

## AGRICULTURAL TOURISM IN THE MEKONG DELTA, VIETNAM: STATE POLICIES, ENTERPRISE STRATEGIES AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

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DOI: 10.37550/tdmu.EJS/2026.01.697

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### Article Info

**Volume:** 8

**Issue:** 1

**March:** 2026

**Received:** Jan. 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026

**Accepted:** Mar. 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026

**Page No:** 70-85

### Abstract

Agricultural tourism (agritourism) has become an emerging development pathway in the Mekong Delta, where agriculture, culture, and water-based ecosystems intersect to form distinctive rural landscapes. Within Vietnam's broader agenda of rural restructuring and sustainable development, agritourism in the region has gradually evolved from small-scale household initiatives into a more organized sector shaped by the interaction of state policies, enterprise strategies, and community participation. This study examines how these three actors collectively influence agritourism development in the Mekong Delta. Using a qualitative research design and an embedded case study approach, the analysis draws on national and provincial policy documents, industry reports, and representative agritourism models such as My Khanh Tourist Village, Con Son Community Cooperative, Con Chim Ecotourism Site, Con Ong experiential farm, and the Dinh Yen Mat weaving craft village. The findings indicate that since 2010, the Vietnamese government has established a policy framework promoting experiential agriculture-based tourism, regional connectivity, climate-resilient development, and cultural preservation, thereby enabling enterprises to upgrade facilities, diversify tourism services, and expand regional tour circuits. At the same time, local communities have reorganized tourism activities through cooperative and community-based models that integrate agricultural practices, culinary heritage, and craft traditions into visitor experiences. Successful initiatives demonstrate improvements in income generation, employment opportunities, cultural continuity, and environmental awareness. However, agritourism in the Mekong Delta still faces challenges, including fragmented policy implementation, limited destination management capacity, weak interprovincial coordination, repetitive tourism products, and environmental pressures associated with climate change. The study argues that the sustainability of agritourism in the region depends on strengthening the alignment between policy frameworks, enterprise innovation, and community-based stewardship.

**Keywords:** agritourism; community participation; enterprise strategy; Mekong Delta; rural development; state policy; sustainable tourism.

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## 1. Introduction

Agricultural tourism (agritourism) has emerged globally as a strategic approach to diversify rural economies, enhance farm income, and strengthen linkages between agricultural production and tourism services. Defined as tourism activities built upon agricultural resources, production processes, and rural cultural landscapes, agritourism allows visitors to experience farming practices, interact with local knowledge systems, and enjoy recreational and educational activities rooted in agricultural life (Hilchey, 1993; Lobo et al., 1999). Its development depends not only on natural and agricultural assets, such as land, water, climate, crops, livestock, and agroecological systems, but also on the participation of local people, their cultural practices, livelihood experiences, and traditional skills (Torres et al., 2004; UNWTO, 2011). In recent years, agritourism has also been increasingly viewed as a pathway toward sustainable rural transformation, linking agricultural production with cultural heritage, environmental stewardship, and experiential tourism.

The Mekong Delta, Vietnam's largest agricultural hub, possesses exceptional conditions for agritourism development. With fertile alluvial landscapes, dense river–canal networks, extensive orchards, aquaculture zones, and a vibrant rural culture shaped by everyday interactions with water and wetlands, the region offers an outstanding variety of resources for agriculture-based tourism. Over the past decade, agritourism has gained traction as both a livelihood supplement for farming households and an emerging business model for enterprises seeking to diversify tourism products. Beyond its economic potential, agritourism in the Mekong Delta also draws upon the cultural richness of rural communities, including traditional performing arts, culinary practices, craft traditions, and ritual life that collectively contribute to a multi-dimensional tourism ecosystem encompassing leisure, cultural, and experiential tourism.

Importantly, the rise of agritourism in the Mekong Delta has been closely shaped by state policies. The Vietnamese Government's Decision No. 2227/QĐ-TTg approving the Master Plan for Tourism Development in the Mekong Delta to 2020, with vision to 2030, laid a foundational policy framework that encourages provinces to mobilize their agricultural strengths for tourism development. These policies promote the creation of distinctive, competitive tourism products that integrate agricultural, ecological, and cultural values, while simultaneously improving livelihoods and enhancing the region's visibility at national and international levels. However, the effectiveness of these policies depends not only on their formulation but also on how they are implemented through coordinated planning, institutional support, and collaboration among multiple stakeholders. In practice, gaps often remain between policy intentions and actual implementation across provinces and localities.

Within this evolving policy environment, enterprises and local communities have become key actors that translate state orientations into practice. Enterprises adopt business strategies that combine agricultural production with tourism branding, service innovation, and market diversification. At the same time, the long-term sustainability of agritourism development also depends on the commitment of enterprises to responsible investment, including support for local workforce development, knowledge transfer, and the prioritization of local labor in tourism services as part of their corporate social responsibility. Meanwhile, local communities, including farmers, cooperatives, and rural households, participate by reorganizing production, developing experiential activities,

and preserving cultural knowledge that adds value to tourism products. Their capacity to learn, adapt to new tourism practices, and embrace responsible tourism principles, such as environmental protection, cultural authenticity, and visitor experience quality, plays a critical role in shaping sustainable agritourism models.

Against this backdrop, the Mekong Delta serves as a compelling case to analyze how state policies, enterprise strategies, and community participation intersect to shape agritourism development. This article examines the dynamic interactions among these three pillars, state policy, enterprise organization, and community empowerment, while also highlighting structural challenges related to policy coordination, enterprise commitment, and community adaptive capacity. The study investigates how policy frameworks enable local initiatives, how enterprises innovate within agricultural landscapes, and how communities negotiate opportunities and challenges in transitioning toward agriculture-based tourism. By identifying both enabling conditions and persistent constraints, the article contributes to broader discussions on sustainable rural development, livelihood diversification, and policy-driven agrarian transitions in contemporary Vietnam, particularly in the context of culture-based and environmentally responsible tourism development.

## 2. Literature Review

Agritourism has grown into a prominent rural development strategy worldwide, supported by global trends that prioritize sustainable, experience-based, and community-centered forms of tourism. As tourists increasingly seek immersive encounters with nature, local culture, and everyday agricultural practices, agritourism has transformed from a supplementary rural activity into a diversified development pathway for many agricultural regions. This transition has been well documented in international scholarship, which emphasizes agritourism's contributions to economic diversification, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship. Recent studies further highlight that agritourism functions not only as an economic activity but also as a governance and development mechanism that connects agricultural production, rural livelihoods, and tourism markets through coordinated institutional and community participation.

A substantial body of literature highlights agritourism's economic impacts, particularly its ability to create alternative income streams for farmers, stabilize rural livelihoods, and catalyze small-scale entrepreneurship. Empirical studies across Europe and Asia demonstrate that activities such as orchard harvesting, tea-picking tours, hands-on livestock care, and farm-based educational programs can significantly enhance farm income while simultaneously strengthening visitor appreciation of rural heritage (Mirzokulova et al., 2024; Evgrafova, 2024; Ovidiu et al., 2024). Agritourism also creates new employment opportunities for women and youth, expands local value chains, and stimulates demand for complementary services such as homestays, handicrafts, and rural transportation.

Beyond economic returns, agritourism has been recognized for its socio-cultural contributions. Many scholars argue that agritourism reinforces the transmission of traditional knowledge, culinary heritage, and local identity by embedding tourism activities within everyday agricultural practices. It helps maintain intergenerational cultural continuity and enhances community pride, especially in regions facing rapid modernization or outmigration. Studies in disadvantaged rural areas further show that

agritourism can act as a catalyst for public investment, leading to improvements in transportation networks, irrigation, electricity, digital connectivity, and public services, thus creating broader conditions for long-term rural revitalization (Tsung-Chiung et al., 2024; Kateryna et al., 2024; Seena et al., 2023). These findings also indicate that community participation is a critical factor in sustaining agritourism, particularly when local residents are empowered to transform everyday agricultural knowledge, cultural traditions, and rural lifestyles into meaningful tourism experiences.

Environmental sustainability also represents a significant theme in agritourism research. In countries such as Russia and China, agritourism development has encouraged conservation-oriented land use, preservation of agro-biodiversity, and adoption of environmentally friendly farming practices (Cyбopa et al., 2023; Eşitti, 2023; Hazuda et al., 2023). These studies indicate that agritourism is most successful when agricultural landscapes are maintained as ecological assets rather than converted for intensive or industrialized uses. Consequently, many scholars emphasize that sustainable agritourism requires the integration of ecological conservation, cultural authenticity, and responsible tourism practices, both from tourism operators and visitors.

In addition, technological innovation has become an emerging frontier in agritourism scholarship. Smart agriculture technologies, such as IoT-based farm monitoring, automated irrigation systems, and digital livestock management, have enhanced farm productivity and improved tourist experiences. These innovations allow farms to operate more efficiently, offer educational demonstrations, and appeal to tech-oriented visitors interested in modernized agricultural environments (Thittaporn et al., 2021; Iroda, 2021; Sadia et al., 2021; Ngo et al., 2020; Bao, 2021). Technological integration also supports destination management, digital marketing, and visitor engagement, thereby contributing to the professionalization of agritourism services.

Importantly, a growing stream of studies emphasizes that the successful development of agritourism depends heavily on institutional support, particularly through state policies, local governance, and public-private partnerships. Policies that provide financial incentives, infrastructure investment, branding strategies, and training programs are critical for helping farmers, cooperatives, and small enterprises transition from subsistence agriculture to tourism-oriented business models. This aligns closely with Vietnam's context, where national and regional policies have increasingly encouraged the integration of agriculture and tourism. However, policy effectiveness often depends on coherent spatial planning, coordinated implementation across administrative levels, and the capacity of local stakeholders to translate policy orientations into viable tourism practices.

Despite the extensive international literature, research on agritourism in Vietnam, especially in the Mekong Delta, often highlights a gap between policy orientations and actual implementation at the enterprise and community levels. The Mekong Delta's rich ecological resources, agricultural diversity, and strong cultural heritage position it well for agritourism development; however, the transformation of these advantages into sustainable business models depends on how effectively state policies are translated into local strategies, how enterprises innovate within agricultural landscapes, and how communities participate and benefit. Recent discussions also stress the importance of enterprise responsibility in supporting local workforce development and ensuring that tourism investments contribute to community livelihoods rather than bypassing them.

Thus, existing literature provides a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for analyzing agritourism as a multidimensional development approach. At the same time, it underscores the need for context-specific studies, such as those in the Mekong Delta, that examine the interactions between policy frameworks, enterprise strategies, and community participation in shaping agritourism outcomes. By focusing on the dynamic relationship among state policy, enterprise organization, and community empowerment, this study contributes to bridging the gap between policy discourse and practical implementation in agritourism development.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative research design combined with an embedded case study approach to examine the factors shaping the development of agritourism in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. The methodological focus is to analyze how state policies, enterprise development strategies, and local community participation collectively influence agritourism trajectories. In particular, the study examines how these three actors interact in translating policy orientations into practical tourism initiatives, while also revealing gaps between policy frameworks and on-the-ground implementation. By adopting a multi-scalar perspective, from national policy frameworks to provincial strategies and local practices, the research aims to generate a holistic understanding of agritourism development in the Mekong Delta.

#### ***3.1. Research Design and Rationale***

A qualitative design is well suited to studies that investigate policy processes, institutional dynamics, and grassroots engagement. Given that agritourism development is shaped by interactions among diverse stakeholders, government agencies, enterprises, cooperatives, and rural households, a qualitative and interpretive approach enables the exploration of how these actors perceive, negotiate, and operationalize agritourism initiatives. The case study approach strengthens this design by allowing in-depth analysis of specific models that represent varying development pathways within the region. Such an approach is particularly appropriate for examining the institutional coordination, enterprise involvement, and community participation that collectively shape agritourism development.

#### ***3.2. Data Sources and Collection***

The research relies primarily on secondary data, systematically collected from multiple sources:

- Government policy documents and legal frameworks, including: Decision No. 2227/QĐ-TTg (2016) approving the Master Plan for Mekong Delta Tourism Development to 2020, vision to 2030; Decision No. 417/QĐ-TTg (2019) on sustainable and climate-resilient development of the Mekong Delta; Decision No. 922/QĐ-TTg (2022) defining the Action Plan for regional coordination.
- Provincial-level resolutions and sectoral strategies, particularly from Can Tho, Dong Thap, An Giang, and Vinh Long, which detail localized tourism development orientations and policy implementation mechanisms.
- Academic publications, industry reports, and analytical studies relevant to agritourism, rural development, environmental sustainability, and community-based tourism in Vietnam and beyond.

These sources collectively provide a comprehensive policy and analytical dataset for evaluating the Mekong Delta's agritourism landscape. Special attention is given to policy documents and development reports that illustrate how national orientations are translated into provincial strategies and local tourism practices.

### ***3.3. Case Study Selection***

To illustrate how policies are translated into practice, several representative agritourism models in the region were selected based on criteria such as community participation, enterprise innovation, integration of agriculture and tourism, and alignment with regional policies. The selection also considers the diversity of organizational forms, ranging from enterprise-led tourism sites to community-based and cooperative initiatives.

The case studies include: (1) My Khanh Tourist Village (Can Tho), a large-scale agritourism enterprise combining traditional agricultural activities with cultural performance and rural experiences; (2) Con Son Community Cooperative (Can Tho), a grassroots community-based model emphasizing orchard-based tourism and household participation; (3) Con Chim Ecotourism Site (Tra Vinh), a sustainable model built on ecological values, climate-resilient livelihoods, and community co-management; (4) Con Ong Farm (Vinh Long), a farm tourism model integrating organic agriculture and experiential learning; (5) Dinh Yen Mat Weaving Village (Dong Thap), an agricultural handicraft village demonstrating diversification of rural livelihoods through heritage-based tourism.

These cases collectively reflect the diversity of agritourism initiatives across enterprises, cooperatives, and communities in the Mekong Delta. They also illustrate different forms of collaboration among policy actors, private investors, and local residents in developing agriculture-based tourism products.

### ***3.4. Analytical Approach***

Content analysis is employed to interpret documents and case study materials. The analysis focuses on identifying: (1) Policy orientations and regulatory frameworks guiding agritourism development; (2) Enterprise-level strategies and innovation practices for integrating tourism with agriculture; (3) Forms and degrees of community participation, including cooperative models, household engagement, and local knowledge systems; (4) Emerging trends, enabling conditions, and structural constraints affecting agritourism in the Mekong Delta.

Particular attention is paid to identifying policy–implementation gaps, enterprise commitments to local development, and the adaptive capacity of communities in responding to tourism opportunities.

A systemic and interdisciplinary analytical framework is used to examine interactions among state agencies, businesses, and communities. This framework allows the study to situate agritourism within broader socio-economic transitions, environmental conditions, and governance structures of the region.

### ***3.5. Expected Analytical Contribution***

The methodological approach not only clarifies how policies, enterprises, and communities interplay in real-world agritourism initiatives but also supports the development of policy recommendations and strategic models tailored to the socio-economic, cultural, and ecological characteristics of the Mekong Delta. By focusing on

the interactions among state policy, enterprise organization, and community empowerment, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how agritourism can function as a sustainable rural development strategy in Vietnam.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### *4.1 Overview of the Mekong Delta in the Context of Agricultural Tourism Development*

The Mekong Delta, located at the downstream end of the Mekong River system, is a region characterized by an extensive network of rivers and canals, fertile alluvial soils, and a tropical monsoon climate. These natural attributes create optimal conditions for agricultural production, particularly rice cultivation, fruit orchards, and aquaculture. With an area of approximately 40,548 km<sup>2</sup> (12% of Vietnam's landmass) and home to nearly 19% of the national population, the Mekong Delta plays a decisive role in ensuring food security. The region contributes more than 50% of the country's rice output, 65% of aquaculture production, and 70% of fruit yields (General Statistics Office, 2023).

Beyond its agricultural strengths, the Mekong Delta is endowed with diverse cultural and tourism resources, including riverine landscapes, floating markets, orchard gardens, traditional craft villages, and a cultural mosaic shaped by Kinh, Khmer, Chinese, and Cham communities (Viet Anh, 2024). In recent years, agritourism has gained momentum as a development strategy that integrates farming, cultural heritage, and tourism services. This orientation aligns with Vietnam's New Rural Development Program, which promotes value-added agricultural products, rural livelihood diversification, and sustainable landscape conservation (Ngoc Mai, 2022).

Several provinces, such as Vinh Long, Ben Tre, Can Tho, Hau Giang, and Dong Thap, have implemented agritourism initiatives linked to the OCOP (One Commune, One Product) program, resulting in distinctive, place-based tourism models (Minh Khue, 2024). At the national level, multiple policy frameworks, including the National Target Program on New Rural Development, the Vietnam Tourism Development Strategy to 2030, and Decision No. 922/QĐ-TTg (2022), provide legal grounds and strategic orientation for agritourism, particularly in rural and agricultural areas. These policies support infrastructure development, human resource training, and product diversification, thus creating enabling conditions for enterprises and communities to enter tourism value chains.

Despite these advances, policy implementation remains uneven across provinces. Fragmented coordination, overlapping functions among stakeholders, and inconsistent service standards hinder the region's agritourism potential (Van, 2023). While private enterprises have begun introducing professional models, such as farmstays, organic tourism farms, and riverside ecological villages, many destinations remain small-scale and lack innovation (Nguyen Huu Nhuan et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, community engagement has grown significantly. Successful examples in Cho Lach (Ben Tre), Lai Vung (Dong Thap), and My Khanh (Can Tho) demonstrate that community participation in designing and delivering tourism services reinforces cultural authenticity and enhances livelihood resilience (Phuong Thao, 2025).

The Mekong Delta still faces long-term structural challenges: weak inter-provincial coordination, limited destination management capacity, infrastructure bottlenecks, and

lack of a unified regional brand. Climate change, salinity intrusion, and land subsidence pose additional risks to agritourism because agricultural production and ecological integrity constitute the foundation of the sector (Nguyen Tran Minh Tri, 2022). These challenges underscore the need for an integrated, adaptive strategy that strengthens the collaboration between government agencies, enterprises, and community stakeholders in building sustainable agritourism value chains.

#### **4.2. State Policy on Agricultural Tourism Development in the Mekong Delta**

The Mekong Delta's abundant natural assets, diverse ecosystems, and rich cultural heritage have positioned it as a priority region within Vietnam's national tourism strategy. Within this strategic vision, agricultural tourism has been increasingly emphasized as a means to restructure the rural economy, enhance agricultural product value, and promote sustainable rural development under the New Rural Development Program.

At the national level, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism's Tourism Development Project for the Mekong Delta to 2020 (2010) laid the earliest groundwork by identifying garden tourism, ecotourism, homestays, and rural experiential tourism as core development areas. This marked a shift from conventional sightseeing toward immersive, community-centered tourism.

Decision No. 194/QĐ-BVHTTDL (2015), which approved the project "Developing Unique Tourism Products in the Mekong Delta," further strengthened agritourism by promoting thematic cultural–agricultural attractions such as the Rice Museum (Vinh Long), Coconut Museum (Ben Tre), and Southern Cuisine Museum (Dong Thap). These initiatives aimed to differentiate the Mekong Delta with high-value tourism products rooted in agricultural heritage.

A critical milestone was the issuance of Decision No. 2227/QĐ-TTg (2016) approving the Master Plan for Mekong Delta Tourism Development to 2020, with a Vision to 2030. The plan emphasized resource-based tourism development, climate change adaptation, sustainable investment, and the prioritization of ecological and agricultural tourism as strategic product groups.

Decision No. 417/QĐ-TTg (2019), implementing Resolution No. 120/NQ-CP on sustainable development in the Mekong Delta under climate change, was equally transformative. It recognized tourism, particularly agritourism, as a new economic pillar, emphasizing natural resource protection, cultural preservation, and rural income enhancement.

At the provincial level, local governments have actively localized these national orientations:

- *Can Tho*: Resolutions 03/NQ-TU (2016) and 10-NQ/TU (2021) identify tourism as a spearhead industry, highlighting integrated cultural–ecological–agricultural tourism products.
- *Dong Thap*: With its philosophy "Pure as the Soul of a Lotus," the province prioritizes lotus-based tourism, orchard tourism, high-quality homestays, and OCOP-linked experiential models under Resolutions 210/2018/NQ-HĐND and 01/2022/NQ-HĐND.
- *Tien Giang, Ca Mau, Vinh Long, Kien Giang, Soc Trang, and Ben Tre* have each developed tourism policies tailored to their ecological and agricultural strengths.

Overall, the multi-level policy framework, ranging from national directives to localized action plans, forms a comprehensive foundation that guides and accelerates agritourism development in the Mekong Delta. These policies integrate socio-economic development, cultural preservation, climate resilience, and rural transformation, positioning agritourism as both an economic driver and a sustainable regional development strategy.

### **4.3. Current Status of Agricultural Tourism Development in the Mekong Delta**

#### *Enterprises as Drivers of Professionalization*

For decades, agritourism in the Mekong Delta emerged spontaneously through farmer-led initiatives involving fruit picking, homestays, traditional music, and home-cooked meals. These small-scale, informal models, although rich in authenticity, suffered from limited investment, lack of professional management, and minimal product differentiation (Huynh Bien, 2024). By 2020, most tourism services remained repetitive and undifferentiated, constrained by inadequate marketing and insufficient knowledge of customer service (Thi Re, 2022).

International arrivals reflected these limitations. While the region welcomed around 2.4 million foreign visitors in 2019, the number sharply declined to just over 190,000 in 2022, only 7.2% of 2019 levels, partly due to the pandemic but also because of low product competitiveness (Huynh Bien, 2024).

The past five years, however, have witnessed substantial transformation with the growing involvement of private enterprises and professional investors. Notable models include:

- *Con Phung Tourist Village (Ben Tre)*, transformed from a simple community-run site into a professionally managed rural tourism area.
- *Thoi Son Islet (Tien Giang)*, integrated rowing boat tours, orchard visits, and Đờn ca tài tử performances through partnerships with travel agencies.
- *My Khanh Tourist Village (Can Tho)*, a standout success, evolving into a 50,000 m<sup>2</sup> integrated ecotourism complex and earning 4-star OCOP certification in 2023 (Thu Hien, 2023).

Innovative farm-based models, such as the Dong Tam Snake Farm (Tien Giang), Muoi Cuong Cocoa Garden (Can Tho), and bee farms in Ben Tre, enhance visitor engagement while supporting agricultural product sales (Many authors, 2022). Creative recreational complexes like Happy Land Hung Thy (Dong Thap) further diversify agritourism offerings.

Large tour operators, including Saigontourist, have introduced inter-provincial agritourism routes that connect major agricultural and cultural attractions.

Overall, enterprises now play a crucial role in: Upgrading facilities and service standards; Innovating tourism products; Developing human resources; Strengthening regional linkages; Enhancing digital marketing and brand visibility. Their contributions are central to transitioning agritourism from small-scale spontaneity to a structured, market-responsive industry.

#### *Community Participation: From Beneficiaries to Co-Creators*

Local communities, farmers, artisans, and traditional cultural practitioners, form the human and cultural backbone of agritourism. Their agricultural knowledge, culinary

skills, folk arts, and lived experiences generate authenticity and enhance visitor engagement.

Before 2015, most community-led agritourism remained informal and fragmented. However, since 2017, several provinces have significantly advanced community-based tourism organization:

- *Soc Trang (2017-2020)*: Community Tourism Development Project; notable success with San Tien Farmstay.
- *Can Tho*: Con Son Tourism Cooperative (2020) with 40+ households offering specialized services and shared-customer models, attracting ~400 visitors daily.
- *Dong Thap*: Tan Thuan Dong Community Tourism Village (mango-based tourism), and Dinh Yen Mat Village (craft + agriculture).
- *Tien Giang*: Tan Phong commune's orchard tours and cultural performances.
- *Ben Tre*: Long-Lan-Quy-Phung islet cooperatives and the transformation of Con Phung.
- *Tra Vinh*: Con Chim and Con Ong, two outstanding ecological and cultural models generating high visitor numbers and significant revenue (Tin Huy, 2025; Nguyen Chuong, 2023).

By 2022, dozens of community tourism cooperatives had emerged across the region, contributing to household income increases and poverty reduction rates of 3-5% within two to three years of operation (Phuong Uyen & Van Hoa, 2022).

Despite progress, disparities persist. Some provinces still struggle with organizational capacity, training gaps, and limited support mechanisms. Yet, successful models such as Con Chim, Con Son, and Ke Sach have become regional exemplars and sites for interprovincial learning.

#### **4.4. From Policy to Practice: Multi-Actor Dynamics in Mekong Delta Agritourism**

Agritourism development in the Mekong Delta reflects a complex multi-actor system in which state policies create the enabling environment, while enterprises and communities operationalize innovations on the ground. This integration of top-down and bottom-up processes has cultivated a distinctive development trajectory in which agricultural production, cultural resources, and tourism services become mutually reinforcing elements of rural transformation.

National policies, including Decision 194/QĐ-BVHTTDL (2015), Decision 2227/QĐ-TTg (2016), and Decision 417/QĐ-TTg (2019), emphasize experiential tourism, resource conservation, climate adaptation, and rural income enhancement. Provincial authorities have localized these strategies through the integration of high-tech agriculture, OCOP product development, and community-based tourism initiatives. However, the translation of these policy orientations into effective local practices remains uneven across provinces, reflecting differences in planning capacity, institutional coordination, and resource allocation.

Enterprises have addressed long-standing gaps in professionalism by modernizing tourism destinations, improving service standards, enhancing market access, and developing cross-provincial tourism circuits. Meanwhile, communities contribute cultural authenticity, environmental stewardship, and localized knowledge systems that enrich tourism experiences. The interaction between enterprise innovation and

community participation has therefore become a critical mechanism through which policy frameworks are translated into practical tourism models.

Success stories such as My Khanh Tourist Village, Con Phung, Con Son, Con Chim, and Happy Land Hung Thy demonstrate that agritourism thrives when policies provide strategic direction, enterprises invest in innovation and service quality, and communities are actively involved in designing and delivering tourism experiences. These cases illustrate how coordinated collaboration among the three actors, state authorities, private investors, and local residents, can transform agricultural resources into competitive tourism products while generating broader socio-economic benefits for rural areas.

However, several structural challenges continue to constrain agritourism development in the Mekong Delta. Weak inter-provincial coordination, inconsistent policy implementation, uneven service quality, and increasing environmental risks associated with climate change remain persistent obstacles. In particular, the absence of integrated spatial planning across provinces often leads to duplication of tourism products and fragmented destination development, limiting the region's ability to build a coherent agritourism identity.

Another important issue concerns the corporate social responsibility (CSR) of enterprises operating within agritourism destinations. While enterprises have played a crucial role in professionalizing tourism services and attracting visitors, their long-term commitment to supporting local communities varies significantly. Enterprises that invest in workforce training, prioritize local employment, and collaborate with local producers contribute to more inclusive tourism value chains. Conversely, models that rely heavily on external labor or limit knowledge transfer may weaken community participation and reduce the long-term sustainability of agritourism initiatives.

Equally important is the adaptive capacity of local communities. Evidence from the Mekong Delta indicates that rural communities have gradually transitioned from passive beneficiaries to active co-creators of tourism experiences. Nevertheless, this transition remains uneven across locations. The ability of communities to learn new skills, adopt professional tourism practices, and embrace responsible tourism principles, including environmental protection, cultural authenticity, and visitor experience management, plays a decisive role in determining the sustainability of agritourism development.

These findings highlight that agritourism in the Mekong Delta is fundamentally shaped by the dynamic interaction among three pillars: state policy, enterprise organization, and community empowerment. Sustainable development therefore requires not only supportive policies but also stronger coordination mechanisms, responsible enterprise engagement, and continuous capacity building for rural communities.

Looking ahead, strengthening the synergy among these actors will be essential for enhancing the resilience and competitiveness of agritourism in the Mekong Delta. Policy priorities should focus on improving regional coordination, promoting climate-resilient tourism models, investing in human resource development, and supporting community-based tourism initiatives. When these elements are effectively integrated, agritourism can function not only as a tourism product but also as a sustainable rural development strategy that reinforces cultural heritage, environmental stewardship, and local livelihoods.

## 5. Conclusion

This study has examined the development of agricultural tourism in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam, through the lens of a tripartite framework encompassing state policies, enterprise strategies, and community participation. The findings confirm that agritourism in the region has undergone substantial transformation over the past decade, evolving from fragmented, household-level practices into an increasingly organized and market-responsive sector. This transformation has been made possible by the progressive elaboration of national and provincial policy frameworks, growing enterprise involvement, and the gradual empowerment of rural communities as co-creators of tourism value. By foregrounding the relational dynamics among these three actors, the study contributes empirical insight into how agritourism development is simultaneously enabled and constrained by the alignment, or misalignment, between policy design and implementation capacity.

The three pillars identified in this study, namely coherent state policy, responsible enterprise engagement, and empowered community participation, function as mutually reinforcing drivers of sustainable agritourism. State policies have provided strategic direction and mobilized resources, while enterprises have introduced professionalism, market access, and product innovation. Communities, in turn, have contributed cultural authenticity, local ecological knowledge, and the lived agricultural heritage that gives Mekong Delta agritourism its distinctive character. Successful models such as My Khanh Tourist Village, Con Son Cooperative, Con Chim Ecotourism Site, and Dinh Yen Mat Weaving Village illustrate that when these three pillars are effectively aligned, agritourism can generate meaningful and lasting benefits for rural populations. At the same time, these cases also demonstrate that agritourism outcomes are strongest where policy support is translated into concrete planning instruments, enterprise strategies are locally embedded, and communities are actively supported to professionalize and innovate.

Nevertheless, the study also identifies persistent structural constraints that must be addressed for agritourism to fulfill its broader developmental potential. The gap between policy intent and implementation remains a critical challenge, as does the uneven distribution of development gains across provinces. The sector continues to suffer from a lack of integrated spatial planning, an underdeveloped framework for corporate social responsibility, and insufficient investment in the adaptive capacity of rural communities. In particular, the absence of synchronized inter-provincial planning and tourism zoning contributes to product duplication and fragmented destination development, limiting the emergence of a coherent regional agritourism identity. From the enterprise perspective, CSR commitments remain uneven, especially regarding local employment, skills training, knowledge transfer, and reinvestment in community infrastructure and heritage conservation. From the community perspective, sustained success depends on adaptive learning, shifts in livelihood mindset toward experiential and creative tourism, and the consolidation of responsible tourism practices among both hosts and visitors, with ecological and cultural stewardship as non-negotiable principles.

Moving forward, policies must shift from general encouragement toward more targeted interventions that promote synchronized regional planning, ensure enterprise accountability for community development, and foster responsible tourism practices grounded in ecological and cultural values. Strategic priorities should include: (i)

strengthening binding coordination mechanisms across provinces to support integrated spatial planning; (ii) institutionalizing incentives and standards for CSR in agritourism investment; (iii) expanding community capacity-building through training, cooperative development, and destination management support; and (iv) mainstreaming climate-smart, green agritourism models that protect agricultural landscapes as the sector's core asset. In this way, agritourism in the Mekong Delta can evolve into a genuinely inclusive, resilient, and green development model that reflects both the richness of the region's agricultural heritage and the aspirations of its rural communities.

### *Acknowledgments*

*This research is funded by Vietnam National Foundation for Science and Technology Development (NAFOSTED) under grant number 504.04-2025.02.*

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