

The Potential of Agritourism in the Rural Environment of Latvia

Imants Justs

*Rezekne Academy of Riga Technical
University*
Rēzekne, Latvia
imants.zavjalovs@edu.rta.lv

Toms Vīksna

Rezekne Technical School
Rēzekne, Latvia
toms.viksna@inbox.lv

Valentina Pole

IK Tava zeme
Dobele, Latvia
valentina.pole@inbox.lv

Justīne Vīksna

SIA LiePas46
Rēzekne, Latvia
justine.viksna@inbox.lv

Ziedonis Miklasēvičs

*State Joint Stock Company "Latvijas
valsts meži"*
Rēzekne, Latvia
ziedonismiklasevics@gmail.com

Abstract—Agritourism in Latvia is experiencing rapid growth, offering a unique opportunity to experience rural lifestyle and natural diversity. In addition to traditional agricultural activities, agritourism farms offer tourism services, thus diversifying their sources of income. The agritourism product corresponds to farms that preserve the traditions of agriculture, fishing, crafts and food production, while educating visitors and providing an opportunity to enjoy the beauty of nature, plant diversity and animal behavior. Agritourism is developing rapidly in Latvia because the countryside is rich in natural resources and ecological diversity. The aim of the study is to investigate and analyze the types of agritourism and their potential in Latvia, identifying the main trends and opportunities. The theoretical basis of the study is based on the study of various sources of information, supplemented with findings from studies and practical examples over several years. The study defined: the keywords characterizing agritourism: "Rural environment. Crafts. Recreation. Health. Nutrition", types of agritourism by purpose: agricultural, educational, gastronomic, health, recreational agritourism. Agritourism is a natural fit for Latvia's landscape, culture, and business traditions. Agritourism activities and services are diverse, including not only accommodation and meals, but also farm tours, educational and inclusive participation in farm work, master classes in making crafts and traditional art objects, traditional cooking from local products and their tasting, nature hikes, fishing, horseback riding and other forms of active recreation

Keywords— agritourism, Latvia, types of agritourism.

I. INTRODUCTION

Agritourism, also called rural tourism, is a dynamically growing type of tourism that offers recreation and experiences in a rural environment. According to the Academic Term Database [1], agritourism is defined as "one of the types of tourism in which the purpose of the trip is to relax on a farm, observe the rural environment and farm work, or even participate in them." This is a popular type of niche tourism that encompasses not only recreation in the traditional sense, but also visiting farms and spending the night there [2]. Agritourism is closely linked to agricultural activities. For small farms, these activities are often an important source of income [3].

Latvian rural tourism service providers create important tourist destinations, however, successful operation is unthinkable without cooperation with other participants in the industry. The recognition and ability of an entrepreneur to form partnerships directly affects its turnover [4]. Agritourism is one of the most dynamic tourism segments in the European Union, which is fueled by the growing interest in closeness to nature, traditional values and sustainable lifestyles. The Latvian countryside, with its ecological diversity and natural wealth, offers an excellent environment for the development of this type of tourism [3].

The modern rural environment is undergoing changes in which agricultural activity is supplemented with new, non-agricultural functions, which are an inevitable part of the development of rural space [5]. Improving the tourism

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industry requires an effective management mechanism and close cooperation between various related areas – transport, culture, environment, education and rural development, ensuring regular exchange of information, coordination and implementation of joint activities [6]. The support of the state and local governments plays a vital role in regional development, promoting employment, the growth of the population's income and the growth of the national economy as a whole [7].

The agritourism product is characterized by rural farms that preserve the traditions of agriculture, fishing, handicrafts and food production. It is important to educate visitors and provide them with the opportunity to explore the beauty of nature, the diversity of plants and animals, gaining both theoretical and practical knowledge in direct contact with nature.

Taking into account the limited availability of research and statistical data on agritourism in Latvia, this study is particularly important in order to summarize and analyze the types of agritourism and their development potential. The object of the study - types of agritourism. Subject of the study – research of types of agritourism in Latvia. The aim of the study – to study and analyze types of agritourism and their potential in Latvia, identifying the main trends and opportunities.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The theoretical basis of the study is based on the analysis of diverse sources of information, including scientific studies, publications and practical examples. The following methods were used in the study:

- **Sociological methods:** Data collection was carried out using observation and literature analysis methods.
- **Statistical methods:** Statistical grouping (descriptive statistics), sampling method and graphical data presentation were used in data processing.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

By compiling information from various sources [8] – [16], a classification of agritourism was developed, based on the keywords: "Rural environment," "Crafts," "Recreation," "Health" and "Nutrition" (Fig. 1). These keywords describe the nature and diversity of agritourism. Tourism destinations can be divided into two types: natural and human-made. Natural attractions are natural tourism resources that are supplemented by human input so that visitors can more fully enjoy and learn about nature and rural lifestyles in accordance with the rhythms of nature (Fig. 2 – 6).

Tourist demands have changed in recent years, with a growing demand for higher-quality and nature-friendly recreation [9]. People are increasingly eager to engage in rural activities and learn new skills, so the development of the agritourism industry is essential. The offer of agritourism is wide, including not only accommodation and meals, but also educational programs, active involvement

in farm work, volunteer work in agriculture, craft workshops, the production of traditional art objects, and dishes made from local products [10]. Agritourism also includes beekeeping tourism [9].

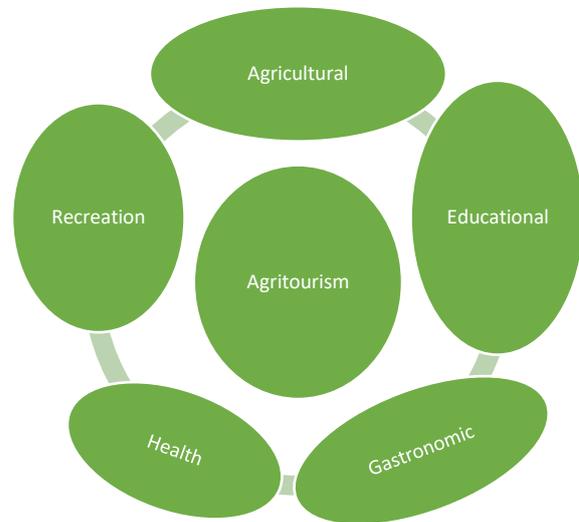


Fig. 1. Distribution of agritourism facilities by purpose of use.

Latvian scientific institutions regularly organize educational events, such as demonstrations comparing agricultural crop varieties, where interested parties can learn about different plants, their cultivation methods, and view agricultural machinery (Fig. 2). Such measures promote the development of local tourism (Fig. 3), which, according to the Tourism Law [17], is "tourism of Latvian residents in Latvia." The Latvian Rural Tourism Association "Lauku ceļotājs" began developing a Code of Ethics for Nature Tourists in 2023 to reduce the negative impact of humans on the environment [18].



Fig. 2. Classification of agricultural agritourism.

Gastronomic tourism, which often includes visits to farms, is very popular [11]. The farms offer tours of production facilities, demonstrating agricultural processes from raw material extraction to finished products, as well as organizing workshops, tastings and offering to purchase

local products (Fig. 4). Agritourism farms have two interconnected stages [8]: the technical and productive side, which includes the processing of natural products, and the economic side, which deals with the production process, pricing, and financial management.

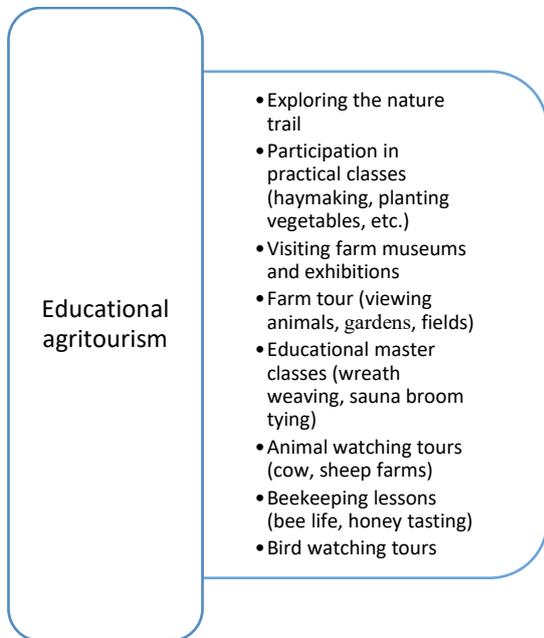


Fig. 3. Classification of educational agritourism.

In the context of globalization, local products have a special value, as the demand for authenticity and quality is growing in modern gastronomy. Global chefs use fresh, local, and organic ingredients, but the concept of "local" is undergoing a new interpretation today [11].

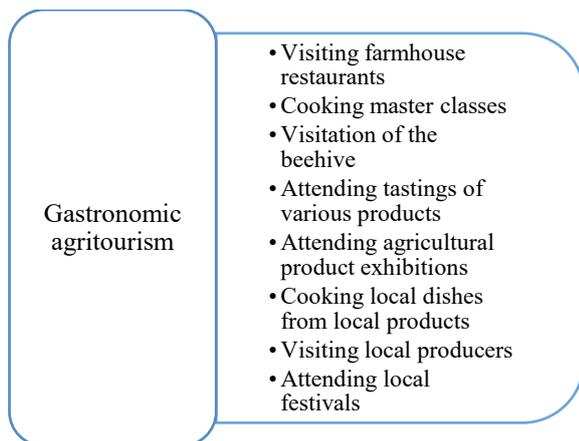


Fig. 4. Classification of gastronomic agritourism.

There is growing interest in the planning of rehabilitation and sensory gardens around the world, which could be more widely implemented in Latvian medical institutions [15]. When obtaining raw materials from plants found in nature, it is important to ensure their preservation and regeneration [19]-[20]. Visiting

agritourism facilities promotes environmental awareness and reminds us of a careful attitude towards nature.

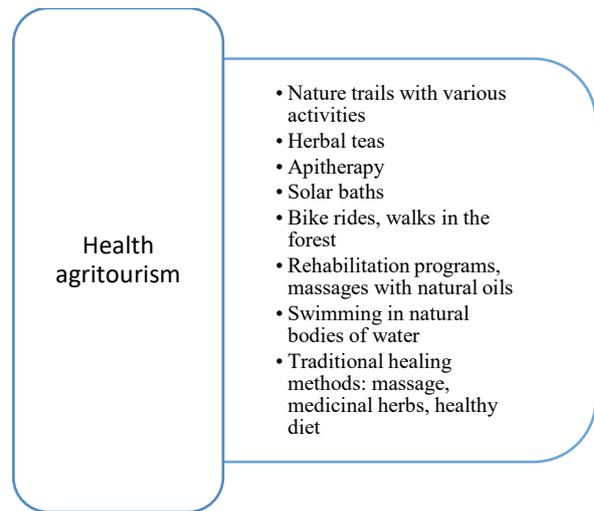


Fig. 5. Classification of health agritourism.

Health and leisure agritourism (Fig. 5 - 6) are closely related, as well-being and recreation are complementary factors. Recreation in a clean rural environment is particularly valuable. One of the goals of European environmental policy is to promote corporate responsibility for environmental impacts [21]. The economy of rural farms is related to the market, agricultural sectors, consumption, and agricultural policy [22]. As demand for natural environments and products increases, interest in beekeeping and apitourism also increases. The development of beekeeping is related to the preservation of the country's natural beauty, traditions, and cultural heritage [9]. The synergy between agriculture and tourism promotes the economic development of both sectors [10]. Regional support is also important for the preservation of natural landscapes that are characteristic of rural Latvia, especially Latgale [23]. Bees are in the closest contact with their surroundings. Changes in plant cover, its depletion, switching to a monoculture, herbicide treatment, slope leveling, clearing and land reclamation of scrub, plowing of meadows and floodplains, and urban expansion have a very strong impact on the life of bees, changing the conditions of their existence [24] -[25]. Interest in the development of bee products and their medicinal, health, nutritional, and beauty benefits has increased, but little attention has been paid to the crucial role of beekeeping in maintaining ecological balance [26]. Despite the fact that there is talk on a global scale about the need for environmental protection measures, people themselves are also destroying it. The beekeeping industry is an industry that can and should be developed, however, environmental pollution and the destruction of the natural environment can hinder it [25], [27]-[28].

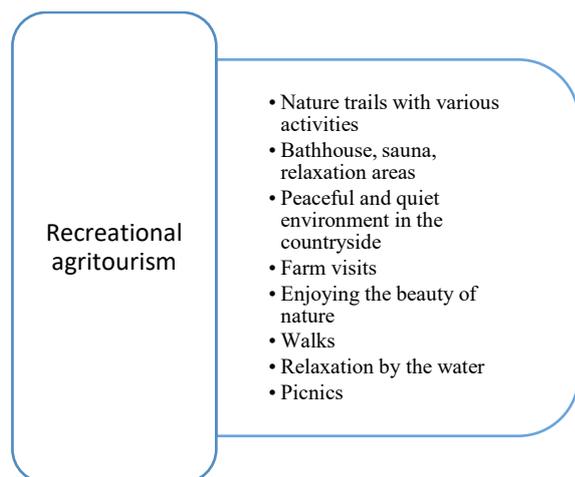


Fig. 6. Classification of recreational agritourism.

This study confirmed the multifaceted importance of agritourism in Latvia, highlighting its connection with rural development, preservation of cultural heritage, and sustainable use of natural resources.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Main conclusions:

- Agritourism is a multidimensional industry that encompasses recreation, active involvement in rural work, education, gastronomy and health promotion. The main keywords characterizing agritourism are “Rural environment. Crafts. Recreation. Health. Nutrition”
- Local products and traditions are the foundation of agritourism, contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage and offering authentic experiences.
- Cooperation between farms, tourism companies and government institutions is essential for the development of the industry.
- The development of agritourism must be sustainable, respecting the principles of environmental protection.
- Promoting education and awareness about agriculture and nature is an important aspect of agritourism.
- Beekeeping is an essential part of agritourism and a significant element of the ecosystem.
- Types of agritourism by purpose: agricultural, educational, gastronomic, health, recreational agritourism.

Agritourism as a component of the tourism sector (industry) with its diverse opportunities and types has great potential, because Latvia, with its geographical location and rich natural resources, could attract not only local tourists, but also tourists from other countries.

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