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## **AGRITOURISM AS A FACTOR OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE MALOPOLSKA REGION**

### *AGROTURYSTYKA JAKO CZYNNIK ROZWOJU REGIONALNEGO W WOJ. MAŁOPOLSKIM*

**Słowa kluczowe: region małopolski, agroturystyka**

*Key words: Malopolska Region, agritourism*

**Abstract.** The article presents the results of research on the agrotourist entrepreneurship. Such entrepreneurship is understood, among other things, as rural service providers' inclination towards self organization of agrotourist associations, willingness to cooperate with farmers running agrotourism farms, foreign language skills and intention of making use of European Union funds.

### **Introduction**

Changeable social and economic realities in country are sympathetic towards revitalizing entrepreneurship in rural areas. Individual features of people, especially their competence and experience are very important in the development of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is often characterized by entrepreneurs' personality, taking into account his features like: resources, initiative, enterprise or system used in the process of management [Żmija 1999]. The significance of institutional surrounding, as an important factor of entrepreneurship development is also a significant issue of entrepreneurship creation [Makarski 2002]. One form of entrepreneurship which is increasingly taken up by farmers is agrotourism. It is concerned with organizing tourists' stay on functioning farms. Its aim is economic elicitation of rural areas. Agrotourism can meaningfully influent the economic development of places and communities and can play significant role in widely understood local development.

Entrepreneurship of agrotourist service providers manifests itself in rural tenderers forming the agrotourist associations. Membership in these organizations is taking place mainly for effective and cheaper promotion. The entrepreneurs' features are also noticeable in farmers cooperation with a view on increasing their tourist activity (tourists exchange and common promotion) and in making attractive the vacationers leisure time spending (organization of different recreational services).

Out of already mentioned agrotourist associations, called Agricultural Extension Centres, local authorities in communities and regional branches of Agency for Restructurization and Modernization of Agriculture play important role in the development of agrotourist entrepreneurship. The Agency is the institution of European Union funds implementation, with a view on setting up or developing agrotourist services, too.

### **Range, aim and methodology of research**

The aim of the paper is the presentation of agrotourist entrepreneurship as the form of non – agricultural activity which is taken up by farmers in the Malopolska Region.

In the descriptive part of the article the number of agrotourism farms and the role of different institutions in the creation of agrotourist entrepreneurship is presented. In the empirical part we present the results of research conducted among 365 farmers providing agrotourist services in the Malopolska Region. The criterion of farmers selection was the choice of agrotourism farms, which were located in districts characterized by the highest number of tourist objects. The research was performed based on author's questionnaire of interview.

### **Agrotourist entrepreneurship in the Malopolska Region**

Agrotourist entrepreneurship is the form of non – agricultural activity increasingly taken up by inhabitants of rural areas. The most agrotourism farms are located in the Malopolska Region. In 2006 the most of such objects were functioning – 2358 in the Malopolskie Region only, which constituted all agrotourism objects in Poland [Information of agritourism state in Poland 2006]. They possessed 24080 places of lodgings in total; 10,2 places in one object on average.

Agrotourist entrepreneurship manifests itself, among other things, in farmers membership in agrotourist associations. These associations play important role in the process of agrotourism management. The main aim of these organizations is general promotional activity and advisory and training activity. Currently among agrotourism associations functioning in the Malopolska Region four are associated in nationwide Polish Federation of Rural Tourism “Hospitable Farms”. They are:

- Association of Tourism and Agrotourism of Mountain Areas with the location in Nowy Sącz,
- Agrotourist Association of the Limanowa District with the location in Limanowa,
- Malopolska Association of Rural Tourism “Hospitable Rożnów” with the location in Rożnów,
- Galicia Hospitable Farms with the location in Cracow.

Another entity which influences the agrotourist entrepreneurship are local authorities. The work of local government in this sphere should manifest itself, among other things, in the care of natural environment. Local authorities should play the role of inspector of business entities, including agrotourism farms, so that their activity does not pose the threat for inhabitants’ health, tourists and environmental values [Kłodziński 2006]. Farmers enterprising activities in the field of agrotourism can be also stimulated by local government by means of: tourism promotion in community, program of tourism development in community and creation the local tourism products, community space adaptation to tourism functions performance and favourable atmosphere making for the development of local tourism entrepreneurship [Pawlusiński 2005].

Preparation of tourism development strategy is an important aim of local tourism industry management. Agrotourism development strategy should be formed on the basis of particular estimation of tourism base, tourism and recreation resources of community and skilful projection of future development of this form of rural tourism [Niedziółka 2006]. The creation of strategy by local government is a crucial element of the development of agrotourist entrepreneurship in community.

Advisory and instructive aspects in the creation of agrotourist entrepreneurship development lies mainly in advisory centres’ hands. These institutions organize courses, trainings in the subject of setting up and providing tourist services in farms. Next, the most important entity in regard of using Union funds for agrotourism development is regional branch of Agency for Restructurization and Modernization of Agriculture in Cracow. Agency is passing applications for projects subsidy in time limits fixed in announcements about program realization’s beginning [Prawno-finansowe...2004].

Enterprising farmers providing agrotourist services also cooperate with other rural service providers, regardless of membership in association. Such cooperation most often consists of sending each other the guests, general promotion, organization and recreational services organization (chaise riding, bonfires making or different trips organization).

Agrotourism in the Malopolska Region has further chances for organization in the future. It can become an important source of additional income for considerable part of farms or even as alternative activity in this region. It is possible because the Malopolska Region is characterized by dispersion of farms, considerable surplus of labour in the village, unique nature and culture values [Żmija 1999]. Therefore agrotourist services influence and should further influence the local development of communities and districts.

### **Results of research**

Facts which influence the attendance and completion of different courses by respondents in the researched agrotourism farms are very interesting. In all of examined 365 owners of agrotourism farms, 145 people (39,7%) completed agrotourist course. It seems unintelligible if one takes into account that over half of respondents have not completed such a course. In the article authors’ opinion one should set out the requirement of agrotourist course ownership. It should be done only if someone is intends setting up tourism activity on a farm. The examiner of it can be both local authorities or Agricultural Advisory Centres. Associations of agrotourism and rural tourism can be such examiner, too. Especially because it was a very accurate move to set out the requirement of agrotourist objects’ registry in a commune.

In all examined farms more than half of respondents (52,1%) completed different courses, among them already mentioned agrotourist course. Among other courses, 17 people have completed course concerning organic agriculture. These farmers run their tourist services, in which specific product is healthy and organic food. These farms belong to ECEAT (European Centre for Ecological and Agricultural Tourism) Poland' Section. This form of agrotourism has been called "agroecotourism". Similar courses completed by respondents were related to: cooking in rural tourism (11 people), rational feeding the guests (9 people), cooking course (2 people), health foods (2 people), HACCP<sup>1</sup> (1 person) and serving the meals (1 person).

Other kinds of courses were connected with: keeping cultural heritage (11 people), computer service (8 people), horse riding instructor (5 people) etc. Looking at the number of almost half of respondents (175 farmers) in the group of examined agrotourism farms, who haven't completed any course, even agrotourist one – the conclusion is that these people have got low engagement in increasing their qualifications.

Financing the agrotourist activity start in most cases comes from own savings (72,4%), only sometimes it was reinforced from other sources. Common farmers' distrust of being in debt is just confirmed, even in the case of expenses which must be borne for modernization and suitable rooms' equipment for tourists. It can prove also about imperfect system of reinforcement at turning up the alternative directions of economic activity. Among people who financed their activity from own means most farmers (40,8%) are occupied with agritourism for 5 years, and 37,8% run agritouristic services from 2 to 5 years. On the contrary 27,6% farmers financed their new activity completely from other capital. In both cases, 14,4% people have benefited from loan coming from acquaintances and relatives and 6,6% farmers from preference credit and the same from other means.

In the examined group only 51 farmers (14,5%) benefited from EU funds, 35 people from Sapard Programme and 16 from Touring Programme. The most farmers, who benefited from Union funds possessed at least secondary education (68,6%). In connection with it is easy to come to a conclusion that the higher education – the better knowledge on the subject of possibilities of receiving these funds. Moreover in the group of farmers who benefited from Union funds, 78,4% of them were associated in agrotourist associations. One should think about good advisory – instructive help in the subject of receiving support from the European Union from these organizations. However, the structure related to the intention of receiving support from the European Union in the future presents optimistically. Almost 40% respondents intends to do it, 41% of them have not decided for it yet, every fifth examined farmer flatly turn down this option. The highest percentage of farmers thinking about help from the European Union have got a high school education (57,1%).

Agrotourist entrepreneurship consists of different forms of service providers' self organization, too. Agritourism farms' owners cooperate with a view on improving the quality of their services and increasing number of tourists. Among examined respondents 279 (76,4%) of them cooperate with other people engaged in agrotourism.

Farmers self organization plays an important role in the process of agrotourist services management. It can contribute to higher effectiveness of running this activity. Agrotourism farms cooperate with each other, independently from the membership in agrotourist association. Especially in the first group – of associated farms (86,4%), a close cooperation is clearly seen. In non-associated objects 66,3% of their owners cooperate with each other. The level of education does not influence the farmers self organization. Among people with primary education 70,6% of them cooperate with each other, with vocational education 78,6%, with secondary education 80%, with high school education 76,5% and with high education 60%. Moderately equal disposition of owners' cooperation who possess different education can be seen.

Farmers with short period of running agrotourism similarly self organize themselves. Among people engaged with agrotourism for one year 76% of them cooperate mutually. It is a good prognosis and indicates big farmers engagement at the beginning of running agrotourist activity (tab. 1). There are different forms of such self organization among farms' owners. They concern mostly "sending" customers mutually, experience exchange and common activities related to promotion (tab. 2). As we can see, the cooperation between farmers meets agrotourism demand. Farms, which do not have free places on a given day recommend tourists to other places which are most often located in the same community. Almost 1/3

<sup>1</sup> HACCP is a systems introduced with the purpose of identification and estimation the scale of food safety threats, from the point of its healthy quality and risk of these threats' appearance during all stages of production and distribution.

**Tabela 1. Cooperation among agrotourism farms in relation to the period of running agrotourist services**

Cooperation among agrotourism farms	Period of running agrotourist activity [%]				Total
	for a year	from 1 -2 years	from 5 to 10 years	over 10 years	
Yes	76,0	75,0	75,9	77,6	76,4
No	24,0	25,0	24,1	22,4	23,6
In total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: own study of the author.

**Tabela 2. Forms of cooperation among examined agrotourism farms**

Form of cooperation	Number of agrotourism farms	Percentage of indication for given kind of cooperation among farms which cooperate with each other
Tourists exchange	173	62,0
Experience exchange	105	37,6
Common promotion	79	28,3
Going to tourism fairs	35	12,5
Feeding guests from other agrotourism farms	13	4,6
Agricultural products exchange	9	3,2
Common barbecue	3	1,0
Common sledging cavalcade	3	1,0
Common bonfires	3	1,0
Common food preparation	2	0,7
Common trips	2	0,7
Information exchange at trainings	2	0,7
Common horse riding organization	2	0,7
Selling products to other farmers	2	0,7

Source: own study of the author

farmers help each other in promotion activity. It results from own engagement in common promotion, sometimes even without any help from institutional surrounding or membership in associations.

In conducted research in 2001 on similar number of agrotourism farms – 342 in the Malopolskie Region by Native Advisory Centre of the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas Branch Office in Cracow about forms of cooperation among farmers, the most often were observed answers related to experience exchange (59,8%), next guests exchange (28,5%) and common promotion (26,3%) [Turystyka wiejska...2001]. Comparing both groups of results we can draw a conclusion that during the period of four years considerable growth of the number of tourists visits took place because of “sending” tourists between farmers.

Another form of cooperation among farms in the process of self-organization is membership in agrotourist associations. Among examined farms over half of them (50,4%) is associated. Most of associated farmers belong to agrotourist association “Galicia Hospitable Farms” (99) and to „Association of Tourism and Agrotourism of Mountain Areas” (32). Among associated farms every fifth of them used Union funds for development of agrotourism in

the past. In the group of non-associated objects only 6,1% did it. Much higher percentage of associated farms think about using Union funds in the future, similarly to the percentage of non-associated farmers. In this group 45,7% farmers want to benefit from Union financial support, 46,2% of them have not decided for it yet, and only 8,1% associated farmers refuse this option.

Article authors’ results of research and other authors’ results show that agrotourist associations play a significant role in the management of agrotourism. Membership in these organizations gives possibilities of better and effective promotion of agrotourism farming and also gives the chance of participation in trainings and courses and obtaining professional advisory help, for example in the sphere of procedures for applying for Union funds for development of agrotourism activity. In over 80% examined farms different forms of self-organization are functioning. Over half of farmers is associated, moreover among them 86,4% cooperate with other agrotourism farms. Over 2/3 of examined objects which do not belong to associations cooperate with others, too. In conclusion, there is good cooperation among farmers with considerable advantages of it.

Among all 365 examined agrotourism farms, over half of them hosts foreigners. In this group there are mostly Germans, Dutchmen and Frenchmen. In total, in 295 (80%) examined farms there are people who can speak foreign languages. Over 1/3 of farms did not host tourists from abroad so far. Among farms hosting foreigners in 95% of them there are people who can speak foreign languages. It indicates that agrotourist services providers or members of their families have got

high competence. In overwhelming majority of examined farms people can speak English (60%), German (43,3%) and Russian (18,4%).

### Conclusions

The research performed and the analysis of the problem of agrotourism in Malopolska Region can bring us to the following conclusions:

- agrotourism is the form of non – agricultural entrepreneurship and represents additional or alternative source of income for agricultural families,
- enterprising activities in agrotourist services are manifested mainly by farmers engaged with tourism associations and also in cooperation of agrotourism farms owners,
- the agrotourist associations play important role in the process of agrotourism management, by supporting different activities,
- rural service providers self organization consists mainly of general organization of promotion activity, and tourists exchange,
- agrotourist providers' entrepreneurship relates to intention to use european union funds for development of agritourism,
- the research showed that the higher education, the better knowledge of possibilities of applying and receiving additional funds from european union,
- although the number of tourists visiting agrotourism farms is growing, the cooperation between farmers helps meeting agrotourism demand,
- farmers and their workers have got high competence and work on the development of their skills and possibilities of high quality maintenance,
- the agrotourism in Malopolska Region is believed to develop very fast in the future.

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### Streszczenie

*W artykule przedstawiono przedsiębiorczość agroturystyczną jako czynnik rozwoju obszarów wiejskich województwa małopolskiego. Omówiono różne rodzaje aktywności wśród rolników prowadzących gospodarstwa agroturystyczne. Szczególnie dwa rodzaje tej aktywności mają istotne znaczenie: organizowanie się w stowarzyszeniach agroturystycznych oraz inne postaci samoorganizacji rolników. Ten drugi rodzaj aktywności (współpraca) dotyczy zwykle podsyłania nawzajem turystów oraz aktywności na polu wspólnej promocji agroturystyki. Przedsiębiorczość agroturystyczna w badanych gospodarstwach agroturystycznych przejawia się także znajomością języków obcych przez ich pracowników oraz zamiarem pozyskiwania funduszy z Unii Europejskiej na rozwój usług agroturystycznych.*

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