

## ENVIRONMENTAL AND AGRIFOOD CULTURAL TRADITION PRESERVATION AS PART OF RURAL TOURISM. A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW IN ROMANIA

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### Abstract

*The terms rural tourism and agritourism can be considered synonymous, but there are differences even though they share certain identifying elements. Agritourism appeared as a solution to increase the income of rural households, by capitalizing on their economic potential, however the main activity remained agriculture. The main purpose of this research is to evaluate the situation of agritourism in Romania approached from different perspectives such as: rural development, traditional products, and landscape integrations. The methodology used in this study is a systematic literature review where the search process was carried out using keywords such as: "Agritourism in Romania" or "Rural development in Romania" or "Integration of the rural landscape in Romania". The research was conducted and filtered through the Prisma guidelines in 30 papers that were highlighted in the Results section. In concluding this research paper, we would like to say that there are many factors that should be considered to find a viable solution to help develop rural communities and simultaneously safeguarding the environment and using natural resources responsibly.*

**Key words:** cultural background, traditional methods, integration of the rural landscape, rural areas improvement

### INTRODUCTION

Although the first records of the use of rural regions for recreation date back to the 19th century, the growth of agritourism in the nations of the European Union and in Romania began in The 1990s [55, 57]. The agritourism industry expanded quickly in the 1990s, notably in Europe. Austria, Germany, Great Britain, France, and Ireland are the five European nations with the most agritourism facilities; they are also the countries with the best-organized agritourism sectors. Rural areas are vital for the European Union (EU), as they cover almost 88% of the territory and account for 59% of the population. In Ireland, Slovenia, and Romania, more than half of the people live in rural areas [16]. The guiding principles of balanced rural development, taking into account the

sustainable growth of the agricultural sector, are highlighted in the European Charter of Rural Areas from April 1996. The charter is applicable to the entire continent of Europe and is based on the multifunctional development of rural areas as well as the sustainable exploitation of the natural resources that are already available, keeping in mind that the majority of the food consumed by Europeans, particularly their raw materials, comes from these areas [15]. The liberalization of trade, the development of communication technologies, and the consolidation of rural development policies have determined major changes for rural areas from an economic and social point of view [20, 27]. Agriculture no longer represents the main pillar of the rural economy, and this aspect is widely known, the contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) and

employment in most rural areas is in relative decline [17, 33]. There are major changes in the economy and social environment of rural areas in the European Union. The need for a change in rural areas by diversifying the basic economy seems to be the only answer to survive socio-economically [20, 51]. Agritourism has quickly developed all over the world, but mainly in Europe. Austria, Germany, France, and Ireland are the European nations with the most agritourism facilities; each of these nations has a well-managed agritourism industry [54]. In contrast, only a small portion of the population in some of the most populated Member States, such as Germany (22.4%), Italy (18.9%), Belgium (18.0%), the United Kingdom (14.9%), and the Netherlands (14.7%), resided in rural areas. Comparatively speaking, Romania is contentious and has enormous potential for agritourism business development, but at the same time, at least 50% of the rural people faced the threat of poverty or social isolation in 2015 [7].

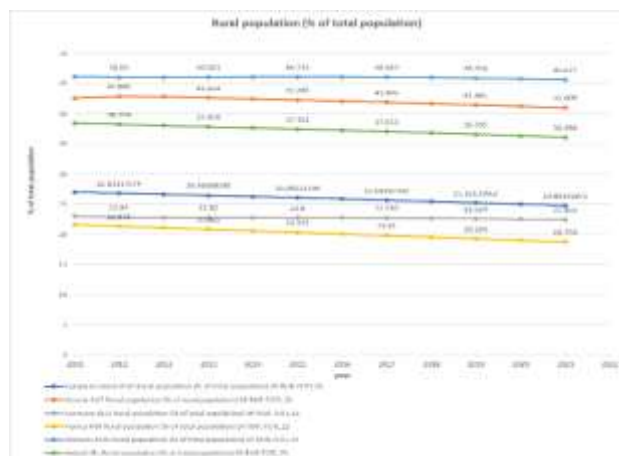


Fig. 1. Rural population (% of total population) - European Union, Romania, Ireland, Austria, Germany, Source: World Bank Data [58].

According to World meter's interpretation of the most recent United Nations data as of Monday, January 23, 2023, the population of Romania is currently 18,910,525 people.

There are 230,170 km<sup>2</sup> of land in all, and 54.6% of people live in cities (10,507,365 people in 2020). In Romania, the average age is 43.2 years.

Rural areas need the optimization of completeness which would translate into

supporting the rural community and encouraging the diversification of economic activity in the rural environment [27], and focus on the main 3 coordinates: people, space, and products [51, 2]. The landscape and the wealth of local resources, which constitute recreational features and ensure cultural, spiritual, and ecological growth, attract many tourists [31, 43]. Like other regions of Europe, rural areas in Romania have experienced a decline in agricultural activities, the restructuring of rural society, and with the rising abandonment of agricultural land as a result of the aging of the rural population and young people's movement to metropolitan areas or overseas, to nations in the continent's center or west [25]. The viability of rural regions is threatened by the aging of the rural population, among all these effects.

These days it is more and more important to find a second income beside agricultural activities, and agritourism entrepreneurship has a great potential to generate and support economic growth and contribute to sustainable development. [3, 23, 29, 55]. Beside increasing the number of jobs there is a great opportunity to promote local food and values and to conserve the cultural landscape, which help to create the specificity of an area [37]. During the last years, there was a tendency of people relocating in the rural areas, due the pandemic and the rise of the prices this moment intensifies [36, 19]. There is a need for modern people to reconnect with their roots, to have freedom of movement and to grow their own food. Different types of people are relocating, and this comes with pros and cons, but there are several studies pointing out that agritourism and sustainable farming has become a viable solution.

The Carpathian, Subcarpathian, hills, plateaus, plains, meadows, and the Danube Delta make up Romania's relief. Their weights are indicated as follows: 31% mountains, 36% hills and plateaus, and 33% plains and meadows. They are grouped concentrically in the shape of an amphitheatre. There are 13,008 villages overall, of which 522 are part of municipalities and cities, according to the Annex that was modified to Point 9, Article I,

of Law no. 290 of November 29, 2018, which was published in the Official gazette no. 1052 of December 12, 2018. These villages are organized into 2,861 communes, each of which is made up of one or more villages. Rural areas often have lower population densities than urban areas, with an average density of 47.7 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> compared to 84.8 residents per km<sup>2</sup> in urban areas [5]. Rural Tourism is described by UNWTO as a specific type of tourism where a large range of items, often connected to outdoor recreation, farming, country living, fishing, and tourism, affect the tourist experience.

A significant component of rural tourism is agritourism, which helps meet visitor demands by providing them with experiences and goods created in-house. According with the Romanian legislation, an Agritourism guesthouse is described as a tourist reception structure, with an accommodation capacity of up to 8 rooms, operating in citizens homes or in an independent building, which offers accommodations for visitors in specifically created areas, the means to prepare and serve meals, as well as the opportunity to engage in domestic or artisan activities [56]. The National Institute of Statistics (NIS) has provided statistics in which both types of lodging structures have an upward trend, with the guesthouse trend remaining constant while the agri-pension trend accelerates. Nevertheless, there are now twice as many agri-pensions as there were ten years ago, and there are now 410 additional housing facilities. The type of services that lodging facilities provide may hold the key. In recent years, there has been a trend toward returning to one's roots, getting closer to nature, and engaging in activities that are typically out of one's daily schedule. Agri-pensions have the benefit of offering wholesome, traditional foods and goods while reviving childhood memories for those who were raised by grandparents or urban residents (whether foreigners or not) who yearn to learn about these experiences.

After 2009, when there were 7% more tourist and agritourism pensions than the year before, the recession slowed the growth to just 1% in 2010 and their numbers even started to

decline in 2011. Beginning in 2014, tourism will begin to rebound, and both pension and agro-pension new housing units will begin to emerge. The number of rooms available for tourists increased by 1.8% annually on average, but 2017 was the most significant year in terms of their growth, with a 4.5% increase on July 31 compared to the same period in 2016 [22]. In recent years, there has been a lot of interest in the development of rural areas. In addition to the rise in accommodation structures, many projects have been launched with the goal of preserving and restoring the traditional architecture of old homes, learning more about how our ancestors lived, and discovering the authenticity of local customs, foods, songs, legends, and crafts. For an accurate answer, the rural region must be analyzed as a complex system that involves all the domains. In addition to academic research, there are numerous NGOs that work to preserve the communities (La Origini, Scoala Trimitoare, Scoala de la Bunesti, Ryma Association with projects in Alba Iulia citadel and Cornea, Herculane Project, Summer school at the Palat in Floresti, Prahova, and many more), festivals which give back to the communities (Electric Castle support Bontinda, Cluj community by creating job opportunities, boosting de local economy and developing the village infrastructure; other examples are Holzstock Festival, in Hosman Sibiu, Maid-en's Festival, Mountain Hen, Apuseni, Sambra Oilor, Shepherd's Festival, Mount Jina).

#### **Literature review**

Rural tourism is an activity that has been practiced for many years in Romania [25] and has gone through many stages, starting from an unorganized structure born from the need of people to find accommodation for their holidays, with a higher degree of comfort than camping, up to the organization of specific accommodation spaces, approved and classified according to several criteria. Rural tourism and agritourism have been significantly developed in recent years in Romania and are approaching the European standards of this field. As a result of the organization of rural tourism, there have also

appeared organizations responsible for representing their interests [30, 42], legislative regulations to support those who want to host tourists, and progress on beneficial competition that has led to the modernization and improvement of tourism activities. The concepts of rural tourism and agritourism, even if they are considered synonymous and have certain common identification elements, are different, with agritourism being included in rural tourism [52]. In principle, agritourism must comply with a series of strict criteria such as the accommodation must be in a peasant household, products obtained by the family will be consumed mainly and the tourists will be involved as much as possible in household activities. This is reflected in the specialist literature, where terms like "agritourism" and "rural tourism" are used interchangeably [48, 44]. Agritourism is not the same as rural tourism, it must be made very clear. Instead, it is a more specific subset of rural tourism.

Agritourism appeared as a solution to increase the income of rural households, by capitalizing on their economic potential, the main activity remaining agriculture. The services offered to tourists are very diverse and can cover many needs such as therapeutic treatments, rest, leisure, satisfying some passions, initiation into traditional crafts, and others. It takes different forms depending on the natural conditions, the stage of tourism development, and other aspects [30, 42]. Preservation of traditions and local identity are an important pillar in development, compared to the presentation of the current situation of local tourism, funding sources and initiatives of administrative bodies at national and EU level (for example LEADER). The LEADER program is known as one of the European Union's financing instruments with the focus on the development of rural communities. It was introduced in Romania back in 2007. In the last program, 2014-2021, CAP invested nearly 20 billion in Romania's farming sector and rural areas. At EU level it was defined that the focus is on modernization, jobs, sustainability innovation and quality. Meanwhile, Romania has flexibility to adapt both direct payments and

rural development programmes to its specific needs. Modernization of non-agricultural activities is covered under Sub measure 6.4. The growth of already-existing non-agricultural businesses as well as the stimulation of the rural business environment are its main goals. This will enhance the amount of non-agricultural operations carried out in rural areas, creating jobs, increasing the incomes of the rural population, and reducing the disparities between rural and urban areas.

The value of the Non-refundable support will be a maximum of 90% of the total cost of the project will not exceed 200,000 Euros/beneficiary over 3 fiscal years.

The main goal of this review article is to evaluate the agritourism situation in Romania. The research would review and analyze the articles based on the following keywords: rural development in Romania, agritourism in Romania, and landscape integration. Research outcomes will create a synthesis of the current information from the main databases (Scopus, Science Direct, Web of Sciences), and will identify the direction and the elements for improving the sector of rural development. Based on the research the identified gaps in the literature are related to the cost of restoration the old houses and using them as accommodation for the tourists, how you can analyze the rural areas and create harmony between humans, environment and developing the community, in the same time how we protect the environment, the importance of the short-chain for the products and using traditional products, how we educate the perception of the villager about agritourism.

The research team tried to approach agritourism from different perspectives, there was a focus on identifying the article related with rural development, agritourism, traditional products and landscape integration. The purpose of this was to understand the approach and if there is a need to fill a gap. Based on the database of 510 article the team created the following objectives:

#### **Objective 1: Analysis of the actual situation of agritourism in Romania**

Objective 1: Analyses of Romania's current agritourism status. The objective responses reveal the state of agritourism in Romania

now from the standpoint of rural development. This objective will help to provide a comprehensive view of the state of agritourism in Romania today from the standpoint of rural development.

There are many discussions and directions depending on the area of research of each of the professionals involved in the well-being of the rural area. Finally, it will offer a macro perspective on the economical, tourism and businesses based on agritourism.

**Objective 2: Analysis of international articles related to the landscape integration of the built environment.**

The objective is aiming to find out how to design accommodation structures to blend in perfectly with the surrounding landscape. Following this objective, there will be observed the state of art of the re-integration. It will be focus mainly on starting from the fact that the landscape integration (from construction to the community and environment) is not studied in Romania and there is no methodology or information regarding the way you should build/restore the accommodation structure and the cultural landscape.

The structure of the cultural landscape reflects the successive systems of beliefs, customs, and norms regarding the social, spatial, and constructive organization of communities, as well as their movements in the territory. The cultural landscape represents a territory established based on prior research that contains elements of value from the natural and cultural point of view, research included in the territorial and local landscape plans. Other landscapes that include areas that are expressions of the historical, cultural, natural, morphological, and aesthetic values of the territory and that are not currently covered from a legal point of view.

In this sense, cultural landscapes include built or unbuilt buildings whose aesthetic value is remarkable; agricultural lands that bear witness to traditional practices; groups of buildings, urban or rural with homogeneous characteristics, whose historical, urban, typological, social or traditional value justifies protection, including urban or rural residential centers; parks, gardens, agricultural fields

including mansions and exploitation areas that are not classified as historical monuments, but whose value justifies protection; valuable views and viewpoints, including urban promenades, cliffs, scenic routes; areas that are characterized by the presence of a series of specific cultural elements that confer local identity (borders, roads, historic roads, infrastructures, and traditional exploitation systems or with historical value); and so on. However, there are certain normative acts regarding territorial planning and urban planning, but no specific legislation has been adopted for the identification, evaluation, and management of landscapes or a guide that integrates these elements, even if by law the European Landscape Convention was ratified.

**Objective 3: Analysis of Romanian articles regarding the traditional products in the context of agritourism**

This objective is designed to find out if food festivals a method to promote and develop traditional products, and, also, how are these concepts translated into costs. The objective will achieve information on the relation between culture and alimentation. It will, consequently, deal with the representation of traditional products in agritourism concept.

Agritourism is such a complex concept which still offers many opportunities and ways of developing communities, there are already articles which study the importance of the traditional products and dishes as a more fulfilling experience. During the past years there have been many projects related to food festivals, which creates extra activities for the tourists. There is even a discussion about a new niche of agritourism, gastronomic tourism. Even if there are still some challenges, for example the market, the lack of trust between the stakeholders, the infrastructure, this can be solved.

This study is preceded by Section 2, in which are presented the methodological aspects that guided the process of this review. Section 3 describes the main results, and the final section presents the conclusions and the recommendations for further research.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology used in this study is a systematic literature review consisting of four steps according to PRISMA guidelines. PRISMA, is a series of modest articles reporting evidence-based comprehensive studies and meta-analyses. PRISMA is a reporting mechanism for randomized trials and reviews. It also acts as the foundation for a thorough review. PRISMA focuses on the best practices that writers can follow to produce thorough and open reports of systematic reviews and meta-analyses. The conduct of systematic reviews with varying requirements has not been directly and extensively discussed. Preparing a systematic review according to the PRISMA methodology is the best approach, as both the reviewer and the reader of the article can go through the path that the authors have followed in order to accomplish the whole process from the beginning of the research until reaching the results. This study was divided into four methodological stages.

**Stage 1: Document Collection** – This is the first step where the literature is collected from various sources and analyzed based on the exclusion and inclusion criteria set for the final review.

**Stage 2: Category Selection** – The second step is to group the results into different categories based on existing trends.

**Stage 3 and 4: Material Review** - The final step is to review the material to identify key issues, insights, opportunities, and data interpretations. The databases used in the first stage of the methodology (document collection) are: Web of Science, Science Direct, Scopus. The search process was performed using keywords such as: “Agritourism” or “Rural development” or “Rural landscape integration” and the search area was restricted to articles referring to Romania. These unique phrases ought to have been located within side the title, panel abstract, and key-word section. Articles needed to offer empirical facts and/or evaluation to be taken into consideration. The search process was limited to English studies. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the

selection of primary databases for literature searches are shown in Figure 2.

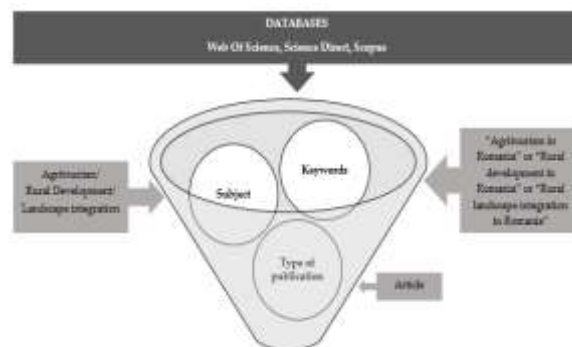


Fig. 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting the literature review.

Source: Original figure, based on data analysis.

The primary database consisted of about 510 articles collected from the three search engines mentioned above.

The PRISMA guidelines consist of a four-step flow chart that describes the identification, screening, admission, and inclusion criteria for materials to be tested. Records were collected from the database (Web of Science, Scopus and Science Direct) followed by the next step which imply to remove duplicates.

The screening process started by excluding records based on the title element, then selected material according to the abstract, and finally excluded records after reading the full text.

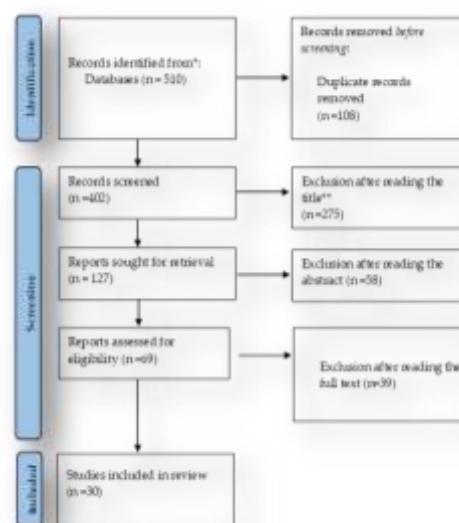


Fig. 3. The selection procedure was aided using the PRISMA flow chart as a tool.

Source: Original figure, based on data analysis.

The complete selection process is presented step by step in:

\* The total number of records identified across all databases was reported (rather than reported separately each database searched)

\*\* The records were excluded by humans, there were no automation tools involved in the process.

A number of 108 duplicates were removed in the first process of selection. Secondly, the articles were excluded after the title component (275 articles)- as mentioned in the first part of the methodology the area of interest remained Romania.

The next step was to eliminate the articles after reading the abstract- articles that had a multi topic approach were not included in the study (58 articles).

In the final step the reason for exclusion was after reading the full text-the articles with non-concluding results for this research were not taken into consideration and considered suitable to be mentioned in the study (30 articles).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As stages 3 and 4 Material review, Table 1 provides a brief presentation of the final studies included in the review (the selection process was previously described in Figure 2). An extended version of the table can be found in the appendix.

Conducting the research after the following keywords "Agritourism in Romania", "Rural development in Romania" and "Integration of the rural landscape in Romania", a database of 510 papers was created. Through the Prisma guidelines (Figure 3) the papers were sorted based on the four Prisma steps: identification, screening, admission, and inclusion criteria for test materials. This resulted in 30 works that were highlighted in the Table 1.

Starting from **Objective 1** where "The actual situation of agritourism in Romania" was analyzed, and the results were exemplified as followed:

Table 1. Analysis of studies which reviewed the academic literature review on Environmental and Agrifood Cultural Tradition Preservation as Part Of Rural Tourism

Authors	Title	Main Idea	Methodology/ Sample Size
Montero-Parejo, M.J , Garcia-Moruno, L , Hernandez-Blanco, J. , Garrido-Velarde, J. (2022) [35]	Visual Impact Assessment in Rural Areas: The Role of Vegetation Screening in the Sustainable Integration of Isolated Buildings	Building integration significantly improves vegetation shielding by over 40% and visual integration ratings.	All of this was supported by statistical analysis, ANOVA test and post hoc analysis (Bonferroni test).
Saghin, D, Lazarescu, LM, Diacon, LD, Grosu, M. (2022) [49]	Residents' Perceptions of Tourism: A Decisive Variable in Stimulating Entrepreneurial Intentions and Activities in Tourism in the Mountainous Rural Area of the North-East Region of Romania	The close relationship between the public's positive perception of rural tourism and the launch of numerous businesses in the tourism sector has been explored.	The research is conducted through a statistical analysis addressed to residents of 78 municipalities in the mentioned area.
Chiciudean, DI, Harun, R, Muresan, IC, Arion, FH, Chiciudean, GO. (2021) [6]	Rural Community-Perceived Benefits of a Music Festival	This article is highlighted by analyzing not only the perceptions of tourists who attend these festivals, but also the perceptions of the music festivals of the Romanian rural communities that organize them.	The tools used to conduct this study were questionnaires designed to measure festival cultural benefits and costs, as well as community well-being. The empirical study is based on a database of 136 responses.
Ciupe, I.A. (2021) [9]	Spatial patterns of second home development as part of rural landscapes. A case study of Apuseni nature park	This study's objectives are to identify the spatial patterns of second homes in connection to significant local environmental characteristics and to offer stakeholders in second home tourist integration planning with a useful foundation.	This study's methodology was built on earlier methods for multivariate categorization landscape analysis, with the addition of a tourist component.
Cozma, A.C ,	Mountain Tourism in	The author tries to	The study relied on quantitative

Coros, M.M , Pop, C. (2021) [11]	the Perception of Romanian Tourists: A Case Study of the Rodna Mountains National Park	understand why tourists are interested in visiting nature and national parks, find out the causes of dissatisfaction and the solutions tourists have to remedy the identified problems.	methods and they used tourist surveys on social media platforms and online forums and distributed them to national park visitors with the help of ARMNP.				was used to reduce the variables to a smaller set.
Dumitras, D. E , Mihai, V.C , Jitea, I.M , Donici, D , Muresan, I.C (2021) [13]	Adventure Tourism: Insight from Experienced Visitors of Romanian National and Natural Parks	Although the focus of the study is adventure travel, other aspects such as accommodation and dining are also seen as key aspects that need improvement.	Researchers conducted an online survey to understand the culture of adventure tourism. They used descriptive statistics and independent t-tests to determine differences between groups.	Popescu, G, Popescu, CA, Iancu, T, Brad, I, Pet, E, Adamov, T, Ciolac, R. (2021) [46]	Sustainability through Rural Tourism in Moieciu Area- Development Analysis and Future Proposals	One of the purposes of this work is to promote the special mountain area around Bran Castle under the name "Moieciu Brand".	Using a questionnaire technique, the survey analyzed the responses of 858 tourists which were accommodated in the area.
Epuran, G , Tescasiu, B, Tecau, AS, Ivasciuc, IS, Candrea, AN. (2021) [14]	Permaculture and Downshifting -Sources of Sustainable Tourism Development in Rural Areas	The researched area consists of the mountainous areas of Brasov county.	The survey included 383 agrotourism guesthouses and 236 traditional guesthouses and traditional restaurants. Of these, 5 agritourism guesthouses and 3 restaurants were selected for detailed analysis, and 5 samples were drawn from 345 guides.	Scutariu, AL, Scutariu, P. (2021) [50]	Perceptions of the local government and the residents regarding rural tourism development effects. Survey in the Suceava County - Romania	The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of tourism development on administrative systems, living standards and the environment by presenting the perspectives of local government agencies and local citizens' human resources in Suceava County, Romania.	A survey-based study revealed that the level of tourism development had a positive impact on the level of improvement in public relations management processes within relevant administrative districts and on the quality of life of the local population.
Herman, GV , Banto, N , Ciaciora, T , Ungureanu, M , Furdui, S , Garai, LD , Grama, V (2021) [24]	The Perception of Bihor Mountain Tourist Destination, Romania	This study aims to present tourists' perceptions of the mountains of Bihor and to highlight the need for a quality-price ratio in accommodation and catering structures.	Researchers have used questionnaires as a way to analyze tourists' perceptions of the Bihor area. 135 respondents participated in the survey.	Adamov, T., Ciolac, R., Iancu, T., (...), Popescu, G., Şmuleac, L.(2020) [1]	Sustainability of agritourism activity. Initiatives and challenges in Romanian mountain rural regions	The aim was to determine the current state of agritourism activity in the three regions and develop proposals that closely address the specific needs of the regions.	The study was conducted in a rural area of Romania, an area with high potential for agritourism. A questionnaire was used and some suggestions were made based on the conclusions drawn.
Muresan, IC, Harun, R, Arion, FH , Fatah, AO, Dumitras, DE. (2021) [38]	Exploring Residents' Perceptions of the Socio-Cultural Benefits of Tourism Development in the Mountain Area	This study describes a survey conducted in June 2018 in a mountain village in Cluj County, Romania.	The research method used in this article is a survey. Forty-eight questionnaires were validated, their results were validated by statistical description, and the varimax rotation method	Galluzzo, N (2020) [18]	The evolution of Romanian agritourism and the role of European Union subsidies in rural areas	The growth of agrotourism is directly correlated with the number of immigrants from Romania and indirectly with the Gross Domestic Product.	The authors used data from the Romanian Statistical Institute and the Agricultural Accounting Data Network. Additionally, the XLSTAT software was used to establish the relationship between financial grants and other payments from his CAP under the first and second pillars.



Gica, O.A., Coros, M.M., Moisescu, O.I., Yallop, A.C. (2020) [21]	Transformative rural tourism strategies as tools for sustainable development in Transylvania, Romania: a case study of Sâncraiu	This article explores how traditions support the growth of sustainable tourism as well as the creation and marketing of new travel goods based on distinctive local heritage.	Using a methodological case study approach, this white paper presents an example of a sustainable rural tourism destination from a developing region in northwestern Romania (Cluj County, Transylvani).	Ibanescu, BC; Stoleriu, OM; Munteanu, A; Iatu, C. (2018) [26]	The Impact of Tourism on Sustainable Development of Rural Areas: Evidence from Romania	The purpose of this study was to conduct a comparative analysis of three metrics: demographics, utilities, socio-economic development.	The method used in this study was the Mann-Whitney U test.
Montero-Parejo, M.J, Moruno, L.G, Rodriguez, A.M.R, Blanco, J.H, Velarde, J.G. (2020) [36]	Analysis of Facade Color and Cost to Improve Visual Integration of Buildings in the Rural Environment	So much for public taste, but when it comes to cost, regardless of typology, painting accommodations in the right color is always greatly appreciated, even though it is 15% more expensive than white. Analysis shows that it is high.	The researchers created infographics, conducted a small pilot study, and after identifying the limited impact of social variables on outcomes, increased the number of participants from 40 to 120.	Nicula, V, Popsa, RE. (2018) [41]	Involvement of Rural Tourism Operators in the Project "Sibiu European Gastronomic Region	This study introduces the concept of gastronomic tourism as a new niche in rural tourism.	Statistical data were collected with a questionnaire that includes quantitative and qualitative information collected from 160 tourists.
Paul, L. (2020) [45]	Rural Development in Romania - A Few Considerations	As a component of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), rural development strategies were first introduced under Agenda 2000. CAP is a complex system of regulations that can guarantee rural dwellers a steady income and respectable standard of living.	The author From the fall of the communist rule 1990 to 2020, the author examined the development of rural Romania.	Martino, Simone Muenzel Dominic (2018) [34]	The economic value of high nature value farming and the importance of the Common Agricultural Policy in sustaining income: The case study of the Natura 2000 Zarandul de Est (Romania)	Its purpose is to provide decision support related to high natural value agriculture and to discuss the contribution of public subsidies and agricultural planning to farmers' income.	This study applies a recently developed toolkit TESSA which provides a set of charts to help practitioners assess five major terrestrial ecosystem services: carbon sequestration, recreational value, crops, and products and services associated with bare forests. present.
Muresan, IC, Harun, R, Arion, FH, Oroian, CE, Dumitras, DE, Mihai, VC, Ilea, M, Chiciudean, DI, Gliga, ID, Chiciudean, GO. (2019) [39]	Residents' Perception of Destination Quality: Key Factors for Sustainable Rural Development	This study is important for determining the main development directions that local governments should consider for inclusion in their local development plans.	The survey was conducted on the basis of 433 questionnaires with valid responses applied in Northwestern Romania. Statistical data processing methods include ANOVA and QUALITEST	Ciolac, R, Rujescu, C, Constantinescu, S, Adamov, T, Dragoi, MC, Lile, R (2017) [8]	Management of a Tourist Village Establishment in Mountainous Area through Analysis of Costs and Incomes	This paper aims to describe tourist villages from three main aspects: Characteristics, stages of development and their advantages.	After amassing the data, researchers used mathematical calculations to apprehend the feasibility of the project.
				Coroș, M.M., Gică, O.A., Yallop, A.C., Moisescu, O.I. (2017) [10]	Innovative and sustainable tourism strategies: A viable alternative for Romania's economic development	The purpose of this paper is to examine how the development and promotion of new tourism products based on unique rural heritage and traditions contribution of developing of sustainable tourism	A methodological case study approach was used, this paper presents an example of a sustainable tourism destination in Romania's Central Development Region (Alba County, Transylvania).

		strategies.				between Romanian and Austrian rural development practices.		
Dragoi, M.C., Iamandi, I.E., Munteanu, S.M., Ciobanu, R., Tartavulea, R.I., Ladaru, R.G. (2017) [12]	Incentives for Developing Resilient Agritourism Entrepreneurship in Rural Communities in Romania in a European Context	This study analyzes agritourism in terms of economic, social and tourism factors that influence the development of agritourism business.	The sample contains information from the Romanian National Institute of Statistics for the period 2010-2015. It used ordinary least-squares regression to test how economic, social and tourism affect Romanian agribusiness.		Muresan, IC, Oroian, CF, Harun, R, Arion, FH, Porutiu, A, Chiciudean, GO, Todea, A, Lile, R. (2016) [40]	Local Residents' Attitude toward Sustainable Rural Tourism Development	Research on factors influencing rural tourism relates to residents' perceptions of the benefits of living in tourist destinations.	Data obtained from official statistical and quantitative surveys were processed using statistical methods and split into several variables to achieve the purpose of the work.
Tieskens, K.F.C., Schulp, J.E., Levers, C., Lieskovský, J., Kuemmerle, T., Plieninger, T., Verburg, P.H., (2017) [53]	Characterizing European cultural landscapes: Accounting for structure, management intensity and value of agricultural and forest landscapes	This paper presents characteristics of the European cultural landscape based on the distribution of three key aspects of the cultural landscape: Landscape structure, management strength and value and importance.	For this analysis, the current version of CORINE Land Coverage was used to assign data to different land cover classes (EAA, 2012).		Rahoveanu, M.M.T., Soare, I., Zugravu, A., Rahoveanu, A.T., Șorcaru, I. (2016) [47]	Traditional food technologies opportunity to increase the competitiveness of agriculture	The purpose of this study was to highlight the relationship between traditional Romanian products and the development of agritourism.	Descriptive statistics were used to describe the geographical distribution of traditional Romanian products, grouped into numbers and categories.
Liang, T.C., Peng, S.H. (2017) [32]	Using Analytic Hierarchy Process to Examine the Success Factors of Autonomous Landscape Development in Rural Communities	AHP is a practical solution aimed at dividing complex, unstructured problems into groups and organizing them into hierarchies	Based on a literature review and discussion with experts resulted in an Analytic Hierarchy Process which consists of six processes: Identification of evaluation factors, construction of hierarchical structure, establishment of dual matrix, solution of eigenvalues and eigenvectors, consistency check of dual matrix, solution of dominant factor part.		Gavrilă-Paven Ionela, Bârsan Mircea Constantin, Lia-Dorica Dogaru.(2015) [19]	Advantages and Limits for Tourism Development in Rural Area (Case Study Ampoi and Mureș Valleys)	This article explores the benefits and drawbacks of promoting tourist initiatives through a leader approach at the level of local action groups in Romania's Hunedoara County.	The Ampoi Valley and Mureș Valley Sustainable Rural Development Plan has tourism development as one of its goals.
Jordan, P., Havadi-Nagy, K.X., Maroși, Z. (2016) [28]	Tourism as a driving force in rural development: Comparative case study of Romanian and Austrian villages	This article presents comparative results on the role of tourism in rural development, especially through tourism,	The paper compared 6 case studies (3 Romanian ones along with 3 Austrian study cases.		Beciu, S., Oana, P., Nistor, S., & Olteanu, V., (2011)[4]	The socio-economic dimension of rural development for the North-East region of Romania	The purpose of this paper is to deal with the social and economic aspects of rural development, identify the main problems and prospects of the region, and implement and improve appropriate solutions of regional development strategies.	To highlight the genuine scope and prospects of sustainable development in the area, a SWOT analysis was employed as the approach.

Source: [35, 49, 6, 9, 11, 13, 14, 24, 38, 46, 50, 1, 18, 21, 36, 45, 39, 26, 41, 34, 8, 10, 12, 53,32, 28, 40, 47, 19, 4].

-The research team discovered that most of the researcher's approach was to identify the perception of the tourist destination in rural areas. How those have an impact on the living standards, administrative systems, the time evolution of agritourism, and the possibility to improve or the direction to develop a specific region. There are no results or papers approaching the cost and benefits of blending the accommodation structures into the cultural landscape.

-The focus at this point is on the economic profits, it is understandable that it is one of the most important aspects when someone starts a business. But in long term without taking into consideration the community, the cultural heritage the environment there will be no sustainable development or specificity, will no matter if you visit an accommodation area from the mountains or from the seaside if the food is specific to the Danube or to the ethnical community of the Hungarians.

-A further important aspect of the agritourism is represented by the integration in the concept of traditional products as part of cultural heritage. In order to receive better national and, international recognition these traditional products and practices must be preserved. The best way to achieve this goal is to bring up to the farmers and producers the concept of food quality schemes. As an alternative to the European Union certification schemes, in Romania were developed national certification schemes. The aims of these national certification schemes are similar to those elaborated by the European Union such as: to preserve traditional recipes and practices, to contribute at the growth of local economy by engaging in the process the whole production chain. We would like to mention that these types of national certification schemes can be initiated by non-governmental entities such as AgroTransilvania Cluster. To sustain this initiative the Cluster has proposed a national certification scheme entitled "Reteta Consacrata".

This certification ensures customers that the Product or composition, method of production is established by use of a recipe whose use has been demonstrated on the market for a

sufficient amount of time to allow transmission between generations, this period cannot be less than 30 years. The scheme involves compliance with mandatory product specifications, this being verified by public authorities or an independent examination body which guarantees complete product traceability and in terms of transparency is available to the general public. Agritourism must be seen as a complete cycle that incorporates aspect of rural landscapes, agricultural practices and traditional recipes.

Another example of the importance of blending is the vegetation used and how will impact the environment, the tourist has to possibility to discover plants such as *Iris ruthenica*, *Dianthus callizonus*, *Rhododendron kotschyi* in the Carpathian Mountains but some entrepreneurs decide to use them for their accommodation structures plants as *Reynoutria japonica*, *Impatiens glandulifera*, *Erigeron annuus* (formerly *Aster annuus*) which are invasive species and will affect the ecosystem. It is important to know the differences between building conventional or with local materials, and how long will take to cover the cost and obtain profit.

The **Objective 2** focused on finding how to design accommodation structures to blend in perfectly with the surrounding landscape. By analyzing the articles, it is observed that it could not be identified a unitary methodology. In conclusion, it is a gap in this direction and as an answer, the research team launches the challenge for the next research papers to try to propose how to integrate the accommodation structures in the cultural landscape (economical, cultural, environmental, community).

According to **Objective 3** in which the Romanian articles regarding traditional products in the context of agritourism were studied, the findings were outlined as below: based on the articles that the researchers studied they reached the conclusion that food festivals are a good example of how to promote and sustain traditional products. Traditional food has always played a major role in agritourism area, and by supporting the promotion and purchasing process of traditional products through events, this might

bring important incomes for rural areas. Beside this as a good side effect there are opportunities for developing accommodation structure and infrastructure which is a big win for the community, it is also important to take into consideration how to improve and conserve the cultural landscape and environment which usually suffers during those events.

In order to respond to the last objective of this research paper, the research also rises the conclusion that, at the moment, there are studies that are presenting the cost and the income of a tourist village, it is important to have this information for other types of accommodation structures and guides with the purpose of educating the community on the way they could do the agri-business in rural areas, more inclusive and sustainable for all the aspects that constitute the rural areas.

## CONCLUSIONS

Agritourism along with the other fields are part of the legislative umbrella of the European Union and any regulation adopted applies to agritourism too. One of the most recent legislations is the Green Deal, a set of policy measures that attempts to move the EU toward a greener path. This program targets several sectors, so it is critical to stay informed and keep up with the developments. In this study, we want to emphasize that Romanian agritourism has a lot of possible methods and may be a good fit with the legal framework of the European Union. As part of Green Deal, the Farm to fork strategy could be implemented through Agritourism and traditional practices. The main role of this strategy is to shift the current food system into a sustainable model and to offer the consumers a traceability of the raw materials/products through the whole value chain. But apart from this role, Farm to fork could be translated into a national certification scheme such as the one proposed by AgroTransilvania Cluster - "FermOras" which means from farm to city. The main objective of this initiative is to reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by shortening the distance between the supply chain and to encourage consumers to buy local and

authentic products by providing the city inhabitants with products/ raw materials that are being produce in the proximity of the city (this way shortens the distances between consumers and producers)

Another part of Green Deal is the EU chemicals strategy for sustainability which has the purpose to support a toxic-free environment and to militate for a better protection of the human health. Preserving the traditional methods of production could lead to a de-creased use of chemicals/ food additives when it comes to food products. The same way goes for the land use, for example an Agritourism unit could use natural fertilizers to produce their own vegetables harvest.

The present paper followed to understand and to create a synthesis of the actual information related to agritourism which focus on rural development, landscape integration and traditional products. Agritourism plays an important role in the communities, being the second source of income, and besides this there are many benefits resulting from it such as, creating employment opportunities, contributing to development of the community, preserving the cultural landscape (traditions, architecture, products, specific plants, and animals). Agritourism has reduced impact on environment, and it is a sustainable option to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change.

Firstly, this research presents the concerns about the approach of the investors, the need of building touristic villages when there are so many traditional houses which can be reused as accommodation structures with an investment. Which is directing for the first recommendation of studying the cost between the restauration of an old house and building a new one (according to the specificity of the area). Most Romanians live in rural areas, so they do not understand who is interested in this type of tourism. On the other hand, there are tourists interested in adventure tourism who will appreciate having some facilities, as well as foreign tourists. As a result, it is important to understand the needs of the tourist and to create a customer profile. On the other hand, the publications that discuss the

effects of agritourism in rural regions and the means of development are significant because they provide knowledge or serve as examples of good practices. Furthermore, along the second Objective 2, it is referred that there is not a single article related to the integration of structure in the cultural landscape, how the materials can affect the environment and the aspect of the village, the way you can be more sustainable and connected with the needs of the community. There have been identified 3 articles (31, 45, 54), as an example of good practices, which present the impact of the facade and vegetation on the human mind and are the cost of this and the other article propose a methodology of analyzing and creating solutions for the landscape. At this moment the landscape architects and engineers are using different methods of understanding the rural area, but there is a need for a general plan for developing relevant actions and sustainable solutions for rural areas, agritourism and in the end for the accommodation structure. However, the landscape analysis should be mandatory before doing any type of construction and besides there is a need of presenting the traditional architecture in modern days and it should be considered in the financial plan. The main objectives of landscape protection are to save, preserve and integrate national/regional/local identity values as an essential element of sustainable development. This concept still exists in different forms, in principle imprecise in several normative acts, but it is for the first time that a unitary vision of the landscape is defined, Romania being among the first states to ratify the European Landscape Convention from Florence, through the law mentioned above.

Moreover, it was presented 2 articles related. to traditional food, gastronomic tourism is a niche which can exploit and support agritourism to another level and there is still a lot to explore about this domain. For the moment, there are only 8 traditional products protected and recognized in the EU. It should be studied the reasons and the solution for this, as well for developing the short-chain practice.

In some of the articles it was mentioned that the cost of developing an accommodation structure, and this is a good way of supporting the entrepreneurs and maybe will help fully understand if or form where they can access financial support. However, there was analysis which proves that the harmony of the accommodation is a criterion of selections, and more people are eager to pay to make sure that they offer a better future to their children. This research paper concludes that there are numerous factors that should be taken into account, and it is crucial to work in multidisciplinary teams to find a complex solution in order to develop businesses, create jobs, maintain the community, protect the environment, and prudently exploit the resources. The world is a diverse place and has the right and obligation to learn and protect the diversity of it.

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