

THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE EXPANSION OF AGROTOURISM IN PRAHOVA COUNTY

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Abstract

An article entitled "The importance of local development through the expansion of agrotourism in Prahova" it refers to the existing agro-tourism potential. The paper presents a synthesis of the technical material related to the specific infrastructure of the area and an analysis of the tourist traffic. Conclusions reveal the need to develop local government to raise the community's living standards with the help of quality services by promoting traditional values.

Key words: traditions, potential, agritourism, local development, Prahova County

INTRODUCTION

The advent of the tourist trips is recorded in antiquity, and tourist activities in rural areas found their beginning in the same period. In Romania, "country life was a theme often addressed in the literature of the end of the 19th century, having the forefront of the village as a symbol of famous works. Remarkable authors of the Roman literature, considered promoters of the development of rural tourism, have praised these areas. The special place occupied by the agro-touristic farm for leisure is derived from the natural quality offered by the geographic space offered to the tourists alongside the traditional meals offered in the peasant farms where the tourists can participate alongside the hosts in making cans, preparing dairy products or to take part in holidays or various holy fests, fishing or hunting events.

Foreign tourists who love agritourism are interested to know the history and traditions of Romania, for visiting scenic areas, admiring the architecture of peasant houses and folk crafts, traditional knowledge and tasting the gastronomic specialties.

From a financial standpoint, these people fall into the category of those with medium and small materials, whereas this type of tourism calls for less money compared with

accommodation in hotel system but there are upper-income vacationers who prefer agritourism out of curiosity or for rest.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The scientific approach achieved by this paper is based on the knowledge of the factors that can lead to support efficiency strategies and development of agro-tourism in the County of Prahova. For this they were addressed issues related to economic development, infrastructure development, social issues and cultural and touristic potential existing in the area studied.

Agritourism as a form of rural tourism has emerged as an alternative to the classic tourism being defined as "*a narrower concept and considered that it uses for accommodations and dining only tourism and agro-farming landlords, is a picturesque and unpolluted environment, natural attractions and cultural-historical values, traditions and customs are present in rural areas*". [9].

The literature identifies many different concepts that characterize the agritourism. Some of these are given in the paper "the Romanian village: tradition, contemporaneousness and hopes for the future" and follow: securing the base material as "*an activity that was able to capitalize on*

the existing surplus of peasant farm accommodation, prepared and arranged specifically for the reception of guests" [3].

Activities that revolve around the peasant household as *"a set of goods and services provided by the household consumption toward the country of persons who, for a certain fixed period, coming into rural areas for relaxation, rest, recreation, therapeutic cures, or business transactions, as well as many other activities" [3].*

Entertainment, through which the agritourism is considered *"a form of tourism with great variety and uniqueness in accomplishing what gives people who love nature, art and culture of the country" [3].*

The development of tourism at European level, is growing good of allowing tourist resources in rural areas. Agritourism is considered *"a promising option for the future whereas it can achieve economic growth of communities with predominantly agricultural and forest, with the dire consequences of attracting and maintaining favourable over the population in rural areas, to encourage agricultural activity in disadvantaged regions of auteurs of natural resources and social and cultural development" [6].*

Its evolution is represented by numerous international associations find examples in this case: World Association for professional training in tourism (AMFORT), Association for rural tourism development (ATRAC) to encourage rural and cultural tourism programme EXPERT (rural tourism development in the participating countries: Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, United Kingdom, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, France, Russia and Sweden.

The basic principles being innovation, transferability, sustainability, profitability and Environmental Management Institute), and "EDEN", "EUROTER" (has as main objective the promotion of agro-products), "CLECOMFORT" (France), "EUROGITES" ANTREC member ('EUROPEAN RURAL TOURISM NETWORK') National Federation of Tourist Offices and labour initiative (FNOTSI), Association ECOVAST (the objective of rural tourism as a means of

developing local and national economy, with implications for ecological and socio-economic). CELTIC INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION ' (program of strengthening ties between the networks established between 8 of Spain's agricultural regions, France, Ireland, Great Britain, with a common cultural past for the promotion of rural tourism and cultural heritage and the creation of a common Celtic identities, along with environmental awareness throughout the tourist season).

The program TRANSNATIONAL AGRITOURISM INFORMATION CENTRE, organized by the 'Bishop Burton College of Agriculture, (aims to create educational services in the field of green tourism and protecting the environment for visitors to the region in which lies the Bishop Burton Agricultural College).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Prahova was always a basic pillar in the history of the Romanian nation in the Carpatian-Danubian-pontic. The natural backdrop of the Prahova valley and Bucegi Mountains, Teleajen, numerous tourist resorts and facilities they have, along with a number of other factors have determined that this county ranked No. 3 on the country (after the County of Constanta and Bucharest) in terms of the number of tourists. Natural tourism potential is defined on the short existence of mountain chains as: Bucegi, Baiu, Scree, Ciuas. Stands and sub-Ploiești that was Plain. The main waters are: Teleajen Doftana Prahova, Cricovul Dulce Salted. The County's climate is a temperate continental, in the North, the mountains present a tougher character with winds from the North and why bat northeast [2, 1, 4].

The vegetation is influenced by altitude, standing out like this: alpine vegetation, forests of conifers and broadleaves (Beech, common oak, Fir, Hornbeam, Oak). The vegetation in the Southeast area of the County has features of a silvo-stepe with grassy xerophyte plants. The plateaus are covered with meadows, forests and orchards of fruit trees.

In the area there vineyards, and sessile oak forests which alternate with large orchards of apple and plum trees. The fauna is varied and specific for steps relief. In the upper floors are found: red deer, bear, wolves, wild boars, ferrets, cats, squirrels, chamois. The specific territorial birds are: Blackbird, chaffinch, Golden Eagle, goshawk, Eagle. Among reptiles there are viper and lizard. The aquatic fauna is represented by trout, and in the rivers mrene Hill Pikes, carp and predatory.

Prahova is among the counties with the most numerous natural reserves, which include geologic complexes and floristic habitats, and also fauna [5].

Human potential of the county is given the existence of: archaeological, architectural and art ensembles of civil and religious memorial houses, tourist resources of cultural, ethno-folkloric manifestations [9].

Among the most important cultural attractions in the area, specific for rural tourism and agrotourism, there are: Princely House Museum-Village Brebu, ethnography and local history Collection, Museum of the Orthodox Monastery Ghighiu and Suzana, the Princely House the permanent exhibition, the Teleajen River Valley Museum, Vălenii de Munte- Museum "flowers of mine"and "Casa Rainer", Key, mountain resort; The Slănic Salt Museum, "Land Museum" from Plopeni. The villages of County represent important centres of cultural heritage (preservation of traditions, customs, crafts, art ensembles of churches, archaeological sites, historic centres, etc.) and host a rich traditional culture, diverse architecture and a way of life based on traditional values [8].

Preservation and conservation of the rural heritage are essential to the development of rural tourism, representing an opportunity with positive effect on tourists and local population [8].

The administrative structure of the Prahova County consists of 104 localities with 2 municipalities, 12 towns, 90 common and 405 villages. Rural areas are predominantly agricultural activities, industrial and predominantly tourist: Valea Doftanei, Telega, Măneciu mountain resort; mixed with agricultural activities-tertiary; in common

with industrial-agricultural activities-tertiary: Filipeștii de Pădure, Măneciu, Valea Călugărească etc, agricultural pools: Large fruit production areas in the area until Voila Băicoi, Măgurele, Valea Calugarească Susie area; wine production concentrated in the Dealu Mare Vineyard with famous pools: Valea Călugărească cu zona Seciu – Boldești Scăieni – Urlați, Ceptura, Tohani – Gura Vadului; the production of vegetables in field crops (Filipeștii de Târg, Târgșoru Vechi, Blejoi, Bucov), under crops (Puchenii Mari, Balta Doamnei) [11].

The network of county roads include: 6 national roads routes: 1 the european road-route E60; 5 main national roads; 70 County roads; 207 communal roads.

Length of public roads classified from Prahova County is 2,189 km, representing 2.8% of the total public roads from Romania. The density of roads in the County of Prahova is 46.4 km/100 km² what County ranks second in the country, over which the average density is of 33.5 km/100 km² and South Muntenia region density of 34.8 km/100 km². Prahova County is located in an area where vegetable growing, fruit growing, viticulture and livestock represent important economic activities [11].

The fundamental objective of agricultural activity is the recovery and ensure the conditions for relaunching it, depending on the potential of natural, economic and human resources available to the Prahova county, in order to ensure food security of the population and to create the cash economy. The structure of the Land Fund of the Prahova County is displaying in Table 1.

Table 1. Land Fund, Prahova County

	HA	%
Agricultural Area	275,244	58.4
forests and lands with forestry vegetation	15,436	31.9
waters and ponds	9,061	1.9
roads and railways	8,895	1.9
courtyards and building	21,692	4.6
Land	6,259	1.3
total land fund	471,587	100

Source: National Development Plan, Prahova

As you can see, the entire surface of the Prahova county farming predominates the 58.4% followed by woods and forest vegetation in the rate of 31.9%.

Prahova county agricultural area by type of use is illustrated in table 2.

Table 2. Prahova county agricultural area by type of service

	HA	%
arable land	145,088	52.7
Meadows	71,842	26.1
pasture	36,877	13.4
vineyards and wine-growing	8,829	3.2
nurseries		
orchards and fruit tree nurseries	12,608	4.6
total agricultural area	275,244	100

Source: National Development Plan, Prahova.

The 1st place in the total utilized agricultural area in Prahova county is occupied by land that holds a percentage of 52.7%, it is preceded by the meadows surface with a rate of 26.1%, while orchards and nurseries presents a small percentage of 4.6% and 3.2% vines.

The rest of the surface is occupied by pasture in percentage of 13.4%. The main tourist areas of the County are: Prahova valley, Hyderabad, L'autodrome, Slănic.

River Valley area and Finished-It-Starchiojd forming part of the mountain range and that; Cricovului Salty Valley belonging to the bottom of the Hill and Ploiești [8].

The accommodation capacity available to tourists in Prahova county consists of 247 tourist structures, of which 53 hotels, motels, villas, 14, 38, 1 bungalow, camping cabins, 14 1, 2 camps for pupils, 120 pensions (86 urban hostels), 2 3 hostels, tourist stops and 1 hotel for youth who respond well to the requirements of the tourists [13].

Although traditions and habits are influenced by the geographical position of the area and the presence of natural resources, cultural identity is not defined merely by a simple location.

Number of establishments of tourist accommodation functions related with the year 2016 is presented in Table 3.

Total accommodation capacity in Prahova is represented by 306 units, of which 36 agro-guesthouses.

Table 3. Number of establishments for tourist accommodation in Prahova county on July 31, 2016

	Units
Hotels and motels	99
Tourist chalets ²⁾	9
Camping sites and units type box	2
Touristic villas and bungalows	39
Camps for students and preschoolers	3
Guesthouses	110
Agrotourism	36
Hostel ³⁾	-8
Total	306

Source: insse.ph.ro

The number of tourists arriving in Prahova county in the first quarter of 2016 was 222,937 people. According to the National Institute of statistics, it is growing by 14.3%, compared with the same period recorded in 2015. Depending on their nationality, tourists are divided into Romanians (188,959) and foreigners (33,978). Compared to the first half of the year 2015 the number of Romanian tourists register an increase 13.9%, while of foreign tourists with 16.7%. Most of the foreign tourists come from 74.4%, European countries 15.8% coming from Asia, 5.6% in North America, 0.4% of Central and South America, 0.3% of African countries and 3.5% of other territories. The 1st position in Prahova county is occupied by the Bulgarian tourists, followed by those from the United Kingdom, Israel, Italy, Moldova, Germany, USA and France [12].

In Prahova County, there were registered 468,420 overnight stays during the first half of the year 2016. This means an increase by 11.9% than in the same period of the year 2015. Of this figure, 386,949 overnight stays belonged to the Romanian tourists and a number of 81,471 to the foreign tourists.

The average length of stay specified (INSSE) was 2.1 overnight stays per person. 1st place in the type of accommodation occupied by tourists in hotels in the County, and the last place camping sites [14].

The index of net use of accommodation places in the County of Prahova, was according to reports INSSE by 22.0 %. It shows an

increase by 2.0 percentage points compared to the year 2015 [10].

The tourist traffic in the Prahova county is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Movement of tourists in Prahova county, 2010-2014

Prahova County	Arrivals (thousands)	Overnight stays (thousands)	Hints for use Net operational capacity (%)
2010	318.8	799.0	22.2
2011	336.0	839.2	23.3
2012	372.4	909.6	23.2
2013	366.3	876.9	21.0
2014	371.7	898.7	21.7

Source: insse.ph.ro

Table 4 shows that in 2012, in Romania it was recorded 372.4 thousand arrivals. The trend of tourist movement in the County is a positive one from 2010 to 2014/ In the year 2013 is a decline in the number of arrivals, 366.3 thousand persons, in 2014 an increase to 371.7 thousand visitors.

The index of net use of accommodation capacity had the highest value in 2011, 23.3% almost similar with the level in 2012, 23.2%. The smallest value was recorded in the year 2013 (21%).

Among the approximately 1.2 million foreign nationals visited Romania in January-November 2015, of which 70 % they came for business or to visit their relatives, and only 25 % were real tourists.

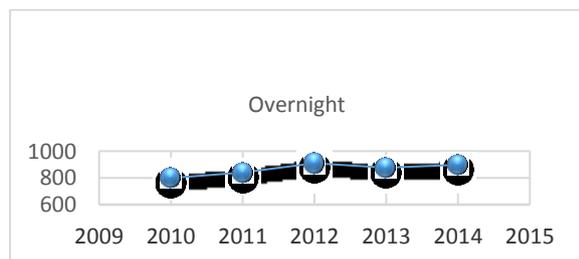


Fig.1. Tourists' night stays in Prahova county, 2010-2014

Source: author's own research.

The situation of overnight stays is similar to that of tourist movements relating to the arrivals of tourists in the Prahova county. On the 1st position is the year 2012 with 909.6 thousands night stays, followed by 2014 when its was recorded 898.7 thousand. In 2013 it

was registered 876.9 thousand. As you can see, the overnight stays trend is an ascending one up in 2012, followed by a slight decline in 2013 and a significant increase in 2014.

The main resorts of national interest in the agritourism of the Prahova valley are: Valea Doftanei, Brebu and Șotriile, starting on the road of fruit: Breaza, Câmpina and Cornu. These resorts present a rich and varied natural landscape, flora and fauna as well as a number of outstanding architectural monuments, museums and exhibitions of folk art, being considered a whole complex for relaxation, cultural and economic development.

The main types of accommodation units in the County Prahova are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Complexes in the area around Valea Doftanei

Name	WTO Classification	No. rooms	No. beds
Pension Iliev	3 stars	17	34
Pension Valea Negrasului	3 stars	14	28
Pension Crăița	3 stars	13	26
Cottage Guest House Sibiu	four stars	5	12
Total	4	49	100

Source: author's own research

The number of bed-places in the guesthouses of the area is 100, distributed in 4 locations, which summarizes 49 rooms.

Table 6. Guesthouses in Valea Doftanei

Name	WTO Classification	No. rooms	No. beds
Pension Perla Doftanei	3 stars	8	20
Pension Loussiana	2 stars	7	17
Pension Paradise	2 stars	10	25
Casa Emanuel	1 star	5	10
Pension Atra Doftana	5 stars	8	21
Total	5	38	93

Source: author's own research

It is a real competition between double and twin room in the area of. A number of 5 pensions are able to put at the disposal of tourists 38 rooms and 93 places.

The accommodation in Villas in the area is possible in 8 units, which have 64 rooms and

131 places. The classification of the villas varies from 2 to 4 stars.

In the Slănic Prahova there are 4 touristic pensions, with 29 rooms. They classified from 3 to 4 stars. The total number of bed places is 70. In Slănic Prahova its is a goats farm of 400 heads. It is named The Forest House and was built using SAPARD funds and is included in the tourist traffic since 2008 (Table 8).

Table 7. Accommodation at guesthouses in Valea Doftanei

Name	WTO Classification	No. rooms	No. beds
Vila Predelus	2 stars	10	20
Vila Negras Black Valley Tourist	4 stars	3	9
Complex-Apollo	2 stars	10	20
Villa Monica	2 stars	9	18
Breeze House	3 stars	5	10
Villa Karina	3 stars	7	14
Squirrel Cottage	3 stars	10	20
Three Bears Resort Chalets	2 stars	10	20
Total	8	64	131

Source: author's own research.

Table 8. Slănic Prahova complexes from

Name	WTO Classification	No. rooms	No. beds
Pension Forest House	four stars	10	20
Pension Portas	3 stars	8	16
Pension Miss Alunis	3 stars	7	18
PensiuneaMuntele Green	four stars	4	16
Total	4	29	70

Source: author's own research

Table 9. Hostels in Slănic Prahova

Name	WTO Classification	No. rooms	No. beds
Top Pension Demac	3 stars	8	16
Pension St. Nikolai	3 stars	7	20
Casa Bella	3 stars	5	12
Total	3	20	48

Source: author's own research

Table 9 presents the structures of accommodation classified by stars in Slănic

Prahova area. It is about 3 urban hostels which offer 20 rooms and 48 rooms.

Table 10. Other forms of accommodation in Slănic Prahova

Name	WTO Classification	No. rooms	No. beds
Baia Rosie Resort Complex Apolodor	3 stars	48	96
Pension Orange Complex	3 stars	5	9
Hotel Coop	3 stars	10	21
Hotel Roberto	1 star	23	46
Hotel Horizon	3 stars	15	30
Hotel Slanic	2 stars	22	45
Rose Vila Darling	2 stars	90	224
Villa La Grand	3 stars	4	14
Caprice	4 stars	4	12
Slănic Villa	2 stars	5	10
House D	3 stars	3	7
Casa Teo	3 stars	6	12
Guest House	2 stars	4	8
Total	14	238	536

Source: author's own research

Other forms of accommodation in Slanic Prahova is represented hotels, villas and houses with local characteristics. They summarize 14 units, 238 rooms and 536 beds.

Table 11. Complexes from Văleni de Munte

Name	WTO Classification	Nr. rooms	No. beds
Casa Tennis	2 stars	3	9
Total	1	3	9

Source: author's own research.

Vălenii de Munte has only one agrotouristic what house, having 3 rooms and 9 places for a two-star comfort.

Table 12. Hostels of Văleni de Munte

Name	WTO Classification	Nr. rooms	No. beds
Pension Teba-Cios	0	7	16
Pension Vera and Livia	2 stars	60	150
Total	2	67	166

Source: author's own research

In competition with the guesthouses from Vălenii de Munte there are the ones from the urban areas. It is about 2 units with 67 rooms and 166 places.

Table 13. Other establishments of Vălenii de Munte

Name	WTO Classification	Nr. rooms	No. beds
Hotel Capitol	3 stars	30	76
Villa Helen	-	8	16
Total	2	38	92

Source: author's own research

Other establishments in the area, are represented by a 3 stars hotel and a tourist Villa, all together having 38 rooms and 92 beds. Touristic accommodation structures, the resulting table 14.

Table 14. Agrotourist Complexes in Prahova county

Area	No. agrotourism	Rooms	Beds
Valea Doftanei	4	49	100
Slanic Prahova	4	49	100
Valenii de Munte	1	3	9
Total	9	101	209

Source: author's own research.

In the total number of touristic pensions in Prahova county, the largest share is kept by Valea Doftanei, 45% and Slanic Prahova 43%, and on the 3rd position comes Valenii de Munte with 11%.

CONCLUSIONS

In general, in Prahova county, agritourism is not developed in accordance with the market demand of the domestic and international tourists.

Despite that accommodation in agrotourism responds to existing requirements in terms of quantity and quality of units and places, it is facing with various difficulties. First regarding the training level, then the technical aspects of the development and in the last it is about the promotion of the local values.

But, the best points of the Prahova valley are given to the beauty of the landscape, the possibility of practicing trekking, winter sports, but also the get knowledge on

traditional folk customs. Here has grown lately agritourism in the form of thematic roads known as large scale projects in Romania: the wine road, and the sheepfold Doftana.

Agritourism activity must be is geared towards rural areas with tourism potential, the opportunities for local development through the promotion of local activities, recreational sports, walks outdoors, resting, watching traditional events and participation in the local celebrations.

Supporting infrastructure and agro services is particularly necessary and promoting a competitive tourism in rural areas but also for the establishment of local networks promotion and touristic services, with the active involvement of the population in rural areas.

The European experience in the field of tourism, as well as conducting studies and research in this field in the developed countries of Europe, constitute an important source of models that can be applied in areas with high potential for practicing agrotourism in Prahova county.

Statistical data showed the evolution of the main indicators that characterize the activity of Agrotourism and how the accommodation structures have worked in Prahova county in the period 2010-2016.

The projects destined to promote rural tourism could have a significant contribution to the economic development of the region.

The optimization of the agro-tourist activities needs new strategies based on the development of projects which could be implemented starting from promoting a destination of the historical, geographical and touristic areas in the existing administrative-territorial and socio-economic profile.

For the creation of development strategies and optimisation of agritourism in Prahova County, it is necessary to set up a SWOT analysis.

For the development of the touristic resorts in the area, it is needed to build a larger number of agro-tourism pensions.

The development of local agrotourism should be based on projects destined to valorize the local capacity and promote handicrafts and local customs..

The existing tourist resorts from the North of the County Prahova could be included in circle sheepfold Road to develop this concept in the mountain areas.

The development of horse farms has allowed tourists to practice horse riding and walking in nature with a horse in the mountain and hilly areas.

Grace to the existence of lakes and dams, fishing could be an invitation to another sort of tour: Fish tour.

The development of touristic cottages has had the purpose to host guests for sport and hunting events.

Agritourism could become an important source of income for residents of both areas who wish to transform its structures function in households with accommodation and meals, as well as for those who want to invest in the construction of new complexes. These activities would have earned local community by collecting taxes and taxes paid annually, but also local producers by developing markets for traditional products. An important element is the creation of jobs and diminishing unemployment, which would solve one of the biggest problems faced by our society during this period.

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