

FACTORS INFLUENCING ECO-RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN ROMANIA

FACTORI CE INFLUENȚEAZĂ DEZVOLTAREA ECO-RURALĂ ÎN ROMÂNIA

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Abstract: *Agro-tourism in Romania can develop in all rural areas, with particularly favorable conditions in the mountain area, where it can be a professional and economic dimension of mountain households, capable of ensuring labour occupancy and supplementary incomes.*

This is the only way rural space has real chances to become a viable alternative of human progress and harmonious and sustainable development.

Rezumat: *Agroturismul în România se poate dezvolta în toate arealele rurale, în special în zonele montane, putând asigura locuri de muncă și venituri suplimentare. Aceasta este singura cale prin care spațiului rural poate deveni o alternativă viabilă la progresul uman și dezvoltarea sustenabilă armonioasă.*

Key words: *eco-tourism, sustainable development, environmental protection, rural development*

Cuvinte cheie: *eco-turism, dezvoltare sustenabilă, protecția mediului, dezvoltare rurală*

INTRODUCTION

In 1994, the Ministry of Tourism signed an agreement with the F.R.D.M. concerning the cooperation in the development of agro-tourism and the improvement of legal conditions. Thus, the Government Disposition 62 of 1994 and the Law 145 of 1994 establish facilities for rural tourism system development in mountain areas, in the Danube Delta, and on the littoral of the Black Sea.

In 1994, with the support of the E.U. and through the Phare Programme they set the National Association for Rural, Ecological, and Cultural Tourism in Romania (ANTREC) that, shortly after became a first rank organization in raising Romanian rural tourism. This Association aims at promoting rural tourism and at training people working in agro-tourism. ANTREC has branches in 30 districts with over 2000 members and almost 700 touristy and agro-touristy boarding houses. The most monitored areas are Bran, Maramures, Bucovina, Harghita, Alba, and Bihor. Since 1995, ANTREC is a member of the EUROGITEST, its European counterpart.

Analysing Romanian rural space, we can see that it has preserved an invaluable thesaurus of historical sites, of architecture and historical vestiges, and a true ethno-folkloric patrimony of unprecedented value and purity.

Rural space should go on being on top priority list of central and local administration and make big steps toward sustainable and efficient development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Rural space has features that individualise it, making it specific and authentic compared to other areas, spaces, and territories; agriculture represents "the backbone" of rural space, its predominant activity though in such areas as mountain and piedmont ones, forestry and its related activities are predominant from the point of view of area and labour, while in mountain or littoral areas touristy activities predominate. Despite all this, rural space still is a predominantly agrarian space:

- ❖ rural space is a productive space, in which primary sectors have a great share: rural population is occupied both in agricultural and non-agricultural activities;
- ❖ population density in rural space is lower, which results in smaller and more humanized communities;
- ❖ from the point of view of landscape, environment, flora, fauna, culture, and traditions, rural space is from far more beautiful and appreciated;
- ❖ rural way of life, traditions, customs make up local and regional culture;
- ❖ urban development resulted in an exodus from the rural area, which explains the diminution and the ageing of rural population, with consequences on economical development (in countries where great mistakes were made in rural exploitation they talk about deurbanizing or "ruralism");
- ❖ the features of agricultural activity influences the rhythm and standard of living of the inhabitants in the area;
- ❖ agriculture does not function satisfactorily in an economic environment only due to market laws;
- ❖ agricultural produce offer follows price oscillations, but is appears on the market only after periods longer than 1 year, when changes can occur;
- ❖ agro-alimentary produce demand is relatively instable, as it depends on consumption structure.

Rural space represents most of Romania's surface, i.e. 93.7%. With such a great extent, it is the main source of food produce and of national culture and civilization. In 1990, the share of forests of the total area equaled that in France, but if we look at the dynamics of rural space in the two countries, we can see that in France the area covered by forests is increasing, while Romania loses its forests. This diminution has most unfavorable consequences on environment in general, and on agricultural environment, in particular.

Romania's land resource is of 23 million ha of which 62% agricultural lands, 28% forests, 3.7 % waters, 6.3% other categories. Romanian rural 45.4% of the population; 89% of the total area and 91 % of the agricultural land inhabits space is administered by villages.

Rural space is very much behind the rest of the country from all points of view (economic, social, and financial) the most obvious difference being that between urban and rural areas. Drinking water covers 88% of the total urban localities and only 5% of rural ones; hot water, 76% of urban localities and 5% of rural ones; sewage systems, 86% of urban localities and 10% of rural ones; sanitary units exist in 85% of urban households and in only 4% of rural ones; gas is supplied 57% in towns and 3% in villages. In 2006, they built 26376 dwellings.

Rural population in 2004 reached 11.605.719 inhabitants, i.e. 45.4%. We can see that rural population is increasingly old and that the share of deaths is also increasing (8.9% in towns and 14.4% in villages). Child death rate is higher in rural areas (16.1% in towns and 20.8% in villages). Natural growth rate is lower in rural areas (-0.5% in towns and -2. % in villages).

From the point of view of socio-economical development, the Banat area is among the most developed regions of Romania, such sectors as agriculture, industry, and services being well represented. About 58 % of the population of the region - County of Caras-Severin, lives in the rural area. Standard of living is lower in rural areas compared to urban ones, because of poor infrastructure. The greatest share is that of agriculture, one of the most important sectors of economy, hence the importance rural areas should enjoy in order overcoming the problems it is confronted with.

Concerns about sustainable development are the results of a complex of problems that constitute the object of mankind: degradation of environment, uncontrolled expansion of urban

areas, and poverty.

The coordinates of sustainable rural development should start from a triple analysis - economical, social, and ecological. Any action has its impacts therefore this should define sustainable development strategies and policies. Adopting good economic solutions can have negative social or ecological effects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Natural touristy resources in the Romania area are represented by the totality of physical and geographical elements which are able of appealing to potential tourists, this ensuring touristy valorization in the area. Natural touristy resources are of particular interest for the beginnings of tourism in an area and are the starting point in its valorizing that should be ensured by the building up of a proper technical and material basis, capable of warranting tourists' needs.

Cultural and historical attractions, much too long considered as less attractive than natural touristy sites, are increasingly more important. Man-made touristy objectives are perhaps nowadays the main elements in assessing a recreational space, also indicating cultural, historical, and economic development level. Man-made touristy sites and natural touristy sites are closely connected.

The following are considered man-made touristy resources:

- ❖ archaeological vestiges and historical monuments;
- ❖ architectural sites, religious buildings;
- ❖ art collections;
- ❖ scientific collections;
- ❖ ethnographical and folklore assets.

Man-made originated touristy sites are the result of the relationship between man and his environment. These sites are increasingly more and more important, with the development of new types of tourism and in particular of agro-tourism which valorize rural space cultural patrimony.

❖ Man-made resources are the key element in assessing recreational value and an index of cultural and historical, and of economic and social level of development of the touristy area.

❖ In order to protect and valorize both historical and architectural monuments with a view to integrate them in the touristy circuit we need to:

❖ reconstitute protection area of some monuments through natural proper landscape ecological reconstruction;

❖ modernize access routes and mark the historical sites;

❖ edit guides and post cards;

❖ preserve ethno-folklore;

❖ employ urban and rural administrators in valorizing all monuments existing within their locality from all points of view (touristy, social, and cultural).

❖ In the Banat region, a lot of vegetation, flora, fauna, or landscape areas have been tacked as nature reserve based on the following:

❖ their great geographical complexity, the interference of plant and geographical areas, the presence of lime stones that increase the landscape value of the area;

❖ the existence of eco-systems preserved in a genuine state, the originality of vegetal and animal associations.

National parks include three areas: recreational, intermediary (not adjusted and with no mechanized traffic), and scientific interest area entirely protected by nature reserves.

Buffer or pre-park areas have the role of retaining some of the touristy, allowing a harmonious management of touristy traffic, in agreement with all other functions.

National parks should become true nature museums in the open as they are the most important touristy assets.

CONCLUSIONS

Implementing agro-tourism in the Romania area need to observe the following elements:

- ❖ economic agents;
- ❖ eco-touristy programmes;
- ❖ proper management in organising.
- ❖ eco -touristy network in the all area should be represented at three levels:
- ❖ local (through economic agents);
- ❖ area (through the agro-touristy agency);
- ❖ national (through a dispatcher's office that centralizes demand and offer and design national promotional programmers).

These organizational levels regarding on eco -touristy activity correspond to the location:

- ❖ at a local level: lodging, boarding, and recreational activities;
- ❖ at a district level: identifying and certifying households, instructing and training inhabitants willing to practice agro-tourism, providing assistance and consultancy, surveying and encouraging agro-touristy activities, promoting eco-tourism, and integrating it in the national and international circuit;
- ❖ at a national level: developing national strategies for developing agro-tourism, developing legislative draft bills concerning the functioning of agro-tourism, developing and improving criteria for selecting agro-touristy boarding houses, training specialists in the field of agro-tourism, developing a national agro-tourism network and a data bank concerning agro-touristy offer, advertising, and publicity.

As a result of my analysis, I suggest the constitution of an eco-tourism agency that represents the interests of the area on both national and international levels. This agency should help inhabitants willing to practice this kind of business. It should be sustained through subscriptions from members practicing eco -tourism, and fees for services provided by the Agency: management and international activities (speleology, mountain climbing, mountain biking, enduro-tourism), intermediation fees, fees for organizing training courses and sponsorship.

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