

Ciobanu, Eugenia-Dorina; Turek-Rahoveanu, Petruta Antoneta

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THE IMPORTANCE AND EVOLUTION OF AGROTOURISM IN ROMANIA

Eugenia Dorina CIOBANU (RĂDOI)¹, Petruta Antoneta TUREK-RAHOVEANU²

Summary: According to recent studies and statistical data in the field, agro tourism, a relatively new form of tourism in our country has grown in the last years, becoming at present time the type of tourism with the highest possibility of development and a real chance of getting a large profit for those who are doing it.

Due to our country's rich natural and anthropical touristic potential, that is diversified and so harmoniously distributed around the territory, the existence of many areas that are still untainted by people's presence and the pollution that accompanies them, of the localities, especially the rural ones that have kept their authenticity, their traditions, customs and their charm from the past, the existence of a vast and interesting history and culture, all of those things make Romania the ideal leisure venue, respectively a strong touristic destination.

Tourists are heading more and more towards peaceful natural destinations from the areas where agriculture is still done in the old ways, the land and the animals being the main sources of nutrition and it being natural obviously. Here, they have the possibility to spend their leisure in a picturesque unpolluted environment, get involved in the main housework and take a break from the bustle and everyday stress from the cram in which they live in the big and crowded cities.

Key words: agrotourism, tourism, Romania

JEL Clasification: Q01

INTRODUCTION

The excessive urbanization, the cram in which we are forced to live and develop everyday activities and the everyday stress that we all have to go through in order to survive, all of the above, amid the growing trend of sedentary life, make it so that each and everyone's modern XXI century man's life, needs a compensation, a balance of the relaxation state and psychological comfort, respectively those touristic excursions in order to leisure in a relaxing environment.

Starting from these premises, this article submits a short investigation on a theoretical and practical level in which all the Romanian tourism and agrotourism problems have to be approached.

The article's theme is part of the present day frame of changes that happen on a national level, changes that have affected and will continue to affect the rural environment, respectively the rural tourism and agrotourism, the forms of tourism that could improve the standard of living of the inhabitants from the rural areas that have touristic potential.

Agrotourism, is defined by romanian authors as "the specific form of rural tourism that has a higher degree of complexity, containing both touristic activity (accommodation, services, recreation) and the economical activity, usually agrarian, made by the hosts for the tourists (production activities, manufacturing agrarian products inside the household and trading them)".[1]

Foreign authors have defined it as: "the entirety of the activities of greeting, accommodating, food and relaxation that take place in an agrarian household (farm); the agrarian tourism (at the farm) proposed by agrarians and interrelated with their traditional activities; greeting activities, accommodating and providing services using an agrarian household (farm) resources that contributes to the increase of economic viability, of the productive function and of its multifunctionality".[2]

Thus, rural tourism and agrotourism are real possibilities of economical, social and human development for the rural population and our country has a huge potential in this field.

¹ Drd. Eng. Ciobanu (Rădoi) Eugenia-Dorina – University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine - Bucharest, radoi_eugenia_dorina@yahoo.com

² Drd. Eng. Petruța Turek-Rahoveanu – Scientific Researcher III at The Research Institute for Agricultural Economics and Rural Development, turek_petruta@iceadr.ro

Right now, rural tourism and agrotourism consists of rural households that provide a touristic product that doesn't have a very good quality, with a material base and basic services that are not adjusted to the requirements of the clients that have tourism experience and a certain level of demand.

People from the rural areas that have not been altered by modernization, that kept their originality are truly hospitable, they proudly present the romanian ethnography and folklore, giving the tourists the possibility of going back in time and spending leisure in a picturesque area, but they need more than that in order for this type of tourism, the agrotourism, to be strong enough to improve their living standards, they need a quality product.

Without claiming to exhaust in the following lines a theme that is so extensive and in a continuous change and perfecting state, the article's end goal is highlighting the most important aspects of the country's agrotouristic potential as well as the impact of the agrotourism development upon the inhabitants, especially those from the rural areas with agrotouristic potential.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

As a method of analysis of the agrotourism evolution in Romania, we used the statistical data taken from The National Institute of Statistics website, respectively the statistics conducted on a 10 year period, statistics containing the number of agrotouristic bed and breakfasts and the number of tourists that used them as accommodations for leisure during the studied years.

In order to also set the quality level of agrotourism in our country at present time, respectively 2015, we have used the statistics containing the number of agrotouristic bed and breakfasts ranked by the level of comfort – the owned number of flowers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

According to The National Institute of Statistics provided data, it shows that the agrotourism evolution in Romania in the last 10 years is significant and constantly growing, as the number of bed and breakfasts has grown from 956 – registered in 2005 upon conducting annual statistics, to 1918 – that were identified later in 2015, after conducting the statistics at the end of the year.

Table 1. The increasing number of agrotouristic bed and breakfasts between 2005-2015 in Romania

Types of tourist accommodation structures with tourist accommodation facilities by types of structures and types of property		
Types of tourist accommodation structures	Types of property	Years
		Year 2005
		UM: Number
		Number
<i>Agrotouristic bed and breakfast</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>956</i>
Types of tourist accommodation structures	Types of property	Year 2015
		UM: Number
		Number
<i>Agrotouristic bed and breakfast</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>1918</i>

Also, in order to confirm the agrotourism evolution as a new type of tourism preferred by tourists, the statistics show that the number of tourists that chose the areas with agrotouristic potential as holiday destination and accommodated in agrotouristic bed and breakfasts increased significantly, from 149.104 tourists accommodated in 2004 in these structures, to 549.302 tourists accommodated in 2014 in the same agrotouristic structures. [3]

Table 2. The number of tourists accommodated in agrotouristic bed and breakfasts in 2004 and 2014

Tourist arrivals in tourist accommodation structures with tourist accommodation facilities by types of structures and types of property		
Types of tourist accommodation structures	Types of property	Years
		Year 2004
		UM: Number of people
		Number of people
<i>Agrotouristic bed and breakfast</i>	Total	149104
Types of tourist accommodation structures	Types of property	UM: Number of people
		Number of people
		Year 2014
		549302
<i>Agrotouristic bed and breakfast</i>	Total	

However, from the statistics made by the same empowered institution, we can see that the level of comfort provided by these accommodation units is lacking and prevents a faster evolution and the capitalizing of the areas with agrotouristic potential.

We can see, according to Table 3, that the number of bed and breakfasts ranked 5 flowers is of only 19 units, meanwhile the units with 1 flower are 57, the rest of bed and breakfasts being ranked 2, 3 and 4 flowers.

Table 3. Romanian 2015 agrotouristic bed and breakfasts ranked with flowers

Tourist accommodation structures with tourist accommodation facilities by types of structures, comfort category and tourist destinations			
Types of tourist accommodation structures	Comfort category	Tourism destinations	Years
			Year 2015
			UM: Number
			Number
<i>Agrotouristic bed and breakfast</i>	5 flowers	Total	19
	4 flower		214
	3 flower		1021
	2 flower		607
	1 flower		57

Source :INSS

This shows the fact that cã they don't put a lot of emphasis on quality, the units function with basic endowments or a little higher than the minimum accepted level and as we can see in the table below the accommodation capacity is also insufficient.

Table 4. Romanian 2015 agrotouristic bed and breakfasts accommodation capacity

The existing touristic accommodation capacity by types of accommodation structures, counties and localities			
Types of tourist accommodation structures	Counties	Localities	Years
			Year 2015
			UM: Locuri
			Locuri
<i>Agrotouristic bed and breakfast</i>	TOTAL	TOTAL	35188

Source : INSS

The owners of these units must take example from the highly developed countries in this field, respectively agrotourism: France, Germany, Austria, which through PHARE programs have developed this concept and become leaders in agrotourism. [4]

By organising the whole agrotouristic activity with high attention to details, diversity, recreation, on a material base that has quality and a well thought offer promotion, all of that made it possible for these countries mentioned above to become an example for all the countries with agrotouristic potential, who want to develop this tourism niche.

In Romania, this form of tourism is insufficiently developed and harnessed, despite the touristic and agrotouristic potential that is extremely rich and diverse.

The development of this form of tourism would bring a significant economical growth and an increase of the living standard of the inhabitants from rural areas that have touristic and agrotouristic potential.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions that we can take after the analysis above based on the data acquired from The National Institute of Statistics according to whom, in Romania, there has been a significant increase of the number of agrotouristic bed and breakfasts, and also an increase of the number of tourists accommodated in these units, are the following:

- firstly, in our country there is an important tourism and agrotourism potential and, according to the figures, there is an appeal that is growing year by year, shown by the touristic products consumers toward this type of tourism – the agrotourism;

- secondly, the country's touristic and agrotouristic potential is not exploited and harnessed to the fullest in order to significantly increase the level of living of the inhabitants from the rural areas who exercise rural tourism and agrotourism;

- thirdly, the touristic product is not, also according to figures, a very good quality one and that is shown in the level of classification using flowers of the existing agrotouristic units.

A wider promotion both internal and international, investments in the modernization of the material base, diversifying recreational possibilities, getting local government institutions involved in the touristic activity of the areas that exercise tourism, but also an active involvement of the locals from the areas with high tourism potential, are just a few of the strategies that must be followed in order to have a visible evolution of the Romanian tourism and agrotourism and an increase of the level of living of the country's inhabitants taking example from the developed countries in this field.

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