

## DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL PENSIONS IN ROMANIA

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### **Abstract**

*The complex nature of agrotourism as an economic phenomenon has a major impact on the social cultural development of Romania in all the geographical areas in which it manifests itself. The study of agrotourism development begins by identifying the geographic space in which it occurs. Agrotourism is known to spread along the borders of some counties and localities that are concentrated in the Carpathian Areas, in the Colinar Depression area of Transylvania, to which are added the Danube Delta, Mehedinti Plateau and Suceava Plateau.*

*Due to its development, agritourism has become an important means of tourism attraction, being represented by a wide range of specific attributes. The main types of ethno-folkloric villages considered to be representative of rural areas in Romania have led to the expansion of agrotourism practice due to a set of essential attributes related to house architecture, folk port, music and specific choreography. All these require the provision of tourist-specific services, equipment and an appropriate decoration along with the serving of traditional gourmet menus. As a research method, we chose the creation of a studio based on the statute data published by INSSE regarding the dynamics of the agro-tourism pensions at the national level for the last 5 years. The main indicators analyzed relate to: Existing tourism accommodation capacity, tourist accommodation capacity in operation, arrivals, overnight stays and net use index of tourist accommodation capacity in operation.*

**Key words:** accommodation, arrivals, overnight stays, Romania

### **INTRODUCTION**

Agrotourism in Romania, is experiencing a development that is closely related to the practice of rural tourism being geographically different. Thus, the main regions, counties and localities involved in the development of rural tourism are situated in the Carpathian and Sub-Carpathian Areas, in the Colinar Depression of Transylvania, in the Danube Delta, but also in the Mehedinți and Suceava Plateau, being less developed in the area plain [1, 3].

This concentration has been made in close connection with the existence of traditional villages which in turn are classified in the literature as being of several types [2].

Of these, there are ethnographic and folklore villages that include a number of localities where the traditional folk port, house architecture, interior decoration, music and choreography prevailed unchanged for centuries [2, 4].

In the ensemble that it forms all this offers tourists accommodation and authentic mass.

Within these villages there are exhibitions organized as open-air museums, not even the life of the village of the seventh day celebrated through the game of traditional horseradish [1, 5].

Another type of tourist village known in the national space is the one dedicated to the artistic and craftsmanship known for being interested in foreign tourists to develop the horizon of their knowledge and the desire to acquire a series of handicraft artworks directly from manufacturers [10].

Over time they have gained a great importance for the development of the tourist phenomenon in the rural area and the landscape-climatic villages [7].

Being preferred for the peace they offer in relaxation and solitude, the natural setting they have is the desirable point in choosing such a leisure destination.

Situated in hilly or mountainous areas, houses having houses spread over valleys and hills, separated from meadows, meadows or orchards, can satisfy the fundamental

motivation of many Romanian or foreign tourists through the message of "the return to nature". In this case the Șirnea, Fundata, Bran and Moeciu localities are well known [6, 7].

Due to a growing number of fishing practitioners and sports hunters, a number of agrotourism activities have been developed in rural settlements that provide them with gastronomic culinary services that are packed with the organization of specific hunting sessions or local fishing. The best known examples in this case are the villages located on the Viseu and Bistrita valleys, in the Gurghiu area and in the Danube Delta [4].

Regarding the location of the localities where fruit trees and vines are grown, a number of locations have been developed in Romania, where specific tourism activities predominate throughout the year, both during fruit harvesting and afterwards, by offering for their consumption, but also by organizing conservation and preparation activities. Well-known villages in this case are located in the areas of Recaș, Agapia and Vânători-Neamț [6, 11].

The typology of the Romanian villages also includes pastoral villages located in the mountains, where the main activity of the locals is the sheep and cattle breeding.

This type of village attracts tourists through a menu based on complex dairy products to which other egg, poultry, sheep and cattle can be added and for shepherd's entertainment are organized shepherd's feasts [13].

The list of typologies is comprised of tourist villages where various sports can be practiced, ranging from winter to nautical rides on the inner rivers, on reservoir lakes, without the need for expensive special arrangements.

In conclusion, the transformation of rural areas into agritouristic destinations of excellence is possible through the realization of investments designed to develop and promote local business to create a constant demand for tourism activities by capitalizing on the full potential of existing land [10, 12].

Research on the agro-tourism phenomenon highlights the fact that it has a major impact on the development of society from all points of view, economic, social and cultural [9].

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The purpose of this research is to identify the current state of development of the agrotourism phenomenon at national level.

For this purpose, the research was used on the basis of an analysis of data obtained in the economic context, using secondary information to further create a basis for the implementation of field research. The information obtained in this way allows understanding the phenomena studied.

The aim of the research is to identify, extract and evaluate a number of indicators specific to agri-tourism activity at national level.

The collection of secondary information on the material technical basis of agrotourism in Romania implies a documentary activity based on the collection of reliable, objective and valid data from trustworthy sources, which is why original statistical sources provided by INSSE were used [8].

In this case, the information carriers were not visibly trained in the research, eliminating the behavioral distortions that are frequently encountered in the data collection situation in a different way.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Thanks to the Agricultural and Rural Development Policy in Romania, the main objective is to stimulate the transformation of peasant farms into family agro-farmhouses that have a commercial character to form the middle class of the society in rural areas.

This objective entails the efficient allocation of budgetary resources to support agricultural producers and, implicitly, to support the development by modernizing the villages. Looking at the development of agro-tourist pensions in Romania as a whole, we observe according to INSSE that they start their evolution since 1996 (Table 1).

In the first mention of the appearance of agrotouristic pensions in national statistics, six such locations are identified from a total of 2,965 units, which represents 0.20% of the entire national accommodation base.

Table 1. The evolution of Agro-tourist boarding houses from 5 to 5 years

The Year	2016	2011	2006	2001	1996
Agro-tourist boarding houses	2,028	1,210	1,259	536	6
Number of establishments	6,946	5,003	4,710	3,266	2,965
Percent	29.19	24.18	26.73	16.41	0.20

Source: Own calculation.

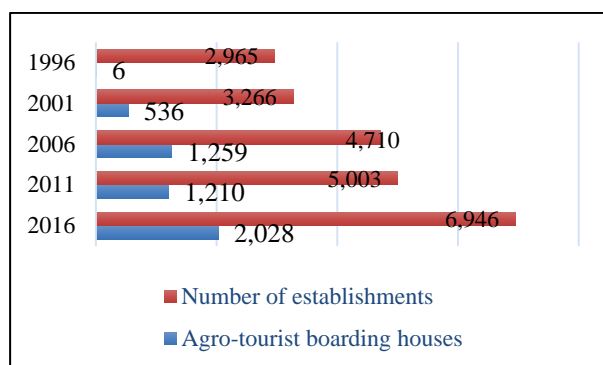


Fig.1 The evolution of Agro-tourist boarding houses  
 Source: Own determination.

For 5 years, the number of agrotourist pensions in Romania increased to five hundred thirty-six units registered according to statistical data in year 2001, which represents 16.41% of the national accommodation base, a significant increase of 16.21% compared to the reference year.

Analyzing the statistical data after another period of five calendar years, it is noted that their number increased by two times. In year 2006, a total of one thousand two hundred and fifty-nine units were registered in the base of INSSE, which represents 26.73% of the total national tourist reception facilities.

We observe for the year 2011 a decrease in the number of agrotourist pensions compared to their number in the year 2006 as 24.18% of the total accommodation structures in Romania. In the following period their number increases by 29.19%. In conclusion, the preference of tourists for practicing agritourism in Romania can be observed in the dynamics of the development of the specific base of agrotouristic boarding houses from year to year. Regarding the material technical basis of the reception facilities in Romania in the year 2018, there is an increase of 1.6% according to the national statistical data. From this base, the largest share is held

by the Hotels category with 58.5%. These are followed by 13.2% agrotourism boarding houses and 11.8% tourists' pensions.

The evolution of the existing tourist accommodation capacity for the agrotourist pensions between years 2017 - 2013 is presented in Table 2.

The indicator of accommodation capacity is the number of accommodation used for tourist purposes in operation, which is entered in the documents of reception, approval, classification of agrotourist pensions, except the additional beds being determined for those existing on 31 December.

Table 2. Accomodation capacity 2013 - 2017

The Year	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Agro-tourist boarding houses	2,556	2,028	1,918	1,665	1,598
Total	7,905	6,946	6,821	6,130	6,009
Procent	32.33	29.19	28.11	27.16	26.59

Source: Own calculation.

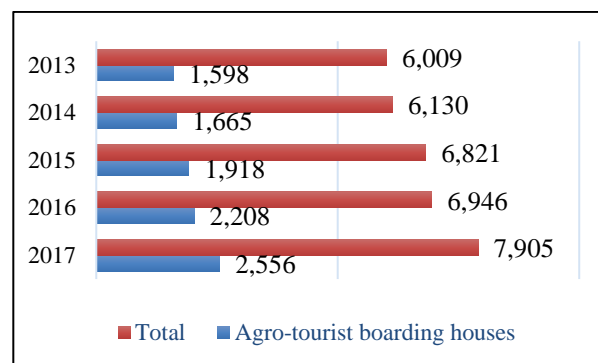


Fig.2 The accommodation capacity  
 Source: Own determination.

From the statistical analysis of the data we can observe the tendency of increasing the accommodation capacity in the segment of the agrotouristic pensions from 26.59% in the year 2013 to a 32.33% in the year 2017. The percentage increase is 0.57% for the year 2014 compared to the year 2013 and 0.95% in the year 2015 as compared to the year 2014. The rate of growth of 1.08% is recorded in the year 2006 as compared to year 2005, the rate rising to 3.14% for the year 2017 compared to the previous one. The percentage increase is determined by the development of the accommodation base and the diversification of domestic tourism services. In the following

we will present the analysis of the agrotourism accommodation capacity indicator according to the geographical location in which it is located. The specific indicator is obtained by multiplying the

number of seats by the number of days. These do not include places in agro-touristic shelters temporarily closed due to lack of tourists or for repairs.

Table 3. Capacity of tourism accommodation in function, on tourist areas (places – days) 2018

Total	Spa resorts	Seaside	Mountain area	The Danube Delta	Bucharest and others The cities Reunion of County	Other Localities
11,569,412	318,689	16,463	4,597,650	283,587	138,643	6,214,380
%	2.75	0.14	39.73	2.45	1.19	53.71

Source: Own calculation.

According to the statistical data processing at the national level, in the year 2018 the territorial distribution of the agro-touristic pensions in Romania shows a high concentration of them in the mountain area in a number of four million five hundred ninety-seven thousand six hundred fifty units. The second place is located in the spa resorts with Three hundred eighteen thousand six hundred eighty nine units, followed by the location of the Danube Delta with Two hundred eighty three thousand five hundred eighty seven units. The following places are occupied by the Bucharest area and the other bigger cities of the country, with One hundred thirty eight thousand six hundred forty three units and the Black Sea coastal space with Sixteen thousand four hundred sixty three units. According to the data analyzed, there are a number of Sixteen thousand four hundred sixty three units located in other geographic areas than those identified.

An important economic indicator is the Tourist accommodation capacity in function, in tourist areas (places - days) shown in Table 4 following the nationality of the tourists.

The analysis of the specific data in Table 4 shows that the entire tourist accommodation

capacity by tourist areas (places - days) is increasing during the period between years 2014 -2017 and decreases slightly in the year 2018.

Table 4. Capacity of tourism accommodation in function, on tourist areas (places - days)

The Year	Total on tourist areas (places - days)
2018	11,569,412
2017	11,787,897
2016	10,336,702
2015	9,079,901
2014	8,219,971

Source: Own calculation.

The analysis of the arrival indicator of tourists in the agro-touristic pensions in Romania, according to their nationalization, is shown in Table 5.

Tourists' arrivals occur when a person enters the register of the boarding house to be hosted one or more nights without interruption. In each agrotouristic boarding house, a single arrival per tourist is counted regardless of the number of overnights. The family is registered according to the number of arrivals per member for which at least one place has been paid.

Table 5. The number of tourists arriving in Agro-tourist boarding houses

	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Romanians	1,026,507	917,213	748,320	622,187	192,013
Foreigners	81,447	87,187	65,134	50,569	9,764
Total	<b>1,107,954</b>	<b>1,004,400</b>	<b>813,454</b>	<b>672,756</b>	<b>201,777</b>

Source: Own calculation.

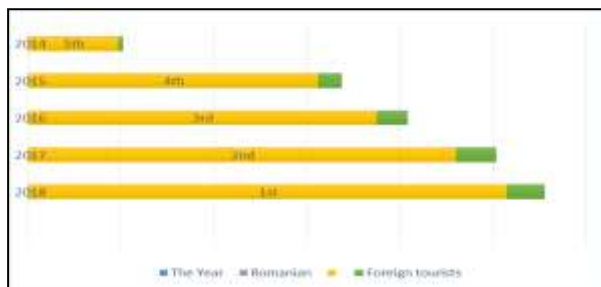


Fig.3 Tourist arrivals by nationality 2014- 2018

Source: Own determination.

The analysis of the data on the evolution of the arrivals indicator shows the tendency of its increase due to the large evolution of the number of persons accommodated in the agrotouristic pensions in Romania in the year 2018. Both Romanian tourists and foreign

tourists register an increase in the number of arrivals from year to year. This is due to the increase in the quality of the services offered by the tenderers and to the promotion of national traditional values internally and internationally.

The overnight stays of the Romanian and foreign tourists in the agrotourist pensions in Romania are shown in Table 6.

Overnight stays within 24 hours of registering a person in the agritouristic boardinghouse, which benefits from hosting for a cost, even if the actual length of stay is less than 24 hours. This indicator also includes overnights for additional beds paid by tourists on request.

Table 6. Overnight in Agro-tourist boarding houses

	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Romanians	1,949,740	1,750,354	1,457,163	1,256,092	990,179
Foreigners	166,893	17,813	140,776	112,900	91,342
Total	<b>2,116,633</b>	<b>1,928,485</b>	<b>1,597,939</b>	<b>1,368,992</b>	<b>1,081,521</b>

Source: Own calculation.

After analyzing the statistical data referring to the tourist overnight stays in the Romanian agro-touristic hostels, the year-on-year growth trend is noticeable both for the segment of foreign tourists and for Romanian tourists.

This increase is due to the increase of tourist circulation at national level and the development of the specific technical material base with the diversification of the services provided to the clients, the creation of a national and international reputation supported by the practice of the local traditions and customs.

Table 7 analyzes the index of the net capacity index. This is the expression of the relationship between the effective use by tourists of accommodation capacity in operation and its actual use by the tourists, being determined by the calculation of the total number of overnight stays, the tourist accommodation capacity in operation agrotouristic pensions of that period.

Table 7. Indices of net use of accommodation capacity

The Year	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Total Agro-tourist boarding houses	18.3	16.4	15.5	15.1	13.2

Source: Own calculation.

As can be seen, the net index values show a year-on-year increase in the actual use of accommodation in operation throughout the analyzed period, starting from 13.2 for the year 2014 to 15.1 for the year 2015 in this case the increase being 2.1%. It is noticed that between 2015 and 2016 there is a preservation of its value, registering a small increase of only 0.4% in the year 2016 compared to the year 2015. For the years 2017 and the year 2018 there are registered annual increases against the values of the years 2015 and 2016 by 0.9% in the year 2017 compared to the year 2016 and by 1.8% in the year 2018 compared to year 2017.

The positive evolution is the result of the increase in the tourist traffic and the number of arrivals of the tourists staying in the agrotourist pensions in Romania. These increases are due to the development of the specific technical material base and the promotion of ancient values along with the diversification of tourism services as a whole.

## CONCLUSIONS

With the evolution of technology by increasing leisure time and revenue on an

ultra-technologized continent, Romania welcomes its tourists to archaic villages where faith and traditions are preserved from father to son of generations. If in the Western world the countryside is just a reminder, the tourist visiting Romania now has an alternative to discover ancient places where pastors still climb their flocks to the mountains, places where the campfire still lights around villages and not in the last places where I can attend the milking of the sheep, preparing the cheeses listening to the laughter in the peasant courtyards in the silence of the evening. In the long winter nights in our villages we still have carpets at war and the tourist in this emotional load can be an active participant in the gathering of the vineyards or in the eggs, the cooking of the dishes or the cutting of the wood for fire. All these activities that result in a life experience have led to the emergence and development of the technical base of the accommodation materials year by year increasing the number of agritourism lodges placed in the middle of nature in a picturesque landscape, endowed with the comfort of a modern world.

As a result of our analysis, we have seen an increase in specific tourism indicators that contribute to raising living standards by increasing profit and developing the national economy. The continuous development of agrotourism at the national level is a priority of the domestic policy. Therefore, the actions of supporting the small entrepreneurs are carried out on a permanent basis both nationally and internationally, with the possibility of accessing foreign financing funds. Keeping alive the traditions and culture of a people is, besides an emblematic visit card itself immortality.

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