Algerian Journal of Arid Regions
Journal Algérien des Régions Arides *JARA*

Article

Rural Women, Agritourism, and the Valorization of Local Heritage in Algeria's Arid Regions

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Abstract: Rural women play a crucial role in preserving local heritage and promoting sustainable livelihoods in Algeria's arid and oasis regions. This study examines the contribution of women to agritourism development and the valorization of cultural and natural heritage in these territories. The research adopts a qualitative and analytical approach based on the review of academic literature, field observations, and examples from Algerian rural communities. The study highlights how women participate in traditional agricultural activities, handicrafts, culinary practices, and cultural transmission, which together strengthen agritourism attractiveness and support local economic development. The findings also reveal that women's involvement contributes to heritage preservation, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability despite challenges related to limited funding, training, and infrastructure. The article concludes that empowering rural women through institutional support, capacity building, and integrated rural tourism policies can significantly enhance sustainable development and reinforce the socio-economic resilience of arid Algerian regions.

Keywords: Rural women1; Agritourism2; local heritage3; Sustainable development4

Received: 13 May 2026
Accepted: 21 June 2026

Citation: Mokhnane, T.; Adjlene, S.; Khiari, R. Rural Women, Agritourism, and the Valorization of Local Heritage in Algeria's Arid Regions. *Journal Algérien des Régions Arides* 2026, 19 (2) : 1–9.

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1. Introduction

Agritourism has become an important tool for promoting sustainable rural development and preserving local heritage in arid and oasis regions [1,3]. In Algeria, these regions possess rich agricultural traditions, cultural practices, and natural landscapes that can contribute to tourism diversification and strengthen local economic resilience [4,10]. Recent studies on the province of Biskra highlight its cultural heritage and agricultural potential as strategic assets for developing sustainable agritourism models [10,11]. In addition, research has shown that agricultural tourism can serve as a driver for environmental sustainability and local development when properly integrated into territorial planning [11].

However, rural territories in southern Algeria continue to face major challenges such as desertification, unemployment, rural migration, and limited diversification of economic activities [7]. In this context, alternative development strategies such as agritourism are increasingly considered as viable solutions to enhance local resilience [11,13].

Within this framework, rural women play a fundamental role in maintaining traditional agricultural systems and safeguarding cultural heritage. Their contribution is particularly visible in handicrafts, traditional knowledge transmission, and local food production, which are essential components of the tourism experience [2,5]. Recent research highlights that rural populations' social characteristics and mindset significantly influence

the success of agricultural transformation and rural development initiatives [14]. Moreover, women's empowerment through tourism-related activities contributes to strengthening social cohesion and economic inclusion in arid regions [8].

In Algeria, several empirical studies have focused on agritourism development in regions such as Biskra, El Oued, and Ghardaïa, emphasizing the importance of selecting suitable sites for sustainable tourism expansion [12]. Other studies have examined domestic tourism patterns and their role in regional development, particularly in Biskra as a representative case [15]. Furthermore, emerging research has explored new dimensions such as religious tourism components and artificial intelligence applications in cultural tourism, indicating the diversification of tourism dynamics in the region [17,16].

Despite these contributions, the specific role of rural women in agritourism and heritage valorization in arid Algerian regions remains underexplored. Existing literature tends to treat agritourism either from an economic perspective or from a general rural development perspective, with limited focus on gender-specific contributions and local knowledge systems [10,11]. Divergent views also exist regarding the effectiveness of agritourism, where some studies emphasize its strong potential for sustainable development [11], while others point to structural constraints such as weak governance, lack of infrastructure, and limited institutional support [8,13].

The present study aims to analyze the role of rural women in agritourism and the valorization of local heritage in Algeria's arid regions, with particular attention to the case of Biskra and similar territories. It seeks to demonstrate how women's activities contribute to sustainable rural development, heritage preservation, and local economic diversification. The study also discusses the main challenges limiting their participation and proposes strategies to strengthen their role in sustainable agritourism development. Ultimately, the findings suggest that empowering rural women can significantly enhance the resilience and sustainability of agritourism systems in Algerian arid regions.

2. Materials and Methods

This section provides a detailed description of the materials, data sources, and methodological procedures employed in this study to ensure reproducibility and transparency.

2.1 Study Area

The research was conducted in selected rural and arid regions of Algeria, characterized by oasis and steppe environments. These areas were chosen due to their agricultural potential, cultural richness, and emerging agritourism activities led or supported by rural women.

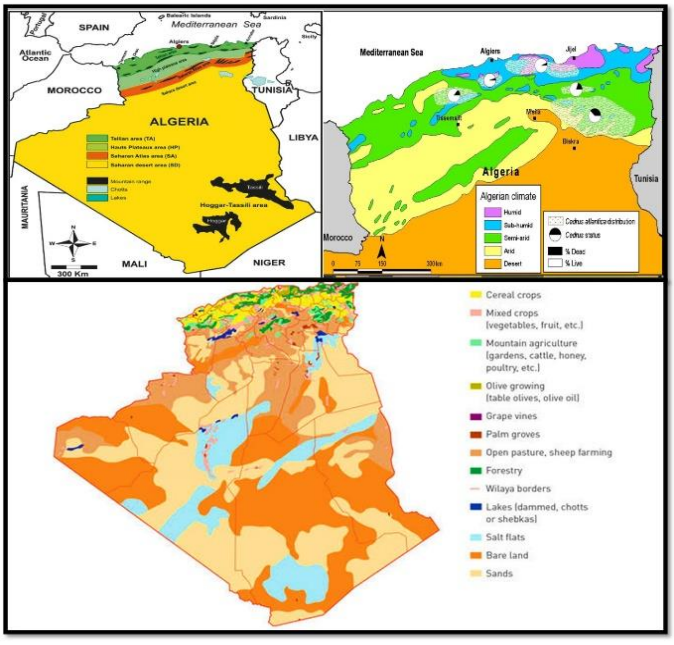


Figure 1. Arid and Steppe Regions of Algeria

2.2. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify patterns and trends, while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic content analysis. This mixed-method approach enabled triangulation of findings and improved the reliability of the results.

2.3. Materials and Instruments

The study employed:

- Structured questionnaires to assess socio-economic conditions and participation in agritourism activities.
- Semi-structured interview guides to explore perceptions, challenges, and opportunities.
- Digital recording devices for qualitative data collection.

Statistical software for quantitative analysis.

All instruments were pre-tested in a pilot study to ensure clarity, validity, and reliability.

2.4 **Sampling Technique**

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants based on their involvement in agritourism or related rural activities. This ensured the inclusion of respondents with relevant experience and knowledge.

2.5 **Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and averages) to identify participation patterns and socio-economic impacts. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes such as empowerment, heritage valorization, and development constraints.

2.6 Data Availability

All data supporting the findings are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Any restrictions related to privacy or institutional policies are clearly acknowledged. If applicable, datasets deposited in public repositories are accompanied by accession numbers.

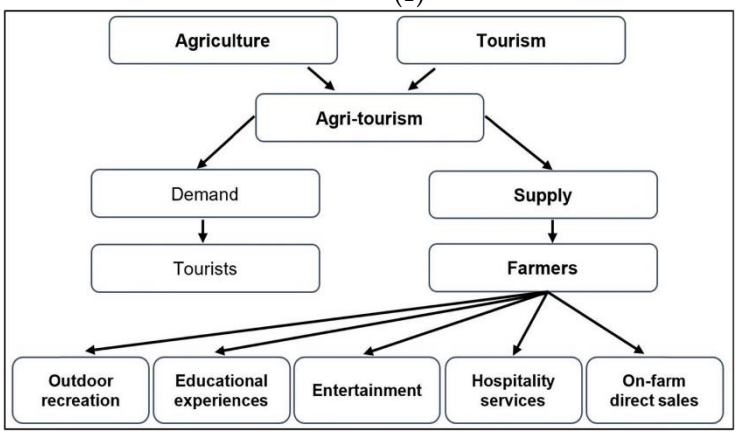
2.7 **Ethical Considerations**

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the research process, and participation was entirely voluntary.

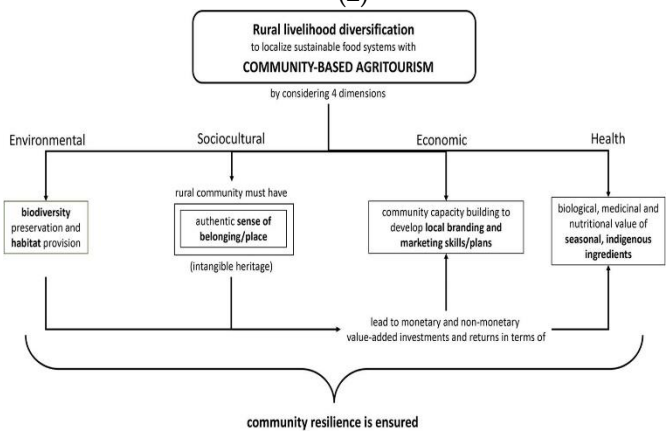
3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Conceptual Framework of Agritourism

(1)



(2)





(3)

Figure (1 , 2 & 3). Conceptual Framework of Agritourism Activities

The conceptual framework illustrates the interaction between agriculture and tourism within agritourism systems. It explains how agritourism emerges from the integration of agricultural activities and tourism demand. The framework also demonstrates the relationship between tourism supply represented by farmers and rural actors and tourism demand represented by visitors and tourists.

The model identifies several agritourism services provided in rural areas, including:

Outdoor recreation; Educational experiences; Hospitality services; Entertainment activities; and On-farm direct sales of local products.

In Algeria's arid and oasis regions, rural women contribute significantly to these activities through handicrafts, traditional gastronomy, hospitality services, agricultural production, and the promotion of local cultural heritage.

3.3 Socioeconomic Profile of Participants

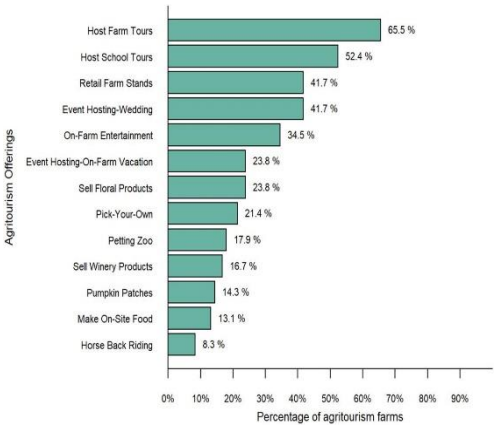
Table 1. Socioeconomic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Age	20–30 years	18
	31–45 years	47
	Above 45 years	35
Education Level	Primary	29
	Secondary	44
	University	27
Main Activity	Handicrafts	33
	Traditional Food Production	29
	Agricultural Activities	21
	Tourism Services	17

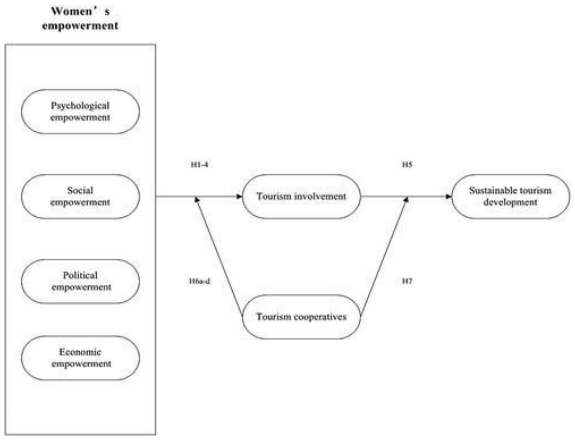
The field investigation revealed that rural women represent an important factor in agritourism development in Algeria's arid regions. Most participants were involved in traditional handicrafts, local food production, oasis agriculture, and tourism-related services. The results indicate that women aged between 31 and 45 years constitute the most active group in agritourism activities. This reflects the important socioeconomic role played by middle-aged rural women in oasis communities.

Furthermore, handicrafts and traditional food production appear as the dominant sectors of women's participation. These activities contribute both to household income diversification and to the transmission of local knowledge and traditions.

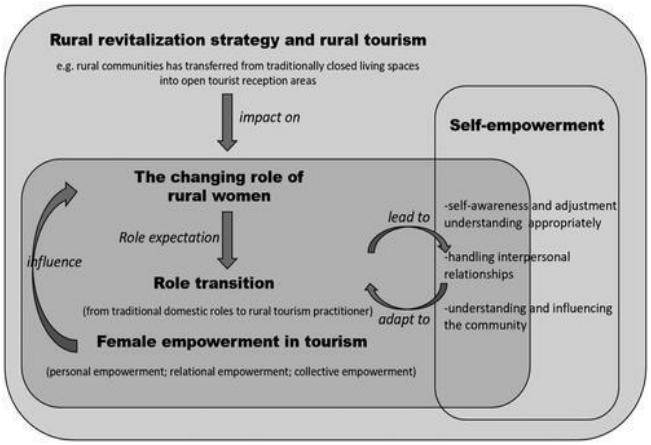
3.4 **Women's Participation in Agritourism Activities**



. (4)



(5)



(6)

Figure (4 ; 5 & 6). Distribution of Women's Participation in Agritourism Activities

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Women's Activities in Rural Agritourism

Activity	Percentage (%)
Handicrafts	33
Traditional Food Production	29
Agricultural Activities	21
Tourism and Hospitality Services	17

3.5 Agritourism and the Valorization of Local Heritage

The collected data reveal that agritourism contributes significantly to the preservation and valorization of local heritage in Algeria's arid regions.

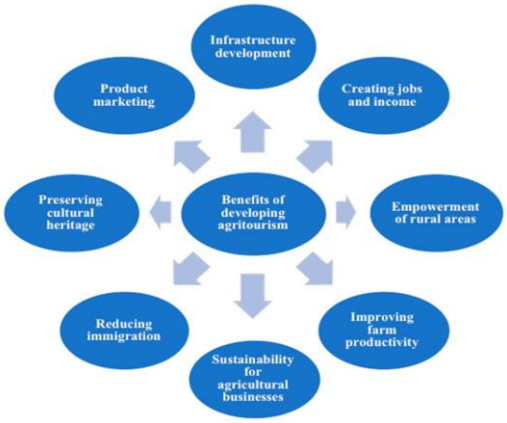
Tourists visiting oasis and rural areas show considerable interest in discovering authentic lifestyles, local gastronomy, traditional architecture, and agricultural practices. This interaction strengthens local identity while generating additional economic opportunities for rural communities.

Agritourism therefore functions not only as an economic activity but also as a mechanism for safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

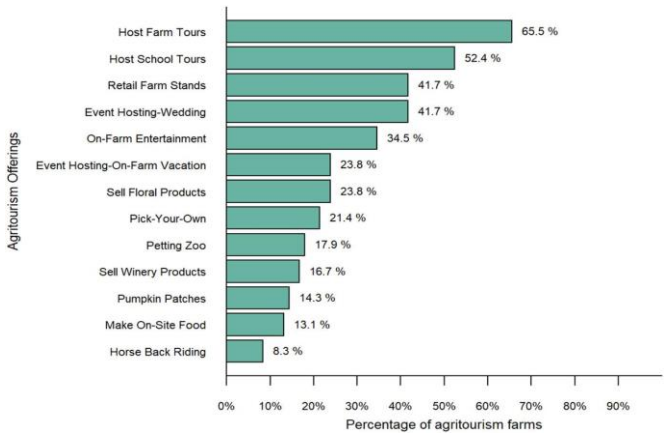
Table 3. Main Heritage Elements Promoted Through Agritourism

Heritage Category	Examples
Traditional Crafts	Weaving, pottery, embroidery
Culinary Heritage	Couscous, dates products, traditional bread
Agricultural Heritage	Oasis farming, palm cultivation
Cultural Practices	Folklore, music, local celebrations
Architectural Heritage	Ksour, traditional oasis houses

3.6 Perceived Impacts of Agritourism on Local Development



(7)



(8)



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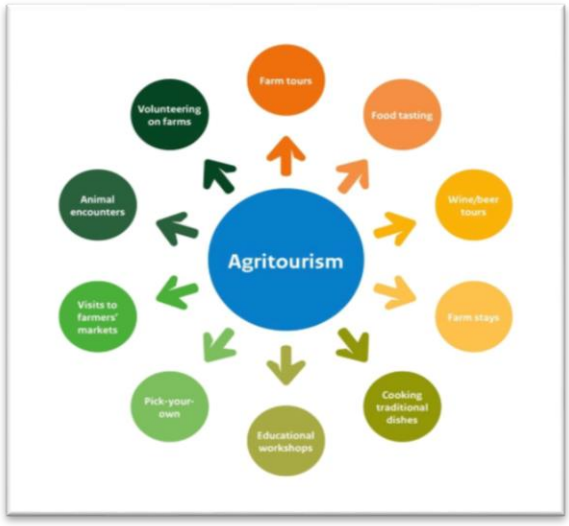
Figure (7 , 8 & 9). Perceived Impacts of Agritourism on Local Development

Table 4. Socioeconomic and Environmental Impacts of Agritourism (%)

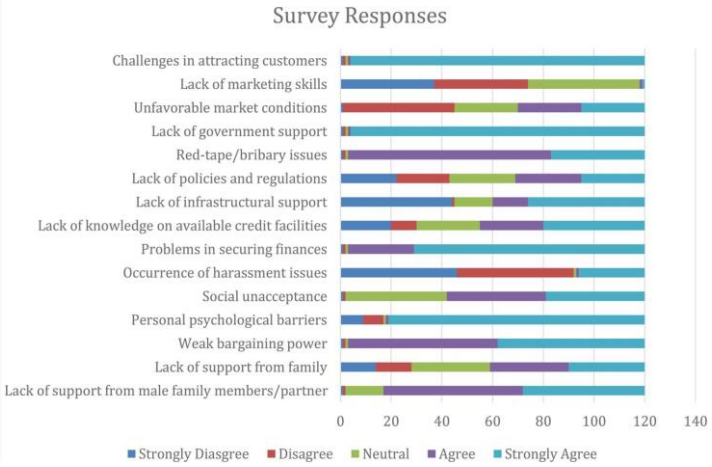
Impact	Percentage (%)
Income Improvement	38
Heritage Preservation	29
Employment Creation	21
Environmental Awareness	12

The findings indicate that income improvement represents the principal benefit associated with agritourism activities. Participants emphasized that tourism contributes to diversifying rural incomes and reducing economic vulnerability in arid environments.Heritage preservation also appears as a major positive impact. Agritourism encourages local communities to maintain traditional knowledge, cultural expressions, and agricultural practices threatened by modernization and rural migration. Additionally, agritourism contributes to employment creation and environmental awareness through the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices and eco-friendly tourism activities

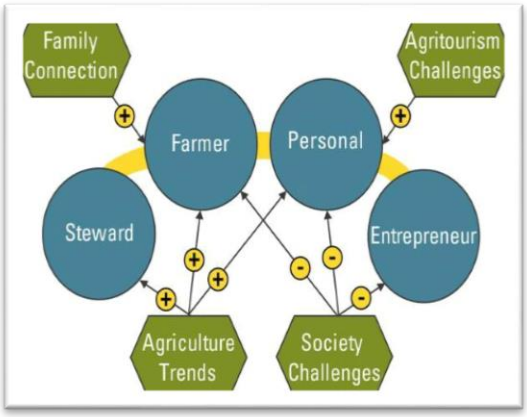
3.7 **Challenges Facing Rural Women in Agritourism**



(10)



(11)



(12)

Figure (10, 11 & 12). Survey Responses on Barriers and Challenges

Table 5. Main Challenges Facing Rural Women

Challenge	Percentage (%)
Lack of Financial Support	34
Weak Marketing Opportunities	27
Limited Professional Training	21
Inadequate Infrastructure	11
Transportation Difficulties	7

The survey responses indicate that rural women face several structural and socioeconomic barriers limiting their participation in agritourism activities.

The most significant challenges identified by respondents include:

- Difficulties in attracting customers;
- Weak marketing skills;
- Lack of government support;
- Limited access to financial resources;
- Weak infrastructural conditions.

A considerable proportion of respondents also emphasized the existence of social barriers such as weak family support, social unacceptance, and psychological constraints.

These findings demonstrate that the successful development of agritourism in Algeria's arid regions requires integrated public policies combining:

- Financial assistance;
- Professional training;
- Digital marketing strategies;
- Infrastructure improvement;
- Women empowerment initiatives.

4.7 Discussion

The results of this study confirm that rural women constitute a central actor in agritourism development and local heritage valorization in Algeria's arid and oasis regions.

Women's participation in handicrafts, gastronomy, hospitality services, and agricultural activities contributes simultaneously to: Economic diversification; Social inclusion; Cultural preservation; and Sustainable rural development.

Agritourism appears as an effective strategy capable of linking tourism development with local identity preservation. Unlike conventional tourism models, agritourism allows local populations to participate directly in tourism activities while maintaining their cultural authenticity and traditional lifestyles.

The findings also highlight the importance of strengthening institutional support mechanisms for rural women. Access to finance, training programs, infrastructure development, and digital promotion remain essential conditions for improving the sustainability and competitiveness of agritourism initiatives.

Overall, the study demonstrates that agritourism can become a powerful tool for sustainable territorial development in Algeria's arid regions when supported by inclusive and participatory development policies.

Conclusion

The obtained results demonstrate that rural women play a crucial role in promoting agritourism and preserving local heritage in Algeria's arid regions. Despite the persistence of several economic and social

Authors should discuss the results and how they can be interpreted from the perspective of previous studies and of the working hypotheses. The findings and their implications should be discussed in the broadest context possible. Future research directions may also be highlighted.

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