

THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS IN DEVELOPMENT OF AGRO TOURISM IN POST-TRANSITION COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT Agro tourism could have a positive impact on the mitigation of depopulation in most rural areas of post-transition countries. Arguments for promoting the development of agro tourism include changing negative demographic trends in such areas and year-round supply and demand characteristics. As the main stakeholders in agro tourism are rural and family farms, the development of this selective form of tourism has a direct positive impact on the growth of the living standards of the local population in rural areas.

The research was conducted by comparing the experiences of the Republic of Croatia and Montenegro. Croatia is strategically oriented towards tourism, but the share of tourism in GDP is obviously high and the share of agro tourism negligible. Montenegro has good experience with the development of agro tourism. Austria's experience with agro tourism development was analysed as a control variable. The aim of the study is to show the actual influence of the main stakeholders on the development of agro tourism in the post-transition countries.

KEYWORDS: *Agro-tourism, Stakeholders, Post-transition countries*

1. INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

The subject of this study is the analysis of the influence of local stakeholders on the development of agro tourism in post-transition countries. The potential of agro tourism for economic and social development in post-transition societies is evident (Kizos & Josifides 2007; Sznajder et al. 2009; Phillip et al. 2010; George & Rilla, 2011; Fagioli et al. 2014; Prorok et al. 2019; Mugauina et al. 2020; Li et al. 2021). This is due to environmental trends and the growing interest in a variety of active tourism content and new experiences while staying in a healthy environment with local gastronomic offerings. Recent research by other authors points to different experiences and

levels achieved in the development of agro tourism in post-transition countries (Kizos & Josifides 2007; Sznajder et al. 2009; Phillip et al. 2010; George & Rilla, 2011; Fagioli et al. 2014; Prorok et al. 2019; Mugauina et al. 2020; Li et al. 2021). The research focuses on the experiences of the Republic of Croatia, Montenegro and Austria in order to understand the role of key stakeholders in the development of agro tourism.

Rural areas in post-transition countries are characterised by depopulation trends. Therefore, the possibility of using existing resources to generate income from tourism in such areas should not be neglected. Recent research on the development of the tourism economy in post-transition countries has proven that the commercialization of potential tourism resourc-

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es (landscape, water, traditions) significantly affects the dynamics of economic growth (Melović & Čirović, 2018; Prorok et al. 2019; Melović, 2022). Therefore, the possibility of commercialization of available national resources for tourism purposes should not be ignored. In this case, it refers to available agriculture outside urbanized areas. Namely, agro tourism can have a positive impact on mitigating depopulation in rural areas. Another argument for promoting the development of agro tourism is the year-round alignment of supply and demand. Since the main tourism stakeholders in agro tourism are rural and family farms, the development of this particular type of tourism has a direct positive impact on raising the living standards of the local population in rural areas. Still, Croatian Government initiatives for the development and growth of agro tourism are modest (Grgić et al. 2015). Thus the experiences of surrounding countries were analysed. The resources for the development of this particular tourism offer are similar, but the results are different in the countries studied. The research was conducted to learn about best practices and to discuss the reasons for the modest share of agro tourism in the gross domestic product of the Republic of Croatia. The research was conducted through descriptive analyses of the available secondary data on the experience of agro tourism development in the three countries studied.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The tourist chooses accommodation in a rural area for the sake of health, for which a stay in an ecologically preserved environment with healthy food and recreation has undeniable health benefits (Škugor & Brščić 2020; Jakšić Stojanović & Šerić 2019 B; Melović et al. 2017). Additional attractions include new experiences and all available destination facilities (Prorok et al. 2019; Jakšić Stojanović et al. 2019 A). Greater choice in the post-transition period is becoming an imperative for business growth and development everywhere, including in tourism (First et al. 2021; Leko Šimić & Pap, 2021).

A prerequisite for the sustainable development of agro tourism is the existence of receptive facilities in rural areas whose quality meets the global standards of this selective form of tourism (Melović, 2022). Tourism in rural areas is a new global trend, so hotel accommodation is rare, except in mountainous areas where ski tourism is developed (Prorok et al. 2019). In such areas, agro tourism is a viable lever to extend the (winter) season to the whole year (Bosnić, 2011). To encourage year-round tourist visits, networking and connection of economic stakeholders and rural

households interested in participating in the destination's tourism offer is necessary (Mugauina et al. 2020). Togetherness and synergy are a prerequisite for the development of additional and complementary tourism offers in agro tourism. Complementary and additional rural content contributes to the impression of added value, which is the basis of competitiveness today (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019; Cooper, 2021; Bašan et al. 2021; Leko Šimić & Pap, 2021).

Exploring best practises is useful to resolve these collisions in marketing communication of agro tourism content, supply, and demand. The results of recent research show that tourists are generally positive towards new content that is thematically linked to local customs and daily life. However, some local customs and traditions as well as daily activities in rural life are experienced one way by tourists and another way by the local residents (George & Rilla, 2011). Agro tourism stakeholders are guided by the experiences of the countries in the region. Their focus is often on the standards for sustainable development of agro tourism, by models of networking and synergistic promotion of rural supply and tourism stakeholders, and by the sustainable valorisation and commercialisation of existing heritage and traditions (Melović, 2022). Rural tourism promotes the development of entrepreneurship. Different specialised tourism facilities involve different investments depending on their complexity. Successful selection among the many alternatives requires following the trends of the global tourism market. A prerequisite for this is adequate training and continuous, lifelong education of the population employed in tourism.

Barbieri & Mshenga (2008) define agro tourism as the offering of rural farms to attract guests for a multi-day stay. Marques (2006) analyses agro tourism as a particular form of rural tourism that involves accommodation shared with the hosts. Agro tourism includes accommodation, food and various accompanying activities (economic, cultural and others) in a rural setting (Grgić et al. 2015). Differentiation of the rural household offer is achieved, as in other specialised types of tourism, through additional and complementary content and activities (Buhalis & Foerste, 2015). Different options encourage thinking about new, original content (Phillip et al. 2010; Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019). In addition to accommodation and meals, guests staying on the farm can also participate in daily farm activities and recreational activities. Sonnino (2004) links agro tourism with catering related to farming and the provision of various services by the host where they stay. Kizos & Josifides (2007) understand agro tourism as all tourism facilities and activities provided by the local farming community. Nilsson (2002) presents agro tourism as a basic form

of agricultural offer within rural tourism. According to these definitions, guest's stay can be defined as stay in a rural environment with various leisure activities and the possibility to buy agricultural and other products directly from the host. A stay of several days by tourists in a rural area is a possibility, because all the facilities offered are also available to tourists staying there as part of day trips or short excursions (Sznajder et al. 2009). Agro tourism enables the direct sale of all products of rural farms. The prospects for the growth of tourism revenues of this selective form of tourism lie in the expansion of contents and activities intended for tourists in order to prolong their stay and promote the consumption of guests in rural areas.

Agro tourism has important social impacts as it reduces the emigration of local population, contributes to their self-reliance and stimulates new investment and additional education (Nilsson, 2002). The potential for positive economic impacts is particularly useful in transition and post-transition countries that have adequate indigenous rural areas with preserved landscapes (Šerić & Luković, 2007).

The existence of industrial facilities in rural areas limits the possibilities to provide all three forms of this specialised type. Rural areas without industrial facilities are a prerequisite for the cultivation of indigenous plant and animal species of high quality (Meler & Ham, 2012). Providers of tourism and hospitality services in agro tourism can be registered legal entities or natural persons. The different daily contents can be adapted to the needs of tourists. For their commercialization, they adapt and register existing facilities or build new ones - tastings of local food and beverages, rural picnic sites, apartments, rooms, rural cottages, camps and more. Each country sets the criteria, standards and minimum conditions required for businesses and sole traders to register. The work of the authors listed in this sub-chapter shows that the incompatibility of national and local rules and regulations with the specificities of agro tourism is one of the fundamental obstacles to faster systematic development of agro tourism in transition and post-transition countries. Moreover, the problem often requires additional investments for tourism valorisation and commercialisation of agricultural activities, creation of conditions for special complementary services (e.g. riding schools), existing legal regulations for hunting and fishing, organisation of excursions, educational workshops and more. The development of additional and complementary agro tourism contents implies new knowledge, additional financial investments and monitoring of the state of resources that are being commercialized. Without additional and complementary content, agro tourism, like other specialised types of tourism, has no significant per-

spective (Šerić & Luković, 2010; Šerić et al. 2012; Šerić & Luković, 2013). Moreover, resources that are commercialized through additional and complementary facilities need to be transformed into tourist attractions (Bašan et al. 2021; Cooper, 2021). This includes the creation of destination icons and their systematic promotion (Jakšić Stojanović & Šerić, 2019 B; Jakšić Stojanović et al. 2020). To this end, the valuable best practise experiences of countries where agro tourism represents a relevant share of GDP are particularly useful and the positive social impacts are evident and well-known.

3. THE RESEARCH

Agro tourism, as a selective form of tourism in the Republic of Croatia, was institutionally neglected until 2016. In that year, the Croatian Rural Tourism Association („Udruga ruralnog turizma Hrvatske“) was founded. There was already an association, the Club of Villagers („Klub članova Selo“), but its initiatives at the state level were ignored. The potential and opportunities to develop this specialised tourist offer were not taken into account at national and local level. Since 2016, these two associations have been continuously appearing together in public, calling on the relevant ministry and other bodies at national and local level to adapt existing regulations and introduce new ones in order to promote the development of agro tourism. Recently, various forms of networking among agro tourism stakeholders been institutionally promoted, while at the same time improving the coordination of local and state authorities and institutions responsible for agriculture and agro tourism. In defining new measures, there is a tendency to balance the tourism content in the country's rural areas and to promote the linking of stakeholders involved in the provision of services with those who provide logistical support for the development of agro tourism.

Since 2016, systematic activities and measures for the preservation of agricultural traditions in rural areas have been implemented in the Republic of Croatia. The synergetic action of the Croatian Rural Tourism Association and the Villagers' Club eventually led to the Action Plan for the Development of Rural Tourism in the Republic of Croatia.

Initiatives related to the development of agro tourism in the Republic of Croatia are promoted exclusively from the entrepreneurial level. The interesting connection of entrepreneurs through two national associations stimulated an argumentative discussion at the institutional level about the need to adapt the existing legislation to this specific, selective form of tourism.

Destinations in rural areas that have a milder negative demographic trend also have higher rural tourism revenues. They have significantly preserved the tradition of producing local organic food, and the traditional friendliness of the local population contributes to the loyalty of tourists who have discovered them in recent years. State regulations, primarily aimed at maintaining agricultural production, have contributed to the preservation of the environment and some traditions and customs. The diversity and attractiveness of the landscape in the interior of the Republic of Croatia contributes significantly to this - thirty rivers with many streams, picturesque mountains and hills, valleys, pastures and forest areas with different vegetation, where the indigenous flora and fauna have been preserved. Nevertheless, the example of the Republic of Croatia shows that without institutional measures and the adaptation of legal regulations, the resources are not sufficient for the development of agro tourism. Areas where agro tourism has developed in only a few years are evidence of the declining emigration, especially of the younger population, reversing the negative demographic trend and halting the economic decline of rural areas. Despite the growth in the number of rural households,

the consequence of decades of neglect of this specialised type of tourism is still a modest share of agro tourism in the total annual tourism receipts of the Republic of Croatia.

Indicators from the pre-pandemic year 2019 were used for comparison. Although the Republic of Croatia and Austria are countries that are similar in terms of area and available tourism resources, the differences in GDP and the standard of the local population are significant. It is also interesting to compare the realised tourist nights. Although Austria does not have the resources to develop seaside tourism, it records more overnight stays than the Republic of Croatia.

The income from tourism in Austria is almost four times higher than the income of the Republic of Croatia from tourism. The continuity of innovative and effective tourism utilisation and commercialisation of all available resources contributes to this. Legislation is adapted to the requirements of sustainable tourism development and special attention is paid to promoting the growth of agro tourism. In Austria, the registration of various agricultural and related activities is made possible, legal regulations are enacted that promote the introduction of new technologies in agriculture and tourism, and continuous state financial sup-

Table 1. Comparison of resources for agro-tourism development in Austria and Croatia

Comparative data	Austria	Croatia
The area	83,879 km ²	88,073 km ²
Population	8.3 million	3.87 million
Accommodation facilities	64,500	92,000
Beds	1.1 mil.	More than 1.1 mil
Area suitable for rural tourism	90%	99.24%
Number of National Parks	6	8
Facilities of UNESCO heritage	9	10
Thermal and mineral springs	150	103
Hotels suitable for congress tourism	More than 250	More than 800
Bicycle paths	More than 20,000 km	(no data)
Hiking trails	74,276 km	No data
Nature parks	48	11 (409 total protective support)
Festivals per year	More than 2500	No data
Performances and concerts	More than 15,550	No data
Museums	700	210
Protected cultural heritage	37,700	8,454
Number of tourist arrivals	41.5 mil.	17.4 mil.
Number of tourist nights	141 mil.	86.2 mil.
Average length of stay	3.4 nights	5 nights
Revenues from tourism	40 billion euros	11 billion euros
Direct share of tourism in GDP	8.80%	18.90%

Source: Authors toward data collected from various reports from Croatian and Austrian Bureau of Statistics, 2022.

port is provided for these activities. This institutional support by the state also leads to an increase in the quality and standard of living in rural areas. In Austria, the national government and state institutions are active in the fields of agriculture, villages and rural tourism, which is not the case in the Republic of Croatia. This is also supported by the lack of several categories of aggregated data, which are necessary for a comparative analysis (Table 1). Aggregated data in Austria are the basis for systematic planning and management of agro tourism development, whereas in the Republic of Croatia they only have a statistical purpose.

The logistic infrastructure, which is a prerequisite for many additional and complementary offers in agro tourism, forms the basis for the perception of the added value of the national agro tourism product. In addition to the experts mentioned above, more than 3,000 interested citizens were actively involved in the development of the Austrian Master Plan for Rural Areas. The government initiated their participation in the finalisation of this strategic national document. In the Republic of Croatia, such documents are often adopted in the Croatian Parliament with the support of the ruling majority, which often favours certain interest groups, regardless of which political party is in power. An obvious example of such long-standing bad practise in the Republic of Croatia is the regional waste management centres. The projects of the regional waste management centres in the Republic of Croatia are accompanied by corruption of various interest groups (local politicians, equipment suppliers,

etc.). As a result, tenders are often cancelled. Studies, which are a prerequisite for such projects in the Republic of Croatia, are more often carried out in the final phase instead of at the beginning of the project. The locations for the construction of waste management centres in the Republic of Croatia have been determined without conducting appropriate geological, hydrogeological and seismic-tectonic studies. All this makes the regional waste management centres in Croatia a threat to the development of ecological agro tourism, as they are planned in rural areas. This may have long-term consequences for natural resources, including water, and indirectly for the development potential of agro tourism.

In Austrian practise, thanks to the massive participation of citizens and experts in the adoption of documents of strategic and national importance, more than two thousand concrete ideas and proposals related to specialised tourism products and other contents have been developed and elaborated. In the Republic of Croatia, consulting companies are hired for this purpose, often even from abroad, so that such strategic documentation on tourism development is hardly used in practise.

The defined strategic guidelines and challenges for the development of the national tourism offer in Montenegro are divided into five categories, which are presented in Table 2. The same guidelines are also recognised in the current management of agro tourism development.

TABLE 2. Strategic challenges of the vision of tourism development of Montenegro

Challenge category	Key challenges
Strategy landmarks	Diversification of the offer in order to attract new segments of tourists; Expanding the portfolio of tourism products and services; Eliminating the trend of seasonality in tourist visits.
Tourist experience	A system of experiences based on the assessment of profits from the tourist type; Continuity of the growth of the quality of the impression of all tourist services.
Communication and sales	Maintaining and strengthening the global visibility of the national tourism brand; Strengthening all forms of marketing communication of the tourism industry; Repositioning the national tourism offer in the global market in a more visible niche.
Competitiveness of the tourism industry	Marketing and other innovations based on new knowledge and technologies; Promoting cross-sectoral cooperation to strengthen the competitiveness of the tourism offer.
Management and governance	Modifying and eliminating everything that slows down tourism development and tourism growth; Providing funds for promotion in large emitting (strategic) tourism markets.

Source: Authors based on data from Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism of Montenegro 2019.

The strategic determinants defined in this way stimulate innovative thinking about different forms of valorisation and commercialisation of the available landscape, cultural and traditional resources (Melović & Ćirović, 2018). The resources are analysed in terms of their potential for use in the development of new specialised tourist types and authentic facilities. Considering the recent tourism trends arguing the importance of preserved landscapes and local customs, traditional and cultural heritage with healthy organic

food and the possibility of accommodation in areas without large tourist flows, agro tourism is imposed as an important strategic option. The arguments for this statement can be found in Table 3.

Despite the positive practise of institutional measures for the development of rural tourism in Montenegro, local entrepreneurs believe that agro tourism is not yet sufficiently taken into account in the regional and economic development of the country (Despotović et al. 2016). Yet there are definitely

Table 3. Globally recognized and accepted products of rural tourism

		RURAL TOURISM PRODUCTS	
PRODUCT GROUP		INDIVIDUAL PRODUCTS	
1	Agrotourism	1.1	Accommodation in rural household facilities with accompanying activities.
		1.2	Accommodation on farms, with passive contact with guests (accommodation without additional services).
		1.3	Accommodation / visit to agricultural farms, with indirect contact with guests (sale of agricultural products).
		1.4	Accommodation / visit to agricultural farms, with demonstration of agricultural activities
		1.5	Accommodation / visit to agricultural farms, with an authentic experience by the guest's participation in activities with the hosts
2	Tourism based on activities in nature	2.1	Cycling / mountain biking
		2.2	Walking / Hiking
		2.3	Riding a horse
		2.4	Sport hunting and fishing
		2.5	Adventure activities / extreme sports (canyoning, paragliding, mountaineering, rafting, etc.)
		2.6	Ecotourism
		2.7	Team building programs
		2.8	4x4 rally, enduro, motocross
		2.9	Other contents
3	Other products of rural cultural heritage	3.1	Wine tourism, gastronomic tourism and product tastings
		3.2	Events and manifestations
		3.3	Visits to historical sites and local museums
		3.4	Tours of rural settlements
		3.5	Creative tourism (craft and art workshops, cooking schools, etc.)
		3.6	Village fairs
		3.7	Thematic routes
		3.8	The rest

Source: Authors based on data from Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism of Montenegro, 2022.

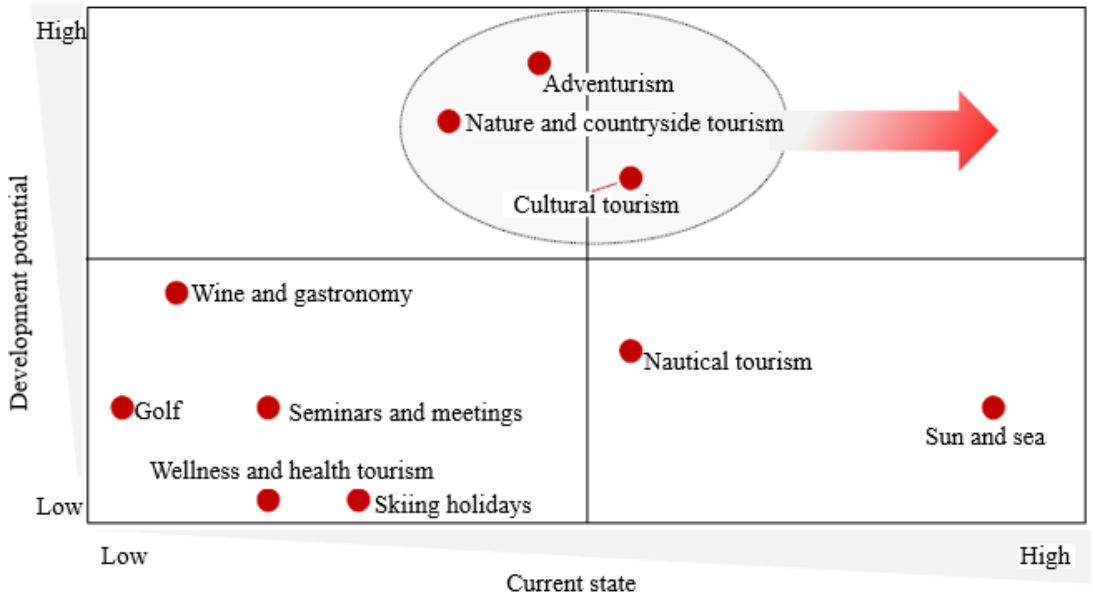


FIGURE 1. Strategic focus of the vision of tourism development in Montenegro.

Source: Authors based on data from Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism of Montenegro, 2022.

perspectives, as Montenegro’s agro tourism offer is recognised as an effective marketing lever for promoting the national natural and cultural heritage and as an important support for the economic development of rural areas. Other authors write about the importance of such support at the national level (Jaafar et al. 2013). According to a 2017 analysis by the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism of Montenegro, three strategic products were defined where it was found that Montenegro can be very competitive on the global tourism market - adventure tourism, cultural facilities and agro tourism (Figure 1).

Thanks to the legal regulations, the grey area in rural and agro tourism has been reduced to a minimum. In the Law on Tourism and Hospitality the catering services of a rural household are precisely defined (Official gazette of Montenegro, No. 56/2009, 18/2011, 40/2011, 34/2014, 1/2015, 30/2017, 51/2017, 41/2019):

1. Preparation and serving of hot and cold food and drink, mainly from own production;
2. Serving and tasting of wine and other alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages and household products, primarily of own manufacture, in a regulated part of a residential or commercial building, indoors, under cover or outdoors;
3. Accommodation services in rooms, cottages, other establishments and camps rented to

tourists, with a maximum of 15 accommodation units or 30 persons at a time in up to 10 rooms or 20 beds, for individuals only, only for guests served with meals, including beverages (breakfast, half board or full board), mainly of own production;

4. The food and beverages served in the rural household must be typical of the region and meet the legal requirements for food safety;
5. The catering facilities for accommodation in a rural household must meet the minimum technical requirements for classification under this Law;
6. Catering services in a rural household referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article may be provided after obtaining a decision on registration in the Central Tourism Register in accordance with Articles 77 and 78 of this Law;
7. Catering services in a rural household referred to in paragraph 3 of this Article with more than ten rooms and/or more than 20 beds may also be provided by registered restaurateurs;
8. The minimum technical conditions and the type of categorisation of establishments where rural household services are provided shall be prescribed by the competent ministry.

The Law on Tourism and Hospitality in Montenegro contains a precise classification of accommodation establishments and various standards for

minimum technical requirements that must be met. The Law classifies different services according to the standards and the number of accommodation units, depending on the legal status of the provider of the respective service.

The offer of agro tourism in Montenegro is dominated by accommodation in rural households with/ without participation in agricultural activities and visits to farms. A rural household is „a functional unit in a rural area that meets the minimum technical requirements to provide the following services: preparation and serving of hot and cold food and beverages, serving and tasting of wine, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages and other products of predominantly own production, which are common for a rural area where a rural household is located, and providing accommodation services“ (Rulebook on minimum technical conditions, conditions for the category and method of categorisation of facilities in which catering services are provided in rural households - “Official Gazette of Montenegro”, no. 41/2019). The regulation also defines the types of establishments in which different services can be provided:

- Facilities for preparing and serving hot and cold dishes and beverages from mostly own production;
 - Facilities for serving and tasting wine and other alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages as well as domestic products from mostly own production;
 - Rooms, apartments, huts and camps.
- The regulation clearly defines the services that can be offered (harvesting of fruit and vegetables, harvesting of crops, hiring of horses for riding, etc.). The symbols for the content of the offer were defined (Figure 2), but also the materials to be used for information boards about the offer of rural households.
- The categorisation of a rural household is regulated by the level of a single whole with one, two or three stars (Figure 3).

The Law on Agriculture and Rural Development (Official gazette of Montenegro, No. 56/2009, 18/2011, 40/2011, 34/2014, 1/2015, 30/2017, 51/2017) recognises a rural household and a farm as „an organised and economically complete economic unit comprising one or more production units engaged in an agricultural activity, having a single management, a single name or business, or a single address or registered office, and organised in one of the following forms:

- a) Company or other legal entity or entrepreneur;
- b) Family farm;



FIGURE 2. Prescribed graphic symbols of the offer content

SOURCE: Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism of Montenegro, 2019. p. 9.



FIGURE 3. Categorical boards of rural households Prescribed graphic symbols of the offer content

SOURCE: Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism of Montenegro, 2019. p.16

- c) Production enterprise;
- d) Educational or scientific research institution also engaged in agricultural activities.”

The same Law also defines a family farm as „an agricultural holding on which a farmer carries out an agricultural activity alone or together with members of his household“. Most of the stakeholders in agro tourism in Montenegro are legally regulated by this form. In addition to the Ministry of Economic Development, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management has also played an important role in defining the development framework for agro tourism in Montenegro. Their responsibilities do not overlap, and both ministries develop incentives in accordance with different scopes and criteria that must be met by agro tourism products and services. Subsidies for farms to adapt and improve the quality of accommodation have become more frequent, as this is seen as a lever for the further development of agro tourism and the growth of its share in GDP. Based on these subsidies, rural households are adapting to the new global tourism trends in terms of organisation and quality.

The experience of development and management of agro tourism in Montenegro proves the contribution of this particular type of tourism to the demographic renewal of sparsely populated areas, but also to the increase of living of the local population. Systematic institutional support for the development of agro tourism has led to an expansion of the tourist offer in the rural areas of the country. Many landscape resources (canyons and lakes) have been valorised in mountainous areas with an extremely pleasant microclimate in the summer months. Accommodation facilities with recognisable architecture become a recognisable tourist symbol of Montenegro. During the pandemic COVID -19 the interest in agro tourism destinations in Montenegro grew rapidly despite the restrictions on tourist travel. Also in the post-pandemic period, a large number of tourists opted for quiet refuges with a gastronomic offer based on organically grown food, away from the noisy tourist resorts on the coast. Institutional activities in Montenegro have promoted more intensive development of agro tourism in the areas with the most pronounced depopulation rates (Figure 4).

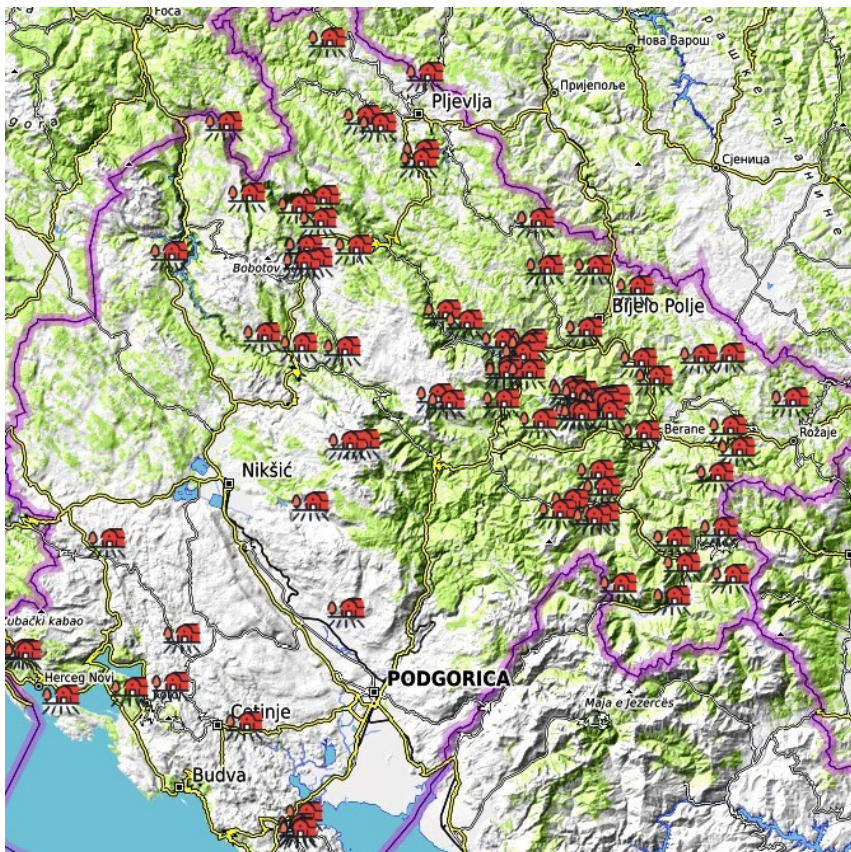


FIGURE 4. Geographical distribution of registered rural households in Montenegro
SOURCE: <https://www.ruralholiday.me/mapa/>, accessed November 2022.

Institutional initiatives to promote the development of agro tourism have contributed to the development of the Bjelasica and Komovi, Prokletije-Plav, Durmitor-Sinjajevina and Žabljak-Plužine-Šavnik clusters. By combining different contents in a single offer, agro tourism in Montenegro also had the task of balancing the economic development of rural areas. Based on the good experiences, the institutional connection of agriculture and tourism was promoted in order to further advance the development of agro tourism.

In the areas where agro tourism has developed in Montenegro, the emergence of other selective forms of tourism is evident. The experience of institutional support for the development of agro tourism has also been used to promote the development of other specialised tourism facilities. The standards for sustainability and control of the intensity of pressure on non-renewable resources of rural areas and local communities have been included in the legal provisions. In Montenegro, agro tourism is considered at the national level as a strategic factor for the economic development of the country. The dynamics and intensity of the development of the agricultural and tourism sectors significantly determine the economic future of the country. Strategic documents promote further specialisation of offers in order to intensify tourism throughout the year. Tourists who choose the agro tourism offer in Montenegro can be classified into two major groups: the so-called purposeful tourists, who are attracted mainly by new local experiences and features of the offer that serve the mental and physical health of the individual. The second group is the so-called leisure tourists, who choose agro tourism because of the various physical activities and attractive gastronomic offer.

4. CONCLUSION

In most transition and post-transition countries, agro tourism is developing mainly on the basis of entrepreneurial initiatives. The specificities of this tourism offer include tailor-made legislation, which is confirmed by the practise of developed countries. This is often not the case in transition and post-transition countries. This is one of the reasons why the development and growth of the agro tourism offer has slowed down in many post-transition countries. The trend of emigration from rural areas continues, which, together with the negative demographic development, leads to the problem of insufficient human resources for agro tourism.

The experiences of Montenegro and Austria suggest that the development of agro tourism should be

managed exclusively at the institutional level until a level is reached that ensures self-sustainability. The Austrian experience suggests that it is reasonable to delegate rational management to the lower levels. Experience and maturity encourage them to cooperate and promote together in the global tourism market.

The systematic approach to the development and management of agro tourism in Montenegro has contributed to the rapid growth of tourism revenues. The adaptation of legal regulations to the specificities of rural areas in Montenegro has slowed down the emigration of the local population and encouraged them to develop and offer a variety of products and services for visitors to rural areas. This has had a positive impact on the growth of the living standards of the local population in the rural areas of Montenegro. Agro tourism in Montenegro has proven to be a strategic, long-term and sustainable perspective for the growth of national tourism and is an effective measure to stop negative demographic trends in the rural areas of the country.

In the Republic of Croatia, the initiatives come from below - from the tourism stakeholders who have chosen agro tourism. Legislation in the Republic of Croatia is not adapted to the specifics of agro tourism and is often a barrier to new investments in this offer. In Montenegro, the national government promotes associations of tourism operators. In Austria, the development of rural tourism is managed organisationally and marketing-wise through a decentralised model of provincial offices that jointly take strategic decisions. In the Republic of Croatia, such initiatives are not considered at all at the institutional level.

Systematic management of legislation can create a stimulating entrepreneurial climate and maintain appropriate standards for responsible and sustainable commercialization of valuable national resources in the long term. Montenegro's experience is proof of the positive impact on landscape protection and the growth of agricultural production. The number of legally protected areas with preserved landscapes is increasing in this country, and agro-tourism is also helping to extend the tourist season. By setting clear quality standards for accommodation establishments that take into account the specificities of agro tourism, procedures have been simplified and the costs of involving new stakeholders have been reduced. Agro tourism requires concrete and continuous incentives for people in rural areas who are potential future tourism entrepreneurs. Only such an approach can lead to a strong and dynamic development of agro tourism. It becomes an economic and social lever to slow down the negative trends of rural depopulation

in transition and post-transition countries.

A limitation of the study is the use of secondary data sources. The authors chose this methodological approach because the aim of the research was to identify and argue what promotes and what slows down the development of agro tourism in Croatia,

following the example of Austria and Montenegro. The research results show that the main reason for the modest share of agro tourism in the gross domestic product of the Republic of Croatia is the lack of institutional initiatives to promote and develop this selective form of tourism.

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ULOGA DIONIKA U RAZVOJU AGROTURIZMA U POST TRANZICIJSKIM ZEMLJAMA

SAŽETAK

Agroturizam može imati pozitivan utjecaj na suzbijanje depopulacije u većini ruralnih područja post tranzicijskih zemalja. Argumenti za poticanje razvoja agroturizma obuhvaćaju promjenu negativnih demografskih trendova u takvim područjima te karakteristike opskrbe i potražnje tijekom cijele godine. Kao ključni akteri u agroturizmu ističu se ruralna i obiteljska gospodarstva, a razvoj ove selektivne turističke forme direktno utječe na poboljšanje životnog standarda lokalnog stanovništva u ruralnim područjima.

Istraživanje je usmjereno na ulogu dionika u razvoju agroturizma u post tranzicijskim društvima. Istraživanje je provedeno usporedbom iskustava Republike Hrvatske i Crne Gore. Iako je Hrvatska strateški orijentirana prema turizmu, udio turizma u BDP-u je značajno visok, dok je udio agroturizma zanemariv. Crna Gora bilježi uspješna iskustva s razvojem agroturizma. Austrijsko iskustvo razvoja agroturizma analizirano je kao kontrolna varijabla. Cilj istraživanja je prikazati stvarni utjecaj ključnih dionika na razvoj agroturizma u post tranzicijskim zemljama.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: *agroturizam, dionici, post tranzicijske države*