

## THE ORGANIZATION OF ROMANIAN AGRITOURISM

CIOLAC RAMONA\*<sup>1</sup>, MATEOC-SÎRB NICOLETA<sup>1</sup>, ADAMOV TABITA<sup>1</sup>,  
POPESCU GABRIELA<sup>1</sup>, MARIN DIANA<sup>1</sup>, SICOE-MURG OANA MARIA<sup>1</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>*Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine "King Michael I of  
Romania" from Timisoara, Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism*

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

**Abstract:** *Tourism has been manifested since ancient times, rural tourism has always been practiced, especially unorganized. The organization of agritourism activity starts with the provision of a room to accommodate an occasional tourist, continues with agritourism farm as form of organization and then with the appearance of specialized economic agents. The objective of the paper is to highlight the organization of agritourism at the national level, to illustrate the way of local organization, but also the existing organizational stages at the household level.*

**Key words:** *agritourism, Romanian rural area, organization forms*

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been manifested since ancient times on large areas, respectively in the Byzantine Empire, Western Europe in the VI-th century and in the Arab world, where it was less developed. In terms of rural tourism, this is not a new phenomenon, as the accommodation of tourists in villages has been practiced for decades in the countries of the European Union (EU). [3,4,6,15,16,19] The first organized forms of rural tourism were marked with the appearance, in the 19th century.

Rural tourism in our country has always been practiced, but spontaneously, sporadically, casually, and especially unorganized; its form of materialization is, since the 1920s and 1930s, accommodation for citizens of the occasional visitors of a rural settlement. The first attempts at organized tourism were made in 1967-1968. After 1989, the first households registered in rural tourism were in the Moeciu-Bran-Rucar area. Then the registered households from the areas of Barsa, Dornelor, Maramures, Apuseni Mountains, Cluj and Marginilor Sibiului were expanded. The first house from Romania that obtained the certification of agritourism boarding house was the villa "Santa Maria" located on a hilltop, between the ridges of Bucegi and Pietrei Craiului.

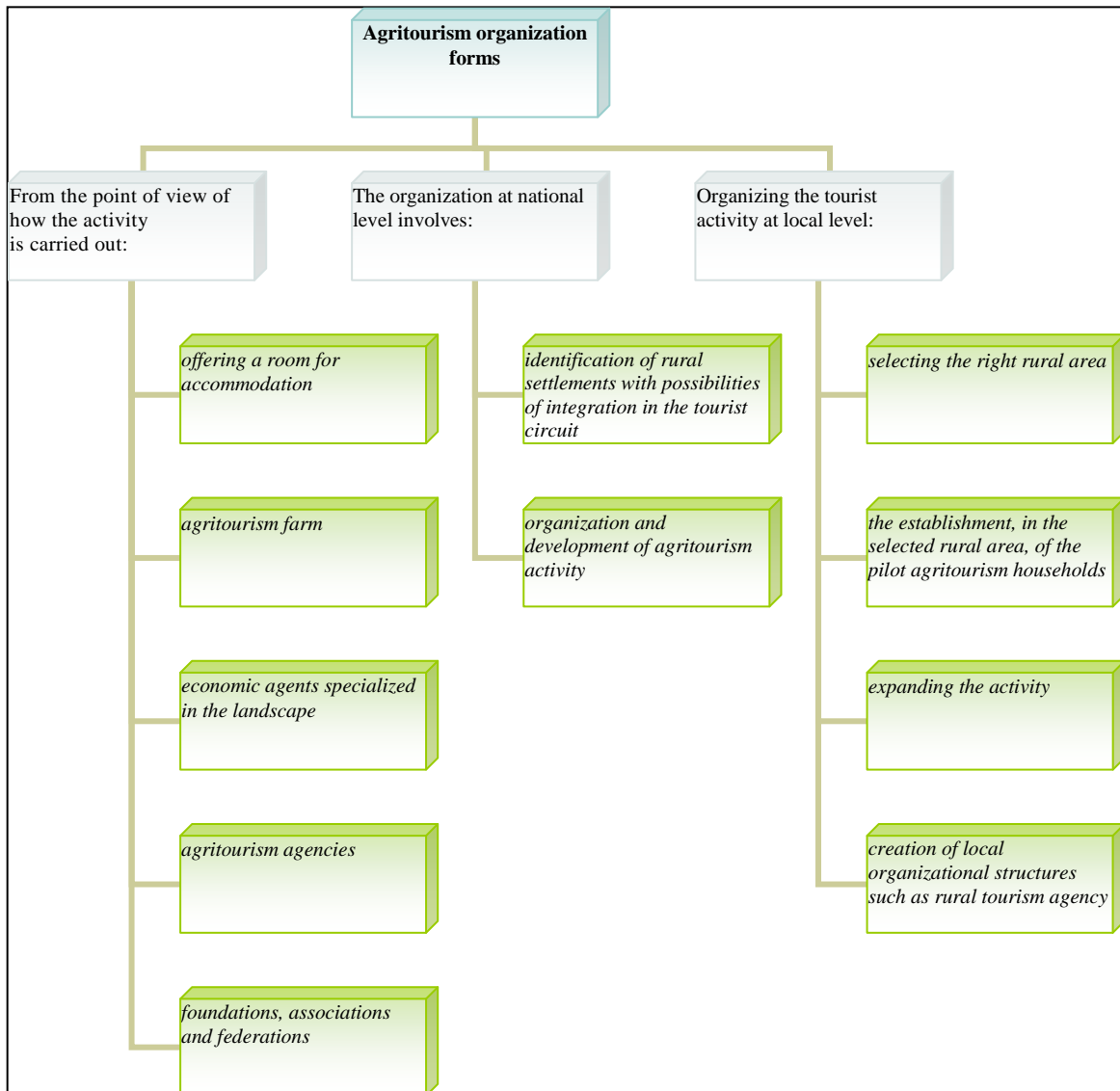
In general, the organization of agritourism activity is illustrated in the following:

An older, but also current, form of organizing rural tourism is *the provision of a room* to accommodate an occasional tourist passing through the town. However, it is a form of seasonal and often occasional organization, through which the owner of a household offers the tourist only accommodation and no other services. Although seasonal, this form of organization is not without benefits. Thus the tourist demand is satisfied and the owner obtains an additional income. Disadvantages, however, are the lack of tourist security and, most importantly, the lack of a tourist program.

Another form of organization is the *agritourism farm*, offering for the tourist accommodation services, food from his own household and tourist programs based on recreational activities within the farm and its surroundings.

A form of organization, specific to the development stage of rural tourism, is met by the presence of *specialized economic agents*. The economic agent can be a natural person who has a property arranged for the reception of tourists, or a commercial company or family association that capitalizes on its surplus accommodation and has an agritourism program. In case in which it is reached to this form of organization there are many advantages: [2,5,18,9,17]

- The tourist benefits from protection through the fact that the economic agent obtains an operating authorization;
- Are practiced competitive prices;
- It is provided for the tourist an own agritourism program;
- The owner of the tourist structure can be integrated and has an adequate management;
- The local administration benefits from this organizational structure primarily through contributions.



**Figure 1. Forms of agritourism organization**

As a modern form of organizing rural tourism, *travel agencies* are established. They have their own programs that they make available to individuals or legal entities, based on a commission. The services offered by these travel agencies are materialized in the promotion of programs offered by rural tourism organizers and the organization of excursions based on programs offered by households and farms in rural areas. Currently, travel agencies have promotion opportunities, but do not have the appropriate programs.

The category of other forms of organization includes *foundations, associations and federations*, which bring together all local and isolated forms to create structures capable of representing Romanian villages. These forms of organization have the capacity to

formulate proposals to improve the legislative level in order to be in line with reality and to promote actions to complete the legislative framework in the field.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The issue of tourist activity in rural areas is an old one, and its evolution over time, we considered it to be an aspect worth highlighting during this paper. Thus, the objective of the paper is to highlight the organization of agritourism at the national level, to illustrate the way of local organization, but also the existing organizational stages at the household level. In order to achieve the proposed desideratum, the authors of the paper used the multi-criteria analysis, based on several existing sources of information at national level.

### **RESEARCH RESULTS**

A supreme argument in the practice of agritourism, including its expansion, is the fact that the rural area is increasingly restricted due to the development of non-agricultural activities, and citizens increasingly express the desire (need) to spend free time in a clean environment. [11,12,14] Because the objective of the paper is to highlight the organization of agritourism at the national level this is the first aspect pursued by us.

#### **- The organization of agritourism at the national level**

The organization of rural tourism involves two stages: the first is based on identifying rural settlements with possibilities for integration into the tourist circuit, and the second on the organization and development of rural tourism and agritourism. [1,10]

Regarding *the first stage*, it is based on the selection of rural localities that can be arranged for tourism purposes according to several criteria that refer mainly to tourist resources, existing economic activities and general socio-economic development.

*The second stage* of organization and actual development of rural tourism refers to a series of activities: [10]

- creation of organizational structures at local, county, regional and national level, respectively the Rural Tourism Association (ASTR), the County/Regional Rural Tourism Association (AJTR/ARTR) and the National Federation of Rural Tourism Associations (FNATR).

- identification of inhabited or independent peasant households, of the existing endowments and of the conditions and classification criteria.

- certification of households as rural tourist pensions.

- the organization of the tourist information system regarding the tourist activity in the rural locality, a measure which, in its turn, supposes several directions of action:

- Establishment of a Tourist Information and Reservation Office equipped with computers, leaflets of the locality, catalogs of the pensions from the area, street map, etc.

- Installation of street signs with the map of pensions from the area and installation of signs to guide tourists to them.

- Display of some plaques on the pension building with the icons used by ANTREC from which to show: the comfort category, the tourist offer.

- Installation at the entrance to the locality of panels with the symbol of rural tourism or agritourism.

- Signage of natural tourist attractions through signs, panels and arrows.

Leisure and animation are a major incentive that attracts tourists to rural areas, which is why special attention is required to the way of spending free time. It is noted that some farms have simpler leisure facilities, others more complex facilities. However, the latter require large investments and are made through partnerships.

**- The organization of agritourism at local level**

In order to organize the tourist activity at rural, local level, in the opinion of Csósz I., it is necessary to go through four stages: [6]

*The first stage* consists in selecting the right rural space, a selection that is made based on criteria, related to:

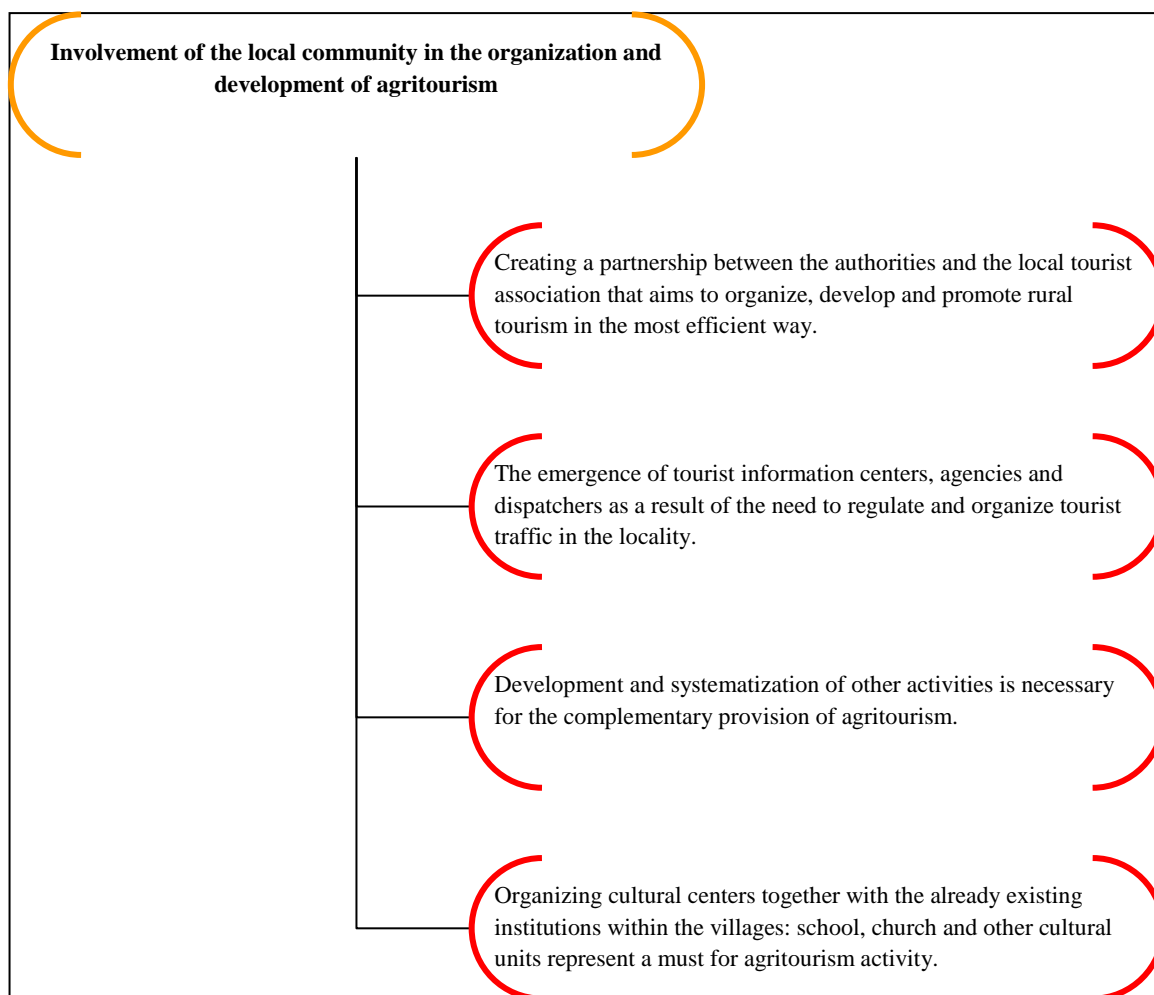
- natural, cultural and human attractions;
- type of organic farming;
- the mentality of the inhabitants towards the tourist phenomenon;
- geographical position in relation to the urban centers potentially emitting tourist flows;
- the infrastructure for receiving tourists;
- tradition in the area;
- offers of leisure activities (tourist routes, hunting, fishing, sports).

*The second stage* includes the establishment, in the selected rural area, of the pilot agritourism households. The pilot farm must have agricultural land and livestock to create food independence. As for comfort, as a rule, the spaces arranged for tourists will be either separated from the owners' homes or have separate access. Household annexes must be isolated from the main building and very clean. The owner must be willing to accompany tourists on various routes, to train them at their request in production activities, to facilitate their acquaintance with various people in the town, to provide details about the economic and social life of the community, historical traditions and cultural.

*The third stage* includes the extension of the activity from the pilot household phase to the transformation into an economic component of the rural life. It is the most difficult stage which, in addition to finding entrepreneurial households eager for such an activity, also involves their training as well as the classification of tourist capacities in the typology of comfort classes.

*The fourth stage* provides both in the creation of local organizational structures such as rural tourism agency, able to facilitate the relations between the host and guests as well as in performing services for scheduling the stay and to offer organized leisure activities. Also in this stage will appear rural economic agents specialized in tourism which, in addition to capitalizing on the food resources produced in the area, will be able to offer a diverse range of tourist services, contributing to the practice of agritourism.

Rural tourism capitalizes the resources of a community, which is why it is necessary for local authorities to be directly involved in the organization and development of these forms of tourism. The involvement of the local community in the organization and development of rural tourism can be achieved through several measures: [10]



**Figura 2. Implicarea comunității locale în organizarea și dezvoltarea agroturismului**

- Creating a partnership between the authorities and the local tourist association that aims to organize, develop and promote tourism in rural areas in the most efficient way. Tourism associations and economic agents must contribute financially to the achievement of the objectives of general development of the locality, development that will support the development of rural tourism.

- The appearance of information centers, tourist agencies and dispatchers as a result of the need to regulate and organize the tourist traffic at the locality level. This organizational segment is meant to capture and transmit information, both in relations with the outside of the local system and with its inside. The activities of these units are carried out by persons specialized in tourism: tourist managers, operators, agents, etc.

- Development and systematization of activities for the complementary provision of agritourism, materialized in units such as: bakeries and pastry workshops, milk processing units, butchery laboratories, tailoring and laundry workshops, shops selling handicrafts and souvenirs, photo workshops (sale of photo films and videotapes, film development, etc.). The crafts and handicrafts sector occupies a special place because these activities have an artistic and cultural connotation being at the same time different from one locality to another. The peculiarities of these activities determine an advantage in the souvenir market with obvious influences on the income of craftsmen.

- Organizing cultural centers together with the already existing institutions within the villages: school, church and other cultural units. In these centers are organized and set up performance halls, local museums, folk ensembles, fanfares, choirs, and others.

In order to support the local population in the development of tourism in rural areas, it is necessary to create a Rural Tourism Association, based on the adhesion of the households that offer rural tourism services and in which the local authority also participates.

**- The organization of agritourism at the household level**

In the organization and development of the tourist activity at the level of the household, respectively of the agritourism, two stages must be followed:

1. a stage of beginning, organization and preparation
2. a stage of the actual activity

The *initial stage* proposes some investments even if apparently, the conditions are met (it is possible to intervene with repairs, constructive modifications of buildings, furniture, etc.). It is a stage in which it is necessary to have a certain amount of money. The questions that arise at this stage are: what are the chances of success? Will there be customers? Is there a market or a demand for rural tourism services? In general, demand arises and develops if the conditions that customers appreciate are offered. Due to the fact that it is difficult for a single host to include the full range of basic offers and as such it is necessary to find substitutes for those elements of the offer that are difficult or expensive to make. Also at this stage, the emphasis must be put on building a clean house and offering tempting meals. The simple existence of a high potential of the area cannot compensate the quality of the offer of the rural tourist farm.

In the initial stage, supply and demand are taken into account and entrepreneurs in the area who have the same object of activity are taken into account. Also must be taken into account the competitive advantage and the specificity of the area, which are determinants for the quality and dimensions of the offer, and also the attractive prices.

*The actual activity stage* involves a series of expenses that will be made long before they are recovered through receipts. The entrepreneur must ensure that he has the necessary money for both, initial and current expenses. The actual, current expenses are variable depending on the number of tourists. The profit is maximum when the accommodation space is fully used for as long as possible of the year.

In many cases, the break-even point is difficult to assess before starting the actual activity. In the conditions of carrying out a rural tourism business, at the level of the simplest form of organization (authorized natural person, family association) it is necessary to keep a record for at least two reasons:

- first of all, for each form of economic organization there are norms that establish the way in which the accounting records are kept, the agritourism entrepreneur being at the same time an economic agent who, integrating in the economic life, must respect its rules. The entrepreneur will have relations with suppliers, various economic agents and will operate with invoices, receipts and other documents.

- the accounting records is useful and necessary for the entrepreneur, the economic agent must know the volume of expenses and incomes, of the links that are established between tariffs, number of tourists and profit.

The accountings records will be completed in own documents, adapted to the stage of the unit and the aims pursued. One of the permanent objectives pursued is to determine

the economic and financial result obtained. It is useful to perform this calculation periodically (monthly) to get a correct result, and it is taken in consideration:

- Elimination of expenses or elements of expenses that did not contribute to the realization of the incomes from the respective month, acquisitions of goods left in stock, expenses of the nature of investments, etc.
- Inclusion of expenses incurred previously but related to the current month (consumption in stock).
- Elimination of receipts related to past periods.
- Inclusion of revenues still collected, but related to the activity of the current month.
- Elimination from the calculation in order to determine the current result of any other exceptional expenses or receipts that have nothing to do with the activity performed.

In parallel with the monthly record, a cumulative record is kept from the beginning of the year to the day, in which all the receipts and payments made during this period will be presented. In order to make correct managerial decisions and to observe a reliable accounting record, it is necessary, in case the entrepreneur does not have specialized knowledge, to turn in time to a business consultant.

## CONCLUSIONS

By developing services for hosting and capitalizing on own and local products, agritourism offers a solution for rural households. Increasingly, the farmer must become an entrepreneur capable of setting up and running a business to earn the necessary income, even in a field other than agriculture. To this end, an entrepreneur must be able to: [7,8,13]

- to make the decision to launch his own business;
- to draw up a business plan and to arrange agritourism holding in order to receive the tourists;
- to ensure its viability;
- to support its long-term profitability and development.

If we discuss agritourism, one of the many forms of rural tourism, then at the entrepreneurial level certain aspects must be observed:

- the entrepreneur must be a farmer, meaning to obtain more than 51% of his own income from agricultural activities;
- the entrepreneur must have a property that can be used for the purpose of agritourism;
- the accommodation area is adequate and equipped according to the requirements of the European Union;
- the entrepreneur must provide quality services;
- agritourism offer to be developed by capitalizing on natural and anthropic resources.

As possible purposes of capitalizing on the unique potential of Romanian villages we could mention:

- reactivation of crafts and development of services in a diversified range, ensuring an occupational balance and a fixation of jobs;
- stimulating alternative or parallel activities that bring additional income (rural tourism, agritourism);
- promoting and stimulating local economies, food and non-food processing;
- organization of production and processing structures through guides with framework models;

- organizing association forms in a diversified range: family micro-production households, family micro-production associations, professional associations, etc.;
- creating a local and public-private institutional structure.

The problem of economic efficiency in agritourism activity is complex because it expresses the effect of a set of activities that cannot always be separated. For example, it is known that some products obtained in the tourist household are intended for self-consumption of the family, another part is used on the market and of course, from the same product, some are food resources for tourists, respectively can be considered an expense that it is found in the structure of costs, on the basis of which the price of the meal served will be determined. Also, some of the endowments made in order to increase the comfort degree benefit the household's family (sewerage, running water, heating system, sanitary endowments, etc.).

In the field of agritourism, economic efficiency interferes with social efficiency. Economic efficiency, as an expression of the ratio between effect and effort, respectively economic results and expenses, presupposes that the agritourism activity corresponds to the real needs, to be profitable and to realize profit. An important problem in establishing economic efficiency is the prices at which the allocated resources are evaluated, especially those from their own household, as well as the prices and costs of products to be capitalized in the agritourism system (agri-food products for tourists). Thus, the more efficient the primary agricultural products (milk, meat, vegetables, fruits, etc.) will be the cheaper resources in the menus offered to tourists and implicitly on the agritourism activity as a whole. In fact, the agritourism activity becomes a form of superior capitalization of agricultural products.

Social efficiency is revealed by the role that agritourism has in building an evolutionary process to improve the quality of life, hygiene and behavioral education of the population, revitalize the social life of villages and provide more attractive living conditions, especially for young people, creating new jobs, professionalizing the workforce and fixing the population, especially the young one, in rural areas, stopping the negative demographic phenomena (migration, aging population, etc.), maintaining and developing the cultural, historical, folkloric heritage, traditions, handicrafts, beautification of rural localities, through an architecture specific to the area, permanent cleaning, nature protection, elimination of polluting factors.

## REFERENCES

- [1]. **ADAMOV TABITA CORNELIA, DRĂGOI DORINEL, IANCU TIBERIU, FEHER ANDREA**, 2016, Capitalizing agrotourist potential of the mountain region from Romania. *Journal of Biotechnology*, Volume 231S
- [2]. **ARCHER B, COOPER CH.**, 1994, The positive and negative impacts of tourism, revue *Global Tourism*, Editura Theobald, Oxford, UK
- [3]. **BAUSCH T.**, 1995, *Le Tourisme et l' Environnement en Europe*; Office des Publications Officielles des Communautés Européennes: Luxembourg
- [4]. **BEETON S.**, 1999, Rural tourism: A solution for employment, local development and environment. *Tourism Management*, vol. 20, pp. 378
- [5]. **CĂLINA A., CĂLINA J., IANCU T.**, 2017, Research regarding the implementation, development and impact of Agritourism on Romania's rural areas between 1990 and 2015, *Environ. Eng. Manag. J.* 16, pp. 157–168
- [6]. **CSOSZ I.**, 2007, *Agroturism și Turism Rural*, Editura Mirton, Timișoara
- [7]. **DINCU ANA-MARIANA**, 2015, *Management în turism*, Editura Eurostampa, ISBN 978-606-32-0075-5, Timișoara

- [8]. **EVANS N.**, 2015, Strategic Management for Tourism, Hospitality and Events; Routledge: New York, NY, USA
- [9]. **GHERES MARINELA**, 2003, Agroturism, de la tradiție la ofertă comercială; Editura Risoprint: Cluj-Napoca, Romania
- [10]. **GLĂVAN V.**, 2003, Turism rural, agroturism, turism durabil, ecoturism, Editura Economică, București,
- [11]. **ISTRATE I., BRAN FLORINA, ROȘU A.G.**, 1996, Economia turismului și mediul înconjurător, Editura Economică
- [12]. **MINCIU RODICA**, 2005, Economia turismului, Ediția a III-a revăzută și adăugită, Editura Uranus, București
- [13]. **MARTIN SIMONA CRISTINA**, 2014, The role of economic efficiency of accommodation units in determination of purchase intentions of tourist services, Scientific Papers: Animal Science and Biotechnologies, vol.47 (2)
- [14]. **MILIN IOANA ANDA, RADAC ANDREEA MIHAELA, MERCE IULIANA IOANA, CIOLAC RAMONA**, 2015, Consumer's perception referring to buying and consumption of ecological food products. Journal of Biotechnology. Volume 208, Supplement, pp.76
- [15]. **PAGE ST., GETZ D.**, 1997, The business of rural tourism: international perspectives, International Thomson Business Press, pp.4
- [16]. **PASQUILINI B., JACQUOT B.**, 1992, Tourism en Europe. Action Touristique, Dounod, Paris
- [17]. **POPESCU GABRIELA, ADAMOV TABITA, DINCU ANA MARIANA, IOSMIM IASMINA**, 2016, Positive and negative trends of the Romanian tourism, Book 2: Political Sciences, Law, Finance, Economics And Tourism Conference Proceedings, Vol. V, pp. 495-502
- [18]. **RUSU S.**, 2007, Turism rural și agroturism, Editura Mirton, Timișoara
- [19]. **STUCKI E.**, 1992, Le developpement équilibré du monde rurale en Europe occidentale – Sauvegarde de la nature, nr. 58