

THE PRIORITIES OF A POSSIBLE ACTION PLAN REGARDING THE CAPITALIZATION THROUGH AGROTOURISM OF RESOURCES AND TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS FROM APUSENI MOUNTAINS AREA

CIOLAC RAMONA*¹

¹*Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine "King Michael I of Romania" from Timisoara, Faculty of Agricultural Management*

*Corresponding author's e-mail: ramonablaga2005@yahoo.com

Abstract: The motivation for choosing Apuseni Mountains as the theme of this scientific approach derives from the fact that the area has a high agrotourist potential. Many of the rural areas have a remarkable historical, natural and cultural potential, and if this potential were properly used in the tourism product, a valuable product could result which could be a "cure" for many of the area's problems. In this context, the establishment of an action plan for the capitalization through agrotourism of the resources and traditional products from this area, starting from the realities of the territory, we consider to be an appropriate proposal.

Key words: *agrotourism, plan, capitalizing, traditional products and resources*

INTRODUCTION

According to specialists [1..11], the total area of the Apuseni Mountains region is about 7% from the country's surface. The region is characterized by a low degree of urbanization of about 30%. Many of the rural areas have a remarkable natural and cultural historical potential, and those, who have developed the necessary tourist infrastructure, (boarding houses/agrotourist farms) have entered in the tourist village circuit. Most of them are located in the Apuseni Natural Park (Albac, Arieseni, Scarisoara, Garda de Sus, Pietroasa, Giulesti, Matisesti, Horea, Casa de Piatra, etc.). The localities of the area, which are aware of their tourist opportunity and have capitalized it successfully, recently, have been: Sancraiu, Rimetea, Marisel.

The approximately 182 homologated households for rural tourism are distributed uniformly across the counties of the Apuseni Mountains:

- Cluj County has a number of 60 homologated households for rural tourism;
- Bihor County has 44 homologated households for rural tourism;
- Alba County has 48 homologated households for rural tourism;
- Arad County has 7 homologated households for rural tourism;
- Salaj County has 23 households approved for rural tourism.

Based on the natural and entropic tourist resources in the areas, can be developed various forms of tourism, namely:

- mountain tourism - with activities such as hiking, winter sports;
- rest and weekend tourism - favored by the proximity of urban centers such as: Oradea, Cluj Napoca, Turda, Alba Iulia;
- speleological tourism - in Padis Areas, Cetatile Ponorului and Meziad;
- scientific tourism;
- balneary tourism - in Geoagiu Bai and Stana de Vale resorts;
- hunting tourism and sport fishing;
- cultural tourism-sights of great interest being seen in Campeni, Abrud, Arieseni, Albac, etc.
- rural tourism and agrotourism: it is practiced in Garda-Arieseni area, Rachitele and also in the rural villages from Mureș Valley, these being not the only areas specific to this form of tourism, but only the most developed ones today.

Despite the fact that the area has a special agrotourist heritage, with great potential for capitalizing, agrotourism is still a quite narrow segment of the tourist market, confronted with many problems, such as[1..11]:

- agrotourism is practiced more in a spontaneous than organized form, following the motto "the tourist finds the agrotourist farm, not the farm attracts the tourists." This is one of the reasons that demonstrate the need to organize this form of tourism with the involvement of the authorities and the local community, so that to be economically viable.
- the owners of tourist locations have entrepreneurial skills, in general, and less specialized knowledge in the field of tourism and management from this field;
- tourist locations have a low occupancy degree, so to develop this business, the owners have opened a shop, a mill, etc. (with minimal staff), which they administer;
- services offered to tourists are very little diversified (generally accommodation, accommodation and meals) and addressed especially to tourists without special needs.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The authors of the paper were used as methods of work: data collection, processing, analysis, observation and their interpretation.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The elaboration of the action plan regarding the capitalization of the Apuseni Mountains through agrotourism represents one of the essential activities for proper management of the tourism resources from the studied area. The elaboration of this plan is based on the realities observed in the field:

- The natural tourism potential, meaning the geographical conditions, specific to the area represent strong points when we speak about the agrotourism sector of this area.
- The entropic potential can contribute to raising incomes and attracting young people to rural areas, taking into account agrotourist activities, based on this affirmation being the fact that, a large part of the area's localities are very good at preserving traditions. The rural environment has not lost its originality, attractiveness, but has supported the preservation of the settlements identity, of culture, of traditions.
- Another positive aspect is the fact that, lately, has become aware the idea of the existence of a great tourist potential and start to be promoted, but yet still quite shy the area..
- Contemporary industry is in decline, it was based on mining, wood processing, textiles, clothing, etc., and there is now a need for a reorientation to other areas of activity, of this field being the agriculture, and as a related activity agrotourism.
- However, the general access infrastructure is one of the major weaknesses, which has much to improve up to the national average quality level and still very much to be comparable with the infrastructure of the tourist areas from the West, in the case in which such an evolution of localities from the area is taken into consideration.

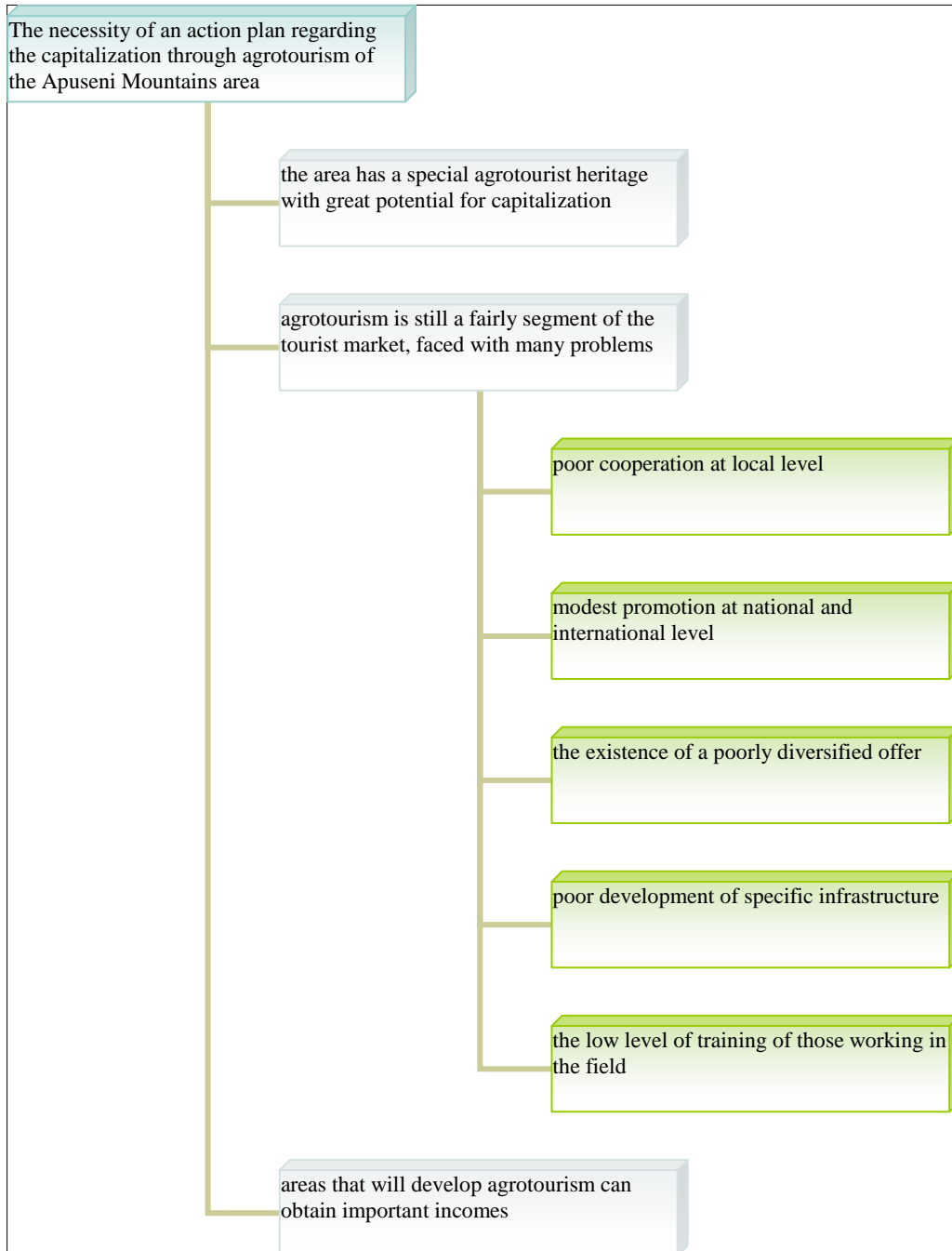


Figure 1. The necessity of an action plan regarding the capitalization through agrotourism of the Apuseni Mountains area

Therefore, it is necessary a reconsideration of the economy of the area [1..7], that require a reorientation towards those activities that can capitalize the existing resources. In recent years, all counties from Apuseni Mountains have documented their main orientations for future development by focusing on local tourism, of which agrotourism has a very large weight, but, as in the future to be a real rescue solution for rural areas, a series of measures such as:

- The necessity of modernizing tourist offerings;
- Development of regional tourism products;
- Raising the qualification of the workforce;
- Improving the quality of services;

- Creating a network between participants and improving public-private partnership and collaboration;
- Qualitative and quantitative increase of tourism promotion-production and distribution of advertising and promotional materials;
- Establishing and expanding regional tourist information points.

In our view, a possible action plan, related to the agrotouristic field, for this area, would involve several major stages:

Table 1.
Brief description of the priorities of a possible action plan regarding the capitalization through agrotourism of traditional resources and products from Apuseni Mountains

Overall objective	Specific priorities	Measures necessary to achieve the proposed objectives	Target groups
Capitalization through agrotourism of traditional resources and products specific to Apuseni Mountains	<i>Encouraging local investment in agrotourism</i>	Carrying out information campaigns on the possibility of practicing agrotourism and the advantages it presents	- inhabitants of rural settlements - inhabitants who are willing to invest in agrotourism activities
		Conducting information campaigns regarding the possibility of accessing European funds for investment in agrotourism	
		Providing facilities to encourage agrotourism practicing	
	<i>Encouraging the development of agrotourism projects with European funding</i>	Information campaigns	- owners of agrotourist units - inhabitants of rural areas willing to invest in forms of rural tourism
		Technical assistance for realizing the necessary documentation	
	<i>Capitalization through agrotourism of traditional resources and products</i>	Identifying the main resources and traditional products that can be capitalized through agrotourism	- farms/boarding houses from areas favorable to agrotourist activity - various producers from rural areas
		Creating a partnership with producers from rural areas	
		Creating training programs at local level in order to include traditional resources and products in the tourist circuit	
	<i>Development of public-private partnership in agrotourism</i>	Creating a form of association of local administrations from communes with traditional resources and products	- agrotourist units from the counties - local public administrations - associations of traditional product manufacturers - various private partners
		Association of various private entrepreneurs, farmers and local governments	
		Developing exchanges of experience with other farmers	
	<i>Promoting agrotourism</i>	Establishing promotional directions and putting them in a unitary framework	- farmers from this area that are doing agrotourism
Establish target groups and areas priority to be targeted			
Promoting through: - tourist guides; - flyers; - web sites and advertisements.			

Source: author's proposals

- identifying the area favorable to the development of this activity, generally taking into account first of all by the access infrastructure, then by the existence of necessary infrastructure for the development of the tourist activity, by the resources and the tourist objectives, by the ethnographic potential of the rural settlements. Agrotourism is an

industry that benefits from highly optimistic forecasts for the future, its importance becoming increasingly at global, regional, national and local level. However, agrotourism is not a universal "cure" for all development issues, and besides, not all rural areas are appropriate to it. We believe that a possible action plan for the agro-tourism development of the area can be easier used in those areas where there is still a beginning of this activity, even if it is a shy one. At present, this form of tourism is found in the Aries Valley (the largest area), the Gurahont-Halmațiu area, the Belis-Fantanele area, the Bihor area. Starting from this point, we consider that our proposals best adapt to the realities of the areas that are found below.

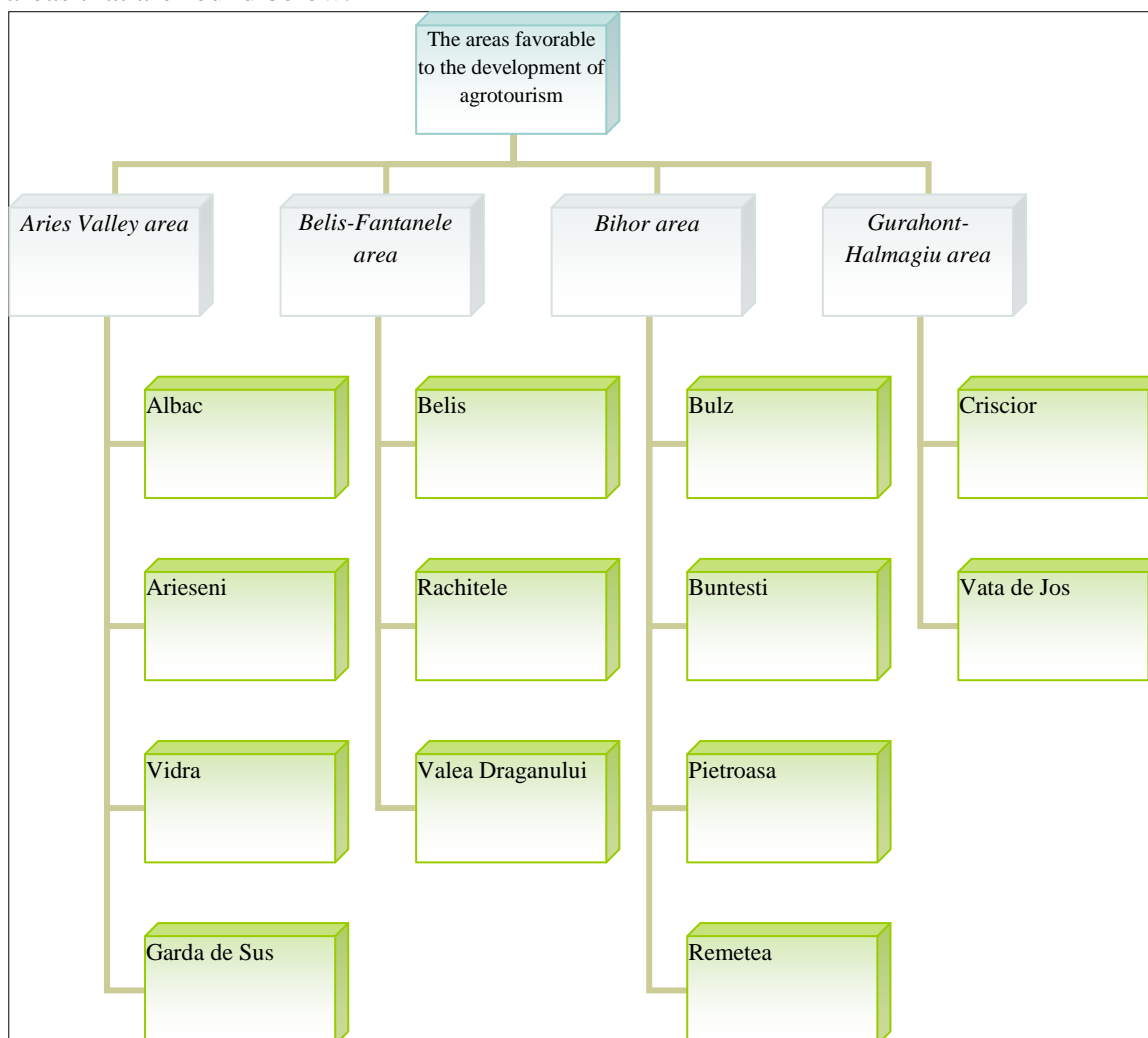


Figure 2. Areas favorable to the development of agrotourism

- it is not enough to identify areas favorable to agrotourism, *must be analyzed several factors in the area*, factors that may support or hinder the implementation of a possible action plan regarding the capitalization through agrotourism of the Apuseni Mountains area:

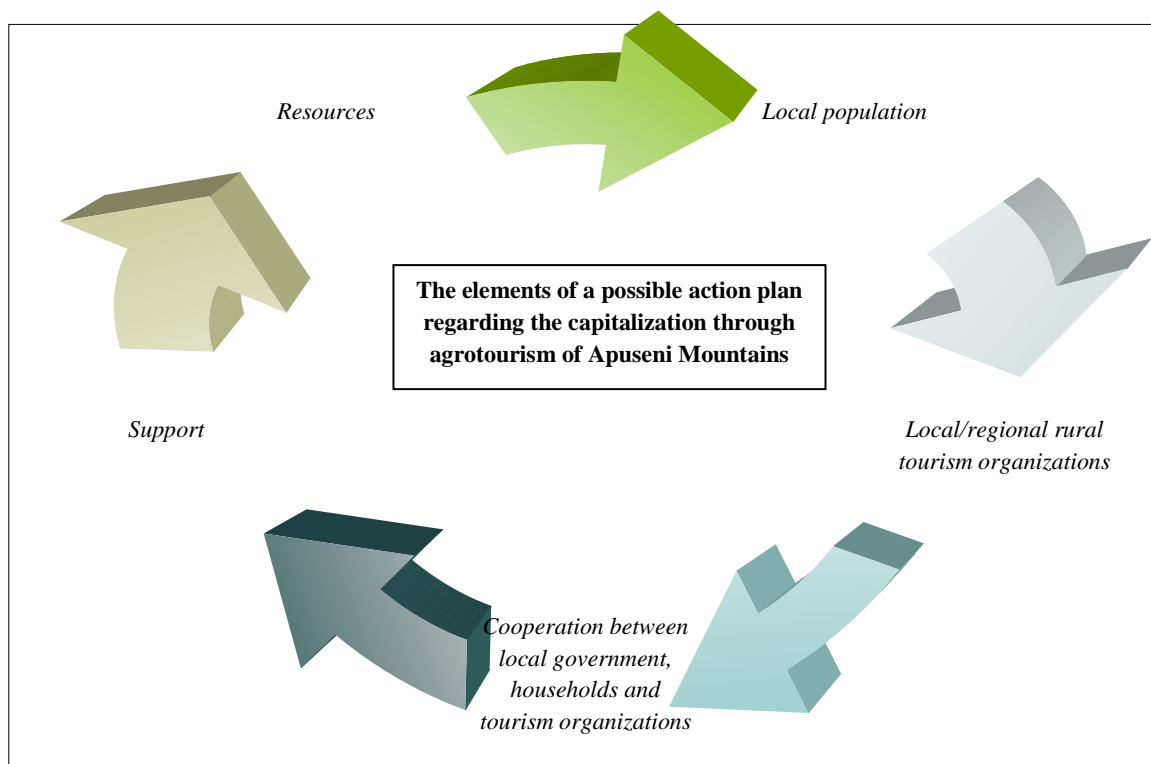


Figure 3. The elements of a possible action plan regarding the capitalization through agrotourism of Apuseni

1. Local population:

- Is prepared the local population for agrotourism?
- What are the expectations of locals and tourists?
- How can agrotourism contribute to the development of the area?
- What are the people who can take the initiative and who can develop agrotourist projects?

2. Local/regional rural tourism organizations:

- Which tourist organizations are active in this area and what are their projects and achievements so far?
- What are the possibilities for collaboration between these organizations, the local community and the households?

3. Cooperation between local government, households and tourism organizations:

- What cooperation already exists at local level, in the field of agrotourism?

4. Support: What kind of help is available?

- it is clear that for the implementation of an action plan regarding the development of the Apuseni Mountains through agrotourism *are needed adequate financial and human resources*. Even though the Apuseni Mountains area has rich tourism resources, the County Councils of the six counties do not have enough financial resources. Linking to this issue is very important to overcome the lack of information and mistrust regarding the European funding sources, and to emphasize the importance of public-private partnership (which, on agrotourism field, was successful in many European countries) and of the implementation of many agrotourist projects, with a beneficial impact on the area through the LAGs.

- *the clear setting of the main objective to be pursued through the action plan and the specific measures to be followed*, in order to achieve the proposed objective, are very important aspects that can ensure or not the exploitation through agrotourism of the Apuseni Mountains area.

- The future action of the plan should be the *designing of some scenarios for the capitalization of traditional resources and products from the studied area through agrotourism activities.*

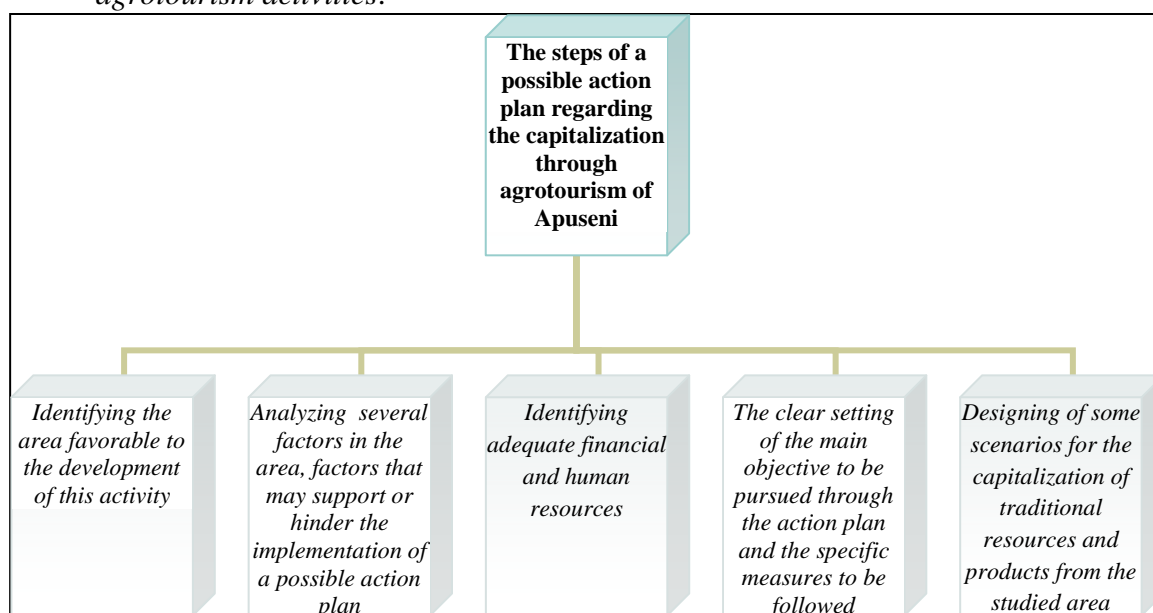


Figure 4. The steps of a possible action plan regarding the capitalization through agrotourism of Apuseni

CONCLUSIONS

Certain is that, in the years to come, the Apuseni Mountains must be perceived not only as a geographical entity, but also as an economic or tourist one. Therefore, the goal of all actions must be to achieve a regional identity based on a strong partnership and a sustained and effective promotion of the specific features of the area.

The action plan proposed by us represents the directions to be followed and some proposals whose implementation would support the development of the agrotouristic activity and the capitalization of the traditional resources and products from this area through this activity.

However, it is not enough to say that this area can offer many possibilities for practicing agrotourism, but it is necessary to develop this activity on the principle of profitability:

- The rural offer as a whole to be a quality good so that the tourist is willing to spend much.
- Must be created agrotourist structures to attract tourists throughout the year (both in summer and in winter).
- To be offered complex agrotourist packages, this will focus on the involvement in household life and rural world life.
- The population must be interested and want to be involved in the production and marketing of the specific resources and products of the area through this activity.

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