

ROLE OF AGROTOURISM IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Agro tourism plays a huge role in the activation of rural areas. Its position and market power affects a number of external components and mechanisms. And although its positive impact on the economic and social development rural areas is noticeable, it also reveals a number of barriers related. An important aspect is to strengthen awareness of local communities concerning benefits resulting from the development of this non-agricultural source of income. Only then it will trigger a multiplier effect that will eventually lead to reduction of unemployment, job creation in sectors serving tourists, revenue growth and will improve both living standard and working conditions of the population actively involved. Improving the visibility of rural values, processing, traditional crafts, rural buildings can become a powerful magnet for tourists, tourists looking for new unconventional forms of recreation. Benefits of the development of rural tourism can become real if there is visible involvement and close cooperation between both – service providers and local authorities (government).

Key words: agrotourism, rural development etc.

INTRODUCTION

Agrotourism is an important element of sustainable development and rural transformation. As a result of decline in profitability of agricultural production and deterioration of living standards of rural residents, these activities – as reported in many countries, conducted observations of the economic activity of farming families in the field of tourism – is mainly a consequence of seeking additional or alternative incomes in many areas related to agriculture. A particular need to improve farming situation occurs in Poland. Market economy have posed problems of rural residents in the situation significantly reduce the possibility of disposing of agricultural production at low and unstable prices, rising production costs, relatively high unemployment, reduce the chances of advancement in life of rural youth and lower living standards [Gurgul, 2005].

The phenomenon of non agricultural activities on the farm occurs in all countries of the world, even the richest, where income per capita is much higher than in India, the production costs and food prices are lower than ours, wealthy village and highly efficient agriculture. There are numerous advantages that rural tourism brings to family farms and rural areas such as efficient use of smaller agricultural areas within the household, then growing better and healthier food and providing tourists unique experience concerning the local gastronomy, traditions and cultural heritage, as well as involvement in agricultural production and an active relation toward nature.

Nowadays, tourists, or as many caterers prefer to call them guests or visitors, are becoming more demanding, better informed, unpredictable and next to the rest they seek also other contents. Thus the purpose of this paper is to explore the basic features of agrotourism farms in India, a primary offer and additional services offered to farm visitors, the characteristics of agrotourism facilities and manpower, methods of promoting the farms, networking with other participants in rural areas, type of visitors and the length of their stay on the farms, as well as prices of services and distribution channels.

DEFINING AGROTOURISM

In this section we look at the term of rural tourism, country tourism, tourist country family farm (TCFF) and agrotourism as well as differences in their definition. Rural tourism is the widest term and refers to the various activities carried out in rural areas, so we distinguish the following types.

- **country tourism** - tourism in national parks and nature parks
- wine tourism - religious tourism
- culinary tourism - cultural tourism
- hunting tourism - adventurous (adventure) tourism
- fishing tourism - medical tourism

Rural tourism can be a professional activity as a primary activity of family farms, but also as a complementary activity which generate additional income. From the above review we see that one of the types of rural tourism is country tourism, which is somewhat narrower term and refers to the rural environment and the activities that are carried out locally (agriculture, gastronomy, cultural heritage, various traditional events, etc.). Country tourism further comprises the following subcategories:

- **TCFF or agrotourism** - rural B & B (bed and breakfast) - folklore
- tasting room - rural camp
- excursion area - ethno village
- rural holiday house - ethnography collection
- rural family hotel - country events

Unlike rural and country tourism **agrotourism** or **tourism on country household** or **village holding** or **tourist country family farms (TCFF)** can be carried out only as a supplementary activity with the primary agricultural activity where own agricultural products are directly sold to guests. Agrotourism includes: a) **overnight services / accommodation**, b) **meals / food services**, and c) **other active holiday services on country farms**. Accommodation services can be offered in the rooms, apartments, rural holiday houses and camps. Food services may also be offered independently through tasting rooms, wine shops, excursion areas and restaurants.

According to the Croatian Chamber of Commerce tourist country family farm is defined as: "... smaller economic entity located in the tourist attractive area giving an original product or a service on the farm, and in which work are involved all family members. Agricultural, country, family farm which provides tourist product or service has the status of 'tourist country family farm'.

Šergo and Tomčić point out that "the development of agrotourism is primarily stimulated by true adventure need of modern consumers to stay in the country area, to experience regional dishes, to experience deep contrast of life in the big city and small traditional environment by seeking inner spiritual harmony and lost integrity

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To draw attention to the role of tourism in the development and conversion of rural areas.
2. To explore the basic features of agrotourism farms in India.
3. To know the benefits of the development of rural tourism.
4. To show the growing importance of the tourism offer in rural farms in terms of growth and sustainable development of the economy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper is prepared by taking recourse to the descriptive, analytical and conceptual methods. Further the paper is briefly describe the Issues and challenges of rural development in India. In writing this paper data is collected from secondary sources of books, news papers, magazine & journal etc.

AGRO TOURISM, TOURISM TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

Although rural tourism and agro tourism are often seen as the same terms, they have their settings that differ from each other. While rural tourism is a general term, agro tourism refers to specific activities addressing leisure, organized by farmers, for different visitors. These tourist services serve as additional sources of income for farmers.

Generally agro tourism features are: it includes separate accommodations at the farmers' homes; it includes activities related to maintained family traditions and customs; it allows visitors to have a comfortable stay away from noise, experiencing the people's friendship and the tranquility of nature.

Agro tourism is more than just a tourist product as it includes many services that accompany the product. It is a way of understanding the journey as a new sensation or positive behavior in relation to the environment, the community and their culture. Agro tourism is a leisure activity and it is very successful. The possibility of enjoying the rural environment and culture extends to these different markets of tourists attractions.

Agro-tourism tourists travel with family and usually come from urban areas. They show respect for the customs of the rural areas and seek information about the places they intend to visit. Agro touristic services are not for mass tourism. In addition to the benefits from accommodation, catering and other activities or direct selling, agro tourism also brings other benefits such as: recognition and assessment of architectural and cultural heritage.

Thus agricultural environment is not only the manufacturer of concrete goods, but also of intangible goods, especially those relating to culture, education, food, landscapes and environment. Thus to determine the development of agro-tourism, a careful analysis should be conducted, a SWOT analysis which highlights opportunities, weaknesses, strengths and limitations.

PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT OF AGROTOURISM

The owners of family farms engaged in agriculture who want to be additionally engaged in agrotourism before such decisions they should assess the attractiveness of the rural area in which they live, then also attractiveness of their own farm and in the end to check are the household members enough motivated and do they have characteristics needed for kind communication with guests.

If the owners estimated that the farm is in an attractive location (preserved environment, pleasant climate, clean air and water) it is also important to enable tourists a good road connections, mobile communications and other services important for the safety and comfort of visitors (health centers, post offices, restaurants, shops, etc.). Owners should also consider could they offer tourists a variety of recreation, tours of cultural and natural heritage and enable tourists to participate in local traditional events. The characteristics of cultural heritage sites are one of the most important factors for attracting visitors and creating a tourism brand. Many world-famous cultural attractions are among the top tourist destinations. When owners evaluate the attractiveness of their farms they need to consider can they involve the guests in certain agricultural activities in the farm, such as gardening, harvesting and processing of fruits and vegetables, feeding and milking animals etc, and also include them in the preparation of traditional foods and drinks. Regarding recreational activities most farms can offer guests hiking, jogging, bicycling and horseback riding. These are the elements that create a unique experience for the customer, and that is exactly the purpose of the trip. While assessing whether the members of farm households have the characteristics important for the kind and appropriate communication with the guests owners should consider their communication skills, entrepreneurial preferences, knowledge of foreign languages, general culture, local customs and along with the knowledge of agricultural activities on the farm it is also necessary to possess knowledge in the field of tourism. In addition to all of the mentioned above the motivation of family members to engage in tourism activities is also very important. Brščić, Franić and Ružić have conducted a study on the subject of motive for starting agrotourism activity where 49% of respondents in a sample of 43 farmers responded that the main reason was self-employment, followed by the use of space, sale of own agricultural products and providing the jobs for children so the family could stay together in future. Among the major limitations in agrotourism activities respondents cited insufficient organization of agrotourism farms, unadjusted legal regulations and insufficient help in education.

THE ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF AGRO TOURISM IN RURAL AREAS

All models of touristic development share dilemmas as to their positive and negative effects. Development of agro tourism in many destinations is viewed positively as an opportunity for local communities to invest, to increase revenues and responsibilities, to protect the environment. Agro tourism generates significant contributions to the process of rural development. Contributions may be in the form of: revenue growth, access to work, exchanges between rural and urban areas, multiplier effects on direct investment, strengthening the local structure through working groups, stimulating the development of physical infrastructure, the diversification of economic activities,

increase the value of properties in an area, creating a ready infrastructure, create opportunities for other economic developments.

Negative effects of agro touristic development occur when this development violates ethical principles. Potential adverse effects are mainly related to environmental degradation and the loss of local cultural qualities.

CONCLUSION

Factors that play a key role in development of rural areas through agrotourism are the following: low farm income, development and expansion of cities, redistribution of financial resources of the urban population to agrotourism facilities (and the whole villages) and local government policy. Material resources of agrotourist farms, their promotional activities, mutual cooperation between hosts, but also a departure from passive attitude and manifestation of initiative and willingness to take risks – these are essential elements that co-create the discussed activity. Top-down solutions used at various levels of government, must respond to emerging opportunities and create incentives for addressing the obstacles encountered while starting agrotourism services.

For the rural areas examined, due to barriers associated primarily with the lower values of the natural environment, support for all initiatives for those who want to deal with this kind of business (especially on local level) should be the factor requiring reduction of load in this particular area.

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