



## Representation of Opportunities and Areas for Agro-tourism Development in Rural Areas (Case Study: Villages of Tehran Province)

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### Abstract

**Purpose-** Agro-tourism and the development of farm-based tourism businesses have emerged as a creative and innovative approach to rural tourism, which exploits the potentials and capabilities of agricultural activities as unique opportunities for employment and development and poverty alleviation. The purpose of this study is to identify opportunities and areas for Agro-tourism development in rural areas of Tehran Province.

**Design/methodology/approach-** This is an applied research that adopts a descriptive-analytical approach. The statistical population of the study consisted of the rural areas of Tehran Province, of which 8 towns and three villages from each town were selected as the sample. Data collection was conducted using both library and field survey methods; however, the main focus of the research was on field studies, which involved a questionnaire and face-to-face interviews. The questionnaires were prepared for three groups of villagers, tourists, and officials separately. The sample size for villagers was determined using Cochran formula ( $n=261$ ). Also, since the exact number of tourists and officials was not known, the sample size of these two groups was selected using purposive method ( $n=31$  and  $n=20$ , respectively). Data were analyzed using descriptive (mean and frequency) and inferential statistical methods (Chi-square test, one-sample t-test and Mann-Whitney test).

**Findings-** The results suggest that government support and infrastructure improvement, the organization of local festivals related to farm products, the participation of tourists in harvesting, the direct presence of tourists in farming, job creation, and promotion of rural income levels are the most factors that influence Agro-tourism development in rural areas of Tehran Province. According to the results, showed all respondents agreed on the positive impact of the studied measures on Agro-tourism development.

**Key words-** Tourism, Rural tourism, Agro-tourism, Villages of Tehran Province.

**Paper type-** Scientific & Research.



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## 1. Introduction

Today, tourism and its businesses associated with this value-creating industry have become a dynamic driver and a new strategy for achieving developmental goals and economic prosperity. The tourism economy with its significant share in generating currency and promoting start-ups has contributed to the diversification of employment, especially in rural areas. From the economic dimension, rural tourism helps alleviate poverty by expanding small business centers, fostering and transforming risky resources into high-yielding resources, and increasing profitability and income distribution (Asghari & Jafari, 2018). Given the predominance of agricultural activity in rural areas and the multifaceted vulnerability of this type of activity, it can be argued that today agriculture and its traditional activities can no longer meet the needs of rural communities. In this regard, Agro-tourism is one of the strategies proposed for diversification and sustainable rural development (Norouzi & Fathi, 2018). Agro-tourism as a subset of rural tourism is concerned with the accountability and benefits derived from local community (Salahi Esfahani, 2018) and can be promoted by encouraging villagers to offer agricultural products and services to tourists, such as the pleasant landscape of agricultural lands, field trips, and site preparation of settlements alongside farmland for leisure time. This can contribute to the prosperity of the agricultural sector (Anabestani & Mozaffari, 2018). Tourism, especially agro-tourism, paves the way for entrepreneurial activity in the rural environment. Entrepreneurship in relation to ecotourism and rural tourism as a supplement to agricultural activities (Asghari & Jafari, 2018) is concerned with criteria such as conservation, recreation and leisure, non-consumer values of agriculture (Razeghi Borkhani & Mohammadi, 2018) and the transition from production-orientation in this sector to multifunctional agriculture (Yazdanpanah, 2018). The prosperity of Agro-tourism in rural areas demands a thorough understanding of the capabilities, relative advantages, and special products of each geographical area. The entrepreneurial activities of the agricultural sector pertained to the farm and the natural environment of the village will lead to the emergence of a new form of business in the villages

called *green entrepreneurship* (Rezaei et al., 2018). Green Entrepreneurship can be defined as establishing a new business in response to a recognized opportunity to make profits and mitigate environmental side effects (Wallenberg, 2012). Achieving sustainable Agro-tourism development depends on local community cooperation (Barbieri, 2013). In Agro-tourism, beyond transactions related to housing, food and leisure activities, the direct sale of local products and industries yield other beneficial effects such as cultural interactions, recognition of the role of women in rural communities, honoring of the role of farmers in society and promotion of cultural exchanges (Lopez & Garcia, 2006; Nouri, Moradi Hosien, Moradi & Pasandi, 2017). In Agro-tourism, the visitors need to pay a fee to the farmer in return for the relevant services offered by the tourism units.

The recognition of target market is one of the requirements of Agro-tourism development (Varmzayari, Rahimi & Babaei, 2017). Agro-tourism lays the ground for the diversification of farm-based economic activities and related fields and concentrates on leisure activities in the farms, harvesting and direct purchase of products, organization of local festivals to showcase local products, the sale of agricultural and livestock produce, and the appreciation of natural landscapes on weekends and holidays. Considering the broad geographical breadth of Iran in terms of size, climatic conditions and various environmental resources, there are substantial capacities and potentials for development of tourism industry especially in rural areas.

Rural settlements constitute a significant share of the country's natural arena and agricultural activities, the diversification of crop production, opportunities and areas for tourism can boost various dimensions including ecotourism and Agro-tourism. Despite the long history of this industry, especially in European countries, it is still a new and emerging industry in Iran. In addition to booming economic growth and job creation in rural areas, the correct identification of destination villages and reliance on environmental capabilities will increase the sustainability of rural population and the share of value added and generated by this sector in the entire economy of Iran. Agro-tourism has not only developed as a strategy of economic diversification around the world, but also as a set

of economic and non-economic goals, entrepreneurship and rural development (Valdivia & Barbieri., 2014). In Agro-tourism, tourists can pick fruits and vegetables, ride horses, taste honey and buy various products and crafts from farm stands and shops and engage in other forms of activities (Hepburn, 2008). Therefore, agro-tourism with its complementary role in agricultural activity represents a means of agricultural development and revitalization in diverse areas of the country; however, given the risks associated with economic, social, natural and psychological dimensions which pose a threat to agricultural activities and consequently agro-tourism, it is important to study this subject in detail (Heidari et al., 2016). Despite the opportunities and areas for the development of agro-tourism activities, the lack a clear understanding of this fledgling industry by rural residents will thwart the implementation of any action in this direction. A thorough understanding of the relative advantages and capabilities of rural areas is vital for their proper exploitation. Many of the entrepreneurial capacities and potentials in the rural agro-tourism sector of the country remain unknown, and there is insufficient information about this field. Tehran Province with 756 inhabitable rural areas and a wide range of environmental resources such as farms, orchards, springs and rivers, mountainous areas and highlands as well as features pertained to the local characteristics of each village are exposed to a broad spectrum of capabilities and potentials in the realm of agro-tourism or farm tourism development. However, despite all the resources and capabilities available, agro-tourism-based businesses in rural areas of the province have not been adequately developed on the one hand, and the locals are not sufficiently aware of the relative advantages of agro-tourism on the other hand. In this regard, the present study aims to develop agro-tourism businesses in rural areas of Tehran Province in order to answer the question regarding the opportunities and potentials for agro-tourism development in rural areas of Tehran Province.

## 2. Research Theoretical Literature

Today, tourism is recognized as a dynamic industry and a strategy to achieve national goals of sustainable rural development. Rural tourism is a branch of the tourism industry which is considered as part of the tourism market and a policy for rural development. In addition to its relative advantages,

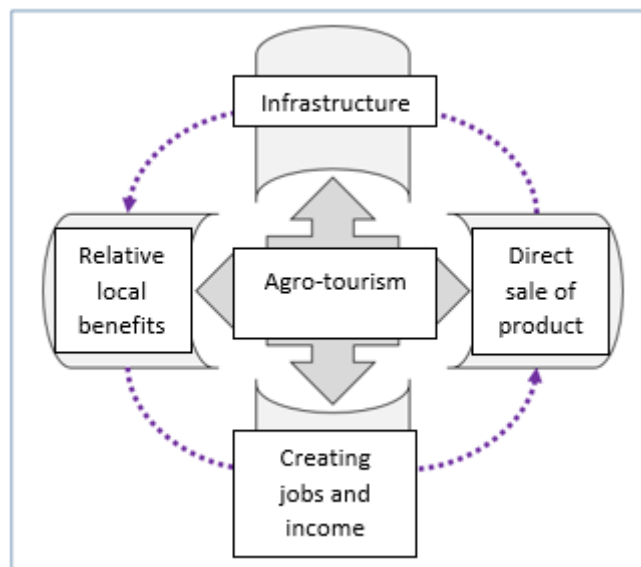
tourism can bring about crucial economic effects such as hampering rural migration, creating employment opportunities for surplus labor forces, diversifying the rural economy alongside other economic sectors, increasing rural households' income levels, and generating demand for agricultural produce and relevant industries (Bagheri & Rashidekloir, 2018). Rural tourism emerged into the rural development literature in the second half of the twentieth century (Khani, Khosravimehr & Toorani, 2014) and the gradually boom of activities in this sector has laid the ground for the emergence of diverse forms of rural tourism. Rural tourism has flourished in the rural areas of Iran over the last two decades (Orouji, Alizadeh, Abyaneh & Safavi, 2018) and has produced numerous job opportunities alongside agricultural and other rural activities (Start, 2010), resulting in increased rural incomes, the satisfaction of rural residents and their active participation in community, as well as diminished rural migration to cities (Motiei Langroud & Kateb Azgami, 2018). To realize the goals of 2025 Vision Documents regarding the arrival of 20 million tourists and the employment of about 6.5 million people in this sector, all tourism facets, including rural areas, should be exploited (Hesam, Rezvani & Faraji Sabokbar, 2016).

Agro-tourism blends the words agriculture and tourism. The amalgamation of tourism and agriculture will produce a new subordinate type of tourism that is more spatially restricted than tourism and even rural tourism, illustrating an image that is primarily based on farms and agricultural affairs. Agro-tourism is one of the major forms of tourism playing a pivotal role in rural and agricultural development (Varmazayari et al., 2017). While generating employment opportunities in rural areas, this type of tourism can provide tourists with a farm-based tourism experience (Rezvani, Najarzadeh & Torabi, 2016). As a complement to agricultural activities (Badri, Salmani & Heidari, 2016), it can also contribute to the flourishing of rural economy. This type of tourism as a subdivision of rural tourism revolves around issues including visiting the natural environment of villages and agricultural fields by tourists, allowing them to experience life in the farm, participating in harvesting process and buying goods and crafts directly from the farm, basking in the landscape of farms and gardens, strolling in farms, making a direct and affordable

purchase, having access to organic products, especially dairies, spending some leisure time in the gardens and farms, riding horses, hunting, and hiking in the neighboring mountainous areas, among other things.

Today, the close link between tourism and agriculture cannot be reduced to a mere product of tourism, and it is more than just a service offered in rural areas. It represents a new way of ascertaining travel and raising positive awareness of local people's culture and the environment. (Sathe, 2012). Since the majority of people may have little or nothing to do with agriculture, agro-tourism offers an opportunity for urban dwellers to enjoy nature and culture, gain insights about agricultural activities. As a result, this increases the purchase of agricultural products (Choo & Petrick, 2014). Agro-tourism is a part of rural tourism offering a broad range of recreational and tourism services. In fact, agro-tourism involves any types of measures taken by a farmer for the leisure or the training of people to promote farm products and generate

additional farm income (Samani Qotbabadi, Torabi Farsani, Shafi'i, Bazrafshan & Ghaffari, 2017). Agro-tourism describes the act of visiting a farm or any horticultural or agricultural activity for the purpose of pleasure, education, or active participation in farm activities or operations, which also enhances the economic productivity of the farm (Bondoc, 2009). Agro-tourism can be considered as a union of tourism, villages, farms and entrepreneurship. In light of the thriving tourism activities and the improved infrastructure in this area, rural tourism can improve the quality of life among the villagers and raise their awareness so that they see farming and agriculture as a potential sub-branch of rural tourism called agro-tourism. Agro-tourism requires the expansion of infrastructure, such as settlements and access networks, local community participation and risk-taking of residents in the creation of new businesses and, most importantly, a thorough understanding of agro-tourism contexts and opportunities.



**Figure 1. Opportunities and areas for agro-tourism development**  
(Source: Research findings, 2019)

Various studies have explored tourism, especially rural agro-tourism over the past decade; however, most researchers have focused on the conceptual frameworks and definitions of this type of tourism, with few delving into the new and varied opportunities for agro-tourism. This can embrace diverse farm-based services. In the following, some of these studies are introduced:

Welteji & Zerihun, (2018) underscored the need for government support of education and the involvement of relevant state agencies to raise the awareness of tourists about the benefits of agro-tourism.

In another study, Lupi, Giaccio, Mastronardi, Giannelli & Scardera (2017) investigated the characteristics of agro-tourism and its role in rural development and found that many rural settlements

in Italy possess enormous potentials in farm tourism, and development of this domain of tourism aids to the growth of rural population and improvement of the rural environment and landscape.

Lago (2017) also pointed that factors such as security, diversification of farm activities and access to the target market are the major parameters of agro-tourism development.

Maruti (2010) asserted that the existence of settlements in farms, adequate water and vegetable resources, on-site cooking in the field, the availability of health care services, the presence of a pond or lake in the field for swimming and fishing, the possibility of direct purchase from the farm and the visit of livestock are the major aspects of agro-tourism development.

Yazdanpanah (2018) also found that due to the myriad of challenges facing the rural agricultural sector, the activities of this sector are shifting from production orientation to post-production orientation or multifunctional agricultural model. In this regard, multifunctional agriculture as an approach to the promotion of sustainable development in rural areas has become a point of reference for rural policymakers and farmers. The adoption of this multi-functional approach, which is a subset of agro-tourism unlike the conventional approach, can promote entrepreneurship.

Najarzadeh & Torabi (2017) in a survey of community-based agro-tourism development planning based on SOAR framework reported that factors such as product packaging, entrepreneurship support, training, constant running of grape festivals, greater synergy between stakeholders and the division of labor between participants commensurated with their power and responsibility are the most important executive strategies for developing agro-tourism in the villages under study.

Samani Qotbabadi et al. (2017) identified agro-tourism capacities of Jahrom City using TOWS model. They demonstrated the potentials of agro-tourism from a strategic management perspective. According to the findings, aggressive strategy, conservation and emphasis on agro-tourism development and tourists' demand to visit farms and agro-tourism destinations as well as the use of

organic products are the best strategy to bolster agro-tourism in the study area.

Bouzarjomehri, Shayan & Qandahari (2017) investigated the role and status of agro-tourism in rural development. In this regard, he emphasized the importance of formulating a comprehensive agro-tourism plan and identifying each region's tourism potentials as well as describing each tourism's agricultural product to capture unmet demand and respond to the current demand. In addition, collaborating with agencies in charge to identify agro-tourism farms as entrepreneurial firms, encouraging people to participate in the development of tourist infrastructure and facilities, and attempting to establish a tourism cycle in the provinces and to organize agro-tourism educational and recreational festivals are other important issues underscored by him.

Amiri, Ehsanifar, Naderi & Rostami (2016) found that agro-tourism, which comprises four dimensions of village, farmer, farm and tourist, has a bearing on the development of rural entrepreneurship through economic, social, cultural and economic effects. These four elements are interactive and interrelated and can affect one another.

Karimi (2014) referred to agro-tourism entrepreneurship as a new strategy for rural development; however, tourism in general and agro-tourism in particular have to be creative and meet the growing demand of tourists. Drawing on innovations, they need to diversify services and products and pave the way for business development, especially small businesses and entrepreneurship development.

In light of the literature review and the conceptual literature of agro-tourism, we can generally identify five distinct approaches to the development of activities, contexts, opportunities, and benefits of agro-tourism development, including bolstering, utilitarian, community-based, recreational and integrated approaches (see Table 2). Considering the type and characteristics of the integrated approach to agro-tourism, which merges the above-discussed views, this approach has been adopted in the present study and the research criteria and methods will be based on this approach.

**Table 1. Approaches to agro-tourism**  
(Source: Novrouzi and Fathi (2018) and the findings of research)

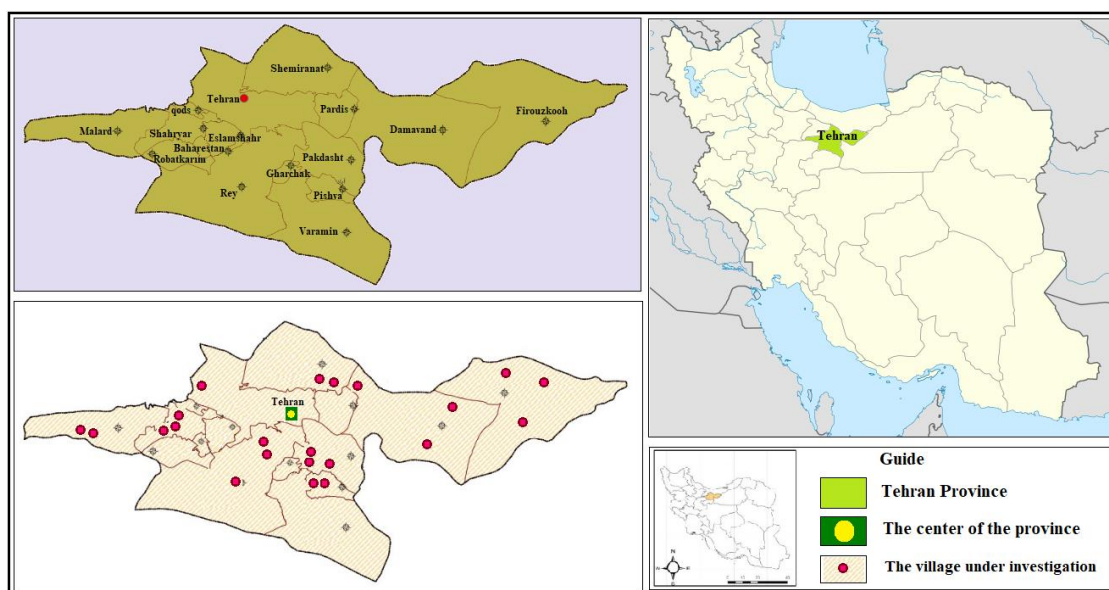
Approaches	Orientation and type of outlook
Bolstering (upgrading) approach	It considers infrastructure development and housing provision as a priority and concentrations on public sector cooperation and support for private sector investment in tourism. This approach maintains that tourism development is inherently good, bringing about many opportunities for the host community.
Utilitarian approach	It focuses on advantages such as wealth creation, development of start-ups, employment creation and marketing, positing that tourism is the most effective strategy to generate income.
Community-based approach	It views agro-tourism as essential to revitalizing long-standing rural traditions, holding local festivals, fostering interactions and cultural relationships, and preserving rural values. It also considers tourism an apt opportunity for cultural exchange and interaction of villagers and tourists.
Recreational approach	It sees agro-tourism as a way of drawing urban dwellers to areas distinct from urban congestion and pollution. This approach emphasizes the potentials of direct purchase from the farm, hiking, hunting, enjoying nature, setting up garden-salons and recreational gardens for strolling and spending leisure time on the farm.
Integrated (Systematic) Approach	This stresses the preservation of rural environment, providing the necessary infrastructure for agro-tourism, including suitable accommodation and transportation network, employment and value creation, organization of local festivals, and recreational activities on the farm.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Geographical Scope of the Research

With a total area of about 12981 square kilometers, Tehran Province has accommodated a population of over 814698 people in rural areas (according to 2016 statistics). It consists of 16 towns, 33 districts, 44 townships, 71 villages and 756 counties, of which 291 are completely uninhabited (see Figure 1). The total area of agricultural and horticultural lands under cultivation in the province is 138038 and 48926 ha, respectively. The total amount of

agricultural and horticultural produce in the province adds up to 3972328 tons. The highest crop area is dedicated to wheat and barley, and fruits such as pistachios, apples, berries, peaches, cherries, apricots and pomegranates are the most well-known crops of this province with a production quantity of 599850 tons. The rural areas of Tehran Province occupy a special position in terms of cattle production so that in 2016 there were a total of 9625 livestock units in operation that bred over 1447417 domesticated animals in the province.



**Figure 2. Map of the study area**  
(Source: Iranian Statistical Center, 2016)

### 3.2. Methodology

This is an applied research in which a descriptive-analytical method has been adopted. The data was collected through document analysis and field surveys. The statistical population of this study consisted of three groups of rural development officials in provinces, local people and tourists who were selected from 8 rural areas in Damavand, Firoozkooh, Shemiranat, Pishva, Pakdasht, Shahriar, Malard, and Ray towns in Tehran Province. Of each town, three villages were chosen as the sample (see Table 1). The main reason for the inclusion of above towns in statistical population was their enormous capacity in agro-tourism development and the large number of tourists in rural areas of these towns. In the group of rural locals, the sample size was determined by Cochran formula ( $n=261$ ). Also, as the exact number of tourists and experts was not known, the

number of samples in these two groups was determined using purposive method ( $n=31$  and  $n=20$ , respectively). The field data was collected through a questionnaire and face-to-face interviews. The questionnaire items were designed based on the main research question. Accordingly, 17 variables were developed and the items were prepared in two forms of open and closed items using a 5-point Likert scale. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by experts in the field, and Cronbach's alpha test was utilized to assess the reliability of items ( $r=0.893$ ). Statistical analysis was conducted using a set of descriptive and inferential statistics (one-sample t-test, chi-square and Mann-Whitney) and based on SPSS software output. Finally, the most important parameters affecting the development of agro-tourism in rural areas of Tehran Province were identified and explained.

**Table 2. Towns and villages under study**

(Source: Research findings, 2019)

Town	Village
Damavand	Jord – Ziyarat, Hoveir
Firouzkooh	Lezur - Jelizjand - Khamdeh
Pakdasht	Golzar - Filestan - Aluak
Shemiranat	Great Lavassan, Ahar – Barg-e Jahan
Shahriyar	Qajar Takht-e Rostam - Torpaq Tape - Qajar Abad
Mallard	Akhtar Abad – Gale Kahriz - Arastou
Ray	Amin Abad – Dehkheir - Klein
Pishva	Yusuf Reza - Tarand Paein

## 4. Research Findings

### 4.1. Descriptive statistics

The descriptive findings related to the demographic characteristics of the subjects exhibit that the highest and lowest number of responders were in the age group of 26 to 35 years (29.1%) and 18-25 years (7.7%), respectively. In the group of officials and experts, the majority (35.5%) belonged to the age group of 46-55 years, and in the group of tourists, the highest frequency was observed in the age group of 36-45 years. In regard to the gender, 88.9% of respondents were male and 11.1% were female. As for the level of education, the results of survey showed that respondents with a diploma or associate/bachelor's degree had the highest frequency with 33% and 24.9%, respectively. Of 261 rural respondents, 88 (33.8%) were also self-employed. To evaluate the capabilities and opportunities of agro-tourism development and the formation of agro-tourism entrepreneurship activities in rural areas of Tehran Province, 17 indicators were developed as sub-categories of main items. Descriptive findings related to the rural perspective suggest that government aids in form of loans and subsidies (mean= 4.13). Moreover, employment creation and promotion of rural income as a result of agro-tourism development programs and projects (mean=3.95), weekend vacations on the farm (mean=3.85) and an expansion of resorts and recreational activities on farms (mean=3.82) are the major opportunities and areas for agro-tourism development in rural areas of Tehran Province.

Supplying local and organic products, extensive and varied gardens and farms, traditional and conventional festivals and ceremonies, tourists' participation in harvesting and direct farm purchases are other great opportunities based on the view of rural residents. In general, a wide range of factors such as produce diversity,

local customs, employment, resorts and recreational infrastructure are excellent parameters noted as relative advantages and areas for agro-tourism development in rural areas of Tehran Province. The villagers hold a generally positive attitude towards these capacities, which is above average (3) in all respects (see [Table 3](#)).

**Table 3. Descriptive findings related to opportunities and areas for agro-tourism development**

(Source: Research findings, 2019)

Index	Spectrum					Mean
	Vey low	Low	Average	High	Very high	
Expansion of resorts and recreational activities on the farm	2.3	5	23	47.5	22.2	3.82
Weekend vacations on the farms	1.1	3.4	28.7	42.9	23.8	3.85
Development of tourism tours in gardens and villages	1.1	6.1	31.4	37.9	23.4	3.76
Turning gardens into a reception and entertaining salons for tourists	1.1	5.7	29.9	40.6	22.6	3.78
Tourism development with emphasis on medicinal plants	1.9	6.5	29.1	41	21.5	3.74
Expansion of production and sales of local produce and crafts to tourists	1.1	3.1	36.8	37.7	21.5	3.75
Production and sale of organic produce	0.8	4.6	36.8	39.8	18	3.7
Direct sale of produce on the farm and involvement of tourists in the harvest	1.5	7.3	32.6	41.4	17.2	3.66
Organization of ritual festivals and traditional agricultural activities	1.9	4.6	34.5	39.8	19.2	3.7
Holding planting and harvesting festivals	2.3	3.4	33.3	45.6	15.3	3.68
Running environmental and agricultural programs on the farm	2.3	5.4	31.4	44.4	16.5	3.67
Organizing a local festival to revive and reinforce traditional customs	1.5	7.3	33.3	39.8	18	3.66
Setting up workshops on handicraft training for tourists	3.1	9.2	36	36.8	14.9	3.51
Increasing earnings obtained from the sale of produce	1.9	7.3	33	36.4	21.5	3.68
Improving farmers' level of production and income	2.3	4.6	29.9	41	22.2	3.76
Promoting direct and indirect job creation	0.4	3.8	28	36	31.8	3.95
Government aids such as loans and subsidies	1.5	2.7	19.5	34.1	42.1	4.13

#### 4.2. Inferential statistics

In light of the issues raised in the theoretical framework of research, tourism and agricultural activity are the main pillars of the emergence and thriving of agro-tourism in rural areas. The government agencies in charge of villages and rural tourism also play a decisive and facilitating role in shaping agro-tourism activities. Therefore, in the present study, three groups of tourists, locals and tourism experts and authorities were selected as key respondents. In this part of the study, we compared mean responses and discussed the relevance and difference from the expected value using single sample t-test. Findings about opportunities and areas of agro-tourism development in rural areas of Tehran Province with respect to differences in views and prioritization of components between the three groups of villagers,

experts and tourists suggest that alpha error was less than 0.05 and the mean responses was distinct from the assumed threshold in all the three groups. In other words, all three groups of respondents agreed on the desirable impact of the components with relative differences and believed that it was above average. Therefore, it can be argued that there is a significant relationship between the components and this value will be acceptable with an error value of 0.000. On the one hand, in the assessment of all the three groups, the effectiveness of measures was desirable; on the other hand, there was a significant and positive relationship between the responses (see [Table 4](#)).



**Table 4. Mean difference and correlation of the measures for three respondent groups using single sample t test**  
(Source: Research findings, 2019)

Measures related to opportunities and areas of rural tourism development	Rural residents		Experts		Tourists	
	t	Sig (2-tailed)	t	Sig (2-tailed)	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Expansion of resorts and recreational activities on the farm	14/60	0/00	4	0/00	8/55	0/00
Weekend vacations on the farms	15/84	0/00	5/48	0/00	2/88	0/01
Development of tourism tours in gardens and villages	13/41	0/00	5/76	0/00	9/55	0/00
Changing gardens into a reception and entertaining salons for tourists	13/94	0/00	3/67	0/00	7/65	0/00
Tourism development with emphasis on medicinal plants	12/73	0/00	6/87	0/00	5/41	0/00
Expansion of production and sales of local produce and crafts to tourists	14/02	0/00	6/73	0/00	6/05	0/00
Production and sale of organic produce	13/35	0/00	9/06	0/00	5/88	0/00
Direct sale of produce on the farm and involvement of tourists in the harvest	11/75	0/00	9/52	0/00	7/51	0/00
Organizing ritual festivals and traditional agricultural activities	12/56	0/00	6/64	0/00	5/50	0/00
Holding planting and harvesting festivals	12/87	0/00	7/35	0/00	6/70	0/00
Running environmental and agricultural programs on the farm	12/20	0/00	6	0/00	2/63	0/02
Organizing a local festival to revive and reinforce traditional customs	11/64	0/00	6/82	0/00	2/68	0/00
Setting up workshops on handicraft training for tourists	8/65	0/00	8/28	0/00	4/09	0/00
Increasing earnings obtained from the sale of produce	11/55	0/00	4/88	0/00	6/54	0/00
Improving farmers' level of production and income	13/29	0/00	5/54	0/00	3/29	0/00
Promoting direct and indirect job creation	17/32	0/00	6/87	0/00	3/98	0/00
Government aids such as loans and subsidies	19/75	0/00	3/88	0/00	3/15	0/01

Given the themes and nature of variables under study, 17 indicators are assigned to four basic categories, including infrastructure, direct sales and supply of products, relative and local advantages, employment and income generation. In this way, the difference between means is evaluated and the relationship between the variables is analyzed using chi-square test.

#### 4.2.1. Infrastructure

One of the major factors related to the development of agro-tourism activities is the presence of appropriate infrastructure and the quality of their function. Five indicators of the expansion of on-farm resorts and activities, the development of

gardening tourism tours, the conversion of gardens into recreational spaces, setting up handicraft training workshops and using public aids fall under the category of infrastructure. The results revealed that there was a significant difference between the variables so that the value of alpha error in all the items was less than 0.05 and the difference between the sample mean and the expected value was confirmed with a positive chi-square coefficient. As a result, it can be posited that there is a bilateral relationship between the core category of infrastructure, which embraces a range of essential actions by local authorities and residents, and the development and thriving of agro-tourism (see Table 5).

**Table 5. Relevance of infrastructure with agro-tourism development using chi-square test**  
(Source: Research findings, 2019)

Index	Mean	Chi-Square	Asymp sig
Expanding on-farm resorts and recreational activities	3/82	170/897	0/00
Organizing of tourism tours in gardens and villages	3/76	131/931	0/00
Changing gardens into a recreational and entertaining space for tourists	3/78	141/969	0/00
Setting up workshops for training craftsmanship to tourists	3/51	126/222	0/00
Using government aids such as loans and subsidies	4/13	173/617	0/00

#### 4.2.2 Direct sales and supply of produce

The participation of tourists in farming activities and the direct purchase of products and goods is one of the main attractions underscored by tourists with respect to agro-tourism. In the present study, increased level of production and supply of local produce to tourists, production and sale of organic produce and direct purchase of farm products and

engagement in harvesting of crops were identified as three key areas and opportunities for agro-tourism development. Chi-square test data showed that there is a relative difference between the items and the expected mean as well as the significant effect of each variable on the development of agro-tourism in the rural areas of Tehran Province to varying degrees. This difference is significant at an error level of 0.000 (see Table 6).

**Table 6. Relevance and relationship of the direct sale of produce with Agro-tourism development using chi-square test**

(Source: Research findings, 2019)

Index	Mean	Chi-Square	Asymp sig
Increased production and sale of local resources and produce to tourists	3/75	161/011	0/00
Production and sale of organic produce	3/70	167/908	0/00
Direct sales of produce on the farm with the engagement of tourists in harvesting	3/66	146/874	0/00

#### 4.2.3. Comparative local advantages

Given the environmental capabilities, the facilities and services available, and the method of tapping into existing resources and facilities, which often originates from rural livelihoods and cultures, each geographic area has specific potentials and abilities. As a comparative advantage, these capabilities, if exploited correctly and systematically, will not only fuel economic development and employment generation, but also accelerate the development and prosperity of rural life. Weekend vacations on farms, festivals,

customs, and agriculture-related activities, and highlighting benefits such as cultivating herbs are among major factors that can be discussed in form of comparative advantages in the rural areas of Tehran Province. The results showed that among the 6 indicators studied, the mean rank was above the average, while the chi-square coefficient was positive in all domains with an alpha error of 0.000, confirming the difference between the mean and the criterion. Each of these areas, relative to their mean rank, have positive effects on Agro-tourism development in rural areas of Tehran province (Table 7).

**Table 7. Relevance and relationship of local relative advantages with agro-tourism development using chi-square test**

(Source: Research findings, 2019)

Index	Mean	Chi-Square	Asymp sig
Weekend vacations on the farm	3/85	162/429	0/00
Tourism development with emphasis on medicinal herbs	3/74	135/073	0/00
Holding ritual festivals and traditional farming activities	3/70	152/506	0/00
Organizing planting and harvesting festival for the crops	3/68	188/176	0/00
Running environmental and agricultural programs on the farm	3/67	165/456	0/00
Setting up local festivals to revive and strengthen traditional customs	3/66	140/743	0/00

#### 4.2.4. Employment and income generation

It is only reasonable to say that the most important factor and incentive for the development of most startups is the economic benefits and earnings generated for entrepreneurs and business owners. Projects that are successful in employment and income generation will be sustainable.

In this section, revenues of crops sale, elevated production levels and farmers' income and direct and indirect job creation are major parameters of employment and income generation. The findings exhibit that there is a significant difference between the mean of the sample and the expected mean, which displayed a tendency for utility,

positive effect and significance of difference. This evaluation is evident in rank average of items, the

chi-square coefficient and the alpha error value of less than 0.05 (see Table 8).

**Table 8. Relevance and relationship of employment and income generation with agro-tourism development using chi-square test**

(Source: Research findings, 2019)

Index	Mean	Chi-Square	Asymp sig
Revenues derived from the sale of products	3/68	121/050	0/00
Improving farmers' production and income levels	3/76	142/774	0/00
Increasing direct and indirect job creation	3/95	144/268	0/00

This section of the study presents findings obtained after asking the tourists and rural residents open-ended questions. In the view of local residents, government aids in form of financial and administrative support, prohibiting the change of horticultural and agricultural land uses, offering basic infrastructure including transportation, supplying the water required for agriculture by permitting to drill deep and semi-deep wells.

Advertising, especially by the rural municipality (Dehyari), guaranteeing the purchase of produce, assisting in the organization of local festivals and export products, among other things, were the major factors contributing to the development of agro-tourism in rural areas. In the following table, the above factors have been described for each village separately.

**Table 9. The most important factors of Agro-tourism development in the views of villagers**

(Source: Research findings, 2019)

	Village	Most important factors in the development of agricultural tourism in the village
1	Jelizjand	Raising public awareness, financial support, nurturing a positive attitude among local residents, cooperation of government agencies
2	Ziyarat Bala	Government support, encouragement and inspiration by officials, participation of villagers, granting low interest loans, provision of service infrastructure and utilities including water, electricity, gas, etc.
3	Arastou	Assistance of farmers, specifically installing drip irrigation, preventing the alteration of land uses by people other than local residents, government's financial support, informing people about agro-tourism benefits
4	Jurd	Create employment, education and revenues for residents, beautifying and decorating the village by setting up Alachiq (alcove), etc. on busy routes, expanding amenities including settlements and salon gardens
5	Akhtar Abad	Supporting the pistachio growing plan, revival of aqueducts, granting loans to villagers, funding the cultivation of crops in the greenhouse
6	Qajar Takht-e Rustam	Creating employment for women, advertising and other measures taken by Dehyari, tackling water supply problems, precluding the inflow of non-indigenous people who seek to change the land use of gardens, financial support
7	Qajar Abad	Aids by local municipality, holding local festivals and financial support
8	Khomdeh	Constructing parking, restaurants, cafes, informing people, direct sale of farm produce, government aids especially financial support, preventing the change of land use
9	Gale Sabz	The officials' visit from the area, addressing the issue of guarantors required to apply for bank loans, providing training services to set up business startup, tackling water supply problem, the guaranteed purchase of produce
10	Torpaq Tappeh	Resolving the water supply problems, preventing land use change, particularly by non-indigenous people
11	Kelin	The participation of private sector and government, funding the establishment of greenhouses, and insuring farm workers, taking people's demands into account, financial support, promoting drip irrigation
12	Talavand Paein	Government financial support, advertising
13	Ahar	Insurance of crops and produce, government aids to indigenous peoples, facilitating the visit of tourists from rural areas, resolving infrastructure problems such as transportation network

	Village	Most important factors in the development of agricultural tourism in the village
14	Barg Jahan	Government aids, training new cultivation and irrigation methods
15	Lavasan Bozorg	The need to drill deep wells, financial support, preventing unauthorized constructions
16	Lazoor	Tacking accessibility issues, advertising, government financial aids
17	Filestan	Granting long-term loans by the government, financial supports, facilitating the establishment of various businesses
18	Golzar	Supporting the construction of greenhouses by granting loans, and standing behind native residents rather than Afghans
19	Amin Abad	Establishing local markets, financial support, safe and guaranteed purchase of crops, granting financial aids to people rather than Dehyari
20	Alouak	Addressing the main problem of the village, i.e. the inflow of Afghans, supporting agricultural sector especially water supply, greater participation of Dehyari and informing people
21	Dehkheir	Granting Loans and Other Government aids
22	Yusof Reza	Government Support, Advertising and raising awareness

According to the tourists' views, the critical factors attracting tourists are accessibility to a paved road, hospitality of villagers, closeness to city and availability of amenities, and infrastructure and utilities in the tourist area. Respondents assigned the highest priority to security in the agro-tourism destination villages followed by proper settlement, health infrastructure, restaurants, tourism tours, Internet access, as the most important demands of tourists.

To examine the disparity of views between female and male officials and experts in relation to the impact of government support plans and private companies, demand-driven research in agro-

tourism, entrepreneurs' linkage with producers, intermediaries and consumers, the awareness of local residents and access of farmers to financial resources for investment in agro-tourism, the Mann Whitney test was used. According to the findings, in none of the above measures, a discrepancy of opinions was observed among male and female respondents. In other words, the mean difference of responses was not significantly different, and the value of Mann-Whitney coefficient was positive for all the variables. Moreover, the significance level (sig=0.05) for all indicators was higher than expected (see Tables 10 and 11).

**Table 10. Relevance and differences of respondents' views in different educational groups based on Mann-Whitney test**  
(Source: Research findings, 2019)

Gender	N	Mean Rank	Mean Rank	Mean Rank	Mean Rank	Mean Rank	Mean Rank
		Government incentives plans	Support of private sector	Adequate and demand-driven research in the field of tourism	Connection of entrepreneurs with producers, etc.	Increasing awareness of farmers	Access to financial resources for investment
Men	22	15/86	15/11	14/66	16/41	15/14	14/98
Women	9	16/33	18/17	19/28	15	18/11	18/50
Total	31	-	-	-	-	-	-

**Table 11. Results of Kruskal-Wallis test on the disparity of views in different educational groups**  
(Source: Research findings, 2019)

Test Statistics	Access to financial resources for investment	Increasing awareness of farmers	Connection of entrepreneurs with producers, etc.	Adequate and demand-driven research in the field of tourism	Support of private sector	Government incentives plans
Mann-Whitney U	96	79/5	69/5	90	80	76/5
Wilcoxon W	349	332/5	322/5	135	333	329/5
Z	-0.138	-0.899	-1.368	-0.413	-0.878	-1.026
Asymp. Sig. 2 tai.	0/891	0/369	0/171	0/679	0/380	0/305
Exact Sig. 2*	0/915 <sup>b</sup>	0/403 <sup>b</sup>	0/203 <sup>b</sup>	0/716 <sup>b</sup>	0/428 <sup>b</sup>	0/334 <sup>b</sup>

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Agro-tourism as an emerging form of rural tourism encompasses a wide range of new services offered to tourists along with a variety of socio-economic benefits generated for residents and entrepreneurs in this sphere of tourism. These benefits are only realized when villagers have the right understanding of farm-based agro-tourism and the prerequisites of tourism including infrastructure services are provided. In this respect, the present study aimed to explore opportunities and areas of agro-tourism development in the rural areas of Tehran Province through a survey of three groups of local residents, tourists and tourism officials using a questionnaire and interviews.

According to the findings, the main areas and opportunities for the development of tourism in Tehran Province include fulfilling the financial needs of villagers and farmers by granting long-term loans and banking facilities, cooperating with relevant agencies to issue permits for utilities and businesses, preventing the change of agricultural and horticultural land uses and supplying water required for agriculture by facilitating the permitting the drill of deep and semi-deep wells. Moreover, the participation of the private sector and local residents in various dimensions, including investment in infrastructure such as settlements, holding festivals and ceremonies related to planting and harvesting of certain products, along with the involvement of tourists in the harvesting process as well as direct purchase of produce on farms, marketing, advertising and the guaranteed purchase of produce made by start-ups in the field of agriculture are also some of major opportunities for expansion of tourism.

Given the geographical vastness and climatic and natural diversity of the villages of Tehran Province, along with numerous historical and archaeological sites in some villages, the cultivation of medicinal herbs, greenhouse farming, handicrafts, the supply of livestock products, growing flower and building garden halls and salons for weekend holidays on farms are among the most important rural

capacities and potentials of this province, which are the local comparative advantages for the development of agro-tourism. Findings also suggest that all three groups of respondents hold a positive attitude of the mentioned variables, stressing the favorable impact of the existing opportunities for rural tourism development in Tehran Province. Therefore, if the destination villages are accurately identified, the tourism plan for each product is formulated, and the necessary infrastructure such as access roads and accommodation are provided, agricultural tourism can be promoted. Also, business development in this area can also contribute to the prosperity and stay of people in rural areas.

According to the findings, the three groups of respondents did not vary significantly with regard to the desirable effect of designated indicators on agricultural tourism development in the rural areas of Tehran Province, and there was a consensus on the effective role of these variables in agricultural tourism development.

In this study, we assessed four core variables of infrastructure, sales and direct supply of produce, local comparative advantages, and employment and income generation in the context in the form of 17 indicators, including government financial support of businesses related to agro-tourism, the visit of tourists from farms, holding local festivals, increasing employment and revenues as the top priorities and major opportunities of agro-tourism development. These findings align well with those reported by [Lago \(2017\)](#), [Najarzadeh and Torabi \(2017\)](#), [Samani Qotbabadi et al \(2017\)](#), and [Bouzarjomehri et al. \(2017\)](#). The aforementioned studies stress the role of the government in providing financial and educational services, organizing festivals, and developing a comprehensive agricultural tourism plan.

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## بازنمایی فرصت‌ها و زمینه‌های توسعه گردشگری کشاورزی در مناطق روستایی (مطالعه موردی: روستاهای استان تهران)

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### چکیده مبسوط

#### ۱. مقدمه

امروزه کشاورزی صرف و پرداختن به فعالیت‌های سنتی آن نمی‌تواند جوابگوی نیازهای جوامع روستایی باشد. در این راستا گردشگری کشاورزی از جمله راهبردهایی است که برای متنوع ساختن و توسعه پایدار روستایی مدنظر قرار گرفته است. گردشگری کشاورزی به عنوان زیرمجموعه گردشگری روستایی به مسئولیت‌پذیری و کسب منفعت جامعه محلی اشاره داشته و می‌تواند از طریق تحریک و تشویق روستاییان به عرضه محصولات و خدمات بخش کشاورزی به گردشگران، مانند بهره‌مندی از چشم‌انداز اراضی کشاورزی، تورهای مزرعه و آماده‌سازی سایت‌ها در جوار قطعات زراعی جهت گذران اوقات فراغت، سبب رونق بخش کشاورزی شود. در نقاط روستایی استان تهران به رغم برخورداری از همه منابع و توان‌های موجود، از یک سو کسب و کارهای مبتنی بر گردشگری کشاورزی از وسعت و رونق کافی برخوردار نبوده و از سوی دیگر، مردم محلی نسبت به مزیت‌های نسبی گردشگری کشاورزی اطلاعات اندکی دارند. پژوهش حاضر در پی پاسخگویی به این سوال

است که چه فرصت‌ها و زمینه‌هایی برای توسعه گردشگری کشاورزی در مناطق روستایی استان تهران وجود دارد؟

#### ۲. مبانی نظری تحقیق

گردشگری کشاورزی از اشکال مهم گردشگری است که می‌تواند در مسیر توسعه روستایی و کشاورزی نقش ایفا نماید. این نوع گردشگری ضمن ایجاد فرصت‌های شغلی در مناطق روستایی، می‌تواند برای گردشگران، تجربه گردشگری مزرعه محور فراهم نموده و به عنوان فعالیت مکمل کشاورزی منجر به احیای اقتصاد بیمار در نواحی روستایی خواهد شد. با توجه به بررسی پیشینه مطالعات صورت گرفته و ادبیات مفهومی گردشگری کشاورزی، به طور کلی می‌توان به ۵ رویکرد مجزا در رابطه با توسعه فعالیت‌ها، زمینه‌ها و فرصت‌ها و مزایای توسعه گردشگری کشاورزی با عنوان رویکرد برافزایی، منفعت و فایده، اجتماع محور، تفریحی و تلفیقی اشاره نمود. با توجه به نوع نگاه و ویژگی‌های رویکرد تلفیقی به گردشگری کشاورزی که ترکیبی از دیدگاه‌های مطرح شده می‌باشد، این دیدگاه به عنوان رویکرد غالب تحقیق حاضر در نظر گرفته شده و معیارها و روش‌شناسی تحقیق نیز بر همین رویکرد استوار خواهد بود.

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### ۳. روش تحقیق

پژوهش حاضر از نوع کاربردی بوده و به شیوه توصیفی-تحلیلی انجام شده است. گردآوری داده‌ها به دو شیوه اسنادی و غالباً پیمایشی صورت گرفته و جامعه آماری این پژوهش، شامل سه گروه مسئولین مرتبط با توسعه روستایی در استان، مردم محلی و گردشگران نقاط روستایی ۸ شهرستان دماوند، فیروزکوه، شمیرانات، پیشوا، پاکدشت، شهریار، ملارد و ری واقع در استان تهران می‌باشند که از هر شهرستان، تعداد سه روستا به عنوان نمونه انتخاب شد. تجزیه و تحلیل آماری در این پژوهش با استفاده از مجموعه ای از روش های آمار توصیفی و استنباطی (آزمون t تک نمونه‌ای، کای اسکور و من ویتنی) و بر اساس خروجی نرم افزارهای SPSS انجام شد و در نهایت مهم ترین اولویت های موثر بر توسعه گردشگری کشاورزی در مناطق روستایی استان تهران شناسایی و تبیین شد.

### ۴. یافته های تحقیق

یافته ها نشان می‌دهد که تفاوت معناداری بین متغیرهای بعد زیرساخت وجود دارد به طوری که مقدار خطای آلفا در همه گزینه‌ها کمتر از ۰/۰۵ بوده و تفاوت و ارتباط بین میانگین نمونه و مقدار مورد انتظار با ضریب مثبت خف دو قابل تایید می‌باشد. در نتیجه می توان گفت که بین مقوله هسته‌ای زیرساخت، که طیفی از اقدامات ضروری از سوی مسئولین و ساکنین محلی را شامل می‌شود و درجه توسعه و رونق گردشگری کشاورزی ارتباط دوسویه‌ای وجود دارد. در رابطه با فروش و عرضه مستقیم تولیدات، داده‌های حاصل از آزمون کای اسکور نشان‌دهنده وجود تفاوت نسبی بین گزینه‌ها و میانگین مورد انتظار و تاثیر قابل توجه هر متغیر در توسعه گردشگری کشاورزی مناطق روستایی استان تهران با تفاوت‌های نسبی می‌باشد. این تفاوت در سطح خطای ۰/۰۰۰ معنی‌دار است. شکل‌گیری تعطیلات آخر هفته در مزرعه، برگزاری جشنواره‌ها، آداب و رسوم و برنامه‌های مرتبط با فعالیت‌های بخش کشاورزی و توجه به مزیت‌هایی همچون قابلیت کشت گیاهان دارویی از مهم‌ترین مولفه‌هایی است که در قالب مزیت‌های نسبی محلی در مناطق روستایی استان تهران مورد بحث قرار گرفت. نتایج نشان می‌دهد که در ۶ مولفه مورد بررسی، میانگین رتبه‌ای بالاتر از حد متوسط بوده و ضریب کای اسکور در تمامی زمینه‌ها مثبت بوده

که مقدار خطای آلفای ۰/۰۰۰ تاییدی بر اختلاف از میانگین و معیار مورد نظر بوده و هر یک از زمینه‌ها به نسبت میانگین رتبه‌ای به دست آمده دارای اثرات مثبتی در توسعه گردشگری کشاورزی مناطق روستایی استان تهران می‌باشند. در رابطه با اشتغال زایی و درآمد، مولفه‌های میزان پس انداز حاصل از فروش محصولات، ارتقاء سطح تولید و درآمد کشاورزان و میزان ایجاد اشتغال مستقیم و غیر مستقیم به عنوان مهم ترین سنج‌های اشتغال زایی و درآمد مطرح می‌باشند. یافته‌ها نشان می‌دهد که تفاوت معناداری بین میانگین نمونه‌های مورد بررسی و میانگین مورد انتظار وجود داشته که گرایش آن به سمت مطلوبیت، اثرگذاری مثبت و معناداری تفاوت هاست.

### ۵. بحث و نتیجه گیری

با توجه به گستره جغرافیایی و تنوع اقلیمی و طبیعی روستاهای استان تهران، همچنین وجود آثار تاریخی و باستانی در برخی روستاها، کشت گیاهان دارویی، کشت گلخانه‌ای، تولید صنایع دستی، عرضه فرآورده‌های دامی، پرورش گل، وجود باغ تالارها و برگزاری تعطیلات آخر هفته در مزارع از توانمندی‌ها و پتانسیل‌های شاخص روستاهای استان و مزیت‌های نسبی محلی جهت توسعه کسب و کارهای مبتنی بر گردشگری کشاورزی می‌باشند. یافته‌ها نشان می‌دهد که هر سه گروه پاسخ‌دهنده، نسبت به متغیرهای مطرح شده دیدگاه مثبتی داشته و بر اثرگذاری مطلوب فرصت‌های موجود بر توسعه گردشگری کشاورزی روستاهای استان تهران تاکید نموده‌اند. بنابراین می‌توان گفت که در صورت شناسایی صحیح روستاهای هدف و تهیه و تدوین برنامه گردشگری هر محصول یا فرصت و فراهم نمودن زیرساخت‌های ضروری از جمله شبکه دسترسی و اقامتگاه، علاوه بر رونق گردشگری کشاورزی و توسعه کسب و کارهای این حوزه، آبادانی و ماندگاری جمعیت در روستاها صورت خواهد گرفت.

**کلمات کلیدی:** گردشگری، گردشگری روستایی، گردشگری کشاورزی، روستاهای استان تهران.

### تشکر و قدرانی

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