

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Socio-economic impact potential of agro tourism activities on *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* community living in Peninsular Malaysia

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Agro-tourism is a tool that has been widely used around the world for the purpose of intensifying the socio-economic aspects of the local community. Malaysia is supportive of this tool. The main objective of this paper is to unveil the potential socio-economic benefits that can be offered by the agro-tourism activities to progressive fishing communities or locally known as *Desa Wawasan Nelayan*<sup>1</sup> community in Malaysia. Data were gathered through document analyses. The qualitative studies concluded that agro-tourism can be the impetus for sustainable development of *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* community. The benefits include enhancing their social empowerment system, strengthening their social ties and developing their social skills and relationships, increasing the income of local community, diversifying and intensifying the economic activities, providing job opportunities and alleviation of poverty. Thus, agro-tourism has the potential to raise the consciousness of the selected community regarding sustainable development.

**Key words:** Agro-tourism, community development, sustainable development, economic development, social development.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in agro-tourism as a vehicle by both developed or developing countries. Agro-tourism was originally developed from ecological movement ideas and concern of societies where mass tourism was developed (Bramwell, 1994). Agro-tourism can be defined as:

*“Activities that go within the property, generating occupa-*

*tions that complement the agricultural activities that continues to make part of daily life on the property with the greater access or lesser intensity. These activities should be understood as a part of a process of adding services to the agriculture products and non-materials value existing on rural properties (landscape and fresh air, etc) using the free time of farm families and sometimes using hired labour.*

Some example of activities associated with agro-tourism are ranch resorts, leisure fishing, hunting grounds, country lodging, country restaurants, farmers' markets, local handcrafts, home industries and other leisure

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**Abbreviation:** Fisheries Development Authority of Malaysia (**LKIM**); Women Group Association (**KUNITA**); community are not well managed (**CNWM**), community are well managed (**CWM**); community are successful (**CAS**).

<sup>1</sup>A village listed as the *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* has the ability to offer attractive agro-tourism activities and has a numerous activities which can attract a bigger number of tourists either local or foreign. *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* is one the community development programs guided by Fisheries Development Authority of Malaysia (LKIM).

activities devoted to the revival of the local residents life-style" (Graziano Da Silva et al., 1998).

Some developed countries such as the U.S.A. have extensive history in agro-tourism activities, while developing countries such as Thailand have shown a promising development in the industry. Agro-tourism is believed to have started in the United States in the early 1800s (Karabati et al., 2009). Rural recreation gained interest again in the 1930s and in the 1940s among people who were seeking an escape from the stress of the great depression after World War II. A number of countries of the world have transformed their economies through agro-tourism activities. In Thailand, agro-tourism has been used as one of the main medium to attract tourists from all over the world. Authority there has started a number of agro-tourism projects and the projects were granted almost 125 million bath. Since the advent of agro-tourism in Thailand in 2002, there have been constantly increasing numbers of private agricultural entrepreneurs participating in the ventures, thus, opening a new destination for the tourism industries. In that year, a total of 98 farming communities have joined the Thailand national scheme. The impact of this scheme is significant since half a million tourists have visited the farm areas (Taemsaran, 2005). Agro-tourism in Greece has promoted the mountainous and less favoured areas to attract tourists. Priority has been given to the areas with declining economies or population or to border and peripheral areas with spatial restrictions that are laid for the development of agro-tourism holdings in mass tourism areas. The Ministry of Agriculture provided an overall agro-tourism development plan for Greece initially without having a specific organization at the national or local level to include the private enterprises (Aikaterini et al., 2001).

## AGRO-TOURISM IN MALAYSIA

Similar to other developing countries, agro-tourism industry is gaining ground in Malaysia as the country has a wealth of products to offer local and foreign visitors alike. In addition, agro-tourism is a catalyst for initiating sustainable tourism activities and diversifying rural activities. Agro-tourism, as it is formally known has a huge potential to improve the community income and economic potentials of small farms, rural communities and agro-based ventures throughout the country. It is a new tourism concept that received a positive acceptance among local and international tourists. The agro-tourism activities in Malaysia include visits to orchards, animal farms, research centres and homestay programs. The main agency responsible for the development of agro-tourism is the Agriculture and Agro-based industry, while the Tourism Ministry complements in terms of its promotion. There are approximately more than hundred tourist destinations in Malaysia that offer agro-tourism

activities. Ten of these destinations are under the jurisdiction of the *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* authority. *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* areas offer the relaxation and calmness of nature to urban dweller and a peaceful retreat away from home. As *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* is one of the major attractions for agro-tourism activities in Malaysia, this study would like to discover the potential socio-economic impacts that can be benefited by the *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* community in terms of social impact, economic impact and environmental impact. Experiences and information from studies conducted locally and from all around the world will be referred for the purpose of identifying the potential socio-economic impact that can be gained at *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* areas.

### ***Desa Wawasan Nelayan* background**

There are numerous agro-tourism activities that can be conducted at a *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* including homestay, sport-fishing, floating chalet, fish barbecue plazas (*Medan Ikan Bakar*), river edging, fireflies seeking expeditions, picnics and village tours. In 2009, at the national *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* competition, there were 10 *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* villages were listed as the candidates. Seven of these villages are located in Peninsular Malaysia while the others were located in the Sabah/Sarawak zone. The ten candidates for the 2009 *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* National competition were:

### ***Desa Wawasan Nelayan* BebulohLaut**

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### ***Desa Wawasan Nelayan* Kuala Pahang**

Kuala Pahang village covers 1.6 km<sup>2</sup>. The population of this village is 2823. More than two thirds of its population (70%) is fishermen. It has a unique and fascinating natural attraction to the visitors. Interestingly, this village also houses a royal mausoleum and a police station which is believed to be the first police station in Pahang. Anglers will find Kuala Pahang village as a fishing haven as there are plenty of fish farms built by Fisheries

Development Authority of Malaysia (LKIM).

### ***Desa Wawasan Nelayan MempakadLaut***

The term “*MempakadLaut*” comes from the word “Pakad” which simply means ‘good and harmonious relationship among people’. It has a population of 669 people of which most of them are Malays. It was utilized by the Japanese army in initiating their war strategies. Located on the shores of TelukMarudu in the district of Pitas Island at the Northwest of Sabah, it has two famous islands known as KapalSpirak and BatuBerunsai. KapalSpirak is a well-known island having the shape of a ship while BatuBerunsai has a rock island in the shape of a dancing man. According to senior villagers it was formed due to a curse.

### ***Desa Wawasan Nelayan Ketam Island***

Located within the district of Kangar, Ketam Island is well known with its strong Malay values. It has a population of 366 people. Not too many places can offer what *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* Ketam Island can offer, for instance, the breeding of nipah crabs in cages. Tourists will have the opportunity to catch the crab through the traditional way using crab cages. The village also has a large portion of mangrove area, which has been declared as a forest reserve by the government. Doubtlessly, it has a huge potential to be developed as a unique tourist area in the northern Peninsular Malaysia.

### ***Desa Wawasan Nelayan Suri Island***

Suri Island village is one of the traditional Malay fishing villages that is located on the atoll at the Kelantan river’s estuary. The population of this village is 400 who still hold strongly to the Malay customs, culture and way of living. Nature’s beauty and serenity are among the main attractions to the tourists.

### ***Desa Wawasan Nelayan Rhu 10***

With its population of 668 and situated at the scenic shores in Terengganu, Rhu 10 village is well known with its white sandy beaches and the rows of pine trees providing perfect shades for the tourists to relax and enjoy the sea breeze and breath taking seaside view. On top of it, Rhu 10 village is very famous with its home-stay and chalets which is one of the income generators for the villagers.

### ***Desa Wawasan Nelayan SediliKechil***

Situated in Southern Malaysia in the district of Kota

Tinggi, Johor, it has a population of 1,500 people. SediliKechil village is a traditional Malay village. Facing the South China Sea, this village has flat beaches. SediliKechil is covered by greeneries and is famous for its mangrove recreational park.

### ***Desa Wawasan Nelayan Senau***

Named after the Senau River, it has a population of 1,297. Senau Village is a fishing village. The Senau River was the main transportation route used before the road was built in the village but the river remains the main source of water supply for commercialized agriculture activities. Interestingly, Senau village homestay is one of the main attractions of the tourism activities in Sarawak. This activity is widely promoted by the Sarawak Tourism Action Council.

### ***Desa Wawasan Nelayan Teluk Tempoyak***

Teluk Tempoyak is a Malay fishing village situated at the Southeast of Penang. It has a population of 1,200. Well known for its natural beauty combined with the sea breeze, it has a huge ability to attract local and foreign tourists. On top of it, this village is also well known for its fresh grilled fish. There are a lot of restaurants offering fresh fish that are open every evening.

### ***Desa Wawasan Nelayan Teluk Gadung***

This village is located on one of the famous tourism islands in Malaysia, the Pangkor Island. A total of 540 people are living in this village. It is famous for its natural beauty especially the crystal-clear waters and white beaches. Within this village, a number of historical places such as the written rock and the Dutch Fort can be found. The details of agro-tourism attraction according to the *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* areas are shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Potential of socio-economic impact of agro-tourism in Malaysia**

As mentioned earlier, agro tourism indeed has the potential to uplift the socio-economic status of the *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* community. Among the effects of the socio-economic impact are:

1. Social impact
  - (a) Community empowerment
  - (b) Village community development
2. Economic impact

**Table 1.** Social activities in *Desa Wawasan Nelayan*.

Community activities/villages	BebulohLaut	Kuala Sungai Pahang	MempakadLaut	Ketam Island	Suri Island	Rhu 10	SediliKechil	Senau	Teluk Tempoyak	Teluk Gadung
Annual long boat races			√							
BeritaHarian GP Joran (Popular Fishing competition held by famous newspaper company)		√		√						
*Berzanji and **Marhaban							√			√
Computer classes for family of the fishermen									√	
Cooking classes										√
***Gotong-royong	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Independence day boat show									√	
****Kendarat activities							√			
Kindergarten parents' association					√					
Leader meet the community program		√		√						
Medical checkup program		√		√						
Nature disaster donation presentation		√		√						
Religious activities (for Muslim community, including quran classes)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			√
*****Silat and *****dikirbarat group					√			√		
Student counseling classes		√		√						
Thankful wingding			√						√	
Visionary force campaign					√					
Village vision movement campaign								√		
Women group association (KUNITA)					√					

1) \*Berzanji is a Islamic religious song and berzanji is usually sang at wedding ceremony and Maulidurrasul (prophet birthday); 2) \*\*Marhaban means welcome and as same as berzanji, it is a religious song and Marhaban is usually sang at events such as wedding ceremony and Maulidurrasul (prophet birthday); 3) \*\*\*Gotong-royong- a joint community program, usually conducted for the beautification of the village environments 4) \*\*\*\*Kendarat- the people who clear up the plates, wash them etc during a typical malay wedding; 5) \*\*\*\*\*Silat- indigenous martial arts of the Malay; 6) \*\*\*\*\*Dikirbarat is a musical form, native to the Malay Peninsula, that involves singing in group, often in a competitive setting and almost always without instrumental accompaniment.

- (a) Increased income of the local community
- (b) Intensifying and diversifying the economic activities
- (c) Employment opportunities
- (d) Poverty alleviation

- 3. Sustainable development
  - (a) Environmental sustainability

The following paragraphs provide the discussion on the potential of the socio-economic impact of agritourism:

**Social Impact**

**Community empowerment:** In terms of social development, agrotourism programs can aid in driving the community development to the highest level. Agrotourism can also aid in building the community pride and confidence. Intensification and diversification of the economic activities brought by agrotourism will strengthen the purchasing power of the local community and this without doubt will be one of the mechanisms to improve the local communities' quality of life and

standard of living. In a study carried out by Pearce (1990), visitors were beneficial for the younger children, since the latter were able to meet people from different places and cultures within their homes. While visitors occasionally helped with farm activities, few hosts saw this assistance as a motive for having guests. Mental rather than physical contributions from the guests were prized. As a result, culture transformation also will occur. Agrotourism will also cause some of social activities to be intensified such as cultural shows, religious activities,



**Table 4.** Level of community development.

CWNM	CWM	CIS
Selfish	Have an organization with a clear vision, mission and program	Realize the problems that exist within the community and response the problems positively.
Unconscious of the problems existing within the community	Have a set of skilled and democratic leaders	Have a sustainable education program
Do not care	Members learn about new knowledge and skills	Have the ability to overcome conflicts and differences
Unable to solve problems	Learn about the community problems	Have a strong relationship with groups and government agencies
Disunite	Have a plan to solve problems	Leaders who are skilled and have a positive attitude
Not perform their task	In the process of initiating a socio-economic project	Posses success record
No relationship	The community possess positive value	Can manipulate the sources, be they internal or external sources
	Involve actively in the community activities	Have a community asset, developed and managed by the community themselves
	Start to initiate different ideas and opinions	Have social services such as water, road, health, transportation, education and so on.
	Start to build relationship	Realize and practice environmental actions that are positive and sustainable
	Limited political consciousness	Women have equal rights and specialties and are involved in the community
		Have a unique quality
		Involve important decisions
		Mature political consciousness

Sulaiman (1995).

sports events, collaborative events and others social activities which require the local community's involvement. The intensification of these activities especially those that are related with culture will provide opportunities for the younger generation to learn and know about their culture. In addition, agrotourism will strengthen the community institution, socialization, networking and leadership. The community of *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* will gain due to the contribution of agrotourism to the improvement of social infrastructure and services like schools, library, health care, ICT centre, and public transportation.

**Village community development:** According to Sulaiman (1995), there are three levels of village community social development: community is not well managed (CNWM), community is well

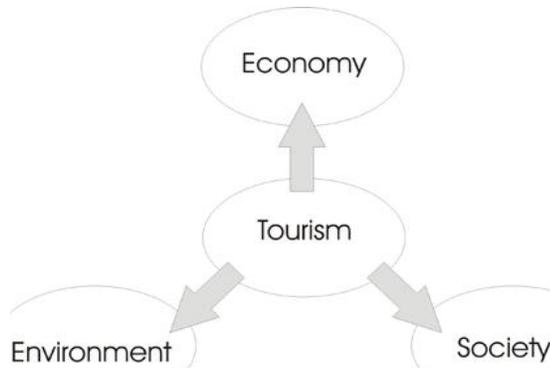
managed (CWM) and community is successful (CIS) (Table 4). Without doubt, with its huge socio-economic opportunities, agrotourism is one of the mechanisms that can aid the community to be at the highest level of community development as suggested by Sulaiman (1995).

### **Economic impact**

**Increased income of the local community:** Agrotourism carries with it a great capacity to initiate an additional source of income for the *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* community. Referring to previous studies carried out by Elson et al. (1995) and by Gusti (2007), there are two main focuses of the agriculture community which are to get extra income and to contribute to the local economy. One of the potentials to be developed in

the *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* areas is the development of agriculture areas. The development of such areas through agrotourism indeed can be an impetus to improve the local economy, which result in slowing down of depopulation, supporting local services, and leading to conservation projects (Davies and Gilbert, 1992). On top of this, the intensification of economic activities brought by agrotourism such as chalet rental, homestay, local products selling, restaurants and fish grilling, for example, have a huge potential to assist the local community in getting extra income.

**Intensifying and diversifying the economic activities:** For sure, agrotourism has a huge potential to further intensify the economic activities of the local community. Before this perhaps the financial resources of the *Desa Wawasan*



**Figure 1.** Sustainable development model, (Granau and Koffman, 2008).

*Nelayan* were solely from the fish catching activities, but after the emergence of the agrotourism, they have the opportunity to run a number of economic activities and this is not surprising as it has been proven by a number of previous studies (Gusti, 2007; Barlybaev et al., 2009; Holland et al., 2003). Based on his study, Gusti (2007), for example, concluded that generating related tourism businesses are the most potential agrotourism development with businesses such as agricultural product sales, hand-made souvenirs or handicraft, opportunity to establish food stalls or restaurants and certain types of accommodation such as homestay, villa, hotel and motel. Gusti (2007) furthermore stressed that agricultural products are the main products that are demanded by the tourists. According to Wilson et al. (2001), agrotourism has an advantage which is less costly to develop and easier to establish as compared to other economic development strategies. Results revealed by Lobo et al. (1999) supported what had been stressed by Gusti (2007), when they emphasized that agrotourism will have an impact on the demand for local products, intensify regional marketing efforts and widen the markets linkage and networking. This for sure will further boost the money-making activities and generate profits for the community.

**Employment opportunities:** One of the primary benefits brought by agrotourism activities is bigger employment opportunities (Yang et al., 2010; Gusti, 2007; Akpınar et al., 2003). This opportunity is not only for the heads of the families but also for their wives and family members. Economic activities brought by agrotourism activities have the capacity to generate a large scale of employment opportunities for skilled and unskilled local communities. Hotels, chalets and motels for example will flourish and a lot of human resources power is needed to run such businesses. Furthermore, local communities have the options to be empowered and be involved in self-employed economic activities such as selling local products (sea products and handicrafts), conducting

seafood restaurants, homestay businesses and others.

**Poverty alleviation:** The intensification and diversification of economic activities offered by the agrotourism activity can be an effective instrument to alleviate the poverty problems that might occur within the *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* community. According to Jamieson et al. (2004), tourism can be an effective instrument to fight poverty if these three requirements can be fulfilled:

1. Economic benefits gained through the offers of full or part time employment or the development of SME opportunities produced by the intensification and diversification of economic activities brought by agrotourism activities.
2. Other livelihood benefits such as access to potable water, roads which bring benefits to poor producers through, for example, improved access to markets, improved health and education and other benefits.
3. Opportunities and capacity for engagement in decision-making to make the poor able to improve their livelihood by securing better access to tourist and tourism enterprise.

### **Sustainable development**

According to Granau and Koffman (2008) and Manziulu and Iancu (2006), tourism activities (which include agrotourism) can assist in achieving community sustainable development. Granau and Koffman (2008), drew this conclusion based on the justification that in terms of economic sustainability, agrotourism can act as an additional source of income which will boost the community purchasing power. Thus this will support sustainable development. Granau and Koffman (2008) furthermore justified that in terms of social development, (Figure 1). Agrotourism activities can be a tool for the preservation of cultural identity, to further develop the local societies and to offer a fair allocation of resources. Conversely, Granau and Koffman (2008) also stressed that agrotourism doubtlessly will develop people's positive attitude towards environment preservation.

**Environment sustainability:** Environment sustainability is indeed an important issue to be emphasized within the agrotourism activities of *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* as it is hugely linked to the social and economic issues as most of the *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* communities are dependent on natural resources. The dependency can be a success if the environment is well managed by the community and by the responsible agencies (Keskinen and Varis, 2005).

Conversely, agrotourism will encourage the authorities and the community to preserve the environment more than before and will create environmental awareness among the community (Anthopolou, 2000). Besides,

agrotourism can help capitalize and preserve the natural, historical, and cultural resources of communities. Thus, it will ensure the environment attractiveness and the authenticity of their tourist sites. In return this will attract more tourists to their places. In a study completed by Sijlbing (2010), the author concluded that sustainable tourism activities will offer a solution for environmental sustainability. All of these will result in pollution and noise free sites for agrotourism activities.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analyses and discussion above, the agrotourism activities in Malaysia, specifically those related to the *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* areas, the benefits are multi-dimensional. Socially, agrotourism will offer numerous tourist destinations and subsequently will strengthen the local community's pride and confidence. Above all the industry has the potential for cultural and physical transformation. More importantly, agrotourism will alleviate poverty through the intensification and diversification of economic activities resulting in availability of huge employment opportunities for the members of the community.

Based on the results gained, initiative can be taken by providing new economic projects to *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* areas. This is essential as the new economic projects will strengthen, intensify and diversify the economic activities of the local community, thus, this can one of the key catalysts of the related agencies to overcome the poverty and unemployment problems within the *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* area. Off course, the receivers of the new economic projects (if granted), need continuous guidance and supports from the related agencies.

Based on this, a number of future researches can be conducted which focus more specific to the social activities of *Desa Wawasan Nelayan*. First, is on the impact of the agrotourism on the religious life of the *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* community Second is study on the sustainable livelihood of the *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* community and third is the impact of the Gotong Royong program on the social values of the *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* community. All of these research projects if can be implemented will indeed strengthen agrotourism activities especially in Malaysia.

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