

A Policy Development Report on
**Promotion and Regulation of
Agro-Eco-Tourism**
in the State of Goa

**Strategy
Paper**



ICAR-Central Coastal Agricultural Research Institute

Old Goa-403 402, Goa, India

ICAR-National Academy of Agricultural Research Management

Hyderabad- 500 030, Telangana, India



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**Promotion and Regulation of
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Citation

Parveen Kumar, R Solomon Rajkumar, Tavva Srinivas, Shripad Bhat, Vinod Ubarhande and Ch Srinivasa Rao 2024. A policy development report on Promotion and Regulation of Agro - Eco - Tourism in the State of Goa. Strategy Paper, ICAR- Central Coastal Agricultural Research Institute, Goa & ICAR National Academy of Agricultural Research Management, Hyderabad, Telanagana, p20.

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Cover page photo

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December 2024

Published by

The Director

ICAR-Central Coastal Agricultural Research Institute, Old Goa-403 402, Goa, India

The Director

ICAR - National Academy of Agricultural Research Management, Hyderabad-500 030, Telangana, India

Acknowledgement

The authors are grateful to the scientists and staff of ICAR-CCARI, Goa and ICAR-NAARM, Hyderabad, speakers, discussants and participants of the various stakeholder meetings organised to derive this strategy paper.

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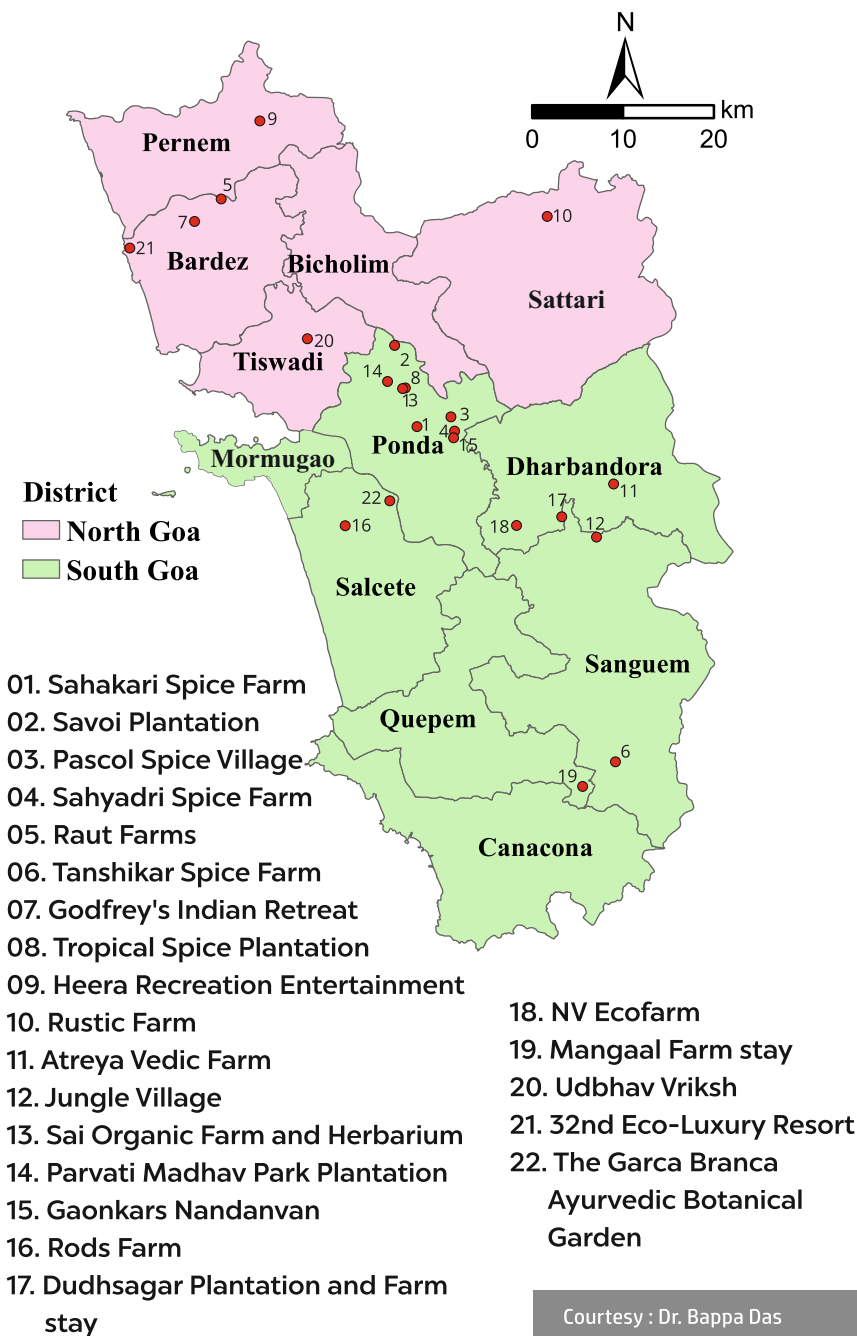
1. Introduction

Goa is often referred to as the “Pearl of the Orient” and the Beach Capital of India. Its natural beauty, unique heritage and a delectable mix of cultures, along with friendly and hospitable people, makes it perhaps the most attractive tourist destination in India. Tourism is the backbone of the Goan economy, with 40% of the population directly or indirectly dependent on it. The sector has shown strong growth with total tourist arrivals increasing from 2.3 million in 2005 to 7.2 million in 2022, an annual growth of nearly 11%.

Goa falls into three distinct categories in terms of topography, the western ghats, the midlands and the coastal region. However, the coastal region, even though it occupies a very small portion of the total geographical spread of the state, it has been the most popular tourist destination, especially for those coming from abroad. As a result, the entire concentration of touristic activities has mainly been confined along beaches. To outspread the benefits of tourism growth to a large section of the people living in interior and hinterland areas of Goa, a perceived paradigm shift from “onshore tourism to 'offshore tourism” would be the key turning point. Nestled in the biodiversity hotspot region of Western Ghats, Goa offers tourists the opportunity to experience this region's diverse agro-ecosystems. The concept of Agro-eco-tourism (AET) will help the state of Goa in creating its own model of barefoot luxury and hip hideaways by exploiting its rich biodiversity, well-endowed agricultural traditions and rich cultural heritage.

The Government of Goa formulated the “Goa Tourism Policy 2020” to harness the full potential of its tourism sector and to address existing challenges in a systematic manner. With the growth of the tourism industry, day by day, tourism product offerings have also evolved and new arenas have emerged in the tourism industry to fulfil the ever-increasing requirements, demands and the thirst of 'Offshore' and hinterland-seeking tourists. With the increasing trend in Agro-eco-tourism centres, farm stays and spice gardens in Goa and their potential for transforming the agriculture and tourism economy, it's imperative to have a comprehensive policy for the promotion and regulation of Agro-eco-tourism in the state of Goa.

Major AET Centers of Goa



1.1 Tourist arrivals to Goa

The total number of tourists arriving in Goa has been increasing over the years. During the pre-COVID period of 2019, the total number of arrivals was 80,64,400 (Fig 1). During the COVID period, it declined to 29,71,726 in 2020 and 33,30,217 in 2021. During the post-COVID period, total tourist arrivals increased to 71,87,950 in 2022 and 86,28,162 in 2023.

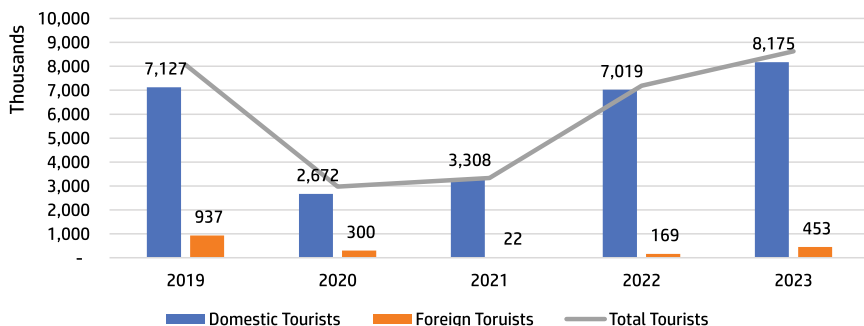


Figure 1: Tourist Arrivals to Goa over the years (2019 to 2023)

Source: Government of Goa

(https://static.gladns.in/goalpub/docs/question_docs/file_0bcbde3b-fcb4-482f-a3f7-cf52acb4b86f.pdf)

1.2 Need for a comprehensive AET policy for Goa

There is an urgent need for a comprehensive policy framework to promote and regulate agro-eco-tourism in the state of Goa for the following reasons:

- The absence of clear policies and regulations supporting agro-eco-tourism can hinder its growth
- Limited financial incentives and support from the government for farmers and entrepreneurs to invest in agro-eco-tourism
- Need for better customer service skills and professionalism among those involved in agro-eco-tourism
- Navigating complex land use regulations and obtaining necessary permits and licenses
- Ensuring compliance with safety standards and regulations to protect tourists



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2. Definition

Agro-eco-tourism (AET) is the latest concept in the Indian tourism industry, and it usually occurs on farms. It is the symbiotic association of the farming sector, tourism industry, and farm business. It is indeed the economic activity that occurs when people link travel with agricultural products, services, or experiences to cater to the mutual demands of the farmers and the tourists.

3. Objectives of AET

- AET would have a multiplier effect, and it was envisaged that tourists' trips and associated spending would significantly contribute to the rural economy and improve farmers' quality of life.
- Connecting tourism with agriculture would add glamour to agriculture and help attract and retain youth in agriculture— a boost for the agri startup ecosystem in Goa.
- Agro-eco-tourism would provide farmers with additional income from their existing assets, a way forward for Goa's 'Doubling Farmers Income' initiative.
- Besides, it allows them to interact socially with various visitors, elevating their social status and enriching their lives.
- Community participation in AET would spill over the whole village community by supplementing the number of activities undertaken, such as artisans' displays, folklore, village walks, etc. This could result in community participation in the villages, the generation of concurrent employment opportunities, and additional income for the villagers.
- Maintains the ecological balance by minimising the negative impact of present-day tourism on the natural and sociocultural environment
- Conserves the traditional cultures prevailing in the natural rural areas
- Will boost the development of small/micro food processing enterprises in Goa





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4. Proposed Eligible entities for AET Centre

- Individual farmer/agri-start ups
- State Govt. Departments/ Institutions/ Corporations/ Local Bodies
- ICAR Institutions/ KVKs/ Agricultural Colleges/ Universities (Private and Government)
- FPOs/SHGs/Agricultural Co-operative societies/ registered farmer groups registered in the state of Goa



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5. Possible Eligibility Criteria for Establishment and Operating AET Centre

- An AET centre should be geographically located in a rural area/village jurisdiction
- Individual farmers must possessing valid Krishi Card
- Startups engaged in agricultural and allied activities must be registered in Goa
- A minimum of one acre of agricultural land could be required to run an AET centre
- Individual farmer applicants should own the agricultural land in their or their family's name
- FPOs / SHGs / Agricultural Co-operative societies / registered farmer's groups in the state of Goa can operate AET on the agricultural land acquired through lease or rent



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6. Activities which can be showcased / implemented in the AET Centre

- Spices, plantation, aromatic and medicinal plants
- Plant nurseries and orchards
- Greenhouses
- Aquarium and recreational fisheries activities
- Livestock, fish and poultry farming
- Ethnic Food, Wine and Spirit Tourism
- Farm stays
- Harvest festivals



7. General Operational Guidelines Proposed for the AET Centres

- These centres may showcase the experience of Goan rural life, heritage, folklore, and traditional agricultural practices such as kulagar
- The primary focus should be on sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation
- Integrated farming systems should be promoted in these centres, emphasising organic and natural farming
- The AET centres should follow Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)
- All activities should be eco-friendly to the best of their ability

- The tourism department's policy states that tourist residential arrangements should be supported by entry and exit records.
- Hygienic and wholesome food and drinking water must be ensured on the premises.
- Preference should be given to ethnic Goan food and beverages.
- Guided tours should encompass scientific information about the natural topography, flora and fauna.
- These centres may arrange to display educational materials and local souvenirs, including handicrafts, farm produce, value-added products, etc.
- The visitors must take security measures at these AET centres.
- The applicant must obtain all statutory procedures, practices, licenses, permissions, NOCs, etc., from the concerned competent authorities.
- Registered AET Centre may celebrate 16th May as "World Agri Tourism Day".
- For school students, a considerable discount may be offered to impart education regarding agriculture.
- Directional signs must be put up at the registered AET centres.
- Monthly footfall data for visitors/ tourists must be shared with the Department of Tourism and the Government of Goa.
- The Department of Tourism will regularly inspect the centre to maintain the highest quality in Agro-Eco-Tourism.
- AET centres should be earmarked as plastic-free zones.
- AET centres should adopt suitable soil and water conservation measures.
- Priority should be given to new renewable energy sources for operating AET centres.
- Obtaining permissions from all departments and the Tourism Department's Registration Certificate to run an AET Centre is obligatory.
- Parking spaces for tourist vehicles should be arranged, and a good-condition approach road should be available.



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8. Specific Guidelines Proposed for the Construction of Civil Structures at AET Centres

- The residential buildings constructed for in-house guests at AET centres should be eco-friendly and mirror Goan architecture
- The proposed total area for the construction (both permanent and temporary), including residential accommodation, everyday utilities, recreation area, etc., should be at most 10% of the total area of the AET centre
- It is proposed that only ground-floor construction shall be allowed



9. Proposed Procedure for the Registration of AET Centre

1. Applications can be made available at the official website of the tourism department. Following valid documents could be required to apply.
 - a. Domicile certificate of the applicant
 - b. Agricultural Land documents of the Applicants
 - c. Krishi card for the individual farmer
 - d. Entities other than individual farmers should provide the registration certificate under different acts (Co-operative Act, Company Act, FPOs, Partnership Firms, etc.).
 - e. Authorization letter to apply by the entity other than individual.
 - f. Aadhar Card, PAN card and Electricity Bill
2. Verification can be carried out after receipt of the Online Application
3. Site Inspection can be carried out by the Director, Tourism or officers authorised by them along with the representatives of the Agricultural Department
4. Registration Certificate will be issued by the Director of Tourism, Govt. of Goa
5. If the rules and regulations under the policy are not fulfilled, then the Director of Tourism, Govt. of Goa, can have the right to refuse their application

If the director or his representative observes anything suspicious during regular inspections, they can have the right to suspend or cancel the Registration Certificate.

9.1 Proposed Registration Fee

For first-time registration, fees can be levied for starting an AET centre. Registration can be renewed every five years.

9.2 Appeals

9.2.1 First Appeal

The first appeal against the decision given by the Deputy Director, Department of Tourism, can be made to the Director, Department of Tourism, within 15 days.

9.2.2 Second Appeal

The second appeal can be made to the Secretary (Tourism) within 30 days against the Department of Tourism's decision, and their decision can remain final.





10. State-level Goa AET Development Committee

A State Level Goa AET development committee for canvassing and redressing problems for giving impetus to AET in the state as follows can be proposed :

1. Secretary (Tourism)	Chairman
2. Director (Tourism)	Member
3. Director (ICAR-CCARI)	Member
4. Director (Agriculture)	Member
5. Managing Director (GTDC)	Member
6. Two experts in the AET Sector	Member
7. Dy. Director (Tourism)	Member Secretary

10.1 Proposed Functions of the Committee

- To take a timely review of AET development activities
- Suggest appropriate changes in AET policy
- Coordinate with different departments of Central and State related to AET policy
- Research and Development about Agro-eco-tourism
- To suggest different options of financial assistance for making the AET centre competent
- Creating a plan for Skill Development for the AET centre
- To attract foreign tourists to the AET centre of the state by publicising widely at the national/international level
- Participate in national/international level AET-related exhibitions, conferences



11. Potential Benefits from the Government for AET Centre

- A Registration Certificate can be issued to the AET Centre from the Tourism Department
- A single-window system for AET registration can be made available in coordination with various statutory and licensing bodies to issue all the mandatory permissions.
- The registered applicants can receive one-time financial assistance to establish and promote the AET centre.
- The interested entities may be extended benefits and incentives applicable as per the Goa state Tourism Policy.
- A bank loan can be obtained based on a Registration Certificate for the AET Centre.
- Registered AET Centres can take advantage of the agriculture and tourism departments' schemes implemented by the state and central governments.

12. Training of Personnel

All the registered AET Centres operators might have to employ and engage only well-trained personnel trained by ICAR-Central Coastal Agricultural Research Institute, Old Goa or any other reputed institute as may be specified and certified by the Department of Tourism, Govt. of Goa. All personnel operating the AET centres shall bear an excellent character to be verified by the concerned Police station, and the said responsibility will be that of the Operator. The owner/operator shall furnish names and qualifications of all such operators to the Department or its agency to issue photo identity cards to the owners and personnel, which shall be prominently displayed at all times.

13. Publicity

Under this proposed policy, publicity may be carried out through various mediums for the AET centres that provide experiential tourism services to tourists. However, the centre may showcase the optional activities and provide photos and videos of the centre to the Department of Tourism. Similarly, registered centres may be publicised on the Tourism Department's website. Links to the AET centre websites may be made available on the websites of the State Tourism Department and Goa Tourism Development Corporation.

14. Removal of difficulties

In case of any difficulty or disputes arising in implementing this proposed policy, the decision of the Director of Tourism may be final. Failure to comply with any of the above conditions and furnishing of incorrect information by the AET centre operator may result in the said AET centre operator being debarred for a minimum period of three years, and the amount deposited as Fees/Security Deposit may be forfeited to the Government treasury.



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15. Socio-Economic & Environmental Impact of Agro-Eco-Tourism Policy for the State of Goa

15.1 Regenerative Tourism Initiatives

The Department of Tourism and Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC) has adopted the Regenerative Tourism Initiative, which aims to foster sustainable, restorative, and beneficial tourism to the environment and local communities. Regenerative tourism goes beyond simply reducing harm to the environment and society; it seeks to actively regenerate ecosystems, cultures, and local economies by focusing on long-term, holistic solutions. The concept of Regenerative Tourism is described in the Fig. 2.

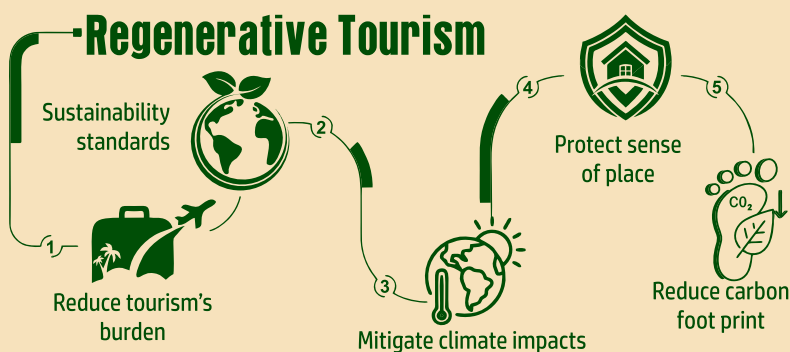


Fig. 2. Regenerative Tourism

Regenerative tourism offers a promising framework for creating sustainable and impactful travel experiences that benefit the environment and local communities. However, the transition to regenerative practices faces several challenges, including resistance to change, limited awareness, and the need for better coordination among various stakeholders. For regenerative tourism to succeed, governments, businesses, and tourists must work together to foster a shift towards more responsible and restorative travel.

**Priority 1: Green Tourism**

Greening the tourism sector for a sustainable, responsible and resilient tourism sector

Priority 2: Digitalization

Harnessing the power of digitalization to promote competitiveness, inclusion and sustainability in the tourism sector

Priority 3: Skills

Empowering youth with skills for jobs and entrepreneurship in the tourism sector

Priority 4: Tourism MSMEs

Nurturing tourism MSMEs, startups and the private sector to unleash innovation and dynamism in the tourism sector

Priority 5: Destination Management

Rethinking the strategic management of destinations towards a holistic approach that

The future of tourism depends on our collective ability to prioritise regenerative practices that balance economic growth with environmental sustainability and cultural preservation. A coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach is essential to driving meaningful change and ensuring that tourism contributes positively to the long-term well-being of both destinations and visitors. By embracing regenerative tourism, we can create travel experiences that restore ecosystems, empower local communities, and foster greater cultural understanding, ensuring that tourism thrives without compromising the resources it depends on.

Focusing on regenerative tourism practices, agro-eco-tourism can encourage the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies in farming and tourism, such as renewable energy sources, waste reduction, and water conservation. Further, by directing tourists to rural and agricultural areas, agro-tourism can alleviate pressure on coastal and urban regions, helping to reduce overcrowding, pollution, and overdevelopment.

15.2 Socio-economic Benefits

A well-designed agro-eco-tourism policy can create significant employment opportunities in rural areas, benefiting farmers, local artisans, and hospitality workers. By offering an alternative source of income, such a policy can help reduce reliance on traditional agriculture while enhancing livelihoods. Furthermore, agro-eco-tourism has the potential to diversify Goa's tourism industry, attracting visitors interested in agricultural practices, organic produce, and rural lifestyles. This would help broaden the state's tourism offerings, complementing the existing focus on coastal tourism and contributing to a more sustainable, year-round tourism model.

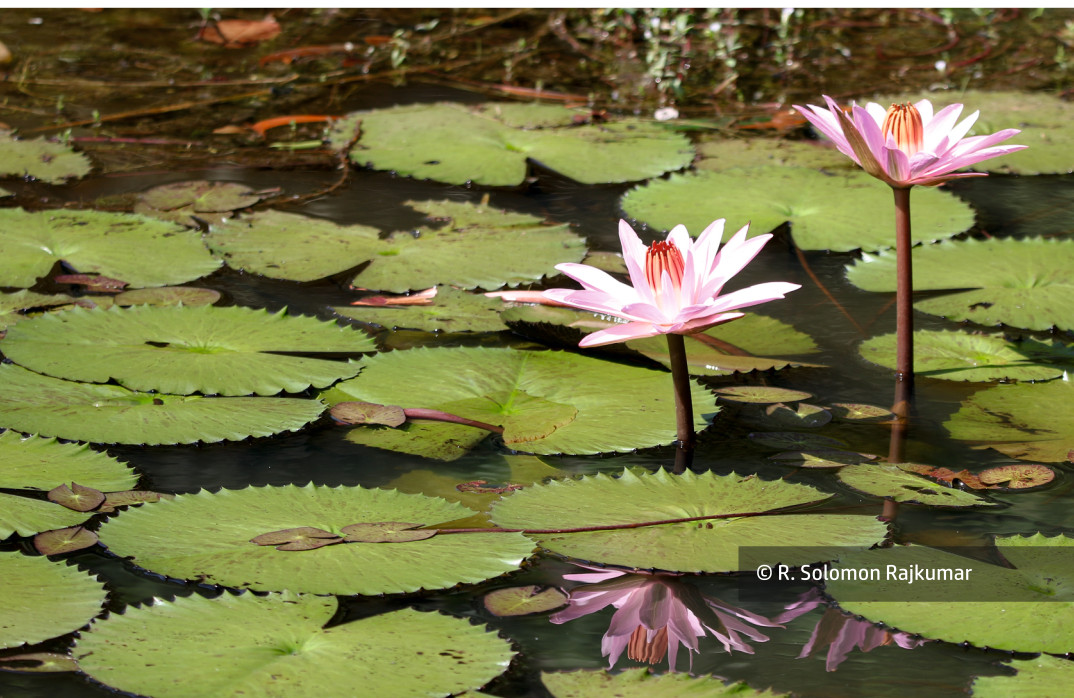
Agro-eco tourism offers a valuable opportunity to preserve and promote Goa's rich agricultural and cultural heritage, including traditional farming methods, folk art, and regional cuisine. The growing demand for agro-tourism can drive improvements in rural infrastructure, such as enhanced roads, sanitation, and healthcare services, benefiting local

communities and visitors. This, in turn, supports sustainable development and fosters a deeper connection between tourists and the region's cultural and environmental assets.

15.3 Environmental Benefits

Agro-eco-tourism can be crucial in promoting sustainable farming practices, such as organic farming, eco-friendly techniques, and soil conservation. These practices help mitigate the environmental degradation typically associated with conventional agriculture. By integrating regenerative tourism principles, the policy can also support the conservation of local flora and fauna. Tourists can participate in nature-based activities, including bird watching, wildlife photography, and forest tours, which enhance their experience and raise awareness about the region's rich biodiversity and the importance of its preservation.

In summary, a comprehensive agro-eco-tourism policy for Goa in line with the principles of regenerative tourism can drive economic growth, create jobs, preserve culture, and protect the environment, all while offering tourists a unique, sustainable 'offshore' experience by exploring the Goa beyond beaches.







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