

AGRITOURISM AND ITS FORMS

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Abstract

The term agritourism describes any type of activity based on the relation between agriculture and tourism and designates a concept over 100 years old, when city-dwellers visited their relatives or friends in the countryside in search of a more pleasant air and of quiet. This practice has become even more popular because of the following: when automobiles appeared and developed; when people were under the pressure of economic crises; when city-dwellers tried to escape war-developed stress; because of countryside nostalgic ones; due to the popularisation of agritourism activities. In the few decades since it has been practiced, agritourism – still in search of one's own identity – has known several names (agrarian tourism, agricultural tourism, farm tourism, countryside tourism, and rural tourism) and definitions whose common element is the rural and that all tend to focus on those types of activities visitors practice in the rural area.

Key words: rural area, agritourism, forms, types

The term **agritourism** is *defined* as:

- „the act of visiting a farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness enterprise for pleasure, education or active involvement in specific activities”;
- „any business of a farmer whose goal is pleasure or public education”;
- „the commercial enterprise on a farm, ranch, or factory processing agricultural produce that functions for visitors' pleasure and that generates a supplementary income for the owner”;
- „a way of spending one's holidays in which you are offered accommodation on farms (Wolfe, K. & Holland, R., 2000; *Health Tourism*, <http://www.health-tourism.info>);
- „any business run on a farm for the fun and education of the public” (McKenzie, Nora & Wysoski, A., 2008; *California Natural Resources Agency*, <http://www.ceres.ca.gov>);
- „the practice of attracting the travellers and visitors to an area or to some areas used mainly in agricultural goals” (Blacka, A., P. Couture, C. Coli, J. Dooley, A. Hankins, A. Lastovica, B. Mihálik, C. Reed, M. Uysal., 2009);
- „a style of holidays spent on a farm or ranch” (Agritourism, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agritourism>, California Natural Resources Agency, <http://www.ceres.ca.gov>), where tourists can take part in specific activities: grape picking (in viticulture areas of the USA, of Australia, Italy, Portugal, and Spain), fruit picking, animal feeding, land cultivating, etc.;

- „a type of tourism in which tourists are accommodated at the farm and eat at the farm or in the village and experience agriculture directly”;
- „tourism at the farm”.

It is *identified* with **agrarian tourism**, with **agricultural tourism**, with **farm tourism** (in the USA, by the Atlantic Ocean), with a wider tourism subset called **rural tourism** that includes resorts, agro-alimentary markets outside the standard circuit, non-profit tours with agricultural character and other activities related to leisure and hospitality that attract visitors to the countryside and with entertainment agriculture (Holland, R. & Wolfe, K., 2001).

It is *associated* with **rural tourism**.

It is *considered* a subset of **cultural tourism** or of **rural tourism**.

An **agritourism firm** is a farm opened to the tourism public in search of entertainment and education, but a farm that can also generate a supplementary income through the promotion of agricultural produce specific to the farm.

Its *main ingredients* are: contemplating or participating in traditional agricultural activities without damaging the ecosystem or area productivity; supporting agricultural activities during the visit, fruit and vegetable picking, horse riding, testing bee honey, deciphering the craft of wine-making, purchasing souvenirs from souvenir shops or from the stands displaying products or local and regional handicraft; accommodation, food, activities, event-festivals at the farm and retail sales – within which the travellers interact

directly with the farmer's family or with agricultural labourers.

Medlik (Medlik, S., 2003) identifies **agritourism** with **agricultural tourism** and with **farm tourism**.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

It is not easy to define **agritourism** since we cannot rely on a generic model to do it. Defining **agritourism** and the other types of tourism more or less related to the practice of tourism in the rural area still is the object of several debates in literature without having yet reached a clear consensus. Most definitions tend to focus on the types of activity practiced by the visitors of the rural area, which allowed the labelling of several different types of "rural" tourism.

In everything that follows, we present, for the first time in the Romanian literature in the field of tourism, a few "labels" applied, in its short history, on agritourism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The different types of agritourism have appeared from the experiences the tourists wanted to live (nature tourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, etc.). Thus, each type of tourism is a way of naming a new niche on the tourism market for a different experience.

Agrarian tourism can be *defined* as: „visiting vegetable or fruit or vine farms, of clearings with tulips”, as “a special type of holidays spent in the farm's original world”, and as “a holidays spent at a farm”.

It can be *identified* with **agritourism** and with **countryside tourism**, being *considered* an alternative type of **tourism**. The *main ingredients* are: simple attractions, relaxation and natural foods, tourism and nature.

Agricultural tourism is *defined* as: „a tourism activity organised and run by family agricultural farms”, as “the act of visiting a farm or any other agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness firm for pleasure, education, or active involvement in the farm's or firm's activities”, as “the exploration of artistic roads and of farm roads”, as “the practice of visiting an agribusiness, horticultural, or agricultural firm, including a farm or a vineyard, a pet farm or an animal farm”, as “an increasing trend in agriculture that combines the world of travel with a farmer's and food producer's experience”, or as “visiting agricultural farms that open their gates to visitors”.

It is *identified* with **agritourism** and with „**agricultural attractions for the spare time**”

being *considered* an alternative to increasing incomes and economic viability of the farms and small rural communities, a way of practicing **sustainable tourism**.

The *main ingredients* are: accommodation, food, and farm activities, event-festivals at the farm and retail sales where the traveller public interact directly with the farmer's family or with the farm's labourers; accommodation, food, and activities destined to people nostalgic about life in the countryside and that wish to experience life at the farm, to participate in festivals and activities organised at the farm, and to share the fun at the farm; accessible recreational and educational activities focused on family and the opportunity of learning how foods and other agricultural produce are produced, or on the agricultural heritage of the area, fairs, festivals, etc.

Farm tourism is *defined* as „a travel associated with the practice of agriculture” whose reference point is the village. It is *identified* with **agritourism** and with **rural tourism** and is *associated* with **countryside tourism** and with **rural tourism**. It is *considered* a subset of **cultural tourism** and a mechanism through which non-farmers can learn about agriculture.

The *main ingredients* are: farm visits for the retail purchase of local produce; activities organised on private agricultural lands that can include fee paying hunting and fishing, overnight stay, educational activities, etc.

Countryside tourism is not defined in literature. It is *identified* with **agrarian tourism** and with **rural tourism** and is *associated* with **farm tourism** and with **rural tourism**.

Practiced in the countryside, in different areas and regions, it is *considered* the opposite of **urban tourism**.

The *main ingredients* are: nature, culture, tradition and gastronomy – concepts that people learn little by little to preserve and encourage.

Rural tourism, practiced by people that belong mainly to middle and upper classes, is *defined* as “any activity carried out in a populated non-urban area”, as “tourism practiced far from the daily routine and from intense tourism activity, practiced by visitors that wish to interact with the rural environment and with the host-community in a rational, authentic way”, or as “tourism practiced outside densely populated tourism areas and centres”.

Rural tourism differs from **agritourism** from two points of view:

- activities specific to rural tourism **are not necessarily carried out at a farm, ranch, or factory processing agricultural produce;**

- activities specific to rural tourism **do not generate supplementary incomes for the agricultural enterprise.**

It is *identified* with any non-urban type of tourism, including **agritourism**, **farm tourism** and **countryside tourism** and is *associated* with **agritourism** and **countryside tourism**, both forms of tourism being *associated* with the basic requirements of **sustainable development** and with **farm tourism**.

It is *considered* a component of **cultural tourism** and of **ecotourism** (the reciprocated is also valid).

It is opposed to **urban tourism**, but it englobes **agritourism**.

The *main ingredients* are: appreciation of rural culture and activities at the farm (where the tourists are accommodated and guided by the natives), appreciating significant local values and cultural identity; learning how to cook a local food or how to milk a cow, relating to natural and man-made resources of the rural communities, searching the quiet specific to the rural area, pointing out the rural life, art, culture and heritage in rural localities, travelling to and staying in rural areas (with no mass tourism), others than the usual ones for the last two years, for business or other purposes (except for paid activities in the place being visited), assisting or participating in activities that are the core of life in the countryside (such as the practice of agriculture).

CONCLUSIONS

Though seen as a school outing less attracting than **adventure tourism**, and as a shy attempt to stop rural decline, **agritourism** and **rural tourism** can be a strategy to take into account in developed countries and a strategy of economic recovery not to ignore in developing countries.

The only element that occurs most frequently is “visiting”: the act of visiting an agricultural farm (**agricultural tourism** and **agritourism**), the practice of visiting an agribusiness (**agricultural tourism**), the visiting of agricultural firms (**agricultural tourism**) and the visiting of vegetal farms (**agrarian tourism**), the rest of the definitions being singular from the point of view of their content.

Of the seven types of tourism related to the rural area, **agritourism** occurs four times as a synonym (for **agrarian tourism**, **agricultural tourism**, **farm tourism** and **rural tourism**), which makes it the preferred name for rural environment related tourism, followed by **agrarian tourism**, **countryside tourism** and **rural tourism** (two occurrences each), and by **agricultural tourism** and **farm tourism** (one occurrence each).

The term most frequently associated with other types of tourism related to the rural area is **rural tourism** (three occurrences), followed by **countryside tourism** and **farm tourism** (two occurrences each) and by **agritourism** (one occurrence).

The only clear antonymic relationship is that between **countryside tourism** and **rural tourism**, on one hand, and **urban tourism**, on the other hand.

The only clear relation of inclusion is between **rural tourism** and **agritourism**, the former including the latter one.

It seems that the different types of tourism have appeared from the experiences the tourists wish to live (nature tourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, etc.). Thus, each type of tourism is a way to name a new niche on the tourism market for a different experience.

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