

IMPROVING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGROTOURISM

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Agrotourism is an important type of tourism, a complex of activities of great importance in large socio-economic, ecological and a number of other aspects. The development of agriculture is an important condition not only for food security, but also for economic security and sustainable development of each country. The dynamic and sustainable development of this sector is directly related to the measures taken to ensure the socio-economic development of rural areas and support balanced regional development. The level and structure of employment play a decisive role in raising the standard of living of the rural population. As shown by advanced practice, the promotion of business activity in non-agricultural areas in rural areas can act as a driving factor not only in the sustainable development of these areas, but also in the development of the agricultural sector. In the described context, agrotourism has a unique and quite serious potential. This potential also deserves special attention in terms of diversification of business activity, as it expands the limited opportunities characteristic of rural areas. In this regard, we consider it appropriate to agree with the following position, which is widespread in Western economic and tourism literature. "Tourism, especially rural tourism, is an important tool and resource for the development of rural areas. Rural tourism provides development opportunities for small farms that cannot compete in the conditions of globalization of markets" [12, p. 5]. Although a broader approach to rural tourism, in other words, in terms of the general area of activity, is favorable in some cases from a macroeconomic point of view, the promotion of tourism activities, especially in terms of financial incentives, requires special details and clarifications. Let us say that the following approach, although an attempt to put an end to terminological discussions, provides practical advantages in statistical and other aspects of accounting. "Rural tourism is a concept that encompasses all tourist activities developed in a rural environment."

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Introduction to the problem. Although not typical for the areas of activity of many well-known scientific centers, research is ongoing on the concept of agrotourism. In the research programs of the University of Puducherry in the United States, "agrotourism is considered rural tourism and is distinguished as a service of farmers to the population for recreation and education, the sale of agricultural products and other activities for obtaining additional income".

The above-mentioned arguments can be considered sufficient to identify rural tourism with agrotourism. However, let us continue our research to clarify the concept of agrotourism from an empirical point of view. Tourism (with the exception of business tourism, including congress and exhibition tourism, which is usually carried out in cities) involves close contact with nature. Although this contact occurs for recreational purposes, commercial purposes are not excluded. Being a type of tourism, the following subtypes of agrotourism are distinguished. "Inbound tourism ("village living"), hands-on experiential tourism (gaining life experience), gastronomic tours (traditional foods and drinks), sports tourism (hiking and cycling), ecological community tourism, ethnographic (getting acquainted with local customs and traditions)."

Agrotourism is able to act as an important factor in the management of rural areas. The role played by agrotourism in the socio-economic development of quite large regions in developed countries (Italy, France, Spain) can be a clear proof of this. First of all, this is due to the increased business activity due to the flow of additional financial resources to

the regions in question. Another, no less important reason is the multifunctionality of agriculture, which creates favorable conditions for the further diversification of agrotourism.

The degree of development of the problem. One of the areas of activity that plays an important role in the sustainable and dynamic development of the national economy and in improving the social well-being of the population is tourism. The role of these activities of various types in socio-economic development is positive and different [10]. One of the important directions of tourism is represented in the rural tourism group. It can be said that rural tourism has a positive impact on the balanced development of regions, and agrotourism, along with this, attracts more attention in terms of increasing business activity in rural areas. Currently, in explaining the essence of agrotourism, it is observed that its economic, organizational, and legal aspects are in the spotlight.

In order to achieve socio-economic efficiency through the effective organization of agrotourism, first of all, the appropriate regulatory and legal framework must meet the necessary requirements. The perfection of the appropriate framework plays a decisive role in increasing the social order of agrotourism and confirming its economic feasibility [1, p. 175]. Agrotourism, as a complex of activities, can play a significant role in the management of rural areas. Agrotourism is able to significantly stimulate investment in rural areas by giving additional dynamics to the development of regions within the country. Agrotourism activity involves activating the natural and cultural-historical potential of rural

areas, protecting them and turning them into a source of income, and expanding the employment options for the skilled and unskilled labor force of the village.

Agrotourism, being an activity that meets strict environmental requirements, has a fairly serious impact on the sustainable development of rural areas. Even at first glance, it is not difficult to see that a comprehensive study of the opportunities discussed should be on the agenda.

The Strategic Roadmap for the Development of Specialized Tourism Industry in the Republic of Azerbaijan indicates that rural tourism (including agrotourism) is in its initial stage of formation, and identifies priorities for its development and prepares an action plan. Scientific support should be strengthened to increase the results-oriented nature of these measures [2, p. 122].

Currently, research is of particular importance in the development of organizational, economic and legal aspects of agrotourism. The strong impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on the tourism sector should be taken into account in the listed aspects of the research, and the expected parameters of the post-pandemic period should be comprehensively characterized. The scientific substantiation of the conceptual approach to the agrotourism market should also take into account the requirements of the current emerging realities, and the Great Victory factor should be in the spotlight. The current state of agrotourism infrastructure provision should be comprehensively analyzed in terms of current and near-term requirements. There is a serious need to assess the various factors affecting the development of the sector, as well as characterize the environment for the formation of agrotourism potential in terms of sustainable development requirements. At the same time, it should be noted that the issues of organizing the effective use of the potential of agrotourism in the development of the non-oil sector in our country have not been sufficiently studied.

The determination of the prospects for using the agrotourism potential of the territories liberated from the Armenian occupation as a result of Azerbaijan's great victory in the Patriotic War is of particular relevance. Increasing the role of agrotourism in the socio-economic development of the country's regions, substantiating the directions for more active and efficient use of the relevant potential are important issues awaiting their solution. The above and a number of other points give full grounds to say that the problems of improving the organization of agrotourism in Azerbaijan are quite relevant.

Theoretical and practical problems of rural tourism, current issues of organizing tourism activities in Azerbaijan have been studied by Bilalov B.A., Budagov B.A., Alirzayev A.G., Askerov A.T., Hasanov A.N., Ibrahimov I.H., Gafarov N.J., Mammadov E.G., Salahov S.V., Salmanov A.A., Yeganly S.T. and others, and significant scientific and practical results have been obtained. Although a number of dissertation studies have been conducted in Azerbaijan, especially in recent times, the actual problems of agrotourism have hardly been studied [5, p. 124].

As for foreign researchers of the problems of agrotourism development, special mention should be made of the works of Aleksandrova E.V., Artyomova E.N., Balabanova A.O.,

Nikitina O.A., Panevnikova N.O., Smirnova Q.A., Shumakova O.V. from the post-Soviet space. The works of Balaguer J.A., Biancamaria Torquati, Broccardo Laura, Hofmann T., Onder K., Ramankutty N, Wright Wynne and others from the Western researchers are worthy of attention.

In those works, the issues of the impact of rural tourism on the macro indicators of the national economy, including employment, solving the gender problem, ecological balance, the "aging" of the population in rural areas, the sustainability of agrotourism on regional development, and the structure of related sectors of the economy were studied. However, it is impossible to say that the current problems of organizing agrotourism have been sufficiently studied from a theoretical and practical point of view. In general, most researchers agree that the level of research on the above issues is not adequate to their importance. Therefore, it is advisable to conduct a comprehensive study of the issues of organizing and developing agrotourism in Azerbaijan.

Goals and objectives. The purpose of the study is to improve the conditions for the development of agrotourism in Azerbaijan, to prepare theoretical and methodological provisions and proposals for its effective organization. To achieve the stated goal, the following tasks have been set:

- study of the development of agrotourism as a type of economic activity in organizational, economic and legal aspects;
- characterization of the agrotourism market and the pace and proportions of its development;
- comparative analysis of advanced foreign experience in agrotourism and assessment of the possibilities of applying this experience;
- characterization of the factors creating the environment in agrotourism in terms of sustainable development;
- assessment of the impact of the development of regions and the agricultural sector on the agrotourism potential;
- assessment of the impact of the effective organization of the use of agrotourism potential on the development of the non-oil sector;
- identification of the prospects for using the agrotourism potential of liberated territories;
- preparation of proposals for increasing the role of agrotourism in the socio-economic development of regions.

Research methods: The study was based on general scientific principles and used monographic, scientific abstraction, structural-functional and comparative analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction and other economic-statistical analysis methods.

Main part. Currently, the ecological aspects of the tourism economy, where part of the income is directed to health, employment, infrastructure and environmental protection, are especially relevant. The tourism economy must meet the criteria of integrity, interdependence and interdependence. Its effectiveness depends more on the characteristics of the relevant business environment.

In explaining the essence of agrotourism, organizational-economic and legal aspects should be in the spotlight. Thanks to the effective legal and organizational provision of agrotourism, it is possible to achieve its acceptable

economic efficiency [8, p. 135]. Thanks to the provision of the concept of "agrotourism" in national legislation, the conditions for the direct allocation of funds to this area by central and especially local authorities and the attraction of private investments can improve. As a complex of activities of great importance in important socio-economic, environmental and a number of other aspects, agrotourism is able to act as an important factor in the management of rural areas.

Agrotourism increases business activity due to the flow of additional financial resources to the regions. The multifunctionality of agriculture creates favorable conditions for the diversification of agrotourism. The possibilities of organizing agrotourism depend on the location and the degree of its recognition, the level of infrastructure development, the provision of resources, including information resources, etc.

In order to increase the role of agritourism in the faster development of the country's rural areas, the profitability of the relevant activity should be increased, and for this purpose, opportunities to use innovations should be realized [7, p. 178].

In addition to general criteria and indicators for assessing the situation and development environment in the agrotourism market, specific criteria and indicators should also be included in the analysis. The criterion of increasing the attractiveness of tourism services in rural areas requires optimization in the ratio of quality and price. When assessing the service offer in the agrotourism market, the criterion may be increasing the period of attraction of tourist interest to this or that object.

The general indicators of assessing the situation in the agrotourism market should include the share of a specific tourism product in tourism products as a whole, the specific weight of tourism turnover in the country in world tourism turnover, and relative indicators that allow comparing the per capita tourist product in the country with countries at different levels of development.

Although the role of digital technologies in promoting products (services) in the agritourism market is increasing, the possibilities of these technologies to neutralize the distance factor in terms of promotion are not unlimited [3, p. 9]. On the other hand, the quality of the product (service) offered in agritourism can be assessed mainly on the spot. It is impossible to bring the service closer to the agritourism and it is necessary to attract it to the place of service. In terms of the development of agritourism, it is unacceptable to expect that the rural lifestyle will attract tourists just because it is interesting. However, different aspects of agritourism should be visualized through digital technologies that involve creative approaches.

A brief analysis and assessment of the world experience of the development of agritourism gives reason to say:

- agritourism is a tool for the balanced development of rural areas and the elimination of the gap between them and non-agricultural areas in terms of socio-economic and cultural development;
- agritourism is an additional source of income for the population engaged in agriculture, which is a relatively low-

income sector in rural areas; agritourism can increase the competitiveness of small farmers;

- the multifunctionality of agritourism expands its capabilities; in order to meet the needs of tourists precisely at the expense of the village's capabilities, various institutions of the relevant profile should work together;
- support for agritourism by the central government and local self-government bodies is appropriate in terms of increasing the level of employment in rural areas and improving its structure;
- it is necessary to encourage participation in the international program system that implements the connection of agritourism with organic agriculture.

It is necessary to distinguish between factors that affect the sustainable development of agrotourism and those that have been formed in the course of the development of society, and factors whose influence increases due to legal, economic and institutional measures taken for the development of tourism [9, p. 79]. It is appropriate to distinguish factors that affect the sustainable development of agrotourism according to the sign of dynamics. As static factors, first of all, geographical, natural-climatic, cultural-historical factors should be noted, and as dynamic factors, demographic, social, economic, cultural, scientific-technical factors, as well as international factors.

According to the sign of the environment of influence, it is acceptable to distinguish environmental factors as internal and external factors.

Internal factors include natural-climatic conditions, natural resources and the degree of access to them, the level of life, cultural and educational level of the local population, lifestyle, the level of promotion of rural tourism by state and public organizations, the state of the transport network, tourist infrastructure, the intensity of urbanization processes, the "aging" of the urban population.

External factors include the level of socio-economic development of the country and a specific region within the country, the regulatory and legal framework, technological characteristics of development, social and demographic changes occurring in society, the level of trade development, the international division of labor, etc [6, p. 98].

Among the factors that increase interest in agritourism, those directly related to a specific area can be attributed to a separate group. The factors that determine the demand for agritourism products include the external market situation, changes in consumer fashion and tastes, the financial situation of consumers, the interaction of supply and demand, price dynamics, consumer activity, the nature and level of competition.

The assessment of the impact of the level of development of rural and agricultural sectors on the formation of regional agritourism potential should take into account the following:

- agritourism is relatively inexpensive and accessible; the relationship of agritourism services, where ethnotourism elements are strong, with the development of the village should be specifically characterized in each specific case;

- a significant part of agritourism trips is short-term; a cautious attitude is observed towards the advertising of agritourism facilities;
- sometimes it is assumed that the development of infrastructure threatens agritourism; the activity of the rural population living in the city in the organization of agritourism services is high;
- public-private sector partnership can be a promising direction for the development of agritourism; the experience of creating specialized tourist villages and ethno-cultural guest houses in rural areas is proving to be worthwhile;
- all members of society can be considered as stakeholders in the development of agritourism.

The impact of the development of rural areas and the agricultural sector on the regional agritourism potential has been assessed.

The impact of agritourism on economic activity in the non-oil sector is manifested primarily in the following areas:

- stimulation of demand for the results of various areas of activity, in other words, for products and services;
- improvement of the attitude to the information system on facilitating access to financial resources in rural areas;
- increased interest and investments of private investors in agricultural production entities as potential agritourism objects;
- increased sensitivity of potential agritourism entities to innovations, etc.

Among the factors determining the positive impact of agrotourism on other sectors of the non-oil economy, it is necessary to note the possibility of flexible influence on the vectors of investment flows, the low cost of stimulating demand, and the presence of a potential polygon for creative approaches [4, p. 190].

The following opportunities should be realized to organize the effective use of the potential of agrotourism in the development of the non-oil sector:

- the relevant regulatory and legal framework should be improved for the joint development of agrotourism and the recreational potential of the territory;
- measures to support the sector's access to finance should be accelerated;
- favorable conditions should be created for the voluntary organization of agritourism market participants;
- the personnel training process should be supported institutionally; the information system should be result-oriented.

Diversification and intensification of agritourism services, tourism cluster initiatives, expansion of the area of green energy use, openness to innovations in agritourism – deserve special attention as factors creating an environment

for realizing the priorities discussed [11, p. 78]. Paying due attention to the biodiversity factor will give impetus to the development of agritourism in Karabakh and East Zangezur and expand the prospects for increasing the competitiveness of the agricultural sector.

In those areas, which are the oldest human settlements, the multifunctionality of agriculture will manifest itself more clearly, accompanying the processes of production, tourism, folk crafts, restoration of material and spiritual heritage, restoration of completely destroyed rural areas and creation of infrastructure.

The following can be noted as directions for increasing the role of agrotourism in the socio-economic development of Azerbaijan:

- ensuring a favorable "quality-price" ratio of agrotourism services in terms of increasing competitiveness;
- improving the quality of human resources, promoting creative thinking and openness to innovation, increasing knowledge and skills for the development of agrotourism;
- increasing economic activity in the area and promoting employment, as well as self-employment;
- increasing the number of financing sources, at the same time promoting permanent partnerships with them, increasing family investments aimed at the development of sustainable business and the surrounding area;
- establishing a digital system for customer relationship management in agrotourism and implementing optimal specialization for customers, taking into account the quality and compliance of services with standards, as well as sustainable development criteria;
- creating a system of effective measures for state support for the development of agrotourism.

Conclusion. Finally, it should be noted that compensation for capital costs for the creation of rural tourism infrastructure, provision of grants to agricultural entrepreneurs and family farms just starting their activities in the field of agrotourism, and subsidizing interest rates on loans for the construction or reconstruction of agrotourism facilities should be specially noted:

- finding the optimal ratio between diversification and integration of activities in the agricultural sector, in the near future; organizing entities engaged in agrotourism activities;
- attracting the interest of the mass media to ensure the effectiveness of relations with the target audience;
- using advanced information technologies and other advantages of the digital environment;
- establishing the most modern agrotourism model in accordance with the requirements of the majority of the local and foreign urban population, meeting the criteria of family recreation.

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