



**Department of Tourism**

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## PRESS RELEASE

### Kerala launches Agri Tourism Network, opens training programme



- **Govt to identify 500 new rural tourism destinations in five years: Tourism Minister**

**Thiruvananthapuram, Sep. 14:** Tourism Minister Shri P.A. Mohamed Riyas today launched the Kerala Agri Tourism Network-Farm Tourism as a major initiative of the globally-acclaimed Responsible Tourism project of Kerala to ensure monetary benefits to agricultural community by linking farming activities with tourism.

The Minister also inaugurated a state-level training programme to create trained manpower to strengthen farm tourism and impart an added impetus to tourism sector in the post-Covid phase.

On the occasion, he said Kerala Tourism will be teaming up with local self-government institutions across the state to identify 500 new destinations in five years. The Responsible Tourism Mission has a key role in achieving this target.



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“Tourism projects of Kerala are largely meant to bring benefits to local communities. The Department Tourism is striving to tap the tourism possibilities of the entire state. The responsibility shown by the citizens in showcasing their localities in a sustainable manner has contributed substantially to the success of tourism in many countries. Citizens in each locality should feel proud of their area and take it their responsibility to keep the place safe and hygienic,” the Minister said.

Shri Riyas said Kerala’s special agricultural traditions have been taken into account while creating the Agri Tourism Network.

Tourism has the potential to associate with various departments like Health and Sports to create more opportunities, he said.

Transport Minister Shri Antony Raju, who presided over the function, said that RT had successfully created both professional and financial progress of large sections of people. This project will help the new generation and foreign tourists to know about the Kerala’s farming culture.

“Tourism can address unemployment problem in the state to an extent. Kerala Tourism and Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) together have planned certain projects and they will be announced soon,” Shri Raju added.

The Agri Tourism Network-Farm Tourism will function on the basis of UNWTO’s Declaration that sees a future in responsible tourism that emphasizes on the experiential aspect of tour and travel.

Under the network, authorities will set up 500 farm tourism units and 5,000 homestay farms (integrated agriculture units in the compounds of houses) by March 31, 2023. Agriculture and tourism activities will be blended in a way that would not harm farming practices.

As many as 680 people have registered under the RT Mission’s training programme. Those farms run by units which complete the training successfully will qualify for RT packages. Authorities will ensure the marketing of such farms’ produce by connecting them with tourism initiatives as in the famed Kumarakom backwaters of Kottayam district. The sales will also be carried out online, for which platforms will be formed.

Plans are also afoot to launch a mobile app, besides hold local market fairs under the RT Mission.



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Tourism Director Shri V.R. Krishna Teja welcomed the gathering. State RT Mission Coordinator Shri K. Rupeshkumar made a presentation on the project. Kerala Travel Mart President Shri Baby Mathew Somatheeram also spoke.

Mission Coordinator Mrs Biji Xavier proposed a vote of thanks. The event also saw virtual participation by prominent tourism sector stake-holders and trainees.

**ENDS**