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## **The Impact of Agriculture and Tourism Potentials on Sustainable Rural Development in Ekiti State**

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### **Abstract**

*The rural areas, which inhabit the greater proportion of the population, mostly in developing nations, are the main sources of primary products (agriculture and minerals) for urban and industrial areas, hence the rural dwellers are regarded as the set of population that provide engine of growth in the development process of a nation (Long, 1982). Equally, tourism in rural environment is a potential strategy of developing the rural areas as an alternative to existing strategies. As a result of this, paper, through descriptive techniques, identifies the various agriculture and tourism potentials within the rural areas, identifies the impacts of these potentials on rural dwellers and suggests various processes of preserving these potentials for self-sustainable development. The result of the findings shows that there is a direct linkage between agricultural and tourism potentials and rural development. Though, agriculture and tourism may exacerbate pollution problems, environmental degradation and other social ills but effective and positive linkages provide ample benefits to the people in the such as job opportunities, generate income and other economic benefits to the people in the rural areas.*

**Key Words:** Agriculture, Tourism, Potentials, Rural environment, Sustainability

## **Introduction**

Sustainable rural development is a way of improving living standards of mass of the low income population receding in rural areas and making process of their development self sustaining. Therefore, sustainable rural development would occur where there has been an improvement in basic needs, where economy progress has contributed to a greater sense of self-esteem for individuals within it and when materials advancement has expanded the range of choice for individuals within the rural settings. FAO, (1992) defined sustainable development as the management and conservation of the natural resources base, and the orientation and continued satisfaction of human needs for present and future generation. In his own view, Kepas (1983) stated that sustainability is the ability of a system to maintain productivity in spite of large disturbance such as repeated stress or a major perturbation. WCED, (1987) stated that sustainable productivity is productivity which meets the present needs of the people for food, fuel, wood etc without damaging the resource base, thereby compromising the ability of future generations to produce their needs on the same land using the same resources base. Sustainable rural development implies restructuring of the rural economy in order to meet the aspiration of the rural populace. Rural development is a process of growth and transformation which must involve the full participation of the rural population in the various multi-sectoral activities such as agriculture, rural infrastructure, rural industries as regards recreation and tourism sectors (World Bank 1975, Bonife and Cooper, 1994).

The production of food and other raw materials is a basic function of rural communities. Productivity is the increment in valued product per unit of time and it is usually measured as yields or income per unit of land (Beets, 1990). The rural populace are the custodian of natural resources (Sills, 1972). They equally serve as bed-rock or veritable areas for agro-allied industries of these natural resources, help to improve the living standard of mass of the low income population receding in the rural areas and making the process of their development self-sustaining (Umalele, 1975).

In developing countries, especially in Nigeria, various programmes have been designed to arrest the problem militating against the development of the national populace. These programmes were centered majorly on agriculture which was thought to be synonymous to rural development. Agriculture is just a sectoral programme under rural development. Tourism in rural area is another potential and complementary strategy capable of transforming the

rural sector economically, socially, historically and culturally (Ogundele, 2007).

However, it has been observed that the mainstay of sustainable rural development is based on agricultural potentials found in the rural areas and tourism is equally concomitant to sustainable rural development. Therefore, the objectives of this research work, with special reference to Ekiti state, Nigeria, include:-

- ❖ To identify the various agricultural and tourism potentials in the rural areas
- ❖ To analysis the impacts of these potentials on the rural dwellers within the study area in particular and Nigeria in general
- ❖ To suggest the various ways of preserving there potentials for sustainable rural development.

### **Agriculture, Tourism and the Rural Environment**

Agriculture is a major fulcrum that supports the mainstay of the economy of the rural areas. Hence, Ogundele, (2007) asserts that rural dwellers and their agriculture productive activities constitute the core of their economy. Land and soils provide the basis for domestic crops and livestock farming in the rural areas. The forest soils stabilize soils, regulate the flow and storage of water and moisture retention in crops. Fisheries, which is defined as a component of Agriculture also benefit from the complex environment processes. The type of climate and nature of vegetation have great influence on the type of agriculture practiced in the rural areas. The transformation of the rural areas through agriculture depends, to a large extent, on the active development of its agro-and forest-based products.

The basic features of the system of agriculture in the rural areas include:-

- Land is usually owned by community or groups of families or the whole village community.
- Fertilizers are not usually employed; hence period of fallow is necessary to allow the farmland gain its fertility.
- The tools employed are usually elementary ones such as hoes and cutlasses several crops such as maize, yam, okro, vegetables are grown together on the same farm. This type of farming in called

mixed cropping which involves the cultivation of two or more crops together on a single farm.

Mono-cropping is another system of agriculture in the rural environment which involves planting a single crop on a plot of land. Intercropping is equally practiced in the rural areas which are similar to mixed cropping but differ in the sense that it involves the cultivation of major crops. Livestock farming is widely practiced in the rural environments. This is referred to as demonstration of animals such as birds, goats, sheep, pig and cattle. The use of local agriculture produce and fish in the preparation of meals for tourists define the substantive linkage between agriculture and tourism within the rural environment. The linkage potential is fully realized in the use of bush meats in local hotels and restaurants because of good quality in production and regularity of supply from the available forests within the rural environment (Ogundele, 2007). The influence of agriculture on tourism is equally known in fruits and vegetable productions. Rural environment is blessed with varieties of fruits which include oranges, cashew, pineapples, pawpaw, and other citrus grown in the rural areas. Equally palm trees and raffia have by-products which include palm wine and local gins which are present in the recreation and relaxation centres. Also, lobsters and fish got from the local streams are demand items in hotel and restaurant menus.

Tourism involves journey to several places during the period of non-working hours or weekends or during holidays and annual leaves. It is defined as recreation activities requiring at least one night's stay away from home following a recreational interest (Ganderton, 2000). It involves staying there in lodges or hotels for the purpose of enjoying oneself on pleasurable activities done with recreational facilities and services supported by safe environment without hampering the available resources and well-being of the local people. The study of tourism is the study of people away from their usual habitant of the establishment which respond to the requirement of travelers and the impacts that they have on the economic, physical and social well-being of their hosts. Tourism composed of three basic elements which include:-

- The dynamic element which involves travel to selected destination(s).
- A statue element which involves the stay in the destination.

- A consequential element which the tourist is directly or indirectly in contact with.

Various factors influencing the location of tourist locations within the environment include physical, economic, political, social, and demography (Ogundele, 2006). Man has adapted to its physical environment to meet his own needs. Land is a chief source of food and of recreational benefits to man. Tourism has a stake in the preservation of land resources for better outdoor living such as playing ground, wildlife refuge and natural parks. Water is the liquid that forms rivers, lakes, and seas on which many recreational activities such as boating, fishing and swimming depend. Since water based activities are one of recreation's most popular attractions, it must be carefully utilized and preserved. Air is an invisible, odorless and tasteless mixture of gases that surrounds the earth and all living creatures. Since tourism is closely tied with man's welfare, it depends largely on clean atmosphere.

Economically, availability of capital to facilitate and execute projects as well as develop tourist attractions are essential. Special incentives to entice investors must be made available. Free and stable political atmosphere will entice tourism investors. Special incentives must be given to investors to facilitate greater development in tourism areas. The socio-cultural norms and values may determine and influence the types of tourism facilities to be provided in an area and lastly, tourism participation in terms of activities as well as frequency and style varies with age, gender, educational level and ethnicity. Therefore, change in the composition of population will have impacts on the level of tourist demand.

The effects of these aforementioned factors led to various demand for tourism. As demands for tourism increase, so too will their impact on other socio-economic structure in the society and tourist environment. Places with special interests or appeal that are very popular with visitors are known as "honey pots" (Waugh, 2002). These honey pots in the rural areas include museums, historic buildings, ruins and parks. The demand and uses of attractions in the rural areas are of categories:

- The desire for space, these quiet and peace of nature by short holiday makers for refreshment of body and mind. This is necessitated by the pressure of mode of life in the urban centres.
- Rural environment is made up of remains of the past such as old buildings, monuments, castles and ancient architecture which are

researchable. All these resorts form educational research ground for those who are interested.

- The use of rural areas as “second homes” permanently or temporary with country cottages as a part.
- Taking outdoor activities that are permissible in rural areas such as hunting, fishing and climbing. These are mainly rural environment sporting activities whose facilities can be natural or artificial on which people are ready to spend their leisure time.

Towner (1996) identifies three categories of treasures in the rural environment.

- Naturally endowed treasures, physiographic or geological features of particular interest, rare plants, animals and ecological features worthy of preservations and areas of scenic appeal.
- Places that process historic biographical, artistic and literary association.
- Man-made prehistoric sites, monuments, precious stone sites, monoliths, historic buildings and ruins and features of industrial archaeological interests.

All these sources of attractions within the rural environments form parts of national heritage. The development of these attractions solves the problems of parity of infrastructural development between urban and rural environment. In order to develop these attractions, there is need for provision of certain facilities which include development of the rural road networks, accommodations, provision of pipe borne water and rural electrification.

### **The Impacts of Agriculture and Tourism Potentials on Rural Environment**

Agriculture has been described as the major bedrock that supports tourism in the rural areas. This shows that rural environment is endowed with the varieties of agriculture products that can support tourism. Examples of such include forest reserves, fisheries, livestock and wildlife resources. These potentials, if well developed, planned and managed, will provide food for mankind, raw materials for agro-based and agro-allied industries, provision of foreign exchange and improve the quality of life of the people through improvement in income level.

The impact of tourism in the rural areas in particular and the environment in general cannot be over-emphasized. If tourism is well planned and managed it helps in the conservation of important natural areas and wildlife including marine environment. It equally helps in the conservation of archaeological and historic sites; conservation of cultural heritage which might have been lost as a result of environmental development and maintenance of museums, theatres and other cultural facilities.

The various environmental impacts of agricultural and tourism potentials within the rural areas shall be extensively discoursed using the rural environments of Ekiti State as a case study.

### **The Study area**

Ekiti state is located between latitude  $7^{\circ}15'N$  and  $8^{\circ}10'N$  and longitudes  $4^{\circ}33'E$  and  $6^{\circ}00'E$ . It is bounded in the west by Osun State and in the North by both Kwara and Kogi States. It is made up of the greater bulk of land mass that occupied the Northern part of Ondo state especially at the central North and North western extensions. The land area is about 5,568 Sq kilometers and is mainly an upland area; rising between about 250 metres and 1,650 metres above sea level. This is where the name takes its name Ekiti, that is, "Okiti" meaning hill. This means that the whole area is dotted with rugged hills that may occur singularly, in groups or ridges that present a kind of scenery for tourist attractions. The major landforms in the region include inselbergs, regolith, mantle hills, flood plains and dambos.

The climate of Ekiti favours the growth of a diverse range of plants and enumeration of these plants reveal that over 80% of plants that are available in Nigeria is represented. The dominant plants contributed immensely to the ecological balance of the state's environment. They serve as habitat to wild life that constituted a prominent feature of the state. Rivers, and rivulets take their sources (springs) from the watershed created by the hills and rocks. There are also numerous lakes which supported water-based recreational and tourist activities such as fishing, swimming, crabbing, Ikogosi-holiday splashing and canoeing.

### **Agricultural Potentials in Ekiti State**

Agriculture is the mainstay of Ekiti State in which over 60% of the total population engaged. The transformation of Ekiti State through agriculture depends, to a large extent, on the active development of its agro-and forest-based products. The various systems of agriculture practiced in Ekiti include rotational bush following mono cropping, plantation, livestock and fishery

(Ogundele, 2002). It is observed that over 80% of the farmers in Ekiti State practice bush following system and these farmers are mostly rural dwellers. The basic features of agricultural system include:

- Land is usually community owned by groups of families or the whole village community.
- The farmers live mostly in the villages.
- Fertilizers are not usually employed; hence a period of fallow is necessary.
- Farms are usually small with average size of one to three hectares.
- Elementary tools like culture, hoes, axe etc. are usually employed.
- There is usually no crop specialization several crops like maize, yam, okro, vegetables are usually grown together.

The various crops grown in the state form the basis of food consumed locally by inhabitants and for exports. Besides, they form part of raw materials for agro-and forest-based industrial activities which are prominent among enterprises in the state. The various crops grown in the rural areas and their by-products are indicted in table 1.

Other agricultural potentials within the rural environment include livestock farming and domestication of animals. Chicken is the most popular among the various livestock's kept in Ekiti. Other animals include goats, sheep, pigs and cattle. Free range system is common among the poultry farmers because of its cost-effective. Few people involved in battery cage and deep-litter system because of cost effects.

Cattle farming is practiced by few individuals and government agency. Wild life resources exist in both inside and outside the forest reserves. These animals popularly called "bush-meats" serve as important sources of income to the hunters as well as animal protein. The most commonly found animals include Drikel (Kolus cob), Buffalo (*synceus caffer*) squirrel (*xerus erythropus*), grass culter (*thynomys swinderianus*), monkey (*cercopithecus aethios*), pangolin (*mani tradactla*) Bats (*caphaloplus spp.*), crocodile (*osterlaemus terrawspis*) and Snail (*Archachatina marginata*). These animals called bush meats are freely served in local hotels and restaurants because of good quality in production and regularity of supply from available forests in the rural areas.



Forest reserves contribute immensely to the development of rural areas in particular and the state in general. Forest provides raw materials for the local industries and serves as foreign exchange earnings. About 300 square kilometers of forest reserves are located all over the state. These include 72 (2sq km at Ogbese, 10.22sqkm at Egbe, 9.06sqkm at Eda, 15.69sqkm at Ogotun, 46.62sqkm at Eporo and 56.77sqkm at Ise (Ogundele, 2002). The trees act as the most dominant group of plants that contributed immensely to the ecological balance of the state. They serve as habitat to wild animals that constituted a prominent feature of the state. The forest offers wild range of food to man and remain the main genetic reservoirs of biodiversity.

**Tourist potentials of Ekiti:** - Ekiti State is endowed with abundant natural tourists' potentials. They include natural features, archaeological and historical features. There are striking rock formations which can be used for recreation, and tourist activities such as reengineering, nature photography, stone dividing, skiing drop-in climbing and bat off. Spectacular examples of such striking rocks include Efon-Alaaye ridge, which presents a spectacular view of what a ridge really looks like and the resultant terrace farming and Orole Hills which is a charnockitic rock occurring in isolation on Akure-Ikere road. Other Hills are Amoye rocks, Olosunta at Ikere, Ayoba in Ado-Ekiti, and other several conical hills. Other rock formations include caves, cliffs and stone trenches. For instance, Esa cave in Iyin-Ekiti has a capacity to contain over 35,000.00 refugees in case of warfare as well as Arinta falls in Ipole-Iloro, which has a giant pool and three pronounced escarpments. There are other structures that are called "plain tops" of outcrops commonly found in villages. They provide space for drying farm products and when such occurs within the town, it provides site for picnic.

Water related features of tourist resources include lakes such as Ero at Ikun-Ekiti, Ose at Egbe, Egbigbu at Ayetoro-Ekiti. Others include Elemi at Iyin-Ekiti, Alantoro at Ilawe, Oruwon at Ogotun and Ireje at Ado-Ekiti. These lakes (Ero at Ekun, Egbe and Ireje) are dammed to provide pipe borne water to numerous towns and villages in Ekiti. Other water-related features are Ipole-Iloro water fall and the cold and warm springs at Ikogosi-Ekiti. The miraculous warm spring where cold and warm water ooze out of hills from different sources meet in a pool while retaining the thermal identity form an important international tourist centre and home of bottled water popularly known nation wide as Gossy Pure Water managed by UAC. The water related features could be used for sun-bathing, swimming, boat regatta fishing, mini surface-riding and crabbing.

Many galleries and archaeological sites as well as historical buildings are located within the rural environments. Historical monuments, cultural heritage, traditional gardens and festival (e.g. Egungun and Oro) provide locations for tourists and visitors to the state.

**The impacts of Agriculture and tourists potential:** - Rural environment is endowed with varieties of agricultural products that can alleviate the living standard of the rural dwellers. The land soils provide the basis for domestic crops and livestock farming. The forest soils stabilise soils and regulate the flow and storage of water and moisture retention in crops.

The use of local agricultural produce in preparation of meals for the dwellers and tourists define the substantive linkage between the environment and agriculture. Fisheries, which is defined as a component of agriculture also benefits from complex environmental processes. The linkage potential is fully realized in the use of fish and lobsters in local hotels and restaurants because of good quality in production and regular supply from the available streams in the rural areas.

The greatest linkage between the rural environment and agriculture is fully realized in the use of bush meats in local hotels and restaurants. Available livestock such as cows, goats, grass cutters, drickel, snails etc serve as a source of protein for the dwellers.

The influence of agricultural potentials in rural environment is equally realized with fruits and vegetables. Rural environment is blessed with varieties of fruits which include oranges, cashew pineapples, pawpaw and other citrus. Fruits juice and wines are derived from these fruits and serve as protein for the dwellers.

Palm trees and raffia palms are products of the forest zones within the rural environment. The by-products which include palm wine and local gins are present in the recreation and relaxation centres. Ekiti State has a high forest of the tropical types in the south and guinea savannah in the north. The vegetation types are dense and they are made up of diversified plant species. The dominant trees contributed immensely to the ecological balance of the state's environment. They serve as habitats to wild animals, offer a wide range of food to man and remain the main genetic reservoir of biodiversity. The early period of history of West Africa made us to know that forest served as a refuge zone, providing some degree of security from the aggressiveness of the better and more sophisticated group (Mobogunje, 1971). The grasses are

used for making house roofing and fences. The unique traditional houses are still within the local environments. These houses are characterized with the distinct architecture of strong beams, covered with broad leaves and decorated with carved doors. The rural dwellers involved themselves in handicrafts such as basket making, fishing nets, fans, table mats, caps and sleeping mats. These activities serve as a source of income to them. The dominant trees which include *adansonia digitata*, Iroko, Obeche, “Koko-igbo”, Mahogany etc. serve as raw materials for the local industries especially furniture factories. The diverse flora and fauna species available constitute a pool of raw materials for both local and foreign industries. The forest potentials also create opportunities for investment in commerce by trading on forest goods and haulage by transportation of forest goods.

The importance of tourism potentials is numerous. It has social, economic and cultural benefits. If tourism potentials are well planned, developed and managed it can bring several types of socio-cultural benefits. It can bring improvement to the living standards of people. Many forest products are intermediate goods that serve as raw products for other industries. Most of the products are in constant demand thus bringing in income to the rural people. Handicrafts such as fishing nets, baskets, fans, table mats, caps, mats etc. are also sources of income to the people.

Tourism in the rural environment reduces rural urban migration and conservation of the cultural heritage of an area which otherwise might have been lost as a result of general development taking place. In spite of the incursion of Christianity and Islam as well as utilization, the rural environment still cherishes culture. For example, the month of August in the rural environment of Ekiti is specifically set aside for masquerade and other festivals. This month is pre-occupied with harvesting by the rural farmers this have less job in the farms. Yam, the most cherished food crop is adequately available with other non-woody forest products such as palm-wine, mushrooms and snails. Hence visitors are treated to the traditional Ekiti hospitality.

Tourism encourages regional development. It is observed that the establishment of tourist facilities and infrastructure in the rural areas is a cost-effective way of meeting national development objectives (Leonard and Carson, 1997). The development process will renew local agricultural qualities and facilitate the revival of traditional arts, (museums and theatres) and other cultural facilities.

**Planning Policies and Principles of Preserving the Potential for Sustainable Rural Development:** Several environmental planning policies and principles are suggested to give room for proper preservation of the various agriculture and tourist potentials in the rural areas. These include:

- Prevent all the forest reserves from further misuse and relevant agency be set up to prosecute whoever causes bush fire or any environmental damage to the forests.
- Establish a biodiversity monitoring and evaluation system within the forest zones to enhance both their natural capital value and short-term and long-term revenue yielding capacities.
- Increase the size and number of forest reserves so as to protect the forests from extinction. Preservation of major trees and incorporation of them into the site plan.
- Prevent soil loss and contamination so that vegetal islands and other flora can flourish on them and attract tourist.
- Develop more agro-allied and tourist oriented industries where some raw materials can be used for making packages and cuisines which the rural dwellers need.
- Preservation of any important or interesting historic, cultural and archaeological sites.
- Preservation of any important or unusual areas such as ecological important, swamps, wildlife, habitats, significant vegetation and usual geological formation.
- For resort development in rural areas, generous use of open space and landscaping with emphasis on natural features of the site.
- Integration of the road network with the land use pollution and major attraction within the resort where possible.
- Careful site planning so that views and outlooks are maintained and unpleasant wind patterns are not generated.

### **Conclusion**

Agriculture especially food production is the main occupation of the rural populace. Tourism and agricultural potentials within the rural environment

depend to a large extent in the natural resources of the environment. The various potentials within the rural areas which include farm products, forest and forest reserves, striking rock formations, water related features and plant communities encourage regional development and cost effective way of meeting national development objectives. These potentials, if well planned, developed and managed in a socially responsible way, bring several socio-cultural benefits to the rural dwellers and reduce rural-urban migration.

Towner (1996) stated that there are three categories of potential in the rural environments. They include naturally endowed treasures, physiographic or geological features of particular interest rare plants, animals and ecological features worthy of preservation and areas of scenic appeals. Second, places that process historic, biographical, artistic and literary association, thirdly, man-made, pre-historic sites (camps, earthworks) circuit monuments and memorials and features of industrial archaeological appeals. All these are sources of attractions and rural tourism which Ashcroft (1991) described as Green Tourism. The development of these potentials solve the problem of parity of infrastructure development between urban and rural environments.

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**Table 1: Locally Grown Crops and Their Products in Ekiti State Environment**

CROP GROWN	BY-PRODUCTS
Coca	Cocoa butter, beverages, cocoa mainly for exports
Butter	Mainly for exports
Timber	Logs, planks, panel, furniture, exports
Kolanut	Tire manufacture, crepes, exports
Yam	Stimulants, dyne
Maize	Yam flour,
Cassava	Maize grit, corn, corn flour, Cassava chips, livestock feed, cassava flour, mosquito expeller, adhesive stick.
Rice	Meals, exports
Plantain	Plantain flour, chips and crips
Citrus	Fruit juice, baby food, wines,
Cashew	Oils and nuts
Cowpea	Grits and flours
Oil palm	Vegetable oil, spices
Raffia palm	Local wine, alcoholic products

**Source:** Fieldwork