

**Role of Agritourism in Mitigating Poverty Among Rural Households in Cross River State, Nigeria****Eremi, Emmanuel Ohara (Ph.D)**[emmanueleremi@gmail.com](mailto:emmanueleremi@gmail.com)

ORCID: 0000-0001-5938-4756

Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology, University of Calabar, Calabar

**Azu, Sunday Begianpuye (Ph.D)**[beginpuyeeazu@gmail.com](mailto:beginpuyeeazu@gmail.com)

ORCID: 0000-0002-5319-7076

Department of Agricultural Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

**Aya, Comfort Felix (Ph.D)**[comfortel@gmail.com](mailto:comfortel@gmail.com)

ORCID: 0002-0002-1800-2587

Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology, University of Calabar, Calabar,

**Ogbor, Michael Ekangfanuyen**[ogbormichael2356@gmail.com](mailto:ogbormichael2356@gmail.com)

ORCID: 0009-0002-3261-6590

Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology, University of Calabar, Calabar

**Corresponding Author:** Eremi, Emmanuel Ohara, [emmanueleremi@gmail.com](mailto:emmanueleremi@gmail.com)**Abstract**

This study examined the role of agritourism in poverty reduction among rural households in Cross River State, Nigeria. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 997 respondents. Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and a logistic regression model. The results showed that on-farm markets/shopping ( $\bar{x} = 1.79$ ), garden tours ( $\bar{x} = 1.78$ ), and winery tours and natural wine tasting on farms ( $\bar{x} = 1.77$ ) were among the most highly ranked agritourism activities in the study area. Agritourism was found to contribute primarily to job creation and income generation (1st), increased market opportunities for farm produce (2nd), and farmer education (3rd). The logistic regression results indicated that age, level of education, and years of farming experience were significantly related to participation in agritourism ( $p < 0.05$ ). The study concluded that agritourism plays a significant role in reducing rural poverty. It therefore recommended that government provide adequate credit facilities and incentives to rural farmers to enhance productive capacity and promote agritourism development.

**Keywords:** Agritourism; poverty reduction; rural households; rural farmers**Introduction**

Tourism has become an important instrument for economic diversification and inclusive development in both developed and developing economies. Beyond its traditional role as a leisure-based activity, tourism

increasingly functions as a development-oriented sector capable of generating employment, stimulating local enterprises, enhancing infrastructure, and improving household incomes (World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2021). Its labor-intensive nature and strong linkages with other sectors particularly agriculture make tourism a viable strategy for addressing rural development challenges.

In developing regions, where rural livelihoods are heavily dependent on agriculture, the development potential of tourism lies in its ability to integrate farm-based activities into the tourism value chain. This integration has given rise to agritourism, a form of tourism that connects agricultural production with recreational, educational, and cultural experiences. Agritourism enables farmers to diversify income sources, reduce dependence on primary agricultural production, and increase household resilience to economic and environmental shocks. As such, it represents a practical mechanism through which tourism can contribute directly to rural poverty reduction.

Rural household poverty remains a major development concern in sub-Saharan Africa, where a large proportion of the population resides in rural areas and depends largely on smallholder farming for survival. In Nigeria, rural poverty is exacerbated by declining farm productivity, climate change, land degradation, limited market access, and inadequate credit facilities. These constraints have rendered sole reliance on farming increasingly unsustainable as a pathway out of poverty (Ogbonna & Eremi, 2019). Consequently, income diversification through non-farm and off-farm activities has become essential for improving rural livelihoods.

Agritourism addresses this need by transforming existing agricultural resources; land, labor, culture, and farming knowledge into income-generating tourism products. Through activities such as farm visits, farm markets, educational tours, and value-added food experiences, agritourism creates employment opportunities, expands market access for farm produce, and enhances farmers' skills and social capital. Empirical studies indicate that these outcomes contribute to increased household income, reduced vulnerability, and improved living standards among rural households (Okoloafor, 2021; Seraphin et al., 2021). Thus, agritourism operationalizes the poverty-reduction potential of tourism at the household and community levels.

Despite its potential, agritourism remains underutilized in many parts of Nigeria, including Cross River State, a region endowed with abundant agricultural resources and tourism attractions. Although the state is predominantly agrarian, rural households continue to experience high levels of multidimensional poverty, raising concerns about the adequacy of conventional farming as a sole livelihood strategy. Understanding how agritourism contributes to income generation and poverty mitigation, as well as the factors influencing farmers' participation in agritourism, is therefore critical for evidence-based rural development planning. This study examines the role of agritourism in mitigating rural household poverty in Cross River State, Nigeria.

### **Agritourism**

Agritourism refers to tourism activities that take place on farms or in agricultural settings and that involve visitors' participation in, or observation of, farming-related activities for recreational, educational, or cultural purposes. It represents the convergence of agriculture and tourism, allowing farmers to offer accommodation, farm tours, on-farm markets, educational experiences, and other farm-based attractions to visitors (UNWTO, 2021; Eremi et al., 2023). Unlike mass tourism, agritourism is embedded within local production systems and directly benefits farming households.

By generating supplementary income, agritourism enhances the economic viability of smallholder farming and reduces farmers' dependence on volatile agricultural markets. Evidence from both developed and developing contexts suggests that agritourism contributes to rural employment, stimulates local economies, and strengthens linkages between agriculture and tourism-related services (Van Sandt, Low, & Thilmany,

2019). Beyond income generation, agritourism promotes environmental awareness, preserves agricultural heritage, and enhances cultural exchange between visitors and host communities (Eremi et al., 2021).

In agrarian regions such as Cross River State, agritourism presents an opportunity to leverage existing agricultural practices for broader rural development outcomes. By attracting visitors to rural communities, agritourism creates demand for farm produce, local services, and cultural experiences, thereby expanding income opportunities beyond conventional farming. Given the persistent poverty among rural households in the state, examining agritourism as a complementary livelihood strategy is both timely and necessary.

### **Statement of the problem**

Tourism has strong potential to support rural development and reduce poverty through agritourism, because it helps farmers diversify income, create jobs, expand markets, and build resilience. However, **rural** household poverty is still high in Nigeria, mainly because farming alone is becoming increasingly unsustainable due to low productivity, climate change, land degradation, weak market access, and poor access to credit.

Even though Cross River State has rich agricultural resources and tourism attractions, agritourism is still underutilized, and rural households continue to experience multidimensional poverty. This creates a gap in knowledge and policy because it is not yet clearly understood how agritourism contributes to income and poverty reduction, and what factors influence farmers' participation in agritourism in the state. Therefore, the study is necessary to examine the role of agritourism in mitigating rural household poverty in Cross River State, Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the study**

The study examined the role of agritourism in poverty mitigation among rural farming households in Cross River State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to;

- (i) determine the types of agritourism activities;
- (ii) determine the contributions of agritourism to poverty mitigation among rural farming households;
- (iii) determine the relationship between farmers' socio-economic characteristics and their practice of agritourism in the area.

### **Research Hypothesis**

The study was based on the following null hypothesis

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics of rural farming households and the practice of agritourism in the area.

### **Material and methods**

The study was carried out in Cross River State. The State is occupying approximately 30,156km<sup>2</sup> and lying 45m above sea level, between latitude 40° 28' and 60° 55 North of the equator and longitude 70° 50' and 90° 28 East of the Greenwich meridian. The population of the study comprised all registered rural farmers in the state. The study adopted a three-stage sampling technique: Stage one involved a random selection of three blocks (LGAs) from each of the agricultural zones of the state (total = 9 blocks). Stage two involved a simple random selection of six communities (cells) from each of the blocks selected, which gave a total of 54 communities. Stage three involved a proportionate. Sampling of 997 respondents for the study. Data were collected using a validated semi-structured questionnaire and administered by the researchers with the help of village extension agents and trained local youth enumerators.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation and logistic regression. The logistic regression model was specified as follows:

$$Y = f(x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5 \dots \dots X_{nui})$$

Where Y = dichotomous dependent variable (the practice of agritourism) measured as;

Y = 1, if respondents practice agritourism; Y = 0 if respondents did not practice agritourism

X = Independent variables (socio-economic variables) defined as:

X <sub>1</sub>	=	Sex of respondents
X <sub>2</sub>	=	Age (in years)
X <sub>3</sub>	=	Marital status
X <sub>4</sub>	=	Level of education
X <sub>5</sub>	=	Occupation
X <sub>6</sub>	=	Farm size
X <sub>7</sub>	=	Annual income
X <sub>8</sub>	=	Year of farming
X <sub>9</sub>	=	Access to credit
X <sub>10</sub>	=	Sources of credit
U <sub>i</sub>	=	Error term

## Results and Discussion

### Agritourism Activities

**Table 1: Types of agritourism activities**

Variable	Mean score	SD	Ranking
• Agricultural museums/artifacts	1.44	0.370	16 <sup>th</sup>
• On-farm farmers markets/shopping	1.79	0.407	1 <sup>st</sup>
• Winery tours and natural wine testing in farm	1.77	0.424	3 <sup>rd</sup>
• On-farm guest house/resort/lodging	1.74	0.439	4 <sup>th</sup>
• Farm swimming pool	1.74	0.439	4 <sup>th</sup>
• Harvesting of fresh fruits	1.73	0.445	6 <sup>th</sup>
• Picking of vegetables/flowers	1.70	0.461	7 <sup>th</sup>
• Wildlife viewing	1.67	0.471	9 <sup>th</sup>
• Demonstration of bee keeping	1.64	0.481	10 <sup>th</sup>
• Hunting of game	1.61	0.489	11 <sup>th</sup>
• Horse riding	1.57	0.497	15 <sup>th</sup>
• On-farm exhibitions/shows	1.51	0.501	11 <sup>th</sup>
• Production and marketing of handicrafts	1.62	0.506	10 <sup>th</sup>
• Participation in organic farm food preparation	1.58	0.502	13 <sup>th</sup>
• Hay riders	1.59	0.471	12 <sup>th</sup>
• Garden tours	1.78	0.371	2 <sup>nd</sup>
• Rearing of on-farm pets livestock	1.69	0.411	8 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field Survey, 2025; Cut-off  $\geq 1.50$

The result in Table 1 shows the distribution of the various types of agritourism activities or practices. It reveals that all the variables recorded mean scores above the cut-off mark of 1.50. On-farm farmer markets ( $\bar{x}=1.79$ ), on-farm resorts ( $\bar{x}=1.74$ ), garden tours ( $\bar{x}=1.78$ ), horse riding ( $\bar{x}=1.57$ ) and harvesting of fresh fruits ( $\bar{x}=1.73$ ) among a range of others were some of the prevalent agritourism activities or practices in the State. The implication of this result is that Cross River State's rural farming settlements are evidently acquainted with different types of agritourism practices, although some of these practices exist at the most rudimentary state, in which case the farmers do not directly derive any significant economic benefit from them. The State is generally accustomed to different varieties of agricultural exhibitions, farm-related festivals, (including new yam festivals, fishing exhibitions etc.) beautiful landforms and natural destinations. However, integrating these attractions or endowments into commercially viable agritourism enterprises remains one of the most compelling needs of rural farming households in the area. The

availability of agritourism activities and potentials in the area are capable of regenerating the economic and social well-being of rural populations in the state. A study by Okoloafor (2021) identified several agritourism potentials and activities in Cross River State. In a similar view, Peters and Fred (2020) reported that Cross River State, like many other parts of Southern Nigeria, is home to some of the most fascinating agritourism settings in the world, from the wildlife sanctuaries, game reserves, on-farm resorts, beautiful farm beaches and attractions to the glorious landforms and farming practices. With adequate education of the people on the economic values of these attractions and means of improving their tourism and market, the rural farmers will generate substantial income from these attractions.

### Contributions of Agritourism

**Table 2: Contributions of agritourism to poverty mitigation**

Contributions	Mean score	SD	Ranking
• Create jobs/income generating opportunities	3.52	0.682	1 <sup>st</sup>
• Opportunities to sell farm produce directly	3.26	0.770	2 <sup>nd</sup>
• Provides an opportunity to educate people about both historic and modern methods of farming, and the risks involved in every day agriculture.	3.19	0.776	3 <sup>rd</sup>
• Optimum utilization of agricultural resources	3.15	0.806	4 <sup>th</sup>
• Improves people's understanding of local food systems	3.15	0.688	4 <sup>th</sup>
• Gives more opportunity to be a price-maker you can make higher profits from direct-to-consumer marketing of your products.	3.15	0.705	4 <sup>th</sup>
• It is a means to add value to farm products through processing and direct marketing to customers	3.11	0.734	7 <sup>th</sup>
• Allows you to meet visitors from different places	3.11	0.772	7 <sup>th</sup>
• Extends the season for income generation beyond the normal farm/ranch cycle	3.10	0.707	9 <sup>th</sup>
• Promotes farming in your community and makes it attractive	3.10	0.795	9 <sup>th</sup>
• Increases demand for locally grown farm products	3.09	0.768	11 <sup>th</sup>
• Farmers make more money from different sources	3.09	0.734	11 <sup>th</sup>
• Enhances value and attractiveness of farming as an employment avenue	3.07	0.746	12 <sup>th</sup>
• Gives room for all-season revenue generation	3.06	0.744	13 <sup>th</sup>
• Conservation of agricultural resources	3.05	0.765	14 <sup>th</sup>
• Environmental protection and maintenance of ecosystems	3.03	0.801	15 <sup>th</sup>
• Encourages cultural preservation and heritage	2.99	0.808	16 <sup>th</sup>
• Protects the environment from pollution	2.99	0.786	16 <sup>th</sup>
• It is a means of conservation of agrobiodiversity	2.98	0.827	17 <sup>th</sup>
• Protects the farmers from the risk of crop/livestock failures	2.96	0.786	18 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field Survey, 2025; Decision rule =  $\geq 2.50$

The result in Table 2 shows the distribution of the various contributions of agritourism to poverty reduction among rural farmers. The result reveals that all the variables recorded mean scores above the decision rule of 2.50, which indicates that the contributions identified were accepted by the respondents. In particular, it was found that agritourism serves as a medium for job creation and income generation ( $\bar{x}=3.52$ ), optimum utilization of agricultural resources ( $\bar{x}=3.15$ ), protection of the environment from pollution ( $\bar{x}=2.99$ ), serves as a means of conservation of resources ( $\bar{x}=2.98$ ), and increase the demand for locally grown farm products

( $\bar{x}$ =3.09) among several other contributions. This result suggests that agritourism plays significant role in mitigating rural farmers' poverty. Apart from helping to diversify or create alternative streams of income for rural farmers, agritourism plays substantial environmental, ecological and resource preservation roles and makes farming more attractive to the young people. Farmers can derive money, not only directly from the crops grown or livestock reared, but also from farm tourists or visitors who pay to participate in farm-based tourism. Attracting visitors to the farm is a sustainable way of maintaining additional income and reducing poverty levels among rural farmers. Low yields have strengthened poverty in rural areas, and it is evident, from the results that agritourism has the potential to address the rural-urban income dichotomy and ameliorate poverty among farmers. It allows rural people to generate money from multiple streams. One of the main reasons for pervasive poverty among rural households is the limited income sources, and with increased investments in the agritourism sector, rural households will generate more revenues to revitalize the local economy. This is in line with Van Sandt et al. (2019) and Gursoy et al. (2018) who reported employment opportunities, multiple revenue streams, revitalization of the local economy, improve rural market access and environmental management as some of the benefits of agritourism. Similarly, Peters and Fred (2020) maintained that agritourism, apart from improving and enhancing farmers' well-being through income generation, it helps preserve agricultural heritage, encourages nature education, and nature awareness and integrates rural areas into national life. Encouraging rural farmers to diversify into agritourism is a viable strategy for reducing poverty among rural households. The findings agree with Eremi et al (2023).

### Socio-Economic Characteristics of Farmers and the Practice of Agritourism

**Table 3: Relationship between selected Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Respondents and the Practice of Agritourism**

Variables	Coefficient	Std. Error	T Value		
Sex	-0.052	0.120	-0.431		
Age	0.118	0.066	1.799		
Marital Status	0.023	0.066	0.351		
Education	0.082	0.057	1.447		
Occupation	0.059	0.084	0.704		
Farm Size	0.115	0.079	1.454		
Annual Income	-0.033	0.033	-1.017		
Year of Farming	-0.072	0.054	-1.344		
Access to Credit	1.756	0.342	5.134		
Source of Credit	0.014	0.041	0.344		
Model Summary	R	R Square <sup>b</sup>	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
	0.981 <sup>a</sup>	0.962	0.957		0.52

\*\* = P<.05

\* = Significant at 1%

Table 3 shows the summary of the logistic regression analysis of the relationship between the selected socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents and the practice of agritourism. The result indicates that the coefficient of variation ( $R^2 = 0.962$ ), suggests that 96% of the variations in the dependent variable are explained by the explanatory or predictor variables. Specifically, it is observed that the age and level of education of the respondents are positive and significantly related to the practice of agritourism. This means the practice of agritourism is related to the farmers' age and their level of education. It is equally noted that the farmers' annual income, access to farm credit and years of farming experience are significantly related to agritourism practice. This indicates that as farmers' annual income levels grow or increase, they are less likely to have the required motivation to pursue agritourism as an alternative source of income generation. In other words, an increase in one's daily or annual income will lead to a decline in the propensity towards agritourism. Similarly, farmers with direct access to credit facilities are more likely to adopt agritourism practices than farmers with no credit support. This could be associated with the fact that most rural farmers

are low-income earners and do not have the required start-up capital to set up certain agritourism enterprises such as farm resorts. The result further revealed that farmers' socio-economic characteristics will influence their practice of agritourism. As Okoloafor (2021) noted, farmers' level of education, income status, farming experience and access to farm credit are directly correlated to agritourism practices. Education plays a vital role in influencing farmers' farming decisions, including agritourism practices and the choice of other farming activities. As a large proportion of farmers do not practice agritourism because of a lack of access to farm credit support, therefore, with increased access to farm credit, they are likely to diversify into different income-generating ventures such as agritourism. This suggests that deploying agricultural extension services to educate the farmers on the benefits and practices of agritourism and providing adequate credit support to them will practice the adoption of agritourism. This result suggests therefore, that the practice of agritourism by farmers is partly influenced by their socio-economic characteristics.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

There is a wide range of agritourism practices in Cross River State, including on-farm shopping, garden tours, on-farm winery tours, game hunting, farm resorts, and lodges. These practices contribute to income generation, job creation, revitalization of village economies, attraction of visitors to farms, and overall rural development, while also helping to address poverty in rural communities.

Although a variety of agritourism practices are available to farmers, the agritourism sector in Cross River State is still underdeveloped, and most farmers who engage in agritourism do so with limited investment. Despite this, agritourism is already contributing to the socio-economic well-being of rural households and has the potential to make a much greater impact if it is adequately invested in, properly harnessed, and systematically developed. Rural farming households should therefore be supported through the provision of credit facilities and incentives to enable them to expand and improve their existing agritourism practices. In addition, farmers should be sensitized through agricultural extension agents within farming communities to enhance their understanding of the benefits of agritourism and to provide them with basic training on agritourism operations. Government support is also crucial and can be achieved by establishing or strengthening community-driven village farm resort initiatives to encourage local participation and promote sustainable agritourism development.

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