

Sustainable Tourism Development: A Study On Agricultural Tourism In Can Tho, Vietnam

¹To Ngoc Thinh, ²Nguyen Duc Duong,

¹Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism, Thuongmai University, Cau Giay District, Hanoi , Vietnam. Email: tongochthinh@tmu.edu.vn

²East Asia University of Technology, Vietnam. Email: duongnguyenvkt@gmail.com

Abstract: In recent years, due to the growth of the tourism industry, sustainable tourism development in Vietnam has become increasingly important. Understanding sustainable tourism development is crucial for improving long-term strategic planning for the tourism sector in our country. Therefore, sustainable development has also become a subject of interest and research for scientists. Agricultural tourism is a type of tourism that relies on agricultural systems to explore the beauty of labor, community cultural values, expand the agricultural product market, create employment opportunities, and increase income for the local population, promoting the development of new rural areas. Can Tho City, located in the heart of the Mekong Delta, is known as the "rice bowl," "fruit basket," and "shrimp and fish farm" of Vietnam, making it well-suited for the development of agricultural tourism.

Keywords: tourism development, sustainable tourism, evaluation criteria, influencing factors

1. Introduction:

In the current development trend, tourism is increasingly important in the economic balance of countries around the world, including Vietnam. However, the sustainable and responsible use of tourism resources for long-term benefits is a critical consideration. Sustainable tourism development relies on two main pillars: natural resources and human resources. If either of these pillars is compromised, tourism may face serious degradation. Therefore, many countries worldwide have chosen "Sustainable Tourism Development" as an effective solution. Sustainable development in a country must be consistent across all three dimensions: economic, socio-cultural, and environmental.

Sustainable development is also a top priority for Vietnam's development. In our country, the concept of sustainable development was introduced in the 1980s and affirmed during the 1991-2000 socio-economic development period, as well as through the resolutions of the National Party Congresses (X, XI, XII), becoming a crucial orientation for various sectors, including tourism. Understanding the concept of sustainable tourism, evaluation criteria, and factors influencing sustainable tourism development is essential for the future of the tourism industry. This becomes even more significant as Vietnam possesses great tourism potential with its natural landscapes and attractive destinations, yet faces common challenges, especially environmental protection issues. Agricultural tourism (Agritourism) is a type of tourism associated with agricultural activities, leveraging the unique features of agricultural production to create tourism products, from the beauty of labor, landscape, and indigenous culture to the processing and consumption of agricultural products. Therefore, agricultural tourism not only benefits tourism but also has a positive impact on agriculture, farmers, and rural areas. It expands the agricultural product market, creates livelihoods, increases income for local residents, and contributes to the socio-economic development of the region, positively transforming rural areas. Today, urbanization and industrialization have driven tourists to seek pristine places with simple beauty, fresh air, and traditional cultural values in rural, mountainous, and island regions, where urban civilization has yet to leave its mark. Therefore, agricultural tourism is becoming a global trend and a choice for tourists in Vietnam.

The Mekong Delta has enormous potential for the development of agricultural tourism. It is a vast and fertile alluvial plain, accounting for 12% of the country's area and 19% of its population, with a dense network of rivers, canals, and ditches. It has advantages in agricultural development, food processing industry, tourism, and renewable energy. It is the largest agricultural production center in Vietnam, contributing 50% of rice production, 65% of aquaculture production, and 70% of fruit production in the country. It also exports 95% of rice and 60% of seafood. It enjoys a convenient location for trade with ASEAN countries and the Greater Mekong Subregion (Government, 2017).

2. Research Content

2.1 Research Methodology

The theoretical framework of sustainable tourism development is an open issue, subject to the perspectives of each country, organization, and researcher. Therefore, in conducting this paper, the author primarily employs methods such as theoretical research, synthesis analysis, and theoretical systematization. Based on the collection and inheritance of relevant scientific documents, including books, journals, textbooks, etc., the author organizes and analyzes each issue to create a comprehensive and in-depth theoretical system regarding the research subject.

2.2 Research Results and Discussion

2.2.1 Concept of Sustainable Tourism Development

The theory of sustainable development emerged in the mid-1980s and was formally introduced at the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) conference in 1987. According to WCED, "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

The Environmental Protection Law (2014) in Chapter I, Article 3, Section 4, defines sustainable development as follows: "Sustainable development is development that meets the current needs without harming the ability to meet those needs of future generations, based on a close and harmonious combination of economic growth, social progress, and environmental protection." This definition is comprehensive, highlighting the most important requirements and goals of sustainable development, tailored to the conditions and circumstances of Vietnam.

The concept of sustainable tourism development is inseparable from the concept of sustainable development itself. Tourism is an integrated economic sector with a clear resource orientation, encompassing both natural and human resources. Therefore, the development of tourism requires a shared commitment to sustainable development in society, and vice versa.

Since the early 1990s, scientists worldwide have increasingly focused on the negative environmental impact of tourism development driven solely by economic interests. As a result, sustainable tourism development aims to mitigate the negative effects of tourism activities, ensuring long-term development. Types of tourism that prioritize environmental concerns have emerged, such as ecotourism, adventure tourism, and others, contributing to a responsible and sustainable image of tourism.

According to the definition of the World Tourism Organization at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (1992), "Sustainable tourism is tourism that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems."

The World Conservation Union (1996) defines sustainable tourism as "travel and visitation that does not harm the environment, supports the well-being of local people, and involves interpretation and education."

In Vietnam, the concept of sustainable tourism development was introduced in the Vietnam Tourism Law (2014): "Sustainable tourism development is tourism development that simultaneously meets economic, social, and environmental requirements, ensuring the harmonious interests of all stakeholders in tourism activities, without compromising the ability to meet future tourism needs."

The theoretical framework of sustainable development has also been formulated by Vietnamese scientists based on international research results and adapted to the specific conditions of Vietnam. While there may still be some lack of consensus regarding the definition of sustainable tourism development, most experts in the field of tourism and related areas in Vietnam agree that sustainable tourism development involves responsible exploitation of natural and human values to satisfy the diverse needs of tourists. It also considers the long-term economic benefits while contributing to the preservation of resources, maintaining cultural integrity, supporting environmental protection efforts, and enhancing the living standards of local communities.

2.2.2 Criteria for Evaluating Sustainable Tourism Development

Numerous research works have proposed sets of sustainability indicators for tourism development, and one notable framework is the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria. This framework was established by the GSTC on December 21, 2016. Here, the author provides a brief summary:

SET OF OVERALL EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT (GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COUNCIL-GSTC): A. Demonstrate effective sustainable management; B. Maximize socio-economic benefits for local communities and minimize harmful impacts; C. Maximum benefits to cultural heritage and minimum harmful impacts; D. Maximum benefit to the environment and minimum harmful impact

A. Demonstrating Sustainable and Effective Management, including: Implementing a sustainable and long-term management system appropriate to the scale and capacity, addressing environmental, socio-economic, cultural, quality, health, and safety issues; Complying with national and international laws and regulations; Providing regular training for employees on environmental, socio-economic, cultural, health, and safety management; Evaluating customer satisfaction to make appropriate adjustments; Advertising tourism products truthfully, committing to sustainability, and not making false promises; Designing, constructing, renovating, and operating infrastructure in compliance with legal regulations, planning, and respecting local heritage, using local materials; Legally owning land and property according to local regulations; Providing information and interpretation about nature, heritage, culture, and guiding appropriate behavior for tourists at tourism destinations.

B. Maximizing Socioeconomic Benefits for the Local Community and Minimizing Harmful Impacts, including: Actively supporting social infrastructure development initiatives and community development support; Prioritizing the employment and training of local community members and using locally produced goods and services when suitable; Creating conditions for the development and sale of sustainable products based on the region's natural and cultural characteristics by local small-scale producers; Adhering to appropriate conduct rules for indigenous community activities; Combating any form of commercial or sexual exploitation, especially involving children, women, and minorities; Fair treatment in recruiting female and minority labor, avoiding the use of child labor; Complying with national and international labor rights regulations; Ensuring that tourism activities do not endanger essential resources or community sanitation systems; Ensuring that tourism activities do not adversely affect the livelihoods of local residents.

C. Maximizing Benefits for Cultural Heritage and Minimizing Harmful Impacts, including: Complying with guidelines and behavior rules when visiting sensitive cultural or historical sites; Prohibiting the sale, trading, or display of historical or fake antiques unless permitted; Contributing to the preservation of heritage, valuable historical, cultural, archaeological, and spiritual sites, allowing local residents access; Respecting the intellectual property rights of the local community when using elements of local art, architecture, or cultural heritage in business, design, decoration, or cuisine.

D. Maximizing Environmental Benefits and Minimizing Harmful Impacts, including: Preserving natural resources; Reducing environmental pollution; Conserving biodiversity, ecosystems, and natural landscapes.

However, in Vietnam, to better align with the practical conditions of localities, we need a more specific set of criteria. The author proposes the criteria of the research group Nguyen Thu Hien, Nguyen Thi Tuyet Nga (2020) as follows:

Criteria for assessing sustainable economic growth:

Rate of revenue growth and added value growth in tourism: The Resolution of the 12th National Party Congress set the target for the average economic growth rate of Vietnam over 5 years at 6.5 - 7% per year. This target remains unchanged in the economic development goals for 2021 - 2025 as outlined in the Resolution of the 13th National Party Congress. This limit needs to be achieved stably and continuously for at least 5 years.

Contribution of added value in the tourism sector to the local GRDP must continually increase. Tourism products that align with local advantages, diversity, and sustainability: Tourism products must align with the local tourism product development strategy. This strategy is usually built on careful consideration, scientific calculations of related factors, and aims to best exploit the potential characteristics and advantages of tourism resources. Capital amount and structure of investment in tourism: Capital sources must be mobilized and structured in accordance with the phased development plan for tourism in the locality. Quantity and quality of tourism labor force: Indices related to the development of tourism human

resources, including quantity and quality, must be appropriately calculated and balanced with other sustainable development goals.

Application of environmentally friendly technology and information technology: The use of technology should increase continuously. In the period 2020 - 2025, on average, more than 60% of tourism businesses should use the Internet for promotional activities and apply environmentally friendly technology in investment and tourism business activities. This rate should increase by 10% in each subsequent 5-year period. Growth in the number of tourists: Not less than 7% per year, stable for at least 5 years. Average spending of tourists: Gradual and continuous increase for at least 5 years. Satisfaction level of tourists: Not less than 80%, stable.

Criteria for assessing sustainable economic growth promoting progress, social equality, and linking with the preservation and promotion of local cultural values:

Percentage of local residents consulted on the planning and investment policies of tourism projects before implementation: 100% of households in the project area. Level of job creation for the local community from tourism: Higher than the normal job creation rate before tourism projects in the area, not less than 80% of the local community acknowledges this. Contribution to poverty reduction, income enhancement, and community benefit from tourism: Gradual increase, not less than 80% of the local community acknowledges this. Contribution of tourism to the humane protection of tourism resources: Proactive and positive, not less than 80% of the local community acknowledges this. Level of satisfaction of the local community with tourism activities: Not less than 80% of the local community acknowledges this, and it should be stable.

Criteria for assessing sustainable economic growth related to the protection of natural tourism resources and the ecological environment:

Percentage of planned tourism resource areas and points: 100%. Percentage of tourism resource areas and points that are invested in upgrading and protecting to meet resource conservation and environmental protection requirements: Gradual increase, not less than 5% per year, reaching over 60% in the period 2021 - 2025, and increasing by not less than 10% in each subsequent 5-year period. Quality of the environment (water, air, waste, noise, light, etc.) at tourism areas and points: Must not exceed the thresholds set by relevant authorities for each period. Awareness of tourists regarding tourism resources and the environment: Compliance with rules and regulations on resource and environmental protection at tourist destinations; the rate of violations leading to serious consequences should be less than 1% of the total number of tourists. Awareness of responsibility among the local community for tourism resources and the environment: Compliance with regulations and commitments regarding resource and environmental protection. The rate of violations should be less than 1% of the total number of community members, and there should be no violations leading to serious consequences. Responsibility of tourism businesses regarding tourism resources and the environment: Compliance with rules and regulations on resource and environmental protection at tourist destinations; the rate of violations should be less than 1% of the total number of businesses, and there should be no violations leading to serious consequences.

2.2.3 Factors Influencing Sustainable Tourism Development

Ensuring sustainable tourism development requires identifying the influencing factors, which is essential today. Therefore, this article outlines some factors influencing sustainable development in the context of tourism based on the research perspective of authors Mai Anh Vu and Nguyen Xuan Hieu (2020).

Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure encompasses road systems, railway networks, airports, ports, telecommunications systems, water supply and drainage systems, electricity grids, and more. Developing infrastructure acts as a lever to promote overall economic and social activities and the tourism sector in particular. In the tourism industry, infrastructure is a prerequisite to ensure easy access for tourists to various tourist destinations and meet their communication and other needs during their travels. Among infrastructure elements, the transportation system is the most critical factor for tourism development as it directly relates to ensuring safety, convenience for tourists, providing transportation services at increasingly lower costs, increasing transportation speed, saving travel time, and reaching even remote areas. Good infrastructure conditions create favorable conditions for building and implementing sustainable tourism development. Furthermore, infrastructure also

plays a role in promoting sustainable tourism development from various perspectives: a well-developed infrastructure system allows tourism development in remote areas, reducing the burden on traditional tourist destinations while addressing seasonality in tourism and redistributing income to local residents. These are crucial foundations for sustainable tourism development. Clearly, there is a close relationship between infrastructure and sustainable tourism development, and the infrastructure system is always a significant basis for the local sustainable tourism development efforts.

Development of Tourism Technical Material Base

The tourism technical material base refers to all technical material aspects involved in exploiting tourism resources to create and provide services/goods that satisfy tourists' needs during their journeys. According to this understanding, it includes technical material bases within the tourism industry itself and technical material bases from other sectors of the national economy participating in tourism potential exploitation, such as road systems, bridges, postal and telecommunications systems, electricity and water supply. This also confirms the close interrelationship between tourism and other sectors in an interdisciplinary relationship. The tourism technical material base created is an essential factor that influences the level of satisfaction of tourists due to its capacity and utility. There are three components that make up products and services satisfying tourists' needs: tourism resources, tourism technical material base, and labor in tourism. Therefore, the tourism technical material base is a crucial, indispensable factor. People, through their labor, use the technical material base to exploit the values of tourism resources to create services/goods supplied to tourists. Besides resource factors, the diversity, richness, modernity, and attractiveness of the technical material base also contribute to the diversity, richness, and attractiveness of tourism services. For a country or business to develop tourism successfully, it must have a good technical material base. Therefore, the level of development of the tourism technical material base is a condition and also an expression of the level of tourism development in a region or country.

Tourism Resources

Tourism resources, according to the Vietnam Tourism Law (2017), are defined as "natural landscapes, natural elements, and cultural values that form the basis for the creation of tourism products, tourist areas, and tourist destinations to meet tourism demand. Tourism resources include natural tourism resources and cultural tourism resources." Tourism resources are essential conditions, the primary input factor in tourism activities, and at the same time, they significantly impact sustainable tourism development. The quantity, variety, structure, diversity, location, and exploitation potential directly and significantly affect the determination of development directions, tourism product selection, and the definition of tourism development solutions. These factors also influence economic and social efficiency and the development capacity of tourism in the corresponding direction. Resource availability is a fundamental factor and a crucial resource to create tourism products. The scale and development potential depend on the quantity and quality and the combination of natural resources. The larger the scale and the higher the quality, the conditions for becoming an attractive destination and attracting tourists are more favorable, helping to expand and develop the tourism market. Tourism activities must be based on resource exploitation and utilization. From the above contents, we can identify that "Tourism Resources" are a factor in sustainable tourism development.

Human Resource Development

Tourism is an industry that demands a large labor force with various levels of expertise due to the unique nature of the industry, with a low degree of mechanization and a diverse clientele. In the tourism industry, most labor directly interacts with customers and participates in activities to achieve unit goals. The quality of services provided to customers depends not only on the skills and craftsmanship of workers but also on their work attitude. Therefore, tourism businesses that want to survive and thrive in increasingly fierce competition need to have a better understanding of the role of the labor force and must have a highly knowledgeable, skilled, and morally sound workforce. In reality, the labor force in the tourism sector has increased in recent years, corresponding to the development of the industry, but it has not yet ensured the sustainable development of tourism. Many departments are still lacking in quantity and quality, especially in terms of foreign language proficiency. In addition, the thinking and tourism skills of workers are limited, lacking professionalism. Therefore, if tourism wants to develop sustainably, the development of human resources is an essential factor.

Level of Organizational Management in the Tourism Industry

State management agencies perform the function of tourism industry planning to ensure that investments follow

a roadmap, ensuring effective investment, allocating resources reasonably for each stage, and choosing the right direction for tourism development projects. Attention should be paid to the conservation and maintenance of cultural works, the issuance of regulations and policies to encourage the investment participation of organizations, individuals, and businesses in tourism development activities. There should be priority policies for tourism investment projects with feasible solutions to minimize the impact of tourism on the environment. Establishing and maintaining urban infrastructure, transportation, information, and financial services are crucial conditions for accommodating tourists, providing modern and convenient services, saving time in travel, extending the stay at tourist destinations, and reaching remote areas. These are necessary support conditions for attracting investment in tourism development. Socialization in creating tourism products to provide high-quality products at competitive prices in the tourism market is also necessary. Focus on information and propaganda work.

State management agencies must balance all resources to guide the development of tourism to achieve sustainable goals. Therefore, the level of organizational management in the tourism industry is a significant factor influencing sustainable tourism development, and a particular policy can either inhibit or promote tourism development.

Quality of Tourism Services

The quality of tourism services is the appropriate level of service from tourism providers that meets tourists' requirements. It reflects tourists' perception of the quality of service provided by a specific company based on that company's performance compared to the general expectations of tourists for all other companies in the tourism service sector. In reality, the quality of tourism services is one of the essential factors that help promote sustainable tourism development. It is a key element that builds credibility and brand recognition not only for tourism service businesses but also for the tourism industry of countries and regions. Standardizing tourism services and improving service quality not only help businesses ensure service quality but also introduce tourists to high-quality destinations, service providers, and products, making them confident in shopping. This, in turn, contributes to longer stays, increases spending, and boosts foreign currency earnings from tourism. Beyond that, improving service quality also promotes the image of local, national tourism and directly enhances tourist satisfaction and competitiveness for tourism service businesses, thereby contributing to sustainable tourism development.

Involvement of the Community in Sustainable Tourism Development

The community's involvement in tourism activities makes tourism more sustainable. Community participation is essential and indispensable for sustainable tourism development, including: (1) Local residents; (2) Small and medium-sized tourism enterprises; (3) Artisans; (4) Organizations of artisans; (5) Households offering tourism services; (6) Service suppliers; (7) Professional tourism organizations; (8) Non-governmental organizations; (9) Researchers; and (10) Consumers (tourists). Community involvement contributes to a better understanding of the demand for the tourism market, local values and specificities, and actual tourism needs. This creates a harmonious combination between tourism exploitation and local life. At the same time, it helps limit the negative impact on the social environment by raising awareness and culture in the community and protects the environment, conserves and promotes the values of tourism resources. Community participation in sustainable tourism development helps to create jobs, reduce poverty, and improve the living conditions of local residents.

Public and Private Investment

One of the critical factors determining the sustainable development of the tourism industry in a region or country is the level of investment in the tourism industry. Investment in tourism is a social product, shaped by the business environment, market demand, the state, and businesses. The investment level in the tourism industry is influenced by various factors, but the most important factor is the business environment. Business environment includes policies on tourism and tourism management, and the overall investment environment of the country. High levels of investment in tourism contribute to the development of the tourism industry, bringing economic benefits. Specifically, it increases the number of tourists, the number of nights they stay, and increases tourism revenue, contributes to job creation, reduces poverty, and improves the living conditions of local residents. Therefore, investment in tourism is a necessary condition for the sustainable development of the tourism industry in a region or country.

Social and Cultural Factors

Social and cultural factors refer to the factors affecting tourism development due to social and cultural issues. Specifically, these include the habits, customs, and lifestyle of the people, the cultural level, education, the capacity of self-management of the community and the local people in general. Social and cultural factors significantly affect tourists' choices in travel, style of travel, the way of shopping, the type of product they use, and consumption. It is a powerful tool for the development of tourism. The cultural environment is also a factor that affects tourists' attitudes and behaviors when traveling, such as lifestyle, manners, and behaviors that may affect tourists' feelings and feelings about a tourist destination. Therefore, if a locality wants to develop tourism sustainably, attention should be paid to creating a cultural and social environment that is suitable and friendly to tourists. These are some of the factors influencing sustainable tourism development, based on the research perspective of authors Mai Anh Vu and Nguyen Xuan Hieu (2020). It's important to note that these factors can vary from one location to another and are subject to change over time as tourism evolves and adapts to different contexts and challenges.

3. The Concept and Role of Agricultural Tourism

The concept of agricultural tourism emerged in Europe in the 1980s and is currently growing worldwide. In general terms, agricultural tourism is a type of tourism that is based on agricultural production activities and related elements within the agricultural value chain. It encompasses everything in agricultural activities that can be utilized to create tourism products, from production materials, land, people, production processes, agricultural techniques, and agricultural products to natural elements related to agricultural ecosystems, such as weather, climate, land, water, and more. According to Christine Tew (2010), agricultural tourism is a term used to refer to activities that involve visiting farms or agricultural production processes, engaging in agricultural business for purposes of awareness, interest, education, or recreation, including agricultural resources, natural resources, and human resources. According to David Preece (2015), agricultural tourism is the activity of agricultural businesses and communities aimed at introducing visitors to the agricultural production process and agricultural heritage of rural areas. Comprehensive agricultural tourism products can be divided into four types: (1) Attraction related to production, such as fields, workshops, farm tools, and production processes; (2) Special events like exhibitions, fairs, conferences, and workshops; (3) Recreational activities like hiking, cycling, animal riding, and camping; (4) Services such as accommodation, camping, retail sales of goods, and artisanal crafts. The spaces for organizing agricultural tourism activities can include farms, fields, orchards, cultivated forests, as well as ponds, wildlife sanctuaries, and wild plants. The entities involved in organizing rural tourism can be homeowners, gardeners, forest owners, farm owners, facility owners, agricultural cooperatives, cooperative groups, and agricultural business owners.

Therefore, the scope of agricultural tourism is quite extensive, and it can also be referred to as agritourism, rural tourism, village tourism, farm tourism, countryside tourism, and more. The fundamental difference between agricultural tourism (Agritourism) and rural tourism (Rural Tourism) is that agricultural tourism is closely associated with agricultural production activities, while rural tourism is more connected to the space and social life of rural areas. However, there is no clear boundary between these two types of tourism, and they often overlap. Nonetheless, it can be understood that agricultural tourism is a specific form of tourism, while rural tourism encompasses various forms of tourism, including agricultural tourism, craft village tourism, cultural tourism, and more. According to David Preece (2015), the interrelation between agriculture (Agriculture) and agricultural tourism (Agritourism) can be represented in the following diagram: Agriculture and agricultural tourism always have a mutually beneficial relationship. Agriculture creates conditions for the development of tourism products that serve the needs of tourists, ensuring the growth of tourism. Conversely, tourism contributes to promoting and consuming agricultural products, increasing the value of agricultural products, creating employment, and increasing income for farmers, thus contributing to the development of sustainable rural areas.

3.1. The Role of Agricultural Tourism

The development of agricultural tourism plays a crucial role in harnessing the tourism potential associated with agricultural production. It allows for tourists to engage in various agricultural activities, such as programs like "A Day as a Farmer," which is being implemented in many localities (Quang Nam, Lao Cai, An Giang, etc.). Tourists can visit agricultural production facilities, including vegetable and flower gardens, ornamental plant cultivation, livestock farming,

aquaculture, and agricultural tool manufacturing. Many tourism programs are attracting visitors, such as visits to dairy farms, fishing villages, ornamental flower gardens, fruit orchards, and more. Tourists can enjoy and purchase agricultural products directly from these production facilities, tasting fresh fruits in orchards, indulging in traditional countryside dishes, and buying souvenirs. Additionally, there are various other activities, such as fishing, photography in vegetable and flower gardens, and more. Based on these activities, agricultural tourism contributes to increasing the income of local residents. Currently, agricultural tourism activities organized by localities bring many benefits to the local population, creating employment opportunities for laborers, contributing to poverty reduction, and generating revenue for local budgets. Moreover, agricultural tourism plays a significant role in promoting agricultural production, enhancing the value of agricultural products, and facilitating on-site agricultural product consumption with high economic efficiency. It also contributes to the exploitation and preservation of the rural ecological environment.

In summary, agricultural tourism not only provides enjoyable experiences for tourists but also contributes to the economic development of rural areas, employment generation, poverty alleviation, and the promotion of sustainable agriculture and environmental protection.

3.2. Characteristics of Agricultural Tourism

Although there are various definitions of agricultural tourism, they all reflect the fundamental characteristics of agricultural tourism. The main characteristics of agricultural tourism include: Agricultural Tourism is Based on Agricultural Production: This type of tourism primarily relies on the foundation of agricultural production to create tourism products for visitors. All resources related to agricultural production, including materials, land, water bodies, people, production processes, farming practices, and agricultural products, are considered assets for agricultural tourism. Agricultural tourism often focuses on providing visitors with the experience of a new culture, allowing them to appreciate natural landscapes, and actively participating in various traditional farming activities.

A Fusion of Nature, Culture, and People: Agricultural tourism serves as a bridge between urban and rural areas, promoting a harmonious relationship between nature, culture, and people. When participating in agricultural tourism, tourists visit rural areas and immerse themselves in the simple life of the local population. They share meals, accommodations, and engage in activities alongside local residents. In this environment, tourists become one with nature and experience the rich cultural traditions and practices of rural communities. There is no distinction between urban and rural residents in these settings, as everyone comes together to explore the unique aspects of the countryside. Mainly Attracts Urban Tourists: Agricultural tourism attracts a diverse range of tourists, but its primary audience consists of urban dwellers. Urban life, characterized by fast-paced living, pollution, limited space, and noise, often drives city residents to seek environments with fresh air, tranquility, expansive landscapes, and a peaceful way of life. These urban tourists desire experiences like participating in agricultural activities, such as planting vegetables, watering crops, harvesting rice, or fishing—activities they may have only read about in books. Economic and Social Benefits for Local Communities: Agricultural tourism generates economic and social benefits for local communities. It allows residents to showcase their cultural and social values, encourages them to preserve and develop traditional trades, and enables tourists to appreciate, experience, and purchase local products during their visits. Many agricultural tourism destinations offer homestays, where tourists share meals and accommodations with local families. Tourists can participate in various local production processes, taste delicious meals, and learn about local customs and traditions. As a result, agricultural tourism provides a source of income that supports conservation efforts, job creation, and increased income for local residents. Consequently, local communities can escape poverty, improve their living conditions, and witness significant improvements in rural infrastructure.

Involvement of the Local Community: The participation of the local community is crucial for the success of agricultural tourism. Each local resident becomes a tour guide, introducing visitors to farming practices, techniques, fertilization methods, irrigation, and the harvesting of agricultural products. They also highlight unique local attractions, such as natural landscapes, delicious cuisine, traditional festivals, traditional crafts, and folk dances. Additionally, local residents may assist tourists with their accommodations and other aspects of their stay, extending their hospitality and genuine warmth to the guests.

3.3. Role of Agricultural Tourism in Local Economic and Social Development

The Role of Agricultural Tourism in Increasing Income and Improving Welfare for Local People:

To develop the economy and stabilize the lives of rural residents, agricultural tourism is seen as one of the most positive solutions for community development. It provides an alternative source of livelihood for local communities, building on their natural resources, strengths, and unique aspects, such as natural conditions, agricultural practices, and cultural characteristics. Through agricultural tourism, job opportunities are created for local residents, allowing them to utilize their skills and expertise, thus increasing their income and stabilizing their lives in rural areas.

Agricultural tourism serves as a promising solution to contribute to economic and social development, improve the lives of local people, and enhance the well-being of indigenous communities. It can help achieve criteria related to income and poverty reduction, as outlined in the construction of the new rural areas in the Mekong Delta region: "Average income per capita by 2020: at least 50 million VND/person/year" and "Multidimensional poverty rate for the period 2016-2020: not exceeding 4%". These are significant challenges for localities, but if they successfully establish agricultural tourism models, along with the opportunities that agricultural tourism brings and the efforts of local authorities and departments, as well as the determination, diligence, and creativity of farmers, significant improvements in people's lives can be achieved.

The Role of Agricultural Tourism in Preserving the Natural Environment:

Agricultural tourism not only offers recreational and health benefits but also serves as an educational activity that raises tourists' awareness about environmental protection and the significance of the environment in sustaining life. It encourages responsible behavior and minimizes harm to the environment, ensuring the preservation of diverse and abundant natural resources for future generations. Local residents, as active participants in agricultural tourism, can generate income from various services, including dining, accommodation, shopping, and experiences. This additional income can contribute to improving and raising the quality of life in the local community, thus reducing negative impacts on environmental values. Through tourism activities, agricultural tourism helps people engage more with the natural environment, enhancing their understanding and environmental consciousness.

Conserving and protecting the ecological environment is one of the criteria for building the new rural areas, creating a clean, green, and beautiful environment, and ensuring safety. Achieving the goal of "more than 95% of households using clean and sanitary water" in the Mekong Delta region, as required by the Program for the New Rural Construction, is feasible for localities in the region when the natural environment is preserved.

The Role of Agricultural Tourism in Promoting Rural Economic Restructuring:

As agricultural tourism develops, small-scale industries, and services related to rural agriculture thrive. Income for local residents shifts from pure agriculture to small-scale industries and agricultural services. This transformation results in a substantial portion of income coming from activities such as dining, accommodation, and the sale of local products. Additionally, some agricultural labor transitions into the service sector, driving the process of labor restructuring and economic restructuring in rural areas towards more advanced forms. Agricultural tourism reshapes the economic structure of rural areas, facilitating the transition to a commodity economy and a service-based economy, with the proportion of non-agricultural sectors in total domestic production steadily increasing.

Concentrating on developing production and restructuring the rural economic sector, reducing agricultural labor, and increasing income for rural residents are criteria outlined in the plan to build new rural areas associated with the restructuring of the agricultural sector for the 2017-2020 period. Therefore, when agricultural tourism develops, it significantly contributes to advancing the restructuring of the rural economy in the Mekong Delta region in a progressive direction, reducing the proportion of agricultural labor. This is an inevitable trend in the process of building a sustainable new rural area.

The Role of Agricultural Tourism in Preserving and Promoting Cultural Identities:

Local community culture plays a vital role in agricultural tourism. The relationship between agricultural tourism and culture is inherent and mutual. For tourists, especially foreign visitors, participating in agricultural tourism activities

not only fulfills their desire for clean air and pristine nature but also satisfies their curiosity about and desire to experience local cultural values, unique customs, and ways of life in rural areas. Therefore, to promote agricultural tourism, it is essential to revive and develop cultural values, unique customs, and ways of life related to agricultural activities in each region.

Building a "rural community rich in ethnic cultural identity" is one of the criteria for constructing new rural areas. With the role of agricultural tourism in preserving and promoting the cultural identities of ethnic groups as well as regional cultures, we can see that the development of agricultural tourism contributes to the creation of new rural areas with unique and distinctive cultural aspects.

The Role of Agricultural Tourism in Enhancing Human Resource Training:

Agricultural tourism is an experiential form of tourism that involves significant interaction between tourists and local residents. To enhance tourist satisfaction and meet the requirements of sustainable agricultural tourism development, local residents must undergo training to improve their skills, provide diverse services, and enhance their professionalism in serving tourists. High levels of cultural knowledge and education help individuals understand the importance of environmental protection and exhibit polite and culturally sensitive behavior towards tourists. These aspects demonstrate the unique cultural characteristics of each region and are of great interest to tourists.

The need to promote human resource development to meet the requirements of sustainable agricultural tourism development is crucial. Farmers recognize the necessity of improving their skills and professional expertise to meet the demands of tourists, especially international visitors. Therefore, agricultural tourism provides an impetus for skill development, professional training, and progressive learning among local residents, which ultimately enhances their ability to serve tourists effectively and responsibly. This is essential for achieving the target of "at least 25% of trained labor" in the construction of new rural areas.

4. Developing Agricultural Tourism in Conjunction with New Rural Construction in the Mekong Delta Region

The National Target Program for New Rural Development is a comprehensive program aimed at developing the economy, society, culture, national security, and defense in various localities. The goal of building new rural areas is to "improve the material and spiritual lives of the people; establish appropriate economic and social infrastructure; rationalize economic structures and production organization forms, linking agricultural development with industry and services; connect rural development with urban areas; promote democratic, equitable, stable, and culturally rich rural societies; protect the ecological environment; and maintain national defense and security as well as order."

Based on an analysis of the essence of agricultural tourism, its characteristics, and its role in relation to the objectives of the New Rural Development Program, localities in the Mekong Delta region need to study and integrate national target programs to mobilize more resources for development. Simultaneously, in order to make a breakthrough in agricultural production thinking and new rural construction, it is necessary to recognize the mutually supportive relationship between the development of agricultural tourism and the construction of new rural areas. The development of agricultural tourism in conjunction with the construction of new rural areas is entirely consistent with the government's strategy to restructure the agricultural sector, as approved by Decision No. 1819 dated November 16, 2017, and aligns with the goal of transforming tourism into a key economic sector, as stated in Resolution No. 08 of the 12th Party Central Committee issued on January 16, 2017.

Through the analysis of the essence of agricultural tourism, its characteristics, and its role, along with the unique natural and cultural landscape values, the Mekong Delta region has a great potential for the development of agricultural tourism. When agricultural tourism develops, it will have a positive impact on local socio-economic development, promote the preservation and development of the rich cultural heritage of the Mekong Delta, and play an essential role in the conservation and protection of natural resources and the environment. It will also address the challenges faced during the process of building new rural areas. Therefore, the development of agricultural tourism will contribute to advancing the new rural construction process and serve as a solution to meet the requirements for maintaining and improving the sustainability of the National Target Program for New Rural Development in the Mekong Delta region in the near future.

4.1. Developing Agricultural Tourism Worldwide...

Agricultural tourism, also known as agritourism, is a form of tourism that primarily relies on agricultural production activities to create products and services for tourists. According to experts, there are four elements that define "agricultural tourism": the combination of tourism and agriculture, attracting tourists to participate in activities related to agriculture, increasing income for farmers, and providing tourists with opportunities for entertainment, physical and spiritual activities, closer contact with nature, and experiences of rural life. Developing agricultural tourism has the effect of diversifying mixed tourism services for tourists, increasing the flow of tourists to rural areas, and extending the tourism season during off-peak times in the industry. By participating in this form of tourism, tourists can experience agricultural production activities and enjoy the scenic beauty created by agricultural activities.

This form of tourism gained momentum in the 1980s and 1990s worldwide. In each country, it is referred to by different names. Specifically, in the UK, it's called "Rural tourism"; in the US, it's "Homestead tourism"; in Japan, it's "Green tourism"; and in France, it's "Tourism de verdure." Apart from the nomenclature, the formation and development of agricultural tourism in each country varies significantly in terms of diversity and implementation methods.

In Israel, agricultural tourism is considered compulsory education for children from an early age. In the United States, large agricultural tourism events are organized annually. Currently, Americans spend over \$800 million annually on farm tourism activities, and this figure is predicted to increase further as the agricultural land area continues to decrease. Farm models in the US have proven to be effective in the development of agricultural tourism, and farmers can actively seek outlets for their products by bringing tourism to their farms.

In Austria, agricultural tourism is organized very professionally, even though only 3% of the population is engaged in agriculture. In South Korea, agricultural tourism tours have been implemented since 2006 and are seen as one of the main strategies for developing agriculture. These tours aim to compensate for the decreasing income of farmers while creating new functions for South Korean agriculture that arise from the rural-urban connection.

In Taiwan (China), agricultural tourism was launched in the 1980s. In the early 2000s, the Taiwanese government decided to plan more than 30 areas for agricultural tourism development with the goal of creating a new economic sector, providing good income for farmers, preserving the diversity of the economy, and most importantly, protecting Taiwan's agricultural history that spans hundreds of years. Agricultural tourism is focused on livestock, agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, and it offers educational content related to agriculture and food. These subjects need to go through six stages of enterprise development, combining entertainment, tourism, and information technology applications to improve competitiveness. Taiwan now has over 300 resort farms throughout the region. With effective and appropriate approaches, Taiwan's agricultural tourism model has exceeded expectations. It has not only preserved their agriculture but also curbed urbanization that encroaches on rural areas, preserved natural beauty, and maintained biodiversity. Agricultural tourism products from Taiwan are now following tourists worldwide, bringing a significant income to local communities.

In Guangxi (China), since 2007, the local government has built over 15 remarkable agricultural tourism routes with 251 eco-agricultural tourism gardens. This has increased the income of local indigenous people and improved agricultural production efficiency. In 2010, Hainan Province (China) constructed 133 agricultural tourism gardens, creating jobs for 14.5 thousand people, with an annual revenue of 132 million yuan...

4.2. The current situation in Vietnam

In Vietnam, based on an accurate assessment of the role and position of tourism in economic, social, Party, and State development, there has been a policy to restructure the tourism industry to ensure professionalism, modernity, and sustainable development. In the strategic orientation for the development of tourism in Vietnam, eco-tourism linked with agriculture and rural areas is identified as one of the five main product lines. As a result, agricultural tourism in Vietnam has been developed throughout the country, with agricultural eco-tourism products becoming a highlight, attracting and promoting tourist growth with many tourism products that reflect the cultural characteristics of agriculture in different regions, stretching from the North to the South. Agricultural tourism in Vietnam has developed in parallel with community-based tourism and eco-tourism, all adhering to the principles of experiential tourism, leveraging the integrated values based on agricultural achievements.

Typical agricultural tourism products include visiting the ancient village of Duong Lam (Hanoi); touring tea hills and dairy farms in Moc Chau (Son La); enjoying terraced rice fields during the harvest season in Mu Cang Chai (Yen Bai), Sa Pa (Lao Cai); visiting the vegetable village of Tra Que (Quang Nam); eco-tourism exploring hydroponic vegetable gardens, tea plantations, and high-tech flower gardens in Da Lat (Lam Dong); eco-tourism along the Saigon River; experiencing cashew farming in Binh Phuoc, Dong Nai; homegrown fruits in Binh Duong; craft village tours in An Giang; tours and stays at vineyards, apple orchards, goat and sheep farms in Ninh Thuan province, and many tourism destinations linked with agriculture in Quang Ninh province, such as the Yen Duc village tourism destination (Dong Trieu town); Dong Trieu pottery craft village; high-quality fruit orchards in Dan Chu commune, high-quality vegetable and flower fields in Le Loi commune (Hoa Binh district); pearl farming in Tung Sau (Halong Bay); golden flower tea hills and purple macadamia hills in Ba Che district, etc.

According to the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, many products from the agriculture sector, such as food and beverages, handicrafts, fruits, and confectionery, from various regions have been used in the hospitality and restaurant systems of the tourism industry. Exploring the culinary arts with regional characteristics to serve tourists is also one of the factors driving agricultural tourism. The supply chain of tourism services cannot be without products from the agriculture sector. The agricultural products sold by farmers at tourist destinations not only generate more income than ticket sales but also serve as extensive promotional tools for each tourist destination.

Agricultural tourism has brought about increasingly clear economic and social benefits for many localities and businesses. Of particular note is the direct participation of farmers in agricultural tourism activities, contributing to the diversity and attractiveness of tourism products, while also generating higher incomes compared to traditional farming activities.

According to reports from some localities and businesses, the number of tourists participating in rural agricultural activities is increasing. Expenditure and income from agricultural tourism activities provide a stable source of income for farmers and businesses and contribute to the local economy. Currently, in the total income of rural residents, income from agricultural production accounts for only about 27%, while income from non-agricultural production and services accounts for 73%. Statistics from the Ho Chi Minh City Department of Tourism show that the demand of tourists for experiencing farm tours has been steadily increasing by 20-30% annually. In Quang Nam province, agricultural tourism welcomes approximately 300,000 visitors each year, accounting for nearly 5% of the total number of tourists visiting the area. Agricultural tourism models with the direct participation of local people have created diversity and attractiveness in tourism products, while also providing higher income for local farmers, contributing to poverty reduction and sustainable development in disadvantaged communities and rural areas nationwide. These are seen as positive initial signs in the development of agricultural tourism in Vietnam. However, alongside the achievements, according to experts' assessment, the majority of agricultural tourism activities are still spontaneous, small-scale, unprofessional, and often overlapping. The products are not yet truly attractive to tourists and lack branding. Many farmers are still focused on traditional agriculture and lack the skills to serve tourists professionally or do not prioritize agricultural production linked with tourism development.

High-quality agricultural tourism products are still limited in many localities. In many eco-tourism areas, services are poor and of low quality, meeting only the basic needs of tourists. Tourists' spending on agricultural tourism products mainly includes entrance fees, meals, and accommodation, with little spending on other services as there are either few complementary services available or those available are not attractive to tourists. Additionally, the infrastructure and support facilities at many agricultural eco-tourism destinations are incomplete, and the quality is not high. In particular, cooperation between travel companies and agricultural tourism destinations is limited. The linkage in the development of agricultural tourism between localities within a province and between localities nationwide has not been effectively implemented. Many agricultural tourism destinations face difficulties in connecting with travel companies to develop and build agricultural tourism products or attract domestic and international tourists.

From the initial results and challenges, experts and managers believe that there is still much work to be done to elevate agricultural tourism. Therefore, the Central Government and relevant ministries and agencies need to pay more attention to this sector through mechanisms and policies, such as developing agricultural tourism in conjunction with building a sustainable agriculture sector; developing agricultural tourism in conjunction with building new rural areas;

providing technical support, technology, and human resource training; investing in infrastructure to serve agricultural tourism, such as roads, electricity, and clean water; improving credit policies, land policies, investment attraction policies, tax incentives, and issuing criteria for agricultural tourism; enhancing investment promotion and marketing to maximize the potential and strengths of the country's agriculture sector in the "smokeless industry," contributing to improving the quality of tourism and the livelihoods of farmers.

It can be seen that agricultural tourism has made significant progress worldwide, not only bringing substantial economic benefits but also introducing the cultural characteristics of each region, creating a nation's image and status in the world. In Vietnam, agricultural tourism is gradually becoming a new trend, a "unique dish" alongside other forms of tourism such as beach resorts, seaside sports, cultural and spiritual tourism, and exploration. Along with this, tourism activities associated with education and awareness-raising, environmental protection, and a life closely connected to nature and agricultural production, especially in purely rural areas with their indigenous cultural characteristics, are becoming increasingly attractive. This is also a necessary task to protect the ecological environment and natural resources from negative impacts due to climate change and globalization. Therefore, it is predicted that agricultural tourism will have strong spillover effects and will have many growth drivers in the near future.

5. Development of Agricultural Tourism in Can Tho City

5.1. Overview of Can Tho City

Can Tho City is a vital gateway for transportation by road, river, sea, and air. It is connected to Ho Chi Minh City by National Highway 1A, located 169 kilometers to the northeast, and to various provinces in the Mekong Delta region at distances ranging from 60 to 190 kilometers. In late 2008, the Can Tho Airport launched the Can Tho-Hanoi route, and in 2010, several domestic flights were introduced, contributing to its effectiveness. Can Tho City boasts a relatively flat terrain with a two-season climate (rainy and dry), freshwater all year round, and an ecological environment featuring numerous canals and rivers. This creates a tranquil and charming setting for the benevolent and refined people of Can Tho.

Can Tho City is situated in the heart of the downstream region of the Mekong River, stretching over 65 kilometers along the western bank of the Hau River. It covers a natural area of 1,401 square kilometers and had a population of 1,188,435 people according to the 2009 census, with 65.89% residing in urban areas. The Kinh ethnic group accounts for 96.95% of the population, with a population density of 848 people per square kilometer. Ninh Kieu District has the highest population density at 8,407 people per square kilometer, while Vinh Thanh District has the lowest at 274 people per square kilometer. Can Tho City is administratively divided into 5 urban districts (Ninh Kieu, Binh Thuy, Cai Rang, O Mon, Thot Not) and 4 rural districts (Vinh Thanh, Co Do, Thoi Lai, Phong Dien) with a total of 85 communes and wards.

Geographically, Can Tho City borders An Giang Province to the north, Dong Thap and Vinh Long Provinces to the east, Kien Giang Province to the west, and Hau Giang Province to the south. Its coordinates are approximately 105 degrees 13 minutes 38 seconds to 105 degrees 50 minutes 35 seconds east longitude and 9 degrees 55 minutes 08 seconds to 10 degrees 19 minutes 38 seconds north latitude. Climate and Hydrology: Can Tho has a tropical climate with distinct wet and dry seasons. The rainy season lasts from May to November, while the dry season is from December to April. The average temperature in 2009 was 27 degrees Celsius, with an average annual rainfall of 1,500-1,800 mm, a total sunshine duration of 2,300-2,500 hours, and an average humidity of 83%. Natural Resources: Can Tho is situated in the fertile sedimentary area of the Mekong River, with the Hau River being a major river running through the city for 65 kilometers and carrying an annual sediment load of 35 million cubic meters. The Cai Lon River, 20 kilometers long, has good drainage capacity. The Can Tho River, 16 kilometers long, flows into the Hau River, providing freshwater year-round. The extensive canal system is advantageous for agricultural production.

Can Tho is part of the semi-open floodplain region, including three types of landforms: natural levees along the Hau River, semi-open floodplains in the Long Xuyen quadrilateral area, and chao thung (sandy alluvial plain). Elevation generally ranges from 0.8 to 1.0 meters and decreases gradually from northeast to southwest. The land was primarily formed through marine sedimentation and the deposition of Mekong River alluvium. Regarding soil types, there are two main groups: alluvial soil accounting for 84% of the natural area and saline soil constituting 16%. Mineral resources include clay for making bricks, clay pottery, construction sand, and peat. However, the utilization and exploitation of biological resources, typical of freshwater swamp areas, are currently depleted. Healthcare System: Can Tho has a system of general

and specialized hospitals that provide healthcare services to the local population. All 9 urban districts and rural districts have medical facilities for examination and treatment. Can Tho General Hospital began construction in 2010. Private hospitals like Tay Do and Hoan My have also become operational.

5.2. Historical Formation

In the 17th century, Mac Cuu, a native of Chau Loi in Guangdong Province, China, immigrated to Ha Tien due to his refusal to submit to the Qing Dynasty. In Ha Tien, he recruited displaced people to open new land. In 1708, Nguyen Phuc Chu appointed him as the Commander-in-Chief of Ha Tien, where he established a military post in Phuong Thanh. By 1739, he had completed the land reclamation and established four provinces: Long Xuyen, Kien Giang (Rach Gia), Tran Giang (Can Tho), and Tran Di (Bac Bac Lieu). Long Xuyen, Kien Giang, Tran Giang, and Tran Di, along with Hau Giang Province, made up Tranh Giang with its capital in Can Tho.

For French colonialists and the Saigon puppet government, Can Tho saw changes in its administrative boundaries. On February 23, 1876, the Governor of Saigon issued a decree to merge Phong Phu District with parts of An Xuyen and Tan Thanh into Can Tho Province, with its capital in the village of Tan An. In 1954, Can Tho included Chau Thanh, O Mon, Phung Hiep, Tra On, and Cau Ke districts. In 1956, Ngo Dinh Diem renamed Can Tho Province to Phong Dinh Province. In 1961, part of Long My and Vi Thanh was separated to form Chuong Thien Province.

The Revolutionary Government during the resistance against the French in 1948-1949 adjusted the administrative boundaries. Can Tho gained Thot Not from Long Xuyen, Long My, Go Quao, and Gieng Rieng, as well as Rach Gia town from Rach Gia Province. It then returned Cau Ke and Tra On districts to Vinh Long and Tra Vinh. The name was changed to Can Tho Province in 1957, and in 1966, the town of Vi Thanh was established in Can Tho Province. In 1969, Can Tho town was separated from Can Tho Province and became directly subordinate to the Southwest Region. In 1971, Can Tho town became Can Tho City, directly subordinate to the Southwest Region.

Following national reunification, the Government issued Decree No. 03/ND-76 on March 24, 1976, merging Can Tho Province, Soc Trang Province, and Can Tho City into Hau Giang Province. In December 1991, during the 8th session of the National Assembly, a resolution was passed to separate Hau Giang into two provinces: Can Tho and Soc Trang. During the 4th session of the 11th National Assembly, a resolution was issued on November 26, 2003, and Government Decree No. 05 on January 2, 2004, separating Can Tho Province to form Can Tho City under central administration and establishing Hau Giang Province. The government issued Decision No. 889-QD/TTg on June 24, 2009, recognizing Can Tho City as a first-class city under central administration.

Can Tho City Today

Can Tho City is a relatively young city compared to other cities in the country. However, Can Tho has a history of over 130 years of formation and development. During the French colonial period, infrastructure such as plantations, industrial facilities, markets, hospitals, and the College de Can Tho (now Chau Van Liem University) were established. Notably, the College de Can Tho has been in existence for nearly 100 years. It was a gathering place for patriots like Bui Huu Nghia, Phan Van Tri, and Chau Van Liem.

Additionally, Can Tho holds a strategic economic and military position in the region. It serves as a central hub for waterway transportation in the Mekong Delta region. Can Tho is classified as a first-tier city under central administration and features an international port and an expanding Can Tho International Airport. The Can Tho Bridge has been completed and operational since April 24, 2010, connecting important transportation routes between Can Tho City, Ho Chi Minh City, provinces in the Mekong Delta, and the entire nation.

The city boasts historical architectural structures such as Ninh Kiều Quay, the Old Market of Can Tho, and the State Bank of Vietnam.

Economic Infrastructure

Can Tho has a diverse economic and technical infrastructure. Can Tho Port can accommodate 10,000-ton vessels, while the Cui Cui Seaport can handle vessels up to 20,000 DWT, with a cargo throughput capacity of approximately 4-5 million tons per year. Can Tho International Airport officially began operating at the end of 2008, serving both domestic

and international flights since late 2010.

The Tra Noc Thermal Power Plant has a capacity of 200 MW, and the o Mon Power Center is under construction with a planned capacity of 2,800 MW. Currently, one unit with a capacity of 330 MW is connected to the national power grid, serving the Mekong Delta region and the entire country. There are two clean water treatment plants with a combined capacity of 90,000 m³/day and night. By 2010, additional clean water treatment plants with a total capacity of 150,000 m³/day and night are expected to meet the city's water supply needs.

Can Tho Bridge

The Can Tho Bridge, spanning the Hậu River, was completed and put into use on April 24, 2010. It connects important roadways between Can Tho City, Ho Chi Minh City, provinces in the Mekong Delta, and the whole nation.

Industries

Industry is a vital strength of Can Tho City, with significant investments and a wide range of sectors and products. Some strongly developing industrial sectors include seafood processing, rice milling, fertilizer production, pesticides, veterinary drugs, biotechnology products for agriculture, beer, pharmaceuticals, construction materials, and electricity production. There is a growing emphasis on research and the application of modern technology in production.

Agriculture

Can Tho City has approximately 115,000 hectares of agricultural land used for rice cultivation, flowers, and various fruit trees. Each year, the city can produce over 1 million tons of rice, with specialty rice accounting for 500,000-600,000 tons for export. The city also produces diverse and abundant fruit crops with over 100,000 tons, 200,000 tons of aquaculture (mainly snakehead fish), and 20,000 tons of livestock and poultry meat.

The city is actively developing concentrated production, applying advanced technology, and establishing large, high-quality, and highly efficient commodity production areas with sustainable multiple-crop models. It is closely linked to agricultural processing and domestic markets. The city is strongly developing export-oriented industries based on competitive advantages. Key industrial sectors include food processing and beverages, energy, machinery and equipment manufacturing, chemicals and bioproducts, electronics and electrical appliances, information technology, new materials, and more.

Trade and Tourism

Can Tho City has a well-established banking, insurance, and auditing system with efficient operations that are expanding. There are 46 credit institutions with 194 banking transaction locations, 10 insurance companies, and reputable financial leasing companies at both national and international levels. The city boasts 330 hotels, 6 ecotourism villages, including 35 hotels rated from 1 to 4 stars, ensuring accommodation for various types of visitors, including during festivals and major events in the city.

The city has over 120 enterprises engaged in import and export activities, with trade relations extending to more than 90 countries worldwide. Key export items include seafood processing (shrimp and various types of fish), rice, fruits, vegetables, footwear, textiles, handicrafts, machinery and equipment, consumer goods, production materials, petroleum products, fertilizers, chemicals, pharmaceutical ingredients, and agrochemicals. The city is actively developing trade and services to become the commercial and service center of the Mekong Delta region. It links the Can Tho market with markets in Mekong Delta provinces, major cities, key economic regions in the south, the whole country, and neighboring countries. Can Tho is focusing on expanding exports and domestic markets in parallel with international integration. It is developing trade with the participation of various economic sectors and encouraging business development in suburban areas, closely associated with the planning of new residential areas and transportation development to promote the development of industries and labor redistribution. Can Tho is also promoting tourism development by emphasizing tour operations, attracting tourists to ecotourism areas, cultural exploration, and conferences and conventions in the city and neighboring provinces. It is developing interregional tourism and bilateral and multilateral international tourism. Efforts are concentrated on preserving and upgrading historical and cultural relics, existing tourist attractions, and adding new routes and points of interest. Infrastructure facilities for the tourism industry are expanded and diversified, with links to provinces

in the region for the development of satellite tourism destinations. Additionally, the city is developing various tourism products and service types, as well as collaboration with neighboring provinces to create tourism events and festivals for Can Tho and the Mekong Delta.

Science and Technology

Can Tho City has a system of universities, colleges, technical training schools, software technology centers, the Mekong Delta Rice Research Institute, and other scientific research facilities. It has become a scientific and technological center of the Mekong Delta region, annually training more than 26,000 scientific and technical personnel and skilled workers to serve Can Tho City and the Mekong Delta region.

Industrial Zones

Can Tho City currently has two concentrated industrial zones: Tra Noc Industrial Zone (Tra Noc I and II) covering 300 hectares and Hung Phú Industrial Zone (Hung Phú I and II) covering 474 hectares. Detailed planning is underway for three more industrial zones that have been approved by the Prime Minister: Thot Not Industrial Zone (600 hectares), O Mon Industrial Zone (600 hectares), and Bac O Mon Industrial Zone (400 hectares). The city is actively attracting investment and developing its industrial zones, industrial and craft clusters, technology centers, and high-tech industrial zones. It is also promoting the creation of industrial clusters for joint investment, high-tech parks, and building and promoting strong brands, implementing policy mechanisms, and improving the investment environment.

The potential for agricultural tourism development

Despite being a centrally governed, first-tier city, Can Tho holds a central position in the Mekong Delta region, the leading agricultural production area in Vietnam, and is the number one region for food and rice production. Therefore, Can Tho still has many strengths for developing agricultural tourism.

Orchards are a significant potential for Can Tho City to develop orchard tourism. Located along the Hau River and regularly replenished with alluvium, the fertile land creates lush fruit orchards for Can Tho, forming attractive orchard tourism spots in Phong Dien, Cai Rang, Binh Thuy, and Thot Not. Visitors to the orchards will be captivated by the lush greenery, fresh and delicious fruits, friendly locals, and peaceful way of life.

Along the Hau River within the city's jurisdiction, there are sandbanks referred to by the locals as "cu lao" or "con," such as Tan Loc sandbank, Son sandbank, Khuong sandbank, and Au sandbank. These areas have rich, fertile soil with lush fruit orchards and traditional cultural aspects of the local people, making them ideal for developing agricultural tourism. Son sandbank in Bui Huu Nghia Ward (Binh Thuy District) has become a popular destination for domestic and international tourists visiting Can Tho. In addition to fruit orchards, there are fish farms here that can serve tourists. Tan Loc sandbank (Thot Not District) has great potential for tourism related to ancient architectural relics, fruit orchards, aquaculture, and the rural life of the local people. Especially, Tan Loc sandbank hosts a traditional fruit festival on the occasion of the Dragon Boat Festival (5th day of the 5th lunar month every year), which is a culturally significant tourism event.

Currently, Can Tho City is actively promoting urban agriculture and high-tech agriculture (Hitech Agriculture). The city has invested in the development of three Hitech Agriculture zones and stations, as well as implemented priority programs and projects to support Hitech Agriculture production. The Hitech Agriculture zones and stations are considered the core of Hitech Agriculture development in the city. Hitech Agriculture Zone I is located at the Can Tho Agricultural Genetics Center (Thoi Thanh Commune, Co Do District) with an area of 20 hectares. It serves as the central hub for research, the application of new technologies, and the transfer of production techniques. Hitech Agriculture Zones II and III are auxiliary areas located at Song Hau Agricultural Company and Co Do Agricultural Company. In addition, three Hitech Agriculture stations are planned for Vinh Thanh, Thot Not, and Phong Dien districts.

Can Tho City is one of the eight provinces and cities in the Mekong Delta selected to implement the Sustainable Agriculture Transformation Project in Vietnam, funded by the World Bank from 2016 to 2020. The project has implemented sustainable agriculture transformation models in 16 communes across three districts: Co Do, Thoi Lai, and Vinh Thanh, covering a total rice area of 30,000 hectares with the participation of 25,000 households. The project's goal is to increase farmers' profits by over 30% through the successful application of advanced techniques and reducing

environmental harm. It also aims to establish sustainable linkages in agricultural production. In addition to rice production, Can Tho City has introduced high-tech agriculture to various other crops, encouraging farmers to transform inefficient rice fields into orchards covering over 895 hectares and promoting water-saving irrigation methods on more than 34 hectares in Phong Dien, Thoi Lai, Vinh Thanh, and Co Do districts.

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, in collaboration with Can Tho University and the Mekong Delta Rice Institute, has developed priority projects under the Hitech Agriculture program. These projects include the application of biotechnology in breeding and producing safe vegetables for domestic consumption, biotechnology in breeding and producing agricultural seedlings, and the enhancement of mechanization in production within the Hitech Agriculture system.

Since 2018, Can Tho City has participated in the "Smart Agriculture and Food Safety with Artificial Intelligence" project, which is jointly implemented by the University of Technology and the Kyushu Institute of Technology (Japan). The project focuses on researching comprehensive smart agriculture systems and gradually developing artificial intelligence algorithms. In addition to modern support equipment, the project is also promoting the deployment of robotic systems. These robots replace humans in monitoring and identifying plant diseases and pests, as well as proposing solutions. Using this method, agricultural products achieve high quality, and product standards can be adjusted to meet market demand. This project not only promotes agricultural development but also opens up new directions for high-tech agricultural tourism in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Within the city's territory, various Hitech Agriculture models have been established, integrating urban agriculture with the city's green belt planning. Examples include the Pho Tho Flower Village (Binh Thuy District), the Trung B Flower Club, Tien Long A Flower Cooperative (Tan Thoi Commune, Phong Dien District), orchid cultivation in Cai Rang, O Mon, and Binh Thuy districts, and various clean vegetable farming models using hydroponics and net houses. The city has also established clean rice and vegetable production areas according to VietGAP standards. Many livestock, poultry, and aquaculture models operate according to food hygiene and biological safety standards, meeting market demands and increasing the value of agricultural products.

In addition to these significant strengths, Can Tho City also possesses favorable infrastructure and conditions for tourism development in general and agricultural tourism in particular. Can Tho is a transportation hub for road, waterway, and air transport in the Mekong Delta region, making it convenient for connecting with domestic and international tourists traveling to tourist destinations in the Mekong Delta such as Phu Quoc and Ha Tien (Kien Giang), Nui Sam, Nui Cam, My Hoa Hung (An Giang), Tram Chim, Cao Lanh (Dong Thap), Mui Ca Mau (Ca Mau), and more.

Furthermore, Can Tho has been actively developing its hotel and restaurant infrastructure, particularly luxury hotels. Currently, there are over 270 tourism accommodation establishments within the city, providing nearly 7,000 rooms (including 140 hotels ranging from 1 to 5 stars with over 4,500 rooms), with an average occupancy rate of over 70%. Additionally, the city has conference centers with modern facilities and capacities for thousands of participants, such as the Hoang Tu Conference Center, Diamond Palace, and conference centers within hotels like Muong Thanh, Vinpearl, Ninh Kieu, Ninh Kieu 2, Van Phat, Dong Ha - Fortuneland, TTC, and Nesta.

The Current Situation of Agricultural Tourism Development

In recent years, tourism in Can Tho has undergone significant positive changes, with a noticeable increase in the number of tourists. During the period from 2015 to 2018, the total number of tourists visiting Can Tho City increased from 4,702,203 to 8,480,968, marking a growth rate of 1.8 times. Among them, international visitors increased from 354,773 to 730,000, more than doubling in number. In 2019, Can Tho's tourism industry welcomed 8.8 million visitors, a 4.6% increase compared to the same period in 2018. Accommodation reached over 3 million stays, up 13.1%, with international stays exceeding 409,000, a 12.4% increase over the same period. The total revenue from tourism reached over 435 billion Vietnamese dong, a 17.2% increase compared to the same period in 2018.

Alongside the general development of the tourism sector, agricultural tourism in Can Tho has also experienced significant growth and achieved notable results, with agritourism being the most prominent form. Currently, Can Tho City has numerous agritourism destinations that are attracting an increasing number of tourists, including some orchard owners offering homestay accommodations in Phong Dien district, Cai Rang district, Binh Thuy district, and Thot Not district.

Visitors to these places can explore fruit orchards, experience gardening and farming activities, grow vegetables, set up fishing nets, catch fish, enjoy local traditional dishes, go cycling to explore the rural life of the local residents, and experience the unique lifestyle of people living in orchard areas.

Phong Dien district was the earliest area to develop agritourism in Can Tho City. Currently, there are 10 orchard destinations offering tourism services, including 6 establishments with homestay accommodations. The My Khanh Tourism Village (My Khanh commune, Phong Dien district) established by Mr. Le Van Sang on his 3-hectare garden in 1999 is considered the most successful agritourism destination in Phong Dien district. After 20 years of effort, this tourism destination has become one of the iconic tourist attractions in Can Tho and the Mekong Delta, covering an area of over 20 hectares. It offers diverse tourism products such as fruit garden tours, ornamental flower displays, fruit tasting, and various traditional folk entertainment activities like pig racing, dog racing, fishing, and more. Two popular activities among visitors are "A Day as a Farm Owner" and "A Day as a Farmer." Domestic tourists prefer the "Farm Owner" experience, which includes having a personal attendant, while international tourists opt for the "Farmer" experience, which involves participating in gardening, harvesting vegetables, setting fishing nets, and catching fish.

Agritourism orchards like Hoang Anh, My Thuan, Ba Xinh, Vam Xang, Giao Duong, Vu Binh, and Ut Dzach attract a large number of tourists, especially international visitors. At these orchards, tourists can experience the traditional food preparation process, such as making banh xeo (Vietnamese sizzling pancakes), deep-fried elephant-ear fish, grilled snakehead fish, and more. They also get to participate in the daily activities of the local residents.

At Vam Xang Fruit Garden, tourists can experience selling agricultural products at the Phong Dien floating market with the program "A Day as a Trader." At the floating market, tourists are guided to immerse themselves in the atmosphere of local trade, experiencing the true feeling of a market trader. After shopping at the floating market, tourists can visit the local village market on the shore, purchase ingredients, and then prepare lunch with the host family.

Tourists are very enthusiastic about the homestay agritourism destination at Muoi Cuong, which features traditional architecture, spacious courtyards, and beautiful flower gardens. When visiting the cocoa orchard, tourists can enjoy the fresh air and participate in harvesting and processing cocoa fruits. They can also taste the products made by themselves or be guided by the host to prepare Southern Vietnamese traditional dishes. Tourists can also gather for a family meal with the host in a rustic, cozy, and friendly atmosphere.

At the eco-tourism orchard of Ut Hien (Ba Lang ward, Cai Rang district), tourists can play the role of "Southern Farmer" by planting colorful vegetables, tending to the garden, rowing boats, casting nets, and catching fish. At the Hung eco-tourism orchard (Thuong Thanh ward, Cai Rang district), visitors can experience activities in fruit orchards and vegetable gardens, as well as cooking traditional dishes like spring rolls and banh xeo.

Bao Gia Farm, an organic farm in Cai Rang district, focuses on developing agricultural tourism combined with local culture and native environment through enthusiastic and meaningful experiential activities. Notably, there are specific experiential programs designed for students, ranging from preschool to high school. Young participants are assigned age-appropriate tasks, such as those of agricultural engineers. Workshops on traditional handicrafts, such as weaving mats, knitting bamboo baskets, and recycling traditional games, are also organized, with the participation of artisans from traditional craft villages, providing the young generation with genuine insights into the craft and village life. Additionally, applied workshops like wood painting, making natural fiber bags, and dyeing fabrics with vegetables allow students to freely express their creativity and ideas for their own artworks.

Con Son, located in Binh Thuy district, with its unique geographical location in the middle of the Hau River, a region rich in river culture and fruit orchards, offers great potential for agricultural tourism development. The local residents of Con Son engage in community tourism, capitalizing on their abundant fruit orchards, fish ponds, river docks, and the tranquil, idyllic lifestyle of the people, which attracts an increasing number of tourists.

Currently, Con Son has 16 households participating in community tourism through the model of orchard tourism. Additionally, some households provide rowing boat services to transport tourists to Con Son, while others rear fish in the Hau River to serve tourists and sell processed seafood specialties. In Con Son, households cooperate to provide diverse tourism services that both cater to tourists' preferences and showcase each family's strengths. For instance, the "Community Meal" tourism product features contributions from various households, with each family providing a dish on the communal

dining table, such as Saucanh chicken salad, Tam Dien crispy pancakes, Nam Phuoc crab hotpot, and Bay Bon catfish with retracted bones. As a result, the "Community Meal" includes an array of diverse and flavorful dishes, fostering a strong sense of community and neighborhood.

Furthermore, traditional cake-making experiences in Con Son have become increasingly popular among tourists. Traditional cakes such as banh xeo, banh khot, banh it, banh lot, banh tam, banh in, and banh kep, along with the necessary ingredients, are prepared in advance. Tourists can participate in any stage of the cake-making process, from selecting rice and grinding it into flour to harvesting accompanying vegetables, as well as pouring, shaping, and cooking the cakes. A unique tourism product in Con Son, known as "flying snakehead fish," offered by Mr. Le Van Tin (Tin Hoa Garden), has become a tourism brand not only for Con Son but also for Can Tho City and the entire Mekong Delta. This product features snakehead fish that are uniquely bred to jump out of the water, providing tourists with an exciting and interactive fishing experience.

In Tan Loc Island (Thot Not district), some households have also ventured into agritourism using existing fruit orchards and ornamental gardens, achieving initial success. Visitors to these orchards in Tan Loc can enjoy common agritourism activities such as garden tours, fruit tasting, and enjoying farm-fresh dishes. Additionally, each orchard destination strives to create unique and appealing tourism products to enhance competitiveness. For example, Son Ca Tourism Orchard (Sau Tia Mango Garden) offers a unique product called "Sau Tia Mango Wine." The Co Diep Durian Orchard offers durian wine, along with dishes made from durian, such as crispy fried durian and dried squid durian salad. The Thay Thong grapevine orchard features a grape variety called Jabuticaba, a tree that resembles an ume plum tree, bears fruit like plums, and has a very distinctive flavor. Furthermore, the orchard houses a more than 100-year-old rambutan tree and a collection of rare and valuable plant species gathered from various places around the world.

In general, agricultural tourism in Can Tho City has made significant progress; however, there are still several limitations as follows:

The development of agricultural tourism is still mostly spontaneous, with individual households engaging in small-scale tourism activities, lacking coordination and collaboration among households in the same area following the community tourism model. People are not confident in investing in tourism development and are hesitant to hire external labor, leading to overcrowding during peak seasons. The tourism products are still rudimentary and simple, lacking creativity to differentiate themselves and attract visitors. Packaging and branding are basic and fail to capture the attention of customers. Agricultural tourism activities heavily depend on the agricultural season, and there is a lack of focus on developing off-season agricultural products or coordinating households to maintain products for tourism purposes.

Government authorities at various levels have not been actively involved and are often passive, relying on guidance from higher authorities. There is a lack of policies encouraging local residents to engage in tourism. The coordination between the agriculture and tourism sectors for the development of agricultural tourism is not well-established and synchronized. There is a lack of linkage, collaboration, and support from travel companies. Tourists primarily find these attractions on their own, leading to irregular customer flows. Public awareness of tourism, especially agricultural tourism, is limited, which hinders its popularity. Some households, such as fish farms, are reluctant to allow visitors due to concerns about the fish not growing fast enough or getting sick, while some garden owners fear potential damage to their gardens. The tourism infrastructure is underdeveloped, with narrow roads, limited transportation options, and insufficient parking facilities. Tourism services are also underdeveloped, failing to meet the needs of tourists. Marketing and promotion efforts for agricultural tourism are also limited, with most farmers independently promoting their activities, resulting in limited effectiveness.

Environmental protection efforts have been insufficient, with a lack of public restrooms, waste disposal systems, and wastewater treatment in many agricultural tourism areas, lacking proper investment and coordination. Challenges in the development of agricultural tourism in Can Tho City include: Despite the attention and directives from central and local authorities to promote agricultural tourism, it remains largely spontaneous, and agricultural products are still simplistic. Agricultural tourism in Can Tho City has potential for growth but requires various solutions, including establishing mechanisms, support policies, and facilitating access to funding, labor, and infrastructure to enhance its competitiveness and move towards sustainable eco-friendly tourism, creating value chains for the tourism industry. Promotion, awareness-

raising, and professional training in agriculture-related fields do not meet practical needs. Budgets for specialized training in agricultural tourism are limited. The management workforce in districts and counties is insufficient. Most small-scale tourism businesses lack competitiveness. Individual tourism businesses are not adequately trained in agricultural tourism, resulting in lower service quality.

The use of digital technology in agricultural tourism in Can Tho City faces certain difficulties due to differences in people's digital literacy levels and economic potential. Therefore, marketing, tourism promotion, and linking tourist destinations between districts and counties do not meet expectations.

6. Sustainable Development Solutions for Agricultural Tourism in Can Tho City

To promote the development of agricultural tourism and leverage the strengths and potentials of Can Tho City, the following key solutions should be implemented:

Develop a strategic plan for agricultural tourism development aligned with agricultural development planning. Identify the potentials, strengths, and direction for agricultural tourism development in each locality and throughout Can Tho City.

Develop agricultural tourism products based on the agricultural tourism value chain, focusing on unique characteristics to create attractions and build destination images for agricultural tourism in Can Tho City.

Enhance the development of human resources for agricultural tourism through training programs and workshops, providing knowledge and skills in tourism for farmers and agricultural businesses. Train and develop personnel involved in the agricultural tourism value chain, such as tour guides, service staff, and family members engaged in tourism activities.

Strengthen information dissemination and promotion of agricultural tourism in a systematic and effective manner, avoiding individual, fragmented initiatives by farmers. Can Tho City should establish a Tourism Information Center to provide general tourism and agricultural tourism information to tourists.

Enhance collaboration in tourism development: Establish mechanisms for cooperation among relevant stakeholders in agricultural tourism development, particularly cooperation between local authorities, local communities, and travel companies. Additionally, Can Tho City should strengthen collaboration with neighboring regions in the Mekong Delta to create a shared agricultural tourism value chain. For example, establish an ecological agricultural museum for the Mekong Delta to serve tourism and agricultural research.

Protect tourism resources and the environment: Raise awareness among local residents and tourists about sustainable, green tourism development. Encourage local residents to improve the environmental landscape, such as creating green fences, decorating with ornamental flowers for photo opportunities, designing attractive entrances to unique tourist sites, and investing in public restrooms and waste collection and treatment systems in agricultural tourism areas.

Given that Can Tho is designated as the tourism center of the Mekong Delta, it is crucial to establish mechanisms, support policies, and facilitate access to funding, labor, and infrastructure for local farmers to participate in tourism and improve the competitiveness of agricultural tourism.

Continue to modernize promotion efforts, utilizing modern technology, and ensuring uniformity, professionalism, and increased effectiveness in promoting and advertising tourism within the country and internationally. Build and position the agricultural tourism brand in connection with the distinctive cultural identity of the Western region, following the spirit of Resolution No. 08-NQ/TW dated January 16, 2017, of the Politburo on developing tourism into a spearhead economic sector.

Continue to develop cultural tourism villages, combining local products and rural tourism services according to Decision No. 2403/QĐ-UBND dated September 24, 2018, on "Building and Developing Unique Tourism Products in Can Tho City in the 2018-2020 Period, Vision to 2030."

Conduct surveys, assessments, and establish tourism routes linking new tourist destinations, heritage sites, river tourism routes in districts and counties within Can Tho City. Improve the quality of tourist sites and gardens to meet the criteria for city and Mekong Delta recognition.

Implement the 2023 Tourism Promotion and Marketing Plan for Can Tho City, as well as the 2018-2020 Tourism Promotion and Marketing Program with a vision towards 2030. Participate in tourism promotion activities in Japan, India, and Thailand. Organize three tourism promotion conferences in key markets. Embrace digital transformation in tourism promotion in 2023.

Can Tho City's Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism should intensify training and public awareness campaigns to help local residents understand the importance and strengths of agricultural, ecological, and community-based tourism. Encourage community participation in tourism development, provide support for residents to access preferential loans and receive training and skills development in tourism. Follow the city's general policy of "Everyone participates in tourism; every household engages in tourism."

Conclusion

In conclusion, in the context of a rapidly changing market economy, while the government has implemented various policies to support agriculture, such as agricultural credit policies and production linkage support, the development of sustainable and higher-quality agricultural products remains a challenge. Therefore, the development of agricultural tourism in the Mekong Delta is considered a top solution to create more jobs in rural areas, increase income for local residents, promote the economic restructuring of agriculture, reduce poverty in a multidimensional approach, preserve and promote the cultural identity of the region, and minimize the impact on the natural environment. Thus, agricultural tourism not only improves the material and spiritual lives of farmers in the Mekong Delta but also meets the requirements for improving the criteria of the new rural development program and ensures sustainable development, in line with the spirit of the National Target Program for New Rural Development set by the Party and the State. Can Tho City, known as the "Western Capital," a land of rice, fruits, and seafood in Vietnam, with its unique eco-urban structure and relatively developed infrastructure, has the potential to become a leading agricultural tourism center in the Southwestern region, an unmissable destination for domestic and international tourists when visiting the Mekong Delta - the leading agricultural region of Vietnam.

Reference

1. Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2017. Resolution No. 120/NQ-CP dated November 17, 2017, on sustainable development of the Mekong Delta region in response to climate change.
2. David Preece (2015), Agritourism: An American Perspective, APO Agritourism Conference Presentations - West Java Indonesia, July 28, 2015.
3. Huynh Bien, 2019. Exploitation of gold in agricultural tourism.
4. Can Tho City Party Committee, 2016. Resolution No. 03-NQ/TU dated August 1, 2016, "on promoting tourism development."
5. People's Committee of Can Tho City, 2015. Decision No. 1358/QD-UBND dated May 12, 2015, approving the "adjustment of the overall tourism development plan of Can Tho City by 2020, with a vision towards 2030."
6. Government (2016). Decision No. 2227/QD-TTg dated November 18, 2016, by the Prime Minister approving the comprehensive tourism development plan for the Mekong Delta region until 2020, vision 2030.
7. Government (2016). Decision No. 593/QD-TTg dated April 6, 2016, by the Prime Minister on the issuance of the pilot program for linking economic and social development in the Mekong Delta region in the 2016 - 2020 period.
8. Claudio, L., Vincenzo, G., Luigi, M., Agostino, G., Alfonso, S. (2017). Exploring the features of agritourism and its contribution to rural development in Italy. *Land Use Policy*, 64, 383-390.
9. Christine Tew (2010). Importance of Agritourism for agriprenuer goal accomplishment. Thesis of Faculty of the Graduate School University of Missouri, 5-20.
10. Doan Thi My Hanh, Bui Thi Quynh Ngoc (2012). Rural tourism development in the Mekong Delta region: The path to a service-based economy - agriculture - industry structure, *Journal of Science, Vietnam National University, Economics and Business*. 28, 261-268.
11. Kim, C., Dwyer, L. (2003). Destination compatibility and bilateral tourism flows between Australia and Korea. *Journal of Tourism Studies* 14(2), 55-67.
12. National Assembly (2018). Amended Tourism Law, No. 09/2017/QH14.
13. Global Sustainable Tourism Council (2016), GSTC Sustainable Tourism Criteria, 3rd edition, December 21, 2016.

14. Nguyen Ba Lam (2007), *An Overview of Tourism and Sustainable Tourism Development*, Hanoi University of Business and Technology.
15. Nguyen Thi Tuyet Nga, Nguyen Thu Hien (2020), "Research on evaluation criteria and factors affecting sustainable tourism development in Vietnam," *Cong Thuong Magazine*, Issue 16, July.
16. National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (2005), *Tourism Law*, National Political Publishing House - Truth, Hanoi.
17. National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (2014), *Environmental Protection Law*.
18. Prime Minister (2004), Decision No. 153/2004/QĐ-TTg on the issuance of the Sustainable Development Strategic Orientation in Vietnam (Vietnam's Agenda 21), Hanoi.
19. Prime Minister (2013), Decision No. 201/QĐ-TTg approving the Master Plan for Vietnam's Tourism Development until 2020, vision to 2030, Hanoi.
20. Mai Anh Vu, Nguyen Xuan Hieu (2020), "Factors influencing sustainable tourism development," *Cong Thuong Magazine*, Issue T7.
21. WCED. (1987). *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*. New York: Oxford University Press.
22. Agriculture and Rural Development, Government of Alberta. (2010). *Rural tourism - an overview*.
23. Dao The Tuan, Nguyen Xuan Hoan (2012). *Diversifying forms of rural tourism*. International Workshop on Agricultural Tourism Development and Farm Tourism: Policies and Lessons Learned, August 21-22, Bac Kan.
24. Nguyen Thi Son and Nguyen Phu Thang (2014). Potential for the development of agricultural tourism in An Giang province. *Journal of Science*, (63), 82.
25. Nhat Quan (2021). Rural tourism will be the main force to revive tourism in Vietnam. Retrieved from <http://baolamdong.vn/dulich/202107/du-lich-nong-thon-se-la-chu-luc-phuc-hoi-du-lich-viet-nam-3070000/>
26. Pham Thai Thuy and Le Van Hue (2021). Linking the development of rural tourism in Viet Tri city, Phu Tho province. *Journal of Science and Technology*, Hung Vuong University, 22(1), 34-45.
27. Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of Hanoi (2020). *Report on the current status of farm economy models, agricultural cooperatives linked to educational tourism and experiences in Hanoi*.
28. Le Anh (2022). Development of unified, green, and sustainable tourism. Retrieved from <https://dangcongsan.vn/kinh-te/phat-trien-du-lich-theo-huong-thong-nhat-xanh-va-ben-vung-628704.html>
29. Nguyen Dinh Tho, Mai Thu Hien (2021). Application of technology in sustainable development. Retrieved from https://www.tapchiconsan.org.vn/web/guest/kinh-te/-/asset_publisher/V8hnp4dK31Gf/content/phuc-hoi-nganh-du-lich-trong-dieu-kien-thich-ung-an-toan-linh-hoat-kiem-soat-hieu-qua-dich-benh-covid-19
30. National Assembly (2017). Law No. 09/2017/QH14: *Tourism Law*, issued on June 19, 2017.
31. ASEAN (2016). *ASEAN community-based tourism*, Secretariat, Jakarta.
32. C (2006). *How can governments boost the local economic impacts of tourism?*, Options and Tools, ODI, London, The UK and SNV, The Hague the Netherlands.
33. Pham Thi Hong Cuc, Ngo Thanh Loan (2016). Community-based tourism contributes to poverty alleviation in Vietnam. *Journal of Science and Technology Development*, Volume 19, Issue X5.
34. Prime Minister (2020). Decision No. 147/QĐ-TTg, dated January 22, 2020, approving the tourism development strategy of Vietnam until 2030.
35. N (2001). *Community-based tourism in Botswana: the SNV experience in three community-based tourism projects*, SNV/IUCN CBNRM support programme, Botswana.
36. Huynh Cong Ba (2019), *The roots and cultural identity of Vietnam*, Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Hue.
37. Nguyen Van Huy (1997), *The cultural picture of Vietnamese ethnic groups*, Education Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City.
38. Huynh Thanh Quang (2011), *The cultural value of the Khmer in the Mekong Delta region*, National Political Publishing House - Truth, Hanoi.
39. Nguyen Quoc Quan (2015), *Thoughts on the development of community-based tourism in Soc Trang*. Retrieved from <https://www.dulichsoctrang.org/bai-viet/3833/vai-suy-nghi-ve-van-de-phat-trien-du-lich-cong-dong-o-soc-trang.kvn>, accessed on September 10, 2019.

40. People's Committee of Kien Hai District (2017), "Summary report on the Project for the Development of Kien Hai District's Tourism until 2025, with a vision towards 2030."
41. Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism - Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, Summary Report on the Comprehensive Tourism Development Plan of Vietnam until 2020 and vision to 2030.
42. Le Thi Lai (2018), "Factors influencing the decision to participate in community-based tourism in Tien Giang province," Master's thesis in Economics, Tra Vinh University.
43. Ngo Thi Lien (2018), Evaluation of community participation in the development of community-based ecotourism in Bidoup - Nui Ba National Park. *Journal of Science, University of An Hien*, 6(2), 96-102.
44. To Duy Hop - Luong Hong Quang (2000), *Community development, theory and application*, Culture and Information Publishing House, Hanoi.
45. Pham Trung Luong and collaborators (2002), "Research on the construction of environmental protection in tourism with the participation of the community contributing to sustainable tourism development on Cat Ba Island - Hai Phong." Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Hanoi.
46. Pham Trung Luong (1999), Potential, current status, and orientation for the development of ecotourism in Vietnam. *Proceedings of the Workshop on the Construction of a National Strategy for Ecotourism Development in Vietnam*, Hanoi.
47. Bui Viet Thanh (2016), "Community-based tourism in ASEAN countries and lessons for Vietnam," *University of Social Sciences and Humanities - National University of Ho Chi Minh City*.
48. Nguyen Dinh Tho (2013), *Research Methods in Business, Finance* Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City.
49. Nguyen Quoc Nghi, Nguyen Thi Bao Chau, and Tran Ngoc Lanh (2012), "Factors influencing the decision to participate in community-based tourism organizations by residents of An Giang province," *Journal of Science, Can Tho University*, 23, 194-202.
50. Vo Que (2006), *Community-based Tourism - Theory and Application, Volume 1*, Science and Technology Publishing House, Hanoi.
51. People's Committee of Kien Giang Province (2012). Decision No. 228/QD-UBND on approving the overall economic and social development plan of Kien Hai District, Kien Giang Province until 2020.
52. People's Committee of Kien Giang Province (2012). Decision No. 441/QD-UBND dated February 29, 2012, of Kien Giang Province People's Committee approving the overall tourism development plan of Kien Giang Province until 2020, with a vision towards 2030.