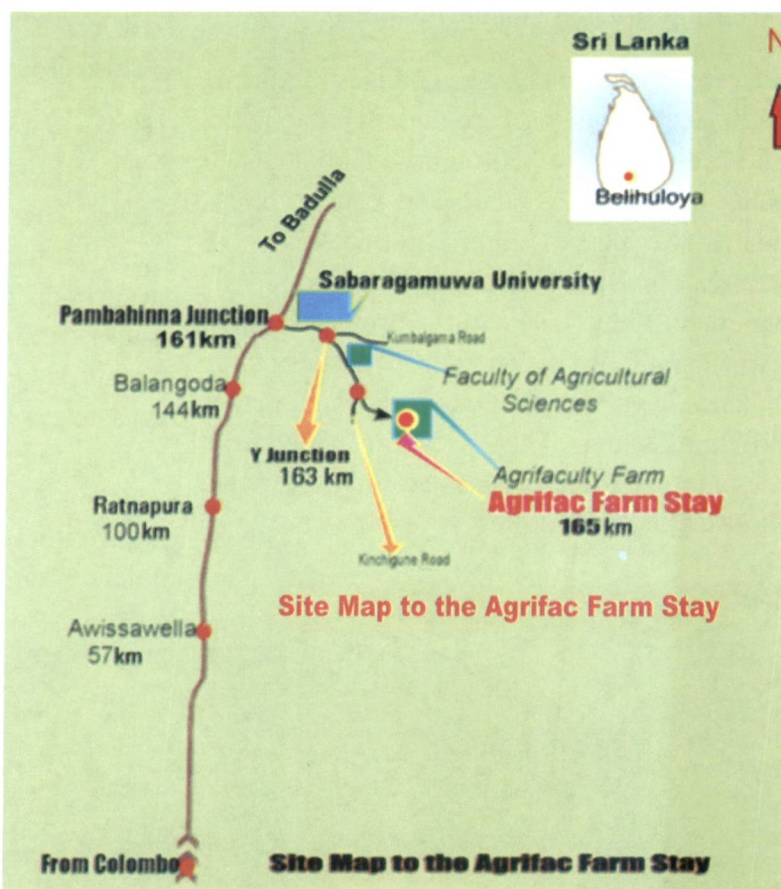
- 1) The ability to bring the main primary industry (agriculture) and the major service sector (tourism) together, by creating win-win situation for both sectors
- 2) Enhancing the possibility of the enlargement of the tourism sector and
- 3) The ability to absorb the expanding tourism sector.

There are very few number of agritourism places you can see within the Sri Lankan context. Agrifac Farm Stay is one of such place

that caters the agritourism facility.

Agrifac Farm Stay – Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

Agrifac Farm Stay is a wonderful destination on the Colombo-Badulla Highway and a perfect place to visit in your holiday tour to Sabaragamuwa. With nice green environment and the cool climate you will really enjoy the charming and peaceful rural life by visiting Belihuloya area. Agrifac Farm Stay is nested in this Belihuloya ranges, Sabaragamuwa Province, Sri Lanka.



It is managed by the Department of Agribusiness Management, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. They are carrying out all farm operations in their farm site with the academic purpose and as the agriculture students; they always contribute to add substantial value to their farm while doing their academic activities.

Therefore all the visitors can pierce a unique experience throughout the tour by visiting this attractive place. In addition to that, the green vegetation, reservoirs and small streams create a comfortable environment and nice scenes which attract more visitors to spend vacation within this wonderful place. Therefore Agrifac Farm Stay is a perfect stopover during your journey.

The staff of Agrifac Farm Stay always binds to facilitate a better service for the visitors with delicious meals and comfortable accommodations and **“Their hospitality is truly exceptional. Their cuisine is superb”**.

There are three cabana type cottages in Agrifac Farm Stay as the accommodation facilities. Each cottage has a bedroom with an attached bathroom and a veranda and can accommodate two persons, and children below 10 years. The three cabanas are named as Mountain View (*Giri wasa*), Farm View (*Keth wasa*), and Lake View (*Vil wasa*). These three cabanas have very unique view which makes different feelings. These views are gifted from the nature and the cabanas are built based on these distinctive features.

According to that, Mountain View has a spectacular view and front side is facing the world's end mountain region. It creates a marvelous scene every time and it adds an artistic value to this place. From Lake View you can see the stunning view of Samanala Lake and it is border on tropical heavy forest. Therefore it is a very graceful place. Farm View gives you a panoramic view of the lake, the jungle and the farm. Hence these three places will definitely be a fantastic restful break for your minds during your tour. Each cottage has hot water and ironing utility facilities, tea and coffee making facilities, and a basket of fresh fruits. All linen and bath towels are also provided.

The staff of the Agrifac Farm Stay also ready to spice your journey by providing delicious meals. Therefore you can have a cheerful breakfast including *kola kenda* (herbal drink), string hoppers, *kiribath* (milk rice), *pittu* (made from rice flour and coconut), fresh fruits and freshly squeezed fruit juices, yoghurt, farm eggs, tea, coffee and many more. And also you can have your lunch including rice and curry, vegetables, meat and eggs that are from the farm. Other than that delicious three course dinner is comprised of traditional Sri Lankan cuisines is available on request.





and protected agriculture practice. There are some tree houses and you can really enjoy bird watching. A well maintained herbal garden with lots of herbal plants and a camping site are also there. You can visit them freely.



All the visitors can enjoy on-going farm activities throughout their journey. You can engage and experience organic farming, traditional paddy cultivation, herbal gardening, feeding animals, milking, animal restraining, guided farm tour, you pick operations, protected agriculture practice, bird watching, cycling, jungle tracking, boating, hiking, BBQ and camping experience. Farm Stay is consisted with both cultivation and animal raring. Therefore visitors can experience both these activities.

The visitors who are coming Agrifac Farm Stay can visit some other nearest places which can add more value to their journey. Here Uggala Athulnuwara Devalaya takes an important place. This place is very popular among most tourists and it provides an ideal opportunity to see sabaragamuwa with several unique features. It is 10km away from the farm stay. There is another attractive place which is called Samanalawewa. It is a reservoir with the area

In addition to that you can gain knowledge on organic farming, traditional paddy cultivation



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of nearly 350 square kilometers at the confluence of the Walawe River and Belihuloya River, 7km away from the Agrifac Farm Stay.



The best known Horton plain is also near to the farm stay and it is a famous national park. Adisham is a bungalow which was made by a British governor before 1940s and it is situated at Haputale, near to the Agrifac Farm Stay. There are number of graceful waterfalls which attract tourists to this area. Pahan Thudawa waterfall is one of more attractive waterfalls near to Farm Stay. It is the last of a series of waterfalls along the Belihuloya: a tributary of the Walawe River. The highest waterfall in Sri Lanka (263m), Bambarakanda waterfall is 20km away from the Farm Stay. Other than that there are lots of nice places to visit. With visiting these delightful places you can really enjoy your journey further.

This is one of the most beautiful areas within the Sri Lankan boundaries and Belihuloya has come forward as the one of most attractive places among tourist at present. Therefore Agrifac Farm Stay is the best place to accommodate while your visit to Belihuloya.

It will definitely add both educational and recreational value to your journey by visiting faculty farm of Sabaragamuwa University. Other than that it will be a different experience in your life and you will really feel the difference between visit to luxurious hotel and a farm. Agrifac Farm Stay will also provide





chances to engage with farm operation while gaining knowledge about farming. The green carpet which is made by huge trees, plants, bushes and vines has created nice scenes within the farm land area and landscape brings additional artistic value to the Agrifac Farm Stay. Through all these things you can enjoy the green environment.

On the other hand the staff of Arifac Farm Stay is always committed to provide better services for you. Under this nice environment with better hospitality you can have a comfortable holiday by visiting this marvelous place. It will be a great vacation which is unforgettable in

your whole life time. Therefore I invite you all to visit this magical place at least once in your life. If you want to spend your vacation in this wonderful place you can contact Agrifac Farm Stay through dialing 045-22 80073 or sending an email to farmstay@agri.sab.ac.lk. It will be a great holiday.

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