

FUTURE POTENTIALS AND DEVELOPMENT OF AGRITOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN: LESSONS LEARNED FROM LATVIA

I.Sh.Baymuradova, Ph.D. student

Samarkand Branch of Tashkent State University of Economics

Abstract

In this article, the prospects for the development of agritourism in Uzbekistan, a type of tourism that is currently becoming a leading industry in the world economy, were studied based on a review of various scientific literature. The experience of Northwestern European countries, in particular Latvia, in terms of agritourism, its many years of activity in agriculture and agrarian policy supporting the diversification of farming activities were analyzed. The potential for the development of this type of tourism, which is still new in Uzbekistan, the statistics of objects that can serve for tourists to relax in the villages, enjoy nature, and participate in agricultural activities were studied. Recommendations were given on the low level of use of agricultural enterprises that want to engage in this activity, which services should be introduced by carrying out the experience of foreign countries.

Keywords: *agritourism, rural tourism, agritourism experience in Latvia, agritourism potential of Uzbekistan.*

Introduction. As an alternative factor of increasing income in agriculture, development of tourism in villages is well underway. The ability to apply tourism to any field increases its influence even more. In particular, the penetration of tourism into the agricultural sector has developed in Europe: in Italy, France, Germany, Great Britain, there are tens of thousands of farms that offer tourist accommodation, food, recreation and educational services. [1].

The first forms of agritourism were formed in the second half of the 19th century, in South Tyrol (Italy), probably when the nobility went to farms in the mountains to escape the heat in the summer. Over the past 35 years, this practice has been named, defined, legalized and spread throughout the world as the concept of agritourism [2]. Although its first manifestations arose on this basis, currently agritourism is developing as an alternative way of diversification in order to achieve economic growth in agriculture in many countries of the world [3], [4].

In various literature, scientists have pointed out that agritourism has different and similar aspects from rural tourism and ecotourism. While agritourism is interpreted together with the concepts of farm tourism, farm-based tourism, and rural tourism [5], other scholars argue that they are similar in terms, but different in essence [6]. However, there are literatures in which agritourism is a unique branch of rural tourism [7].

As a result of the conclusions obtained from the studied literature, we believe that although the concepts of ecotourism, agrotourism, ethnotourism, and farm tourism have common features, they differ from each other in their specific aspects, and all of them are part of rural tourism.

There is still no clear and basic classification that characterizes all the signs of agritourism [8], which is interpreted as the activity of farms that earn income at the expense of tourists directly participating in agricultural production. Perhaps, in different countries, agritourism activities are interpreted differently from the perspective of the state's agrarian policy. However, a number of scientists from Great Britain have created a typology of agritourism that clarifies the main point of it in the literature and will be the basis for future empirical research [9]. That is, they created a non-hierarchical 5-category typology according to the level of authenticity of the working farm, the contact of tourists with agricultural activities (passive, direct or indirect) and the level of authenticity of the agritourism activities [10].

In the last decade, it can be seen that agritourism is developing rapidly in the Baltic states [1]. It was during

these years that the countries of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia actively began to introduce and develop agrotourism facilities, taking experience from the countries of the western part of the Baltic Sea - Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland. In the European Charter for Rural Areas developed by the Council of Europe, fiscal, administrative and legal measures to encourage the development of agro-tourism in rural areas were determined. In addition to product agricultural goods, the tasks of supporting farmers who provide accommodation for tourists on their farm, development of tourism without harming the natural environment were assigned to the relevant agencies [11]. As a reason for this, the consequences of the negative impact on the natural environment in the countries of the north and west of Europe demanded the sustainable development of tourism. Due to anthropogenic factors, the ecology is slowly going out of track, which eventually caused the problems of economic stagnation, unemployment, and urbanization. World experience has shown that mitigating and reducing these consequences can only be achieved by attracting tourists to rural areas - by developing agritourism.

The word "agritourism" in the countries of the western part of the Baltic States is considered synonymous with the word "rural tourism" in the eastern countries (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia) [1]. It is even stated in some literature that rural tourism includes more than 19 types of tourism, starting from farm tourism to sports and entertainment tourism, adventure tourism, cultural tourism, hunting tourism, fishing tourism and so on [12]. In this study, agritourism as a component of rural tourism in Latvia is taken as a concept equal in meaning to each other.

Latvian experience in agritourism

Latvia has a growing market in the tourism industry, with an increasing number of international travelers to destinations. Latvia's geographical location and conditions created at low prices are very convenient for tourists, as can be seen from the fact that the number of tourists there has been steadily increasing since 2010 [24].

In 2020, the number of international visitors to Latvia was 3.2 million, and the income from tourism was 1.06 billion US dollars. This indicator included 2.7% of the country's GDP [13].

The highest organization responsible for planning and implementing tourism policy in Latvia is the Ministry of Economy. The Latvian Investment and Development Agency (LIDA) is under the control of the Ministry of Economy and is responsible for national tourism policy within the framework of the Law on Tourism [14].

In the Law of the Republic of Latvia "On Tourism", rural tourism is defined as a tourist activity based on natural, economic, cultural resources, organizing recreation in rural areas and providing the opportunity to use accommodation services [15].

It can be observed that the number of agritourism facilities providing these services increased in Latvia in 2009-2017. This increased the share of agritourist enterprises among the objects offering accommodation services for tourists by more than 50% in all cases except for 2015-2016. The reason for this is directly related to the interest of agricultural enterprises in agritourism (Table 1).

Table 1.
Agritourism facilities in Latvia and the possibility of accommodation (2009-2017 years)¹

| Years | Total tourist reception facilities | Agritourist boarding houses | Percent % | Total accommodation capacity | Agritourist accommodation capacity | Percent % |
|-------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------|
| 2009 | 559 | 327 | 58,5 | 32496 | 12113 | 37,3 |
| 2010 | 628 | 375 | 59,7 | 34657 | 12717 | 36,7 |
| 2011 | 641 | 390 | 60,8 | 35745 | 14195 | 39,7 |
| 2012 | 632 | 385 | 60,9 | 36901 | 15134 | 42,0 |
| 2013 | 546 | 307 | 56,2 | 32311 | 11131 | 34,4 |
| 2014 | 544 | 306 | 56,3 | 33459 | 11460 | 34,3 |
| 2015 | 563 | 257 | 45,6 | 34420 | 10311 | 29,9 |
| 2016 | 607 | 291 | 47,9 | 37453 | 12177 | 32,5 |
| 2017 | 809 | 487 | 60,2 | 40824 | 15479 | 37,9 |

After the 2021 reform, tourism regions of Latvia were divided into 5: Vidzeme, Kurzeme, Latgale, Zemgale and Riga. Some lands of Riga regions were added to Kurzeme and Vidzeme [16]. Each region can be classified based on its specific aspects and according to the provided agritourism services.

The agritourist facilities located on the western border of Kurzeme are mainly specialized in fishing, preparation of various dishes from fish and beekeeping, as they are near the sea. In Zemgale and Riga, grain cultivation, bread and dairy products; processing; goat breeding and cheese making from goat milk is well developed. In Latgale, beer producers, artisans, manufacturers of horse breeding and equipment necessary for horse breeding make up the main part of those engaged in agritourism. Due to the large area of Vidzeme, there are few rural tours compared to other regions, because there are also few agritourism facilities. Fishing from the lakes, liquor and various drinks are well established here (Table 2):

Table 2.
Type of agritourism services developed in Latvia²

| Kurzeme | Zemgale and Riga | Latgale | Vidzeme |
|---|--|---|---|
| - fishing; - apiculture; - milk and milk processing; - wine production; - picking herbs and drying tea; - processing of berries; - camping. | - livestock; - greenhouse; - grain production, - bread and milk production; - processing; - goat farming (making cheese from goat's milk); - restaurants, hotels and guest houses; - museums of agricultural labor tools. | - coffee production; - beer production; - processing of milk and milk products; - craftsmanship, - horse breeding and production of necessary tools for horses; - sauna service; - barbecue in the heart of nature. | - services on historical and modern musical instruments, - fishing from lakes, - preparation of liqueurs and various drinks, - restaurant, hotel services. |

In these areas, the Latvian Rural Tourism Organization awards a "Green Certificate" for 3 years to the farms that preserve the environment and landscape, show locally produced healthy food, environmentally friendly activities, and provide tourist services for tourists [17]. Objects with this certificate are considered ecologically clean.

The agritourism potential of Uzbekistan

The noisy environment and the negative effects of modern lifestyle make the city dwellers want to relax away from the central area, in the villages, in the heart of nature, which is the impetus for the sudden popularization of agrotourism in our country. Agrarian tourism is developing among the local population as a form of agricultural diversification. The responsible body for this is the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage is helping to promote it. Also, regarding the development of agritourism in the republic, the agribusiness development project of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is being implemented in cooperation with the Agribusiness Development Fund [18].

Despite the popularity of this type of tourism in Europe, it is still a new and unexplored phenomenon for our Republic. The potential of tourism in our country is high, and the number of visitors to historical and cultural tourism objects in 2022 will reach millions. The number of foreign citizens who came to the Republic of Uzbekistan in January-December 2022 totaled 5,232.8 thousand people, and this figure increased by 2.8 times compared to last year [20]. One of the priority tasks of the state agrarian policy is to increase the profitability of agricultural producers. In this regard, for rapid developing of agritourism in rural areas, the widespread involvement of farmers and peasant farms, the attraction of local residents in rural areas in tourism circulation, effectively use the tourist potential of the regions, the decision project of the Cabinet of Ministers "On additional measures for the rapid development of the field of agritourism in rural areas" was elaborated in accordance with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated January 5, 2019 №. PR-5611 "On additional measures for the rapid development of tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan". According to the project, the model composition of regional coordinating councils for the organization and development of agritourism in the Republic of Karakalpakstan and regions was approved and a number of tasks were defined [19].

In addition, relevant ministries were assigned the issues of providing loans for infrastructure development, construction of holiday homes and rural tourism clusters, and practical assistance in attracting foreign investments. These events will create the ground for agritourism facilities to start operating in our country.

According to statistical data, the majority of agritourist facilities are located in Samarkand and Tashkent regions. Along with its rich history, Samarkand attracts tourists with its contribution to the republic's economy through agriculture. Tasting of fishery, beekeeping, animal husbandry and farming products, as well as shopping, greenhouse services, wine and pomegranate juice tastings at agricultural enterprises in Uzbekistan are relatively more widely developed in almost all regions, and horse breeding and horse sports are mainly in the valley - Andijan, Fergana regions, deer breeding is well established in Tashkent region. The following agritourism services are provided in the territory of Uzbekistan (Table 3):

Table 3.

Projects formed in the direction of agritourism in the region³

| № | Region | Number of objects | Agritouristic services |
|----|----------------------------|-------------------|---|
| 1 | Khorezm | 6 | Hotel, restaurant, tasting and shopping, fishing and its consumption |
| 2 | Kashkadarya | 7 | Wine tasting, honey production master class, fruit picking, shopping |
| 3 | Republic of Karakalpakstan | 8 | Participation in the process of milking, fruit picking, tasting and shopping, fishing, gardening, greenhouse |
| 4 | Samarkand | 12 | Accommodation, greenhouse, tasting and shopping, participation in milking and its consumption |
| 5 | Surkhandarya | 4 | Tasting and shopping in agroclusters (soy, wine, pomegranate juice) |
| 6 | Navoi | 8 | Accommodation, camel milk consumption, greenhouse, tasting and shopping, fishing, gardening |
| 7 | Syrdarya | 5 | Greenhouse, gardening, fishing, consumption of camel milk, pomegranate juice |
| 8 | Fergana | 8 | Herb picking (papaya), rosemary, olive and lavender plantations, wine tasting and shopping, fishing, boating, horse sports complex services, ostrich watching |
| 9 | Bukhara | 7 | Fishing, beekeeping, tasting and shopping |
| 10 | Tashkent city | 3 | Walking in the flower garden, shopping |
| 11 | Jizzakh | 3 | Horse breeding, camel breeding, fishing, gardening, fruit picking, animal feeding |
| 12 | Namangan | 8 | Tasting and shopping, fishing |
| 13 | Tashkent region | 12 | Seed and seedling planting, deer watching, greenhouse, fishery, poultry, apiculture, livestock, horticulture-viticulture, packaging and storage |
| 14 | Andijan | 4 | Horticulture, viticulture, ostrich breeding, horse breeding, tasting and shopping |

Materials and methods. Latvian agritourism includes activities such as getting to know the rural lifestyle and national traditions, working in agriculture and having close contact with local people, caring for domestic animals, enjoying rural nature in the Zemgale area and it was studied during the conducted monographic research.

Survey data were collected in June 2022 through face-to-face interviews with respondents in the Zemgale region - owners of 5 large agritourism facilities. The monographic investigation was carried out during study visit to Latvian Life sciences and technologies university in frame of Erasmus+ AgroDEV project and on this basis, the following table data was collected and analyzed (Table 4).

Results and discussions.

1. The main activity of “Pūtelkrogs” guest house is related to agritourism, hotel and restaurant services are provided. Basically, 80% of income comes from gastronomic services, and 20% from hotel services (Table 4).

2. “Zoltners” multi-branch agricultural enterprise focuses on the cultivation of wheat, sugar beet, peas, and rapeseed. In 2015, with the purchase of new lands and the establishment of hotel and restaurant services there, 15% of the total income is earned from agritourism activities (Table 3).

3. “Piparmetru Namins” farm also grows wheat and rapeseed products. In the agritourist object “Mint house” within it, 20 types of confectionery and perfume products from 32 different varieties of mint imported from 25 countries are grown and sold. The income from agritourism activity is 10% of the total income (Table 4).

4. “Dabas Gardumi” organic farm is engaged in agritourism activities in addition to the cultivation of berries. Tourists are offered a tour of the farm, fruit

picking, tasting, various games and festival services. 25% of the income comes from agritourism (Table 4).

5. “Pēteris Upītis” horticultural institute offers museum services in honor of the scientist who founded it. In addition to fruit growing and processing, siren seedlings are grown on an area of more than 4 hectares. 20-25% of the total income comes from agritourism activities (Table 4).

According to the study, it is possible to increase the economic efficiency in Uzbekistan by introducing well-established agritourism services in Latvia.

Compared to services in Latvian agritourism, such as hotels and guesthouses, conference halls, restaurant service, camping, processing of dairy products, especially goat’s milk into cheese, processing of berries, drying of various herbs, organization of flower festivals are not well developed in the villages of our country. The main reasons for this are the insufficient funds allocated by the state for the promotion of agritourism activities and the provision of tourist facilities, the absence of law in the field and less developing infrastructure in the villages [20].

Table 4. Information about the activities of agritourism facilities in the Zemgale region⁴

| Agritouristic object | Land size, ha | Number of workers | Activities | Entrance | The number of people in the group | Season | Profits from tourism |
|---|---------------|-------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| “Pūtelkrogs” guest house | 50 | 3 | Restaurant Hotel Event and conference halls Bath (sauna) Confectionery | Depending on the services | 10-150, on average 60 tourist per day | April-October | 100% of total revenue |
| “Zoltners” multifunctional farm | 2800 | 13 | Restaurant Hotel Beer (own product) Events hall Wedding hall | Depending on the services | 10-200, on average 80 tourist per day | During the year | 15% of total revenue |
| “Piparmetru namins” farm (2015) | 1200 | 12 | Mint planting Confectionery Tea and liquor production Cosmetic products; Master-classes Tasting and shopping | For adults - 5 euros, for children - 4 euros | 10-80, on average 40 tourist per day | March-October | 10% of total revenue |
| “Dabas gardumi” organic farm (2015) | 45.6 | 3 | Fruit, berries growing; Fruit processing Picking-up berries Tasting and shopping | 5 euro | 20-50, on average 30 tourist per day | May-October | 25% of total revenue |
| “Pēteris Upītis” museum of horticulture institute | 30 | 10 | Fruit growing Fruit processing Informing on horticulture Tasting and shopping Trip to the museum Walk in the siren garden Siren Festival | 5 euro | 10-50, on average 25 tourist per day | May-November | 25% of total revenue |

Furthermore, when statistics about visitors to agritourism facilities in Samarkand were included in the Gravity model, which is widely used in the analysis of the tourism economy, the distance between regions had a negative effect, and the number of local residents impacted positively on increasing the flow of tourists [21].

The distance between the agritourism facilities spread across the regions, transportation costs; seasonality of agriculture; unavailability of accommodation in many objects; not having farmers sufficient qualifications about agritourism services; provision of asymmetric information about these objects and their activities to domestic or foreign tourists; deficiencies in social and production infrastructures (roads in rural areas, internet, electricity, gas supply, health services, education, etc.), lack of state guarantees and legal norms (tax rates, benefits in the bank credit system, lack of regulations and laws); lack of tourism brands is the main obstacle to the development of tourism in villages.

Conclusion. As noted above, Uzbekistan has sufficient potential for the development of agritourism. It is important to introduce tourism services in villages, taking into account the specific characteristics of individual regions and the degree of specialization in agriculture and use foreign experience for this. Based on the experience of Latvia in the field of agritourism and the results of the monographic research conducted there, it is recommended to promote the following in Uzbekistan, to increase the attractiveness of agritourism and the income of the population through it:

- providing financial assistance in building hotels or guest houses in villages;
- establishment of conference halls or halls for holding events (weddings, parties, holidays);

- well-established catering, national food fair services;
- creation of various products from picking, drying or processing of medicinal herbs (production of 20 types of food and perfumes from mint, following the example of "Mint House" in Latvia);

- creation of a brand of cheese from camel milk (the composition of camel milk is close to the consistency of goat milk);

- organization of festivals in the flower garden (such as the festival in the Lilac garden in Latvia), holidays and various cultural folklore events, museum tours;

- natural processing of fruits and berries (sugar-free drying, freezing, jamming, juicing), their tasting and shopping;

- healthy recreation services (sauna, spa, massage)

- active recreation services (swimming in a boat, cycling, quad biking, horse riding, hiking, etc.);

- educational services (gardening, livestock, fishing, apiculture, wine or beer production, master classes on baking bread in the oven, organizing summer schools for children in villages: feeding animals, picking fruits and vegetables and other services).

In conclusion, agritourism is a type of tourism based on the production of environmentally friendly goods and services, which adds significant income to the farms and country's budget. As a result of the introduction of rural tourism clusters in the villages of Uzbekistan, the development of agritourism services, meeting European standards and becoming competitive, measures will be taken for the sustainable development of rural areas; rural residents will be provided with vacant jobs; incomes of rural population will increase; migration of young people abroad and urbanization will decrease; the duration of the tourist season will be extended.

References:

1. Karlsson I, Ryden L., 2012, Rural development and land use, 130-140 pp (Elena Kropinova, Agro- and rural tourism in the Baltic sea region).
2. Lamie, R. D., Chase, L., Chiodo, E., Dickes, L., Flanigan, S., Schmidt, C., & Streifeneder, T (2021). Agritourism around the globe: Definitions, authenticity, and potential controversy. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 10(2), 573–577. <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2021.102.002>
3. Barbieri, C. (2009). A comparison of agritourism and other farm entrepreneurs: implications for future tourism and sociological research on agritourism. In D. B. Klenosky, & C. L. Fisher (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 2008 northeastern recreation research symposium*, March 30eApril 1, 2008; Bolton Landing, NY. General technical report NRS-P-42 (pp. 343e349). Newtown Square, PA: U.S.: Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northern Research Station.
4. Nickerson, N., Black, R., & McCool, S. (2001). Agritourism: motivations behind farm/ ranch business diversification. *Journal of Travel Research*, 40(1), 19e26.
5. Barbieri, C., & Mshenga, P. M. (2008). The role of the firm and owner characteristics on the performance of agritourism farms. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 48, 166–183.
6. McGehee, N. G., & Kim, K. (2004). Motivation for agri-tourism entrepreneurship. *Journal of Travel Research*, 43, 161–170.
7. Clarke, J. (1999). Marketing structures for farm tourism: beyond the individual provider of rural tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 7, 26–47.
8. Barbieri, C., & Mahoney, E. (2009). Why is diversification an attractive farm adjustment strategy? Insights from Texas farmers and ranchers. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 25(1), 58e66.
9. Phillip, S., Hunter, C., & Blackstock, K. (2010). A typology for defining agritourism. *Tourism Management*, 31(6), 754e758.
10. Flanigan, S., Hunter, C., & Blackstock, K. (2014). Agritourism from the perspective of providers and visitors: a typology-based study, 40, 394-405.
11. Council of Europe, 1996, 15-16.
12. Todorović, M., & Bjeljic, Željko. (2009). Rural tourism in Serbia as a concept of development in undeveloped regions. *Acta Geographica Slovenica*, 49(2), 453–473. <https://doi.org/10.3986/AGS49208>
13. World data.info, 2022
14. Regional survey of tourism development in Latvia, June, 2017, Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Latvia.
15. Tūrisma likums. [tiešsaiste]. Likumi.lv. [atsauce 12.12.2013.]. Pieejas veids: <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=50026>.
16. Latvian Cabinet of Ministers' regulations, June 22, 2021, No. 418, " Rules on the territories of the planning region ", <https://www.varam.gov.lv/lv/planosanas-regioni>
17. <https://destinet.eu/resources/certificates/green-certificate-latvia>
18. <https://www.agro.uz/aqsh-xalqaro-taraqqiyot-agentligi-usaid-ning-agrobiznesni-rivojlantirish-bo-yicha-loyihasi/>
19. Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated January 5, 2019 No. PF-5611 "On additional measures for the rapid development of tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan"
20. Matyakubov U., Role of agritourism in sustainable rural development in uzbekistan: insights from the italian experience, *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, United Kingdom Vol. VI, Issue 3, March 2018, <http://ijecm.co.uk/>, ISSN 2348 0386