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THE DEFINITION OF AGRITOURISM AND ITS PERSPECTIVES IN AZERBAIJAN

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Summary

Azerbaijan as an emerging country with rich natural resources, has seen a dramatic growth thanks to its thriving oil and gas industries. Recently, the Azerbaijani government has made a great deal of efforts in the growth of non-oil industries including agriculture. Azerbaijan has quite good conditions for agricultural improvement, we should appreciate the all possible chances. Agriculture only accounts for 5% of GDP but is important to reduce poverty, rural-urban migration and national food insecurity as 37 % of the country labour force is employed in agriculture. In this regard, agritourism may help rural population to increase their income. The current situation of tourism in Azerbaijan is analysed and recommendations for development of agritourism put forward in this article.

Key words: agritourism, off-site farmers, rural tourism, organic farming, agricultural exhibits, farm staying, beekeeping, apiculture.

Introduction

Nowadays the improvement level of non-oil sectors is going to be higher impressively in Azerbaijan. One of them is tourism. Because of geographic situation and natural resources Azerbaijan is one of the heritage countries with perspective touristic conditions. You can find most types of tourism here like agro, sport, ecological, heritage, commercial, social, religious, health-cure, special and etc.

On the 25th september 2001, at the 14th assemble of UNWTO Azerbaijan became a member of UNWTO in Seoul, South Korea. After that first governmental program of tourism in Azerbaijan is accepted during 2002-2005. After then Governmental Tourism Institute is established for preparing tourism specialists. Until the acceptance of second governmental program for tourism a lot of activities were implemented like tourism fairs, building up of new tourism centers, hotels an etc.

Second program was accepted for 2010-2014 years. This is for development and improving the defected features of tourism industry. These matters are targets for this program: stimulating of tourism management, standardization and certification of inner-tourism service, providing of legacy for tourism service, determination of recreation zones, implementing and agitation of touristic activities there, suggestion package for protection of environmental, heritages and historical monuments and etc.

Number of licensed touristic centers is approximately 123,000 and comparing with previous years it increased 3 times. About the number of hotels we can say it is also good indicator for Azerbaijani tourism industry and comparing with previous years it is approximately 4 times increased [1].

Tourism is one of the most noticed fields of economy today. As the leading international organization in the field of tourism, UNWTO promotes tourism as a driver of **economic growth, inclusive development** and **environmental sustainability** and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide. UNWTO generates market knowledge, promotes competitive and sustainable tourism policies and instruments, fosters tourism education and training, and works to make tourism an effective tool for development through technical assistance projects in over 100 countries around the world[2].

Agritourism is one of the important branches of tourism industry. Because of today's demand agritourism is also more attractive for tourists.

Before analyzing the possible perspectives of agritourism in Azerbaijan, firstly we should give the definition of agritourism.

Agritourism is a commercial enterprise at a working farm, ranch or agricultural plant conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates supplemental income for the owner.

Agritourism is a subset of a larger industry called rural tourism that includes resorts, off-site farmers' markets, agricultural tours and other leisure and hospitality business that attract visitors to the country side.

Rural tourism differs from agritourism in two ways. Firstly, rural tourism enterprises do not necessarily occur on a farm or ranch, or at an agricultural plant they do not generate supplemental income for the agricultural enterprise.

Note: in other words a working farm is the place where agricultural activities are practiced [3].

Because of some literatures introduce this term like an "agrotourism" so there are a lot of definitions about "agritourism" and "agrotourism". Let's look through some them:

1) Agritourism:

- "any practice developed on a working farm with the purpose of attracting visitors";
- "a specific type of rural tourism in which the hosting house must be integrated into an agricultural estate, inhabited by the proprietor, allowing visitors to take part in agricultural or complementary activities on the property";
- "rural enterprises which incorporate both a working farm environment and a commercial tourism component";

- “tourism products which are directly connected with the agrarian environment, agrarian products or agrarian stays”;
 - “activities of hospitality performed by agricultural entrepreneurs and their family members that must remain connected and complementary to farming activities”;
- 2) Agrotourism:
- “tourism activities which are undertaken in non-urban regions by individuals whose main employment is in the primary or secondary sector of the economy”;
 - “tourist activities of small-scale, family or co-operative in origin, being developed in rural areas by people employed in agriculture”;
 - “provision of touristic opportunities on working farms”.

So generally “agritourism” is crossroads of agriculture and tourism: when the public visit working farms, ranches or wineries, to buy products, enjoy entertainment, participate in activities, shop in country stores, eating a meal or make overnight [4].

We should know agritourism introduce us what kind of services:

- Participating in daily farm work and getting real information about agriculture;
- Providing courses in gardening and organic farming;
- Horseback riding;
- Fishing;
- Historical agricultural exhibits;
- Exhibitions of agricultural products (fairs);
- Organizing agricultural and traditional events;
- Accommodations which are appropriate for each kind of budget (breakfast including service);
- Food shops and etc.

Now, let's look through some countries' practices about agritourism because of their nature, agricultural field conditions arrangement level and etc.

In England, 23% of farms provide some type of commercial leisure service enterprise such as fishing, nature trails, picnic sites and so forth whereas 24% of English farms provide overnight accommodation and/or catering. In countries like France, hikers and cyclists can follow a network of trails around the country that leads from farm to farm. In the Netherlands and some other European countries, the farmers have centralized clearinghouses for contacting and booking stays services on working farms. Agrotourism, while new to many types of American agriculture, has been a major part of the development of the American wine industry for decades. Many wineries are part of organized regional wine tours, and some special events such as concerts, festivals, and weddings are also held for attractions. And another form of agrotourism that has been around for decades is "dude ranches." Dude ranches are more common in the United States and Australian Outback. It offers visitors the opportunity to work on cattle ranches and the chance to take part in the cattle drives.

In Australia, Canada and the Philippines, agrotourism is deemed as a growth industry. Reynolds (2005) mentions that agrotourism is a type of businesses conducted by farmers whose working agricultural operations for the enjoyment and education of

visitors. Since it can complement farmers' income and contribute to local economic development, agrotourism is being conceptualized as a business model in terms of product diversification. Referred to as "agriturismo" in Italy, "sleeping in the straw" in Switzerland, "farmstays" in New Zealand, and "farm holidays" in England, agrotourism is well established throughout Europe and in many other countries. Agrotourism enterprise is as a business conducted by a farm operator or farmer for the enjoyment and education of the public beside promoting the products of the farm and generating additional farm income". Although the farmers may not always have the time, moneys and necessary skills and expertise to develop the tourism potential of their business, agriculture and public sector tourism organizations are always promoting agrotourism [5].

In South Korea there is Cheongdo Gam Wine Tunnel where you can find a wine made from persimmon. It is good idea for attracting tourists and at the same time good marketing for selling products. In Azerbaijan the region of Ganja-Qazakh is popular because of its grape. Although there is a wine factory in Ganja but there are not any touristic facilities. Shamkir, Tovuz, Qazakh have better opportunities than Korea for such kind of tunnels. And these regions also have beautiful panoramic nature surrounded with mountains. It means that is good for building up comfortable accommodations for tourists and at the same time providing them with fresh products in the breakfast is also good chance for attracting attentions. Nature reserve parks are also interesting point for tourists because of rare types of trees and animals.

Apiculture is also one of the best parts of agriculture in Azerbaijan. Shaki-Zagatala, Gabala-Ismaily and Nakhchivan are popular with their beekeeping traditions and of course pure, delicious honey. It is also good chance for attracting the people who are interested in tasting different honey types.

In South Korea there are lot of examples for farm stay villages which are arranged in high level for local people and tourists. For instance, Guam Farm Stay Village is located near the Daegu city so it is easy to find and is well-equipped with cultural facilities. Nine rocks in the area resemble the back of a turtle so it is referred to as "Guam" (From Chinese 'Gu' means turtle and 'Am' means rock). Farming experiences start from the time when cherry blossom are about to be in full bloom along the road surrounding the foot of Palgongsan Mountain. Visitors can take part in planting various vegetable seeds, thinning out the apple trees, rice reaping, and pulling out beans. The village is abounding in fruits, including apples, grapes, peaches, and chestnuts. Among the many hands-on programs, picking apples and chestnuts has already become famous activities for nearby kindergarten students. To facilitate the farm stay program, local organization operates a weekend farm, where one can grow and taste vegetables such as lettuce and chili[6].

Another example in South Korea is Andong Hahoe village. This village is on the list of UNESCO World Heritage. Surrounding by Nakdong river and cliffs give to it beautiful natural view. There are cottages for renting during stay there. Having local meals and drinks are also available. Taking boat to Buyongdae cliff gives a chance for visiting beautiful panorama of this village. In each autumn traditional Andong Mask Dance festival is held and it is also perfect chance for attracting tourists.

In our country we also have such kind of villages with beautiful panorama as in Gakh, Gabala, Balakan, Zagatala, Guba, Gusar, Lerik. During Novrooz holiday because

of nature-waking time it will be interesting and attractive for tourists and it will be a chance for them learning agricultural traditions of our country.

We have to know that attracting tourists for agritourism field is helpful for increase the number of whole tourists coming to Azerbaijan. We can say that for the last decade as the result of implemented activities the number of tourism companies increased from 74 to 276, the number of hotels from 96 to 516, guest places in hotels from 9569 to 32834. The number of workers in this field increased from 2678 to 9051, the number of coming tourists from 767500 to 2 million. The profit from tourism was 57.7 million dollars in 2003 but in 2013 this number increased to 1 billion 479 million dollars. For comparing we can say in 2014 the number of guest placing increased 6%, number of rooms 7% and number of workers at the placing facilities are increased 5.8%. Like as in previous years 95% of the whole tourism companies in Azerbaijan are situated in Baku. Here is a table which represents the number of tourists by the names of countries came in Azerbaijan in 2014[7]:

Table 1. The number of tourists by the names of countries came in Azerbaijan in 2014

	Summary		At the same time:			
			accepted		sent	
	Number of tourists	Number of tour days, people-days	Number of tourists	Number of tour days, people-days	Number of tourists	Number of tour days, people-days
Summary	92,305	614,009	10,657	57,931	81,648	556,078
At the same time						
Azerbaijan Republic	13,410	70,460	210	675	13,200	69,785
Russia	15,373	96,754	4,192	24,937	11,181	71,817
Georgia	1,341	8,518	154	720	1,187	7,798
Kazakhstan	488	2,024	26	119	462	1,905
Ukraine	708	6,015	37	156	671	5,859
Turkey	35,405	234,258	4,174	19,601	31,231	214,657
United Kingdom	844	4,190	40	209	804	3,981
Germany	1,358	7,782	91	396	1,267	7,386
Spain	1,103	8,549	491	4,946	612	3,603
Italy	927	5,104	125	594	802	4,510
France	722	3,286	105	420	617	2,866
Finland	26	89	16	44	10	45
UAE	6,388	42,565	12	46	6,376	42,519
Egypt	73	463	2	6	71	457
Iran	2,527	24,788	14	98	2,513	24,690
USA	187	987	37	173	150	814
Czech Republic	709	4,654	4	16	705	4,638
Australia	46	315	-	-	46	315
China	303	2,324	9	36	294	2,288
Other	10,367	90,884	918	4,739	9,449	86,145

Agritourism will be an effort for increasing the incomes of budget. For instance in Poland agritourism is the important part both of agriculture and tourism, there are approximately 2 million farms and 10,000 of them are accepting tourists [8]. It means

0.5% of agricultural farms bring more incomes to the budget of government. And this number is really a big deal for Azerbaijan.

In our country the number of agricultural producer units is 1,208,700 [9]. Even if 0.5% of them will work for agritourism that will be very profitable for our country. Good organizing and governmental support for farmers can help them doing their best in this way. It is good opportunity for development of agriculture and at the same time for tourism. We know that fields of economy are in touch with each other, it will help to the advertising sector too. It seems that at the same time we have a chance for improving several fields of economy. That is why we should provide some farms with facilities and opportunities which have good conditions and perspectives for agritourism. Firstly it will be good for farmer's well-being, then for development of village. If several such kind of villages are improved in this way it will be good for building up governmental budget too.

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