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IMPORTANCE OF AGRO-TOURISM FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN NORTHEASTERN MACEDONIA

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is how and in what way to stimulate and activate the villagers bordering areas of Northeastern Macedonia, in order to revive the country for sustainable rural tourism. It is emphasized that tourism can greatly improve the lives of people who live in those areas. When it comes to rural households, often ignored is the fact that many of them in addition to dealing with agriculture and other complementary activities, such as forestry, handicraft processing, services and even tourism. This is especially important for small farms, which are not able to achieve a high enough income with just dealing with agricultural activity, and their education should include these additional activities. With traditional manufacturing and food preparation, equal and rural tourism activity should be included as a supplementary activity and in the restoration of these villages and the overall development of rural areas. When agriculture and tourism are connected, the number of young people not leaving the rural areas would be growing, and the ones already there would rearrange their homes for accommodating tourists. Tourism can be considered as the most appropriate activity that will contribute to the increase of various economic activities in these areas.

Key words: tourist products, rural tourism, touristic destination, agro diversity

1. Introduction

Agriculture and rural areas are developed in a variety of conditions, including its greater or lesser success. This is especially true for so-called marginal areas, where the limitation of natural conditions causes the inability to establish intensive agricultural production that can compete with that which takes place in conditions where soil, climate and other conditions are favorable.

On the other hand, agriculture in those areas traditionally present and she has just designed and

maintained environment for the development of other economic activities for which this area has comparative advantage as an example - tourism. So agricultural production should not be put out, but must increase the diversity of its evaluation of the alignment of its intensity and the product environment - natural, productive and socially.

There have been lots of talks about the development of the villages in the context of the development of rural tourism in Macedonia. This is an aspect that is certainly of interest to the rural economy, but it is a pity that the whole story is based mainly on one-sided view of the matter, without delving into what it truly means to tourism and what is the connection with agricultural production. Agricultural production in the countryside, not that it should be replaced by a tourist activity, but integration in such a way that farming is sized to provide the conditions for the development of tourism, not only in terms of providing food for the tourists but also in terms of maintaining the village atmosphere that appear attractive.

In this paper will be processed one part of Northeastern Macedonian border villages. It is part of the villages in the municipality of Staro Nagoricane (village Mlado Nagoricane), municipality of Rankovce (village German), and municipality of Kriva Palanka (village Ogut).



Agriculture is not only a need in terms of production of products that will meet our needs, but it is needed to maintain the resources and this is particularly visible in areas that are depopulated, mountain areas, such as these, where there is a lot of abandoned land, which is reliant directly on agriculture, human influence and his animals. One cannot expect that there is a mountain pasture resource if there is no cattle on it and man that affects its appearance. On the other hand, this appearance is exactly what is valorized as tourism potential. This is perhaps the lawn high value for biodiversity conservation with many scientifically or economically interesting species whose presence is conditioned by the presence of man and his livestock, conducting proper selection and recreate natural conditions to sustain this kind there.

There is a danger in large areas to lose valuable due to the lack of natural agricultural production. The interactions between nature and agriculture are very complex, and without knowing them the sustainable development of villages and agriculture it is not possible.

2. Research methods

During the research, method used is PLA (participatory learning and action). It is a complex method composed of more resources related to the situational analysis and planning, and it was made possible to acquire an authentic picture of the situation seen by the eyes of residents in rural communities. By applying this method they were allowed to identify their problems and options for improving their situation, together with the identification of potential, scope and type of assistance required. This method assumes that the members of the community and the PLA facilitators need to be active participants in the development process, and we should point out that the members of the community are the key. Their standards of value and ideas to improve their own situation, prejudices, hopes, fears, needs and resources, are the basic starting point for entry into the development process.

PLA method allows the systematic situation analysis of the village. This method provides an unbiased and transparent processing problems and needs of the village, and an overview of natural resources and potential for development of traditional rural activities whose reactivation is justified in view of sustainable rural development. Recorded are testimonies of former normal way of living, traditional crafts and traditional land use and livestock etc. providing the basis for an analysis of their options in light of global trends in the open market. The aim of the PLA method, however, is not situational analysis per se, but to initiate a sustainable development process in the villages.

3. Multifunctional agriculture and rural tourism in northeastern Macedonia

The tradition of agricultural activity in Macedonia is very long. Old almost as the human race. For some ancient civilizations it is known that they were based exclusively on the breeding success of some crops. So the old Mexican civilization is based on corn and ancient Chinese and ancient Egyptian on rice. Animal milking should be emphasized, particularly nomadic, which also enabled high-ups of some of the people.

Agriculture has always been a crucial economic sector, enabling cultural or civilizational rise. Today's issue of agriculture is largely eclipsed by other branches of the economy, such as industry however we are witnessing just today, in the era of lack of food, the importance of agriculture for the planet, as well as the fact that the significance is very complex and multifunctional.

Multi functionality of agriculture in rural development today means a complex tangle of agricultural production in rural development and, conversely, the impact of rural development at the start of some aspects of agricultural production, which until now were not attractive ^[1]. Functions of agriculture in feeding the population it is its first and most important role, because it is the only agriculture that is able to produce food. Agriculture and food are therefore often used as synonyms. This fact, too, defines the fundamental importance of agriculture for each country.

Young people leave rural areas because of lack of employment opportunities and poorer living conditions than in the cities. The trend cannot be stopped even with the present awareness that life in rural

^[1] International conference, multifunctional agriculture and rural development, Belgrade, 2005

areas is one in higher environmental quality environment than in urban areas. Traditional rural farm-based agriculture does not provide sufficient opportunities for employment, and employment outside the farm is usually very difficult or impossible. Many rural communities that have endured and that have developed are turning to rural tourism as one of the solutions to alleviate poverty, the slow migration of the young and revive small rural households who are perishing.

We still think that is enough to feed and accommodate the person when he or she comes to our tourist-oriented household. However, this person wants to see something after the meal and sleep. No matter how good and healthy the food was, he would like to sleep. A horse or donkey can do the role of entertainers and earn for their survival on the mutual satisfaction of the holder and the animal's owner.

4. Agro-tourism as a form of direct connection for tourism and agriculture in northeastern Macedonia

Agro-tourism - a form of sustainable tourism development. Implemented around the farm and activities related to farms, such as, agricultural activities, food processing and sheep shearing. Agro-tourism was popular in the late 19th century and by the end of the 20th has become even more attractive as a possible option for the farmers, who required additional and increased revenue from the property. The benefits of agro-tourism include life extension of agricultural land because it helps agricultural producer and his family to keep the farm. Agro-tourism is common in many parts of the world and is becoming increasingly popular as the primary farm income from properties decrease, and Macedonia.

Agro-tourism is not an acceptable form of business activities for all farmers in this region. Those who want to succeed must possess specific personal characteristics as well as some resources within the building in which they want to engage in this activity. First of all, it is necessary to have the necessary physical and natural resources the people who will take care of the quality of services; there must be an appropriate legal system that will allow for such facility operations as well as the existence of the necessary support of the local community. As far as personal characteristics, entrepreneurs, farmers first of all must be open, highly motivated for this job and willing to share the day, every day with their guest's even strangers and possess some business, primarily managerial skills. Moreover, a necessary initial capital, accessible location and appropriate resources related to the character of service offered. In fact, studies have shown that tourists are interested in this type of tourism, largely urban population with the primary reasons for choosing this form of tourism being (Ou, F., Shih, A., 2002):

- Strengthening of family ties - to be isolated from everyday life from the family,
- Improve health - outdoors and physical activity,
- Rest and relaxation - peace,
- Adventure - the need for new adventures and experiences,
- Running away from it all,
- Learning about local rural culture, particularly food and nutrition,
- Special events and celebrations
- Saving time and money compared to other forms of vacation,

- Nostalgia - frequent users of agro-tourism services are people who descend to the village, but no longer have family ties and contact.

For guests who usually come from highly industrialized areas, rural activities are things that can be seen only on TV, in the zoo or the Internet. This way returns them the past, to produce products that were previously only found on the shelves of major supermarkets and perhaps for the first time in my life to have a chance to try a really fresh vegetables, fruits, eggs, milk, cheese... As for the host, whose majority of income derives from agriculture, this represents an additional source of funds to make them less dependent on the movement of market prices for agricultural products, the communication with the visitor opens a window into the events and trends in the world and provides the evidence for the importance of local culture and its preservation in the processes of globalization.

Agro-tourism is a real chance to revive the border villages in this part of Macedonia, through developing as a tourist destination and as a pleasant place to live, work, visit and invest. It should become a brand of high quality in the field of agro-tourism and offers other products (organic food, medicinal plants, native species, cheese, crafts ...), that would be available during the whole year, taking advantage of the diversity, uniqueness and authenticity of its natural and cultural resources. These products and services are to be offered to local, national, regional and international markets intended for tourists who behave responsibly towards nature and which support nature protection, conservation of biological diversity and cultural heritage.

Agro-tourism as the integration of agriculture and tourism represents a realistic chance of reviving and developing the region as a tourist destination. Admittedly agro-tourism is only one form specific tourism, and can be a good complement to other traditional complementary activities that correspond to the territorial characteristics, but it is certainly one of the basic activities that can help the adequate diversification of rural economy in this part of Macedonia. Ensuring a sustainable economic base and protecting the natural and cultural resources, agro-tourism is a necessary complement, which can provide the proper evaluation of traditional production systems and thus conserving natural resources. Trends indicate that alternative tourism forms are becoming increasingly popular and this attitude is justified in the global scope.

Agro-tourism however, can adversely affect the farmers, because the impact of agricultural production season often coincides with a high peak in tourism. In this way, the manufacturer is torn between growing crops and meeting the needs of the visitors so combining these two activities requires management and quality of labor within the household or even some of its members to specialize in one or the other work. In addition, agricultural production requires different skills, which are often complementary, not reflected in the skills required to be successful in tourism.

When a farmer is successful in tourism then there's no time for the production of food. His agricultural land becomes attraction, not a place to grow food. There can be a negative and a positive side to this, that small farmers, who develop skills for organizing visitors will be able to maintain a lifestyle based on the farm, while the manufacturers who increased the size of their estates could be successful in the market of agricultural products. Those farmers who are unable to develop skills of organizing visitors, and are forced to deal with and work outside the farm to survive, will be at a loss.

The best chance of combining the two activities are based in livestock grazing, where the household member can animate the tourists while being in the field. The problem is that in these areas carrying the cattle is performed by the weaker household members, and their training in terms of providing tourism services is almost unthinkable. There are good examples too. Their use can be linked to a common conception of tourism programs at the level of the village or a few communities but it can be a stand-alone offer a household. It is rare to have schooled and younger members of the local community, capable of the traditional herding and other agricultural activities.

5. Transfer of stories through the tourist experience (Case Study in the border region of Macedonia)

People want to see and experience the natural areas, historic sites, cultural issues, recreational activities, agriculture, indigenous tribes of animals, the architectural characteristics of the community, special people, schools, health centers, museums, art centers and similar, less through classical guided bus tours, but by a walk with the owners, local guide, alone or with family. In the village there is always something to be seen. Every tourist could find something interesting that he can do. It could be sports activities in nature (hiking, biking on terrain of Osogovski mountains), cultural activities (singing, playing, making pottery, making cheese and other cheeses, weaving, cooking), as well as agricultural activities (collecting hay, milking, cleaning stables, bathing animals, cleaning weeds, planting, sorting or sampling products on the estate). It is necessary; however, to help the local inhabitants realize that their life as it is interesting to someone, it may be dull to others. However, one should bear in mind that not all tourists want to be active. A large part of them wants to take some time to relax, read a book, listen to a presentation, see a show or just sleep in the shadow of the woods, so bids must be flexible and the tourists never considered domestic workers.

6. Conclusion

No passenger can pass through the village and be unwelcomed. Every traveler and guest is welcome. There are lots of reasons to go to this village. Nature in the villages in this part of Macedonia is still intact and the local's villagers still live traditionally in harmony with nature. Diverse forests, pastures and natural meadows with an abundance of medicinal plants, wild strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries and mushrooms are just part of what binds these villages. Rural areas are beautiful and interesting in every season. Residents often present many skills from the past that are related to the nature and its healing powers, bound by traditions, ancestors to preserve their musical heritage - songs, games and costumes.

The most beautiful image of the village is the one that carries the charm of its environment, an environment of youth and family - grandparents from villages etc. Reconstruction of emotional connection and the environment that supports it is a good starting point for the development of rural tourism, especially when it targets the domestic tourists from urban areas.

Plays on emotions and creating relationships between the inhabitants of towns and villages in the villages

are a realistic option because of the traditional hospitality to greet the traveler, making it possible to bring tourists to the village. However, this setting can only be made in small villages with mixed households where guests can experience it and wake up with a lamb bleating, roosters and skim milk, a cow and a piece of fruit and sleep on hay. It is a village atmosphere that cannot consist of with modern, but only traditional agriculture. Only in such a household tourists can enjoy the entire meal in a local setting, which is poured from early childhood in the memory as a synonym of a village (Đorđević Milošević S., Milovanović J., 2012).

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