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Agrotourism Training

Module 1: Introduction to Tourism & Agrotourism



Trainer Manual

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from relief to recovery

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Module 1: Introduction to Tourism & Agrotourism

Unit 1: Introduction to Tourism and Agrotourism

Tourism happens when people travel away from their homes and go to other places for different reasons. These reasons could be for fun/leisure, for business, or to visit friends and family. While they are in the place they are visiting, they look out for things to do and entertain themselves. This created opportunities for enterprising businesses to develop and offer fun activities and earn some money. The more things there are to do in an area, the longer visitors may stay, and the more money they may spend.

Agrotourism is any agriculture-based tourism experience that brings tourists to agricultural areas. It is an **experience!** One that provides connection to nature, rural areas and the outdoors. It can be romantic, healthy and quiet, and may involve adventure, education and/or learning.

Agrotourism belongs to two economic sectors: agriculture and tourism. While producing an agricultural product, it also offers a tourism product or service to visitors and tourists.

Agrotourism may offer both products (e.g. fresh produce) and/or services (e.g. tours) to visitors.

Benefits of Agrotourism

There are various benefits of agrotourism, both for the farmer/s, and for the communities in which the agrotourism is located.

For the Farmer	For the Local Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agrotourism provides an additional income to farmers, over and above what they make from normal farming activities. • Can sell their produce/products directly to consumers instead of using a middleman. • Can market their produce directly to consumers – and create a name or brand for their product. • Can branch out into other stages of production (e.g. berry farmer produces jams) and expand their reach in the market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job/training opportunities • Tourism brings money and spending into the area. • Provides opportunities for the development of other businesses. • Farmers can provide locals with produce or products to sell in their stores/stalls. • These local businesses can expand their businesses by creating value added products from raw produce – for example food processing like making juices, jams, cheese, etc. • Local culture is preserved.

In addition, agrotourism also has the potential to help revitalise rural economies, educate the public about agriculture, and preserve agricultural heritage. Community-focused farms may find agrotourism an attractive option because it provides more labour opportunities for local residents

Agrotourism as a Business Opportunity

Economic hardships and changes in the farming and livestock industries led to farmers, especially those with small, family-owned farms, supplementing their basic agricultural income by exploring new ways to generate money.

Fortunately for farmers, many people are becoming interested in where their food items are produced, and how crops are grown, and livestock is raised. Public interest in local foods is a growing trend, and some people like to visit farms for leisure or buy local food while on holiday (especially vineyards). Many small farmers are interested in receiving visitors as a strategy to earn additional income, selling farm products, and even involving guests in some helpful farm work. In addition, many small farmers want to increase their direct-to-consumer sales, whether to members of neighbouring communities or to tourists visiting the area.

These two needs come together in agrotourism which helps rebuild a relationship between producer and consumer that has nearly disappeared with the rise of intensive, large-scale farming.

From a business standpoint, agrotourism can play one of three basic roles for the farmer:

1. As an **extra source of income**: agrotourism supports the farm's primary role as a farm. The usual agricultural products still generate most of the income while agrotourism, like offering a dairy tour to school groups, provides a little extra income on the side.
2. As an **equal activity**: agrotourism and traditional agriculture provide relatively equal profits. An example of this would be a strawberry farm where half the crops are sold to a wholesaler (who then provides strawberries to supermarkets or into canneries for jam making), while the other half are provided to paying guests who do strawberry picking as an activity and pay for what they pick.
3. As the **main offering**: agrotourism is the main activity on a farm. The role of agriculture and agrotourism may be reversed; agriculture supplements the agrotourism business. An example of this would be an apple farm that makes most of its money from guests paying to spend a weekend there, but still sells some apples to wholesalers on the side.

Agrotourism operations tend to be quite small with relatively little impact on the area. This means most farmers looking to start an agrotourism business don't have to worry about their land and facilities suffering from a high volume of visitors, or any subsequent environmental impact or damage.

Agrotourism gives farmers the opportunity to educate visitors about their way of life and share their agricultural heritage with others. In the next unit, we'll look at the various forms agrotourism can take.

Responsible Tourism

Responsible tourism: tourism activities that are aware of the impacts that they make in the local economy, to the local people and culture, and to the environment. Responsible tourism tries to maximise positive impact, and minimise negative impacts on these.

Responsible Tourism consists of three pillars:

1. Environmental
2. Economic
3. Social

The pillars, concepts and practices of Responsible Tourism must always be kept in mind when conducting agrotourism business and services.

The key message from each of these pillars is:

Environmental	Economic	Social-Cultural
Protect the earth and everything that lives on it so that we can all live safely and comfortably on the planet.	Spend money on local goods and services to spread tourist money to local people and communities.	Respect and protect local cultures and people.

Environmental responsibility

Agrotourism is nature-friendly, which is why protecting the environment is especially important. Do this by:

- **Minimising energy use:** use as little electricity and gas as possible.
- **Minimising water use:** find ways not to waste fresh, clean water: not dripping taps, leaking pipes; harvest rainwater to water animals and crops.
- **Managing waste:**
 - Reduce: the amount of waste you produce: use biodegradable, reusable or no packaging for farm produce; provide takeaway or picnic meals in washable, reusable containers, not disposable containers, provide water refill stations to cut down on plastic bottles.
 - Reuse: items as much as you can before replacing them.
 - Recycle: items wherever possible.



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- **No littering:** collect any litter that may be found on your property as soon as possible – this keeps it looking nice and keeps harmful substances out of water sources and the ground.

Economic responsibility

Key message: Spend money on local goods and services to spread tourist money to local people and communities. This will be a natural result of agrotourism as agrotourism businesses usually employ local people (often family and friends), and buy local produce as needed.

Do this by:

- Supporting local suppliers: buy locally to keep money in the local community
- Employing local people
- Promoting local goods and products to tourists to buy (ensure these are sustainable and authentic)
- Teaming up with any neighbouring attractions to create tour routes or packages

Social and cultural responsibility

Key message: respect and protect local cultures and people. In agrotourism, this is likely to happen naturally because agrotourism is a locally-based business, usually depending on local people and culture for its activities and charm.

Do this by:

- Involving the local community in setting up a viable tourism attraction which may include other farms or businesses outside of the main attraction e.g. a wine farm may direct visitors to a nearby cheese farm.
- Assessing social impacts of tourism activities e.g. will this benefit the community?
- Maintaining and encouraging social and cultural diversity in the workforce.

The Tourism Market

What tourists want and who agrotourism should be aimed at

With leisure being the main reason for travel in the KRI, most tourists are looking for a relaxing, fun, and sometimes educational experience that suits all people on the trip. Parents want their children to be entertained while they relax, young adults travelling with friends want to have some fun, etc.

The need for a relaxing time away from home applies to all ages, backgrounds, family units, etc. However, the product offered by the agrotourism destination needs to suit a specific group or two or three groups. It does not help to offer water-based activities for elderly

people who might be unable to swim, or to offer long hiking trails to families with small children who cannot walk a distance.

It is important to take stock of what the property can offer and also know the types of tourists and what they are looking for. This will increase the likelihood of tourists visiting the property.

Tourists may be at different stages of life and their needs will differ as a result. Different activities will be unsuitable for one tourist but perfect for another. For example, family groups will look for different types of activities (e.g. opportunities for children to pet animals, collect eggs, pick fruit) to young singles (e.g. more physical or adventure activities) or a couple who are retired professionals (e.g. birdwatching, nature walks).

Types of tourists

There are different types of tourists who make up the market that is attracted to agrotourism products. These are in two broad categories of domestic and international visitors.

Domestic

There may be domestic or regional domestic tourists. Domestic tourists being Kurdish and Iraqi people travelling within the country for fun or for business. Agrotourism visitors are most likely to be leisure tourists, looking for fun, entertainment and relaxation.

The income the tourists have available to spend influences how long they stay in a destination, the more they have available to spend the longer they will stay.

Examples of domestic and regional tourists:

- **Family travel:** this is parents with children of different ages, usually travelling in school holidays or on weekends, often from Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Duhok and Halabja, looking for a place to relax in the country away from the city. They look for family and child-friendly activities and places to stay or do things in natural settings.
- **School groups:** these groups are usually organised by schools or clubs to take pupils to places so that they can learn while they visit. They may go to farms to learn about agricultural practices, or for interest to see how food is grown and/or processed.
- **Youth groups:** groups of young people going on holiday together.
- **Regional visitors:** residents from the region who can be any age group and normally interested in only using the catering facilities and enjoying the peaceful outdoor setting.

International

International tourists are people from other countries, further away from our neighbours. They come to Kurdistan to experience culture, scenery, history, architecture, food and so on. They can be any age – young backpackers, or retired people who have the time and money to travel. They may even be foreign people living in Kurdistan (Erbil and other places) and Iraq e.g. Baghdad for work, and who like to explore the country.

How Tourists Buy Tourism Products

A tourist or visitor can buy/book a tourism (or agrotourism) product (e.g. a farm tour ticket, a farmstay, a picnic lunch) in different ways. Options include booking/buying directly at the product (on the farm), through an Online Travel Agent (OTA – e.g. TripAdvisor), or a Travel Agent.

How visitors buy the product individually:

Direct from the Farm	OTA	Travel Agent	DMC/ Tour Operator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrive at the farm and pay when they are there. May also book online if they have such a facility on their website. Visitor must physically be there to buy or book 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Book online through an OTA such as TripAdvisor, Booking.com, or other. The visitor can be anywhere to make this purchase – in KRI or any other country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Book through a travel agent; this may be done in person, by telephone or email. Can be in KRI, or in other countries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A visit to the farm or activity is included in a tour package The package is sold to tourists who travel in groups.
Product example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picking fruit Farm tour Farm produce – farmstall, shop Dining 	Product example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farmstays B&B Working farm holiday 	Product example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning experience, farmstay, guided activities B&B Working farm holiday 	Product example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cheese tours Lunches, meals, picnics General farm tours Food processing on farms – e.g. dairy.

Destination Marketing Companies (MDCs) are also called Tour Operators. They package different products (transport, accommodation, activities) into a package tour that they sell to

tourists who join their tours. If farmer has a product that can be included in such a tour, this means constant business – which can also be seen as bulk sales. Because of this, the product owner/farmer sells the product at a discounted price to the tour operator.

Tourism routes

Route tourism is the linking together a series of tourism attractions to promote local tourism by encouraging visitors to travel from one attraction to another. They can be:

- **themed routes** that link products of the same , such as a wine route, or a fruit route such as a route to different types of fruit farms, or
- **general interest routes** linking a variety of interesting rural attractions e.g. crafters, artists, farms, brewery, farmstalls, dairy, cheese making, food processing, etc., all linked into one interesting drivable area.

Routes are generally presented to tourists on a map, with all the participants indicated and explained on the map. These are usually self-drive for domestic tourists, but can also be enjoyed by self-drive foreign tourists, and by tour operators with groups.

A route is created when a series of agrotourism businesses in an area join together to offer an experience to tourists. For example, a series of animal farms such as a dairy farm, a goat farm, a chicken farm and an alpaca farm could form the basis of a ‘*Farm Animals*’ route.

Types of routes or trails:

Specialised Product route examples	General Interest Routes: Attractions could include diverse stops such as
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce route: e.g. fruit route: pomegranate farm, apple farm, strawberry picking, sumac farm, grape or wine farm. • Product routes/trails : e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wine route: wineries, tastings, wine courses; ○ Fruit route: fruit farms and fruit product producers on the route – could include honey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crafters: potters, weavers, jewellery makers, special local crafts • Gastronomy: local cuisine, cooking classes, tastings, tahini mill • Beverages: wine, fruit drinks • Natural sites: picnic site, view spots, waterfall, caves • Cultural: historic sites • Activities: horse riding, pottery making, guided walks, birdwatching, hiking, trekking

Routes are a good opportunity for developing new tourism areas that have many cultural resources that appeal to special interest tourists. These visitors often stay longer and spend more to pursue their particular interest. Routes appeal to a great variety of users such as overnight visitors that visit the route as part of a special interest holiday, or day visitors that frequent the route (or part of it) on excursions.

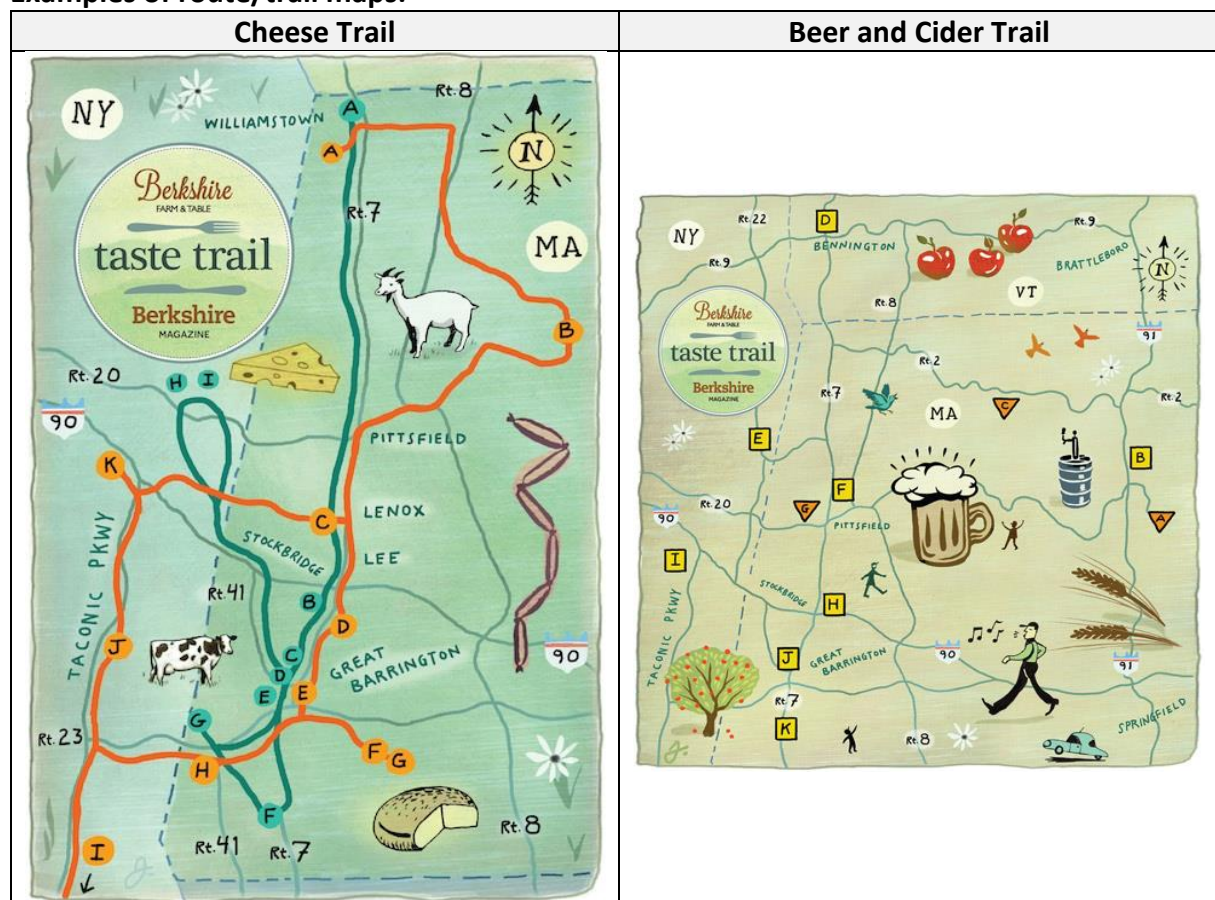
However, route tours require more than two or three service providers to be feasible and the farmers may require assistance in developing these routes. The more attractions the more likely the tourists will engage with the route. However, once a series of properties agree to work together the results can be impressive as seen in many countries.

The development of tourism routes offers opportunities to form partnerships and collaboration between different products along the route. Some of the best and most successful examples of such 'rural routes' are the development of wine or food circuits, which have been widely researched in Europe, North America and Australasia.

This also builds relationships between local businesses who may be able to support each other in other ways, e.g. directing tourists to other attractions to visit next. The main challenge that farmers may face is finding other farms to partner with and facilitating and maintaining those connections.

These routes give more options to visitors in terms of activities and opportunities to learn and engage with a theme in different ways. Tourists also want to support local business, so going on rural routes has become a worldwide trend.

Examples of route/trail maps:



How to develop a route

1. Participants:

- Find products within a certain geographical area that would offer a range of interesting and diverse stops on the route.
- Identify and include non-agricultural stops e.g. cultural (ancient mosque or religious sites), natural attractions (e.g. waterfalls, caves) or other sights or activities.
- Meet and explain the idea: show examples of routes to the other potential members and explain the concept. Look at a few ideas online e.g. Jordan and Lithuania.
- Set up a collaborative platform e.g. a co-operative to be the basis of membership to which everyone contributes an ongoing amount to develop, manage and market the route. Agree on how this will work and what this will cost.

2. Develop:

- Products: a range of diverse but interesting and complementary products.
- Quality standards for inclusion on the route – product, cleanliness, access, facilities e.g. toilets.
- A name, logo, signage, map and social media platform. Find out if the local tourism authority and help with this.

3. Working with other farmers

- Test each other's products – experience the product and give constructive feedback – visits each stop along the way and help to improve each one.

4. Marketing:

- Decide on a catchy name: e.g. the Fruit Route, The Panorama Route; the Garden Route, the Mountain Meander, Kurdish Classics
- Design a clear, simple, eye-catching logo
- Agree on standard road signage for each product
- Develop a map and leaflet with product info
- Create an online presence:
 - Website
 - social media platform

5. Get business!

- Inform local tourism hubs like resorts about the route
- Invite tour operators on the route to experience all of the products on the route – ask their feedback on improvements or adjustments needed.

Unit 2: International Agrotourism Experiences

Agrotourism provides an opportunity for visitors to learn the rich diversity of agriculture through farming operations within a wide range of commodities – from fruit, dairy, animal husbandry, spices, and so on. Agrotourism leaves a lasting impression on curious visitors wanting to experience the fascinating world of the production of food and natural materials.

There are many examples of agrotourism internationally, but there are some that stand out above the rest. Here are some examples of agrotourism products from different countries.

United States of America: California

Agrotourism is big in California, USA, because of the diversity of agriculture in the region. There is also a large population looking to escape from cities and get in touch with nature and agriculture, often to entertain their families. The following agrotourism products are examples of agrotourism in California:

Product: Farm Tours and Drives	
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tractor rides ● Petting animals e.g., baby goats, ● Buying fresh produce, eggs, dairy such as goat cheese ● Buying artisanal products (bread, cheese, drinks) ● Food offerings or picnic sites ● Information/interpretation space or centre ● Opportunity to pick food, feed animals, engage with farm activities
Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Families with children ● Couples ● Young friend groups
Services and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parking ● Ticket booth ● Transport: e.g., tractor, open utility vehicle ● Shop or farm stall ● Toilets/restrooms ● Some form of dining area: café, restaurant, picnic sites
Critical Success Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An <i>interesting</i> product or tour experience with good content ● Competent and well-informed staff to lead tours ● Providing information in a way that children enjoy it and engage ● Being interactive (but safe)

Product: Farm Stays	
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staying in rustic accommodation on a farm / farm-style accommodation experience ● Participate in farm activities e.g. collect eggs, feed lambs, harvest berries, churn butter

Product: Farm Stays

Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families with children • Young or old couples • Groups of friends
Services and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rustic, farm-style accommodation: clean and comfortable • Meals if accommodation is not self-catering • Parking • Dining area e.g. in the farmhouse • Information/instruction on farm activities and daily work
Critical Success Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives families the chance to live the farm lifestyle without having to do actual farm works

Product: U-Pick Farms

Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors can pick fruit, berries or vegetables • Potentially buying fresh produce or products made on the property • Picnics • Cooking classes (making jams, preserves, drinks, etc.)
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strawberry picking • Pumpkin patches • Apple picking • Grape picking (and pressing)
Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families with children • Couples • Young friend groups
Services and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale and weighing facilities • Punnets or containers for collecting the picked produce • Shop selling fresh produce and other products processed from the fresh produce • Parking • Toilets/restrooms
Critical Success Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy access and good signage • Having crops that have a long harvesting season • Coincide harvest time with school holidays

Product: Farmers Markets	
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Large area for farmers to set up their stall – may need cover in winter. ● Farmers come together in one place to sell their wares ● Tourists can buy artisanal and farm-fresh products ● Some farmers may choose to bring animals like ponies for additional activities for families with children
Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People looking to buy farm fresh products – families, couples, singles, retired people.
Services and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stall spaces ● Electricity for some stalls (e.g. for refrigeration) ● Parking ● Toilets/restrooms
Critical Success Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sufficient farmers to make the market a good drawcard/attractive to visitors ● Marketing of the market – set dates and times

Product: Farm to Table	
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Farm-fresh ingredients and artisanal products are used to create tasty dishes – could be traditional or local dishes. ● Usually organic produce is used as ingredients ● Meal may be offered in an interesting traditional setting. ● Produce and dishes are seasonal
Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Families ● Local community ● Tour groups ● People staying in farm stay accommodation
Services and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cooking facilities ● Dining facilities ● Service staff
Critical Success Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Produce must be locally produced ● Dishes must be authentic, interesting, using local ingredients ● Dining areas that reflect the type of cuisine.

Italy: Tuscany

Italy is well known for its farmstays, the rural areas have many accommodation options for travellers who want a break from the modern world. The farmstays are often set on very old properties, most with original infrastructure and buildings, this is part of their appeal.

Tuscany offers mostly farmstay experiences with recreation and adventure activities such as horse riding and walking in the countryside. Most farmhouses have kept their outer appearance and had modern alterations inside for the comfort of the guests.

Most farms have activities for all seasons such as skiing, hiking, swimming, bike riding, U-pick, etc. Italy receives more than a million agrotourism visitors in a year.

Product: Farmstays	
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Old farmhouses converted to accommodate tourists ● Quaint pastoral experiences ● Dining space ● Authentic local meals
Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● International tourists: self-drive or FIT ● Domestic tourists
Services and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clean, comfortable accommodation ● Bathrooms (private or shared) ● Meals and dining area ● Sometimes cooking classes to make authentic, traditional dishes
Critical Success Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cleanliness and good housekeeping ● Privacy for guests ● Safe food preparation ● Good meals

Lithuania

Agrotourism in Lithuania is largely focused on heritage. This means:

- Traditional methods of farming
- Traditional processing of produce
- Traditional living
- Educating visitors about the history of the area

This is officially known as 'Heritage Tourism' and can include showing visitors historic sites, equipment, and practices.

Azerbaijan

The agrotourism sector in Azerbaijan is developing. There are some existing agrotourism businesses (see below) and the government and development partners such as GIZ have invested in training and supporting farmers in the development of additional agrotourism businesses.

Examples of Agrotourism Products in Azerbaijan

- **Citrus Valley** offers farm (fruit) tours, a tasting of jams and tea, and offers lunch/meals for private groups and organised tour groups. It also offers U-pick opportunities for different fruits, has a farm stall selling preserved fruits and veg, has local women prepare meals such as tandoor-style chicken and bread, art activities for children (and adults) and cooking demonstrations and classes.

https://www.instagram.com/citrusvalley_lankaran/?hl=en

- **Lakeside Garden:** ‘agro-ecotourism farm’ is a social enterprise that offers a range of products and activities including accommodation in an nicely renovated farm house, musical events, outdoor movies for kids, traditional food provided by local women, camping. https://www.instagram.com/lakeside_garden_ismayilli/?hl=en
- **Bio-Garden** is a farm with orchards and animals that presents different activities and experiences to visitors, especially families. The farm also has a restaurant for dining and events. <https://www.instagram.com/biogarden.az/?hl=en>
- **Hope Lake:** offers rustic but comfortable accommodation and authentic local food in a beautiful natural setting along a small lake. https://www.instagram.com/hopelake_/?hl=en

Turkey

Agrotourism is becoming popular in Turkey, because of the many different landscapes and produce the country has to offer. The resort city of Bodrum is situated near the coast and has begun to offer a wide variety of agrotourism experiences. The following agrotourism products are examples:

Product: Farm Stays	
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staying in farm ‘mansions’ in remote areas • Participate in farm activities e.g. collect eggs, feed lambs, harvest berries, churn butter • Many farms offer sports, such as horse or bike riding
Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young singles travelling alone • Young friend groups
Services and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation is usually in large, well-kept buildings • Meals if accommodation is not self-catering • Parking • Dining area e.g. in the farmhouse • Information/instruction on farm activities and daily work • Renting sport equipment, e.g. bikes • Guided tours
Critical Success Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A break from the cities • A chance to experience farm lifestyle without losing modern comforts

Product: Educational Farms	
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors can pick fruit, berries or vegetables • Potentially buying fresh produce or products made on the property • Learning about ancient grains, medicinal plants and aromatic plants grown in the area • Cooking classes (making jams, preserves, drinks, etc.)
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cologne producing mandarin farms

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Olive picking (and pressing)
Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School groups ● Families with older children
Services and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Punnets or containers for collecting the picked produce ● Shop selling fresh produce and other products processed from the fresh produce ● Museum ● Parking ● Toilets/restrooms ● Guided tour
Critical Success Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Easy access and good signage ● Having crops that have a good history or unusual uses (e.g. cologne made from mandarins) ● Well prepared dialogue for tour guides

Iran

Agrotourism in Iran is only beginning, but the opportunities revolve around special Persian produce such as saffron, dates, barberries, pomegranates, pistachios, rose petals and the making of rose water.

The saffron harvest season begins in early November and draws people from all over to see the bright purple flowers that cover the fields and create an outstanding landscape in dry regions in Iran. Major saffron producers of Iran are located on the east side of the country.

Iran is investing heavily in large agrotourism farms that create up to 40 jobs per farm. The aim is to attract foreign and domestic tourists while promoting agriculture as well as tourism.¹

Some agrotourism products or tours are seasonal, depending on agricultural cycles such as rose distillation in April, saffron field visiting in November, pistachio and pomegranate in October, dry figs in August, barberry in September, dates, raisins, tea in May.

Product: Farm tours	
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learning about agricultural processes while engaging in production activities
Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● International people interested in culture, history, Persian products such as saffron, dates, rose (water), barberries, etc. ● Domestic tourists – families, friend groups.
Services and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Farm tours and participate in picking e.g. saffron, rose petals, berries, pomegranates. Making rose water. ● Learning about agricultural processes ● Tasting products

¹ <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/465663/New-agritourism-farm-comes-on-stream-in-northern-Iran> (Creative Commons)

Product: Farm tours

Critical Success Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aimed at the correct market • Activities are interesting, informative and engaging
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Jordan

Agriculture in Jordan has been developing for a number of years. They can offer a range of agrotourism experiences which are presented and can be booked on a dedicated website. Each product is named, described and the duration, cost and inclusions are listed.

Product diversity includes offerings such as:

- Bread making
- Olive harvesting
- Grape harvesting and making grape rolls (fruit leather)
- Glycerine soap making
- Pottery making
- Sundried tomato pastry making
- Vineyard tour and tasting
- Forest walk with traditional breakfast
- Making traditional bracelet cookies
- Beekeeping and making beeswax candles
- Making and tasting cheese balls

<http://bookagri.com/en/portal/exp>

Unit 3: Agrotourism Development in the KRI

Tourism in the KRI

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) has beautiful natural landscapes and interesting cultural peculiarities that meet the travel interests of many tourists both domestic and foreign. It is well positioned geographically, not far from Europe and Middle Eastern markets, and with many opportunities to participate in economic growth of emerging tourism markets or in developing cross border tourism. It also has excellent preconditions to develop regional tourism under specific themes such as culture, eco-tourism and rural tourism to attract more tourists.

Agrotourism in KRI

The main challenge for the KRI is to introduce the concept of agrotourism to the region, then develop and support ideas for agrotourism businesses. Implementing new approaches for regional and rural development is particularly important for stimulating the development of the non-oil economy, increasing the country's overall competitiveness, and addressing rural-to-urban drift.

Both the agriculture and tourism sectors have development potential, but this potential is not yet channelled towards development of agrotourism. Developing new agrotourism products will tap into huge potential in this economic space.

In the short term (3 – 5 years) the focus should be on domestic tourists as the main market for agrotourism in the KRI. A good market for development is young and older families with children, and health tourists, by offering them customised tourism facilities and products all year round (during all four seasons). Interest by local tourists and by all who are interested in healthy living and/or slow food is an additional advantage and opportunity for agrotourism.

Additionally, there is a need to focus on foreign tourists from Western Europe who are seeking authentic experiences in nature.

Distribution of agriculture and agrotourism

The main regions that have agrotourism potential are in the following economic regions: **Amedi, Barderesh, Choman, Shaqlawe, Dukan, Sitek, Halabja, Bogrd and Qaradagh.**

Challenges for Agrotourism Development

Supply vs demand: there is a mismatch between supply and demand and a lack of intermediary support structures that enable buyers and suppliers to come together – including/such as: interlinking portals, organisations between agricultural and tourism entities, tourism agencies dealing with agrotourism tours.



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Lack of cooperation and collaboration: farmers and tourism businesses (tour operators, tour guides, hotels) do very little to cooperate and work together to develop agrotourism; it seems they are waiting for this to be done by a third party.

Industry value chain links: there is also a need to form close ties between the tourism agencies in Erbil and other economic regions.

Limited products: Agrotourism is limited to visitors staying in village guest houses on an informal basis with no formal booking systems or such. Tourism and hospitality business owners need help to develop their skills and knowledge in how to develop, promote and operate rural tourism products.

Skills development: farmers need training in:

- welcoming guests
- presenting their daily activities in an interesting and interactive way
- accommodation to meet the needs of rural tourists
- tourism in general
- language skills
- easy access / support for financial resources to develop their agrotourism services and facilities.
- how to start to agrotourism activities
- expectations of tourists/benefits of farmers
- motivation and leading
- customer service and communications
- finance / accounting and reporting
- sales and marketing
- digital marketing (including social media marketing)
- quality control
- Food and drinks service, menu planning and pricing
- room cleanliness / housekeeping
- legislative regulation acts in agrotourism
- guiding services
- computing/IT
- road and directional signs

Operational standards: standards must be prepared and adopted for minimum conditions in rural accommodation and for basic and relevant knowledge for participants in this field.

These challenges need to be taken into account when creating and maintaining sustainable and beneficial linkages between tourism and agriculture sectors.

Product Gaps (opportunities) in Agrotourism

Some gaps that may be very useful for farmers to understand and possibly meet with agrotourism products, are presented below. Family-friendly activities are particularly emphasised and could take many different forms.

Name	Description/Examples/Ideas
Farm experiences	Farm related experiences for visitors relating to harvesting, tasting, cooking / preparation of national / traditional foods, tours for kids and teens, farm animal interaction, bed and breakfast / accommodation, etc.
Accommodation	There is very little rural accommodation, especially where visitors can have an authentic farm experience. Farmstays (staying with the farmer's family either in their house or in other farm buildings decorated and equipped for the purpose) is an opportunity to develop in many rural areas.
Gastronomy experiences	Cooking classes with local experts, supported by translators where possible. Using 'culinary matriarchs' that are holders of the region's ancient food recipes make such experiences very authentic. Classes should be entertaining and provide for engagement and interaction with the visitors – getting them to help, try their hand, cook their own dishes, etc.
Food or agrotourism routes	Food routes based on products different products that are available locally.
Local tours	Expand and develop a range of thematic routes by local people who know the local nature and can provide interesting stories, quizzes and / or activities along the road. Develop a communication platforms / channels / booking portals listing local tour services for tour companies / visitors in different languages.
Agricultural factory tours	Agricultural factory experiences (e.g. wineries, tahini mills, jam or preserve factories, dairy processing, etc.) with professional farm tours (especially for kids and teens), product tastings and presentation of products, participation in production processes, etc.
Kid's entertainment	Activities, entertainment and spaces designed for families and kids such as family-friendly nature / agriculture experiences. Classes where families and children can make an artisanal product, bake bread, cook, etc. Engaging with animals: petting safe animals, collecting eggs, feeding ducks, etc. Mini environment course – learning the trees, flowers, animals, birds. Dress-up activities and family photoshoots. Bonfires and singalongs.
Cultural experiences	Farm-to-table offerings can provide a cultural experience, offering traditional meals, accompanied by local music and dance performances, photoshoots wearing ethnic / traditional clothes, etc.). Wineries with wine tastings and on-premise wine sales (possible with snacks, cheeses, light meals).

Name	Description/Examples/Ideas
Trekking and hiking	Good, safe, well-marked hiking routes should be developed and have some cultural involvement – e.g. hiking to a culturally significant place. Train and offer the services of good local hiking guides
Camping	There is a demand for public and private camping grounds with well-developed facilities near to nature areas and hiking trails with adequately priced booking services for camping grounds, equipment rental. Supporting leisure and recreation opportunities e.g. bonfires, hiking tours, photo sessions, connections with local hostels / accommodation, ethnic experiences using local food, music, dance, crafts, etc. should/could be developed and offered to entertain campers.
Outdoor experiences	Outdoor leisure and recreation experiences and other short duration outdoor tourism experiences in picturesque natural areas such as cycling, mountain biking, quad biking, picnic / barbeque facilities, cooking equipment rentals, etc.
Horse riding experiences	Horse trails and horse-riding opportunities along interesting / beautiful routes with the telling of stories / legends / myths by guides.
Crafts and giftware	Develop and diversity a range of traditional art / craft forms to create contemporary handmade products as souvenirs, homeware, and giftware (e.g. pottery / clay flowerpots, cups, cutting boards, coasters, trays, boxes, knitted, wooden and wool toys, epoxide resin products such as ashtrays, jewellery, local produced textile and clothing like silk dresses and tops, skirts and scarfs, beaded brooches and headbands. Establishment of handicraft markets and selling of hand made products to tourists and visitors
Souvenirs	Locally grown produce and food products must be beautifully packaged and presented in key tourism places e.g. dairy products, fruit products, sweets, tahini, etc. Limited availability of small (easily transportable), lower-priced souvenirs such as magnets, gift cards, notebooks, postage stamps, etc.
Festivals and events	Develop events to attract tourists to the region. This includes providing information/marketing the event, organising the event, co-ordination of regional level festivals and events. An online booking / ticketing systems for tour companies and the general public would enhance the success of events like this.
Rural cultural experiences	Limited development of cultural tours / experiences in rural / natural areas which visitors / tour companies can incorporate into holidays (e.g. presentation of local arts, crafts, music, dance, master classes), as well as the limited promotion of such experiences on travel and online booking portal apps.

Challenges to agrotourism development:

Lack of tourism product knowledge: while farmers have land and agricultural activities, they often do not realise the commercial potential of developing these as interesting agrotourism products. They generally do not know much about tourism, or what tourists want or are



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interested in. They would also need to ensure consistent product quality if offering their product to tour operators to include into tour packages.

Coordinated planning: Several local products such as fruit jam, dried fruits, preserves, etc. produced by farmers can be of interest to visitors. However, these products are usually not planned to be offered to tourists in any easily accessible way such as farm stalls or shops. Working together with other farmers and producers in a coordinated effort can establish an agrotourism destination or route.

Training in tourism and hospitality skills:

- Farmers need training in general hospitality skills such as welcoming guests, offering clean, comfortable accommodation that tourists would enjoy as a rural experience, preparing, presenting and serving traditional and farm-to-table meals to guests, and a general hospitality and service ethic.
- Other training needs include language skills and easy access / support for financial resources in order to organise accommodation. There is a need to assist farmers who have agrotourism products on how to form close ties with tourism agencies in Baku.

Funding: some farmers may be interested in developing an agrotourism attraction, but they may often not have the funds to do so. Lack of investment funding is often a barrier to offering a good quality product in sufficient quantity to get business from tour operators.

Funding opportunity for development of Agrotourism Products: CARP

The Covid 19 Adaptation and Recovery Pilot (CARP) project:

Financed by the World Bank Group through the I3RF.

- Implemented by GIZ on behalf of the Iraqi Federal Ministry of Finance.
- Aims at supporting the resilience of viable micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and the sustainability of their intermediaries through **capacity enhancement and access to finance** in Iraq.



CARP

COVID 19 Adaptation
and Recovery Pilot

CARP project: Access2Growth:

- Supporting Iraqi MSMEs to enhance their capabilities, focusing on achieving **growth through financial support** (vouchers and the matching grants).
- Central theme of tech adoption, digital transformation and digitalisation.
- MSMEs will benefit from eLearning services offered by CARP.
- Developing a **grant ecosystem** to catalyse private investment into Iraqi start-ups.

The project is aimed at:

- **Start-ups:** established less than 5 years ago
- **MSMEs:** operating for a minimum of 2 years



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- **VCs:** willing to invest in Iraqi SGBs

Access2Growth grant instruments for **Start-ups** offer:

1. **Capacity Development Grants:** Provide funding for emerging seed/early-stage investment funds willing to invest in Iraqi SGBs.
2. **Co-investment Grants:** Supplementary funding for start-ups from angel investors or venture capitals.
3. **Pre-investment Grants:** Grants to start-ups that show promise but are not yet 'investment ready'.

Access2Growth grant instruments for **MSMEs** offer:

1. **Vouchers:** Qualifying MSMEs can apply for funding up to a maximum of 4,000 USD to upgrade their business.
2. **Grant Matching:** Qualifying MSMEs can apply for funding up to a maximum value of 20,000 USD to upgrade their business.

Criteria for Access 2Growth Vouchers / Grant Matching

- Be duly registered under Iraqi laws as a private company
- Core operations conducted in the Republic of Iraq
- Operating for a minimum of two years
- Not have participation or ownership by any public entity
- Minimum number of employees: 5
- Growing business or have great potential to grow
- **Matched Grants only:**
 - Willing to invest in its business development plans and activities by 20 percent of the total project cost
 - Clear and sound business development plan
 - Full capacity to implement the presented solution or project

For further information:

Visit: <https://www.carp-iraq.com/>

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