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**AGRO-TOURISM IN COUNTRIES AND REGIONS OF THE
EUROPEAN UNION ON THE BASIS OF PODKARPACKIE
PROVINCE IN POLAND**

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The article examines the economic effects and benefits of agro-tourism. Presented the ecological, social, cultural and economic laws, on which are based the basic principles of agro-tourism. The features of agro-tourism in the Podkarpackie province are identified.

Since the beginning of 1990s Europe has been dominated by diversified model of tourism, with predominance of “sun, sea, sand” type. At the same time the development of agro-tourism could be observed, especially in the upland and mountain areas. It was also noticed in Poland, where it was seen as an opportunity to face poverty and unemployment in the countryside. It is very visible in the south-east part of Podkarpackie province.

Presently these features constitute the most important elements of multi-level development of villages in that area. This is also a stance manifested by the central and regional administration and social organizations. Various economists, especially those dealing with the subject of the countryside, are more careful in expressing their opinions pointing out to the fact that agro-tourism can only partially under certain conditions solve problems of rural areas in particular regions of the country. One of these conditions is sustainable development of the countryside and agriculture but also the development of tourism in these areas provided that it is not going to cause their gradual degradation, depopulation and acculturation, etc. If the values that the countryside represents for people who visit it during their free time and holidays will be lost, then tourists and their money will disappear once more.

In order to pursue the assumptions of European integration system it should be concluded that affiliation of regional associations and agro-touristic trade households, which through their activity constitute public benefit organizations, involving many programmes, especially through promotion of their social partners, play a very important role in sustainable development of agriculture and countryside in modern world.

The English term “sustainable development” started to be used in Polish literature as equivalent to Polish “rozwój zrównowazony”, although English adjective “sustainable” has much wider meaning. It means not only “self-supporting” but also “able to last” and “possible to maintain”. However Polish term “rozwój zrównowazony” in social and economic terms can be considered as the most accurate. This term is often identified with eco-development, sustainable development or development respecting the needs of environment. The term “sustainable development” was first used in 1972 during the

Conference in Stockholm¹. This term appeared again in the United Nations report of the World Commission on Development in 1987. Then it was popularized on the conference “Earth Summit” in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. As a result there were formulated rules and aims of sustainable development, addressing the needs of modern society and taking into consideration interest of future generations through solutions, which would contribute to its renewal². This type of development has to combine the rights of nature and economy, also in the area of energy industry, by following certain rules. Therefore sustainable development does not violate natural environment, does not lead to degradation of biosphere and it allows nature, economy and culture to co-exist.

In Poland the idea of sustainable development was adopted by the Constitution of Poland and by appropriate legislation, it is especially expressed by “Environmental Law” from 27.04.2001, thanks to which using the term “sustainable development” was approved in national documents³. Moreover the initiative of the sustainable development of agriculture and countryside was integral part of the development strategy, which was realized in terms of the European Union integration processes, according to National Development Plan and the Treaty of Accession to the European Union and the strategy of the development of Poland formulated then. The aspect of environment protection was considered to be the most important in the National Development Plan. Attention was also paid to spatial planning and local investments in the whole process of European integration. In Europe the most active when it comes to agro-tourism are The European Commission whose Department of Business and Trade within a range of its Tourism Unit handles legislation, additionally the Department of Agriculture in the field of agricultural marketing, also worth mentioning is the Economic and Social Committee, where as all initiatives are supported by the European Investment Bank⁴.

Sustainable agriculture should accomplish four main goals: productive, economic, environmental and social. The aim of the first is to deliver sufficient amount of agricultural products of required quality to the consumers. The economic goal is understood as providing farmers and their families with sufficient income while sustaining the prices on accepted by the consumer’s level. The purpose of the environmental goal is to make sure that the economy does not violate the balance of ecosystems. The last goal is to get the acceptance of non-agricultural part of the society to support agro-businesses. Such union of social and agricultural platforms is possible only by “democratic because not formalized” unions of parties within similar trade applying the rule

¹ B. Poskrobko, *Teoretyczne aspekty ekorozwoju* [in:] „Ekonomia i Środowisko”, 1997, no. 10, p. 11.

² D. Zaręba, *Ekoturystyka*, Warszawa 2006, s. 36.

³ See Enactment of Sejm of the Polish Republic from 10.05.1991, regarding environmental policy of the country, M. P., no. 18, poz.118; Dz.U. Nr 62, poz.627, art. 405.

⁴ J. Walasek, *Turystyka w Unii Europejskiej*, Lublin 2009, pp. 47– 48.

of synergy in realizing their common goals and acting according to the rules of competition, called cluster⁵.

One of the components of sustainable development is protection of the natural environment, cultural heritage of the countryside and the usage of energy potentials of non-urbanized areas⁶. A number of factors that determined the development of rural tourism can be specified including rapid industrialization and urbanization of Western societies, although in recent years this can also be noticed in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, despite the recurring economic crises, one can observe a steady increase in the welfare of society and more free time that allows trips to the countryside, where city dwellers look for a different kind of everyday experiences and emotions. We have to remember that economic boom of the cities was unfortunately accompanied with increasing disappearance of traditional agricultural activity, in particular agriculture in areas located far away from urban centers.

The idea of agro-tourism is based on many subjective elements in the center of which often is empathy of local community. Thus agro-tourism is dependent on the landscape values of the particular area, its heritage and culture. At present it also uses the opportunity to participate in a typical rural activities and learning about rural life on a daily basis.

Rural tourism

There are many academic interpretations and definitions of rural tourism. The proposed version assumes a broad interpretation of this issue, and in the best possible way it reflects the complexity of agro-tourism. Agro-tourism is practiced mainly by the weekend tourists who after a long week of work in the urban environment seek typical rural landscape, peaceful atmosphere and lifestyle. This type of tourism is far from the mainstream of holiday/mass tourism, and thus, from the areas often visited by tourists - top destinations. Agro-tourism also helps tourists get involved in the farm life and create genuine interactions with the environment, its "rural spirit", it also teaches how to coexist within the local community⁷.

⁵ J. Staszewska, A. Szromek, A. Hadzik, Klaster jako perspektywiczna forma powiązań sieciowych w turystyce uzdrowiskowej [in:] Turystyka uzdrowiskowa – stan i perspektyw, Gdańska 2009, pp. 72–73 and J. Staszewska, Klaster perspektywą dla przedsiębiorców na polskim rynku turystycznym, Warszawa 2009, p. 21 and E. Nosal-Szczygieł, Wpływ inicjatyw klastrowych na rozwój przedsiębiorstw, wyniki badań w woj. Podkarpackim [in:] Klastry gospodarcze jako czynnik rozwoju regionu, B. Pławgo (ed.), Łomża 2008, p. 124.

⁶ P. Halemba, A. Tyc, Agroturystyka, turystyka wiejska, ekoturystyka – pozyskiwanie zewnętrznych źródeł finansowania i zarządzania nimi w kontekście wejścia Polski do UE, Kielce 2010.

⁷ F. Kapusta, Agrobiznes a zrównoważony rozwój obszarów wiejskich, Warszawa 2008, p. 8.

Tourism development therefore also gives benefits to rural communities. However, improper development, investments often left without control, may also negatively affect the sustainable development of rural areas, and ultimately even discourage potential tourists.

In the economic aspect agro-tourism still constitutes an important additional or new source of income for rural communities. As a result, tourism business can create many new job opportunities or markets. On the other hand, thanks to the tourists it is possible to maintain existing jobs in various services (such as transport and accommodation)⁸. Tourism activities can attract new businesses, thereby leading to diversification and strengthening of the local economy.

Furthermore, the development of agro-tourism contributes to a variety of benefits to rural communities, often involving the creation and maintenance of local public services such as health and transport; also it can contribute to creation of artistic groups. Local communities will benefit as far as the development of new infrastructure facilities and seasonal attractions is concerned⁹. Also cultural or entertainment facilities will be developed. Other social benefits include increased contact in more isolated communities, and for guests - a chance to experience a different culture. Increasing a sense of belonging and social revitalization of local customs, crafts and cultural identity are very important social benefits that may be a result of properly organized tourist activities.

The success of agro-tourism depends on attractive environment and because tourism can both provide financial resources, as well as an incentive to protect and improve the natural rural environment. It can also help to protect and improve the state of historic buildings for instance castles, monasteries, parks and gardens¹⁰. There are many examples in which agro-tourism has contributed to the improvement of the environment in towns and villages (waste disposal, traffic regulations, and the overall improvement of the state of the buildings).

As indicated above, the development of agro-tourism is also related to certain costs. In economic terms, agro-tourism increases the demand for public services such as: waste collection, medical services and their cost. This may lead to an increase in land prices, real estate, goods and services and contribute to the excessive dependence of local communities on one sector of the economy.

Among the social costs that may be associated with agro-tourism there should be mentioned congestion and overcrowding, which may interfere with the daily life of residents. Among other potential social costs of perhaps the greatest importance is devastating impact on local rural communities associated

⁸ J. Sikora, Organizacja ruchu turystycznego na wsi, Warszawa 1999, s. 70.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 11.

¹⁰ S. Kozłowski, Regionalne strategie rozwoju zrównoważonego, Warszawa 2004, p.

with the introduction of new ideas, styles and which in many cases can constitute a challenge to traditional culture and values.

In terms of environmental costs tourism can cause damage to both the natural environment and environment created by humans through increased usage of almost non-renewable resources. Improper tourist activities can lead to increased levels of pollution in the countryside with garbage, waste and traffic congestion¹¹.

Since the early nineties chance to improve the economic situation of rural areas in Poland, has been seen in their multi-purpose development. Particular emphasis, at least theoretically, is put on agro-tourism. All other areas of multifunctional development of rural areas - trade, services and manufacturing - are controlled by the limited purchasing power of the rural population. In this situation, tourism has the primary advantage - the product is produced in rural areas and its buyers are residents of urban areas. Agro-tourism has been recognized by international experts as one of the five priority areas for the development of Polish tourism. Its importance stems from the fact that it corresponds to the stable preferences of buyers - urban dwellers looking for ecological forms of recreation not only at present but also in the future¹².

Agro-tourism is a form of recreation that takes place in rural areas and includes multiple types of recreational activities related to nature, hiking, health tourism, sightseeing, cultural and ethnic, while leveraging resources and values of the village. Although the touristic values of the countryside will be lost, if the development of rural areas and agriculture will not be sustainable, environmentally friendly or harmful for tourists' health¹³. "Everyone has to understand this, local and central authorities, but above all the inhabitants themselves, because it depends on them largely whether the region is attractive to tourists. The attractive more often means- quiet, peaceful, green, since these elements have become more attractive for the XXI century tourist, emphasizing that this form of recreation has to be environmentally friendly"¹⁴.

Agro-tourism therefore requires a balance between the needs of the local community, tourist's dreams and eco-development of the local landscape.

By adopting a set of guiding principles for a sustainable approach to agro-tourism, local communities may seek to maximize the benefits of the development of the tourism while minimizing the costs. Guiding principles of sustainable agro-tourism can be developed from different perspectives, taking into consideration environmental, social, and inheritance, cultural and economic rules.

These rules can be grouped as follows:

¹¹ Ibidem, pp. 91–92.

¹² S. Arasymowicz, D. Nałęcka, *Agroturystyka w społeczno – ekonomicznym rozwoju środowiska wiejskiego*, Warszawa 1997, p. 45.

¹³ T. Iwanek, *Bezpieczeństwo ekologiczne Polski i regionu warunkiem rozwoju turystyki uzdrowiskowej* [in:] *Turystyka uzdrowiskowa w gospodarce regionu i kraju*, Wrocław 2006, pp. 50–51.

¹⁴ M. Woźniak, *Turystyka wiejska a zrównoważony rozwój obszarów wiejskich*, Warszawa 2001, p. 209.

1 Environmental Policy:

- a) to respect the natural diversity of the region;
- b) to protect natural diversity by respecting the carrying capacity of each area;
- c) to determine the carrying capacity of the region;
- d) taking measures to monitor the carrying capacity of the area
- e) monitoring the impact of tourism activities on the flora and fauna of the region;

2 Social Policy:

- a) respect for social diversity of the region;
- b) in ensuring that development of tourism protects not destroys cultural diversity

and local community important are:

- The pace of development,
- The scale of development,
- The type of development,
- c) actively discouraging forms of tourism causing social dysfunctions;
- d) ensuring the scale, nature and pace of tourism should support hospitality and natural understanding;

3 Principles of Economics:

- a) the promotion of employment opportunities allowing people to stay in the countryside;
- b) preventing the disappearance of traditional occupations;
- c) to promote economic diversity by combining rural tourism with ongoing activities of the local community;
- d) promote the use and sale of local food products.

Rules outlined above, may constitute the basis for the development of the "Charter for Sustainable Agro-tourism"¹⁵. Indeed, before the rural community will actively participate in the development and promotion of tourism in their area or region, they must specify the type of tourism, they would like to get involved in and type of tourists who would they like to attract.

In order to implement the idea of agro-tourism in a given area or in a region all aspects including environmental, social, culture and economic need to be taken into consideration. Nevertheless, it is necessary to formulate the next set of rules needed to meet the needs of the customer or visitor – sometimes even defined as the "Ten Commandments of agro-touristic lodging" and they are as follows:

- 1 accommodation in rooms with comfortable beds at a reasonable price,
- 2 hygienic toilets and bathrooms,
- 3 sampling of regional products – not too much sophisticated, but tasty cooked,
- 4 admiring the landscape, views and nature of the region,
- 5. exploring the history and culture of the region,

¹⁵ Compare: Rada Europy, Zaleceniю No. 1296 from 1996.

6 enjoying recreational activities (golf, walking, fishing, horse riding, skiing, etc.)

7 buying regional crafts and souvenirs purchases,

8 enjoying the regional music, dance and theater,

9 travel without restrictions and security concerns,

10 experience a friendly attitude on the part of people employed in local tourism¹⁶.

In rural areas the development of all forms of tourism, as long as it is carried out in accordance with the requirements of environmental protection, leads to economic revival of the region.

The most important is the area without any environmental threats. Nevertheless, the existence of such areas is very desirable, and clearly increases demand for such services. The development of rural tourism, including agro-tourism, is visible both in the growing number of people providing lodgings, as well as in the expanding range of services and their increasing quality.

A special type of agro-farms is organic farms welcoming tourists. Holidaymakers in such holdings are able to be in an ecologically clean environment and all their meals are prepared from organic food produced on the farm. Many tourists among many offers of rural accommodation choose consciously organic farms as the ones fulfilling their expectations of a safe and healthy holiday. For organic farms, this means the possibility of consumption of some of its products directly on the farm and to generate additional revenue rewarding their increased workload with organic production¹⁷.

The increasing number of tourists in the area, especially if it is excessive, can spoil the attractiveness of the area. Therefore rural tourism indicators should be taken into consideration in the development plans of agro-tourism in the particular area. Tourism receptivity is defined as the maximum number of people participating in the tourist traffic that can simultaneously reside in an area without causing devastation and environmental degradation, through which they could worsen the conditions of holidays. Tourism capacity determines the maximum number of people participating in the tourism traffic who can simultaneously use various elements of tourist infrastructure without contributing to the reduction of the level of tourist services and that would not upset socio-economic development. At a low level of technical infrastructure (water supply, sewerage, sewage treatment plants, gasification) in rural areas both indicators will be appropriately low¹⁸.

Rural tourism in Podkarpacie province

Podkarpackie province like the whole area of South-East Poland is characterized by a much larger number of villages than the rest of the country.

¹⁶ www.mg.gov.pl (access: 09.11.2013).

¹⁷ J. Korol, *Wskaźniki zrównoważonego rozwoju w modelowaniu procesów regionalnych*, Warszawa 2007, p. 110.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, s. 115

Thus the area is less urbanized. The province is inhabited mainly by the rural population (59.5 % of total population), which greatly differs from the situation in the country, where the population living in rural areas constitute 38.3 %.

Particularly unfavorable feature is the large distance between particular farms, which limits the development of agriculture and to a large extent is reflected in the cost of production. This is reflected in the average area of agricultural crops, which amounts to 2.6 hectares for the province, and for the county of Krosno only 1.73 ha. The area structure of individual farms is also unfavorable. Most farms belong to a group of 1-2 ha of agricultural area (24%). If we accept the opinions of economists that the farm with an area of 5 ha can only provide an additional source of income for farming families, this means that more than 83% of households in the province need to seek for an additional source of income. Moreover, the area is characterized by very high percentage of people employed in agriculture, which in 2002 was 48.3% of the total working population. As a result the productivity was low and work force was not efficiently used. Unemployment rates were also unfavorable, its rate was 17%. In addition to people who were registered as unemployed there were also many who were not registered, which also worsens the income situation of rural families. In this situation, there is an urgent need to develop non-agricultural activities in rural areas, which will increase the income of the agricultural population [2].

Development of social entrepreneurship of NGOs is now seen as one of the factors determining the economic development of rural areas. This is done by:

- possibility to transfer the agricultural population to non-agricultural activities;
- Improving the structure of farms due to the resignation of population from agricultural activities because of undertaking jobs in different sector;
- Improving technical, social and economic infrastructure;
- Development of the fields that support agriculture.

The development of non-agricultural entrepreneurship in communities depends on the following factors:

- The location of the area
- the historically shaped structure of economy
- The type of agriculture in the development of the region
- The state of infrastructure
- The demographic situation in the area and the level of unemployment
- The socio-professional structure
- Property relations and capital resources
- efficiency of rural institutions
- Social attitudes, especially the predisposition to entrepreneurship [8].

Agro-tourism also creates opportunities for business development supporting and providing additional services in the environment of tourist farms.

The development of entrepreneurship in rural areas significantly affected the activity of local government. It can stimulate economic activity in a direct

manner (tax relief), as well as indirectly, primarily through the creation of appropriate infrastructure conditions in the area. Chances of economic recovery should be also look for in strategic development plans of municipalities or regions applying modern green technology¹⁹.

The development of non-agricultural entrepreneurship not only affects the creation of new jobs and additional income, but also is an important structural change in agro-culture. One of such opportunities is the development of private enterprises, especially small-scale, appearing in all areas of economic life, including in particular the area of agribusiness. Examples of such solutions are organizations of farmhouses. For example, "Galicyskie gospodarstwa gościnne – Bieszczady" is a typical association of NGO created in 1993. Tourists are offered here the form of organized stay in villages in Bieszczady and Beskid Niski. Accommodation is organized in homes, holiday cottages, apartments, holiday and guest rooms. Catering is provided based on local products²⁰.

Tourists staying here, living with local families can get to know their habits and daily activities - baking bread, making butter, smoking meat, can meet the farm animals and learn their rite. All guests are offered active recreation. Depending on the expectations of tourists and seasons, one can try: hiking, fishing, harvesting of wild products, photographing wildlife, cycling, horse riding, carriage rides, sleigh rides, skiing, table tennis, tennis boating, canoeing and pontoons, accompanying hunting. For guests "Galicyskie gospodarstwa gościnne – Bieszczady" are prepared approximately 2,500 beds in 260 farms. Prices for services are affordable, much lower than the hotels, and the quality should please everyone.

Анотація

Вєжбінець В., Томас І.

Агротуризм в країнах та регіонах Європейського Союзу на прикладі Підкарпатської провінції в Польщі

У статті розглядаються економічні наслідки і переваги агротуризму. Представлені екологічні, соціальні, культурні та економічні закони, на яких базуються основні принципи агротуризму. Виявлені особливості агротуризму в Підкарпатській провінції.

¹⁹ J. Szymbara, Przykładowe rozwiązania proekologicznie zastosowane w obiektach PTTK w Bieszczadach [in:] Turystyka zrównoważona i ekoturystyka PTTK, Warszawa 2008, pp. 161 – 162.

²⁰ www.galicyskie.pl z dnia 12.12.2013.