


Development of rural areas and farms for tourism

Farms and rural areas are increasingly becoming the favorite destinations of tourists. This is due to the fact that people living in urban areas yearn for a quiet, calm, clean environment when they have a chance for rest and recreation. This growing trend offers opportunities for farmers and rural people to develop small-scale enterprises catering to the needs of tourists to generate additional income, while optimizing the benefits from the use of natural resource endowments and other local resources of the community. Such tourism efforts could also stimulate the development of farms not only for the production of food and various agroproducts but also adjunct enterprises that could generate employment opportunities and added income for farming households.

In many countries, farms have become an integral part of rural tourism destinations. For example, Italy is known for its *agro turismo* in addition to the attractions of rustic remnants of Roman grandeur. The development of interlinked enterprises also generates other benefits to rural communities such as better environmental and cultural awareness, preservation of cultural heritage sites, and agrobiological diversity. Few countries in Asia have tapped such opportunities despite the great potential.

In recognition of this untapped potential, the APO organized a training course on Planning and Management of Community-based Rural Tourism and Agrotourism Enterprises in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 10–17 August 2010. It was held in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture Development and Agrarian Services and the National Productivity Secretariat. The course was designed to address the needs of consultants to local entrepreneurs and government officials responsible for planning and manag-

ing rural tourism development through four modules: Concepts and principles of community-based rural tourism; planning the development of rural areas as tourism destinations; planning, development, and management of farms as tourism enterprises; and marketing and promotion

of rural agrotourism products and packages. Twenty-one participants from 10 APO member countries completed the course. Three international experts from Hawaii, USA, the Netherlands, and Thailand served as resource persons. The selection of experts from different regions facilitated the sharing of best practices and models from around the world and confirmed the popularity of farm tourism in diverse cultures. Examples seen by participants in Sri Lanka were the Pelwehera CIC Farm and tourism enterprises near Sigiriya, a World Heritage Site in the central Matale district, which the participants evaluated onsite. They also visited the Agro Technology Park Gannoreva of the Department of Agriculture in Peradeniya, a sterling example of a technology park and community-based rural tourism model. 



Participants observe the cleaning of newly harvested bananas during a "banana tour" offered as part of the agrotourism project of Pelwehera CIC Farm 14 August 2010. APO/Joselito Bernardo