

Ways of Empowerment of Rural Women through Agritourism

Iroda Baymuradova Shermamatovna, Ph.D

Student of Samarkand Branch of Tashkent State University of Economics

Abstract: Although women are main part as a major labor force at every stage of agricultural activity and undertake responsibilities such as domestic task and childcare, they do not profit from social and economic benefits proportionate to the responsibilities they have undertaken. In particular, women living in rural areas work harder than urban women, that is, they do field work (picking cotton, tending cattle, irrigating the land, or harvesting crops) in addition to housework and are not paid for it. It is known from the world experience that through agritourism, rural women earn income for their work in the field as well as household work. In the article, it is studied from foreign experiences that the employment of women in agritourism has a positive effect on obtaining economic and social benefits.

Keywords: Women employment, diversification of agriculture, agritourism, "Women's Notebook" program, women entrepreneurship, sustainable practices.

Introduction

In Uzbekistan, women's employment has been a major focus of government reforms in recent years. The country has made significant progress in promoting gender equality and empowering women in the workforce.

One notable initiative is the "Women's Notebook" program, which was launched in 2020, at the meeting of video selectors of the Head of our state to discuss measures to increase the role of women and youth in society and ensure employment. The program provides women with information on their legal rights, as well as resources and support for starting and running their own businesses. The notebook also includes practical advice on topics such as financial management, marketing, and networking. In the process of creating the "Women's Notebook", working groups consisting of officials from the relevant ministries and departments studied the problems of women in each district (city), neighborhood, household, divided them into relevant areas, and provided practical assistance. In the same year, 253.2 thousand women needed social protection, of which 131.2 thousand needed employment, 36.4 thousand needed vocational training, 69.9 thousand needed credit, 15.7 thousand of them needed to be employed in household and farm work and were included in the that notebook. The 8 most important directions in the labor market have been determined, and employment services have been provided to 77,800 of them to date. Of these, 21,200 women were employed, 16,200 were involved in public works, and the rest were trained in professions and entrepreneurship. Among them, unemployment benefit was assigned and paid to 4,800 women. The goal of this system is not only to provide material and moral support to women, but also to provide them with a permanent source of income through employment, and to reduce poverty [1].

The government has also implemented a range of policies aimed at increasing women's participation in the labor force. For example, it has introduced tax incentives for companies that hire women, and has established a quota system to ensure that women are represented in government and public sector positions.

Despite these efforts, however, there are still challenges facing women in the workforce in Uzbekistan. Women continue to face discrimination and gender-based violence, and many are employed in low-paying jobs with little job security or opportunities for advancement. Almost 50% of the population in Uzbekistan lives in villages, and half of them are women. This means that the employment of women in agriculture is important as well. But the problem is that, as a result of the majority of men going to work in foreign countries, women are left with household chores in addition to child care. This leads them to do basic work at home without any pay and unable to work elsewhere.

But development of agritourism in order to increase the employment of women, attracting mainly women's labor to it will be a solution to such problems.

An increase in income can be achieved by additional services for tourists in rural areas of Uzbekistan to solve problems such as low profitability of agricultural enterprises, migration and increased urbanization due to unemployment of the majority of the rural population, lack of financial incentives for women to perform non-domestic field work. In this regard, diversification of agriculture, that is, the development of agritourism, is considered as the best and proven way to create new jobs in agricultural enterprises, increase the incomes of villagers and improve living standards.

Main part

Uzbekistan has made efforts to enhance women's participation in the workforce, and the government has implemented policies to promote gender equality. However, like in many countries, women in Uzbekistan may face challenges related to gender stereotypes, access to education, and traditional societal expectations.

Women in Uzbekistan have traditionally been active in the labor force, and many have been employed in sectors such as agriculture, education, and healthcare. There may be differences in women's employment patterns between urban and rural areas. In rural areas, women might be more involved in agriculture, while in urban areas, they may have access to a broader range of employment opportunities. The level of education among women can influence their participation in various sectors of the economy. Efforts to improve access to education for women can contribute to their increased presence in professional and skilled occupations.

Most of the women who did not get a higher education do business in the agricultural sector and own the land inherited from their father or the head of the family. Women's participation in agriculture tends to be concentrated in certain activities, such as cotton picking and post-harvest processing, while men are more likely to be involved in plowing, sowing, and irrigation. Although participating in agricultural activities and carrying them out are physically characteristic of men, today women's entrepreneurship is also developed in villages. Mainly in developing countries, female employment in agriculture is high, for example, in South Asia, over 90% of employment in rice cultivation, about 75-89% in agricultural production, in Pakistan over 80% in animal husbandry and 60% in farming [2].

Women farmers in Uzbekistan face a range of challenges, including limited access to land, credit, and extension services. They also tend to have lower levels of education and training compared to men, which can limit their productivity and income-generating potential [3].

While male entrepreneurs seek to increase profits through agritourism, women try to balance business and family life [4].

An increase in income can be achieved through additional services in rural areas of Uzbekistan by solving problems such as low profitability of agricultural enterprises, migration and increased urbanization due to unemployment of the majority of the rural population, as well as increased poverty due to the fact that women in rural areas do not receive income comes only from household work. In this regard, diversification of agriculture, that is, the development of agritourism, is considered as the best and proven way to create new jobs in agricultural enterprises, increase the incomes of villagers and improve living standards. Efforts are underway to address these challenges and promote gender equality in agriculture in Uzbekistan. For example, the government has launched initiatives such as the Women's Entrepreneurship Support Project [5], which provides training and support for women entrepreneurs in rural areas. The World Bank is also supporting programs aimed at improving women's access to land and credit, as well as promoting gender-sensitive agricultural policies and programs.

Today, in order to increase the employment of women, especially in order to reduce poverty, to increase the status of rural women by providing them with work and bringing additional income to their families, we should pay attention to agritourism in the experience of developed countries.

Women entrepreneurship in agritourism is a dynamic and growing trend that combines agricultural activities with tourism to create a unique and sustainable business model. Agritourism provides an opportunity for women to showcase their skills, creativity, and leadership in various aspects of the industry.

Many scholars have studied how agritourism can be used as a means of empowering rural women, and how this activity has affected their social, economic, and cultural status [6].

In the developed countries of the world, encouraging the employment of women in agriculture is achieved today by involving them in agritourism. If a tourists come to a village and live on a farm a few days, the woman of the house provides services to him and receives a salary, this will be a motivation for both the tourist and the woman. The tourists enjoy the services provided in rural environment, and the woman always gets paid for what she does.

The possibilities of women's employment in the following areas of agritourism were studied:

Table 1. Possibilities of women's employment in agritourism

№	Directions	The role of women
1.	Diversification of Agriculture	Women entrepreneurs in agritourism often play a crucial role in diversifying traditional agricultural practices. They may introduce innovative crops, organic farming methods, or niche products to attract tourists.
2.	Culinary Experiences	Women entrepreneurs frequently excel in offering culinary experiences that showcase local, farm-fresh produce. This could involve cooking classes, farm-to-table dining, or food festivals, creating a unique and authentic experience for visitors.
3.	Hospitality and Accommodation	Many women in agritourism manage guesthouses, bed and breakfasts, or boutique hotels on their farms. This allows them to offer visitors a chance to experience rural life while contributing to the local economy.
4.	Educational Programs	Women entrepreneurs often engage in educational initiatives, such as farm tours, workshops, and seminars. These activities help raise awareness about sustainable farming practices, environmental conservation, and the importance of supporting local agriculture.
5.	Arts and Crafts	Women in agritourism may incorporate arts and crafts into their businesses, selling handmade products or organizing workshops for tourists. This not only adds value to the visitor experience but

		also supports local artisans.
6.	Community Engagement	Successful women entrepreneurs in agritourism often engage with the local community. They may collaborate with other farmers, artisans, or businesses, fostering a sense of community and promoting overall regional development.
7.	Marketing and Branding	Women entrepreneurs are often adept at marketing and branding their agritourism businesses. Social media, online platforms, and storytelling are used to showcase the unique aspects of their farms and attract a wider audience.
8.	Sustainable Practices	Women in agritourism are often champions of sustainability. They may implement eco-friendly practices, such as organic farming, water conservation, and waste reduction, aligning their businesses with the growing demand for responsible and sustainable tourism.
9.	Networking and Collaboration	Women entrepreneurs often participate in networks and collaborations within the agritourism sector. This not only provides support but also opens up opportunities for shared resources, knowledge exchange, and joint marketing efforts.
10	Challenges and Opportunities	Women in agritourism may face unique challenges, such as balancing family responsibilities and business operations. However, they also have the opportunity to empower other women, contribute to rural development, and promote sustainable and inclusive tourism practices.

Source: author's work as a result of research studies

Women entrepreneurship in agritourism can be found in various parts of the world, and it is not limited to any specific region. Successful women-led agritourism initiatives have been established in both developed and developing countries.

In countries like Italy, France, and Spain, women entrepreneurs have developed agritourism businesses that offer a combination of agricultural experiences, culinary tourism, and rural accommodations. These businesses often highlight the region's cultural heritage and local cuisine.

In the United States and Canada, women are involved in agritourism ventures that range from pick-your-own farms to farm-stay accommodations. These businesses often focus on sustainable and organic farming practices, attracting visitors interested in connecting with the source of their food.

Countries in Asia, such as India and Thailand, have seen the emergence of women-led agritourism initiatives. These ventures may involve organic farming, agritourism events, and rural homestays. Women entrepreneurs often play a key role in preserving traditional agricultural practices.

Countries like Argentina, Chile, and Costa Rica have witnessed the growth of agritourism, with women entrepreneurs leading initiatives that showcase the region's rich agricultural diversity. These businesses may offer guided tours, on-farm accommodations, and cultural experiences.

In various African countries, women are engaged in agritourism projects that highlight local agriculture, traditional practices, and cultural heritage. This includes farm tours, cooking classes, and artisanal activities aimed at providing authentic experiences to visitors.

Australia and New Zealand have also seen the development of women-led agritourism businesses. These ventures often focus on sustainable farming practices, rural experiences, and connecting urban populations with the agricultural sector.

In each of these regions, the specific focus and nature of women's involvement in agritourism can vary based on cultural, economic, and environmental factors. Women entrepreneurs in agritourism often contribute not only to the economic development of their communities but also to the preservation of local traditions and the promotion of sustainable and responsible tourism practices.

Conclusion

Working women on farms mainly work to support their families and do not receive financial support, that is, they are financially dependent on their employers, and they have more work than urban women. For example, in addition to farm work and field work, they also provide accommodation and food services to other workers who are not family members of the farm.

In the villages, there is a restrictive environment for women, that is, in terms of gender in Uzbekistan. The most common case of women doing business in farms is due to their inheritance. Women want to diversify agriculture and it is connected with agritourism.

Women's entrepreneurship in agritourism is considered for them as a parallel to their professional activities to their ordinary household chores. Agribusiness and household's work complement each other.

In conclusion, women entrepreneurship in agritourism is an inspiring and impactful phenomenon, contributing to the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of rural communities. It showcases the versatility and leadership capabilities of women in creating and managing successful businesses in the intersection of agriculture and tourism.

References

1. Information from the Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment of the Republic of Uzbekistan, <https://mehnat.uz/uz>
2. Ahearn, M.C. and D. Tempelman, 2010. Gender issues in agricultural and rural household well-being. Proceedings of the 3rd Global Conference on Agricultural and Rural Household Statistics, May 24-25, Washington, D.C., pp: 1-18.
3. Halim, Mirza F.; Morais, Duarte B.; Barbieri, Carla; Jakes, Susan; and Zering, Kelly, "Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs Involved in Agritourism" (2016). Travel and Tourism Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally. 10. https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra/2016/Academic_Papers_Oral/10
4. Weiler, S. and A. Bernasek, 2001. Dodging the glass ceiling? Networks and the new wave of women entrepreneurs. Soc. Sci. J., 38: 85-103. DOI: 10.1016/S0362-3319(00)00111-7.
5. Decision of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "Regarding measures to further improve the system of supporting women and girls, ensuring their active participation in the life of society", PQ-5020, adopted on March 5, 2021.
6. Sh.Gupta, R.Sharma - Empowering Women through Agritourism: A Case Study of Rural Women in India, International Journal of Agriculture, Environment and Biotechnology.
7. Baymuradova, I. S. (2022). AGROTURIZM: O'ZBEKISTONDAGI FERMERLAR VA MAHALLIY AHOLI UCHUN POTENSIAL IMKONIYATLAR. Academic research in educational sciences, (Conference), 86-94.
8. Shermamatovna, B. I. (2021). The Role of Agritourism in the Sustainable Development of Rural Areas. Academic Journal of Digital Economics and Stability, 83-88.
9. Shermamatovna, B. I. (2021). Agroturizm–barqaror rivojlanish asosi. Development issues of innovative economy in the agricultural sector, 906-910.
10. <https://stat.uz/ru/>