

**Sustainable Agro-Tourism and Climate Entrepreneurship in Hanguranketha, Sri Lanka****Guruge, T.P.G.W.D.<sup>1\*</sup>, De Silva, W.N.<sup>2</sup>, Disanayake, D.M.T.L.<sup>3</sup>, Bandara, Y.M.A.M.<sup>4</sup>**<sup>1</sup>*Department of Geography, University of Colombo, Colombo 03, Sri Lanka*<sup>2</sup>*Department of Agricultural Economics & Agribusiness, University of Ruhuna, Matara, Sri Lanka*<sup>3</sup>*Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka*<sup>4</sup>*Divisional Secretariat, Hanguranketha, Sri Lanka**\*[Deepaniguruge11@gmail.com](mailto:Deepaniguruge11@gmail.com)***Abstract**

Integrating agriculture and forest conservation into tourism offers a strategic pathway to promote community livelihoods, build climate resilience, and sustainable rural development. The Hanguranketha Divisional Secretariat Division (DSD) in Sri Lanka possesses rich biodiversity and fertile agricultural lands, but faces challenges such as climate variability, socio-natural disasters, and weak rural entrepreneurship which is vital for local development. This study evaluates agro-tourism as a driver for sustainable development in Hanguranketha, examining the challenges and opportunities of related climate entrepreneurship. The research adopted a mixed-method approach, combining primary data from questionnaires, interviews, and field observations with information from government development plans. A total of 28 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) across tourism-related sectors accommodation, food and beverage, tour operations, transport, and agro-based products were selected using stratified random sampling. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively and examined qualitative insights thematically. The study generated the findings into a SWOT framework to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of agro-tourism development. Results show that agriculture uses 67.08% of the DSD's land area, while 23.38% of the forest cover supports agroforestry and related tourism. Based on evidence from 28 respondents, 70% identified wellness tourism particularly herbal spas and Ayurveda based experiences as a key strength for developing integrated agro-tourism packages. However, agro-tourism expansion is constrained by inadequate policy and programmatic support (40%), weak integration into divisional and local development plans (48%), limited industry and community commitment (71%), and insufficient incentives for climate entrepreneurship (64%). Conversely, strong opportunities exist to establish agroforestry tourism clusters (84%), enhance entrepreneurial capacity (89%), and promote public- private partnerships linking agriculture, tourism and climate adaptation (85%). Increasing anthropogenic forest fires over the past five years, mainly damaging grasslands and understory plantations, pose a significant threat to the sustainability of agro-tourism (64%). To overcome these challenges, the study proposes strategic interventions such as developing agroforestry tourism clusters, building local entrepreneurial capacity, and enhancing collaboration between public and private actors. By mobilizing local resources, applying traditional agricultural knowledge, and promoting climate-conscious entrepreneurship, Hanguranketha can position itself as a model for community-centered, environmentally sustainable, and climate-resilient rural tourism in Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** *Sustainable tourism, Agro-tourism, Forest-based tourism, Climate tourism entrepreneurship*