Economic contribution of agritourism in Zimbabwe: An empirical study

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ABSTRACT

Agritourism is an important economic driver that has contributed significantly to the economies of most developed countries. However, the significance of the contribution of agritourism has been minimally explored in the developing world context, particularly in Zimbabwe. Therefore, this study aims to assess the economic contribution of agritourism in Zimbabwe from the supply side. Using a qualitative approach, farmers' perceptions of the economic contributions of agritourism were collected and analyzed. The assessed variables included farm income, sales, profits, employment, tax revenue generated, value addition, size of agritourism businesses, and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Twenty (21) agritourism ventures were purposively selected and in-depth interviews were conducted. The results of this study indicate that agritourism's contribution to Zimbabwe's economy is still meager. They showed that agritourism activities increased farm income, sales, profits, employment, tax remittances, value addition, and GDP by a small margin. Revenue generated through farm entry fees and farm activities has a low effect on farm profits, except for farms with accommodation facilities. Therefore, the study recommends the development of various adaptable strategies to increase tourist flow to farms, including increased marketing efforts, offering family and holiday events, creating entertainment facilities, and increasing agricultural production. The results of this study provide policymakers, farmers, and other relevant stakeholders with information that can be used to assess the potential and profitability of agritourism. Furthermore, policy recommendations are provided to strengthen agritourism as a sustainable diversification strategy for farmers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Agritourism has become the most prominent form of tourism that utilizes farm resources for tourism purposes. The concept has been defined as the business of providing farm experiences in the form of education, outdoor recreation, entertainment, direct farm sales, and

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hospitality activities (Chase et al., 2018). Agriculture and tourism are two major industries in most economies, contributing enormously towards employment and the economic development of nations (Zacal et al., 2019). The synergy between the two industries has resulted in unique enterprises that are developed on a working farm combined with commercial tourism. This synergy dates back to the early 19th century in developed countries, such as Europe, the United States of America (USA), and the United Kingdom (UK) (Chase et al., 2018). Since then, the relationship between agriculture and tourism has continued to strengthen and has given birth to a new tourism concept known as agritourism (Chase et al., 2018). The concept has been developing throughout the century, with rapid growth witnessed in the 1980s in most European countries, including the USA and the UK. These regions today boast a vibrant agritourism sector, and the available literature provides evidence that agritourism is indeed an economic driver. For example, in the USA, agritourism contributed an estimated total income of US3.7 billion dollars in 2017 and US1.7 million dollars in Vermont in the same year (Chase, 2020).

The history of agritourism in Africa is short and not well-documented (Baipai et al., 2021). There are few success stories on agritourism, particularly in South Africa (Danaher et al., 2016) with wine tasting being the most common agritourism activity (Van Zyl, 2019). To date, South Africa boasts of approximately 23 different wine trials (Chase, 2020). This concept is gaining popularity, although most countries are still in the development stage (Baipai, 2022). Agritourism has been regarded as a possible solution to challenges such as climate change, pandemics and financial crisis being faced in the economies of most African countries (Sawe et al., 2018). According to a study that was done by Van Zyl and Merwe (2021), farmers in South Africa are motivated to develop agritourism prompted by the need for alternative forms of revenue streams and the desire to preserve culture and heritage. Eshun and Mensah (2020) noted that agritourism has great potential for value addition to farmers in Ghana during off-peak seasons and for increasing tourist arrivals in the country. In Ghana, Eshun and Mensah (2020) acknowledged that agritourism has the potential to become a market leader in the country's tourism industry. However, despite the positive contributions of agritourism to economic development in Africa cited in the literature, the significance of the economic contribution is not known (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2014). Most agritourism destinations in developing countries do not have official documentation on the economic contribution of agritourism (Eshun & Mensah, 2020). In Zimbabwe, agritourism has been regarded as a possible alternative tourism product (Chikuta & Makacha, 2016) but its development is still in its early stages (Baipai, 2022) and its contribution to the economy remains to be explored. This research therefore aims to fill this gap by exploring the economic contribution of agritourism in Zimbabwe.

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Agritourism as an Economic Driver

Agritourism development has been commended in the literature for being a sustainable diversification strategy that can contribute to farmer's income, profitability, employment creation and the to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Chase, 2020;Roman et al., 2020; Poczta-wajda & Poczta, 2016). Agritourism has been growing in popularity and has been triggered by a combination of factors. For example, additional income streams derived from agritourism activities can be useful to farm businesses (Magnini et al., 2017). Moreover, agritourism has also been applied as an alternative solution to declining agricultural and tourism endeavors (Cristina et al., 2017). Agritourism provides farmers with meaningful employment for their families, as well as a market for their farm produce and for local communities, since tourists may buy some of their local products. Roman and Grudzie (2021) confirmed the economic benefits of agritourism in terms of profitability during the COVID 19 pandemic. Their results indicate that running an agritourism venture, even during the COVID 19 pandemic was profitable.

Leh et al., (2017), have also seen the ability of agritourism to revitalize the local economy, as it supports other related sectors such as traditional handicrafts, food services, and commerce. Roman et al. (2020) pointed out that the realization that agritourism brings economic benefits is a motivator for farmers to become creative, thus leading to various innovations in the art and craft sectors. Thus, the development of such innovative products not only improves the livelihoods of the farming communities through job and income creation but also contributes to the economic development of the whole nation economically. However, there is emphasis to ensure that innovations do not dilute the cultural and traditional essence of the rural areas, but that the preservation of the cultural identity is critical (Viglia & Abrate, 2017).

Awan & Saeed (2016) and Ammirato et al. (2020) affirmed that agritourism is a sustainable diversification strategy for farming communities because of its ability to provide sustainable income to these communities. In their study Awan and Saeed (2016) revealed how the Chinese government viewed agritourism as a starting point for rural development and focused their policies on agritourism development. Agritourism has contributed significantly to economic growth in China over the past three decades (Awan & Saeed, 2016). Ammiratoet al. (2020) affirmed that a positive vision of agritourism as a sustainable diversification strategy is clear. They confirmed that this positive vision supports the UN's Agenda for Sustainable Development by 2030. The goals of the agenda include employment creation, infrastructural development, and poverty reduction. These goals refer to the economic sustainability measure of the triple bottom line (TBL) by Elkington (1994).

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Adamov et al. (2020) also concluded that agritourism can support the future sustainable development of farming communities. Adamov et al. (2020) made these conclusions after a significant number of their participants confirmed that the concept presented a chance for them to develop guesthouses at the farm, and this initiative provided them with the opportunity to capitalize on their farm products and craft services. Moreover, 84% of the respondents in Leh et al.'s (2017) study confirmed that the arrival of tourists to their region for agritourism activities has created many job opportunities for locals who can now work as hotel employees, tour guides, and sell their souvenirs and other farm products. This has helped alleviate poverty in the region through employment creation (Leh et al., 2017). Rural to urban migration has been a challenge facing many rural areas because youth migrate to urban areas in search of employment opportunities. In most cases, the elderly who no longer have the energy to manage farms are left behind. Eighty-one percent of the respondents in Leh et al.'s (2017) research agreed that agritourism has increased in migration to the region in the past five years.

However, despite the application of agritourism having been applauded in the literature for its economic benefits, little has been done to quantify its contribution to the economy. The few studies that have been conducted to assess the economic contribution of agritourism were conducted in developed countries and have focused mainly on income (e.g., Arru et al.,2021; Chase,2020; Rogerson & Rogerson,2014; Van Zyl & Merwe,2021). The contribution of agritourism to sales, profits, employment, tax revenue generated, value addition, size of agritourism businesses, and GDP has not received enough attention. Therefore, greater research is required in these areas.

Agritourism in Zimbabwe

Agritourism in Zimbabwe remains in its infancy. There is limited literature on agritourism in Zimbabwe (Chiromo, 2016; Chikuta & Makacha, 2016). The few studies conducted on agritourism in Zimbabwe do not reflect the importance that the concept has gained worldwide. The limited literature on this topic prompted the researchers to conduct this research. However, the limited secondary data available on Zimbabwe, reveal that agritourism was more pronounced before the country's land reform program of year 2000 (Guvamombe, 2019). Commercial white farmers had invested in farm tourism. They had farm lodges, snake parks, wildlife sanctuaries, monuments, and many attractions that they exploited to attract tourists to farms (Guvamombe, 2019). The controversial land reform program is argued to have reduced the number of agritourism farms in the country (Baipai et al., 2022) and no deliberate efforts have been initiated to promote agritourism among new black farmers (Guvamombe, 2019).

Therefore, the agritourism sector of the country is still in its initial stages of development. Preliminary findings indicate that only a few agritourism destinations are currently operating,

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with farm tours and educational activities being the main agritourism activities. However, the country has great potential for agritourism development, mainly because it is agro-based and has several farms that could be transformed into agritourism farms (Baipai et al., 2022). Furthermore, the country has five (5) ecological regions with diverse agro-climatic conditions conducive to the growth of different types of crops, vegetables, fruits, trees, and rearing of different types of animals. The country is endowed with tea, banana, sugarcane, and macadamia plantations, dairy farms, and ranches. These present great opportunities for the development of agritourism. Agritourism has not gained popularity in the country, mainly because farmers lack knowledge on how to utilize the available farm resources to develop agritourism activities and profitability (Baipai et al., 2022). Further, there is a lack of a comprehensive body of literature on agritourism and its contribution to individual farmers' economic well-being, as well as to the country. Thus, farmers are not motivated to venture into agritouristic business. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by assessing the economic contribution of agritourism specifically on farm income, sales, profits, employment, GDP, tax revenue generated, and value-added effects from agritourism.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study followed a multiple case study approach. A qualitative method was considered suitable because it allows investigators to obtain a comprehensive appreciation of participant practices from small samples (Creswell & Plano, 2007). Specifically, this study used semi-structured in-depth interviews, which allowed investigators to discover participants' practices at a profound level (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2018). Interviews are normally used for data gathering, because respondents are more likely to share in-depth information with the investigator (Creswell & Plano, 2007).

Twenty (21) farmers were interviewed. Only farms offering agritourism activities with traceable financial records were selected. Although Zimbabwe is agro based with many farms that have potential for agritourism development most of these farms are not yet fully developed in terms of agritourism. Moreover, some farmers offering agritourism did not have traceable financial records and therefore could not qualify for interview. Purposive sampling was used to select farms using their ratings in agriculture business and the diversity of farming activities that have the potential to attract visitors. The data were obtained from farm managers or farm owners who were individually interviewed. The respondents were booked for interviews in advance, and farm managers or owners were interviewed depending on their availability. The manager or owner of a farm was a rightful respondent, as they were in a better position to give competent responses on the farm's economic performance better than anyone else at the farm. The in-depth interviews lasted 30 to 40 minutes to probe and capture diverse agritourism

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economic impacts, as proposed by Saunders et al., (2019). In-person interviews and telephone interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researchers. Broad and specific questions were asked to address a variety of topics on the economic contribution of agritourism, including descriptions of farms, number of tourists received, and employment-number of farm workers, salary range, tax returns, farm incomes, sales, profits, and value addition.

The interview transcripts were analyzed for content using directed thematic analysis. Themes applied in the research were directed by key themes established in the reviewed literature, which makes them reliable and valid, as they are founded on previously recognized related results and theories (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). The collected data was imported into Microsoft Excel for data visualization and analysis. Utilizing Excel charting and tabulation features, the data was presented in various formats, including pie charts to illustrate proportional distributions, bar charts to display categorical comparisons and tables to provide detailed summaries and insights.

The researchers got approval to conduct the interviews from Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences Research Ethics Committee. The committee ensured that ethical standards such as informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and elimination of potential harm to participants were adhered to throughout the research process. Informed consent was sought through the use of a consent form which respondents were requested to fill before commencement of data collection.

Qualitative investigators are concerned with conformability, credibility, and transferability instead of generalizability and repeatability (Creswell & Plano, 2007). Credibility was ensured in this study by crafting an interview guide that covered key research concepts of economic contribution. Regarding conformability, respondents were debriefed at the end of the interviews. Validity was ensured by comparing the coded themes to interview transcripts by the entire research team. Confidentiality of farmers was ensured by not giving farms names instead used key codes for referral. Biases are expected in qualitative research and cannot be detached from the interviewee or interviewer. As such, experiences convert clear knowledge and become an essential element of research development and must be acknowledged (Creswell & Plano, 2007). Research team members included a PhD holder specializing in Tourism and Hospitality Management, and a specialist in agribusiness. The lead investigator in this study also had expert knowledge of agritourism.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study findings are presented under the eleven key themes of research on the economic contribution of agritourism.

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Distribution of Sampled Farms by Province

Twenty-one (21) agritourism farms were included in the study sample. These were selected from four provinces in Zimbabwe, as shown in Figure 1.

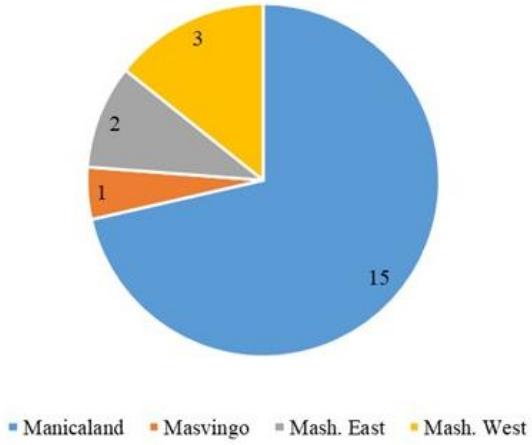

Figure 1. Farm Distribution by Province

The distribution of the sampled farms indicates that the majority (N=15 or 71%) of the farms are from Manicaland. This is mainly because the province is in agro-ecological regions 1 and 2a, which are characterized by high rainfall and fertile soils that increase the agritourism potential of farms in this region. One farm sampled in Masvingo province demonstrated adverse farming conditions in the region, which reduced the agritourism potential of the farms in the same region.

Farm Sizes

Figure 2 indicates that a larger number of respondents were from commercial (N=7;33%) and large farms (N=7;33%).

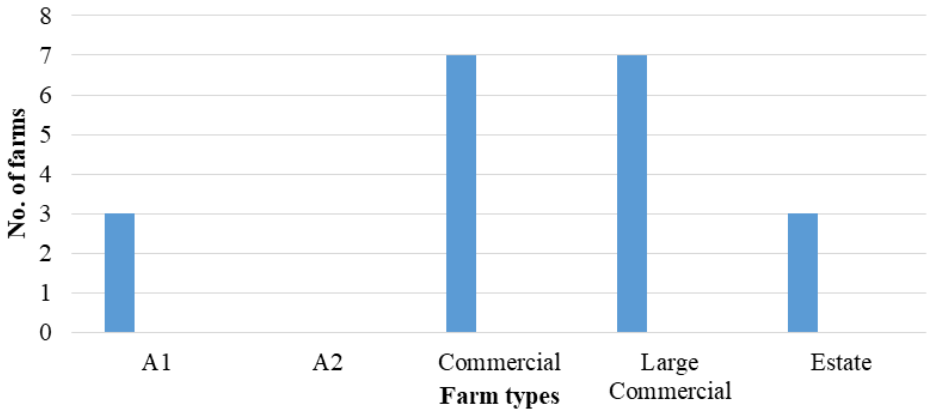

Figure 2. Farm Sizes

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Estate and A1 farms had fewer (14% each) respondents, whereas none were interviewed from A2 farms. On one premise, access to interviews with the respondent was denied.

Number of Tourists Received

The number of tourists received at a particular agritourism destination translates into farm incomes. The figures below show the number of tourists visiting agritourism farms per day, per week, or per month.

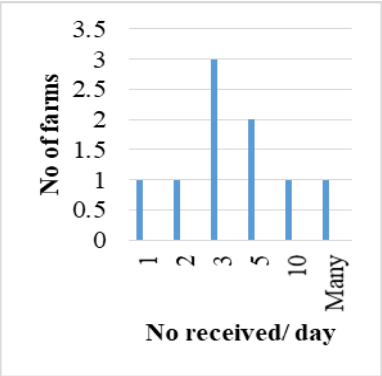

Figure 3. Number of Tourists Received/Day

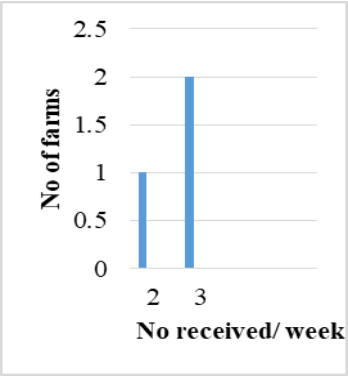

Figure 4. Number of Tourists Received/Week

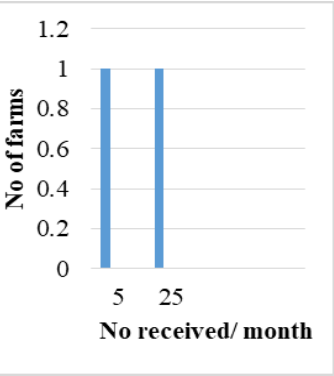

Figure 5. Number of Tourists Received/Month

Figure 3 shows that three farms are receiving an average of three tourists each per day, two farms are getting about five visitors each per day whilst a single farm is getting either one, two, ten or many tourists per day. On the other hand, Figure 4 shows that two farms are receiving three tourists per week each whilst a one farm is getting two tourists per week. Figure 5 displays that two farms are receiving five or twenty-five tourists each month. This translates to not more than one client per day for each farm. It was noted that a renowned resort place has the highest frequency of tourists, Fruit and fish farms and sugar cane farm owned by sugar Refinery Company have high frequent tourist visits who incidentally become produce buyers. These are much less frequent than in Figure 3. Seven respondents did not indicate the frequency of tourist visits to their premises although they confirmed that they sometimes receive visitors. This may imply that they do not keep records of visitors or that the frequency of visits is insignificant.

Entrance Fee

Entrance fees are payments done by visitors at the entrance on entering the farm. These contribute to the farm's income and may be used to maintain the farm's day by day operation

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(Chen et al, 2021). Figure. 3 shows the number of agribusinesses that charge entrance fees to tourists to access their farms, services, or products.

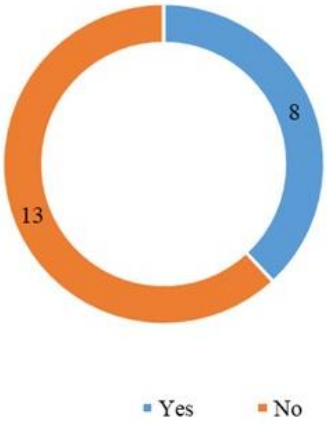

Figure 6. Response on Charging of Entrance Fee to Farm

Eight respondents (38%) said they charge entrance fee at their farms, while 13 respondents (62%) said they do not charge entrance fee. This has contributed to farms receiving little agritourism. One farmer commented that he feels it is inhuman to charge entrance fees, yet it is one way through which farmers should earn income.

Crops Grown at the Farms

Crops grown at farms contribute immensely to the farmers' income through sales as agricultural produce and as agritourism attractions that attract visitors to farms. The range of crops grown at a farm broadens its agritourism product base. A broad agritourism product base may possibly affect the tourist tendency to revisit the destination (Leo et al, 2021). From Figure 7, it is evident that most tourist businesses were fruit growers, followed by annual crop growers.

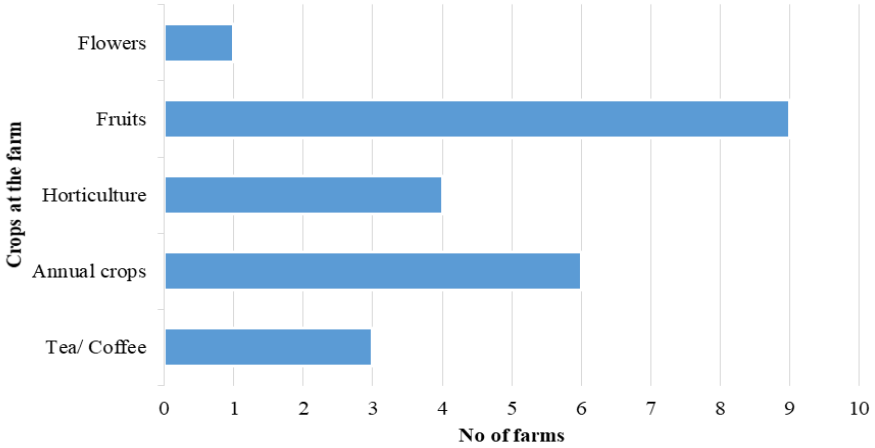

Figure 7. Number of Farms Growing Crops

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Fruit trees observed were apples, peaches, bananas, oranges, pine apples, blueberry, cherry peppers, avocado, and Macadamia. Annual cycle crops include tobacco, maize, wheat, sugarcane, potatoes, small grains, and groundnuts. A moderate number of farms conduct horticulture, while plantation (tea/coffee) and flower growers are fewer of the respondents. These results indicate that the sampled farms are rich in agricultural attractions, which is a prerequisite for authentic agritourism.

Animals Reared at the Farms

In addition, animals reared at the farm also contribute to farm income in a similar manner as crops. The animals can be sold for income or they can be utilized as agricultural attractions. Most visited agritourism farms (67%) had livestock, including cattle, goats, and sheep as shown in Figure 8.

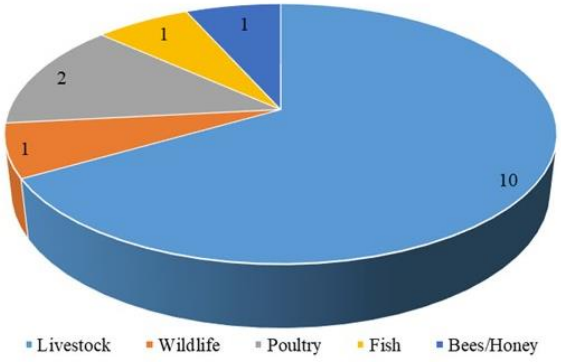

Figure 8. Number of Farms which Rear Animals

Poultry that were chickens and guinea fowls were from two farms (N=2;13%), while wildlife, fishery, and apiculture bees/honey were from individual farms (N=1;7%) each.

Items that are Sold to Visitors Directly

Farm direct sales are a major contributor to farmers' income and have been referred to as a standalone category of agritourism by Chase et al. (2018). Farm direct sales refer to agriculture related products sold directly to customers at the farm. Most tourists bought fruits and horticultural produce from ten farms, as illustrated in Figure 9.

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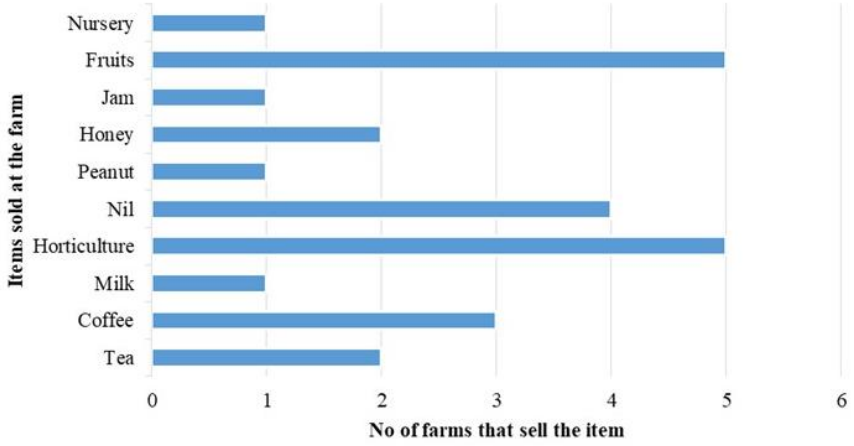

Figure 9. Items Sold Directly to Tourists

Four farms (N= 4) either had nothing to sell to tourists or did not respond to the inquiry. Three farms (N=3) offered coffee, while two farms (N=2) offered tea and honey. Four farms (N=4) sell nursery trees, jam, milk, and peanuts.

Items that are Sold to Visitors Directly

From the literature, agrotourism provides three unique offers to visitors. It presents to visitors something to buy at the farm, something to do while at the farm (activities) and something to see or the attraction (Eshun & Mensah, 2020). These unique offers contribute to income generation at farms. Most agritourism farms in Table 1 offer educational tours which they charge between US$3 to $10 per tour, usually per tourist.

Table 1. Activities Offered to Visitors and Their Charges

Activity offered at the farm	Farm Tour	Fruit picking	Coffee testing	Education tour	Accommodation	Nil	Nature walks	Picnicking	Mountain climbing	Fishing	Outdoor Recreation	Goat Keeping Lessons
No. of farms with that activity	3	1	1	13	4	4	1	1	1	1	4	1
Price range (in US$) charged for the activity	Free 3-5(x2) 5-10			3-5 5-10 10/hr	40 - 580		3-10	3-5	3-5	12/kg		Free

Approximately four farms offer farm tours, accommodations, and outdoor recreation facilities. However, four farmers did not have or provide the activities that they offered. There are individual farms that offer fruit picking, coffee tasting, natural walking, picnicking, mountain

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climbing, fishing, and goat-keeping lessons. These results indicate that some farmers do not charge anything for their activities. One farmer in Manicaland commented that he offers free goat-keeping lessons because he is not sure of how much to charge. Another commercial farmer who grows fruits also revealed that they charge entrance fees and visitors are allowed to pick up fruits for free.

Other Income Generating Projects that Compliment Agriculture

Identifying complimentary products that can be offered on the farm that are attractive to the tourist market will be essential to encourage synergy between the farm and the tourism enterprise. Where synergy can be found, the agritourism business may be more sustainable (Kumbah, 2021). Figure 10 below indicates that three farms from the respondents generate income from accommodation facilities, while the other three farms have farm shops.

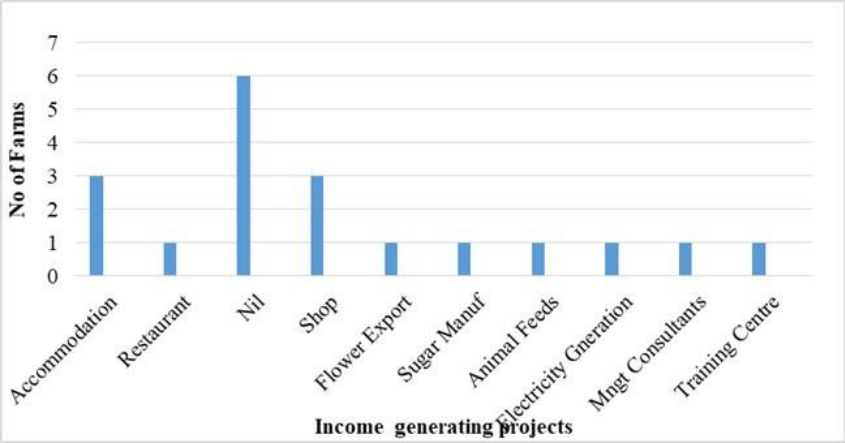

Figure 10. Other Projects Being Implemented to Compliment Agriculture

Other individual farms interviewed export flowers, manufactured either sugar or animal feeds, generated electricity, had training centers, or offered management consultancy to supplement other agricultural activities.

Value Addition Activities

Few farms (N =9; 43%) are in the value addition of products, as shown in Figure 11.

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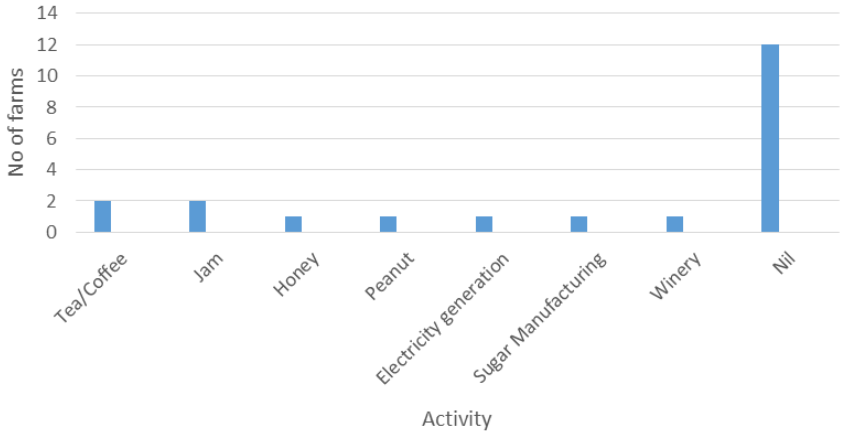

Figure 11. Value Addition Projects

Only one interviewed farmers produce honey, peanuts, wine, generate electricity, and manufacture sugar from sugarcane. Electricity is generated to complement the farm power and is added to the national grid. Each farm produces tea, coffee, or jam. The majority of respondents (N=12 or 57%) had no value addition activities at their farms or did not disclose such activities.

Income Being Generated from Agritourism Activities at Farms

Table 2 shows the number of farms that generate the indicated ranges of monthly gross income from all their farms' aggregated activities.

Table 2. Income from Farming, Tourism Activities and Value Added Products

Monthly Income range (US$)	0	1-500	501-1000	1001-2000	2001-5000	5001-20000	20001+
No. of farms	4	1	1	4	1	0	2

Notably, five farms are in the US$1000 to US$2000 income bracket. Farmers provided these estimates. They revealed that they did not have records specifically of income from agritourism activities. There are two farms that generate over US$20,000 per month. These are estates with accommodations. They highlighted that a larger portion of this income comes from their accommodation facilities. One farm was in the 1 to US$500 category, while another one was in the US$2001- US$5000 band. Four farms did not give their earnings, indicating that they did not have records of income specifically from agritourism.

Proportion of Agritourism Income as to Total Farm Income

The results in Table 3 indicate that there is no meaningful relationship between the total income earned by a farm and the corresponding income generated from tourism activities.

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Table 3. Proportion of Agritourism Income to Whole Farm Income

Tourism income proportion from the whole farm income	Not much	10%	Not Sure	Nil
No. of farms	3	1	5	7

Three farms indicated that they do not earn much income from agritourism compared to agriculture; one farm said it gets about 10% as tourism venture income from its gross. Five farms were not sure of their relative income proportion, while seven farms did not give statistics on tourism revenues as to the whole farm income proportion.

Number of Employees at the Farm and Those Specific to Tourism

Table 4 shows the aggregated responses to the number of employees at the farms and the relative number of employees specific to tourism from the same farms.

Table 4. Number of Employees at the Farm and Those Specific for Tourism

Range No. of Employees	1-5	6-10	11-20	21-50	51-100	101-200	201-400	401+
No. of farms	2	0	4	1	4	5	1	2
Total employees at respective farms	3, 5	0	14, 14, 15	15	25, 60, 60, 70	83, 118, 130, 157, 157, 180	201+	400, 420
No. of Employee specifically serving tourists respective	3, 3	0	0, 3, 3	6	23, 0, 60, 0	15, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0	50	0, 11

For instance, three farms employed 11 to 20 employees. Ironically, each has 15 workers, of which three, five, and six are specifically undertaking tourism duties. Again, one farm has a total of 25 workers, 23 of whom are all engaged in tourism. However, one farmer in Mashonaland West commented that during the peak farming season, some of the workers at the farm guesthouses go and work on the farm, and vice versa. She indicated that having agritourism at the farm helped them deal with issues of seasonality that characterize both the agriculture and tourism sectors.

Employees' Job Roles

The employees at the farms have roles as farm managers, research technicians, research officers, researchers, agricultural assistants, supervisors, and general hands. All participants were from a coffee training center. One farm had goat keepers, while the others

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had a horticulturist and a fisherman. Tourist-related businesses include tour guides, chefs, cooks, housekeepers, front-office staff, and waiters. Their distributions are listed in Table 5.

Table 5. Employees' Job Roles

Positions	Tour Guides	House Keepers	Front Office (incl. Receptionist)	Chefs	Managers (incl. Guest House Manager)	Cooks	Waiters	nil
No. of farms	4	5	3	2	2	1	2	10

Workers at the majority of farms N=13 (62%) are permanently employed. One farm employs casual, whereas the other two farms have both permanent and casuals. The remaining five farms (24%) did not indicate their employees' employment status. The only recorded casual workers were school leavers and housekeepers from the two farms.

Notable qualifications for farm workers are occupationally related, as in the case of researchers, horticulturists, and farm managers. The qualifications include certificates, diplomas, and degrees. Tourism employees have predominantly tour guiding courses from four farms, cooking, waiting, housekeeping, and front office qualifications from one farm, while two farms indicated staff with academic qualifications only. A tourist resort business (tea estate) has employees with hospitality and tourism certificates, diplomas and degrees.

Salary Scales for Agritourism Employees

Table 6 relates to salary ranges paid to employees of the agritourism farms that were sampled.

Table 6. Employees Salary Scales

Salary being offered (US$)	100	120	150	200	200	300	300-500	Not given
No. of farms offering that salary	7	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Proportion	33%			29%				38%

A large proportion of employees (33%) from the interviewed respondents earn up to US$100 each or have no salaries indicated (38%), the remaining 29% of the employees earn between US$120 and US$500. Among these 29% are the research team and estate employees who constitute part of the biggest earners.

Registration with National Social Security Authority (NSSA)

Thirteen (13) farms indicated that they were registered with the NSSA whilst eight (8) were not. This supports the fact that most employees are permanently employed by large farming and formal organizations.

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Contribution of Agritourism to the National Economy

Registration with Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA)

Only three (3) respondents confirmed that they were registered with the ZTA whilst eighteen (18) were not. The registered subscriptions amounted to US$345 for the ZTA. The three registered with the ZTA indicated that they were registered as accommodation facilities and not as agritourism ventures. This implies that none of the sampled farms were registered with ZTA as agritourism ventures.

Payment of Income or Corporate Tax to Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA)

Nearly half of the twenty-one (21) respondents affirmed that they were paying income/corporate taxes to the government through ZIMRA, whereas eleven (11) were not. Three of those remittances indicated that they were paying US$24, US$50, and US$3500, respectively. The other seven did not state the payable amount.

Strategies to Promote Agritourism

Strategies to Attract More Tourists to Farms

From Figure 12, four farmers consider building chalets and other accommodation types ideal to attract more tourists.

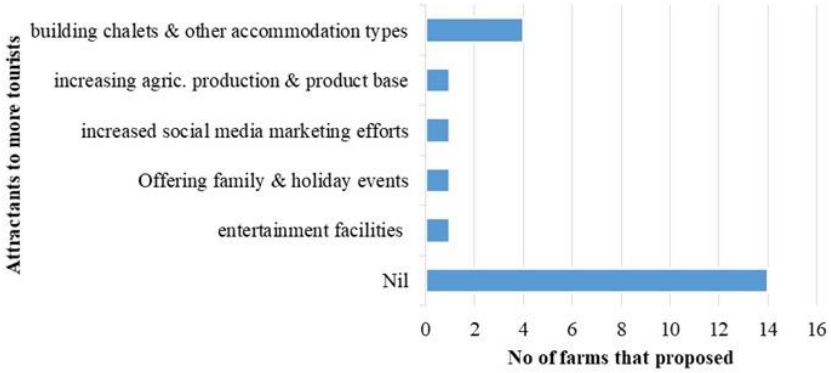

Figure 12. Attractants to More Tourists

One farm each proposed increased marketing efforts through social media, offering family and holiday events, and creating entertainment facilities as keys to increasing tourists. Increasing agricultural production and product base, for example, providing original produce such as pure honey, has been noted by one farmer. Fourteen (14) farms however, did not offer proposals on how they wish to increase their tourist volumes.

Vision of Agritourism Farmers in the Next Five Years

In Figure 13, two farmers proposed to have built chalets in five years, while three farmers generally intended to offer on farms or luxury accommodation.

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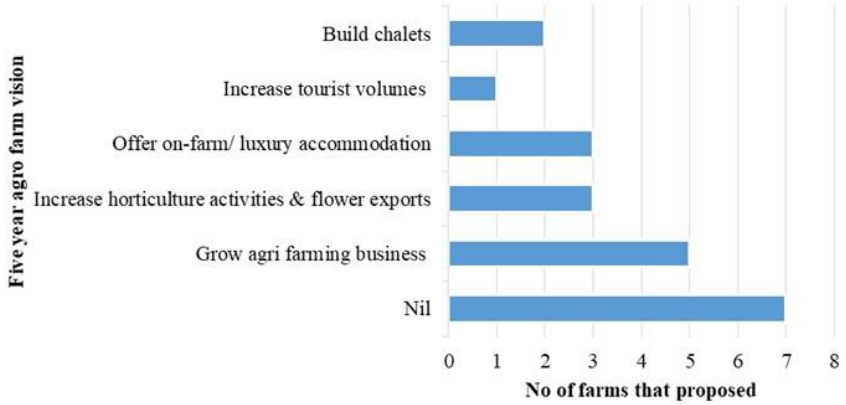

Figure 13. Agritourism Businesses' Five-Year Plan Visions

One farmer cited increasing tourist numbers at his farm as a five-year endeavour. Three farms proposed to increase horticulture activities and flower export, to produce and market over 15 tons of first grade blueberries per hectare and to supply the whole country with tree nurseries. Five farms proposed to grow their agro-farming business units through initiatives. These services offer unique and affordable services to individuals, starting processing of tinned fruits and technology usage for farmers, growing sugar cane through contracting smallholder farmers, and research to improve productivity and be a research hub for coffee and macadamia in Zimbabwe. Seven farms did not share their five year plans.

Recommended Government Interventions to Enhance the Agritourism Industry

As illustrated in Figure 14, three farms each recommended that the government offer training for farmers on agritourism and provide grants and/or loans to agritourism businesses.

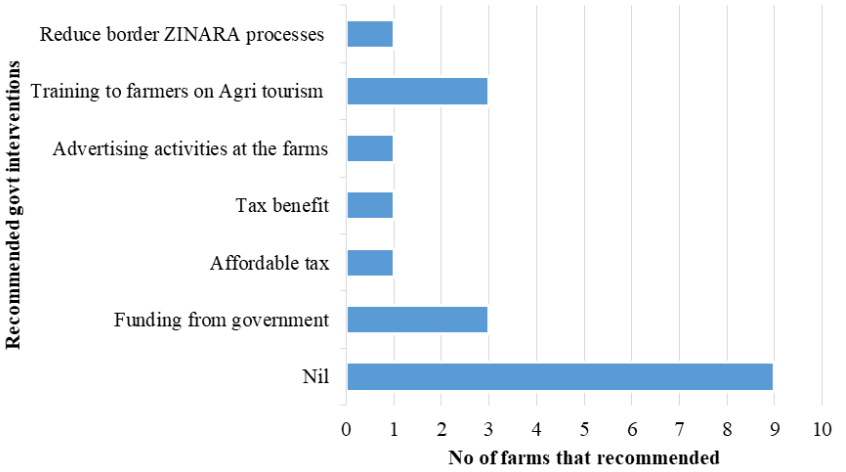

Figure 14. Recommended Government's Enhancements to Improve Agritourism

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Individual farms each contributed to the government levying affordable tax, giving tax benefits, reducing ZIMRA's often cumbersome border procedures, and helping advertise the farm's agritourism ventures. Nine farms did not provide suggestions for government intervention.

Discussion of Study Findings

Farmers must adopt agritourism as a smart, viable, and sustainable adaptation opportunity for climate change to alleviate the adverse impacts of climate change in both the agricultural and tourism sectors. The distribution of the sampled farms indicates that the majority (71%) of the farms are from Manicaland, mainly because the province is in agro-ecological regions 1 and 2a, which are characterized by high rainfall and fertile soils. This increases the agritourism potential of the farms in this region. Agritourism can be practiced in any ecological region as postulated by scholars for example, Valdivia and Barbieri, (2014); Mahaliyanaarachchi et al., (2019). In low rainfall regions, such as Masvingo, farmers can take advantage of agritourism activities to increase their farm business. The adoption of agritourism as a climate change adaptation has great potential to increase the economic contribution of agritourism throughout the country's region rather than its concentration in the eastern highlands. In Zimbabwe, agritourism is mainly conducted by commercial farmers. None of the communal farmers were interviewed in the study. However, in China, agritourism is practiced at a rural level and is the starting point of development, as noted by Awan and Saeed (2016). Failure by communal farmers in Zimbabwe to adopt agritourism also contributes to the slow development of rural areas (Schilling et al., 2012).

Tourists visiting farms in the country are very few and spend less time on farms. This has resulted in very little income from agritourism compared to income from agricultural activities. In developing countries, agritourism contributes to approximately 30% of tourism GDP, as noted by Magnini et al. (2017) in Virginia and Rogerson and Rogerson (2014) in South Africa. Farms in resort areas, fruit farms, fish farms, and sugarcane farms have the highest frequency of tourists who incidentally become buyers of produce. The record keeping of tourists who visited farms and how much they spend on agritourism is poor and almost non-existent since farmers do not consider them as their key income generating activities. This poses some challenges to the collating of the economic contribution of agritourism to farm incomes and to the country at large. Information on the contribution of agritourism was based on estimations provided by farmers.

Three farms indicated that they do not earn much income from agritourism; only one farm said that it receives about 10% as tourism venture income from its gross income. Five farms were not sure of their relative income proportion, while seven farms did not give statistics

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on tourism's contribution towards the whole farm income proportion. The results typically reflect on the agritourism status in a developing country as espoused by Ammirato, et al., (2020). The low economic contribution of agritourism in Zimbabwe can be attributed to the low farm entrance fees charged by farmers, with 38% of farmers charging nothing at all. Failure to tag value for farm entry fees gives away the value of agritourism activities at the farm (Chang et al.,2019). These results are similar to those obtained by Schilling et al. (2012) in New Jersey, where some farmers indicated that they did not charge anything for their agritourism activities. Crops on farms are grown without the intention of attracting tourists, although having crops is a prerequisite for authentic agritourism, as postulated by Streifeneder, (2016). Farmers lack knowledge of how to utilize these agricultural attractions for tourism purposes (Baipai et al., 2022). It is evident that most tourist businesses were fruit and flower growers, followed by annual crop growers. Farmers need to grow diverse crops with the intent of attracting tourists to be successful in agritourism activities.

Chase (2020) noted wine tasting as one of tourists' pullers to farms; thus, farmers need to grow crops like grapes and embark on value addition activities like wine making to attract more tourists and increase their incomes. However, the study noted that only a minority of the interviewed farmers have embraced value addition in form of producing honey, peanuts, wine, electricity, and manufactured sugar. The majority of farmers have no value addition activities on their farms. Ultimately, the lack of value addition at farms frequently reflects why tourists do not visit farms. In addition, rearing of commonly found livestock on visited agritourism farms can contribute to the low economic impact of agritourism. 67% of the farms had livestock including cattle, goats, and sheep. Arru et al. (2021) observed that animals are key to the development of agritourism and encourage the rearing of a variety of animals in an attractive manner.

The surveyed farms had limited items for direct sales to visitors. Most tourists bought fruit and horticultural products from 10 farms. Four farms had nothing to sell to tourists. Chase (2021) advised that agritourism supports native food systems and improves direct consumer sales. Farms need to offer sales to attract visitors. Agritourism farms offer visitors various activities, ranging from educational tours to recreational activities. The farm activities revealed are similar, but not all, to those analyzed by Arru et al. (2021); however, they are not well popularized and priced, as indicated by the low uptake of farm activities from the survey. Notably, the farms also embark on manufacturing, electricity generation, management consultants, and the training of farmers, in addition to tourism activities complimenting agriculture to generate more income. This is in line with Chase's (2020) assertion that agritourism is a successful element of wider and varied farm activities.

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The number of employees at a farm specific to tourism reflects the low economic impact of agritourism. With the exception of only one farm that had more than 90% of its employees, it was also directly involved with visitors. Chang et al. (2019) observed that employment in agritourism improved livelihoods and had a positive economic impact. It takes employee training to be effective in delivering their roles and qualifications signal level of competency with work. Employees working in agritourism earn better salaries, as they are reflective above the minimum wages stipulated by the National Employement Council for Agriculture Sector (NECAIZ, 2022), with all workers earning above USD $100. The majority of farms are registered with NSSA. Very few are registered with ZTA as accommodation facilities, and not as agritourism facilities. Failure by agritourism farms to be registered with statutory bodies might mean a low economic contribution of agritourism at the national strategic level. This means ZTA continues not to receive an appropriate levy to develop the concept of agritourism at the policy level. These observations validate earlier observations that Agritourism is not officially recognized in national tourism reports as its national GDP is not accounted (Baipai et al., 2022).

The study findings may be applicable to other context as they can inform similar initiative in agritourism in various geographical and cultural settings. Although this study was grounded in Zimbabwean context, its qualitative nature offers implications in broader context. Themes that maybe identified through thematic analysis likely resonate well with other regions in Africa and beyond that have a foundation in agriculture and are exploring agritourism as a means of economic diversification This study adopted purposive sampling and at the same time focused on diverse farming activities. Through that, the study ensured a deep dataset which further reflects agritourism initiatives which are varied. Moreover, the study findings may offer insights to policymakers, agricultural stakeholders and academic community in other context who seek to comprehend and implement agritourism initiatives. The credibility of the findings which was enhanced by the rigour of the study's methodology may allow the findings to be applied in different agritourism settings outside Zimbabwe.

4. CONCLUSION

The contribution of agritourism to the economy of Zimbabwe is still very low. The study revealed that agritourism activities increased with small margin farm income, sales, profits, employment, tax remittances, value addition, and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The study also concluded that the contribution of agritourism varies depending on the size of farms, with large commercial and estates contributing more than commercial and A1 farms. Revenue generated through farm entry fees and agritourism activities is too low to effectively affect farm profits. Moreover, the study revealed that some farmers do not charge any entrance fees, and

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some do not charge anything for their agritourism activities. This contributes to the low income obtained from agritourism. Failure to charge fees for agritourism activities may mean that some farmers have non-monetary motivations for venturing into agritourism, which may need to be investigated. Only few farms are remitting taxes to statutory bodies, such as NSSA and ZTA, which, to some extent, contribute to national revenue. However, the study shows that there are no recognized structures to promote agritourism and account for its impact in any way, either economically, socially, or otherwise. ZTA, which is the national tourism body, does not consider agritourism in its reports, which shows that agritourism is not given enough recognition. Moreover, none of the sampled farms are registered with ZTA as agritourism ventures, but are rather registered as accommodation facilities. The country has a high potential for agritourism development, which can impact the economy immensely if appropriate strategies are implemented.

The study recommends various adoptable strategies to increase tourist flow to farms, including increased marketing efforts. Agritourism should be advertised like any other form of tourism, in the same way wildlife and other natural and man-made attractions are popularized on various advertising platforms such as the media, ZTA website and face book page. Agritourism farms can increase tourism flow by offering family holiday events and creating more entertainment activities from the already existing farm resources. For example, farms with dams can develop water-based activities such as swimming, canoeing, speed boats and various water sporting activities. Increasing agricultural production can help to increase the agritourism product base in terms of agricultural attractions and activities. For the future sustainable development of agritourism, horticulture must be embraced, offering unique and affordable services. Starting value addition ventures at farms as fruit and vegetable processing, grain milling, oil extraction and wineries may also improve tourist flows and increase the economic benefits of agritourism. Technology adoption such as automated irrigation systems to optimize water usage and reduce waste, farm management software to manage finances and optimize operations as well as drones and satellite imaging for crop health monitoring may also go a long way in improving productivity at farms and increase agritourism attractions and activities. Providing farm accommodation for visitors will enable prolonged length of stay which will result in increased farm income. Notable barriers to implement these strategies include lack of knowledge and capital required in funding these developments.

At the national policy level, ZTA needs to recognize the agritourism sector and plan for its development accordingly. The government should levy affordable tax, provide tax benefits, and reduce statutory obligations to farmers embarking on agritourism to encourage its growth.

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Agritourism is supposed to be advertised like any other form of tourism, in the same way wildlife and other natural and man-made attractions are popularized.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The study was purely qualitative, and only 21 farms were surveyed, which brings in some limitations to the study as it seeks to reflect the economic impact of agritourism at the national level. For future studies, it is recommended to conduct a similar study following a quantitative methodology on the economic impact of agritourism in Zimbabwe. Repeating the same study is noble at a later stage, as it reflects the level of development of agritourism in Zimbabwe.

Despite this limitation, this study contributes to the body of knowledge. This study is the first attempt to the best understanding of the researchers; to quantify the economic contribution of agritourism to Zimbabwe. Previous studies have confirmed that agritourism has economic benefits to local communities and the nation at large, but no effort has been made to enumerate the significance of this contribution.

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