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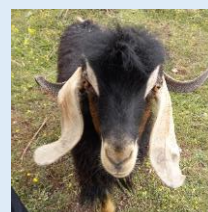
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ZOAC
from relief to recovery

Agrotourism Training

Module 2: Agrotourism Experiences



Trainer Manual

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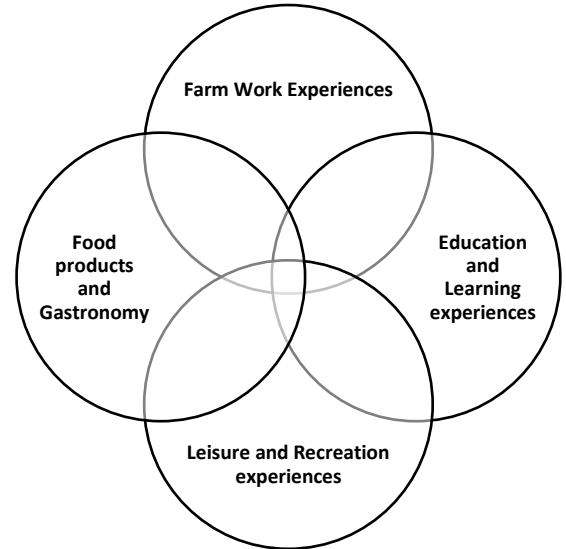
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Module 2: Agrotourism Destination Experiences

Agrotourism offers a range of experiences to the visitor. Each of these has its own character, advantages and disadvantages, and is based on the type of agriculture being conducted as well as other factors such as access, safety, interest, extent of activities and other such issues. The type and scope of agrotourism varies drastically depending on the type of farm, available land and how much of the farming business is aimed at the agrotourism market.

There are four main types of agrotourism destination experiences, and sometimes they may overlap based on the range of products or activities that a farm is able to offer visitors.



In addition, agrotourism experiences can either relate to the agricultural product of the farm, or be quite separate from it. For example:

Activities related to Agriculture	Activities not related to agriculture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Farm-work experiences ● Pick your own fruit or vegetables ● Farm events e.g. harvesting ● Farm tours e.g. wine tour, dairy tour, olive tour ● Agri-processing: making cheese; making jam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Farmstay accommodation ● Hiking and camping ● Quad biking ● Horse trails ● Zipline ● Photoshoot venue
Some may be both: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Farm-to-table meals: beautiful meals (often with cooking classes) using farm produce ● Farm stall or shop: selling produce (e.g. strawberries) and products (e.g. strawberry jam) 	

Unit 1: Farm-work Experiences

Visitors to farms take part in activities, depending on the type of farm or production process taking place. Examples include:

- **Livestock, dairy or poultry farms:** milking cows, collecting eggs, herding animals, feeding orphaned baby animals, mucking stables, grooming horses, cleaning tack or harnesses.
- **Horticultural farms:** picking fruit or vegetables (U-Pick), harvesting grains, planting or maintaining crops.
- **General farming:** daily farm chores
- **Agri processing:** crushing grapes for wine, churning butter, making jams, relishes, syrups, sweets; packaging farm produce

These activities are carefully supervised and all visitors are first taught how to do the task and the correct processes to follow. They often work alongside the farmer or farm hands so that there is no risk of anything being done incorrectly and therefore any product being spoiled or rendered unusable or unsellable.

Advantages and disadvantages may include:

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provides hands on opportunities to experience farming activities ● Offers an authentic experience of farm life ● Allows visitors to gain a deeper understanding of the work and an appreciation for farmers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is the risk that visitors could make mistakes that impact the farmer negatively, e.g. picking grapes that are not appropriately ripe, wasting crops ● Visitors may harm themselves, or damage farming equipment. ● Visitors may be there to learn how to run a similar business and may become future competitors to the farmer. ● Damage may be caused to the environment by visitor groups ● Negative impacts to the social life/culture of community by introducing foreign cultures.

Challenges and opportunities of farm work experiences:

Horticultural farms:

- **Challenges:** the agricultural cycle provides for different experiences at different stages of the cycle. At some stages, there may be little if anything to do. For example, after sowing seeds, there is crops maintenance (fertilizing, weeding, spraying) to do, which may not be very interesting for visitors. If there are current crops being cultivated, there may be little of interest for visitors to participate in.



- **Opportunities:** The most interesting times in the cycle may be harvesting, which is a comparatively short time compared to the annual calendar. This creates a small window of opportunity for farm work experiences that will really engage and interest visitors.

Livestock farming and animal husbandry:

- **Challenges:** if there are any outbreaks of disease that harm animals or could harm humans the farm may have to be temporarily closed. Some times of the year may be very busy and require specialist input such as sheep shearing, lambing, calving and so on. Work is hard and days are long so this form of agrotourism may not be widely participated in.
- **Opportunities:**
 - There is no clear crop/agricultural cycle, but there may be a lambing or calving season which may be of particular interest to visitors. Day to day operations such as herding, milking, feeding, dipping, may be woven into a farm work experience of a few days.
 - Tourists may provide a potential source of free labour on the farm once the visitors have been oriented to the tasks and can perform them properly.

Process and elements

A farm work experience would include some or all the following processes or elements:

1. **Orientation:** a tour of the farm and work areas, with explanations of what happens where.
2. **Training and coaching:** showing the visitors what needs to be done and how; allowing them to practice and coaching them on how to get it right.
3. **Tools and equipment:** introducing visitors to tools or equipment that they will work with, and how to handle, clean, store and maintain these. This may also include specific things to wear like Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves, masks, overalls.
4. **Team:** introducing the visitors to who they will be working with
5. **Schedule:** what needs to be done, when in the daily farm schedule or calendar. This is important for e.g. market days, to maintain freshness and maximum quality of produce
6. **Oversight:** supervising the visitors and working alongside them to ensure that they are doing the work properly and to the standard required by the market e.g. picking fruit at the right ripeness, not bruising fruit, cleaning and packaging produce to the correct standard, etc.

Safety

Farm work can be hazardous, and certain tasks should only be conducted by farm hands who have the experience, training or qualifications to conduct them. This includes things like driving and operating farm machinery, using herbicides and pesticides, dealing with large, unrestrained animals, etc.

Unit 2: Education and Learning Experiences

This form of agrotourism provides visitors with the opportunity to possibly participate in some farming tasks, but they will spend more time learning about farming processes and the final products the farm produces such as cheese, nana qaisi or wine. Information about organic farming and sustainable agricultural practices, etc. can all form part of the learning experience.

Education and learning experiences usually include a tour that shows and explains the agricultural product or process from the initial stages such as planting, through a crop cycle, to the product processing and packaging. For livestock farming it may include elements such as rearing of young, feeding, general care of animals, routine veterinary care and so on.

These agrotourism products may include additional features such as accommodation, U-pick, cooking, tasking or other activities aimed at giving guests a hands-on education in farm life. Once visitors know the product that the farm produces, they may also want to buy its products such as cheese, olives, wine, etc. The farm itself is marketed as a tourist attraction.

Providing additional learning and information: An exhibition room with displays and interpretive information can be a great way to learn about the form of agricultural production. Demonstration exhibits of traditional agricultural practices vs. modern can also be an interesting learning experience (for example traditional vs modern bee hives).

Advantages and disadvantages may include:

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can accommodate large groups such as tour or school groups – there will be a maximum capacity or groups may be split. • Sales of the final product are more likely, allowing the farmer to sell some produce directly to the consumer, often through a farm stall or shop. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be time consuming; staff need to be specially allocated to overseeing and guiding the experience and they will probably require special training. This may require employing specific staff such as guides or drivers to run tours. • Requires professional and accurate interpretation and information.

Challenges and opportunities of education and learning experiences:

Challenges

- **Groups:** If group sizes are not managed, they could become problematic. Setting a maximum group size allows for a better visitor experience (visitors can see and hear better) and is also potentially safer.
- **Interpretation:** require things like information boards to explain the different agricultural product or process such as animals or crops. Research may be required to ensure that information is accurate, and also to bring in information such as a comparison to similar products (e.g. different breeds of livestock, different varieties or cultivars of fruit) in other



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parts of the world. Interpretation information needs to look professional and be kept in good condition. Design and presentation are important considerations.

- **Children and school or family groups:** Younger visitors cannot concentrate or pay attention for too long, so farm tours would need to provide some activities or information that would appeal to children – for example feeding animals, milking a cow, collecting eggs.

Opportunities:

- Charging for these tours provides additional income to the farm.
- Sales after the tour through souvenirs, products or fresh produce, as well as the possible provision of meals on the property, can provide add-on sales to the tour, thus increasing revenue.

Process and elements

A farm education and learning experience would include some or all of the following processes or elements:

1. **Welcoming:** visitors and explaining the programme and duration of the tour. This may include indicating where restrooms, refreshments or shopping opportunities are available.
2. **Guiding:** providing the content and explanation of the farming practices. This would have to be researched, scripted and practiced by the guides so that information given to different groups or tours is consistent. This may include opportunities for visitors to get involved and use their senses:
 - **Try a skill:** milking a cow or goat, churn butter, dye some fabric, unroll a silk cocoon
 - **Taste:** a product in various stages of production – e.g. raw, unprocessed, then the final product
 - **Smell:** what a product smells like at different stages of ripeness or preparation: grape must – raw wine – ready wine; raw sesame seeds – roasted sesame – tahini.
 - **Feel:** different textures such as uncombed and combed wool, rough silk, untanned leather, etc.
3. **Interpretation and visitor information:** information boards on farming practices or processes may be made to provide key points for guides to explain or for visitors to read.
4. **Closure:** a conclusion and some form of call to action – e.g. eat in our little restaurant, browse the gift shop or buy produce from the farm stall.

Education and Learning Experiences in Kurdistan

Shaqlawa wine: Shaqlawa

Shaqlawa wines is a small winery in Shaqlawa. They grow their own wine grapes and also use other fruits and vegetables for making different wines.

They use both a traditional method and modern method of making wine.

Products can be tasted, and the process of wine making is explained along with a tour of the small cellar/wine area. There is a shop where their wine products can be purchased.

<https://www.instagram.com/shaqlawawine/>

Unit 3: Leisure and Recreation Experiences

Leisure and recreational experiences are activities that may be offered on a farm for entertainment, exercise, pleasure or adventure, whether or not a fee is charged to the participants. 'Agricultural recreation or agrotourism activity' may include activities such as camping, hiking, birdwatching, horse riding or operating motorized recreational vehicles (e.g. quad bikes) that may be offered on the property of an agricultural operation/farm. Other activities or experiences that fall within this category include tractor tours, horse and cart tours, special 'under the stars' events including music, dinner, etc.

While still considered agrotourism, these offerings generally use farmland for other marketable uses and not just agriculture. For example, non-arable or steep land may be used for hiking; fields or meadows can be used for harvest festivals, or as picnic sites. Weddings held on farm land draw heavily on the farm's atmosphere. Activities like camping, hiking and horseback riding do not depend on the agriculture of the farm itself.

In recent years, recreation farms have been booming in many countries. For tourists, they provide broad opportunities to participate in a range of fun leisure and recreation activities.

Advantages and disadvantages may include:

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less likely to encounter the cons associated with farm work experiences (visitors making mistakes). • Still sell directly to the consumer. • Promotes sustainability in rural areas, by encouraging visitors to the area who may or may not support other local businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More staff are required for events or activities like horse riding. • Staff may require special training to lead various activities. • Events might be seasonal, and income isn't guaranteed each month. • Events can be expensive to host.

Challenges and opportunities of leisure and recreation experiences:

Challenges:

Leisure Experiences:

- It can be harder to market a leisure experience because the target market will be broader than for an educational and learning experience.
- It may be necessary to hire special staff for events and their rate may be higher than the existing employee's rate.
- It could be difficult to schedule staff, during low seasons fewer staff are necessary.

Recreation Experiences:



- For some activities the property will need to meet certain criteria for safety and hygiene, or access permits to natural areas that are managed by the parks/wildlife authorities.
- Some activities may depend on the weather such as hiking, or swimming and alternatives need to be available.

Opportunities:

Leisure Experiences:

- Food and beverages may be required for overnight guests, which could be a chance to showcase and possibly sell products from the farm or its farmstall.
- Some visitors may prefer to have fixed accommodation such as cabins or cottages rather than sleeping in tents, which will attract a higher price and higher value visitor.

Recreation Experiences:

- Equipment in the case of activities like fishing, for example, could be sold.
- The farm may have several kinds of activity, there might be hiking, swimming, horse riding, a zipline, etc. all on one property for visitors to choose from a variety. If not, there may be nearby farms offering additional activities.

Process and elements

A farm leisure or recreation experience may typically include some or all of the following processes or elements:

1. **Welcoming:** meeting and welcoming visitors to the activity or experience
2. **Orientation** to the activity: how it is done, demonstrations, risks, safety measures, general fitness assessment of participants to ensure that they can handle the physical demands of some activities.
3. **Safety:** many such activities are adventure-based and may pose degrees of risk to the participants. The operator must always ensure safety by providing well-maintained adventure and safety equipment (e.g. helmets), trained guides, emergency plans, and careful monitoring of visitors and adventure activity participants. Risks and threats must be clearly explained to the visitors, and they should sign indemnities. Farmers offering agrotourism activities should have insurance coverage in case of any accidents or injuries occurring.

Leisure and Recreation Experiences in Kurdistan

Aspswar Horseback Riding Centre

The horse riding farm, which is 10 km outside of Suleymanyah, was built in 2021 with the intention of teaching horse lovers how to ride properly and have fun during daily sessions of an hour. This is the first in the entire region at this level and has gained popularity for its additional activities, which include offering guests a cultural lunch and returning them to the farm after a 6-hour picnic ride to the extraordinary place 'Glezerde Hill' in the spring and autumn.

They also ride past livestock farmers and enjoy the area's stunning scenery during spring and autumn. The farm can also arrange photo shoots and wedding ceremony packages conducted in the old-fashioned manner.

The farm has 20 horses, each with their own names such as Mani, Bamo, Romio, Shelby, Charles, Pasha, Rambo, Palawan, Oreo.

<https://www.instagram.com/aspswar1/tagged/>

ATBT Safari Kurdistan (Shaqlawa)

ATBT Safari Kurdistan (Shaqlawa) established in 2020, is an outdoor adventure company located 5km outside of Shaqlawa. The company provides guided ATV bike-riding tours along Safeen Mountain in all seasons. They also offer other outdoor activities such as ziplining and obstacle courses, which are suitable for groups and teambuilding events. Guests can stay at "**Kaper**" and enjoy simple food and beverages, including hamburgers, snacks, and shisha. Groups can pre-book their activities and enjoy them during their visit to the site.

https://web.facebook.com/ATBTsafariKurdistan/?_rdc=1&_rdr

<https://www.instagram.com/atbtsafari.kurdistan/?hl=en>

Hazarmerd Safari and Fruit Farm

This farm is located 20km out of Sulemanyeh and offers visitors a chance to escape the city and enjoy natural surroundings. It is a recreational tourism attraction that offers a variety of activities for visitors to enjoy.

- **ATV riding tour** to the Cave of 'Hazar merd' is a thrilling adventure for visitors who are looking for an adrenaline rush. Having a riding tour guide is a great way to ensure the safety of visitors while still allowing them to have fun.
- **Picnic areas "kaper"** for groups and families, providing a place for visitors to relax and enjoy their surroundings while taking a break from activities.
- **Providing seasonal fruits** like olives and pomegranates to allow visitors to sample local produce.

The venue is close to Kani dekon", a famous spring water source in the area and the village has also has a livestock farm..

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100088841562719&mibextid=ZbWKwL>

https://instagram.com/hazarmerd_safari?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=

Pick your Own/U-Pick Experiences

A Pick-Your-Own (PYO) or U-Pick experience is when visitors to a farm pick their own produce as a fun activity. Popular products to pick (especially with children) are fruits such as berries, strawberries and apples.

The visitors pay for what they pick and take it home with them. This helps the farmer get a crop picked and sold with no labour or transport cost. U-pick can also offer more opportunities for income generation through selling food and drinks to the pickers, by having a restaurant, by offering farm-to-table experiences, by cooking classes or demonstrations on using that product, and also selling consumer products made with the produce, such as strawberry jam, in a farm stall shop.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Direct sales to the consumer. ● Lower operating costs. ● There are no transportation costs ● Reduced need for seasonal labour as visitors help pick the crop. ● Lower packaging costs. ● Income is in hand when the consumer leaves the farm. ● Since customers are allowed and often encouraged to eat while picking, an entry fee usually covers any produce customers may eat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is extra work to have to manage the U-pick activity and provide services and facilitates for visitors. ● The work week is extended as the weekends require longer hours ● The producer may not be well located (e.g. near a main road) to sell their products.

Process and elements

A farmer wishing to offer a U-Pick experience to visitors should plan to have the following in place:

1. **Signage and parking:** so, visitors can easily find the farm and park their cars
2. **Welcoming:** meeting and welcoming visitors to the U-Pick experience and explaining the 'rules' e.g. not supposed to eat while picking; explain the pricing structure.
3. **Collection containers:** provide punnets or baskets for the pickers to use to collect what they pick. Environmentally friendly containers such as baskets are recommended.
4. **Weighing station :** a scale to weigh what they have picked, a calculator to calculate the price of that weight, cash point and change for handling payments.
5. **Restroom:** clean, simple toilet facilities for visitors who need them.

Unit 4: Food Products and Gastronomy Experiences

Gastronomy is all about the relationship between food and culture, the art of preparing and serving appetizing food, the cooking styles of particular regions, and the science of good eating. In agrotourism, this would include meal opportunities on farms, where fresh produce is used to create authentic and appetizing dishes. Stories about the recipes, the ingredients, the presentation may all be told to add to the experience.

In addition to this, visitors and customers may also buy food products direct from the farmer through retail outlets (restaurant or shop) on the property. Products can include fresh produce or processed products such as cheese, wine, preserves, other drinks (tea), honey, baked goods, ready-prepared meals (fresh or frozen) to take away and eat at home.

Advantages and disadvantages may include:

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchases can be made directly through the farmer. • Farmer can expand into different stages of production. • The traditional preparation of local food is kept alive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff may be needed to man the sales outlet. • Special food hygiene licensing or certification may be needed. • Infrastructure may be needed for tasting and selling food products. • Special dining areas may need to be created.

Challenges and opportunities of food products and gastronomy experiences:

Challenges:

- **Seasonality:** different items may be available at different times of year.
- **Stock:** stock of some items may run out
- **Perishability:** some food stocks may be perishable and may not be sold before their sell-by date, leading to waste and financial losses unless the commodity can be processed into another less perishable product such as jam or cordial.
- **Food hygiene and safety:** high standards of food hygiene and safety are needed when serving any food to the public. Special food hygiene licensing or certification may be needed, and staff must be trained and monitored to follow good food hygiene practices at all times when handling food for public consumption.

Opportunities:

- **Seasonality:** as seasons change – different items may be produced and offered to the market. This keeps the sales offering fresh, and may keep visitors coming back for different experiences, thus generating repeat business.
- **Cooking classes:** local cooks can present lessons or demonstrations on cooking the food of the region, focusing on local dishes and ingredients. Part of the experience can include



picking fresh vegetables from the fields, or shopping in a local market. Produce can be processed and sold later out of season, e.g. jam.

Process and elements

A food or gastronomy experience would include some or all of the following processes or elements:

1. **Welcoming:** meeting and welcoming visitors to the food product experience
2. **Interpretation:** explanation of the product, how it is made, what makes it special, what it can be eaten or served with.
3. **Demonstration / Participation:** visitors may watch and participate in the preparation of different products. This can be very fun and some farms may offer a certificate or other reward to participants.
4. **Tasting:** allowing visitors to taste the range of products on offer. This could be in simple tastings, or could be pairings of different foods and drinks – e.g. wine and cheese.
5. **Dining:** this could include a meal in an informal dining setting such as a garden, on a veranda, or in an old building.
6. **Purchasing:** this requires a retail outlet of some sort – with sales facilities.
7. **Packaging:** products should be packaged in environmentally friendly packaging such as biodegradable or reusable materials such as paper or glass. Plastics should be limited as much as possible. Rustic packaging such as paper, glass, string, etc also lend themselves well to farm products, so enhance the product presentation.

Hygiene and Safety:

Food safety is the biggest concern when offering a gastronomy experience. The property will need to have high standards of food handling and hygiene; staff will need to be trained in safe handling of food for public consumption, and kitchen safety.

Examples of Food Products and Gastronomy Experiences from Kurdistan

Mam Ghareeb Salmon Fish Farm and Resort: Choman

The Salmon Restaurant and Fish Farm in Choman offers visitors a number of leisure opportunities:

- **Gastronomy:** visitors can watch the salmon being caught from the freshwater ponds by the staff handle. Later the Fish are weighed, killed and cleaned, after which they are seasoned, flavoured with saffran and sumac, and cooked in a gas-fired oven. The fish is served with salad and local bread accompaniments.
- **Accommodation:** the venue offers self-catering accommodation in six family units. There is a small playground for children.
- **Kaper:** visitors may also rent kaper units along the river for 24-hours at a time and relax along the riverside.



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Qubahan Tahini Shop and Demonstration Mill

Qubagaan Water Mill has been producing tahini since 1994. This family-owned factory is located 3km north of Amedi District and 150 meters away from the ancient Qubahaan School. The three-story building was renovated in 2022 and includes its own shop. The factory employs 9 individuals, both male and female.

The shop is beautifully fitted and decorated, both inside and outside. Large signage outside also helps visitors find the shop. The tahini is displayed outside in barrels, inside on shelves and is branded and labelled.

Guests are offered a complimentary breakfast that includes warm bread, tahini, cheese, jajee, yogurt, and syrups. The company plans to expand the project into an extraordinary tourism attraction in order to attract visitors from all around the world.

https://www.instagram.com/qubahan_tahin/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y