

Dams and prospects of irrigation farming vis-à-vis agro tourism development

Written by National Tourism Services Association
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In countries like Eritrea where there is scarcity of rainfall it is essential that Governments and the community seek alternative solutions to alleviate water problem. That alternative solution, mainly, is catching every drop of water through building water catchment schemes and constructing micro and macro dams. These dams and water catchment schemes would not only be confined in supplying the society with the needed water supply both for them and their animals but they have also a big role in changing the eco-system in the country and add impetus to other significant development programs such as the development of irrigation farming and thereby ensuring food security. As has been said time and again water is one of the main components that tourists ask its availability before they decide to visit a given country. Hence, with availability of water and putting in place the other essential elements for tourism attraction we could full heartedly say that the prospect of developing the industry is in hand. Tourists have different interests to come and visit a given country, and one of the elements for tourism attraction is the development of modern agricultural establishments which are commonly referred as agro-industries.

Eritrea has been, until the Ethiopian occupation of the country, renowned for its agro-industries that have been supplying fruits and vegetables to the Middle East and as far as Europe. The Eleberet agro-industry has been one of these. The Agro-industry has been running its agricultural activities not depending only to the natural rainfall; it has been conducted through modern irrigation system. History tells us also the agro-industry has been visited every week end by many foreign and local tourists who have been going to enjoy the fresh air buy fresh agricultural products such as oranges, mangoes, dairy products, wine and vegetables.

And with this article, notwithstanding with old good days of the past agro-industries in the country, we would like to talk about the future prospects of Agro-industry emphasizing “Dams and prospects of irrigation farming vis-à-vis agro tourism development” in connection with this year’s International Tourism Day which is being celebrated under the theme “Tourism and Community Development”.

In most developed countries it is very hard to find organic agricultural products. And if there are, are very expensive for an average income families to afford. In countries like Eritrea, however, with the conducive climatic condition and relatively cheap labor organic food items are cheap and affordable.

Eritrea with the pace that it is marching to ensure lasting solution of water shortage with the construction of so many small and big dams throughout the country will be in not far time the

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hub for tourism, and especially that of agro-tourism. This is true with putting in place of other requirement that tourists would prefer and chose to come to visit. They say “Rome has not been built overnight”. And that we could not expect agro-tourism to grow overnight in Eritrea but with steady progress we have been observing every one could smell that prospect.

The development of irrigation farming through the dams enables every on in the vicinity have his/her share in improving his/her livelihood. The big farms would create an opportunity for the nearby residents with employment opportunity, others would have the opportunity of providing basic supplies such as food, tea and local drinks for the employees in the farms, and others would benefit from guiding the tourists. This is to say the least without talking the revenue the country would earn from the development of agro-industry. This is only to mention the average person from nearby village would benefit, since we are talking about community development and community begins from a single family and grows to community level.

There are many countries that have developed big agro-industries that are frequented by tourists and become big income generation establishments. The vineyards in Spain, Algeria, and southern Italy are renowned for their tourism attractions Tourists go there not only to visit the agro-industries but also to enjoy the fresh wine brewed there. The Haifa orange agro-industry, though to date abandoned, has been one of the tourist attraction area in the Middle East. This not forgetting that there has been “Day of Wine’ being celebrated every year in Dekemhare. Every Asmarino and especially the Italians and the metuchios would go there early in the morning and spend the day enjoying fresh fruits of wine grapes and wine products.

Agro-tourism is characterized in which tourists that are fond of visiting big agricultural complexes not only to buy and enjoy organic agricultural products but also they come to enjoy the atmosphere. The fresh air that is coming out of the environment, the smell of the different fruits and vegetables, the sound of music the birds make, the serenity of the place, free from the industrial and vehicles noises and the pollution they create in urban centers is what agro-industry tourists would like to enjoy most.

The Eritrean National Tourism Services Association has no doubt that with the full fledged commencement of agro-industries behind the dams of Gerset, the two Fancos and other dams agro-tourism would flourish and every citizen would benefit from their establishments and services.