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Sustainable Development and Implications of Rural Tourism in the Development of Călărași County

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ABSTRACT

Our work aims to contribute to a better knowledge of how the countryside in the south of Romania and, in particular, in Călărași County, the existing values stored here, as well as those ignored or forgotten address the complex issue of rural tourism in an area with tourism potential but poorly known and promoted. Integrating agriculture into the market is ensured by strengthening the private type of economic organization in which natural processes go hand in hand with economic mechanisms in a manner that creates a balance of organic demand – demand. For this purpose, open development strategies are needed that exploit the advantages created by the dominant share of private ownership in agriculture and ensure intensive development to achieve competitive supply of agricultural products and an expanded market for all types of farms, with wide access to market products and production factors. Our paper makes a diagnosis of the evaluated space arguments and outlines a possible strategy to develop tourism in the studied area. Sustainable development and the implications for the tourism development concept is put into a complex, multidimensional perspective, while the contents of general tourism and of rural tourism, in particular, is integrated into this development. Seasonal and permanent tourism activities can be provided by exploiting the rational development of settlements and the existence of equal opportunities for development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge, research and sustainable development of rural areas are vital activities for a country, both in the rural dimension, expressed through the area owned and through the share of employment in productive activities, in social services, in cultural tourism, and in environmental protection.

The Agriculture and Rural Development Committee of the Council of Europe welcomes the report of the European Charter on the countryside. Rural areas of Europe represent 85% of its total area and affect, directly or indirectly, more than 50% of the continent. Economic growth, at a global level, forces

national economies and local communities to adapt, to maintain and to develop social and economic competitiveness through restructuring, both in rural areas themselves and in how to use and exploit them.

In this context and as a result of Romania becoming a member of the European Union, we will present the situation in Romania, with Călărași County as case study, in terms of rural tourism and agrotourism.

2. THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

In this context, the paper entitled "Sustainable Development and Implications of Rural Tourism in the

Development of Călărași County" aims to contribute to a better understanding of how the countryside in the south of Romania and, especially, of the Călărași County, the values stored here, often ignored or forgotten address complex issues of rural tourism in an area with great tourism potential, but poorly known and promoted.

Research undertaken on the role of agrotourism has shown that it has an important impact on social, cultural and especially economic development of the area.

The idea that we followed throughout our scientific approach was to research this subject in a systemic manner, to use an organic blend of theoretical statements and references to the investigated reality taking into account that the south of Romania may be driven by agrotourism. On the other hand, we tried a pertinent analysis and one applied to the situation of the phenomenon, placing it within the broader context of sustainable development and of the importance given to Romanian rural tourism, considered a strategic

sector of the European Union. Our paper makes a diagnosis of the evaluated space arguments and outlines a possible strategy to develop tourism in the studied area.

We suggested ways of obtaining brand tourist products that express awareness, to support the preservation and promotion of local identity and a competitive offer.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Features and scope of agrotourism. Rural areas through their components satisfy a wide range of motivations: recreation and leisure, knowledge, culture, sports, bathing, hunting and fishing.

Tourism provides a large area of coverage leisure opportunities (fig. 1). Thus, agrotourism is a means to fully achieve its rural agriculture, tourism, human, technical, and economic potential.

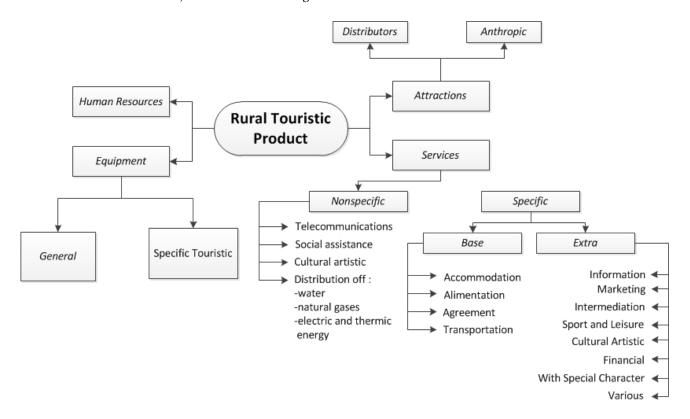


Fig. 1. Components of rural tourism products [6].

Călărași County is in south-eastern Romania, on the lower left bank of the Danube, at the Bulgarian border. In the central part is intersected by the parallel of 44° North latitude and the meridian of 27° East longitude. The county has $5,088~\text{km}^2$, representing 2.13% of Romania.

It has 2 municipalities, 3 towns, 50 communes, and 160 villages. The administrative centre of the county is the city of Călărași, with a total of 70,000

inhabitants. The total population of the county is of 324,617, representing 1.5% of Romania. The urban area has 120,270 inhabitants (37% of the county population) and the rural area has 204,410 inhabitants (63% of the county population). Population density is 64 inhabitants/km².

In Tables 1 and 2 and in Figure 2 we showed the evolution of production and agricultural services and its dynamics, the total industry and sectors in the period

2002-2009, expressed in thousand lei prices of the respective period. We noticed an increasing trend of total production from 779,705,900 lei in 2002 to 1,688,465,100 lei in 2005 and 2,041,731,000 RON in 2009.



Fig. 2. Location of Călărași County.

In total production, the largest share is held by plant production, followed by livestock production, and by agricultural services. In terms of changing agricultural land use in Călărași County, we noticed that

in 2009 compared to 1990, the total agricultural area decreased from 426,780 ha to 426,230 ha, and total arable land declined from 415,779 ha to 414,821 ha during the same period.

On the same line is located the area planted with orchards, which declined from 311 hectares to 172 hectares, while the one with vineyards declined in the same period from 5,246 ha to 4,965 ha.

Decline was significant in large villages such as Grădiștea (from 15,580 ha to 14,752 ha), Borcea (from 30,363 ha to 29,680 ha), Jegălia (from 10,476 ha to 9,992 ha), Modelu (from 9,887 ha to 9,438 ha), etc., while arable land increase was characteristic of the following: Budești, Căscioarele, Ulmeni, Vasilai, etc., but in a much smaller proportion than that of the surfaces that declined. All communes had an increase of the areas occupied by vineyards, some even up to five times, such as Borcea, Chirnogi, Ciocănești, Cuza Voda Jegălia, Dorobanțu, Radovanu, Bălcescu, Unirea, etc., the only place where the area planted with vineyards declined was Al. Odobescu, from 189 ha to 105 ha. Several communes have a significant number of acres occupied by orchards, such as Lupşanu - 26 ha, Jegălia -25 ha, Dragalina - 17 ha, Lehliu - 27 ha, Al. Odobescu and Valea Argovei with 16 ha etc., the same recording an increase of the number of acres occupied by pastures and meadows, a direct result of the increasing individual livestock holdings and agricultural associations.

Table 1. The structure of agricultural production of goods and services, in Călărași County. Thousand lei current prices.

| Year | UM | Total | Vegetal | Animal | Agrarian Services | |
|------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-------------------|--|
| 2002 | thousand lei | 779,705.9 | 548,646.7 | 208,718.8 | 22,340.4 | |
| | (%) | 100.0 | 70.4 | 26.8 | 2.9 | |
| 2003 | thousand lei | 747,892.4 | 391,184.5 | 330,687.1 | 26,020.8 | |
| | (%) | 100.0 | 52.3 | 44.2 | 3.5 | |
| 2004 | thousand lei | 918,565.7 | 553,370.0 | 339,917.8 | 25,277.9 | |
| | (%) | 100,0 | 60.2 | 37.0 | 2.8 | |
| 2005 | thousand lei | 1,688,465.1 | 1,218,727.4 | 434,645.9 | 35,091.8 | |
| | (%) | 100.0 | 72.2 | 25.7 | 2.1 | |
| 2007 | thousand lei | 1,738,264.0 | 1,336,817.0 | 364,199.0 | 37,248.0 | |
| | (%) | 100.0 | 76.9 | 21.0 | 2.1 | |
| 2009 | thousand lei | 2,041,731.0 | 1,514,423.0 | 488,767.0 | 38,541.0 | |
| | (%) | 100.0 | 74.2 | 23.9 | 1.9 | |

Note Agricultural production of goods and services is according to Eurostat methodology on "Economic Accounts for Agriculture". Source: Statistic Research – County Statistics, DADR Călărasi.

Out of the total area of 292,154 ha, 112,895 ha are used in the associative system, 93,609 ha are leased and operated by the system, and up to 85,650 hectares are individual holdings. We noticed that in the case of individual holdings (85,650 ha) 77,646 ha was arable land, 7,750 hectares were vineyards, 198 hectares were

occupied by pastures and meadows and 56 ha with orchards. In the associative farms (SA + SC + AF), out of the 112,895 hectares, 112,777 hectares were arable land and 118 ha were occupied by vineyards. The same situation was for the case of companies formed through leasing land, where out of 93,609 ha, only 2 ha were

occupied by vineyards and 5 hectares of pasture, the difference of 93,602 ha was arable land. Although in most of the towns in the county the operating system was land lease and associations (e.g. Cuza Voda - 74% and 9% in rental association, Lupşanu - 78% and 14% in rental association, Ulmu - 95% in association, Ulmeni - 81% and 9% in rental association, etc.), there were communities where over 50% of the agricultural land was operated in individual systems (e.g. Căscioarele -

85%, Tamadau - 65%, Belciugatele - 60%, Fundulea - 61%, Budeşti - 59%, Frumuşani, Nana - 58%, etc). With the current size of individual farms in Romania, rational use of land lease requires stimulation of the partnership and ownership concentration by buying farmland.

Current legislation allows local increase in the size of farms and encourages land use directly by the owner or the tenant.

Table 2. The dynamics of agricultural production of goods and services, in Călărași County. Thousand lei current prices.

| Year | Total | | Vegetal | | Animal | | Agrarian Services | |
|------|-----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| UM | thousand lei | (%) | thousand lei | (%) | thousand lei | (%) | thousand lei | (%) |
| 2002 | 779,705.9 | 100.0 | 548,646.7 | 100.0 | 208,718.8 | 100.0 | 22,340.4 | 100.0 |
| 2003 | 747,892.4 | 95.9 | 391,184.5 | 71.3 | 330,687.1 | 158.4 | 26,020.8 | 116.5 |
| 2004 | 918,565.7 | 117.8 | 553,370.0 | 100.9 | 339,917.8 | 162.9 | 25,277.9 | 113.1 |
| 2005 | 1,688,465.0 | 216.6 | 1,218,727.0 | 222.1 | 434,645.9 | 208.2 | 35,091.8 | 157.1 |
| 2007 | 1,738,264.0 | 222.9 | 1,336,817.0 | 243.7 | 364,199.0 | 174.5 | 37,248.0 | 166.7 |
| 2009 | 2,041,731.0 | 261.9 | 1,514,423.0 | 276.0 | 488,767.0 | 234.2 | 38,541.0 | 172.5 |

Note Agricultural production of goods and services is according to Eurostat methodology on "Economic Accounts for Agriculture". Source: Statistic Research – County Statistics, DADR Călărași.

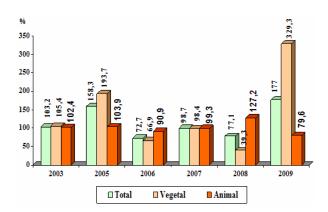


Fig. 3. Dynamics of total agricultural production and industry sectors (previous year = 100) [7].

4. CONCLUSIONS

Non-agricultural activities conducted in farms in the Călăraşi County were defined by, on one hand, specific territorial and non-agricultural activities, and on the other hand, village and farms located in a permanent evolution. In the units with legal personality they also reported the existence of such activities but, unlike individual holdings, they are in lower number but with a much higher capacity.

The natural conclusion is that the complexity of non-agricultural activities in the area studied is still small. All this shows a shift in the implementation of non-agricultural activities in farms in the Călărași area to which reference may be made especially for the sale of vegetables, pork and beef, milk and milk products, which is precisely where the production of raw material has high potentials.

Attractions and local attractiveness. Currently, in agritourism many entrepreneurs work often in isolation, at the individual household level, lacking a unified concept in the preparation and launching of attractive touristic offers.

Forms of cultural and religious tourism. Religious buildings are the main objectives (e.g. monasteries and churches). Very few settlements disappeared in the rural area. Thus, rural settlements in Călărași show a continuity of living in this region. Rural tourism is one of the key factors of the economy in the analyzed area having significant tourism potential.

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