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Editor

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Agri-tourism: A modern development in Bahamian agriculture

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Abstract

The Bahamas has made tourism the country's primary economic force. Tourism comprises approximately half of gross domestic product while agriculture comprises approximately three percent. The Bahamas has a lack of development in other sectors of the economy, (e.g. agriculture), putting the country at a global disadvantage. In order for The Bahamas to compete globally there has to be some level of food security and a larger share of alternative venues of economic activity. The lack of connection between the local farming community and the hospitality industry has been identified as one of the main areas that can potentially ease the over reliance on foreign foodstuffs.

This paper is based on data from tourist surveys, interviews and personal observation. A classification model of agritourism enterprises is introduced and important linkages between agriculture and tourism are examined. This research investigated three varying agritourism enterprises as modern developments in agriculture and prospects for developing an economic diversification strategy for The Bahamas, utilizing agritourism.

The research observed that the greatest barriers to agritourism were on the supply side. Issues such as: lack of government interest, policy, farming labor and funding were key barriers for the farmers' perspective whereas elites touted low production and limited farmer reliability as barriers. Bureaucrats and academics found lack of policy, limited amount of farmers and lack of resources (technical, financial, infrastructure) as obstacles. This research has revealed that agritourism can be a success with careful planning, market determination and strong marketing coupled with the will to adapt and remain flexible.

Keywords: Agritourism, Agriculture, The Bahamas, Tourism, Development

Introduction

Several countries in the Caribbean depend on tourism receipts to contribute to their employment and gross domestic product. According to a Dos Santos (1972), "Dependence is a situation in which a certain group of countries have their economies conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy, to which the former is subject. The relation of interdependence between two or more economies, and between these and world trade, assumes the form of dependence

when some countries (the dominant) can expand and give impulse to their own development, while other countries can only develop as a reflection of this expansion" (71). Currently The Bahamas is the "other country", which only expands and grows as the American economy does (Table 1). This heavy reliance on tourism as the number one industry that comprises approximately half of gross domestic product leaves the country in a state of uncertainty. Of the gross domestic product, agriculture comprises approximately three percent, and with limited technological

advancements, government policies and minimal subsidies, the country does not even have the ability to feed itself. (Ministry of Statistics, 2007; Personal Communication, 2008)

The Bahamas is searching for ways to develop agriculture that is best suited for the country. One way to link the government's goals and development into other sectors of the economy is through agritourism. Tourism is something that The Bahamas has done well with thus far in the 21st century, but the country needs to broaden its economic base and agritourism presents another viable option to pursue. Combining tourism and agriculture has the potential to shift some of the funding away from tourism and into agriculture. If a revenue-funding stream can be developed by this venture it could be a more equitable model for agriculture. Research and promotion of the agricultural sector would also lure a wider segment of the population to participate if they can show members of the public how this venture can be profitable for businesses.

Research has shown that several agritourism venues have flourished in other countries, such as Italy, France, Jamaica, St. Lucia and British Columbia (Frater, 1983; Lack, 1997; Hsu, 2005; Personal communication, 2008). This new business sector has supplemented their tourism and agriculture industries. If The Bahamas wants to promote agriculture to the wider population as a viable job opportunity especially the younger segment of the population, there has to be a creative, innovative marketing of the concept given the kaleidoscope of activities under the aegis of agritourism. Agritourism has become a modern development for agriculture in the Caribbean.

Problem statement

The heavy reliance on the tourism sector by the government of The Bahamas has made tourism the primary economic force in the country. This singular reliance leads to structural deficiencies in the Bahamian economy. The Bahamas has a lack of development in other sectors of the economy, (for example, agriculture), putting the country at a global disadvantage. The intense dependence on agricultural imports has made the country vulnerable to events in other countries (e.g. external shocks). In order for The Bahamas to compete globally there has to be some level of food security and a larger share of alternative venues of economic activity. The lack of connection between the local farming community and the hospitality industry has been identified as one of the main areas that can potentially ease the over reliance on foreign foodstuffs (Personal communication, 2008). This research will explore potential agritourism linkages between the local farmers, hotels purchasers, international tourists and the government, with a view to develop a broader agritourism policy for The Bahamas as one element of a national strategy to ease reliance on foreign agricultural imports.

Agritourism Classification:

For newer areas entering into agritourism, having a classification system will provide a basic knowledge of the current and potential agritourism sectors.

These complementary phases (CP) depict the integrated system that Agritourism capitalists utilize in the Caribbean:

CP1: is a business enterprise that is in the initial stage of agritourism development on their farm. These agritourism operators attract tourists to purchase produce or their agricultural commodity

either on their premises or through stalls located near their premises. Lots of these entrepreneurs also utilize a coordinating agency to assist with marketing and continued development of their agritourism firms. Some of these enterprises are focused on creating and or continuing backward linkages.

CP2: businesses often start out as CP1 and mature into CP2 enterprises that still have at least one component of the CP1 venture but have expanded their production to include festivals and training with more interaction with tourist at the forward linkage level. These enterprises are normally also working on increased production to enter into in the backward linkage area. Some of these undertakings utilize the CP5 portion of the model but these vary depending on the national commitment of country and the number of organizations playing a role in coordination.

CP3: These agritourism endeavors that are classified mainly in this segment are permanent elements of the farming operations. These enterprises continually and actively seek tourist to participate in their farming/tourism activities. These businesses utilize aspects of CP5 to expand their market share, from on-site visits.

CP4: This agritourism activity is classified as a backward linkage towards the tourism sector. Blair (1995, 1997) describes a backward linkage involves buyers attracting suppliers. Agritourism operators of the other three segments, CP1-3, all strive to participate in this segment. The backward linkage in this model is the collaboration and usage of the agriculture sector in the country utilization, so as to stimulate the economy as a whole and to create synergy effects between agriculture and tourism. In this model, the agriculture

producers are trying to increase the amount of local foodstuffs utilized in the tourism sector of the economy, through fresh and value-added products.

CP5: This component of the model could be a governmental agency, a non-governmental agency, an international agency or a financial agency that assists the producers with the development of their agritourism venture. Several countries around the world have some form of coordinating entity that assist with agritourism development either directly or indirectly. Frater (1983) provides an extensive list of European agencies governmental and non-governmental that assists farmers with the development, marketing and resources.

“The advancement of agritourism is commonly attributed to the repercussions of agricultural restructuring and to the forces driving this structural adjustment” (Hackett 1995). Cox *et al.* (1995) have determined that tourist tastes are changing and require native dishes to soothe their exploratory palate. The Bahamas has the ability to market to these types of tourist with their native dishes that are slightly different on each of the islands. Other factors, such as the individuals’ interest in where their food comes from, and their health and well being, accentuate the rationale for a country to look into developing an agritourism program. Several studies have examined tourist interest in their health and where their food comes from (Bryden *et al.*, 1993; Reid *et al.*; 1993, Lack, 1995). While previous studies found tourist were not interested in local foods, there is a shift in the tourist palate for more local items.

With assistance from the government and other agencies such as Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) in the country, more farmers can advance from CP1 to other segments of the

classification system. Currently there are only three farms in the country that are at the CP3 stage and the numbers that are using the CP4 are also small (Personal Communication, 2008). More technological assistance and funding may have to be provided to farmers so that they would be able to capture a larger percentage of the tourism dollar.

Data Collection Techniques

This research utilized a mixed method approach (combining both qualitative and quantitative methods). A concurrent nested strategy; mixed methods design was used to explore the various participants in agritourism. "This model is used so that the researcher can gain broader perspectives as a result of using the different methods as opposed to using the predominant method alone" (Creswell, 1991, 2003). The predominant qualitative method, used interviews (content analysis), participant observation while the nested method applied a survey instrument. This method was chosen to mitigate the weakness of using one method instead of the other.

The first method used was a review of literature, where concepts and definitions were analyzed and classifications of agritourism and tourism was presented. The second technique developed was policy maker interviews, and academic interviews, that took place over a nine-day period of field research. Another interview was administered to farmers, on various islands in The Bahamas, while the final interviews were carried out with hotel purchasers. A third technique was self-administered, tourist questionnaires (survey) was supplied to tourists at airports around The Bahamas over a two-week period. The final method that was utilized is personal observations of three farms currently trying to pursue agritourism in The Bahamas. These methods were all

employed to determine if agritourism is a viable option to pursue for economic development in The Bahamas.

Review of Knowledge based Literature

A comprehensive literature review was undertaken to examine the concept of agritourism and develop definitions of agritourism. Research into agritourism as a form of sustainable agriculture and its role in sustainable development, was also explained. The literature review provides a rationale for the linkage of agriculture with tourism, and introduces two different linkages (forward and backward) while examining the economic leakages with respect to tourism. The review then researches and develops a classification theory for agritourism and other research of agritourism.

Interviews (General Overview)

While the study at its inception had planned to utilize Dolbeare and Schuman's (1982) method of a three-interview series used and cited by Kidston (2002) several factors made a change necessary and therefore a hybrid of the technique was employed. There were thirty-five interviews administered. All interviews were 45-minutes or less, open-ended question face-to-face interview which addressed current views of the issue of study, agritourism. Interviews varied in length from 15 minutes to 45-minutes, which was anywhere from 4-15 pages long once transcribed. There were 10 interviews that took 20 minutes to 45 minutes. The reminders of the interviews were all under 20 minutes but within the 15-minute range, with the exception of 2 that were 11 minutes.

The majority of interviews were recorded via digital recorder except the one with the Minister of Tourism. Journal notes were

also taken during all of the interviews this was done to corroborate what was stated with what participants wanted to express while not being recorded. Interviews were conducted on four of the islands throughout the country. Once completed, these recordings were then transcribed into Microsoft Word and then imported into NVivo₈ software and coded then grouped together through the use of content analysis.

Policy Makers Interviews

The elite group comprised of two Members of Parliament from the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Tourism. Bureaucrats were individuals from the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Tourism. There were also bureaucrats from a quasi government agency, Bahamas Agricultural Industrial Corporation (BAIC). Combined these individuals comprised the policy makers section. There were eight interviews in total in this category. The main objective of interviewing elite members and bureaucrats was to determine: 1) whether they knew what agritourism is and, if they did, how they would define it. 2) Whether policy makers thought agritourism is a viable option for The Bahamas. 3) The barriers to agritourism from a policy perspective 4) If agritourism should be pursued as a diversification strategy for the country.

Elite Interviews

There were three scheduled elite interviews with Members of Parliament from the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), Ministry of Tourism (MOT) and the Ministry of Finance (MOF). The minister of Finance was not available for interview because this minister was disputing a case in election court. The ministers each participated in a single,

forty-five minute or less, open-question interview that was similar but varied at times dependent on the response of the minister. The Minister of Agriculture interview was recorded with a digital recorder but the Minister of Tourism was not able to provide a face-to-face interview. The Minister of Tourism interview was carried out over the phone and recorded via speakerphone. Journal notes were utilized heavily for this interview, which took a substantial amount of time because of the method used. Similar to all scholarly readings, conducting elite interviews does take some finesse and patience. It is beneficial in the case of The Bahamas to know someone who has a personal contact with the minister. With the exception of Minister Cartwright, MOA, all other ministers proved very difficult to gain access.

Other Policy Officials

There were eighteen scheduled interviews with other bureaucrats from the three ministries and two interviews from BAIC. However there were only three from the MOA and two from the MOT while meeting with officials from the MOF was not possible because of scheduling conflicts. There was one scheduled interview that took place with an official from BAIC. These interviews took place over a five-to-seven day period, (March 14th-March 24th) as several rescheduling from the original dates had to take place.

Academic Interviews

The main goal of the key participant interviews was similar to the elite interviews the objective of determining: 1) whether they knew what agritourism is and, if they did, how they would define it. 2) Whether

academics thought agritourism is a viable option for The Bahamas. 3) If agritourism should be pursued as a diversification strategy for the country. 4) The barriers to the development of agritourism and 5) whether agritourism would constitute a niche market for The Bahamas. There were nine scheduled academics interviews but only four were completed. These individuals were selected the role that they participated in agriculture or tourism development in the country. Two professors from The College of The Bahamas (COB) (PhDs), a researcher in horticulture (PhD) and a representative (PhD) the Inter-American Institute for Corporation on Agriculture (IICA) in the Bahamas.

Farmers Interviews

Farmer's interviews had two similar goals to the other interviewees 1) whether they knew what agritourism is and, if they did, how they would define it. 2) Whether farmers thought agritourism is a viable option for The Bahamas. 3) If farmers thought policy makers established policies that were beneficial for their business, which in turn would benefit agritourism. There were eighteen farmers interviewed from four islands the New Providence, Exuma, Abaco and Grand Bahama. There were 30 scheduled interviews with farmers in various islands but when it was determined that there was limited funding to travel to the other family islands, the number was decreased. These farmers ranged from individuals who were well aware of agri-tourism and had some form of agri-tourism established on their farm or at a separate facility to individuals who never heard of the concept. There were also farmers that practiced a more subsistence level of farming compared to those that considered farming their main business. Of all the groups interviewed, this was the

most diverse and provided a great deal of knowledge for where agriculture is currently in The Bahamas.

Hotel Purchasers Interviews

Hotel purchasers or chefs were interviewed depending on who actually ordered the foodstuffs for the hotels. They were interviewed to determine where, how and why they purchased certain foodstuff items. The researcher wanted to determine if there was a preference for local versus foreign foodstuffs. There were fifteen scheduled interviews for hotel purchasers on New Providence, three on Exuma, two scheduled interviews for hotel purchasers on Abaco and three on Grand Bahama. Only five interviews were completed mainly because of scheduling conflicts and interviewers not having enough time because it was determined to be a peak tourist season. Officials from the following hotels were interviewed: Sheraton Cable Beach Hotel, Superclubs Breezers, Wyndham Crystal Palace Cable Beach, Atlantis Paradise Island International, and Comfort Suites Paradise Island.

Tourist Surveys

A survey was administered to approximately 1200 individuals at various points throughout The Bahamas. Surveys were administered on islands that have a large tourist visitation for that seasonal time period. There were ten islands scheduled for visitation but because of weather conditions, increased fees due to fuel costs and scheduling conflicts only four islands were visited. There were 960 respondents from the Nassau International Airport, 48 respondents from the Exuma Straw market, 20 respondents from the Abaco International airport and 29 from Port Lucaya, Grand Bahama totaling 1057

surveys. One hundred and forty-three questionnaires were discarded due to incompleteness and other reasons.

Surveys were administered in New Providence at the Nassau International Airport over a seven-day period in March, 2009. In order to survey at the airport, airport clearance had to be obtained, which meant getting approval from MOT and civil aviation administration. MOT limited the length of the surveying instrument and the number of days that could be surveyed on any one island, as the surveyor had to fit in the schedule that was already in place. This was disappointing as the dates and the times that were selected to be surveyed was sent to the ministry in advance after the pilot study was completed.

Surveying in Exuma took place at the straw market, a central area, because the airport did not have any foreign tourists present. Local officials informed me that tourists to the island stay for extended periods, therefore going to the straw market and business around that area would yield more results. Tourists were surveyed on this island from 11:00 am – 4:00 pm. Similar to Exuma, tourists on Grand Bahama were plentiful at another location besides the airport. Port Lucaya yielded more tourists in a central location and did not require airport clearance. Tourists were surveyed at the port from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm. Tourists were surveyed at the Abaco international airport from 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm. Because of scheduling conflicts Abaco only had a small sample. Tourists were randomly selected at each location. The sample was randomly selected. On average, because of the selection process, no more than 135 people were surveyed each day.

Once selected, participants were asked if they wished to participate in the study. They were given an informational letter as outlined by the IRB and verbal consent was obtained. Tourists were then given the

questionnaire and a writing instrument and told that the survey would be collected once others were distributed to other tourists in the area. The survey took approximately 3-5 minutes, and was comprised of a combination of checklist, open ended, nominal and interval scale questions. Checklists were used for several questions: length of stay, activities participated in are just a few; this was used to give the respondents several choices. The main open-ended question was defining agri-tourism if they had ever heard of the concept; the idea was to gather what the respondents thought. Nominal questions were used to gather factual information while an interval scale was used for income and age. Three committee members analyzed surveys and five other faculty members before it was pre-tested. The survey was pre-tested early January by 416 tourists at the Nassau International Airport. This pre-testing resulted in (3-5) additional questions and a larger scale for household income.

Agri-tourism Farms: Participant Observational Visits

Observation is another type of qualitative research that was utilized in this study. "A major strength of the approach is the extent to which investigations are conducted and descriptions are written, usually resulting in sufficient details for the reader to grasp the idiosyncrasies of the situation" (Myers, 2002). The observational protocol that was used for this research was an adapted version of (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) with descriptive and reflective notes. Farms were visited in the months of December and then again in March of 2008, the average visit lasted for two hours and in some cases three hours.¹

¹ The Abaco Neem Farm was only visited once because of cost.

Participant observation was used on these three farms to allow complex social and cultural nuances to be viewed. (Bloomberg et. al, 2008) This method was used to enlighten the researcher about how these farms operated and to gain insight about their owners. There are several noted benefits of utilizing participant observation namely: it furnishes access to the "backstage culture"; allows for completely comprehensive description, which can then be interpreted to describing "behaviors, intentions, situations, and events as understood by one's informants" is highlighted; and it provides opportunities for viewing or participating in unscheduled events. (Kawulich, 2005, p 43) While all information was written and recorded (conversations) some of the information that was discussed was asked by participants not to be inserted into the study.

Tourist Survey Results

This section presents the results of the tourist survey that took place in March on New Providence, Abaco, Grand Bahama and Exuma. Because of the number of respondents the data was entered into Microsoft excel, and numbered and highlighted upon completion in order to go back to that survey to check data entry. The data was then imported into SAS² in order to run the logistic regression.

The results of the survey were compared to the national statistics available from the Ministry of Tourism (MOT). Information from (MOT) was utilized because this ministry has undertaken interviewing of tourists leaving The Bahamas since the early 1970's through the "Exit Survey". The 2007/2008 statistics were not available therefore the 2006 Exit Survey results were

used. 10,792 tourists completed an Exit Survey in 2006; only 71% of them provided sufficient valid information upon which reliable estimates of expenditure could be made (Ministry of Tourism, 2006). For the researcher, 1,200 participants completed the survey however only 88% of them provided sufficient valid information. Once the researcher compared results of the MOT's survey with the results of the survey instrument used for this study it was found that they were similar.

In 2006, 45% of Stopover Visitors spent, on average, \$1,175.1 per visit. This is an estimated total of \$1,881.08 million; fifteen percent (15%) of their expenditures were on meals and drinks. (Ministry of Tourism, 2006)

While results were similar for the researcher's report and the MOT's report, because statistics for this year were not available a direct comparison could not be made, but similarities can be drawn. There were areas where a larger percentage was determined for the researcher than MOT. This could be a result of sample size difference or an actual change in tourist demographics, for this year.

There were a notably larger percentage of females surveyed by the researcher when compared to the MOT statistics. This could have affected the survey's results but it is unlikely as Catalino et al (2004) determined that females have a higher preference for agri-tourism activities, which was also indicated in this research. (Catalino et. al., 2004)

Participant Observational Visits

There are currently two operational and one-beginner large-scale agri-tourism farms in The Bahamas. While one of these farms caters solely to domestic tourists and natives the other is planning on branching out to actively encourage international tourists to their operations for more than

² Statistical Program

just a brief visit. This is another farm that is in its initial stage and is targeting both the domestic and international markets. All three farmers provide a different attraction on their farms, showing the diverse nature of agri-tourism.

Descriptive

Goodfellow Farm

The most advanced of these three farmers is the Goodfellow farm (run by Ian). The agri-tourism component of the operation consists of forward and backward linkages. An example of the forward linkage is the selling of products and the farming experience to the consumers as they come to visit and shop on the farm. The store located on the farm is called country store. It sells homemade jellies, jams, syrups, marmalades, conserves, relishes and herb infused vinaigrettes and dressings. There is also a restaurant on the farm where numerous products sold at the restaurant, are from items produced the farm to items from other farms around the country. Mr. Goodfellow stated that, in the beginning they started with one picnic table and now they seat 250 at their farm for lunches along with serving 300 students and another 60 staff members at the Lyford Cay School.

Goodfellow farms mainly cater to the domestic market for on-site visitors featuring fall festivals and pumpkin pickings during the "fall" weather. In the summer they have waterslides and bouncing castles on the farm along with the regular play area that is designated for children.

In the area of backward linkages, this farm has also prospered having contracts worth at least \$1 million a year with major hotels in the country, e.g. Atlantis. Some of the gourmet restaurants that tourists and locals frequent are Atlantis Five Twins, Ocean

Goodfellow); his farming operation is located in Mount Pleasant, New Providence; which is on the western side of the island (

Figure 2). The farm grows a variety of products such as green beans, four varieties of lettuce, squash, corn, tomatoes, onions, cucumbers, carrots, ginger, parsley, dill, garlic, chives, basil and spinach. All animals on the farm are for domestic use.

Club Dune, Villagio, Lyford Cay, Graycliff, Old Fort Bay, The Landing and The Rock House, all these purchase items from this farm.

Down to Earth Farm

The least advanced farmer in this observational study is Sidney Sinclair. He is a part time farmer with his main profession being construction. Down to Earth Farm is located on Cow Pen Road on New Providence (Figure 2). Because of finances, it took him three years and eight months to get his farm up and in-partial operation. He sent a proposal to the government and was successful to receive land to start his farm. The size of the farm is nine acres and while he plans on using all of these, there is still space left to place cottages on the farm. While the other farms are fully operational, this farm is only in its beginning stage. However if the plan that Sidney Sinclair has for Down to Earth is achieved, then it will be one of the more successfully agri-tourism ventures in the region. Mr. Sinclair is 45 years old and plans on devoting more time to his farm once he has the entire infrastructure in place.

Mr. Sinclair has a variety of crops and animals on his farm. There are goats, sheep, donkeys, Yorkshire pigs, fish pond, birds, ducks, along with some citrus crops, onions, mint, garlic, bananas, watermelon,

celery, sweet peppers, cabbage, mangoes, walnuts, carrots, beets, plantains, corn, coconuts, broccoli, cauliflower, peanuts, tomatoes, guinea plum, juju, tamarind, pumpkin, pears, bok choy. Mr. Sinclair plans on having dune buggy rides and his farm is set up like a park. Go-carts race through the crops, persons can sit and eat on a man made island with tropical fish and turtles swimming in the surrounding water. There will also be a chef that comes to the farm to prepare meals with the produce that is grown on the farm. The soon to be constructed cottages will house visitors from both the domestic and international markets and are located at the back of the farm where there is less traffic.

Although there has not been an official opening, during a “pre-test”, several family members and friends were invited to visit the farm and provide feedback. There was a positive response and the children really seemed to enjoy the animals and asking asked questions about their food.

Abaco Neem Farm

Nicholas Miaoulis, a Bahamian Greek, has been living in Abaco for 27 years after moving from Nassau. At 52 Mr. Miaoulis has been farming for 17 years. The name of his farm is Abaco Neem Farm, which means tree farm. This farm is a certified organic³ farm and has 140 acres of certified organic aloe and coconuts.

Unlike the first two farms that were discussed, this farm is located on a family island and not the capital. The Neem farm is in Marsh Harbour, Abaco and like Down to Earth, is planning on having guests come and live on the farm for a period of time. This farm focuses on one crop, mainly the Neem tree, and grows few other crops (aloe

and coconuts). Unlike the other two farms, this operation has a separate store off site that manufactures products from the 7,500 Neem trees on the farm.

The reason that Mr. Miaoulis started the farm was for health reasons.

“When I stumbled on the Neem tree I thought it would be a wonderful tree for builders at that time because it is also for carpentry, base molding and ceiling molding for construction because the Neem tree is insect resistant. The more I researched the Neem tree and the value of Neem tree; I got to see the medicinal side of it to contribute to the healthcare of our country. So we make soaps. We make a dental hygiene product. All good health starts with dental hygiene. We make an extract from the leaf. Again, all the oil that is produced from the seeds, that is pressed from the seeds from the Neem tree, that will all go into our products. We produce facial creams, salves, and bug repellent. We also make a Neem cake, which is a byproduct again when we press the oil from the fruit the byproduct is Neem cake. We make pet shampoo. We make shampoo for ourselves. We make capsules from the leaf for high blood pressure, poor circulation, to help with the immune system. The beauty of the Neem is there are no side effects. Some capsules – we make capsules also for pets, because they also suffer from diseases.”

Source: Mr. Miaoulis

The Neem Farm is also planning on building bathrooms along with a restaurant on-site. An application was sent into the government to ask for financial assistance with the bathroom project. Mr. Miaoulis discusses in great depth the need for government assistance in education,

³ Grown without the use of conventional pesticides, artificial fertilizers, human waste, or sewage sludge, and processed without radiation or additives. www.botanicalbasics.com/glossary.htm

motivation and policy formation in the agricultural sector.

Analysis

“The existence of shared mental models at a certain moment in time is important because it provides the cognitive condition for every social interaction” (Mantzavinos, 2004, p 69). The Bahamas, similar to every other society, has developed its own cultural knowledge and learning. In the area of agriculture this learning has not advanced as progressively as other industries in the society. Current farmers are utilizing the same antiquated techniques that were employed by former farmers, even though these techniques were not “successful” for the latter group. The shift in thinking has only come with the introduction of foreign nationals exploring new ways to solve old problems in agriculture. An additional factor that is still current in the old agricultural paradigm is the lack of information sharing. The native farmers still hesitate to provide information to each other and others putting themselves at a disadvantage for learning new techniques and different ways to solve farming problems. A more recent cultural learning model has developed in the country, the disinterest in agriculture. It is uncertain if this mental mood change derived from the government’s obvious disinterest or from parent’s disinterest being passed to their children. Regardless of the reason, this industry once seen as prominent has faded into the background, taking with it the country’s chance of being agriculturally self-sufficient.

Goodfellow Farm

Goodfellow’s grandfather was a farmer in The Bahamas who for several years owned Sunrise farms. Mr. Goodfellow left his job as an investment banker to pursue farming. Mr. Goodfellow was born in Canada and

moved to The Bahamas. At age 49 he has the most advanced agri-tourism operation in The Bahamas to date. This farm is ran as a corporation even though Mr. Goodfellow insists that it is a family farm. Their mission statement reads: To improve the quality of produce, food and life in The Bahamas. (www.goodfellowfarms.com)

Mr. Goodfellow has been able to target a niche market in the country. It is difficult to determine if the reason there are so many patrons is because of the prestige associated with their establishment eating or actual interest in agriculture related activities. The farm is situated in an area where higher economic brackets residents live.

Down to Earth Farm

While Mr. Sinclair’s farm has the ability to be a great success, limited funding is proving to be a major obstacle. With the exception of three workers, the majority of his staff is family, (which adds another dimension to his business). While it does mean that his labor costs are low, there is a reliability factor that comes into play with a “typical” family business in The Bahamas- Mr. Sinclair is also at a disadvantage compared to the other two farmers because he can only develop his farm part time, the other farmers in this study are married and work as a team with their partners. One of those farmers’ wives brings in supplemental income with a real estate business, while the other works in the store and works on the marketing aspect of their business.

These are only minor issues however and can easily be overcome with an injection of funds and adequate marketing. Mr. Sinclair does have an advantage of being the only “native” Bahamian developing an agri-tourism farm in the country, at the time of this study.

Abaco Neem Farm

Mr. Miaoulis similar to Mr. Goodfellow has the advantage of more funding for their start up capital. His business is one of the main attractions on Abaco. Abaco Neem products have branched out nationally and internationally. Both he and Mr. Goodfellow have been able to penetrate larger hotels in the country, while several other farmers have not. The reason for this is uncertain, some would suggest it is a supply issue or inability to market. These reasons seem unlikely as both farmers only sell a small fraction to the hotels. It is the author's belief that it has more to do with the social networks these individuals are a part of, one that takes time, money and maneuvering to enter.

Conclusion

This study's objective was to examine the prospects for developing an economic diversification policy for The Bahamas, utilizing agri-tourism. Agri-tourism was determined to be a viable option for the country to pursue. To capitalize on agri-tourism a careful management approach will need to be employed, strong linkages constructed, advertisement for agriculture and cooperative strategies formed. Yet agri-tourism will only work if policy makers advance the policy and craft legislation that will specifically mandate how programs will be carried out.

With intense competition from other Caribbean nations in the tourism sector, it is evident The Bahamas has to diversify its tourism product. One vehicle to move the country in a new direction is agri-tourism. This research has revealed that agri-tourism can be a success with careful planning, market determination and strong marketing coupled with the will to adapt and remain flexible.

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Table 1: Country Growth Comparison

Year	The Bahamas	United States (a)
1996	4.2	3.7
1997	5	4.5
1998	6.8	4.2
1999	4	4.4
2000	1.9	3.7
2001	0.8	0.8
2002	2.3	1.6
2003	1	2.5
2004	1.3	3.9
2005	2.5	3.2
2006	3.4	3.3
2007 (a)	4.5	2.2
2008(a)	4	2.8

Source: The Bahamas 1996-2006 Department of Statistics. (a) IMF WEO April, 2007

Table 2: Interviews Results and Findings

Group Interviewed	Barriers to Agritourism Development	Benefits to Agritourism development
<i>Academics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Policy • Lack of Infrastructure • Limited amount of Farmers • Limited technical advancements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification of the Economy • Food Security • Redevelopment in Rural Areas • Encourage more Participants into the Agriculture Industry • Increase Foreign Reserves • Rejuvenation of Both Industries
<i>Elites</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low Production of Crops • No Food Security • Limited Reliability of Farmers • Slow to Change Perceptions • Lack of Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing Additional Activities • Increase Foreign Reserves • Additional Employment
<i>Farmers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Policy • Lack of Funding • Lack of Government Interest • Communication between Actors • Labor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification of the Economy • Rejuvenation of Both Industries • Encourage more Participants into the Agriculture Industry • Increase Foreign Reserves • Providing Additional Activities • Food Security
<i>Hotel Purchasers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing Issues • Labor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Security • Increase Foreign Reserves • Diversification of the Economy
<i>Bureaucrats</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Policy • Lack of Government Interest • Limited Reliability of Farmers • Slow to Change Perceptions • Lack of Funding • Limited amount of Farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification of the Economy • Rejuvenation of Both Industries • Encourage more Participants into the Agriculture Industry • Increase Foreign Reserves • Providing Additional Activities • Food Security • Redevelopment in Rural Areas

Table 3: General Survey Respondent Statistics

	2006	2005	Author 2008
Main Purpose of Visit			
Vacation	70.1%	71.2%	81.46%
Business	7.6%	7.1%	6.35%
Honeymoon	6.1%	6.1%	2.08%**
Primary Reason for Choosing The Bahamas			
Beaches	33.1%	31.2%	
Climate	13.1%	15.3%	
Hotel Facilities	10.3%	10.0%	
Likely Return in 1-5 Years	82.5%	80.7%	
Likely Recommend to Friends/Relatives	89.5%	87.8%	
Used Travel Agent	38.7%	42.2%	
Age (in years)			
25-54	56.7%	57.0%	82.49%
>= 55	18.3%	17.7%	17.51%
Sex			
Male	48.9%	48.8%	42.33%
Female	48.2%	48.3%	57.67%
Race			
White	83.9%	80.2%	93.22%
Black	6.6%	9.8%	3.63%
Hispanic	3.3%	3.2%	1.17%
Mixed Race/Heritage	2.0%	1.6%	0.12%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.4%	1.6%	0.71%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.4%	0.1%	1.15%
	2006	2005	Author 2008
Education			
College Graduate or Above	63.4%	63.7%	82.71%
Annual Household Income (thousands US)			
\$40 - \$59	9.8%	9.0%	Different Scale
\$60 +	67.6%	68.3%	
Previous Visits			
First Time	44.5%	45.0%	54.87%
Repeat	55.0%	54.5%	45.13%
Travelling Party Size			
One	15.0%	14.3%	36.04%
Two	48.0%	47.0%	32.08%
Household Size			
One	12.1%	11.4%	13.50%
Two	36.7%	36.2%	30.67%
Three-Four	35.3%	35.3%	37.32%
Country of Origin			
USA	85.3%	85.8%	88.72%
Canada	5.3%	4.7%	2.96%
Europe	5.1%	5.3%	6.67%
Outher	4.3%	4.2%	2.31%
Average Length of Stay (nights)	6.4	6.4	6.8

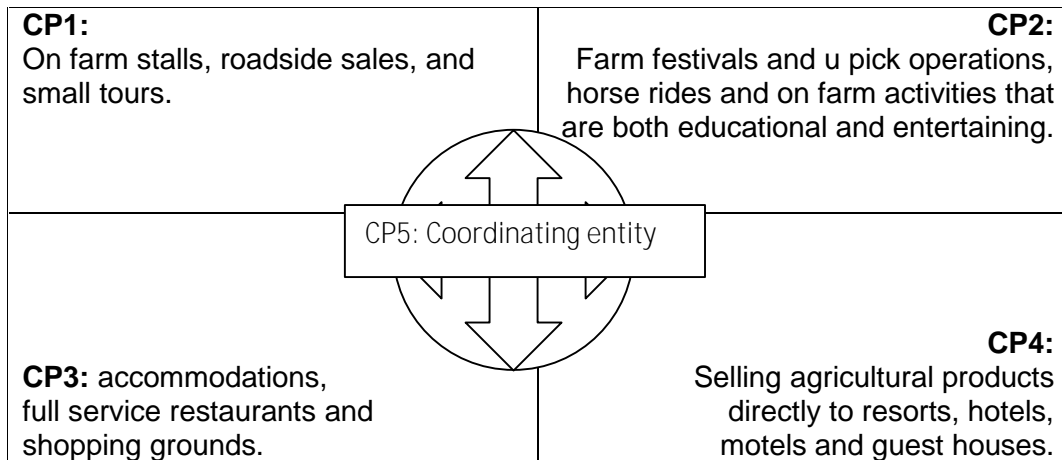


Figure 1: Complementary Phases (CP) Classification Model.
Adapted from Leeds & Barret Model Source: Author



Figure 2: New Providence Island Map