

STUDY ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AGROTOURISM PENSIONS IN THE APUSENI MOUNTAINS AREA

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Abstract

The current study highlights the main forms of ownership of agrotourism pensions, a classification of agrotourism pensions in the Apuseni Mountains area, a presentation of agrotourism pensions according to the period of business development in this field of activity, as well as a grouping of agrotourism pensions by funding sources. The Apuseni Mountains area has been and is a special attraction for both Romanian and foreign tourists, due to the traditional tourist attractions in this region. Following the increase in the flow of tourists, we are witnessing a diversification of the forms of accommodation and catering. Currently, tourism entrepreneurs orient themselves towards the establishment of agrotourism pensions because they have found that tourists are increasingly attracted to the practice of tourism as close to nature as possible. In order to achieve the objectives proposed from the beginning, it was necessary to carry out a quantitative study based on questioning. It was applied to a number of 110 managers from agrotourism pensions in the Apuseni Mountains area. On the one hand, statistical data taken from the Ministry of Tourism were used in the paper, and on the other hand, the information obtained from the application of the questionnaire was used.

Key words: agrotourism, questionnaire, Apuseni Mountains, agrotourism pension, Romania

INTRODUCTION

Currently, in Romania there are a variety of opportunities to spend free time by escaping in the middle of nature, by exploiting places full of history, a culture that shows us the origins we are proud of. Tourism in our country has developed gradually, starting at the beginning with "the concept of recreation, until the increase of the level of cultural training, by returning to traditions, customs" [5].

In this sense, the agrotourism pension represents "a form of knowledge and reliving the customs that are kept in our villages and communes, in independent buildings or in the citizens' houses that provide accommodation and food for tourists from their own farm" [8]. It is important to note that any household that is for tourists, as a tourist pension, must meet the requirements of agrotourism, which represent the "internal resources that consist of material resources, intangible resources and tourist resources" [7] and which are the key

elements in the classification of the accommodation unit.

In the specialized literature, the undertaken studies highlight the similarities and differences between the rural tourist pension and the agrotourism pension and they refer to "living space, knowledge and participation in the life traditions of the region, traditional household activities and services that are provided by the farmer's family" [2].

Currently, the normative acts in the tourism field of the relevant ministry and the books published under the guidance of the ANTREC team of professionals are a real help for entrepreneurs who focus on starting a business in agrotourism, eager to "authorize their accommodation and dining to enter the tourist circuit" [9]. In the present paper, the data obtained after completing a questionnaire by the managers of agrotourism pensions in the Apuseni Mountains area were processed. The questionnaire is the most used research tool in conducting an opinion poll, used for the purpose of "obtaining primary data" [3] regardless of the applicability field. "The

questionnaire involves a series of questions that must be answered in writing" [10], "designed to collect the data necessary to achieve the objectives of a marketing survey" [4].

The purpose of this study was to identify the main legal forms of agrotourism pensions in the Apuseni Mountains area, a classification of agrotourism pensions by types of daisies, a presentation of agrotourism pensions according to the period of economic activities in tourism, and a classification of agrotourism pensions according to funding sources.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to carry out this paper, the applied questionnaire was chosen as the main tool for collecting information in order to achieve the proposed objectives. The questionnaire "on the management of agrotourism pensions in the Apuseni Mountains area", 2020, was applied to a number of 110 managers of agrotourism pension in the Apuseni Mountains area, respectively in the counties of Alba, Arad, Bihor, Cluj, Hunedoara and Sălaj.

Starting from specialized bibliographic sources and the legislation in force regarding the establishment and the classification of accommodation units, the paper highlighted the possibility of establishing or developing a business in tourism by opening an agrotourism pension in Romania and especially in the counties of Apuseni Mountains.

Part of the statistical data that formed the basis of this research were taken from the Ministry of Tourism, and another part were correlated following the application of the questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The agrotourism activity can be carried out within an agrotourism pension that can take the form of a legal person according to Law no. 31/1990 regarding the commercial companies, namely as LLC, General Partnership, Joint Company or as entities without legal personality regulated by GEO no. 44/2008, namely Self-employed person, Individual enterprise, Family association, Family enterprise.

When choosing the form of ownership, it must be taken into account how many people need to be hired and what services are to be offered to tourists.

At national level, there were 945 agrotourism pensions out of a total of 14,922 tourist reception structures with classified accommodation functions existing on 13.03.2020, according to the Ministry of Tourism. The most common form of ownership as a type of economic operator was the Individual enterprise (491 units), followed by Self-employed person (260 units), LLC (150 units), Family enterprise (32 units), Family association (3 units) and General Partnership (1 unit).

Table 1. Legal form of agrotourism pensions in Alba, Arad, Bihor, Cluj, Hunedoara, Sălaj counties at the beginning of 2020

County	Individual enterprise (no)	Self-employed person (no)	Limited liability company (no)	Family enterprise (no)	Total agrotourist pensions	
					No.	%
CLUJ	18	50	16	1	85	37.61
ALBA	19	12	7	3	41	18.14
HUNEDOARA	16	11	7	1	35	15.49
BIHOR	16	9	3	-	28	12.39
SĂLAJ	11	10	6	-	27	11.95
ARAD	9	1	-	-	10	4.42
TOTAL No.	89	93	39	5	226	100.00
%	39.38	41.15	17.26	2.21	100.00	x

Source: Ministry of Tourism [6] accessed on 13.03.2020.

Following the research carried out on the main types of property forms related to agrotourism pensions established in the 6 counties studied (Alba, Cluj, Bihor, Sălaj, Hunedoara, Arad) and existing in the Ministry of Tourism database of classified structures, it has been found that the most common are: Self-employed person (93 units), Individual enterprise (89 units), LLC (39 units) and

Family enterprise (5 units), with a total of 226 units (Table 1).

Following the analysis of centralized data at the level of the relevant ministry, it was found that out of a total of 945 agrotourism pensions classified at country level, most of them have 3 daisies (533 units), representing a percentage of over 56%, followed by the structures classified with 2 daisies (328 units), representing over 34% (Table 2).

Table 2. Classification by daisies of agrotourism pensions in Romania

1 daisy	2 daisies	3 daisies	4 daisies	5 daisies	Total
27	328	533	51	6	945
2.85%	34.70%	56.40%	5.40 %	0.65 %	100%

Source: Ministry of Tourism, [5] accessed on 13.03. 2020 and own processing.

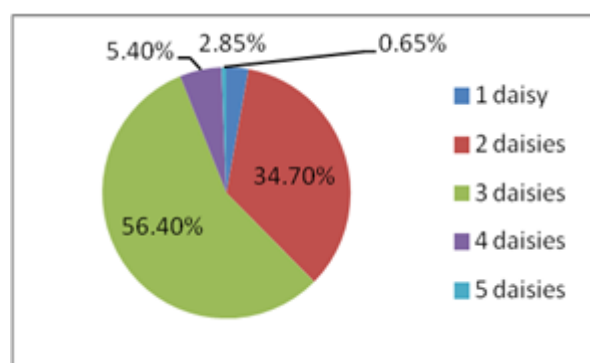


Fig.1 Classification of agrotourism pensions in Romania (%)

Source: own processing.

Currently, at the level of the 6 counties in the Apuseni Mountains area, the agrotourism pensions classified with 3 daisies also

predominate, being followed by those classified with 2 daisies (Table 3). Following the research, it was highlighted that in Romania only 6 agrotourism pensions are classified with 5 daisies and one of them is located in Sălaj county, namely Orgona agrotourism pension in Almaşu commune, Stana village. Following the centralization of the data obtained on the basis of the questionnaire completed by 110 managers of agrotourism pensions in the Apuseni Mountains area, it was found that in this area the agrotourism pensions of 3 daisies predominate (61 units), followed by pensions of 2 daisies (43 units).

Table 3. Classification of agrotourism pensions in Alba, Arad, Bihor, Cluj, Hunedoara, Sălaj counties, at the beginning of 2020

County	1 daisy (no)	2 daisies (no)	3 daisies (no)	4 daisies (no)	5 daisies (no)	Total agro-turist pensions	
						no.	%
CLUJ	1	54	28	2	-	85	37.61
ALBA	2	13	23	3	-	41	18.14
HUNEDOARA	-	10	24	1	-	35	15.49
BIHOR	1	11	15	1	-	28	12.39
SĂLAJ	1	10	15	-	1	27	11.95
ARAD	-	2	8	-	-	10	4.42
TOTAL	No. 5	100	113	7	1	226	100.00
	% 2.21	44.24	50.00	3.09	0.46	100.00	x

Source: Ministry of Tourism [6] accessed on 13.03.2020 and own processing.

The following aspects were also highlighted from the analysis of the questionnaire: the existence of an unclassified pension, a pension classified with 1 daisy and 4

agrotourism pensions classified with 4 daisies (Table 4). From the analyzed data it was found that in the Apuseni Mountains area

there is no classified agrotourism pension of 5 daisies.

Table 4. Classification of agrotourism pensions in the Apuseni Mountains area, until the beginning of 2020

County	unclassified	1 daisy	2 daisies	3 daisies	4 daisies	5 daisies	Total agro-tourist pensions	
	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	%
CLUJ	-	-	25	19	1	-	45	40.90
ALBA	1	-	16	21	2	-	40	36.36
HUNEDOARA	-	-	1	5	1	-	7	6.37
BIHOR	-	1	1	8	-	-	10	9.09
SĂLAJ	-	-	-	5	-	-	5	4.55
ARAD	-	-	-	3	-	-	3	2.73
TOTAL No.	1	1	43	61	4	-	110	100.00
%	0.90	0.90	39.09	55.48	3.63	0	100.0	x

Source: own processing according to the data collected on the field between 2018 and 2020.

Considering the period of activities carried out in the agrotourism pensions in the Apuseni Mountains area, following the application of the questionnaire, the answers given by the pension managers can be grouped as follows: 5 of the managers answered that the activity is more recent, less than 1 year, 50 managers responded that the activity dates between 1-5 years, 13 managers

responded that the pensions have a length of service between 6-10 years since their opening, 42 managers said that the agrotourism pensions are over 10 years old, having a rich experience in the agrotourism activity (Table 5).

The most numerous agrotourism pensions with a long history are found in Sâncraiu commune, Cluj county, that is 22 units.

Table 5. Presentation of agrotourism pensions in the Apuseni Mountains area taking into account the period from establishment to the beginning of 2020

County	MU	Period				Total agro-tourist pensions	
		< 1 year	1-5 years	6 -10 years	>10 years	no	%
		no	no	no	no		
CLUJ	no	3	14	3	25	45	40.90
ALBA	no	1	20	7	12	40	36.36
HUNEDOARA	no	1	4	1	1	7	6.37
BIHOR	no	-	5	2	3	10	9.09
SĂLAJ	no	-	4	-	1	5	4.55
ARAD	no	-	3	-	-	3	2.73
TOTAL	no	5	50	13	42	110	100.00
	%	5.00	45.00	12.00	38.00	100.00	x

Source: own processing according to the data collected on the field between 2018 and 2020.

Considering the period since the opening of the agrotourism pensions in the Apuseni Mountains area, from the analysis of the data obtained on the field, it was highlighted that most agrotourism pensions are young (open between 1-5 years), holding 45% of the total, and others even very young, less than 1 year since their opening, in a proportion of 5%. There are 12% of the agrotourism pensions with 6 to 10 years since their establishment and 38% of the agrotourism pensions with over 10 years of experience. Some of the pensions analyzed on the basis of

the questionnaire were set up with the help of the Agency for Financing Rural Investments (AFRI) within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) which supported rural entrepreneurs to access European funds from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) through the National Rural Development Program (NRDP) 2014-2020 submeasure 6.2. "Support for the establishment of non-agricultural activities in rural areas" of 70,000 euros and through submeasure 6.4 "Support for investments in

the creation and development of non-agricultural activities" of up to 200,000 euros.

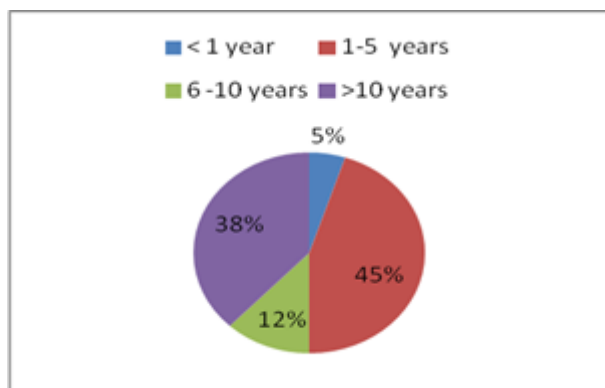


Fig. 2. Agrotourism pensions in the Apuseni Mountains area taking into account the period of establishment (%)

Source: own processing according to the data collected on the field between 2018 and 2020.

On both lines of financing, non-reimbursable financial sources were granted even for the construction of agrotourism pensions, having the CAEN code 5520 - "Accommodation facilities for holidays and short periods," which was a real support for people in rural areas who had the desire to get involved in the hospitality industry.

The development of a business in the field of agrotourism attracted people from the village world who met a series of eligible conditions for accessing non-reimbursable funds.

In order to accept the financing project, "tourist reception structures with accommodation functions such as agrotourism pensions must be included in the tourist circuit and must meet the minimum mandatory criteria provided in the Order of the President of the National Authority for Tourism (NAT) no. 65/2013, with subsequent amendments and completions. The level of comfort and the quality of the services proposed by the project must meet the minimum mandatory criteria for agrotourism pensions classified at least with one daisy"[1]. Analyzing the 110 questionnaires completed by the managers of agrotourism pensions, it was found that 4 respondents used the SAPARD development program (2000-2005), while the non-reimbursed development funds through the National Rural Development Program (NRDP) managed through AFRI were accessed by 55 respondents.

An example in this sense is the manager of the Agape pension from Aghireş, Meseşenii de Jos commune from Sălaj county, who accessed European funds both through SAPARD with 50% financing and through AFRI, the financial aid being 85%.

Table 6. Sources of financing of agrotourism pensions in the Apuseni Mountains area

County	Funds through prin AFRI	Funds through SAPARD	Own funds
	no	no	no
CLUJ	19	2	24
ALBA	17	1	22
HUNEDOARA	5	-	2
BIHOR	6	-	4
SĂLAJ	5	1	-
ARAD	3	-	-
Total No.	55	4	52

Source: own processing according to the data collected on the field between 2018 and 2020.

The questionnaire also showed that 52 agrotourism pensions were opened with their own funds by those wishing to get involved in tourism.

We can add an observation to the ones mentioned above, namely that the pensions opened by their own efforts are more than 10 years old, which shows us that the rural entrepreneurs were not so familiar in terms of attracting European funds.

Currently, due to the competitive pressure, it is necessary for tourism and agrotourism entrepreneurs to constantly make investments in order to: improve services, offer complementary spa services, swimming pools, increase the accommodation capacity by increasing the number of rooms, build houses, etc.

The field questionnaire also considered this issue, and at the end of it a question was asked about the desire to access European funds. The analysis of the respondents' answers revealed that 36 of them want to access more European funds in the future.

CONCLUSIONS

The agrotourism pension is one of the options for tourists who want to relax in a clean and

traditional environment. Some of the villagers who on the one hand sought to carry out profitable activities and on the other hand had as objective the promotion of rural areas started actions for the establishment of agrotourism pensions. Some of these pensions were built on the basis of European projects accessed through SAPARD and AFRI which represented a main financial pillar. Following the analysis of the answers given by the 110 managers of agrotourism pensions opened in the Apuseni Mountains area, it was found that: 4 of them accessed financing projects through SAPARD; 55 respondents received non-reimbursable funds through AFRI and 52 managers had their own financial sources.

According to the statistical data provided by the Ministry of Tourism, at the beginning of 2020, it was found that most open agrotourism pensions are located in the 6 counties in the Apuseni Mountains: Self-employed person (93 units), Individual enterprise (89 units), LLC (39 units), Family business (5 units), with a total of 226 units.

Regarding the comfort provided by the receiving agrotourism pensions, at the national level, at the beginning of 2020 the situation was the following: 533 units of 3 daisies; 328 units of 2 daisies, 51 units of 4 daisies; 27 units of 1 daisy and 6 units of 5 daisies.

At the level of the Apuseni Mountains area, following the result of the questionnaire, the agrotourism pensions were grouped as follows: 3 daisies (61 pensions), 2 daisies (43 pensions), 4 daisies (4 pensions), 1 daisy (1 pension) and an unclassified pension.

Also based on the questionnaire, out of the 110 agrotourism pensions studied, in the Apuseni Mountains area, it was found that according to the year of establishment 5 agrotourism pensions are less than one year old, 50 agrotourism pensions are 1-5 years old, 13 agrotourism pensions have been open for 6-10 years, 42 agrotourism pensions have been open for over 10 years.

The managers of the studied pensions are convinced that the establishment of an agrotourism pension represents an opportunity for the entrepreneurs from the Apuseni Mountains area and that it will know a

development in the future, both for the Romanian and for the foreign tourists.

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