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OCLC - 1368736135











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# AGRITOURISM AS A SUPPORTIVE TOOL IN THE TOURISM **SECTOR OF JAPAN**

Submission Date: July 17, 2024, Accepted Date: July 22, 2024,

Published Date: July 27, 2024

Crossref doi: https://doi.org/10.37547/ijasr-04-07-04

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#### ABSTRACT

This article explores the upcoming trend of agritourism in Japan, where tourists are increasingly seeking authentic and immersive experiences in rural agricultural areas. The article provides an overview of the concept of agritourism and its potential impact on local economies, sustainable farming practices, and cultural preservation. It delves into the unique attractions that draw tourists to Japanese agritourism, such as tea farms, fruit-picking orchards, and traditional rice paddies. Additionally, it examines the challenges and opportunities faced by farmers and rural communities as they embrace agritourism, including issues of infrastructure, marketing, and balancing the needs of visitors with those of agricultural production. Ultimately, this article aims to provide insights into the development of agritourism in Japan and its role in promoting rural revitalization and cultural exchange.

## **K**EYWORDS

Agritourism, local economies, farming practices, and cultural preservation.

## INTRODUCTION

As Japan's tourism sector begins to recover, rural stakeholders tourism hope activities businesses such as farm stays, food tours, and rice planting and harvest tours will return as tourists prefer the open spaces and outdoors.

To give an example with numbers, a local survey in 2021 found that 31 percent of respondents

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wanted "nature and scenery" on their next domestic trip, and 21 percent wanted "outdoor activities." These figures confirm that agritourism has great potential to capture this target market. Meanwhile, in a report, by the end of 2023, Japan's travel and tourism industry will have contributed approximately JPY40 trillion (USD293.5 billion) to the nation's GDP, just 2.2 percent less than 2019's numbers.

Prior to the pandemic, the industry contributed JPY40.8 trillion (USD298.6 billion) to the country's GDP in 2019, which decreased to JPY18.4 trillion (USD134.6 billion) in 2020. However, Its contribution to GDP increased by 22.9 percent annually in 2021 to JPY22.7 trillion (USD166.1 billion). The sector's GDP contribution is anticipated to increase by 60 percent to more than IPY36.2 trillion (USD264.9 billion) by the end of this year, or 6.5 percent of the overall GDP.

Agricultural tourism, often referred to as agritourism, is a rapidly growing industry in Japan, and for good reason. This unique form of tourism allows visitors to experience the rural lifestyle, connect with nature, and gain insights into traditional farming practices. With its rich agricultural history and diverse landscape, Japan offers a wide array of agritourism experiences that cater to a range of interests and preferences.

Popular activities: One of the most popular agritourism activities in Japan is fruit picking. Whether it's strawberries, peaches, or oranges, visitors have the opportunity to pick fresh, ripe fruit straight from the trees or bushes. This hands-on experience not only allows visitors to

savor the delicious flavors of locally grown produce but also provides a deeper appreciation for the hard work and dedication that goes into cultivating these crops.

Another key attraction for agritourism in Japan is the rice paddy fields. These lush, terraced fields serve as a breathtaking backdrop for cultural experiences such as rice planting and harvesting. Visitors can participate in these traditional activities alongside local farmers, gaining a newfound respect for the meticulous process of rice cultivation and its significance in Japanese culture.

For those interested in animal husbandry, agritourism offers opportunities to visit livestock farms and learn about the care and breeding of animals such as cows, goats, and pigs. Many farms also offer hands-on experiences like milking cows, making cheese, or even partaking in horseback riding activities, providing memorable and educational experience for visitors of all ages.

In addition to farm-related activities, agritourism in Japan often includes accommodation options such as farm stays, where guests can immerse themselves in the rural lifestyle by staying in traditional farmhouses or guesthouses. This allows visitors to engage with local communities, savor home-cooked meals made from fresh, locally sourced ingredients, and gain a deeper understanding of Japanese rural life.

Public policy: Japan has been making efforts to promote agrotourism as part of its rural revitalization strategy. The government has been

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implementing various policies and initiatives to support and encourage agrotourism activities across the country. Some key aspects of Japan's agrotourism policy include:

- Promotion and Marketing: The government has been actively promoting agrotourism destinations and experiences through various marketing campaigns, both domestically and internationally. This includes showcasing traditional farming practices, local food experiences, and cultural activities in rural areas.
- Financial Support: The government provides financial support and incentives to farmers and rural communities to develop and improve agrotourism infrastructure, such as farm stays, agricultural experiences, and eco-tourism facilities.
- Training and Capacity Building: The government offers training programs and farmers and workshops to communities to enhance their hospitality and tourism management skills. This helps them provide high-quality agrotourism experiences to visitors.
- Policy Integration: Japan has working to integrate agrotourism into its broader rural development and regional revitalization policies. This includes coordinating efforts between different government agencies to ensure a cohesive approach to supporting agrotourism initiatives.

Collaboration with Private Sector: The government collaborates with private businesses and organizations to develop agrotourism products and experiences, as well as to improve the overall visitor experience in rural areas.

Overall, Japan's agrotourism policy aims to create sustainable rural economies, preserve traditional agricultural practices, and provide unique experiences for both domestic and international tourists. This policy is part of a wider effort to address depopulation and economic decline in rural areas, while also promoting cultural heritage and environmental conservation.

#### Conclusion

The government and local municipalities in Japan have been supporting agritourism as a means to revitalize rural areas and foster sustainable agricultural practices. This has led to the development of farm tours. educational programs, and promotional initiatives that showcase the unique offerings of each region and encourage visitors to explore the countryside.

In recent years, agritourism has gained popularity among both domestic and international tourists seeking authentic. off-the-beaten-path experiences. It provides an opportunity to escape the hustle and bustle of urban life and reconnect with nature while gaining a better understanding of Japan's agricultural traditions.

As the demand for sustainable and authentic travel experiences continues to grow, agritourism

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in Japan is poised to play an increasingly important role in the country's tourism industry. Its ability to offer a meaningful connection to nature, local communities, and traditional agricultural practices makes it a valuable addition to Japan's diverse and vibrant tourism landscape. Whether it's fruit picking, rice planting, or farm stays, agritourism in Japan offers a memorable and enriching experience for travelers who seek a deeper connection to the land and its people.

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