

**AGRO TOURISM – FINANCIAL HELP FOR SMALL FARMERS IN TIMIȘ
COUNTY**

**DANA SÂMBOTIN¹, COSMINA-SIMONA TOADER¹,
ANDREEA ADRIANA PETCOV², SIMONA CRISTINA MARTIN¹, ELENA TONEA¹**
¹ *Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine*
“King Michael I of Romania” from Timisoara, Romania, Faculty of Agricultural Management
² *Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine*
“King Michael I of Romania” from Timisoara, Romania,
Faculty of Horticulture and Silviculture
dana82tm@yahoo.com

Abstract: *Romanian agro-tourism development from past years lead to reorientation of most small farmers toward coming the tourism with agriculture. Incomes at national level in rural area are lower than urban area, so that the inhabitants need to search alternatives in order to increase their incomes. In Timiș County agriculture is predominant. Although here it is performed different types of tourism beginning with classic one, rural tourism, business, ecumenical and not last agro-tourism. In present paper we'll try to identify the number of small area farms, their place and tourism development potential in Timiș area.*

Key words: *agro-tourism, small farmers, local economy, Timis County*

INTRODUCTION

Timis County is located in the western part of the country, it borders Yugoslavia and Hungary to the west, and Arad, Hunedoara and Caras-Severin in the north, east and south. Geographical location is very advantageous, at the crossroads of major European roads where western culture and civilization interfere with the East ones. Timis County, Romania's largest county, with an area of 8697 km², has a temperate climate, two-thirds of the territory is covered with plains crossed by the rivers Timis, Bega and Bârzava.

In Romania, as in Timis County agriculture still represents the main income source for rural people. There are areas in which rural economy monostructure is so pregnant as during unproduction years it appears the rural people pourness. So, during our days, rural areas require promoting a multifunctional economy, in order to complete rural peoples income. We talk about services development, among which a special attention is for rural tourism and agro-tourism. Timis county agricultural is remarcable, due to plain agricultural areas and good quality soil. The sustenance farms, in general family type, are those which produces, mainly, for own consumption, but also may comercialize part of production.

Agro-tourism is a closed „relative” of rural tourism, with wich may not by assembled, due to the content of the two concepts, as to specific methods of manifestation and of activitie which each one contains.

If rural tourism implies specifically rural area, then agro-tourism implies even agricultural activity and mainly household activity. In such context, it may be reminded that agro-tourism needs accomodation services, but also participation ago-tourism consumers at agricultural production activities, such as picking fruits and vegetables, gathering eggs, animals careing, animals feeding and even at some agricultural activities on the field. So, agro-tourism may not be separated by agriculture exploitation. In few words agro-tourism implies symbiosys among entertainment activities and the oness of agricultural production specific to exploitation where it develops.

Agro-tourism may be defined as being the sum of all touristic activities – accomodation, trips in the specific agricultural of the area and accesibility for variuos consumers of agro-tourism.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present paper will comprise description of agricultural and agro-tourism practiced in Timiș County which will end with conclusions referring to potential financial help for small farmers who desire to combine agricultural with tourism.

The study was based on methods specific to selective research: identification of problem under research, delimitation of research framework, information collection, data processing, analysis and interpretation and drawing up the conclusions. The information sources that have been used are the official data of National Institute of Statistics 2013 and Census of Agriculture 2011.

RESULTS AND DISCUTIONS

We consider that sustenance farms have between 6 and 30 ha. So, as a country medium, in 2010, the total number of agricultural exploitation of small dimensions were of 235 460 exploitation, country medium, on an area of 2 332 158, 29 ha.

In Timiș County the total number of exploitation in 2010, according to provisory data of agricultural census, was of 78 829 (from which 77 267 are individual agricultural exploitations); from which 75 990 exploitation which uses agricultural area. Total used area (ha) is of 660.103,56 from which the main part 508 646,900 is tillable land. Medium of agricultural area per exploitation is of 8, 37 ha.

Agricultural field and rural area economy shows a potential increase, but is not exploited adequately. Productivity, in 2012, in agricultural branch was of 2464 e/person, being 5 times lower as national medium – 12 527 E/person. Small and medium companies from rural area implied in non-agricultural activities (services, rural tourism, agro-tourism) are really low. Regarding tourism infrastructure, accomodation capacity at national level registered a favorable evolution during 2005-2012. Actually the hotels have almost 60% from accomodation capacity. Also at national level considering rural tourism over 90% of accomodation capacity is represented by agro-touristic half boards. But, with all support, rural tourism haven't reached a satisfying development level, especially from the point of view of infrastructure quality and of services.

In Timiș County are almost 2000 farmers with sustenance farms. The incomes at national level, especially in rural area are lower, so that more people are looking for alternatives. Tourism development in western side of the country is growing continuously. Even if this county it is considered by tourism as being passing town or board to Europe, here developed and it is still developing alternative tourism, in Timisoara, cultural tourism, agro-tourism, rural tourism, hunting tourism, etc. Practicing of agro-tourism has its origin in economical part of human activity, but equally or even more in affective part of the mankind. In table 1 we present tourist accomodation chain of Timiș County in 2010.

Timiș County touristic infrastructure contains a number of 122 accomodation units. We may notice that the number of accomodation units registered an increase, from 64 accomodation units in 1995 at 122 accomodation units in 2010. Considering the informations in table 1 it results an low use index of accomodation capacities, continuous decrease, but also an increase of accomodation capacity. This fact is due to existence of some accomodation capacities which haven't been renewed.

Table 1

Accommodation units chain in Timiș County						
	1995	1999	2007	2008	2009	2010
Accommodation units	64	56	102	104	115	122
- total, from which:						
Hotels	19	22	47	46	49	53
Apartment hotels	-	-	-	-	-	1
Hostels	-	-	-	-	-	3
Youth Hotels	-	-	3	3	-	-
Inns and motels	4	3	3	3	3	2
Chalets	1	1	-	-	-	-
Camping	3	1	1	1	1	1
Touristic villas	29	16	9	11	11	9
Boarding	-	-	31	32	37	42
Farmhouses	-	-	4	4	5	7
Student camps	5	4	4	4	4	4

Source: Statistic annular of Timiș County 2010

The services are not always at high standards, but new investments wants to comply satisfactory to tourists requirements, in Timiș County. Touristic potential is inadequately valued and publicity is not so attractive.

Table 2

Accommodation capacity existent in Timiș County, number of places				
	2007	2008	2009	2010
Places– total from which	5724	6335	6550	6857
Hotels	4057	4237	4338	4603
Apartment hotels	-	-	-	63
Hostels	-	-	-	98
Youth Hotels	64	74	-	-
Inns and motels	100	100	100	70
Chalets	-	-	-	-
Camping	260	260	260	260
Touristic villas	203	563	513	445
Boarding	722	781	806	912
Farmhouses	65	67	83	137
Student camps	253	253	269	269
Functionally accommodation capacity places (thousands)	-	1997	272	2079
Index of net occupation %	32,0	31,6	25,1	23,6

Source: Statistic annular of Timiș County 2010

In table 2 it is presented existent accommodation capacity in Timiș County, number of places. It may be observed the continuous decrease of accommodation occupation, a sign for tourist decreased interest to occupy the accommodations, but doesn't mean the decrease of tourism in the area. In agro-tourism evolution it manifested the interdependence among agricultural activities and the ones with touristic content.

We have to admit that agro-tourism incomes won't be over 65-70%, considering the fact that agricultural exploitation by realized productivity offers necessary inputs in agro-

tourism activity. The more agricultural exploitation is well represented the more incomes are higher. In analysis and appreciation of incomes structure we have to consider the superiority of prices for agro-touristic services compared to agricultural products price.

The agro-tourism may not be practiced, or it is difficult to be practiced in sustenance farms, as is the main part of agricultural exploitation in Romanian rural area. The sustenance agricultural farm, with its narrow economical-organizational area, with low services it could not make the citizens to come back to old time environment or to know the rural area. As we have mentioned agro-tourism have an emotional side, which constitutes one of the main feed-backs generated by agricultural exploitation. So that is the reason why tourism in Romania developed so slowly.

So, in order to reach the paper purpose, that is potentially financial help for small farmers in Timiș County, it must be increased accommodation capacity in farmhouses. That may be a benefit for local rural economy first by incomes increase and mainly of local economy, infrastructure development, increasing of jobs, migration ending, especially of young people, towards towns or even other countries. In order to acaparate tourists, the farmers with farmhouses may „offer” three qualities of local agricultural productivity:

- Freshness of local product (example: potatoes from their own garden, fresh milk, etc.)
- Health of local product – cultivation without insecticides and chemical fertilizers;
- Specific of local products

CONCLUSIONS

1. Once agro-tourism developed are increasing the economy oportunitie, the local ones especially.

2. The agro-tourism activity implies also the agricultural activity and the household by default. We have to mention that agro-tourism needs services of accomodation, but also the participation of agro-tourism consumers at activities of agricultural productivity such as fruits picking or vegetables, eggs gathering, animals careing, animals feeding and even some field activities.

3. The agro-tourism means, as it have been shown, an alternative but also a dynamic factor of classic tourism rythm of development.

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