

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AGRITOURISM GUESTHOUSE IN RUNCU, DAMBOVITA COUNTY

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Abstract

Setting up an agritourism guesthouse combines hospitality services with agricultural activities, offering tourists an authentic rural experience. The first step involves selecting a picturesque rural location and owning an agricultural holding (such as an orchard, animal farm, or vegetable garden), as agritourism entails providing meals prepared from locally sourced or self-produced products, as well as accommodation within the host's household. From a legal point of view, establishing an agritourism guesthouse requires registering it under a legal form (Limited Liability Company – LLC, Authorized Natural Person, or Individual Enterprise) and obtaining a classification certificate from the Ministry of Tourism. The essential conditions include accommodation capacity (between 3 and 8 rooms), compliance with sanitary, fire safety and environmental regulations. Financing can be self-funded or through European Union funds, which encourage the diversification of the rural economy. Success largely depends on the quality of services provided, effective promotion through online platforms and the organization of recreational activities, such as horse riding, craft workshops or guest participation in agricultural work.

Keywords: guesthouse; agritourism; SWOT analysis; sustainability

1. INTRODUCTION

Runcu commune has recently become a tourist attraction not only for the people of Dâmbovița County, but also for many tourists from other parts of the country who are looking for fresh air, a more secluded and less crowded destination. Located approximately 36 kilometers from Targoviste, it is the place from where you can start a mountain expedition on Mount Leaota. The locality of Runcu has become increasingly known for the pastoral festival and fair "Răvășitul oilor", which takes place every year on the third weekend of September, gathering visitors from all over the country and even from abroad. The pastoral festival "Răvășitul oilor" is a folkloric show held on the communal pastureland of Runcu commune in Dâmbovița County, in the area known as "Vârf la In" offering visitors a fair with traditional products in a wonderful place, with hills and wonderful landscapes of the Ialomicioara valley. The following tourist attractions are worth mentioning: Blide waterfall, Masa haiducilor, Monastery "Adormirea Maicii Domnului", the hermits' hermitage on Cucuteanca Mountain, the guesthouses in the town of Runcu and many other tourist attractions. Here a large number of deciduous and coniferous forests, meadows and sub-mountain pastures can be found. The latter is an ideal environment for animal husbandry and tourism.

Conceptual delimitations

Agritourism in Romania has gained much more ground in recent years, with tourists increasingly interested in rural life, animal husbandry, traditional cuisine, customs and local traditions [4]. The main source for agritourism remains agriculture, animal husbandry in mountainous regions, the optimal possibilities for capitalizing on material and human potential, preserving valuable traditional experiences and maintaining the mountain natural space in the least altered conditions, from an ecological perspective, in the general interest of society.

In mountain areas that meet the necessary conditions, tourism in organized forms combined with mountain agriculture can become a complementary solution, directly supporting the development of agriculture and animal husbandry, with positive effects both economically and socially. Mountain agritourism leads to the most favorable results, resulting in complex and important benefits through meticulous organization and special facilities. Romania offers multiple beneficial conditions for the development and organization of agritourism, hence the need for decision-making regarding the manner in which it can be developed.

"Agritourism - a relatively new concept, includes those forms of tourism that are directly related to agricultural activities and/or constructions that have a role and function in the field of agriculture. This specific form of rural tourism is based on the provision of accommodation, restaurant, leisure and other components in the peasant household" [1].

"Agritourism is the form of tourism practiced in rural areas, based on the provision of accommodation, food, leisure time activities and other services within the peasant household. Through agritourism, the natural and anthropogenic resources of the area are thus better utilized, contributing to raising the standard of living of the rural population" [7].

"Agritourism is defined by the movement of people to an unpolluted rural locality, located in a picturesque area, completed by a stay of at least 24 hours and the consumption of specific food and non-food products, completed with cohabitation and integration into the rural society viewed in all its complexity" [8].

Peasant households

This aspect can be better exploited by maintaining mountain agricultural lands in satisfactory production conditions, by maintaining young generations of farmers in the rural environment, with moderate investments with effects on the degree of civilization in mountain villages, as well as on the conditions offered to tourists.

The smooth running of mountain agritourism involves the local organization of the supply of animal and vegetable products obtained within the peasant households in that area, both of the raw product but also by going through some processing phases, with the aim of diversifying the assortments, the presentation method or increasing the conservation period, all while respecting the sanitary norms [3]. These activities are beneficial from an economic and social standpoint. There are certain restrictions regarding the development of tourism in the livestock breeders' households that refer to the quality of the services offered, the comfort conditions, the level of training in the tourist field [6]. Under these conditions, mountain tourism can be organized in chalets, agro-guesthouses, integrated into the mountain village environment.

Pensions

Pensions are buildings intended for accommodation of tourists who want to spend more time in the mountainous areas, or maybe just a weekend, where the accommodation conditions are clearly superior to the conditions in agritourism households. Boardinghouses are one of the more expensive solutions for guests in terms of meal service. The raw materials for the preparation of the meals are provided by local producers or they are even bought from the supermarket. Located as centrally as possible compared to the households included in the agritourism system, this type of tourist pension is larger in size with a number of approximately 50 accommodation places. Within agritourism pensions it is necessary to operate a canteen restaurant through which the meals of the tourists staying here are served.

Recreation is an important and complementary function, available to tourists to relax and spend their time at the agro-pensions.

As facilities intended for recreational and utilitarian purposes, we can suggest: sauna, fir-tree bath with massage, swimming pool, mini-football field, tennis, handball, club or disco, day bar, confectionery, ATV rentals, bicycle rentals, etc.

Also in this framework, folklore shows, made up of locals, can be presented by rotation between nearby localities with the intention of a rich variety of repertoire. The reception of the pension also has the role of a local agro-tourism office through which tourists are guided to various tourist attractions, group excursions, entertaining evenings, and rides with hippo carriages or horseback riding.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Agritourism research uses a mix of methods from fields such as geography, economics, sociology to analyze the agritourism potential of rural areas, establish the tourist profile, and the sustainability of agritourism guesthouses and farms, with the purpose of analyzing the agritourism potential of rural areas, the sustainability of agritourism guesthouses and farms and for the establishment of a tourist profile. [2, 9]

The research method was based on exploration and documentation, with a SWOT analysis being conducted to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for a guesthouse or region. [9]

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The agritourism guesthouse

The agritourism guesthouse is a special location, it is the place where one can relax, enjoy nature, the fresh mountain air, the beautiful landscapes and the excellent accommodation and food conditions. Tourists arriving here are welcomed with joy and hospitality by the hosts. The places and the people have made this location an important tourist landmark for the northern area of Dâmbovița County. The agritourism guesthouse has an accommodation capacity of 8 rooms divided into three types: 4 standard double matrimonial rooms, 3 family double rooms with an extra bed for children and a room for people with disabilities. The agritourism rooms are spacious, bright, traditionally decorated with wood and river stone, overlooking the orchard and the wonderful landscapes. The menu is traditional, personalized, made from products obtained in the own microfarm with a convenient price for all tourists. The rooms are each equipped with their own terraces where you can breathe the fresh mountain air in peace or admire the picturesque landscapes of Runcu commune, the Ialomicioara valley and the Leaota massif.

The agritourism guesthouse has a restaurant with a capacity of 40 people, ideal for events with a small number of people, kitchen, bar, terrace, gazebo. The agro-pension consists of a basement, ground floor and first floor.

The basement

It has a useful area of 110 square meters, the walls are built of river stone, the floor is paved with river stone and the ceiling is also clad with river stone, it is divided into two rooms, a room intended for food storage used as a cellar, has an area of 50 square meters and a room intended for storage and tasting of drinks produced by us which we called a cellar with an area of 60 square meters. Palinca and țuica are stored in barrels of acacia, mulberry, oak wood. The beverage obtains a certain color and aroma depending on the type of wood it comes in contact with. The basement has a constant temperature both in winter and summer, the temperature being around 15-18 degrees Celsius.

There are no windows in the basement, the lighting is only with artificial light, the ventilation is done naturally through the presence of air vents.

The cellar is equipped with wooden shelves on which there are stored foodstuffs such as zacusca, pickles, jams, compotes, syrups, fresh fruits and vegetables, sausage side dishes, spare ribs and pork loin in lard, and the bellows cheese packed in natural membrane are stored.

Ground floor

The ground floor has a usable area of 200 sq m, is built of brick, the pillars, floor and beams are made of reinforced concrete.

The walls and ceiling were plastered, finished with putty, painted with washable paint and decorated according to the project with stone and wood.

The ground floor consists of a hall, reception, food preparation office, storage area for dishes, dishwasher and crockery, staircase, cloakroom, bathroom, technical space, lobby, entrance terrace, dining area (restaurant), outdoor terrace, room for people with disabilities.

The room for people with disabilities is located on the ground floor of the agro-boarding house, has an area of 17.6 sq m. The floor is made of wooden parquet, the walls are made of brick, plastered, painted and decorated with wood and river stone.

The furniture in the room is made of wood and consists of: a double bed, a single bed, bedside tables, a coffee table, chairs, a wardrobe, a chandelier, nightstands with nightlight, a picture, decorative mats, a radiator, a curtain rail, a curtain, a drapery. The bathroom has an area of 5.92 sq m and is equipped with: a shower cabin for people with disabilities, a toilet with a tank, a toilet paper holder, a bathroom cabinet with a washbasin and a sink, a mirror, a shelf, a radiator, a towel rack.

The technical space has an area of 14.86 square meters, the floor is made of ceramic tiles, the walls and ceiling are painted with washable paint and decorated with stone and wood. As furniture there is a desk, an office chair, a document storage cabinet, a chandelier, a radiator, a curtain, a gallery, and drapes.

The dining area has an area of 64.64 square meters, the floor is made of ceramic tiles, the walls and ceiling are painted with washable paint and decorated with stone and wood. The guesthouse restaurant has a capacity of 40 people, which are divided into five tables with eight chairs each, covered with tablecloths, a flower vase, curtains, drapes, chandeliers, and a bar.

The outdoor terrace has an area of 22.44 square meters, it is covered, and the floor is made of non-slip ceramic tiles. There are two tables with six chairs each on the terrace.

The stairwell has an area of 12.6 square meters, the floor is made of sandstone, the walls and ceiling are painted with washable paint and decorated with stone and wood.

Floor

The floor of the agro-boarding house is built of brick and consists of the staircase, hall, four standard double rooms, and three double family rooms. It has a total usable area of approximately 177.34 sq m, of which the hall is 24.4 sq m, the staircase is 12.6 sq m, the double rooms have a total area of 18.42 sq m and the double family rooms have an area of 22.22 sq m. All rooms have their own bathrooms. The floor is made of wooden parquet, the walls are made of brick, plastered, painted and decorated with wood and river stone.

The furniture in the rooms is made of wood and consists of: double bed, bedside tables, coffee table, chairs, wardrobe, TV, chandelier, nightstands with nightlight, painting, decorative mats, radiator, curtain rail, curtain, drapery.

The bathrooms for the double rooms have an area of 4.62 square meters and are equipped with: shower cabin, toilet with tank, toilet paper holder, bathroom cabinet with washbasin and sink, mirror, shelf, radiator, towel rack.

The double family rooms have an area of 17.6 sq m.

The floor is made of wooden parquet, the walls are made of brick, plastered, painted and decorated with wood and river stone.

The furniture in the rooms is made of wood and consists of: double matrimonial bed, single bed for children, bedside tables, coffee table, chairs, wardrobe, and chandelier, night lamps with night light, painting, decorative mats, radiator, curtain rail, and curtain.

The bathrooms for the double family rooms have an area of 4.62 sq m and are equipped with: shower cabin, toilet with tank, toilet paper holder, bathroom cabinet with washbasin and sink, mirror, shelf, radiator, towel rack.

Activities necessary for the implementation of the project. To carry out the project, it is necessary to complete several activities such as: arranging the work center, arranging the rooms, restaurant, warehouse and kitchen, purchasing the furniture, equipment and machinery necessary to start the activity, obtaining the necessary permits to carry out the activity, recruiting, hiring staff, staff training activities, promotional actions, starting the activity.

Authorizations required for project implementation

After designing and obtaining the construction authorization consisting of B+G+I floor, for the operation of the guesthouse, it is necessary to obtain operating authorizations. [5]

These are:

- Operating permit issued by the local city hall;
- Sanitary-veterinary operating authorization;
- Sanitary operating authorization;
- Environmental authorization
- Operating authorization for labor protection;
- Operating authorization from the ISU;
- A manufacturing license is also required for processed milk and meat products.

SWOT analysis

This involves identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the agri-pension and the tourist area studied.

The advantages of the agritourism guesthouse are:

- The valorization and promotion of its own products;
- The valorization of the potential of the area;
- Closing the circuit from producer to consumer;
- Processing its own products, which are natural and ecological;
- Promoting a healthy lifestyle.

Strengths

- 80% of the raw material is provided from our own production;
- High quality of the products obtained in the household;
- Our own products are valued and promoted;
- Traditional recipes with a unique taste;
- Experience in the food field;
- Low costs of the raw material that is produced in our own micro farm;
- Easy to transport and store raw material.

Weaknesses

- Limited experience in tourism;
- Infrastructure (lack of sewage system);

- Lack of accounting and management knowledge;
- Lack of strong marketing;
- Lack of staff experience;
- Insufficient initial own funds;
- Lack of irrigation for fruit trees and pastures intended for animal feed.

Opportunities

- Obtaining non-reimbursable funding from European or national sources;
- The development of infrastructure in the area;
- Greater openness of consumers to Romanian products;
- Constant increase in people adopting a healthy lifestyle;
- Environmentally friendly activity;
- Reduced competition on the market of traditional dishes.

Threats

- Tighter credit conditions;
- The emergence of a financial crisis;
- Devaluation of the national currency;
- The economic and political crisis;
- Threat of armed conflict.

Sustainability of the project

The business, by its very essence, is friendly to the environment, because the products are prepared from its own production. In order to achieve sustainable development, non-reimbursable projects can be accessed by accessing European funds for the establishment of a photovoltaic panel farm and the purchase and installation of a biogas plant.

The exposure of the land on the farm is southern, the place is sunny and suitable for the installation of photovoltaic panels. [2]

Animal manure and organic household waste are collected in the garbage platform, where facilities can be arranged.

To combat soil erosion due to exploitation, the land was fenced with trees and shrubs of the acacia and ash species, forming a protective forest curtain.

In terms of respecting the principles of environmental protection, packaging made from renewable materials (paper, cardboard, metal) will be used, efficient equipment with low energy consumption will be used, efficient waste sorting will be carried out based on the possibility of recycling, the use of ecological raw materials, and the processing of raw materials will be carried out as efficiently as possible to reduce losses. [2, 5]

The agro-pension has an accommodation capacity of 8 rooms, or 20 people/day.

The average room for rent/day is 290 lei. The maximum accommodation capacity/month is 240 rooms. Estimate a monthly occupancy rate of 160 rooms out of the total of 240.

The breakfast, lunch and dinner menu is 180 - 200 lei/day for adults, and the children's menu is 90 - 120 lei/day. Estimate an average of 356 adults/month who can dine with out of the maximum serving capacity of 600 people.

For spending time and for fun, we have 3 ATVs, 5 bicycles for rent, rides to certain tourist attractions by carriage or horse-drawn sleigh (depending on the season), for groups of maximum 10 people.

Menu for tourists

At the guesthouse, tourists may choose between a regular meal and the "menu of the day". At the request of tourists, culinary specialties can also be prepared: lamb on a spit, suckling pigs in the oven, and duck in the oven. Before these culinary delights, tourists can enjoy a pear palinca, plum brandy, sour cherry, pickled, raspberry, cranberry, mint liqueur, rose liqueur, all of which are produced from its own production.

By converting the microfarm to organic farming, the agro-boarding house's clients will be convinced that the products are of the highest quality, with a fresh taste, respecting traditional recipes, having a beneficial effect on the body. In the kitchen, mostly only products from the own microfarm are cooked. [2]

Crop production

60% of crop production is produced on the farm's own land, and the difference consists of purchasing cereals and alfalfa hay. Cereals are purchased for the microfarm's needs for a period of one year, during the harvest period, for the lowest possible cost. They are stored in warehouses where they are kept in optimal conditions. Cereals for animal and bird feed are purchased in full, as Runcu is located in a mountainous area that is not suitable for growing cereals. The land on which the agro-pension is established is personal property.

Animal production

The microfarm is composed of fourteen dairy cows plus young of the Romanian Bălțata breed and the native Brună breed (mocănițe), 40 sheep of the Suffolk, Țigaie and Țigaie neagră breeds, 12 pigs plus young of the Bazna and Mangalița breeds, 2 horses for traction and riding, a pony, rabbits and domestic birds: chickens, turkeys, ducks, mallards, geese, guinea fowl and a few peacocks, which are the attraction of children.

Recreation

For the recreation of tourists, the agritourism guesthouse offers a number of recreational options, namely:

- Horse-drawn carriage rides to the monasteries and tourist attractions in the area;
- Horse-drawn sleigh rides in winter;
- Horse-drawn horse riding;
- Horse riding with very gentle horses;
- For tourists eager to ride bicycles, bicycles can be rented;
- ATVs for those who meet the legal requirements;
- Field arranged for mini-football, handball;
- Ziplining;
- Routes to various tourist attractions by carriage;
- Routes for horseback riding;
- Nature trails where tourists can freely enjoy nature, the fresh air and the magnificent landscapes of the area;
- Hunting.

At the edge of the forest there is an observatory from where wild animals can be easily observed when they come for dinner or very early in the morning.

The hunting fund is very rich, with specimens of wild boar, bear, fox, roe deer, red deer, rabbits, squirrels and a wide range of birds such as: lark, black grouse, black-headed grouse, raven, magpie, jay, woodpecker, starling, owl, finch, hawk, bottlenose dolphin, tit, cuckoo, hissing grouse, finch, oleander, blackbird, gray woodpecker, gray flycatcher, blue tit, sparrow. In order to have numerous and healthy specimens, we provide food, shelter and peace for the game. Game needs abundant food of the best quality according to the needs of each species.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- Revenues cover the costs of raw material production, animal husbandry and employee salaries.
- The products obtained are of high quality at an affordable price.
- Most dishes can be prepared in the own kitchen.
- The raw material for preparing the meal is produced in a proportion of 80% from the own farm.
- The products/production from the animals from the own micro-farm satisfy the needs for preparing the meal.
- Animals and birds are raised in the own micro-farm and are sacrificed to produce the freshest and tastiest traditional dishes.
- Competition in terms of preparing traditional products is weak because none of the competitors are focused on traditional products.
- Customers are served with the best products and drinks produced in the agro-boarding house (palinca, țuică, sour cherry, cranberry, rose liqueur, fir bud syrup).
- The construction respects the architecture specific to the area.
- The accommodation places are sufficient to satisfy the needs of the customers.
- The spaces for accommodation, relaxation and rest ensure the desired comfort for the guests.
- The plant production covers approximately 60% of the food requirement for the animals and birds in the microfarm.
- A wide range of activities is provided for the tourists who arrive at the agro-boarding house.
- The agro-boarding house collects biodegradable organic household waste, subsequently using it as organic fertilizer.
- Manure and manure must are collected in concrete platforms so as not to pollute the groundwater and to be used after fermentation as organic fertilizer.
- Paper and cardboard packaging is used that are friendly with the environment.
- In the future, may be possible to start a project to create a photovoltaic panel farm.
- In order to protect the environment and reduce pollution, it considering purchasing a plant for the production of biogas extracted from the manure from the animals in the microfarm and placing the plant on the garbage platform.

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