

Title of Project:

(English)     Agricultural tourism for rural resilience: A sustainable livelihoods approach

(Chinese)    農業文化旅遊促進鄉村韌性: 可持續生計方法

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Rapid urbanization poses significant challenges to rural communities, often threatening their economic, cultural, and environmental sustainability. However, existing rural resilience projects often employs top-down planning approaches that neglect community-specific contexts, leading to unsustainable outcomes and reduced community participation. This study proposes agricultural tourism as a potential avenue for enhancing rural resilience by capitalizing on local agricultural practices, cultural heritage, and natural resources.

Despite the recognized benefits of agricultural tourism, substantial gaps remain in the literature, particularly regarding the application of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) within this field. The SLA is a way of thinking about rural sustainable livelihood with a focus on local communities. While some studies have linked tourism with rural livelihoods, few have explored the intersection of agricultural tourism and community resilience. More importantly, the SLA itself has several limitations that remain unaddressed, such as its lack of qualitative insights and local perspectives, its limited application to agricultural tourism, and its disregard for urban destinations with agricultural resources. This study aims to address these gaps by developing a framework for agricultural tourism to achieve sustainable rural resilience that incorporates the principles of SLA alongside a two-dimensional assessment approach focused on livelihood diversity and livelihood freedom.

To achieve this, the research employs a qualitative methodology grounded in interpretive paradigms, utilizing a single case study of Lai Chi Wo, a traditional Hakka village in Hong Kong. Data will be gathered through semi-structured interviews, field notes from observations, and secondary sources. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 30 purposively selected informants, including local community members, agriculture and tourism practitioners, and policy stakeholders. This methodology facilitates an in-depth exploration of local dynamics surrounding agricultural tourism and its implications for community livelihoods. Additionally, triangulation will enhance data validity by integrating findings from interviews, field observations, and secondary sources.

This study offers both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it extends the SLA to the context of agricultural tourism. Furthermore, by incorporating a two-dimensional assessment framework, livelihood diversity and livelihood freedom, the refined SLA is expected to provide a more comprehensive tool for evaluating the role of agricultural tourism in fostering livelihood sustainability. Practically, it highlights the potential of SLA-guided agricultural tourism to enhance rural resilience by diversifying income, strengthening cultural identity, and preserving biodiversity. By refining the SLA for agricultural tourism and identifying pathways for sustainable development, this research provides valuable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and scholars. The findings may also serve as a model for rural communities facing urban migration pressures and the need for economic, cultural, and environmental sustainability.