

**DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM AND AGRO-TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE
IN ROMANIAN RURAL AREAS DURING 2000 – 2012**

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Abstract: *More and more tourists from around the world are passionate about the beauty that nature has created. Romania has, including and especially in rural areas many attractions, some already known, others less known. Tourism practiced in various forms in rural areas of Romania offers people who want to relax, who loves nature, culture and folk art, a treasure chest of ancient rural civilization values and can save time and money is staying in reception of rural areas, be it by: peasant family farms, private farms, boarding houses and guesthouses. The evolution of these structures for tourism and agro-tourism in Romania recorded an upward trend during the period studied, respectively 2000 to 2012. This research paper is based on a complex processing and analysis of statistical data, the information from official sources, to central and local institutions, as well as numerous data and information obtained from the field. Rural tourism and agro-tourism potential in Romania have been created and developed numerous tourist accommodation, in order to practice both forms of tourism types: classic and unconventional, complementary, such as rural tourism, agro-tourism, ecotourism, cyclo-tourism, etc.*

Key words: *tourism, agro-tourism, infrastructure, rural areas, Romania.*

INTRODUCTION

Romania has a vast and valuable natural and human potential and a rich tradition of travel, which argues the registration of tourism and agro-tourism between the main branches of the national economy. Romanian villages have special qualities, undeniable, generating new prospects for recovery which has rich resources countryside. New sense of admiration, perhaps a little exaggerated, the townspeople leisure and holidays in the countryside, has many causes. These cases are the consequences of intense urbanization and cultural diversification that gives local peculiarities another value, that of privilege, the exception, of originality. If we add social chaos, economic and political strikes them mainly urban, understand their desire to seek other landmarks in the world who believe, wrongly, free of seizures. More difficult to understand at first, then harder accepted - given its lack of prestige - rural tourism and agro-tourism - were imposed slowly but consistently, especially in tourist markets in economically developed countries, industrialized countries and the degree of urbanization high. Today tourism in rural areas is increasingly appreciated and requested by people who live and work in more stressful conditions inherent in modern civilization. Can not be declared as a product that entirely eliminate stress, rural tourism and agro-tourism is still a possibility of returning to nature, to everything that is pure, unadulterated and pure. In Romania, rural tourism and agro-tourism have always practiced, but empirically and unorganized. Since 1990, Romania develops the concept of rural tourism accommodation in reception taking place in rural areas (mainly guesthouses). Households first attempted transformation of rural tourism in agro-tourism, namely combining farming with tourism, were those of the Rucar - Bran.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The overall objective of this study was the reflection of rural tourism and agro-tourism development in Romania, in the period 2000 - 2012, in terms of infrastructure and development at national level.

Working materials were represented primarily by statistics published by the National Institute of Statistics of Romania. Also been studied and databases published by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, National Association of Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism, organizations in the field.

Research methods were represented of data collection, mainly in the online environment, data processing, centralization and synthetic presentation (tabular) data obtained. Also, there were performed a series of exploratory research on the concepts and terminology areas concerned.

RESEARCH RESULTS

"Green" tourism or nature lovers tourism is a relatively recent phenomenon and a segment of the tourism industry which is often referred to rural tourism, agro-tourism and ecotourism, the participation of tourism resources ensuring adequate capitalization while maintaining their ecological integrity.

Relatively new domain in the world, and emerging and developing in Romania, rural tourism and agro-tourism aim to capitalize agricultural, horticultural, animal, landscape and rural tourism in a rational and sustainable exploitation, maintaining unaltered the agricultural and tourist ecosystems.

Rural tourism and agro-tourism in our country always practical but spontaneous, sporadic, random and, especially, unorganized, its materializing form it represented, since the early 1920 - 1930, accommodation citizens (peasants) occasional visitors of a settlement areas. Since 1990, interest in these two forms of tourism has revived so arose various organizations and bodies, the objectives, seeking to stimulate and develop tourism in rural areas.

Rural tourism and agro-tourism are complex economic activities with a wide range of coverage that highlight, through a proper mechanism, the movement of rural tourism. Also, agro-tourism is a real opportunity to revive the local economy and proven Romanian rural communities. Rural tourism and agro-tourism created and supported by specialists and people in rural areas:

- creates main motivation in training and development of local initiatives, some traditional activities that have long been neglected;
- creates the possibility of developing crafts;
- enables consolidation, development and even marketing of local artwork and crafts;
- lead to the development of relationships and the binding friendships through material and spiritual needs of tourists;
- contribute to sustainable development of rural areas concerned.

Themselves those living in rural areas should be the main "actors" in the business of rural tourism and agro-tourism to be the main beneficiaries. Traditional hospitality of the peasant, however, qualified by specific training activities tourist accommodation, private initiative must be integrated into a comprehensive development plan and their contribution should contribute to assembling tourism products, offering the visitor / the customer satisfaction of a civilized accommodation accompanied by adequate restoration and at the same time the possibility of discovery of new people and places. If the types of initial or continuous training of traditional tourism (hotel industry, restaurants, transportation, etc.)

are run for a long time and answer a call clearly defined, not as things stand regarding the types of rural tourism and agro-tourism training.

In the table below (Table 1) you can see **the evolution of tourism and agro-tourism units of the Romanian rural area during 2000 - 2012**, in terms of their number and the accommodation capacity (number of seats).

Table 1

Evolution of tourism and agro tourism facilities Romanian rural areas

Year	Tourist inns		Tourist chalets		Agro-tourist boarding houses (guesthouses)	
	Number	Accommodation capacity	Number	Accommodation capacity	Number	Accommodation capacity
2000	23	836	161	7972	400	3544
2001	18	526	158	7523	536	4748
2002	16	422	140	6176	682	6219
2003	16	378	138	6361	781	7510
2004	15	385	132	6215	892	9405
2005	11	292	113	5961	956	11151
2006	9	278	116	5875	1259	14551
2007	6	186	108	5574	1292	15448
2008	5	136	116	5207	1348	16906
2009	5	97	123	5887	1412	19783
2010	4	77	134	5667	1354	20208
2011	4	77	147	5928	1210	20683
2012 (expected)	4	77	156	6291	1202	20546

Source: Taking and personal processing of databases from Romanian Statistical Yearbook, editions 2003, 2007, 2008, 2010 and 2012, published by the National Institute of Statistics of Romania, www.insse.ro.

As can be seen from Table 1, the evolution of the number of rural locations (found under the name of rural guesthouses until 2005) in the period had an upward trend, the average growth rates of 4-11%.

On average, tourist pensions have a capacity of 15 to 18 seats and agro-tourist pensions (guesthouses) from 10 to 12 seats. Average occupancy of agro-tourist boarding houses (guesthouses) during 2000 - 2012 was 12.76%. Number of accommodation places in agro-tourist pensions in 2011 was over 5 times higher than in 2000. (Table 1)

Regarding the net use index of accommodation capacity in operation in agro-tourist boarding houses (guesthouses), there is an increase from 5.8% in 2000 to 13.8% in 2011, with a peak of 18.4% in 2008, according to data published by the National Institute of Statistics of Romania in statistical Yearbooks 2010 and 2012. (Figure 1)

Study reporting indicators reflecting, in some ways, the degree of development of rural tourism and agro-tourism in rural areas at Romanian national level these indicators could have observed the following:

- in 2011 the number of rural tourism units counted (inns, chalets and guesthouses) represented 27.2% of the total number of structures with functions of existing accommodation in Romania;
- in 2011 the accommodation capacity in number of accommodation units located in rural areas considered was 9.58% of total accommodation capacity in Romania, which was 278,503 places;

- net use index of accommodation capacity in rural areas is lower than the national level of this indicator (26.3% in 2011);
- regarding ownership of tourist and agro-tourism accommodation units, both rural and national, privately owned units predominate (over 90%).

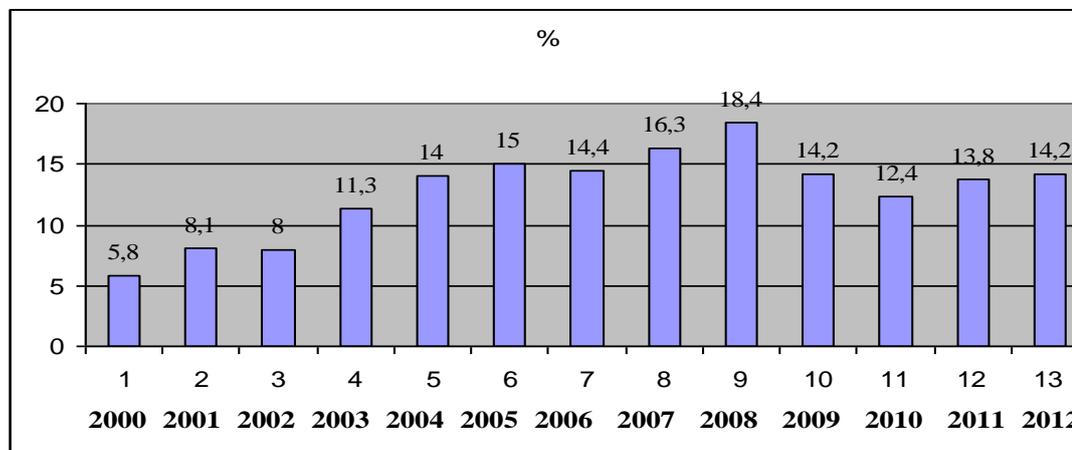


Figure 1
Evolution to the net use index of operating accommodation capacity in tourist establishments from Romanian rural areas

In Romania there are many villages that have good natural conditions for tourism in various forms and have also built and picturesque surroundings, with comfortable homes and farms, with hospitable people, who have their own cultural and artistic tradition, with talented craftsmen and artisans. Unfortunately, just as there are many cases where these villages, representing a rich local heritage are insufficiently important in terms of tourism.

Romanian villagers move to town to sell their own products and to find a job. To put unused heritage of the Romanian villages and to support their development is necessary to find the solution that led to urban citizens to look back to the village to return here to find origins and to and spend time in a unique way.

Evolution countryside is one of the important problems of mankind, as it requires a balance between the requirement of preserving rural economic, environmental and social with logical tendency to modernize rural life. Rural developments, in these coordinates, is influenced by urban sprawl, sometimes aggressive industrialization, the lack of a permanent and consistent environmental health. Maintaining and preserving national character and culture of rural space are targets of major interest to any nation.

Evolution of human society caused structural and functional changes of the countryside highlighted by the emergence and development of agricultural activities and the general trend of urbanization.

Currently, **the Romanian rural tourism and agro-tourism**, all sectors of the national economy, are going through a period of acute crisis, both in terms of tourism capacity development and the number of tourists, and investment income. But, as the output of the current economic crisis and increasing real incomes, tourism demand will improve and, given that traditional tourism will remain quite expensive, will focus far more than the other cheaper forms of tourism, such as agro-tourism.

Sustainable development of tourism and agro-tourism and Romanian rural world, it is a long process of change that allow long-term use of the environment so that economic development remain possible while maintaining an acceptable level of environmental quality. *Sustainable development of Romanian agro-tourism* will play an

important role and develop a clear national policy and perspective. In this long-term development policies need not be omitted following:

- precise targets and judiciously spaced in time, with the active involvement of the Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR), the Ministry of Labor and Ministry of Tourism;
- improving general infrastructure on which the whole revitalization of rural economies (roads, water, sewerage, telecommunications, electricity, gas etc.)<
- setting up farms, guesthouses, tourist households model, equipment and organization of work, but respecting the architecture and local traditions, avoiding "the kitch", typing or transfer of urban construction in rural areas - "urbanization" of rural areas;
- identification, inventory and use of local tourism resources and adjacent, and the development and modernization of the tourism introduced with special emphasis on entertainment, animation, entertainment and sports;
- achieving national reservation system in the first phase and connection to the international world of tourism reservations - the priority areas;
- dispatchers organizing accommodation and tourist information offices;
- location in tourist villages and the roads that connect them (European, national and local) panels - positioning map parts TRR (Romanian Rural Tourism): dispatching accommodation, point information, tourist attractions, hosts traditional catering facilities, farms, pensions and so on;
- installing signs for marking plates with the logo of the federation or association to which they belong and the classification level of the unit;
- preparing a record of the main events of village life (cultural, religious, traditional, exhibitions, fairs, etc.), anniversary, artisans and local bards, to present authentic tourist programs and certain value, personalized and specific for rural areas.

CONCLUSIONS

Given the rich heritage existing tourism especially in rural areas and minimal use at present, we can say that the Romanian rural tourism product is insufficiently capitalized. In this respect, the scope of rural tourism activities performed in the Romanian must expanded from offering simple accommodation to:

- popular gastronomic display of products;
- leisure and animation specific rural areas;
- traditional means of transport;
- pilgrimages to places of worship consecrated;
- organizing cycling routes;
- speleological tourism development;
- festivals, concerts, and so on;
- traditional art exhibitions;
- visiting craft shops, etc.

The main feature of which requires unique tourism product - Romanian village with tourist vocation - to consumers is the degree of compensation, physical and spiritual deficiencies accompanying, in most situations, life in urban areas. Tourists who aspire to a "perfect holiday", whose positive effects take as much time universe is in Romanian tourist village resources that mitigate the impact of urban stress with elements of city life and also considerably increase its chances adapt to modern living conditions, ensuring peace, comfort and healthy eating. Romanian rural environment offers the diversity, beauty,

serenity, comfort for the entire population. He has a great wealth of flora and fauna and preserve the most important part of our cultural heritage. Rural areas is at the same time, the source of the vast majority of the population food and forests, mineral resources, raw materials and energy recycling industry, all have their origins in rural areas.

The offer of Romanian rural tourism and agro-tourism be seen as all "production capacity" put into action to deliver a product on the market contains a variety of items such as: agro-tourist resources, natural and anthropic; "production equipment" agro services, or technical - material basis of units of accommodation, catering and leisure; mass consumption goods to agro-tourism (agricultural goods, food, industrial); workforce specialized in agro-tourist units; local agro-tourist infrastructure (accommodation structures, access roads, social institutions, art, culture, etc.); specific conditions, technical and economic marketing of agro products (prices, rates, facilities, and so on).

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