

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST THREE ROMANIAN AGROTURISTIC MACROREGIONS

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### Abstract

*This paper aims to achieve a comparative analysis of agro-tourism in the first three macro-regions of Romania regarding the number of agro-touristic pensions as well as the number of Romanian and foreign tourists. This analysis highlights the consistency between the physico-geographic framework, the tourism objectives and the development of agrotourism in the mentioned regions (North-West Region, North-East Region and Center Region). The data were taken from the National Institute of Statistics and processed according to the objectives of the paper. From the work, there are a number of reasons for setting up an agro-touristic pension in an area with a rare natural beauty that offers tourists warm, welcoming accommodation conditions for foreign tourists.*

**Key words:** agrotourism, tourist boarding houses, macroregions, Romania

### INTRODUCTION

With an area of 238,397 km<sup>2</sup>, Romania ranks 12th in size relative to the European continent surface, with a temperate continental climate and with a varied and relatively balanced relief, each major relief form (mountains, hills, plains) occupying about 1/3 of the total area of the territory, our country offers favorable conditions for the development of tourism and agritourism.

Law no.315 / 2004 regulated 8 macroregions of development by bringing together several counties (the territorial-administrative base form). The purpose of creating these development regions was to be able to apply the European regional development policies, aimed at reducing regional imbalances, linking sectoral policies, stimulating interregional cooperation (Photo 1).



Photo 1. Romania's macro-regions of development  
Sursa: <https://goo.gl/SG2zgR>

Agrotourism capitalizes on the natural potential of the area, highlighting both the tourist attractions and the hospitality of the inhabitants, introducing into the economic circuit novelties such as landscape, hospitality, solicitude, information of the nature: geographic, cultural-historical, gastronomic, artistic etc. [1].

Rural tourism includes a wide range of accommodation, activities, events, celebrations, sports and entertainment, all taking place in a typical rural environment. It is a concept that includes the touristic activity organized and managed by the rural local population and which is based on a close connection with the natural and human environment [4].

Agrotourism in Romania is especially a chance for locals who, given the crisis in the agricultural sector, are willing to try a new activity using, in order to increase profitability, the infrastructure they already have. But equally true is that agrotourism can be a good opportunity to make a business and for those who, tired of the stressful life of the city and willing to make a change, may be interested in the idea of moving to the country, together with their own family, to work the land and provide hospitality to tourists [5].

From the point of view of entertainment, agritourism is a form of tourism with a wide variety and uniqueness in delivering services to people who love nature, culture and peasant art [2].

Agrotourism can be a complementary solution to agricultural activities by directly supporting the social and economic development of a macro-region.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

For the characterization of rural tourism in the North West Region, North East Region and Central Region of Romania, the following indicators were used: number and share of agro-touristic pensions, number and share of Romanian and foreign tourists in the three development regions. The analyzed period is 2012-2016. The data were taken from the National Institute of Statistics and processed according to the objectives of the paper.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Agrotourism in general, and in Romania in particular, pursues regional development in several aspects:

- increasing the size of the household;
- development of household facilities;
- increasing the efficiency of the existing natural resources;
- increasing professionalism in hospitality services;
- increasing the living standards of the inhabitants

The official statistical records and the official documents for the operation of the agro-touristic hostels have terms such as: agrotourist pension features, spending, income, inputs, etc.

Table 1. Agrotourism evaluation indicators

Indicators used in this study			
Indicators of result	number of agrotourist hostels	number of tourists / year	the number of new jobs
Indicators of impact	increase in value obtained by additional facilities	the volume of household's complementary income	

Source: UNWTO, [6]

The research carried out by the UNWTO [6] to establish and identify the impact of agrotourism development on regional and national economies allowed them to be grouped into two categories of indicators (Table 1).

From the data from the National Institute of Statistics we have taken up and processed the information regarding the number of agrotourist pensions in the North West Region, North East Region and Central Region of Romania (Fig.1).

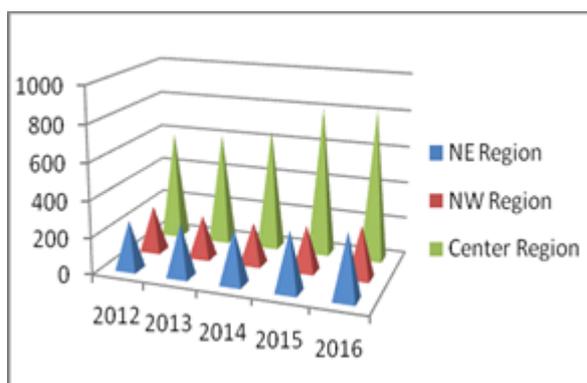


Fig. 1. Number of agro-touristic pensions in the first three macro-regions of Romania

Source: NIS data processing

From the analysis of the number of agrotourist hostels, the following results:

- at the country level most of the boarding houses were registered in the Center Region, their number varies between 594 in 2012 and 823 in 2016, the increase being 229 agrotourist hostels, which represents approximately 39%;
- second place was the NE Region with a number of agrotourist hostels ranging from 226 in 2014 to 284 in 2016, the increase being of 58 agro-touristic hostels, which represents about 26%;
- in the ranking of macro-regions for the number of agrotourist pensions, the North West Region ranks third, the number of them ranging from 265 in 2012 to 352 in 2016, the growth being of 87 agro-touristic pensions, which represents about 33%.

At Romania level, it is observed that the three aggregated macro-regions have overwhelming weights ranging from 70.40% to 71.95% (see Fig. 2).

As regards the population in the analyzed regions, it is noticed that more than 42% of

the Romanian population is concentrated in these areas (Table 2).

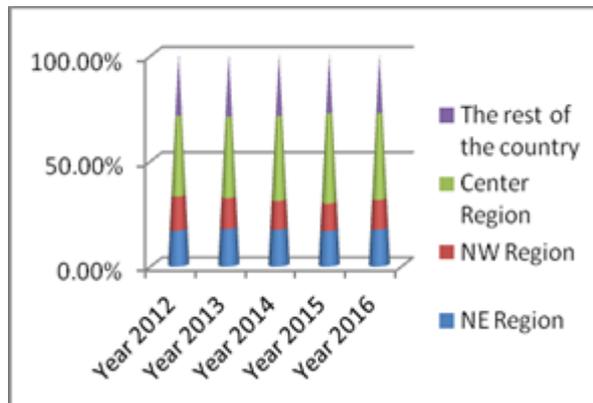


Fig. 2. Share of agro-touristic pensions from the macro-regions studied in total

Source: NIS data processing

Of the total of 10,843,549 Romanian men, 42.66% live in the three studied regions, while out of 11,371,446 Romanian women 41.90% live in the North East, North West and Center Region.

Table 2. Population structure in studied macroregions

Region	TOTAL inhabitants of which:	Men		women	
		No.	%	No.	%
NE	3,924,954	1,951,730	18.00	1,973,224	17.35
NW	2,832,637	1,384,709	12.77	1,447,928	12.73
Center	2,632,384	1,289,448	11.89	1,342,936	11.81
Whole country	22,214,995	10,843,549	100.00	11,371,446	100.00

Source: NIS data processing

Throughout the analyzed period 2012-2016, the number of Romanian tourists who visited the three analyzed regions was increasing.

Thus, in the North West Region the number of Romanian tourists increased by 793,003 from 1,814,020 in 2013 to 2,607,023 in 2016, representing 43.72%.

In the Central Region, the number of Romanian tourists increased by 1,309,084 persons (42.72%), from 3,064,185 in 2012 to 4,373,269 in 2016.

In the North East Region, the number of Romanian tourists increased by 519,740 persons (36.72%), from 1,415,328 in 2013 to 1,935,068 persons in 2016 (Table 3).

Table 3. Number of Romanian tourists (thousands of people)

Region	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
NW	1.819,6	1.814,0	1.960,7	2.270,2	2.607,0
CENTER	3.064,2	3.356,9	3.490,7	4.122,5	4.373,3
NE	1.446,9	1.415,3	1.499,1	1.699,6	1.935,1
Whole country	15.868,7	15.884,8	16.511,9	19.047,7	20.609,1

Source: NIS data processing

As a percentage of the total Romanian tourists who visited the three analyzed regions, we see an increase from 39.89% in 2012 to 43.26% in 2016. By far the Center Region leads the ranking, the share of tourists visiting it tending to 25% of the total number of tourists in the country. Second place was the North West Region with about 12% of the total Romanian tourists visiting Romania. Within a short distance, the North-East Region is located, with about 9% of all Romanian tourists visiting their country (Fig. 3).

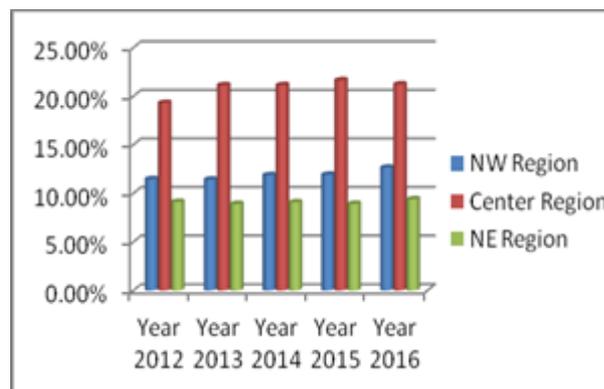


Fig. 3. Share of Romanian tourists in total

Source: NIS data processing

Regarding the number of foreign tourists who visited the three reference macro-regions in the present paper, the trend was growing throughout the period (from 31.11% to 37.35%), the ranking being the same (Center, North West and North East).

Table 4. Number of foreign tourists (thousands of people)

Region	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
NW	292.1	299.7	326.8	443.6	481.5
CENTER	612.9	680.7	754.1	919.6	1,012.9
NE	186.9	199.0	211.3	234.7	270.7
Whole country	3,297.4	3,477.9	3,768.1	4,471.6	4,725.6

Source: NIS data processing

The number of foreign tourists who visited the three areas is much lower than that of Romanian tourists, but steadily increasing. Thus, the sum of tourists visiting the three macro-regions increased by 673,285 persons from 1,091,916 persons in 2012 to 1,765,201 in 2016, an increase of 61.66% (Table 4).

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the Center Region is detached in our analysis in terms of the number of agritouristic hostels built and in terms of the number of Romanian and foreign tourists who visited it. On the second place is the North West Region, followed by the Northeast Region.

The number of agrotourist pensions increased during the analyzed period 2012-2016, so by the end of 2016, in the three macro-regions analyzed, there were 1.459 (cumulated) of such accommodation units, representing approximately 72% of those on total country.

Also, the number of Romanian and foreign tourists has been increasing.

Agritourism in the Central Region, North West Region and North East Region harness the natural potential of the areas, highlighting both the tourist attractions and the hospitality of the inhabitants.

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