

AGROTOURISM AS A FACTOR OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF SIRINIĆ DISTRICT IN KOSOVO AND METOHİJA

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Abstract

The authors analyze the current problem from the economic point of view of the rural development of the Sirinić District and the importance of agro-tourism financing. The authors' hypothesis is that agro-tourism directs the entire agrocomplex towards the sustainable development of this Serbian enclave. The term agro-tourism points to the inextricable interdependence between agriculture and tourism, thus it is therefore necessary to solve the problems of financing agricultural farms in the Serbian enclave Sirinić District in Kosovo and Metohija.

The authors specifically conceive the place of agro-tourism in the concept of rural development, as well as the place of agro-tourism in the concept of economic development. Also considered in the paper is the link between agro-tourism and regional development. The economic effects of agro-tourism are particularly emphasized. Financial resources are one of the biggest restrictions in the development of agro-tourism, lack of accommodation capacities, accompanying equipment and catering facilities, as well as promotion of the sale of rural tourism products to the population of central Serbia.

Key Words: *agriculture, agro-tourism, rural development, economic effects*

JEL classification: *M21, L83, Q18*

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Introduction

Agriculture in the rural area is an important factor in the development of rural agro-tourism. In rural areas, it enables the development of all forms of tourism, while in urban forms of tourism, agriculture is an important economic activity that supplies food and drink to tourist objects and tourists. The development of agriculture in a certain area depends on a number of assumptions, and distinguished in particular are:

- The existence of agricultural land,
- Favorable climatic, pedological and other conditions for the development of agriculture,
- Favorable market-economic environment.

The Sirinić District (Municipality of Štrpce) extends over an area of 250 km² with one urban and fifteen rural settlements. It represents a mountainous area with a specific jagged area and an altitude range of 900 m in the Lepenac river valley, up to 2500 m at the highest peak of Ljuboten. One of the five national parks the Šar Mountains is located in the Sirinić District, founded in 1986, on an area of 22,805 hectares. The National Park was established for the purpose of preserving: forest and highland vegetation and their habitats and populations of wild flora and fauna, especially rich fauna of the butterflies, birds (gray fox, wood grouse, grey partridge deer, crane, Balkan horned lark), mammals (snow and dinar marten, brown bear, wolf, chamois, etc.); a region with a number of characteristic features.

The Šar Mountain National Park is a cradle of Serbian spirituality, statehood and history. There are 45 cultural heritage sites in this area, among which there are 14 categorized cultural goods of exceptional significance built in the period from 12th to 16th century. There are hermitages and the Monastery of St. Peter Koriški from the 13th century, the church of St. Petka from the 14th century, the church of St. Virgin of Odigitrija from the 14th century, the monastery of Holy Trinity from the 15th century, the remains of Dušan's town and monastery complex St. Archangels from the 14th century near Prizren, and other monuments of culture of greatest national importance (Cvijanović & Ružić, 2017).

The altitude and climatic conditions indicate that the area of the Sirinić District is extremely favorable for the development of livestock, fruit and vegetation. In the structure of agricultural land, the Sirinić District is

dominated by pastures with 38.8% and meadows with 25% which indicates that this area is extremely suitable for the development of livestock breeding, in particular sheep farming and goat breeding. By putting into operation the existing cheese factories as well as organized supply of the population to mother flocks of sheep and goats, preconditions for the production of high quality dairy products will be created, the possibility of creating a brand of the Šar mountain cheese known for its quality throughout the old Yugoslavia. There are also conditions for the development of fruit and, above all, berry fruit, since the agroecological conditions of the Sirinić District enable excellent raspberry quality and high yield per unit area. Raising plantations at several locations would affect the employment of the population (Maksimović et al., 2015).

The organic production in Serbian enclaves in Kosovo has a great potential based on the extensive production mostly in hilly – mountainous areas with rich and convenient environment for the organic production of medicinal plants, fruits, vegetables, wine, honey etc., but it still keeps developing. The enclave can realise a high income, and thereby also an economic basis for the sustainable development of multifunctional agricultural holdings in Serbian enclaves, by the production and sale of organic products on local markets. (Maksimović et al., 2017).

From the above mentioned data it can be concluded that the Serbian enclave Sirinić District has enough agricultural land and a sufficient number of agricultural holdings that have their own land; which are two important preconditions that are necessary in the development of agro-tourism in the rural area.

From the aspect of healthy nutrition and healthy natural environment, i.e. the primal life needs, through the health of people, it can be said that tourism is dependent on agriculture, although on the other hand it directly or indirectly stimulates the prosperity of agriculture.

The very term "agro-tourism" refers to the inseparable interdependence of tourism and agriculture, regardless of whether it is organized through a monofunctional or profit model. The sole meaning of the term "agro-tourism" can be interpreted in many ways. It can be said that agro-tourism represents a form of tourism focused on essential issues, healthy food for the tourists and staying in a healthy environment, through integral

development of agriculture, taking into account the aspects of sustainability.

The multifunctionality and integral development of agriculture on the one, and the heterogeneity of demands or desires on the other hand (tourism side), with the implementation of the principles of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism, make their connection very complex.

An interdisciplinary analysis of the interdependence of these two activities (more tourism from agriculture) profiles agro-tourism as a citadel of total tourism, which has a base in agriculture. Agro-tourism directs the entire agro complex to sustainable development, the production of healthy food and its placement on the market. It does not encourage and support only the orientation of tourism activities to the original meaning of the concept of agro, but to sustainable integral development with primary agriculture in the headquarters. Indirectly through the concept of integral development of agriculture, tourism is faced with a series of activities related to agribusiness (Pejanović et al., 2015).

Compatibility and integrativity of the cultural and health values required by the units (tourists, visitors) make it an axiom of supply and healthy rural areas with an organized offer. Furthermore, the compatibility and integrativity of the natural and anthropogenic values of rural areas and tourism with all its specificities (tourist demand, motives, needs, preferences, indifference, experience, etc.) point to the necessity of calculating all functions of tourism, primarily the social and economic ones. (Pejanović, 2013)

Agenda 2000 is the most important reform document of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the EU, which reformed the former agricultural policy in rural development policy (Milošević et al., 2010). This document presents a new European perspective on the future of rural development. In this way, the European concept of multifunctional agriculture has been promoted in the EU. Multifunctional agriculture means actions that are not focused solely on increasing production and farming, but also on the other benefits of rural life, such as:

1) the benefit of preserving the environment (biodiversity, flood protection, erosion, conservation of natural landscapes); 2) the benefit of ensuring food security in rural areas; 3) development of rural areas

(securing employment and linking agriculture with other sectors); 4) socio-economic benefits (preservation of traditional rural values, cultural heritage, promotion of traditional gastronomy, etc.) It is namely the transition from agriculture for production to agriculture for protection.

Multifunctionality is a key word for the new agrarian and rural policy of the EU, which is often associated with the syntagm rural development. Agricultural activities in this context are not only related to the cultivation of the country and food production, but also to the management of the environment, as well as the provision of services to the local community and the whole society. In its basic sense this is not a new concept, since agriculture has previously had a multifunctional role in economic development, but conditions have changed quite a lot today.

The approach to interpreting multifunctionality is based on numerous functions of agriculture not only in the production process, but also on other functions that originate from it and which are entrusted to it by society. Namely, during the last decades, numerous entrepreneurs who started agricultural activity appeared in developed European countries, and gradually introduced new profitable non-agricultural activities. There are numerous examples of such rural entrepreneurship that show that the concept of multiculturalism is strictly linked to the presence of agricultural and non-agricultural activities within the same farm, where there is a common use of the same resources. In this case, the multifunctionality of agriculture represents much more than the possibility of additional income. In essence, it is about a new organizational form of entrepreneurship that connects (association) agricultural production with other activities such as: tourism, food industry, trade, production and service crafts, various types of cooperatives, education, services, culture, health, landscape conservation and environment renting of land and houses for housing and other profitable activities. In doing so, rural entrepreneurship does not have to be located only in rural areas (primary rural settlements, village centers or village community centers), but also applies to and close to larger urban settlements, where there is a potential demand for agro-food products, as well as for activities which include recreation, rehabilitation or care of victims of social pathology of urban areas (Pejanović & Vujović, 2008).

Multifunctional agriculture opens the way for the development of villages, as well as small agricultural and family farms, as well as for the development of the hilly mountain area of the Sirinić District.

Rural tourism, as part of a tourist offer, has multiple significance for the integral development of agro-tourism and villages. In the villages, modern houses were built that with other amenities, ambience and ecological food provide the conditions for the development of rural tourism. The WTO World Tourism Organization defined objectives, development strategy, organization, marketing and investment in rural tourism development. The tasks of development of rural tourism are based on the following facts:

- Rural tourism enables the creation of income and jobs;
- Environmental protection should be regulated in order to develop rural tourism;
- Rural tourism revives vital existing roles in the village and quality of life;
- Rural tourism preserves the cultural heritage of the countryside, and
- Affirms the market economy.

The vision of rural tourism is based on the principles of alternative mass market tourism, a sustainable approach to economic development, a common strategy for planning partnerships between the private and public sectors, the harmonization of standards in tourism, the balance between the strengths of progress and stagnation and employment. The strategic principles of rural tourism are:

- Good organization and cooperation;
- Connectivity and network of cooperation among rural tourism participants;
- Legal access to the natural and cultural advantages of destinations, and
- Group enterprises in the village to build a critical mass of facilities.

An efficient organization of rural tourism includes municipal organizations, providers of accommodation services, other providers of tourist services and local-regional administration. It is responsible for determining the vision and strategy, organizing and maintaining a classification system, marketing rural tourism by fields, providing rural tourism service providers, sharing experiences, training, financing and lobbying with government and other, non-governmental organizations.

Training and maintenance are key conditions for the development of a rural tourism and include instructor training, training for rural service providers (consumer care), foreign language skills, standardization of

products, understanding of partner needs, product knowledge, marketing basics and internet training of officials in local administration. In addition to investments, it is necessary to invest in human resources. Legal regulation of environmental protection and legal regulations for the development of rural tourism (agro-tourism) is important. Farmers are good hosts and are ready to accept and host tourists.

A modern marketing concept is needed in the presentation of the offer in the village with all the contents and the competitive price of stay, with the addition of all sanitary measures. An integrated link between tourism and agriculture is based on satisfying the needs contained in a broad list of tourist spending, creating the possibility of better and more complete use of the workforce in the rural environment and the dynamism of the development of rural areas. With the development of tourism and improving the quality of services, the share of agrarian and final products in the value of catering services is increasing.

Tourism through the valorization of attractive rural landscapes is an important factor in the development of underdeveloped areas, additional occupations and additional income of the rural population. It improves the production and quality of products, affects the demand, and changes the culture of life in the countryside; in the economic sphere, tourists are supplied with food, employment increases, conditions for the development of the village are created, and the standard of living of the partner is growing. From the social aspect, agro-tourism is the defense of the migration of the Serbian population from the Sirinić district to central Serbia.

Tourism affects the spatial and urban development of the village, the increase of the educational level of the rural population and the politicization of the village. Tourism, from the aspect of consumption, affects the development of agrarian production, employment in agriculture and the rural environment, living and working conditions in the countryside. The village is included in the tourist offer through a holiday in a rural environment with the inclusion of households in tourist services, hunting tourism with accommodation services, food, fishing with accompanying services, organization of tourist events from the area of agrar-harvest, sightseeing, events.

There is a direct demand of the tourism industry for agricultural products and processed products, which affects the volume, type and quality of the

produce and the higher income of the farmers. In short, tourism is a major consumer of agricultural products and affects the stable development of agriculture. Tourism is also an additional activity of agrars through land leasing for the construction of buildings, additional employment in tourism, provision of accommodation and food in the countryside. Tourism affects the quality of life in the countryside. The effects of rural tourism are relevant from the aspect of the overall development of the village, additional income, employment and general cultural life, development of service activities and domestic craftsmanship.

The development of rural tourism requires significant investments in facilities and equipment, infrastructure, sports facilities. Rural, spa, mountain, health, sport and transit tourism have a perspective and a significant impact on the development of organic food production, higher income, better quality of life and development. In the field of rural development, along with the rural (countryside) tourism it is necessary to develop ecotourism (valorization of ecological values of the area), agro-tourism (participation in agriculture and food), agrobiotourism (organic food, education, food, rest), recreational, health and educational tourism.

The key factors of the impact of tourism on agriculture are: in the production tourism is an additional activity to agro-production, and then it is a market for agrarian products and a factor of development trends in agrarian sector, strengthening the economic basis of development and standards in the countryside.

In the non-economic area tourism is a factor in stopping migration; it affects raising the educational and cultural level in the countryside, urbanization and farmerization (Pejanović, 2013).

Agro-tourism in the concept of economic, regional and economic development

Agro-tourism is therefore a part of the concept of multifunctional agriculture, that is, broadly speaking, the concept of integral rural development. Agro-tourism is, above all, part of a tourist activity, which encompasses the totality of relationships and travel related activities and the temporary stay of people outside their place of residence, for recreation, leisure, etc. Tourism can be: summer-holiday tourism, rural, hunting, health, entertainment, cultural, sports, excursion, residential; seasonal and off-season; domestic, foreign and border; individual and

collective, and so on. Tourism is important for the local and national economy, because it generates income from tourists.

The development of tourism (and agro-tourism) leads to the rapid improvement of all related activities (transport, industry, agriculture, utilities, cultural institutions, local crafts, catering). By forming clusters, as the broadest functional-market and spatial units of tourism in the Serbian enclave Sirinić District, organizational simplification of regional touristic brands will be achieved by emphasizing commonly known geographical concepts, differentiated positioning of clusters on the market, more efficient action on attractiveness, marketing, productivity and destination management (Maksimović et al., 2015).

The strategy envisaged for the distribution of characteristic clusters in the Republic of Serbia is not based on the administrative and management boundaries that currently exist within the country, but above all on rational impulses in different forms of experience economics that can develop in some parts of the country (Cvijanović et al., 2018).

By improving and developing clusters and their activities, the goals of cluster members, agricultural producers, suppliers, and other entrepreneurs and institutions from the enclaves are realized, which unite resources and thus create and increase competitive abilities in the market. Clustered they are trying to compensate for what they lack, which are human resources, finances (access to favorable credit sources) and the ability to realize joint investments, raw materials, new knowledge, technologies.

The broader economic, social and general social interests of the Serbian community are being realized from increasing employment in rural areas, stimulating young people to stay in Kosovo and Metohija, increasing productivity and improving agricultural production and preserving the environment, as well as other aspects in rural areas (Živković & Maksimović, 2018).

Tourism is particularly important for the employment of the population, therefore, all countries, especially those that have favorable natural conditions (such as Serbia); establish special organizations (educational, tourist, etc.) and agencies that care about tourism improvement. Continuously followed are tourist demand, tourist offer, tourist policy, scientific research and testing of the tourist market are conducted, for the

purpose of continuous improvement of tourism, forecasting of trends and realistic expectations. We will, in short, address the basic issues of (agro) tourism. A tourist destination is a defined spatial unit that has the capacity to accommodate tourists, but also an attractive power for them. The content of each tourist destination should be adapted as much as possible to the needs and requests of tourists for usable and aesthetic values.

Creating the offer of a tourist destination starts from looking at and analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of each destination, which is also a job for our manager of agro-tourism. Consideration of the natural attractions of the Sirinić District such as: rural surroundings, rivers, springs, caves, mountains, climate, diversity of flora and fauna, enable the evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of the tourist destination. Tourist destinations have, in particular, their cultural, natural, demographic, economic and architectural specifics. The attractiveness of particular destinations depends, however, on the social potentials for the development of the tourism, such as life, customs, folklore, as well as the development and stability of the economy, culture, science, sports and education.

Tourist goods consist primarily of tourist services that include different types of goods and specific goods of one country, made up of ecologically preserved nature, cultural and historical heritage, security of political and socio - economic system, infrastructure (roads, catering, trade, crafts, health, travel agencies, utilities, science, etc.), which create conditions for the settlement of tourist demand. Most segments of the tourist offer are non-transferable, inexhaustible and unprofitable and only in tourism do they get market valorization (e.g. climate, nature, cultural heritage).

Tourist demand is the quantity of tourist goods, services and goods that tourists tend to accept at a certain price level. The basis for defining tourism demand is a combination of tourist needs for traveling, leisure, getting to know new places, people and communication. Converting the need for real tourist demand is only possible when it is completed with the effective purchasing power of the population as a crucial presumption of inclusion in the tourism market.

The basic characteristics of tourist demand are: seasonal character and high level of its elasticity, the causes of which are often non-economic. From the economic point of view, demand depends mostly on: the available income of the individual and the household, the price of tourist

services, tourist marketing, as well as on individual reasons, i.e. the desire and preferences of the man, satisfaction and fulfillment of expectations, etc. The tourist market is, therefore, a special area for whose knowledge, monitoring and analysis a special profession is needed, for example, a manager of agro-tourism and rural development. It is a market of a special type (*sui generis*) not by its constituent elements (entities, supply, demand, exchange objects - services and prices), but in the interrelation of these elements, which result in numerous specificities (e.g., highly heterogeneous demand, its pronounced elasticity on changes in prices, income and promotion, mobility, expressed heterogeneity of supply and its stiffness, seasonal character of business, and other characteristics: matching process and consumption, inability to store, selling of products in advance, and so on).

Tourism marketing is a significant activity within the tourist market. The task of marketing in tourism, which is gaining in importance, is to create and maintain the competitive advantages of tourism companies, organizations, agencies, and tourism as an economic branch. Starting from the economic and then social significance of tourism, the state in developed countries strives to formulate appropriate tourism policy as a basis for the development of tourism.

The affirmation of tourism policy in a large number of countries has enabled the successful development of tourism, which should be a signpost for our country. In addition, the development of agro-tourism as a part of tourism does not disturb the development of agriculture, but complements it.

Agro-tourism is increasingly affecting individual regions, and therefore becomes a regional macroeconomic challenge. The problem, however, is that the impact of agro-tourism on regional development has not been sufficiently drawn out, nor have methods been identified to successfully quantify this impact.

Therefore, the impact of agro-tourism on regional development is not systematically monitored; there are not all necessary indicators, which can be verified, so it is difficult to determine the overall results of tourism's impact on the development of a particular region. Whether agro-tourism has influenced the changing economic picture of individual regions, we see from the fact that it is not only an economic but also a sociological, geo-strategic and political category. Today, agro-tourism is

part of a unique function of the socio-economic system, which means that it activates all those parts of the secondary product of other branches and activities in creating the most valuable rural tourism product.

The experience of rural and regional development within the EU shows that the development of agro-tourism enables: stabilization of the overall regional development, full valorization of the natural and anthropogenic values of the rural area, preservation of the tradition, culture and recognizable identity of the rural communities, optimization of the relations between rural and urban entities of the region, raising the competitiveness of the region as a tourist destination and creating balance between all economic activities of the rural area environmental regions and effort of the appropriate management structures to make the tourism product of rural areas an adequate component of gross domestic product (GNP) of the region.

Accepting the challenges of regional development of agro-tourism in developed countries, the EU meets the following: its identity (economic, social, political and ecological) (Milošević et al., 2009), establishes optimal relations between urbanized and rural areas (since most of the population of our country's urban areas is with a rudiment from rural areas, the so-called return to the sources, i.e. roots, is achieved). Economic redistribution of secondary parts of the tourist product, social stability creation of appropriate tourism culture in accordance with international codes of conduct, opening of acceptability or compatibility in all segments of socio-economic development, achieving full employment, of both excessive living space and excess of workforce (predominantly women), determining the tourist capacity of tolerance in accordance with the available resources of the region.

Within the EU, the rural population increasingly accepts tourism as one of the sustainable development strategies of the local community. Agro-tourism in areas that are not considered as tourist destinations in the traditional sense develops twofold; on the one hand, it is the result of entrepreneurial activities aimed at attracting tourists, and on the other hand, the increase in the number of tourists in rural areas leads to the generation of demand for tourist services, which leads to the growth of entrepreneurial activities at the local level.

An adequate qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the interdependence and interconnection of rural development and tourism,

the light of agro-tourism, is determined by analyzing the economic effects of tourism and part of the mutual economic effects. The following impacts of tourism on agriculture are manifested as direct: increased production and higher placement of agricultural products, higher salaries of employees, new jobs, development of undeveloped and poorly developed areas, stopping emigration from certain villages and municipalities due to lack of work, stimulation of natural population growth, protection and valorization of cultural and historical values (monuments, monasteries, galleries and similar).

Through indirect economic impacts on agriculture, tourism indirectly stimulates a number of other activities from the segment of the economic system to a wider level: the involvement of the economy in the international division of labor, general economic and cultural development, social and pension policy, and the like. The economic effects for the rural area of the Sirinić District are very important and numerous: the development of a number of abandoned rural communities by valorizing neglected abandoned estates, village houses. The essence of the offer in rural areas is to stay in renovated rural houses in traditional style with the possibility of self-catering, familiarizing traditional cultural values and customs, all in an environmentally sound environment.

The accommodation and food of tourists in this way are much more attractive, economically cheaper and at the same time healthier than usual hotel accommodation and food. Therefore, self-preparation of food in rural homes combines classic accommodation and food services into one, unlike classic hotel service. Then, this form of tourism in rural areas would take place throughout the year, unlike the seasonal character of other selective forms of tourism.

As a special significance of agro-tourism and its advantage in relation to all other forms of tourism, its non-seasonal character can be stated, that is, the functionality during 365 days. Tourism continuously encourages the development of a range of other activities in the rural area, which directly or indirectly participate in the provision of services to tourists (transport, trade, food and beverage producers, construction, and other activities that participate in the offer). The development of tourism stimulates or brings effects at the macro-state level: the impact on the country's balance of payments, the impact on employment and the standard of living of the population, and the stimulation of the development of other economic activities involved in the tourism economy, and finally, the impact on

investment and incentives for the development of other underdeveloped areas.

Spacious separation of tourist demand and supply of a particular rural area or destination points to the importance of organizational activities in terms of establishing effective relationships between holders of demand and supply. The cases in practice confirm that the volume of tourist traffic and consumption depends on efficient organization of rural development and tourism in general, especially in terms of establishing favorable relations between holders of tourist demand and supply (Pejanović, 2013).

Conclusion

The development of agro-tourism in the Serbian enclave Sirinić District is an opportunity, but also a necessity, bearing in mind the available resources, while considering the economic underdevelopment and the process of demographic rural areas. The development of agro-tourism would enable the diversification of the rural economy, additional income for the rural population, reduction of unemployment and reduction of the differences in the economic development of rural and urban areas.

The development of rural tourism will enable the valorization of the work of women in agricultural farms, as well as the working engagement of young people and the elderly who are statistically kept in a job as inactive rural population. The population of the Sirinić District mainly sells primary (unprocessed) agricultural products, and agro-tourism is the possibility for food products to be sold on the farm to tourists. It is necessary to finance the development of agro-tourism and to include: infrastructure, personnel, tourist facilities, promotions and sales channels of agro-tourism products in the Republic of Serbia, and thus help the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija.

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