

# Agrotourism and Rural Development in Sri Lanka

## With Special Reference to Nuwara Eliya District

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Sri Lanka is a tropical island in the Indian Ocean. It has been one of the major tourist attractions since long. Tourism is booming in the island once again at the end of a long civil war though its benefits are still confined to a few locations under a few players in the industry. The island is rich in rural tourism resources with a great appealing to a visitor. Such resources range from fauna and flora, aesthetic landscapes, streams and waterfalls, irrigation tanks and canal systems, beautiful beaches, mouth-watering tropical fruits and vegetables, historical monuments, music, dance, festivities, authentic foods, beverages, traditional agriculture, local costume, indigenous medicine and healing methods, traditional arts and sports. The island carries an overwhelming majority of rural population and this will continue well into the middle of the century. Interestingly rural agricultural characteristics have been preserved to a great extent in many parts of the country as those areas have not yet received that much of urban influences. Similarly economic problems as well as development potentials still remain in agricultural areas side by side. Only a small fraction of the vast rural agrotourism resource base is being utilized by the industry now with little or no benefits to rural people. Dedicated research work on agrotourism will promote that sector with the participation of policy makers, rural communities and private investors on a sustainable manner while trickling down a reasonable fraction of the benefits to the rural people. This would diversify their agricultural livelihoods and improve their incomes and living standards. This paper examines agrotourism and rural development of Sri Lanka with special reference to Nuwara Eliya District, a popular rural tourism destination in Sri Lanka.*

Keywords: agrotourism, foods, plantation, fruits, vegetable, tourists, rural sector.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Individual mobility from place to place for different purposes is the norm of the modern society. Inquisitiveness and curiosity are always involved with mobility to unfrequented locations. It is a well known fact that the globalization waves have further intensified this trend. The ‘traveler’ was the name given to the tourist in olden days when the modes of traveling were primitive and the risk involved with travel was extremely high. Firsthand accounts made by early travelers are referred “travelers’ records” in modern days. Traveling triggered either by recreational or leisure motive is generally referred to as tourism. In the recent past traveling opportunities as well as motives have changed and intensified over time along with the technological advancement, rising productivity and attitudinal changes. Traveling motives have shifted from traditional ‘recreation or leisure’ to such areas as education, sports, business, health care and adventure. New products such as ‘agrotourism’, ‘adventure tourism’, ‘sport tourism’ and ‘sustainable tourism’ have emerged reflecting the changes in this sector.

Many terms have been used to convey the meaning of agrotourism. These include agricultural tourism, agri-tourism, farm tourism, farm vacation tourism, wine tourism, and agri- entertainment. Generally, these terms refer to small-scale farm enterprises and community events that showcase the activities and produce of rural families and the agricultural heritage of farming regions to travelers. Agrotourism provides “rural experiences” to travelers with the goal of generating revenues for farmers and surrounding communities. These experiences typically include a wide range of attractions and activities that take place in agricultural areas. Important ingredients of “rural experiences” of agrotourism include open spaces, low levels of urban or industrial development, and opportunities for visitors to directly experience agricultural, pastoral, and natural environments.

Agriculture in its modern sense is divided into two as urban agriculture and rural agriculture. Agrotourism, however, is the launch of activities aiming at the economic and social development of rural and country regions in general. The location of agrotourism broadly covers land areas not covered by cities, towns, urban areas and suburbs. Such locations are called country, countryside and hinterlands invariably. Agrotourism combines agricultural or rural settings and products within a tourism experience. The scope of agriculture encompasses farming for human foods,

beverages, fodder and fibre; livestock products; hunting, fishing, and forestry. When it comes to agrotourism, the scope of the subject expands into agro-based industries, modern and traditional services in agricultural areas and also culture, beliefs, and value systems in the same areas. Some general features of such geographical locations are remoteness, small scale, low density of human settlements and low degree of specialization.

In the beginning, agrotourism (often found as ecotourism or rural tourism) started to diversify rural activities and agricultural practices. Nowadays, it acquires a highly acceptable environmental protection concept. Offering market-linked long-term solutions, ecotourism provides effective economic incentives for conserving and enhancing bio-cultural diversity and helps protect the natural and cultural heritage. One definition of agrotourism was given by Weaver and Fennell (1997): “Rural enterprises which incorporate both a working farm environment and a commercial tourism component”.

While ‘nature-based tourism’ is simply described as travel to natural places, ecotourism is a type of nature-based tourism that benefits local communities and destinations environmentally, culturally and economically. It works by promoting small-scale, local production and touristic activities. Agrotourism functions as a mechanism against urbanization, spreading the message of environmental protection.

The last three decades have seen a significant increase in the number of farm families diversifying their farm production. Moreover, agrotourism is intrinsically connected to sustainable development, hence environmental protection. It offers relevant information and advice on how travelers can minimize the impact on the ecosystem as well as how they can contribute to the protection of fragile ecosystems. This target can be achieved by promoting and supporting: (i) Moderate and small-scale tourist services, (ii) Local agricultural production, (iii) The manufacture and trade of traditional products, and (iv) Local culture and natural wealth.

Agrotourism is the process of attracting visitors and travelers to agricultural areas, generally for educational and recreational purposes (Lamb, 2008; Veeck et al. 2006). Many farmers all over the world especially those who have small-scale, family-owned farms have understood the necessity to supplement their agricultural business model and find new ways of generating income. Agrotourism can contribute to the overall income, cash flow and profitability of a farm by providing alternative income via farm

products, and farming activities (Colton and Bissix, 2005; Huybers, 2007; Keith et al. 2003; Sharply, 2002).

Furthermore, agrotourism can also be explained as a holiday concept of visiting an agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education or involvement in the activities of the operation. In developed countries this includes you-pick operations, corn mazes, hay rides, pumpkin patches, dairy tours, and more (Adam, 2004). Therefore, agrotourism may be any form of farm-based tourism operation that provides economic benefit to the farm owner(s) and provides on-farm entertainment, activity, or product for the visitor. Normally, agrotourism is a small-scale, low-impact business and in most cases, it mainly focuses on education (Wicks, and Merrett, 2003; Wall, 2006). In agrotourism a native or local farmer offers tours to their agriculture farm to allow visitors to view them growing, harvesting, and processing locally grown crops such as maize, sorghum or any produce the person would not come across in their areas. Often the farmers would provide farm-stay opportunities including educational programs and recreational activities (Nilsson, 2002; Weaver and Fennell, 1997). Important advantages of agrotourism are: (i) the ability to bring the main primary industry (agriculture) and the major service sector (tourism) together, by creating win-win situation for both sectors; (ii) enhancing the possibility of the enlargement of the tourism sector; and (iii) the ability to absorb the expanding tourism sector (Singh, 2007).

Many agrotourism activities need only a small team of farm laborers in order to be successful. For example, farm tours, farm stay with bed and breakfast, tractor or bullock cart rides, picking of grapes, mangoes, and other horticulture items, farm zoos, and many other activities may be operated with little additional expenditure on labor (Agrotourism Development Organization in India, 2008; Taware, 2009).

In its purest sense, agrotourism refers to travel which combines rural settings with products of agricultural operations – all within a tourism experience that is paid for by visitors. Examples of these experiences include: visiting farmers' markets to purchase farm fresh products, taking part in orchard and floral garden tours, using farm bed and breakfast accommodation, and participating in harvest festivals. The full range of agrotourism product and service development options can be categorized within three broad themes – fixed attractions, events, and services. All require careful management and supporting development resources.

## 2. SCOPE OF AGROTOURISM CONCEPT

Agrotourism as a concept covers rural /natural environments; agricultural products, processing and packaging; agro-based services; rural community and their culture/belief system; and tourism products. Each and every component in this list is interdependent even though they are compartmentalized for the sake of discussion. In general, human activities, either evolved within the location itself or externally introduced, are mixed with the natural endowments in creation and supply of tourism products.

Fixed tourist attractions in a location are current or potential generators of tourism. They range from historic farms whose primary purpose is to attract visitors, to existing agricultural buildings and natural features that are appealing sites for agrotourism activities. The five primary types of fixed attractions are historic farms, living farms, museums, food processing facilities, and natural features such as ponds and wooded areas.

Based on an agricultural or seasonal theme, events are often highly appealing products that farm operators can organize. They differ from fixed attractions because of their limited period of operation (e.g. a single day to a few weeks). Different types of events include conferences/ conventions, agricultural fairs, historic events, and festivals.

Tourists typically require a range of services to “fill out” their agrotourism experiences over time and space. Prudent initiatives are required to maintain the sustainability of the industry in a particular location. It is essential to facilitate the participation of local community rather than to keep them as mere onlookers. Tourist services are traditionally divided into four primary categories as:

- Accommodations such as bed and breakfasts (vacation farms). Bed and Breakfast (B&B) is usually confined to small lodging establishments that provide overnight accommodation without lunch and dinners. Sometimes agreement under B&B extends to self-catering facilities. This practice agrees well with small farmlands, especially in developing countries. Isolated cottages in or close to farmlands would be able to use for the purpose. A family/group/couple or an individual can stay in a farm feeding animals, watching environment, picking and cooking farm products.

- Tours associated with production or processing facilities (e.g. food processing operations), or scenic environments (e.g. botanical gardens, herbal and floricultural,

plantation heritage sites). These tours may be delivered by outside agencies (e.g. school teachers) or on-farm staff.

- Retailing services selling local produce and farm-processed products (e.g. jams, spices; “u-pick” fields and orchards; gifts, crafts and baked goods).

- Leisure/recreation activities centered on events or attractions such as indigenous cuisine, wellness pursuits, biking, hiking etc.

The IICA publication entitled “Cultivating Agritourism: A Guide for Establishing Agritourism Resource Centres in the Caribbean” (undated) lists following benefits from agrotourism for farmers, their communities and tourism operators.

**Table 1: Agrotourism Benefits**

Benefits for Farmers	Benefits for Communities	Benefits for Tourism Operators
<p>For farmers, agritourism is a potential way of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expanding farm operations;</li> <li>• using farm-based products in new and innovative ways;</li> <li>• improving farm revenue streams;</li> <li>• developing new consumer market niches;</li> <li>• increasing awareness of local agricultural products;</li> <li>• increasing appreciation of the importance of maintaining agricultural land;</li> <li>• channeling additional on-farm revenues directly to family members;</li> <li>• improving farm living conditions, working areas and farm recreation opportunities;</li> <li>• developing managerial skill and entrepreneurial spirit; and</li> </ul>	<p>From a community perspective, agritourism can be a vehicle for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• generating additional revenue for local businesses and services from tourists;</li> <li>• upgrading / revitalizing community facilities for residents and visitors;</li> <li>• increasing protection of rural landscapes and natural environments for tourists and residents;</li> <li>• helping preserve and revitalize local traditions, art and craft;</li> <li>• promoting inter-regional, inter-cultural communication and understanding;</li> <li>• increasing awareness of agricultural issues and values among the public;</li> <li>• promoting the on-going use of local agricultural products and</li> </ul>	<p>From a tourism industry viewpoint, agritourism can be a means of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diversifying the mix of tourism products and services available to visitors;</li> <li>• increasing tourism flows into attractive rural regions;</li> <li>• increasing season length during traditionally off-peak business periods;</li> <li>• Uniquely positioning rural regions in key tourism markets; and</li> <li>• bringing more foreign currency to local businesses</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>increasing the long term sustainability for farm businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>services;</li> <li>helping to diversify and strengthen the rural economy via job and income creation; and</li> <li>providing a more energetic business environment for attracting other businesses and small industries.</li> </ul>	
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### 3. AGRICULTURE AND RURAL SECTOR OF SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka, a tropical island in South Asia, lies above the equator between 5° 55'N and 9° 55' N and between the Eastern longitudes 79° 42' and 81° 52'. The total land area of the island is 65,610 sq km and the length of the coast line is 1,340 km. Nearly 23.2 percent of the land mass of the island belongs to wet zone where rainfall widely spreads throughout the year guaranteeing low temperature and ever green environment. This part of the island has been home for the major plantation crops and spices for centuries. The intermediate zone carries 13.3 landmass while the balance 63.5 belongs to the dry zone. The widespread irrigation facilities, monsoon rains, and fertile lands have created a rich environment for the domestic agriculture in these areas. Agricultural and environmental diversity of the country is further intensified by the topographical differences. The elevation of the island gradually goes up from the costal belt through the central hilly areas while reducing the temperature level inversely.

Agriculture of Sri Lanka consists of two major sectors as domestic (traditional) agriculture and plantation (modern) agriculture. The former, consisting of food production and related activities, has evolved within the country itself for more than 2,000 years while the latter, consisting of tea and rubber cultivations, was introduced to the country in the nineteenth and twentieth century's by the British colonial administration. The coconut cultivation, the third component of the modern (plantation) agricultural sector had been in the domestic agriculture for centuries, mainly in the food sector in a small scale before being incorporated into the plantation agriculture as large and medium scale cultivation units for export purposes during the colonial administration. However, the traditional small coconut gardens remained

intact side by side with the plantation sector. All the aforementioned sectors of Sri Lankan agriculture have more or less development potentials for promoting the tourism sector side by side of existing activities.

Agriculture of Sri Lanka, excepting small scale rubber and tobacco sub-sectors, consists of food and beverage items. However, the domestic agriculture plays an important role in the food production for the local market and export in small quantities. Tea production, as a beverage crop in the modern sector, mainly targets the global market. It is safe to say that there is not that much difference between the food production and agriculture in the country.

The rural sector of Sri Lanka is dominated by the food production consisting of rice in irrigated and marshy lands and other foodstuffs in higher lands. In the wet zone, high lands mainly consist of small mixed gardens where coconut, fruits and vegetables are mainly cultivated and on some occasions a few cattle and birds are also kept. Shifting cultivation practice is still visible in some dry parts in addition to mixed crops gardens in those areas. Two main types of vegetables are grown in Sri Lanka based on agro-ecological adaptability. European varieties of vegetables such as leeks, carrot, cabbages, and beetroots are cultivated in high elevated areas where temperature is low while more tropical varieties such as pumpkin, bitter gourd, snake gourd, and cucumber are cultivated in low elevated areas where temperature is high. Such fruits as banana, papaya, mango, pineapple, and jackfruit are widely cultivated in mixed gardens in many parts of the country although there are some regional variations. Poultry farming and cattle rearing, inland water and sea fishing are common practices in the rural sector of the country.

Sri Lanka has maintained a rural sector biased dwelling pattern and human settlements with some modern urban facilities required for the modern life style of the inbound tourist. Sri Lanka will have higher percentage of rural population even in the middle of this century. Sri Lanka is also one of the countries with highest population density in the world and the situation will further be aggravated in the future even though population growth is slowing down. The ultimate outcome of this trend would be the gradually declining farmland size in the countryside thus requiring alternative income sources other than cultivation. The agrotourism would be an ideal solution for this impending future challenge of rural Sri Lanka. The rural sector based tourist friendly resources other than agriculture would be added advantages in this endeavor.

Such resources as rich culture and cultural diversity, smiling faces, visitor-friendly behavioral pattern, and mouth-watering local culinary would essentially be helpful in promoting agrotourism in rural Sri Lanka.

**Table 2: Basic Information of Population in Sri Lanka**

Year	Mid Year Population (Thousands)	Population Growth Rate	Percentage of Rural Population	Percentage of Urban Population	Population Density per sq.km
1950	7,544	3.3	84.7	15.3	126
1960	9,896	2.8	83.6	16.4	153
1970	12,514	2.1	80.5	19.5	191
1980	14,747	1.9	81.2	18.8	230
1990	17,105	1	82.2	17.2	271
2000	19,102	1.3	84.3	15.7	305
2009	20,450	1.1	84.7	14.1	326
2030	22,194	0.05	78.6	21.4	338
2050	21,705	-0.28	66	34	331

Sources: Sri Lanka Census and Statistics, Central Bank of Sri Lanka, UN Population Division

Agricultural sector's contribution as a percentage to the GDP has drastically reduced since the political independence of the island while it still provides livelihoods for a large percentage of the labor force of the country. Agriculture contributed nearly 12% to the GDP in 2010 while it provided occupation for nearly 33% of the labor force. Average income of those who are engaged in agriculture is low compared to those earned by industry and service sector workers economy, so that rising of income in agriculture sector through alternative income generating strategies would be essential if the living standards of rural population are to be improved and rural poverty is to be reduced.

**Table 3: Sectoral Contribution to GDP and Labor Force by Occupation**

Year	Contribution to GDP (%)			Labor Force by Occupation (%)		
	Agriculture	Industry	Services	Agriculture	Industry	Services
1950	46.3	19.6	36.9	53	13	34
1960	37.8	16.8	45.4	52.9	10	37.0
1970	28.3	23.8	47.9	50.1	9.3	40.2
1980	27.6	29.6	42.8	50.5	12.3	35.5
1990	26.3	26.0	47.7	46.8	13.3	38.4
2000	19.9	27.3	52.8	36.0	23.6	40.3
2009	12.0	28.6	59.3	32.6	25.1	42.3
2010	11.9	28.7	59.3	32.7	24.2	43.1

Source: Annual Reports, Central Bank of Sri Lanka

Even though population of the country is divided into three categories as urban, rural, and estate for the convenience of administration and also to reflect historical division, both estate and rural sectors come under the same banner of agriculture. Agrotourism products and development strategies are more or less the same in these locations.

As household income and expenditure surveys show (Table 4) agriculture sector representing both the rural and estate sectors records poor performances in many areas compared to the urban sector of the economy. The most striking feature of these two sectors is a comparatively high poverty level. There seem to be certain limitations to reduce poverty level further sticking only to traditionally assigned activities of those sectors. Alternative strategies should be explored and exploited for this purpose. There are huge untapped potentials in both sectors to improve the living standards of communities living in those sectors and one of them is tourism potential and related activities. Among many others, seasonal as well as fulltime agricultural activities, seasonal and geographical variations of products, flavor and appearance, rituals and ceremonies involved with agriculture, unmatched natural environment with its fauna and flora, open-minded and friendly people, absolutely peaceful and secured living environment, special rural culinary, can be made use of to provide the basis for agrotourism development of the country.

**Table 4: Key Economic Characteristics by Sector in Sri Lanka – 2009/2010**

Key character	Sri Lanka	Urban	Rural	Estate
Population (million)	20.3	3.0	16.3	1.0
Average household size	4.0	4.3	4.0	4.2
Mean household income per month(US\$)	331	434	320	220
Mean household expenditure per month(US\$)	285	408	267	218
Average per capita income per month(US\$)	83	102	81	53
Number of income receivers per household	1.8	1.9	1.7	2.1
Food ratio	42.3	35.4	43.7	50.9
Gini co-efficient of household income	0.49	0.48	0.49	0.45
Gini co-efficient of household expenditure	0.39	0.39	0.38	0.31
Poverty headcount ratio	8.9	5.3	9.4	11.4

US\$ 1= Rs.110

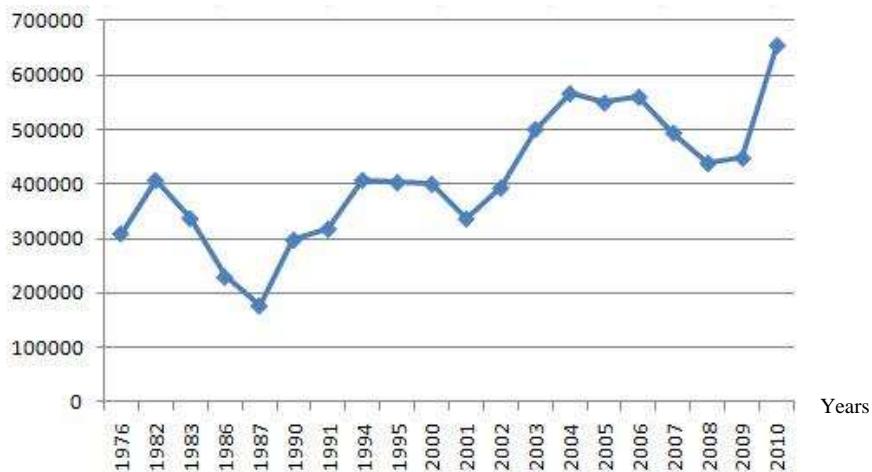
Sources: Source: HIES 2009/2010- Department of Census and Statistics

#### 4. TOURIST ARRIVAL TO SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka is a tropical island with an exceptional biodiversity and rich cultural heritage with high potential to draw the attention of the tourist who expect for a vast experience within a short period of time. Sri Lanka has inherited multitudes of tourism resources within a small geographical location. Popular tourist destinations are located in close proximity, so the distance and travel time between tourist attractions are negligible. For example the travel time through lush rural agricultural hinterlands between the world class beaches of tourist facilities in Southern Sri Lankan Galle to the cool hilly Nuwara Eliya district is about six hours by road. Similarly, a journey from the commercial city of Colombo to ancient kingdoms of the North Central province through rural Sri Lanka again would take nearly six hours.

Tourism has become a fast growing sector of the economy of Sri Lanka after the thirty years of civil war of the country. Local and foreign investments are constantly flowing into the sector to be the leaders of many tourism products although agrotourism has not received that much interest. Tourist arrival is expected to rise exponentially in the near future as the country is currently enjoying a new era of

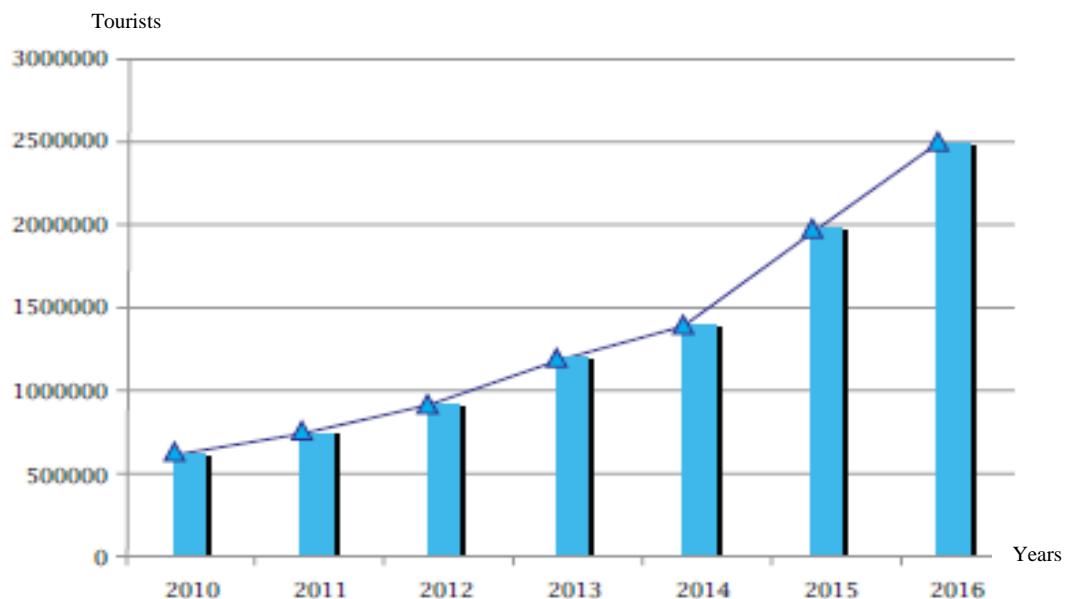
political stability and security which is well above many popular tourist destinations in the world. Similarly, old tourist attractions in war-ravaged regions have been added to the tourism product basket. Interestingly, the civil war-affected Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka have plenty of untapped agro-based tourism potential.



**Figure 1: Tourist Arrival to Sri Lanka**

Sources: Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority and the Central Bank of Sri Lanka

Tourism arrival has reached to a new record level in the recent past. Number of tourists visiting the island has reached to a record 0.75 million by the end of 2011. It is estimated that the number of tourist arrivals will reach 2.5 million by 2016 if the tourism growth momentum continues during the next five-year period of time.



**Figure 2: Tourist Arrival Projection to Sri Lanka**

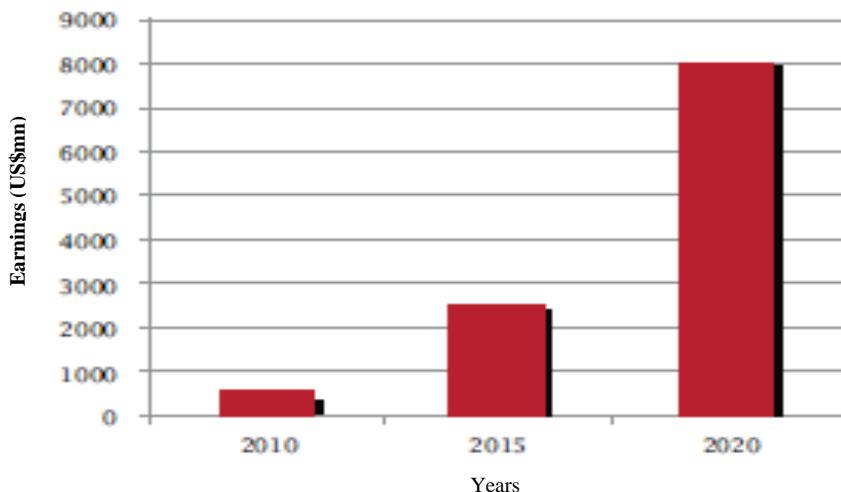
Source: Ministry of Economic Development

Income as well as employment generated from the tourism sector will go up along with the growth of tourist arrival in the future. If a considerable fraction of tourists are directed to the agricultural sector through prudent innovative tourism products with the participation of the community, income and employment generation ability of this sector can increase while improving the living standards of the sector.

Tourism season in Sri Lanka coincides with its mild winter period during the November-January period and the climatic condition of the country is very much close to the summer in temperate climate although humidity is little higher. The season comes after the inter monsoon and during a part of the northeastern monsoon and difficult to distinguish dry and wet parts of the country during season. The entire country is green and fruits and vegetables are also in plenty almost everywhere. The *maha* (great) cultivation season falls during the same period and all rice fields, gardens and also shifting cultivations are in full swing. Animal and bird breeding seasons also fall during this period of time, so that many creatures are easily visible in the countryside. This is also the season for migrant birds and they are visible in many parts

of the island even though there are special high attraction locations. Fish harvest is also high during the season and different types of fish varieties are available from the market.

Still sufficient number of tourists does not come to the agriculture sector and this is very much true with the domestic agriculture. However, some of their products such as vegetable, fruits, and fish are purchased by the tourist service providers mostly through middlepersons, so that income is not trickled down to the farmer. Introduction of the agro-based tourism products with the participation of the local community is an essential strategy of the hour in the wake of rising tourism arrivals to the country.



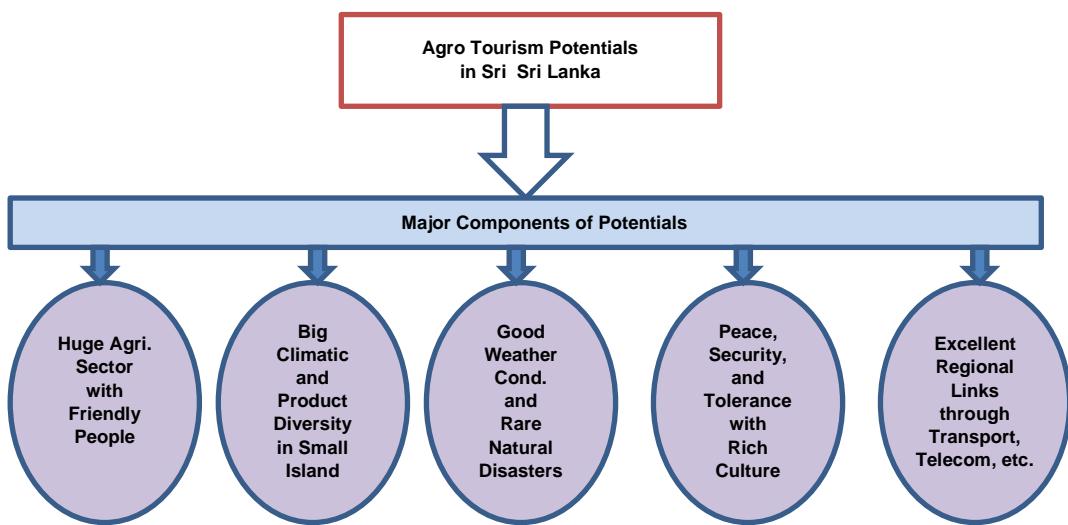
**Figure 3: Tourism Earning Projection**

Source: Ministry of Economic Development

## 5. AGROTOURISM IN SRI LANKA

There are a huge potential for agrotourism sector of Sri Lanka although it is still in its initial stages. Only a few agrotourism destinations are operating at present with general facilities and services. The remarkable increase in the interest surrounding the concept of agrotourism of other countries is influencing the development of agrotourism in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is a suitable destination for agrotourism. It has diverse agro-climatic conditions suitable for growing different types of crops, fruits, vegetables and trees. Sri Lanka's complex paddy cultivation systems (developed over the course of 2,500 years), huge and very old irrigation tanks, many tea and rubber

plantations, milking cattle on dairy farms, having a go at plucking tea leaves using the traditional 'bag-on-the-back' method, rubber tapping under expert guidance, or even working in many scenic paddy fields ( plowing using bullocks, work on paddy nurseries, transplanting seedlings in muddy fields) of Sri Lanka are just some examples of its diverse agricultural developments (Advisory Panel on Community Based Sustainable Tourism in Sri Lanka, 2008).

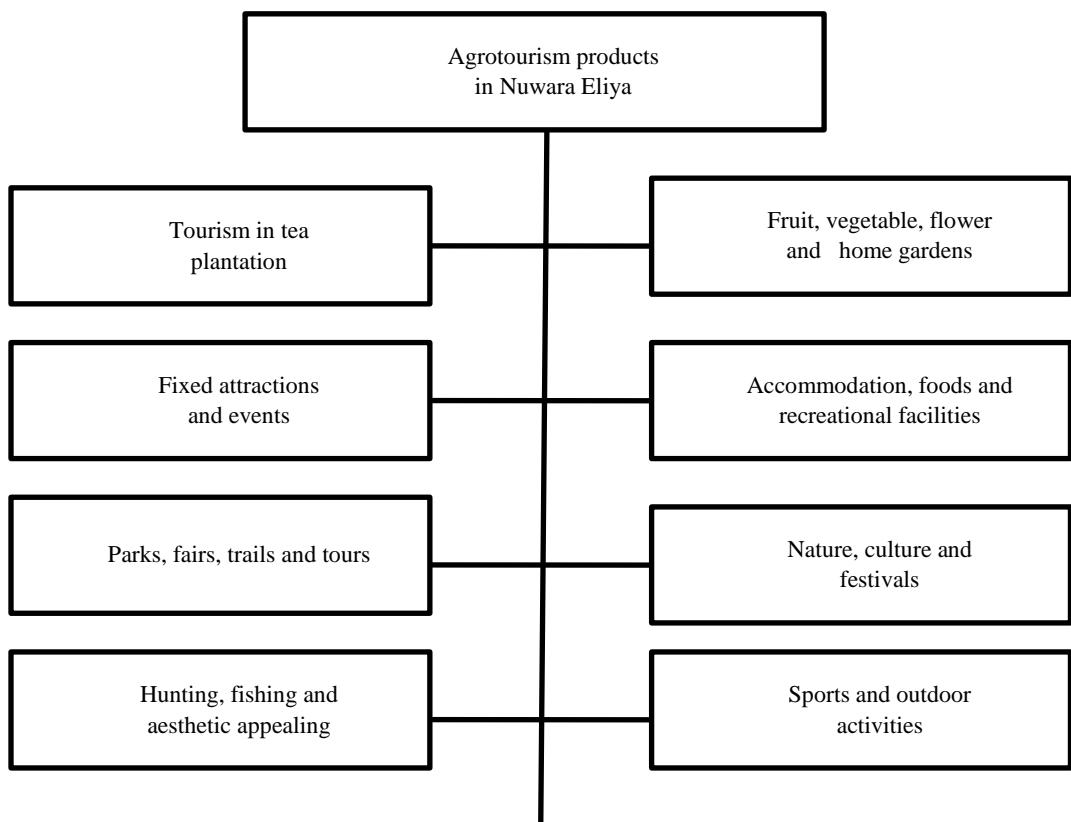


**Figure 4: Agrotourism Potentials in Sri Lanka**

Nevertheless, farmers are simple and hospitable. Sri Lankan villages and farms can offer unique experiences including local food and accommodation. Rural areas are rich in traditional goods and services and cultural activities. Thus agrotourism can cater to a niche market of agro-tourists.

## 6. AGROTOURISM IN NUWARA ELIYA DISTRICT

Nuwara Eliya is a district in the Central Province, Sri Lanka. Its area is 1,228 km<sup>2</sup>. Nuwara Eliya town is a tourist attraction. Nuwara Eliya is a mountain station at 1,868m (6,128ft) of altitude, in a splendid landscape. The city is well-kept and neat, and the evergreen grass gives the locality an aspect of "colonial British style". Hence, Nuwara Eliya can be regarded as a highland tourist destination famous for its British ambience.



**Figure 5: Agrotourism Products in Nuwara Eliya**

Nuwara Eliya was built entirely during the 19th century and its architecture mimics that of an English country town, with red-brick walls, country house like hill club and mock-Tudor half-timbering. Many of the buildings retain features from the colonial period such as the Queen's Cottage, General's House, Grand Hotel, Hill Club, Town

Post Office; and even new hotels are often built and furnished in the colonial style. Anyone who visits the city can wallow in its nostalgia of bygone days by visiting these landmark buildings. Many private homes still maintain their old English-style lawns and gardens. Nuwara Eliya's climate lent itself to becoming the prime sanctuary of the British civil servants and planters in Ceylon. Nuwara Eliya, called Little England then, was also a hill country retreat where the British colonialists could immerse in their pastimes such as fox hunting, deer hunting, elephant hunting, polo, golf and cricket.

It is also a transportation hub and an accommodation base to explore nature tourism sites in the highlands such as Horton Planes National Park, Kithulgala forest reserve and Hakgala Forest Reserve. There are many tourist attractions in and around the town. They include, Gregory Lake, Queen Victoria Park, Galways Land Bird Sanctuary, Nuwara Eliya Golf Club, Horton Plains, British tombs, Hakgala Botanical Gardens, Single Tree Hill, Shanthipura, and Nissan Gala Lena. Tea tourism attractions include, Oliphant Estate, Labookelle Tea Centre, The Tea Cup, The Tea Factory, and St. Clair's Tea Centre. There are two mountains namely, Pidurutalagala and Sri Pada (Adam's Peak) and therefore surrounding areas of Nuwara Eliya abound in opportunities for hiking and trekking.

There are a number of waterfalls within the Nuwara Eliya district and in close proximity. They include, Lover's Leap, Glen Falls, Lakshapana, Ravana Ella, Bombure Ella, Poona Oya Ella, Ramboda Ella, Gerandi Ella, Helboda Ella, St. Clair Falls, and Ihala Devathura Ella. Nature based tourism or ecotourism is an existing tourism opportunity in Nuwara Eliya but it would be further strengthen and diversified by promoting community participation. Since it needs good guiding service, training of local people for guiding would be important.

Although the town was founded in the 19th century by the British, the whole district is today visited by native travelers, especially during the month of April, the season of flowers, pony races, go-cart races and auto rally.

The population in Nuwara Eliya, according to 2001 census is 703,610 of which 50.61% are Tamils of Indian origin, 40.2% Sinhalese, 6.5% native Sri Lankan Tamils and 2.4% Sri Lankan Moors. Some 51.0% of the population are Hindu, 39.7% Buddhists, 5% Roman Catholic, 2.7% Muslim and 1.5% non-catholic Christian denominations. Due to the high altitude, Nuwara Eliya has a much cooler climate than the lowlands of Sri Lanka, with a mean annual temperature of 16°C. But the

temperature changes and sometimes it can be as low as 3°C. In the winter months it is quite cold at night, and there can even be frost although it rapidly warms up as the tropical sun climbs higher during the day. The town really comes alive in April for the Sinhalese and Tamil New Year, and it is difficult to find an accommodation in the region during this period. The festive season starts on April 1 annually in a ceremonial manner. The ceremony consists mainly of a band show in which all the local school bands participate.

Main attractions during April season include the numerous motor racing and horse racing events. Motor racing comes alive with the Mahagastotte and Radella Hill Climbs, the former being run since 1934. The Nuwara Eliya Road Race and the 4X4 Lake Cross on edge of Lake Gregory attract a fair share of enthusiasts. Parties are held nightly in the hotels, and the season culminates in the nine furlong (1,811m) Governor's Cup, Golf Tournaments and the flower show at the end of the month.

Nuwara Eliya district has lots of potential for the introduction of agrotourism industry which could have positive effect on the development of local people. Nuwara Eliya produces not only tea but also a variety of vegetables and fruits that are rare in other parts of Sri Lanka. Local agricultural activities have potential for agrotourism and to contribute to the diversification of tourism products. Out of the total population, there are a significant number of farmers with farm lands and some other facilities that are important in agrotourism development. Most of the farmers also have basic knowledge and skills required for farming. Further, different important features of these areas are able to attract visitors in a great deal. Also, the extent of agrotourism will never overlap with other rural tourism operations.

Sri Lanka needs to attract high spenders by promoting Special Interest Tourism (SIT) such as Medical tourism and agrotourism so that people who are interested in these areas can come for these vacations.

## 7. TEA TOURISM

In the area of agrotourism, there is much potential to promote the Tea Industry as one of the tourism products and a new market segment to develop Sri Lanka as a Tea-tourism destination.

The 140-year-tea history, the country's agricultural history, beautiful tea plantations and brand name of Ceylon tea, are all unique features that can be explored to develop tea tourism.

Sri Lanka has tremendous potential and opportunities to attract foreign tourists and domestic tourists through tea-tourism. It is also necessary to identify mechanisms and strategies on how tea-tourism can be incorporated into the overall tourism strategy through measures such as product development, promotions and formulation of policy decisions, development of value added products in tea-tourism and more importantly in enhancing benefits to the local community through pro-poor partnerships to alleviate poverty. It is also worthwhile to select a few tea plantation areas where tea-tourism could be developed as a pilot project.

Social life too, gets benefits from tea-tourism and the tourists can see way of life of the people in the tea plantations. Tea Tourism helps to protect our natural environment and creates natural greenery. Tea-tourism can create more income for the people, reduce or reverse migration of labor. It also can create more employment opportunities within the district. Considering the current and future tourism expectations on tea tourism, product development, stakeholder cooperation and tourism promotion are necessary for the future development of tea tourism.

## **8. AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE SOCIETY LTD. (AGCO) TRAINING CENTRE**

AGCO provides diverse agrotourism facilities in Nuwara Eliya. At AGCO Educational/Awareness programs are conducted for school children, university students, employees of public institutions, pilgrims and private travelers. Accommodation and meals are provided for a reasonable charge and the rates are much lower than that charged by hotels and home stay etc. in and around Nuwara Eliya. Apart from the training imparted on how crops and flowers are grown etc. the centre provides opportunities to visit places/locations where various crops and flowers are grown (e.g. Seetha Eliya for potatoes). Training programs on floriculture and visits to various places where flowers and flower plants can be bought, are also arranged. Training programs are also conducted on ornamental fish (Trout fish are found only at Worlds End), herbs, and different types of animal and other wild life species. It also has a Pack House where participants can observe how vegetables are processed and packed. The participants can see how crops are grown and animals are reared, can taste foods prepared with fresh vegetables, consume fresh milk and fruits etc., purchase pots and plants through the programs arranged by AGCO. This can be regarded as a well-organized agrotourism activity in Nuwara Eliya.

According to a study done by the Canadian Tourism Commission, the following table presents the top ten travel motivations of key overseas agrotourism travel markets namely, Japan, United Kingdom and Germany.

**Table 5: Top Ten Travel Motivations of Key Overseas Agrotourism Travel Markets**

Japan	United Kingdom	Germany
Outstanding scenery	Variety of things to see and do	Opportunity to increase one's knowledge about places, people and things
Variety of things to see and do	Opportunity to increase one's knowledge about places, people and things	Variety of things to see and do
Opportunity to increase one's knowledge	Personal safety, even when traveling alone	Outstanding scenery
Historical or archaeological buildings and places	Interesting and friendly local people	Personal safety, even when traveling alone
Environmental quality of air, water and soil	Nice weather	Interesting and friendly local people
Just relaxing	Standards of hygiene and cleanliness	Destination that provides value for my holiday money
Destinations that provide value for my holiday money	Destinations that provide value for my holiday money	Environmental quality of area
Nice weather	Inexpensive travel within the Country	Historical or archaeological buildings and places
Having fun, being entertained	Outstanding scenery	Nice weather
Standards of hygiene and cleanliness	Inexpensive travel to the country	Chances to see wildlife, birds and flowers not normally seen

Source: Canadian Tourism Commission Pleasure Travel Market Studies

The above table shows the top ten (10) travel motivations of travelers from Japan, United Kingdom and Germany to visit rural agrotourism destinations worldwide. Although the priorities assigned do change, the top ten motivations are more or less the same in all the three travel markets. These motivational considerations need to be taken into consideration in order to promote agrotourism in the Nuwara Eliya District as well. Thus, it becomes necessary to improve tourism infrastructure, provide signage and other tourist information, and provide training of tourism-related skills that would promote rural people to tap the tourism opportunity.

Table 6 presents a few proposals to develop nature and agrotourism in Nuwara Eliya. The proposals include those which are suitable for Nuwara Eliya district as a whole and also include ecotourism activities as well. This is because agrotourism is part of ecotourism which tries to diversify the tourism products. They are categorized into four themes namely, Fixed Attractions, Events, Recreational Services and Other Services.

**Table 6: Agrotourism Development Themes in Nuwara Eliya**

Fixed Attractions	Events	Recreational Services	Other Services
<u>Historic Places and Buildings</u> Visits to <i>Ramayana</i> sites (Seetha Eliya Kovil, Hanumanta Kovil at Ramboda) Colonial Type Buildings (Queens Cottage, General's House, Grand Hotel, Hill Club and Town Post Office) British Tombs	<u>Conferences</u> Corporate Family Reunions Weddings Get-togethers	<u>Water-based Activity</u> Boating/Canoeing Swimming Tubing and Rafting Fishing with the hook	<u>Accommodation</u> Bed & Breakfast Camping Youth Hostels Elder Hostels
<u>Parks</u> Hakgala Botanical Gardens Queen Victoria Park Horton Plains National Park Kande Ela Educational Forest Garden	<u>Agricultural Fairs</u> Food and craft shows Food cooking demonstrations Flower shows	<u>Trail Based Activities</u> Hiking Off- Road motor cycling Mountain biking Cycling Horse racing Motor racing	<u>Tour Operations</u> School tours Picnicking Organic farm visits
<u>Religious Places</u> Holy Trinity Church St. Xavier Church Bambarakele Sri Maha Vihara Jumma Mosque	<u>Seasonal Festivals/ Activities</u> Sinhala & Hindu New Year Festival	<u>Nature Appreciation Activities</u> Photography/Painting Bird watching (Galways Land Bird Sanctuary, Horton Plains)	<u>Retailing of Various Items</u> Gift/ Craft/ Antique Floral Arrangements Gardens/ Nurseries (Flowers, Greenery)

Sri Muthumariamman Kovil	Paddy harvesting Threshing (traditional) Plowing with bullocks Transplanting Plucking beans Strawberry harvesting Tea plucking (Bag on the Back) Christmas trees Easter eggs	Wildlife viewing Kitulgala Forest Reserve Hakgala Forest Reserve Kande Ela Reserve	Herbs, Dried Flowers) Roadside stands/markets U-Pick operations Specialty food and craft products Tea centers
<u>Food Processing Facilities</u> Spice Chocolate Jam /Jelly Herb Livestock operations e.g.Ambewela Milk Tea Factories, New Zealand Farm		<u>Outdoor “ Hard Adventure” Activities</u> Rock / Hill Climbing (Pidurutalagala, Sri Pada) Hiking/Trekking Cave exploring Pony rides Horse racing Motor racing (Mahagastota and Radella Hill Climbs)	
<u>Recreation Facilities</u> Archery Range Camping/Picnicking Areas Nuwara Eliya Golf Club		<u>Outdoor” Soft Adventure” Activities</u> Fossil/rock collecting Farm vehicle rides (Bullock cart, 2-wheel tractor)	

<u>Natural Areas and Water Bodies</u> Gregory Lake Single Tree Hill Shanthipura Nissan gala Lena Water Falls (more than ten)		<u>Hunting and Fishing</u> Trapping fish with nets Hunting Dog training Habitat improvement	
<u>Working Farm Structures</u> Green Houses Poly Tunnels Ambewela Farm New Zealand Farm			
<u>Agricultural Museums and Displays</u>			

Source: Information Gathered by the Authors from Field Work and Literature Search

Also, given below are some other tourism potentials which are prevailing at present in the Nuwara Eliya and have the potential to develop further.

**Table 7: Other Nuwara Eliya Tourism Potentials**

Trekking Sights Adam's Peak Horton Plains Kirigalpotta Mountain Thotupola Mountain Waterfall tours	Mixed Activities White Water Rafting Mountain biking Horse back adventures Scenic Hill Country Railway Tours Flora and fauna study tours Rain forest exploration Sea planes / Helicopter rides
Popular Bird Watching Sights Galway's Land Bird Sanctuary	Identified some new tourist production Ragala - Trekking track of Historical Area (Garundagela" Manthri thenna"

Horton Plains	Dorawa" Pandithayakumbura" Rupaha and Kotamba)
Victoria Park	Walapane – Foot Track (Manilwala" Thibbotugoda" Thawalama) Very remote area
Hakgala Botanical Gardens	
Gregory's Lake Wetlands	
Bomburuella	Rathnayaka pathna – Ragala Kotagala View Point

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

In developing countries like Sri Lanka, tourism has become one of the major sectors of the economy, contributing to a large proportion of the national income and generating significant employment opportunities. The tourism industry has become the fastest growing service industry in the country with great potentials for its further expansion and diversification. Agrotourism is all about unraveling various facets of village life. This includes opening up farms to tourists from cities and abroad, and letting them spend some time in the lap of nature. Apart from telling them about the various crops and how they are sown and harvested, agrotourism exposes tourists to authentic food, handicraft, dress, culture, music and language. Tourists get to indulge in rural activities such as bullock-cart rides, milking cows and goats and picking farm-fresh fruits and vegetable. The activities may vary from village to village.

Basically, agrotourism should ensure the following three basic necessities.

(i) Have something for visitors to see:

Animals, birds, farms and nature are the few things which agrotourism could offer to the tourist to see. Apart from these, culture, dress, festivals and rural games could create enough interest among foreign tourists in agrotourism.

(ii) Have something for visitors to do:

Participating in agricultural operations and swimming, bullock cart riding, pony riding, buffalo riding, cooking and participating in the rural games are the few activities in which tourist can take part and enjoy.

(iii) Have something for visitors to buy:

Rural crafts, dress materials, farm gate fresh agriculture products, processed foods are the few items which tourist can buy as souvenir for remembrance.

However, in Sri Lanka agrotourism is at an infant stage and is poorly organized. In most of the farms, infrastructure facilities are not sufficiently available. This is one of the factors that determined the success of the industry. Therefore, provision of basic infrastructure such as road facilities, clean water, and electricity is very important. Moreover, there is low awareness of agrotourism and its attractiveness with farmers and other stakeholders. Making them well aware of agrotourism and creating a positive attitude towards opportunities of agrotourism is essential in order to have agrotourism operations. Although farmers have basic knowledge and skills in farming, they are poor in business management skills namely entrepreneurship, management skills, and interpersonal and communication skills etc. Therefore, education and training in these areas are very much important for the successful agrotourism operations.

Tourist guides in Sri Lanka and travel operators have very little knowledge about the benefits resulting from agrotourism. Training programs to cater to the needs of these individuals need to be conducted. Furthermore, another important aspect for the successful agrotourism operation is to make arrangements to get necessary financial facilities for the farmers to renovate and arrange agrotourism destinations in an attractive manner. This activity needs large amounts of money and effort. If farmers can have access to credit or loan facilities under concessionary rates, it would be an ideal solution. Some farmers also fear that letting foreigners to visit their farms is risky, because some foreigners can introduce harmful insects intentionally to their farms. Thus there is a need to conduct awareness programs to dispel such doubts from the minds of the concerned farmers.

Finding proper remedies for the above-mentioned problems is an essential prerequisite as the potential entrepreneurs will face difficulties to start a business without external support. After that, introduction of agrotourism under the themes suggested earlier would be of great significance and would improve the overall economic, social, cultural, and aesthetic level of the areas.

In conclusion it can be said that, 'Agriculture has been the oldest vocation in all countries since the Neolithic revolution. It is still the center of gravity of livelihoods, culture, social values, and politics in many [developing] countries. You need a fair deal

if you are to maintain the delicate socioeconomic equilibrium in your country.<sup>1</sup> This is equally valid when agrotourism is promoted in many regions of the developing countries including Nuwara Eliya District of Sri Lanka.

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