

Webinar – “Agri Tourism – The Opportunities, Challenges & Prospects Ahead”

Date: 23rd Oct 2020

Panelists: Shri. Pandurang Taware, Director – ATDC & Baramati's Agro-Tourism Development Corporation & Deputy Director, Tourism Department, Nagpur

Shri Prashant Sawai, Dep. Director, Directorate of Tourism, Nagpur

The webinar was organized by Smart Welfare Foundation Nagpur, Agro-Tourism Development Council and VED Council. Pankaj Mahajan, Vice-President, VED Council, and Chairman – Agri- & Allied Services Forum of VED, and also V-P, Smart Foundation, who conceptualised the webinar, introduced the subject saying Agro-tourism is the most enjoyable tourism in the world, reducing congestion, pollution and stress in daily life, involving less money and time. The tourism sector, which contributes significantly to the development of the rural economy, also contributes about 6% to the country's GDP. Against this backdrop, the role of agro-tourism will continue to be important in the next two decades. The development of agro-tourism will strengthen the rural economy, aid the development of farmers, rural women and youth, and the development of infrastructure. However, agro-tourism experts say that it is our responsibility to provide a new and prosperous experience to tourists in order to achieve this goal.

Pandurang Taware, in his inaugural address, explained, what exactly agro-tourism was, saying it meant going to a place to spend quality time, relaxed from stressful life. He lamented that Vidarbha was rich in water, land and forests but the tourism sector had not developed as it could have. Resource mapping needs to be done by linking agriculture and tourism. He suggested the option of setting up an anchor village by setting up a tourism committee through the Gram Panchayat. Oranges, cotton and Soyabean are the major crops in Vidarbha, and agro-tourism can be boosted by making value-added products or organizing festivals based on these. He guided budding agro-tourism entrepreneurs, and dispelled their doubts, answering the queries of these participants.

Deputy Director Prashant Sawai gave complete information about the solutions to the problems that come up while starting an actual agro-tourism centre. Out of the total area of agriculture, 80 per cent should be under agriculture and 20 per cent for agro-tourism. The tourism policy provides rules for the construction of rooms and kitchens. Tourists love to experience first-hand effects of farming, such as sowing and cutting the crops. A proposal to conduct district-wise agro-tourism workshops is under consideration. No subsidy is being given to agro-tourism activities directly. Experts suggest that tourists should be well-informed about hospitality, local food culture, presence on social media, local climate, history, geography etc..