

RURAL TOURISM IN THE NORTH WESTERN REGION OF ROMANIA

Ancuța MARIN¹, Daniela Ileana GODJA (DĂNILĂ)²

¹The Research Institute for Agricultural Economics and Rural Development, 61, Mărăști Blvd, District 1, Bucharest, Romania, Email: marin.ancuta@iceadr.ro

²Bioterra University Bucharest, 81, Gârlei Street, District 1, Bucharest, Romania

Corresponding author: marin.ancuta@iceadr.ro

Abstract

This paper aims to analyse the data related to tourism and agro-tourism in the North-Western region of Romania and the number of Romanian and foreign tourists. This analysis represents partial data from the paper entitled "Research regarding the management of quality of activities and agro-tourism services in the North West region of Romania" which will be sustained and published soon. The data were collected from National Institute of Statistics and processed according to the study purpose, namely the establishment of a agrotourist boarding house in a village in the county of Maramures. In order to accomplish this, it was necessary to analyze the tourism potential, types of tourism from the region and the local market. From the present paper resulted a multitude of reasons to set up a agrotourist boarding house in an area of a rare natural beauty. Almost in no other area in Romania you will not see traditions better maintained than in Maramures. One possible explanation for the high percentage that agrotourist pensions have in the total number of accommodation in Maramures County is the fact that it could be exploited the existing buildings that have been modernized and adapted to the current rules. The second explanation could be that they provide the visitor welcoming accommodation facilities, warm or even unusual for foreigners.

Key words: agro-tourism, tourists, North-Western Region, Romania

INTRODUCTION

The tourism exploits the natural and anthropic potential of a country having a multiplying effect by introducing into the economic circuit, unusual sides such as the landscape, hospitality, solicitude and geographical information, cultural, historical, culinary, artistic, etc [1],[4].

The rural tourism includes a wide range of ways of accommodation, activities, events, celebrations, sports and entertainment, all taking place in a typical rural environment. It is a concept that includes tourist activity organized and led by local rural population and is based on a close connection with the natural and human environment [5].

Rural tourism capitalizes traits involved in tourism development act by the following elements:

- precincts of the village and the family estate as the basis of the process of living and carrying out specific activities;
- rural population;
- natural assets that meet personal requirements and those of the tourism offer.

Rural tourism has a receiving heterogeneous structure that is not represented by farms but by the holiday villages, bungalows or villas. All of which are clustered around common areas for meals, travel plazas, camps for environmental activities, art camps, amusement and sports not ultimately recreation.

There were identified several types of touristic villages, namely:

(i) *Villages of artistic creation:* the villages where the basic concern are popular archaic techniques: painting on glass, wood and stone carving, weaving traditional clothing and traditional sewing, ceramics, etc. (Săpânța - Jud Maramures).

(ii) *Villages ethnographic folklore:* the villages where traditional costumes, architecture and interior decoration, popular music and choreography prevails (Bogdan Voda - Maramures County).

(iii) *Villages of fishery and hunting interest:* the villages which can offer besides accommodation also culinary services typically for hunting and fishery (villages from Bistrita valley and Viseu valley).

(iv) *The Villages for sports*: are villages from mountainous and hill areas where there are facilities for winter sports and water sports (Cavnic) [2].

The agritourism in Romania represents an opportunity especially for the local people taking into account the crisis in the agricultural sector are willing to try a new activity using the infrastructure already available to improve profitability. But equally true it is that rural tourism can be an opportunity to make a deal for those who, tired of the pace stressful life of the city and eager to make a change, may be interested in the idea of moving to the country along with his family to work the land and provide hospitality to tourists [6].

In terms of entertainment, rural tourism is a form of tourism with more variety and uniqueness in achieving of services that are offers people who love nature, culture and peasant art [3]. Therefore agrotourism is closely related to farming activities that may constitute a complementary solution to support direct its development with good results social and economic.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to characterize tourism and agrotourism in Maramures County, North Western region of Romania, were used the following indicators: the number and percentage of agrotouristic pensions in the northwestern region and particularly in Maramures County, the top of localities in Maramures County based on the number of pensions, the number and percentage of Romanian and foreign tourists in the North West region. The period under review is 2012-2016. Data were collected from National Institute of Statistics and processed according to the study purpose.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The impact of tourism development has the effect of regional development that is oriented according to studies on the following issues:
 -increasing the size of the household;
 -technical endowment of households

constitutes a condition of raising the efficiency of resources utilization;
 -professionalisation and education, which constitute a lever to improve the living standards of citizens through efficient utilization of resources.

Simultaneously both official statistical records and official documents of the functionality of rural tourist guesthouses present terms such as: the characteristics of pension, expenses and income, inputs, etc.

Research by the World Tourism Organization in order to establish and identify the impact of tourism development on national and regional economies have enabled grouping them into two categories of indicators (Table 1).

Table 1. Indicators for evaluating agro tourism

Result Indicators	Impact indicators
➤ the number of households equipped for agro-tourism	➤ increasing the value of the construction through amenities
➤ the number of tourists/year	➤ the complementary amount of revenues
➤ the number of new jobs created or maintained	

Table 2. The number of agrotourist boarding houses

The reference years	Total for northwestern Region		Maramureş county	
	Number	%	Number	%
2012	252	100%	78	30.95%
2013	231	100%	78	33.77%
2014	226	100%	71	31.42%
2015	246	100%	79	32.11%
2016	284	100%	104	36.62%

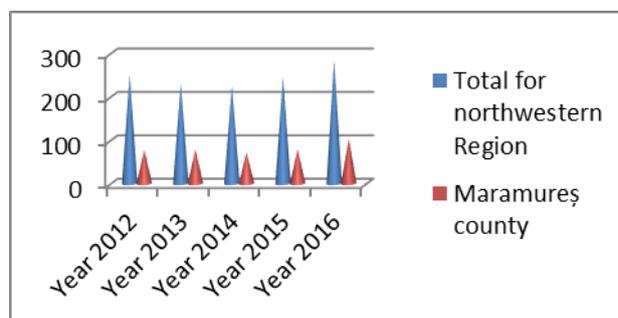


Fig. 1. The share of agrotouristic pensions from Maramures County in the total of NW Region

Analyzing the number of rural tourism units

from Maramures County in the 2012-2016 period, on settlements, show the following (Table 2, Figure 1):

- in Maramures county are 40 localities where pensions were established in 2012-2016;
- by averaging at county level it ranged between 1.77 guesthouses / village in 2014 and 2.6 guesthouses / village in 2016;
- We note that there are places (eg. Sighetu Marmatei) where there was only one pension and therefore that pension not resisted, but also places where their number has increased sharply, from 7 to 10 in the town of Poienile Izei;

We can establish a ranking of settlements with agrotourist boarding houses; so first place is occupied by Ocna Șugatag, followed by Poienile Izei, Botiza and Vadul Izei are on 3rd place and 4th place is situated Bârsana village (Table 3).

Table 3. The top five localities in Maramures County

<i>Maramureș County</i>						
		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
1	<i>Ocna Șugatag</i>	12	14	12	11	13
2	<i>Poienile Izei</i>	7	7	7	7	10
3	<i>Botiza</i>	8	8	8	6	8
4	<i>Vadu Izei</i>	8	7	6	8	8
5	<i>Barsana</i>	4	4	3	8	7

During 2012-2016, in Maramures County, the number of tourist accommodation structures ranged from 168 in 2014 to 221 in 2016. The number of tourist boarding houses and agrotourism units, which constitute the majority (78.73%), practically exploded. In the case of pensions, the minimum recorded was 53 in 2012 and the maximum of 72 was recorded in 2015. Regarding the number of agrotourist boarding houses, the minimum number recorded was 71 in 2014, and the maximum of 104 in 2016. There is an increase of 19 units in tourist guesthouses in 2016 compared to 2012 (minimum compared to maximum) and 33 units in the case of rural tourism units (Table 4). From the total of tourists structures recorded in Maramures County in the 2012-2016 period, the share of rural tourism units in the total varied between

40.51% in 2015 and 47.06% in 2016. In tourist guesthouses, the variation was between 30.99% in 2012 and 36.92% in 2015 (Table 4).

Table 4. The share of main accommodation structures in Maramures County

<i>Maramureș County</i>						
Year	Guesthouses		Agrotouristic guesthouses		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2012	53	30.99%	78	45.61%	171	100%
2013	64	35.56%	78	43.33%	180	100%
2014	58	34.52%	71	42.26%	168	100%
2015	72	36.92%	79	40.51%	195	100%
2016	70	31.67%	104	47.06%	221	100%

One possible explanation for the high share that agrotourist pensions have in the total of accommodation from Maramures County is the fact that existing buildings could be exploited after they have been modernized and adapted to the rules in force. The second explanation could be the fact that provides tourists with welcoming accommodation facilities, warm or even unusual for foreigners. Either way, Maramures is famous for hospitality of the hosts. In order to complete our image of the competition among the accommodation from the northwestern region of Romania, we must consider the number of tourists staying in them as well as stays duration which they spend.

Table 5. Share of Romanian and foreign tourists

Reference years	North Western region		TOTAL
	Number	Percent	
2012	137,078	15.12%	906,504
2013	148,634	14.92%	996,475
2014	167,927	15.53%	1,081,521
2015	221,995	16.22%	1,368,992

Whether the growth at the country level was 51.01% in 2015 compared to year of reference, at the northwestern region level the increase was 61.94%. The increase by 462,488 tourists at the country level could be attributed to the rise in tourists' interest to know

Romania, increase in revenues and/or external conditions (attacks in Nice and Berlin, political and economic crisis in Greece, Brexit) that discouraged the tourism abroad (Table 5).

CONCLUSIONS

It follows that the decision to build a guesthouse, for example in the area of Bârsana, will prove difficult because direct competition (7 pensions) and indirect (39 agrotourist boarding houses) within a radius of 20 km around Barsana, is extremely serious. Positioning, conditions and facilities must be more than what they offer.

From this paper follows a multitude of reasons to set up an agrotourist pension in an area of a rare natural beauty. Almost in no other area in Romania you will not see traditions better maintained than in Maramures.

Hospitality of the people that welcomes you in the door with a warm smile, offering you the dishes prepared in house with lot of hard work, but with a lot of heart, lodging in room appointed with wooden furnishings, crafted by local carpenters, adorned with counterpanes and pillows and weaved carpets crafted by skilled women, complete the idyllic image of Maramures.

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