

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR AGRITOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SUCEAVA COUNTY

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*Abstract.* Rural tourism, or agritourism, is a vector of rural development, the local community being the beneficiary of general advantages. From a geographical and administrative point of view, the Bucovina area is assimilated to Suceava County. Bucovina is the tourist area from the north of Moldova, considered as being, at national level, the third region in terms of tourist flow, second in order of development and first in terms of number, diversity and value of tourist attractions.

The development of agritourism in this area must take into account the perfect harmonization of natural, architectural, historical, ethnographic, and folkloric and museum objectives.

Suceava County is a tourist destination recognized both nationally and internationally. The variety and richness of the natural and anthropic tourist potential, places Bucovina in the top of the Romanian tourist destinations.

**Key words:** agritourism, traditions, customs

### INTRODUCTION

Integrated tourism in rural areas and localities is an alternative to solve, at the same time, problems concerning, on the one hand, the village and, on the other hand, the city.

Rural tourism and agritourism are notions that for many mean the same thing, but rural tourism has a wider scope as follows: rural tourism is a concept that covers the tourist activity carried out and led by the local population and based on the local natural and anthropic potential, mean while agritourism is a particular form of rural tourism, comprising the actual tourist activity: accommodation, boarding house, tourist traffic, running programs, providing additional basic services, as well as economic activity, usually agricultural one, practiced by tourist hosts - productive activities for obtaining and processing agricultural products in the household and marketing them to tourists, or through commercial networks, as well as how to spend free time. [4,8,13,17]

The forms of rural tourism, specific and integrated to it, can be considered alternatives to solve, at the same time, problems specific to the rural environment but also to the urban one, from this category being problems such as those related to planning, social, economic, etc. [1,3,9,11] Therefore, the emergence and development of tourism forms in rural areas is necessary, the aim being to ensure a possible economic and social development of rural areas, the contribution of these forms of tourism to support the overall development of rural areas is highlighted by economic, social, ecological and cultural. [3,12,16]

Suceava County is one of the main tourist areas of Romania due to its favorable relief conditions, beauty of landscapes, purity of air, water, mountain areas, traditions and folk customs preserved to this day, the specifics of Moldovian gastronomy and not in the last line due to the well-known hospitality of the locals. [5,7,14]

Although more and more locals from the tourist areas of Suceava County have understood to capitalize on existing resources in this area and contribute to the development of accommodation infrastructure by transforming their homes into tourist guest houses or by building new ones, the true potential of this area is not intensely capitalized. Often the main problems are related to the quality and standards of tourist

services provided, the involvement of hosts in agritourism activities, lack of collaboration between local authorities and the administrators of tourist units, but of course infrastructure and funding sources, as in many other areas of the country, remain the most acute of the problems. [2,6,10,15]

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this paper, an analysis of the agritourism activity in the Bucovina area is made, indicating the main elements of rural tourist attractiveness. For the analysis of the tourist activity were used as research methods the analysis and synthesis of data, the processing of statistical data and the identification of solutions to support the development of the agritourism activity in this area.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

Bucovina is located in the northern part of Romania, in the northwest of the Moldova tourist area, on the right bank of the Suceava River.



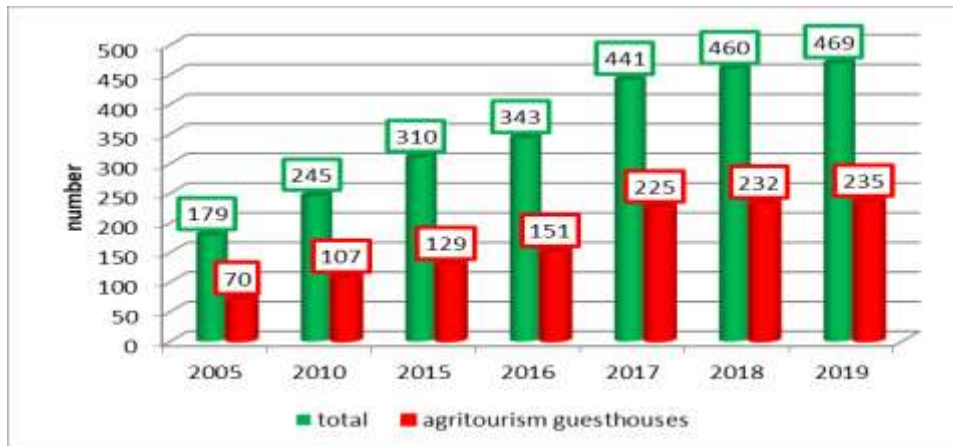
Figure 1. Map of Bukovina

From a geographical and administrative point of view, the Bucovina area is assimilated to Suceava County. It is part of the North-East Region, along with the counties: Bacau, Botosani, Iasi, Neamt and Vaslui.

### *The analysis of the agritourism offer of Suceava County*

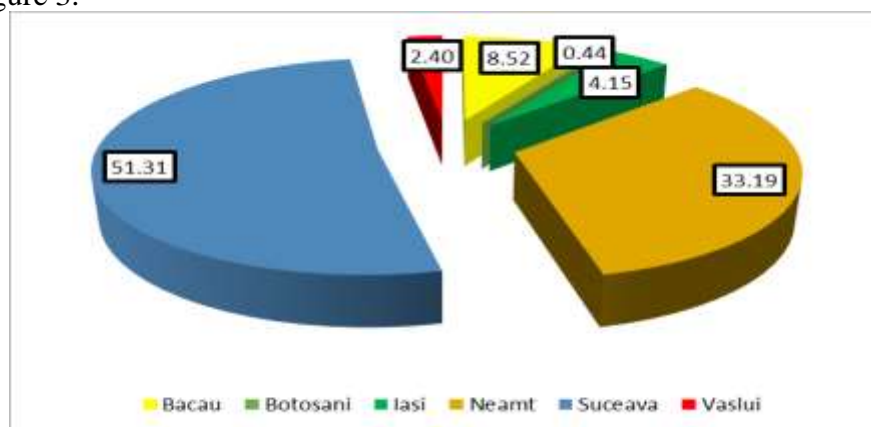
Suceava County is a tourist destination recognized both nationally and internationally. The variety and richness of the natural and anthropic tourist potential, places Bucovina in the top of the Romanian tourist destinations.

Figure 2 shows the evolution of accommodation units in Suceava County, in the period 2005-2019. Regarding the total number of tourist reception structures with accommodation function, they show an upward trend, in the analyzed period, the growth rate being 162.01%. In the case of agritourism structures, the same upward trend is observed, in the analyzed time interval, increasing over 3 times (3.36 times).



**Figure 2. The evolution of tourist reception structures, Suceava County, 2005-2019, [18]**

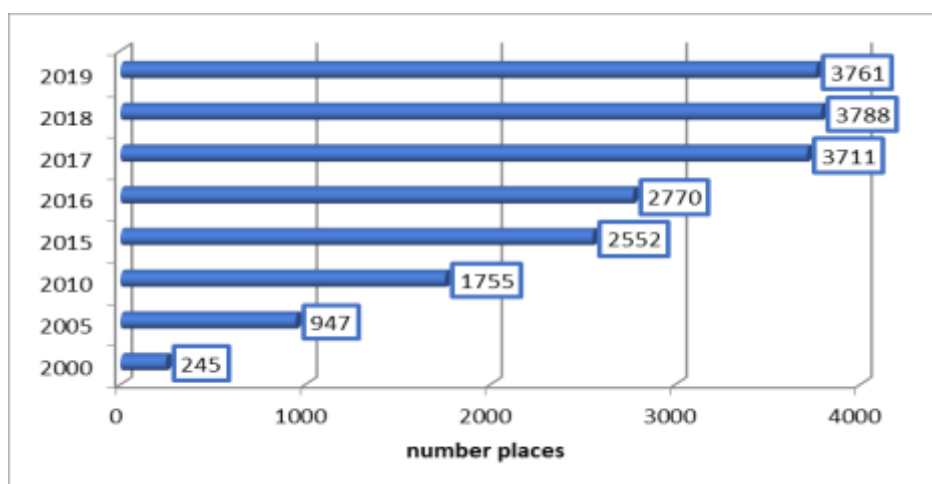
At the level of the North-East Region, Suceava County is the most representative county, in terms of tourist activity, especially agritourism. 51.31% of the existing agritourism guesthouses at regional level are concentrated on the territory of Suceava County, figure 3.



**Figure 3. Distribution of agritourism guesthouses on the counties of the North-East Region, [18]**

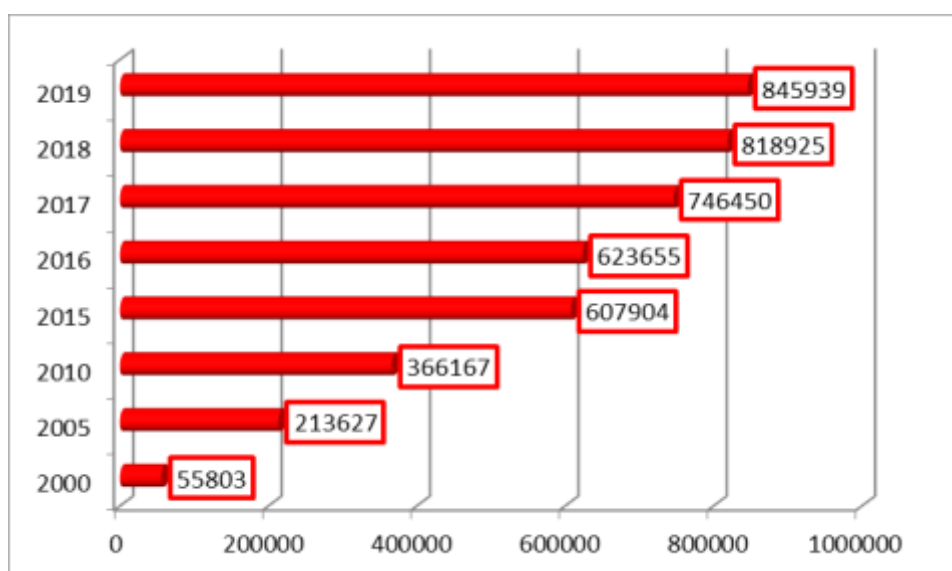
Recognized as an agritourism destination, Bucovina offers a large number of agritourism guesthouses. The richness of the tourist resources specific to agritourism allowed the development of this form of tourism so that, at present, we find in almost every village, an agritourism guesthouse. However, there are rural settlements that are recognized as agritourism destinations, concentrating a number of agritourism guesthouses. In 2019, the localities that had more than five agritourism structures are: Ciocanesti, Malini and Panaci each with 5 agritourism guesthouses, Scheia with 6 guesthouses, Cacica and Sadova with 7 guesthouses, Dorna Candrenilor - 8, Putna - 9, Vatra Moldovitei - 11, Fundu Moldovei - 12, Pojorata - 12, Saru Dornei - 16, Dorna - Arini - 18, Manastirea Humorului - 19, Vama - 22 and Sucevita - 23.

The existing and functioning accommodation capacity, specific to the agritourism guesthouses, for Suceava County, is presented in figures 4 and 5.



**Figure 4. The evolution of the existing accommodation capacity in agritourism guesthouses, Suceava County, 2000-2019, [18]**

In the period 2000-2019, the number of existing accommodation places in agritourism guesthouses from Bucovina has continuously increased, increasing over 15 times.



**Figure 5. The evolution of the accommodation capacity in operation, agritourism guesthouses, Suceava County, 2000-2019, [18]**

The accommodation capacity in operation indicates the number of accommodation places made available to tourists, taking into account the period of operation of each accommodation unit, during a year. As in the case of the existing accommodation capacity, the evolution of the accommodation capacity in operation indicates an upward trend, increasing 15.16 times.



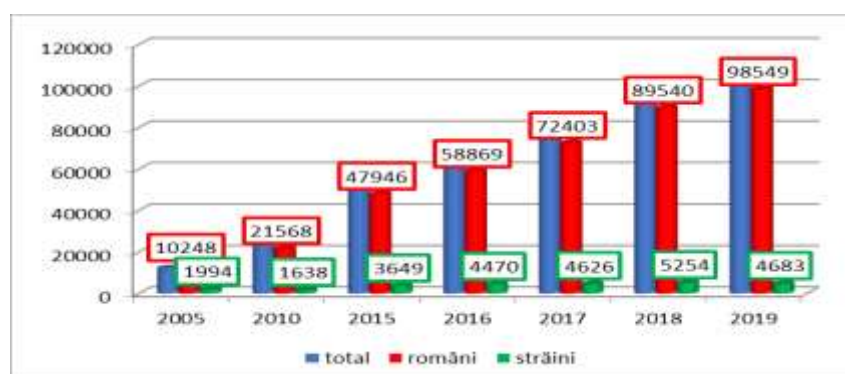
**Figure 6. The evolution of the index of net use of accommodation capacity, agritourism guesthouses, Suceava County, 2000-2019, [18]**

The net use index allows the creation of an overview regarding the use degree of tourist structures with accommodation function. Regarding the evolution of this indicator, both at regional and county level, there is an upward trend, determined by the intensification of tourist traffic and the possibility of functioning of agritourism guesthouses throughout the year, due to the permanent demand for this type of tourism. For the first interval (period 2000-2010), the value of the utilization index of the accommodation capacity registered at county level, is lower than the region average. The next ten years are characterized by a higher degree of use of the tourist capacity in operation, typical of Suceava agritourism guesthouses, compared to that recorded in the North-East region.

#### *The analysis of the agritourism demand of Suceava County*

The analysis of tourist demand is based on a series of indicators, of which the most important are: the number of tourists, the number of overnight stays and the average length of stay.

The total number of tourists can be seen both in terms of tourist arrivals in accommodation units and as the number of people accommodated or participating in tourism. Figure 7. presents the evolution of tourist arrivals in agritourism guesthouses in Suceava County, by categories of tourists.



**Figure 7. The evolution of tourist arrivals by categories, in agritourism guesthouses, Suceava County, 2005-2019, [18]**

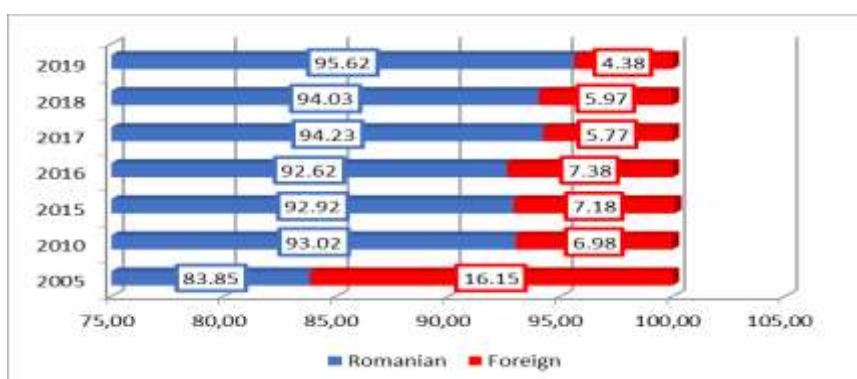
The evolution of the number of tourists, accommodated in agritourism guesthouses, from Bucovina marks an ascending trend, both in the case of Romanian and foreign tourists. The registered increases are significant (9.6 times, in the case of Romanian

tourists and 2.35 times, in the case of foreign tourists). In 2019, the number of tourists arriving in agritourism guesthouses from Suceava County represented 43.32%, out of the total number of tourists staying in the same accommodation units, at the level of the North-East Region.

The share of foreign tourists is lower compared to that of Romanian tourists, in 2019, 95.46% of these were Romanian tourists and 4.54%, foreign tourists.

The tourist notoriety of Bucovina as a rural tourist destination is an ascending one, both nationally and internationally, a fact proven by the continuous increase of both tourist arrivals and overnight stays.

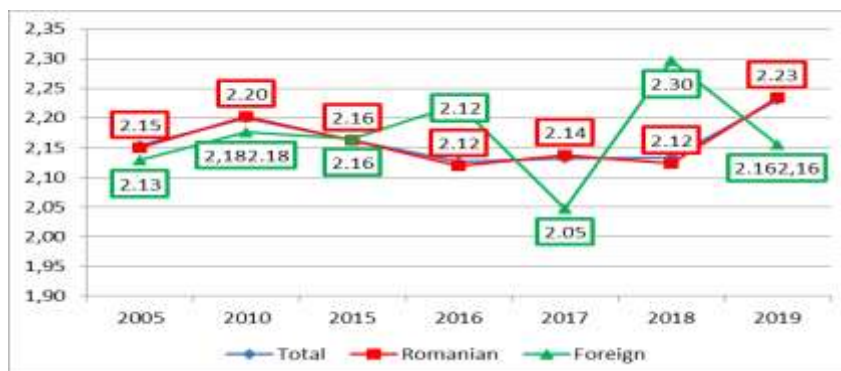
In the period 2005-2019, the total number of overnight stays in the agritourism guesthouses from Suceava County increased, 8.76 times. For Romanian tourists, the increase of the indicator was almost 10 times (9.99 times) and 2.38 times, in the case of foreign tourists.



**Figure 8. The structure of overnight stays by categories of tourists, in agritourism guesthouses, from Suceava County, 2005-2019, [18]**

The number of overnight stays of foreign tourists in agritourism guesthouses from Suceava is increasing, but their share in the total value of overnight stays indicates a considerable decrease (72.87%), the main problem being the state of road infrastructure.

The average length of stay is an important indicator of the analysis of tourist demand, reflecting the ability of accommodation units to maintain the tourist for as long as possible. It is determined by relating the number of overnight stays to the number of tourist arrivals.



**Figure 9. Average length of stay in agritourism guesthouses from Suceava County, by categories of tourists, 2005-2019, [18]**

The evolution of the indicator "average length of stay" in agritourism guesthouses, from Suceava County, is marked by an upward trend in the period 2005-2010, followed by a reduction, and in 2019, there is again a significant increase (3.6%), exceeding the value

recorded at the beginning of the study period. The average length of stay of Romanian tourists follows the trajectory of the average length of stay, recorded as a whole. In the case of foreign tourists, the value of the indicator is mostly below average.

## CONCLUSIONS

Following the study undertaken, the following conclusions were drawn:

- Rural tourism, and especially agritourism, has major development opportunities, because rural areas from Bukovina have both a picturesque natural landscape, unpolluted and with many options and opportunities for leisure and real cultural and historical tourist resources.

- Rural communities preserving ancient traditions, crafts and customs, where talent and attraction to beauty materialize in real works of art, represented by hand-woven carpets, ceramics, fabrics, folk instruments, masks, are a real pole of rural tourist attraction.

- Special relief, harmoniously combined on the territory of Suceava County, favorable climate for practicing tourist activities throughout the year, river basin, rich faunal and floristic potential, impressive cultural-historical and architectural heritage recognized nationally and internationally, along with well-known hospitality, popular customs and traditions, specific gastronomy, have made Bucovina a true international tourist destination.

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