

## CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE EVOLUTION OF AGROTOURISM IN ROMANIA

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**Abstract:** Year after year, statistics prove that tourism in rural areas has made more and more followers. Many reasons are invoked to explain this evolution: the influence of ecological ideas, the desire to evade classic touristic structures, the search for a better quality/price ratio. The European continent represents the tourist region with the strongest integration, both of supply and demand. Tourist traffic in Europe is dominated by 5 large emitting countries: Germany, England, France, the Netherlands and Italy. The new emitting poles of tourist flows are Spain and Japan.

In Romania, rural settlements of the village type have a number of inhabitants that varies between 100 and up to 5000 inhabitants, even more in the case of very large villages.

Most specialists define rural areas as those that have 10-20% of the total area occupied in constructions, the dominant activity is agriculture or forestry and which largely preserves the natural environment and gives the tourist the feeling of a natural, traditional and non-industrialized economy. Also, the number of agro-tourism pensions increased from 61 units in 1996 to 1354 units in 2010 and 1991 units in 2023. Correspondingly, the existing tourist accommodation capacity has increased dramatically, almost 61 times between 1996 and 2010, from 332 to over 20000 accommodation places, and almost 450 times between 2010 and 2023, from over 20,000 places to 9729,007 agro-tourist accommodation place.

**Key words:** agrotourism, receiving structures, tourists

### INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism has developed as an important economic sector, contributing to the revitalization of rural communities and improving the quality of life of its inhabitants. This form of tourism not only attracts tourists in search of authentic experiences, but also supports the development of local communities as well as environmental conservation. The following sections will explore the main aspects of rural tourism. [6]

Policies at local and national level have adapted to support rural tourism, creating frameworks that promote sustainable development and community involvement. A focus on biocentric approaches emphasizes the importance of quality leisure and community solidarity and is in line with current sustainability paradigms. [1] However, while rural tourism brings many benefits, it can also generate challenges, such as overtourism and cultural commercialization, which risk undermining the authenticity that attracts visitors. It is essential to strike a balance between these dynamics to ensure the sustainable development of rural tourism. [13] Rural tourism can be defined geographically only after clarifying the concept of rurality and assessing the level of urbanization and ruralization. To determine this degree of ruralization, three criteria are taken into account: population density and household characteristics, land use, and the relationship between agriculture and forestry, together with traditional social structures and aspects of community identity and heritage. [12]

The European continent is where the first conscious manifestations of rural tourism emerged in the 16th and 17th centuries. At that time, masters of the visual arts were motivated to capture rural architecture and landscape in their work. French, Italian and Dutch painters immortalized village life as it really was. In this context, the great French thinker Jean Jacques Rousseau (1721-1778) described a journey through the Alps in his

Confessions, which inspired many contemporaries to plan trips to mountain regions to enjoy the beauty of nature. In the 19th century, with the development of the great landscape painters, rural architecture began to assume increasing importance in drawing and painting. [14]

The first forms of organized tourism were initiated in Romania in 1967-1968, aimed at groups of tourists visiting the Romanian Black Sea coast. [5]

After 1989, there has been a revival of interest in rural tourism, thanks to the establishment of associations and organizations that, through their objectives, aim to promote and develop tourism in rural areas. [2] These include the Romanian Federation for Mountain Development, created in 1990, which aims to support mountain dwellers, including through the promotion and development of agro-tourism. [17] The Romanian Agency for Agrotourism, established in 1995, also aims to integrate Romanian agrotourism into the international system, collaborating with the National Association for Ecological and Cultural Rural Tourism in Romania (ANTREC), founded in 1994, which is a member of the European Federation of Rural Tourism (EUROGÎTES). [8]

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Secondary records which includes magazine articles, intending papers reviews and statistical records have been analysed to acquire an photo of the modern degree in studies with the subject rural tourism, agrotourism and ecotourism in Romania. The quantitative shape of the bibliometric evaluation makes it perfect for this look at because it keeps the authors` bias below control. Its capacity to address large databases lets in it to extract statistics from a massive corpus. In the modern look at, a overview and a bibliometric evaluation turned into finished to identify, organize, and examine tendencies withinside the proposed studies area [15]. Selecting the proper database is decisive for a well-finished evaluation. We used the Web of Science Core Collection that is a complete bibliographic records source. The method turned into carried out to generate a whole seek of the WOS database using the syntax: "rural tourism" OR "agrotourism" OR "agritourism" OR "ecotourism" AND "Romania" with inside the title, summary and keywords of the papers.

### **RESEARCH RESULTS**

In contrast to other forms of tourism establishments, rural tourism in agritourism inns has seen steady growth since 1996. Although there was a decline in activity in 2010, it was small in magnitude and significant activity is expected in 2023. [15]

Thus, the number of agritourism guesthouses increased from 61 units in 1996 to 1354 units in 2010, and in 2023 it reached 1991 units. This represents a more than 22-fold increase, while the total number of tourist accommodation units has less than doubled.

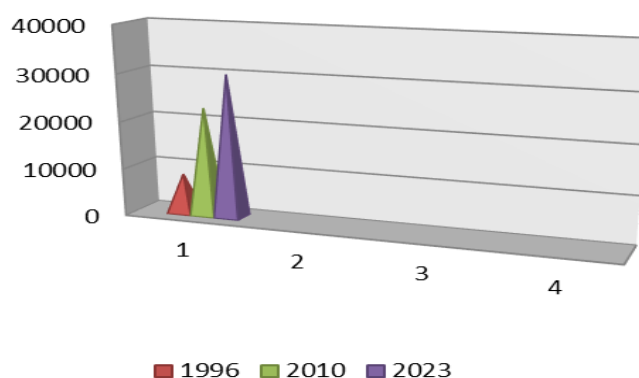
Correspondingly, tourist accommodation capacity has seen a remarkable expansion, increasing almost 61-fold between 1996 and 2010, from 332 to over 20,000, and in 2023 it exceeded 9729,007, indicating an increase of over 450 times.

**Table 1.**

<b>The number of accommodation structures</b>		
	<b>2010</b>	<b>2023</b>
The number of accommodation structures in Romania		
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.953</b>	<b>8.038</b>
Hotels	1.700	1.628
Motels	150	198
Hostels	97	316
Agroturism guesthouses	1412	3498
Tourist villas	747	756
Tourist cottages	49	184
Tourist guesthouses	847	1642

Source: [https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/seria\\_turism\\_in\\_anul\\_2023.pdf](https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/seria_turism_in_anul_2023.pdf))

According to the inserted table (Table 1.), a progressive increase in tourist reception structures can be noticed. The most significant increases were recorded in hostels and agritourism guesthouses. As a result of rural development in recent years through PNDR, agro-tourism guesthouses have contributed to the tourism development of rural regions, boosting tourism, and subsequently the economy. [9] In total, there was an increase in the number of 1.62 times in 2023, compared to 2010.

**Figure 1. Graphic representation of tourism development in Romania**

The illustrated figure (Figure 1) captures the growth and development of tourism in Romania from 1996 to 2023.

Due to the fact that the number of accommodation units has increased, the accommodation capacity has also increased, given also the fact that the accommodation units have increased their original capacity, without changing the number of units. [11]

**Table 2.**

<b>Existing accommodation capacity</b>		
	<b>2010</b>	<b>2023</b>
Existing accommodation capacity		
<b>Total</b>	<b>252.317</b>	<b>98.276.381</b>
Hotels	185.521	49.900.507
Motels	6.126	20.480.641
Hostels	5.218	2.860.948
Tourist villas	16.822	3.535.804
Tourist cottages	4164	435883
Tourist guesthouses	18.422	8.681.624
Agroturism guesthouses	20.208	12.816.857

Source: [https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/seria\\_turism\\_in\\_anul\\_2023.pdf](https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/seria_turism_in_anul_2023.pdf))

According to the table (Table 2), a significant increase in accommodation capacity can be noticed. This fact is due to tourism, which encouraged the owners for a new stage, namely the development of the units and the arrangement of new spaces [5].

**Table 3.**  
**Tourist reception structures with tourist accommodation functions and tourist accommodation capacity**

T	H	M	P.T	P.A	C.T
ALL ARAES					
6.627.845	4.575.545	200.491	550.013	1.169.303	132.493
BALNEAR STATION					
1.030.335	874.861	20.820	90.752	42.906	996
RESORTS IN THE MOUNTAIN ZONE					
2.004.704	1.104.618	21.225	251.842	516.253	110.766
RESORTS IN THE COASTAL AREA, CONSTANȚA					
1.905.704	1.034.906	2.012	7.137	2.620	-
OTHER LOCATIONS AND TOURIST ROUTES					
1.897.907	912.936	156.434	200.282	607.524	20.731
T.R	3.873.116	190.500	518.694	1.115.555	125.680
T.S	307.142	9.991	31.319	53.748	6.813

Source: [https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/seria\\_turism\\_in\\_anul\\_2023.pdf](https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/seria_turism_in_anul_2023.pdf)

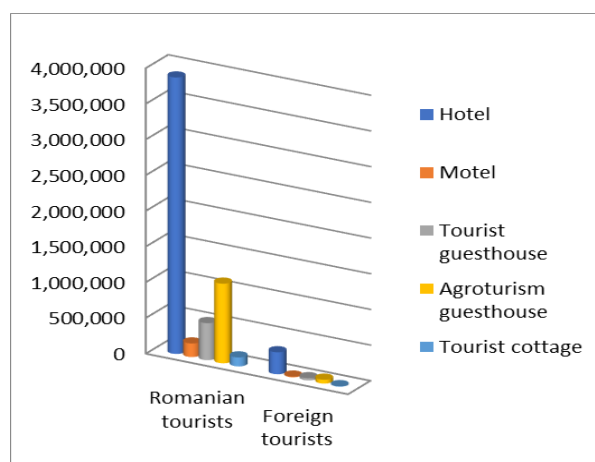
Note: H - Hotel; M - Motel; P.T - Tourist guesthouse; P.A - Agritourism guesthouse; C.T - Tourist cottages; T.R - Romanian tourists; T.S - Foreign-tourists

According to the table (Table 3) we can support the fact that the accommodation capacity also increased according to the number of places and days [7].

**Table 4.**  
**Arrivals in tourist reception structures with accommodation functions, by tourist areas and types of structures, in 2023**

	2010	2023
Accommodation capacity in operation (number of places-days)		
<b>Total</b>	<b>58.895.353</b>	<b>81.189.524</b>
Hotels	42.695.391	49.900.507
Motels	1.826.777	2.048.064
Hostels	1.273.505	2.860.948
Tourist villas	2.740.132	3.535.804
Tourist guesthouses	5.490.842	8.681.624
Agrotourism guesthouses	4.735.468	12.816.857
Tourist cottages	133.238	1.345.720

Source: [https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/seria\\_turism\\_in\\_anul\\_2023.pdf](https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/seria_turism_in_anul_2023.pdf)



**Figure 2. The number of those accommodation according to origin**

The figure 2 represents the distribution of Romanian tourists in accommodation units compared to foreign tourists. The figure is related to the table 4, representing it. Romanian tourists choose to stay in hotels in the largest percentage, as do foreign tourists. Both Romanian and foreign tourists choose to stay in Romania in agroturism guesthouses, second only to hotels. For both Romanian and foreign tourists, the last place is the tourist cottage.

## CONCLUSIONS

The development of agrotourism in Romania presents a remarkable opportunity for sustainable rural advancement, integrating agricultural practices with tourism to offer genuine experiences for travelers. This sector has the capacity to broaden income streams for rural populations, safeguard local traditions, and aid in the preservation of Romania's natural environments. To maximize this potential, ongoing initiatives are essential in enhancing infrastructure, refining marketing approaches, and providing training for rural business owners. By prioritizing these aspects, Romania can establish itself as an attractive agrotourism destination, fostering rural prosperity and enriching the nation's overall tourism attractiveness.

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