

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background

Tourism is one industry that raises the economy's revenue, produces thousands of employments, improves a country's infrastructure, and fosters cultural exchange between visitors and natives in many countries. One of the tourism sectors with potency for growth is **Agro-Tourism**. According to Maruti (2009), Agro-tourism is an Agri-Business activity. A local farmer or person offers tours of their agricultural farm so visitors can see how they grow and harvest. Thus, individuals in local tourism organizers and entire local communities can benefit from it. During the emergence of COVID-19, the agro-tourism industry has faced challenges because its operations frequently enhance the contact between wildlife, livestock, and humans, potentially spreading the COVID-19 disease.

The Covid-19 outbreak was initially discovered in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, in December 2019, and the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a pandemic on March 11, 2020. This virus has been one of the most challenging times in the lives of both individuals and businesses because many countries are experiencing decreased economic growth, more unemployment, and increasing financial market instability as a result of the lockdown.

Indonesia has been named one of the world's most beautiful countries, and it has become a popular tourist destination for many people because of its diverse culture and lovely nature. Indonesia is a Southeast Asian country with over 17,000 islands, including Sumatra, Sulawesi, Java, Bali, and portions of Kalimantan and Papua, the biggest islands in Indonesia. Moreover, Peneva (2018) stated that Indonesia has a lot of room for agricultural development, especially in rural areas where a large portion of the population still lives. Some farmers turn their farmland into an agro-tourism destination to educate and introduce agriculture to the public, while others do it to supplement their income during the off-season. Palm oil, natural rubber, cocoa, coffee, tea, cassava, rice, and tropical spices are essential agricultural commodities.

According to Fivintari et al (2021), the Covid-19 pandemic occurred in Indonesia starting at the end of March 2020, which were led to hundreds of hotels closing due to low occupancy rate, as well as a decrease in the number of visitors, resulted in a reduction of workers and double work to reduce costs incurred. The Coronavirus Statistics Data further stated that in 2020, Indonesia obtained a total number of cases of 8,074. This where led the government of Indonesia to impose social constraints that have hindered the economy from running at full capacity, forcing some enterprises to close and people to be temporarily laid off (Izzati, 2021). This government policy also applies in Yogyakarta's Special Region. As a result, several agrotourism businesses in DIY have had to deal with such disturbances and uncertainties, which have harmed their economic activities. Agroedukasi Caping Merapi is one of the agrotourism businesses in Yogyakarta's Special Region that was impacted by the lockdown.

Agroedukasi Caping Merapi is one of the private-sector in Indonesia, an agro-education program implementing the social mission, where encouraged to work quickly to educate the public on using agricultural goods better organically and develop agricultural products because the community's adoption of organic agriculture is gradual. Agroedukasi Caping Merapi was founded on October 7, 2017, by the Yogyakarta Special Region's agricultural community members. Jl. Raya Tajem KM 2.5, Wedomartani, Ngemplak, Sleman, D.I. Yogyakarta is where Caping Merapi Agroeducation is located. It covers around 2.4 hectares and can be used to carry out ideal farming, tourist, and training operations based on organic farming. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, Caping Merapi was one of the agrotourism sites in Sleman visited by many people, including kindergarten students, students from different universities, and community members, to learn about organic farming and urban farming. This agrotourism was good for taking pictures because the facilities are complete and well maintained and cleaned, such as the hall for meetings, greenhouses for showcasing different types of plant life starting from ornamental to vegetable and fruit seeds, and herb seeds, as well as the fact that the arrangement of the gardens is interesting and unique. There are many employees responsible for the operation of this agrotourism. During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, Agroedukasi Caping Merapi had a problem with a decline

in the number of visitors, which harmed the business's profitability, resulting in a scarcity of human resource, resulting of double labour and not spotless facilities. The limited promotion and activities in conducting agro-educational visits are less diverse.

On the other hand, Kiribati is one of the few countries in the South Pacific or Oceania continent that most people are unaware of, as well as the least visited tourist destination. Kiribati comprises 33 atolls and reef islands that cover a total area of more than five million square kilometres of water and located where the equator and the international dateline intersect, in the heart of the Pacific. Kiribati is the first to enter the millennium and the first country to welcome each new day. It boasts a lovely white beach with a vast lagoon that turns turquoise at high tide and a beautiful sunset. However, agriculture is still primarily subsistence in the country, with only a few small commercial farms because of an infertile soil. Yet, coconut is the most important commercial crop, and palm trees cover roughly 75% of the total land area. The main commodity derived from coconut is copra, which considerably contributes to the economy (Redfern, 2007).

According to International Fund for Agricultural Development (2022) stated that during the COVID-19 outbreak, everything in Kiribati has undoubtedly become more challenging. One of the significant fears among the inhabitants is that if the virus reaches their borders, their 100,000-strong population will be wiped out. More immediately, the global slowdown in trade and closed borders and other protectionist measures are jeopardizing their food imports' stability. Fear and frantic shopping have ensued among residents, who have relied on store-bought, pre-made meals for decades. The World Health Organization (WHO) database in 2022 further stated that the COVID-19 pandemic began in January 2022, with 1,387 confirmed cases and moved the country to Alert Level 3. There are currently no international flights, and inter-island travel to and from outer islands will continue, except for those who have not completed their COVID-19 vaccination. Radio New Zealand (2022) further stated, it was alert level 3 and a four-day lockdown in the same month, which went into force at 3 p.m. on January 22, 2022. There will be a 24-hour curfew imposed during the lockdown, with all critical service providers, such as wholesale and retail food suppliers, remaining available to the public from 6 a.m.

to 2 p.m. All government offices were shut down, and employees worked from home. As a result, Tobwakira Farm, an agrotourism in Kiribati, was also impacted by the government's COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

Tobwakira Farm is a government sector in Kiribati involved in agro-educational initiatives and is located in Temwaiku village, South Tarawa. Tobwakira Farm was established in 2004 after Taiwan signed an agricultural aid contract with Kiribati. Since Taiwan departed from Kiribati in 2019, the Agriculture and Livestock Division of the Ministry of Environment, Lands & Agricultural Development (MELAD) has maintained this garden. Tobwakira Farm teaches agricultural and nutritional skills to students at boarding schools such as King George V & Ellaine Bernachi School (KGV& EBS), Moroni High School (MHS), Marine Training Center (MTC) and so forth, as well as the workplace like the Ministry of Health (MOH). Furthermore, personnel visit each community in Kiribati's urban and rural areas to educate inhabitants on how to create agricultural commodities found and farmed on the island. This farm also welcomes foreigners and locals who wish to enjoy the scenery and students from kindergarten until senior high school who want to accomplish agricultural and piggery-related schooling. Before COVID-19, Tobwakira Farm held short courses about agricultural education in its compound as well as had employees travel to Kiribati islands and local communities to educate them about agriculture. Students from kindergartens and different high schools were welcomed to learn about plants and cultivation. There are many employees responsible for the operation of this agrotourism. However, during the outbreak of COVID-19, guests are no longer permitted to visit, workers must follow COVID-19 regulations by keeping a social distance and working shifts, and employees stopped visiting Kiribati islands and local communities for agricultural education.

Therefore, the potential of agro-tourism to thrive over the COVID-19 era can be adequately maintained by maintaining facilities and infrastructure, diversifying, and not having boring services, making numerous promotions, and making products that can drive the income of the agrotourism. This is because tourist satisfaction has a significant and positive link with service quality, while visitor satisfaction has a moderate and

positive association with amenities and costs Fivintari et al (2021). Additionally, those in charge of agrotourism centres must strictly follow safety and health regulations. Also, guests visiting Agro - tourism destinations must make reservations in advance to make adequate preparations to provide quality services. Because the spread of any infectious disease increases whenever large groups gather at a location. Farmers or agrotourism operators must receive adequate training on successfully addressing safety and health issues so that tourists can relax without worrying about contracting an infectious disease. Moreover, at the entrance of agrotourism, hand-sanitizing liquors and thermometer guns must be readily available.

With the purpose of making two study locations more established, it was important to develop strategies of Caping Merapi and Tobwakira Farm, based on some of the concerns stated above in both research locations. This approach might be effective both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **B. Objectives of the Research**

1. To investigate COVID-19 impacts on Agrotourism between Caping Merapi, Indonesia and Tobwakira Farm, Kiribati.
2. To identify the strategies between Caping Merapi and Tobwakira Farm to overcome the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **C. Significant of the Research**

1. This research will help actors in Agrotourism to gain a better understanding on how the COVID-19 impacts Agrotourism.
2. For Caping Merapi and Tobwakira Farm, it is hoped that this research can provide more input on how the strategies in the development of Agrotourism to overcome the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic.