

AGRARIAN AND TOURIST POTENTIAL OF RURAL AREAS IN SERBIA

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Abstract

Generally, many factors influence, the life and economic status of a population, - but in terms of the impact on the economic status of the rural population in Serbia, the most important influencing factors that can be highlighted are: the tourist potential of rural areas, the number of family holdings in the village, the growth and development of small family businesses, demographic trends in the country, the level of development of infrastructure at the local level and so on. This paper presents the results of analysis which covered the most important determinants of the agrarian and tourist potential of the rural sector. Exploration of this area is very important for a better understanding of the economic status of rural areas and rural population, but whether it could be better, too. Differences are noticed in the level of economic potential of rural areas and the status of the rural population from one region to another because agrarian and tourist resources are different, and the impact of many factors is not the same in every region.

Key Words: *Rural sector, development, tourist potential, demographic trend, infrastructure*

JEL classification: *Z32, K15, Q10*

Introduction

The agrarian and tourist potential of rural areas in the Republic of Serbia certainly holds an important place in terms of the rural areas' economic contribution to the GDP of the Republic of Serbia. If the trend of growth in the contribution of tourism activity to the formation of gross domestic

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product and employment continues, it is expected that in the near future this activity can be claimed as the generator of employment in the Republic of Serbia (Gnjatović & Leković, 2019). Chronologically taken, the level of its exploitation has never been at a high level. Economic reforms after the Second World War did not provide long-term results, and the wars of the nineties had a devastating and destructive impact on the agrarian and tourist potential of our society. Today's economic trends and the European integration processes in the region indicate that significant reforms are needed in the field of agrarian and tourist policies. The paper presents the results gathered on the basis of studies that have focused on creating a clear picture of the state of the rural areas in the field of agrar and tourist potential. The unambiguous indication of the status and potential of agriculture and tourism greatly facilitates the creation of strategies for the future development of rural areas and their greater contribution to the GDP of the Republic of Serbia.

In addition to the use of tabular-diagrammatic and illustrative method, the authors in this paper draw special attention to the mandatory discussion and interpretation of the gathered results, considering the differences that can be noticed between the results gathered by the scientific-theoretical approach and the reality in the field. This certainly contributes to a better interpretation of the presented results and completes the entire contribution of this paper. In addition to the analytical and statistical methods and the methods of synthesis and analysis, the research and in the paper also use the chronological historical and deductive inductive method.

Agricultural holdings in Serbia

Overall agrarian production and every society in general must respect all aforementioned natural properties of the land it possesses, but also find a more rational social organization of land relations. In this light, important property relations over usable land areas and parcel structure of land property should be adapted to technical and technological optimums in land cultivation, which primarily implies the shape, size and number of parcels. Equally important is climate change (Petrović et al., 2019) "which manifests in our country and has a significant impact to crop yield" (p.173). All in all, every society is obliged to organize all agrarian activities and overall social life to be used in the best way, maximally preserve it and, if possible, improve the natural characteristics of the land. These would be the basic principles of land policy which are the foundation of every good agricultural policy and a necessary component of every spatial planning of

socio-economic development. These are all general rules that are considered in rationally organized societies that ensure a systematic sustainable agrarian and rural development for themselves. Serbia cannot allow a different attitude towards its own agrarian land comparing to the rules that are imposed by the members of the EU, even if the European Union does not insist on it.

Although often neglected, agriculture represents the central part of development, the foundation that not only satisfies the need for food, but also provides the basis for industrial development and economic growth. It represents a significant factor of rural employment, important feature of economic growth (Jovović et al., 2014). The significance that agricultural holdings have is not in accordance with their structural developmental potentials, and those potentials, as they are, are not used enough, wisely or rationally. One of the main indicators of social and economic value of each agricultural holding is the size of its land property (Mitrović, 2015).

Table 1: *Ownership structure of family holdings in Serbia, 2012.*

Size of the land property	% holdings		% areas	
	2002.	2012.	2002.	2012.
Up to 2 ha	42,8	47,2	41,5	34,4
1-3	30,3	22,4	21,9	24,8
3-5	12,1	12,8	10,6	14,7
5-8	10,1	10,2	10,6	12,8
8-10	4,1	3,8	11,8	10,6
More than 10 ha	2,6	3,6	3,6	2,7
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: Ševarlić, M. (2015). *Agricultural land - Census of Agriculture 2012*, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade.

Given that structural surveys are conducted in the form of a census every 10 years, Table 1 and Table 2 present the state of agricultural holdings in Serbia from 2012 (the next census is expected in 2022). The current structure of agricultural holdings is clearly shown in Table No. 1. The total number of agricultural holdings in Serbia has not significantly changed, but there was a further division of land property and changing its purpose. Average size of peasant land property in Serbia is 2.01 hectares, with an average of 5.3 parcels (Mitrović, 2015). In general, it is very poor agrarian-parcel structure, although its ultimate effects must always be viewed within the context of other natural and economic conditions, such as primarily geographical region, technical equipment, type of production and the rest.

Table 2: *Number and economic size of agricultural holdings in the Republic of Serbia by regions, 2012, (excluding the Kosovo and Metohija regions)*

	The Republic of Serbia	Belgrade Region	Vojvodina Region	Šumadija and Western Serbia Region	Southern and Eastern Serbia region
Family agricultural holdings					
Number	628552	33117	146269	261935	187231
Economic size in Euros	3136526046	145344061	1309594621	1079712999	601874365
Average economic size in Euros	4990	4389	8953	4122	3215
Legal entities and entrepreneurs					
Number	3000	127	1355	1005	513
Economic size in Euros	614264849	55375077	466664135	53197084	39028553
Average economic size in Euros	204755	436024	344402	52932	76079
Agricultural holdings, total					
Total	631552	33244	147624	262940	187744
Economic size in Euros	3750790895	200719138	1776258757	1132910083	640902918
Average economic size in Euros	5939	6038	12032	4309	3414

Source: *Cvijanović, D., Subić, J., Paraušić, V. (2014). Agricultural holdings by economic size and production type in the Republic of Serbia, Census of Agriculture 2012, Agriculture in the Republic of Serbia, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade.*

Based on the data from Table No. 2 we can conclude that the average economic size of agricultural holding in the Republic of Serbia in 2012 amounted to 5.939 Euros. If this data is observed by legal-organizational form of agricultural holdings, then we can conclude that in the sector of family holdings that same indicator was at 4.990 Euros and in the sector of legal entities and entrepreneurs 204.755 Euros.

Today, Serbia does not have as many agricultural cooperatives as there should be. At the same time, existing ones should be much better organized from all aspects. On the other hand, the real situation of cooperatives in our

country lags behind the actual social needs for various types of cooperatives. In the hilly-mountainous and southeastern areas of Serbia, wherever there are no cooperatives, there are no people as well. With the establishment of agricultural, fruit growing, livestock, dairy, beekeeping and similar cooperatives, those who have not yet migrated would stay in vilages, and only in such a way could someone come back from the city where they lost their job or have no prospect of finding another one and therefore ensure a decent living for them and their family. Starting from the existing situation, there is a number of problems in our country that could be more easily solved with the help of the institutions of cooperative type, such as: ensuring the cheapest food supply, supply of consumer goods at affordable prices, employment of the unemployed, solving the housing problems of the poor, optimal and versatile development of rural regions and providing the best quality food.

The factor that intensively disturbs agricultural potential is reflected in the expansion of cities and the conversion of agricultural land into construction land. This is a very unfavourable tendency of reduction of total agricultural, arable areas. In this way, in the last three decades, the agriculture of Serbia has lost about 1/3 of the total and mainly arable areas. One of the reasons for abandoning the cultivation of agricultural land is also very low selling price of agricultural products in larger settlements.

Furthermore, the particularly worrying factor or problem is the expansion and strengthening of large shops. In Serbia today, hypermarkets are not only conquering the market of agricultural products but also controlling food prices. At the same time, monopolies are acting in the field of import and export of food products, but also in selling necessary materials, machinery and equipment in agriculture, which is something that affects small and poorly organized farmers and traditional peasants who cannot compete with them on the market. It is natural that the big players in the market are stronger, but they cannot be the only ones in the hierarchy of things, so for a modern social and agricultural structure is not rational to allow those who are lesser and smaller to disappear. Primarily, they must have sustainable development ensured, preferably with as large as possible share of their small, but optimally integrated material and spiritual, economic, social and cultural resources that would be activated as a hidden and unused capital. The cooperative is the only and so far the most rational form of such a unification and therefore must in all possible ways be encouraged and preserved - not only in the village and agriculture, but also

in various forms of urban cooperatives whose tradition in our country is not as old and deep as the one of the agricultural cooperatives.

The potential of rural areas

Rural tourism is an important component of integrated and sustainable rural development, as well as an important factor in encouraging the development of local agricultural and non-agricultural activity in the village, but represents also a special incentive for employment. There is no commonly accepted definition of rural tourism since different countries have different criteria for defining a rural area (Vujko et al., 2017). Many authors have dealt with the topic of rural tourism from different aspects (Bičanin, 2018). From the aspect of theoretical determination of rural area in Serbia Cvijanović & Ružić (2017) have dealt with this topic. Ristić et al., (2016) point to the necessity of giving priority to rural tourism development as an essential component of the revitalization of villages and local communities. Rural tourism is a very broad concept that encompasses not only rural holidays but also all other tourist activities in rural areas (Cvijanović et al., 2018). In the most countries of the European Union, strategies for development of regions and rural areas also included rural tourism, which creates new jobs and contributes to socio-economic progress of the underdeveloped and undeveloped areas, helps in retaining the population in the village, which should be paid special attention to in the reform process in order to dynamize growth rates of tourism industry. Rural tourism "through tourism consumption generates general economic growth and development at all levels of the economy" (Ružić, & Amidžić, 2019, p. 65).

Rural tourism is at the same time an old and a new phenomenon. The interest in recreation in the rural areas started to grow already in the nineteenth century as a reaction to the growing pressure of urbanization and industrialization. The term agritourism or rural tourism was adopted by the European Commission for Tourism in order to describe and explain all tourist activities in agri-rural areas.

Serbia has great untapped potential for the development of rural tourism (Labović, 2015). Natural beauty combined with the culture, tradition, gastronomic specialties, and music can become a recognizable tourist brand, which would contribute to a significant foreign currency income and improve the country's image. According to a broader definition, rural tourism includes a wide range of activities, services and pleasures provided

by the farmers and peasants in order to attract tourists to their area in order to create additional revenue. Therefore, rural tourism with its potential represents a significant resource for economic status of population in the village, but also for the development of the tourist offer of the Republic of Serbia is general. In its offer, rural tourism includes various forms of tourist activities in different stages of development: agritourism, agricultural holding, farms; outdoor activities; eco tourism; cultural tourism; manifestation tourism; gastronomic tourism and other combined forms of the tourism of special interests.

In foreign literature, there is a number of papers in which the authors give examples of how to attract tourists to rural areas through the promotion of idealized symbolic cultural environment. Rural areas are now increasingly seen as places for entertainment, leisure activities, as well as a second house and as a substitute for life in the city. These trends question the relationship between rural tourism and culinary heritage (Bessière, 1998). Discussing the need and desire of the visitors to learn much more during their stay in rural areas, through which the connection among all types of tourism is actually seen, Bessière (1998) points out that "such knowledge can be acquired through a series of cultural events such as traditional cuisine, regional languages, handicrafts, folklore, local visual arts, acting, literary events, historic and prehistoric excavations, beautiful landscape, flora and fauna" (p.10). In the recent years, agro-tourism, as part of rural tourism and a direction in tourism industry has crystallized in the territory of Serbia. It takes place on agricultural estates where there is a possibility for being provided with food and drinks and/or accommodation along with the basic agricultural activity (Miletić & Todorović 2003). Catering industry, with a strong gastronomic specificity, is an integral segment of activities within the agro and rural tourism, called gastronomic tourism. The base of this type of rural tourism is production of specialties in a traditional way and to a large extent is determined by the specificity of environment. The original national dishes - gastronomic specialties are served in a traditional peasant way and everything is from domestic production.

The main objective of rural tourism is that -based on tourist demand, the rural population is provided with additional earning and thereby their standard of living is improved and migration are reduced, especially of young people from rural areas. The success of a business depends also on the way and ability to fit into the new market and business environment (Radević et al., 2016). The goal of implementing the tourism policies relating to rural tourism should be reflected in the fostering of growth of

living standard of population in the regions attractive for tourist trade, so that at least for the beginning it satisfies their basic needs. Local population should be associated with tourist activities and participate in equitable distribution of economic, social and cultural benefits they generate, particularly in direct and indirect jobs resulting from them.

Rural tourism is a real asset for the revitalization of many small and large rural spatial units, which, if they have not already completely disappeared, are then dormant. Tourism development in these areas can stop the migrations of young people, because development of tourism today means creating basic conditions for a general, much higher mutual comfort of rural settlements. In such circumstances young people can find not only economic, but also socio-cultural motives to continue living in family hearths in areas where the general quality of life is really approaching a level that is today in the world and the region considered as necessary. Fifteen years ago this was realized by Croatia, Bulgaria and Slovenia. The economies of these countries are featured by similar share of agricultural land in total land, share of arable land in total land, value of arable land per person, share of agriculture in GDP and agriculture employment and also by well preserved and rich in biodiversity environment (Stojadinović Jovanović & Dašić, 2015). As shown by available literature (Baćac, 2003), rural tourism in Croatia and tourism in agricultural holdings are in starting, pioneering stage. In the last 10 years, rural tourism has mostly gained in importance in the inner part of Istria. In Istria, there are 126 households of various category of offer: agritourism (agricultural products and tourist services), rural houses, rural family hotels, wine cellars, rooms and apartments in rural households, with 982 beds, with an average annual visit of 110 days (Baćac, 2003). In Bulgaria, the first successful beginnings of rural tourism were achieved in the picturesque Rhodope village of Momchilovtsi, where tourists are offered all the benefits of rural tourism, from 23 churches in the surrounding area to culinary specialties and excursions to exotic places (Ivanova & Delibatova, 2003). Development of rural areas and villages' revaluation - The Integral Development of Rural Areas and Renovation of Villages, IDRARV' project - in Slovenia runs from 1991. At the beginning, the project started with 14 rural areas, and in 1998 the project included about 100 rural areas (Koščak, 1998).

Development of tourism in the villages of Serbia, as an organized activity, began a little over a quarter of a century. Beginnings of tourism development themselves in the villages are related to the spontaneous movement of tourists, who wanted, at least briefly, to escape from the

urban, ecologically polluted areas, and spend some time in nature. At the beginning, only individual households dealt with this type of tourism. Over time, fueled by tourism organizations and other state bodies, tourism in the village has achieved mass character. In order to develop tourism in mainly hilly-mountainous villages, tourism associations started to be established and this activity has been joined by cooperatives and the catering-tourist industry. According to information from the archives of tourism associations in the late eighties of the last century, 50 villages with nearly 3,000 beds in 800 households in Serbia were engaged in tourism. Identifying families, elderly people, young people, active tourists, etc., as various categories of potential visitors plays a key role in the formation of an adequate offer. Each of these categories of visitors has different preferences, interests and requirements, so it is necessary for each of these segments to form a various offers and services within rural tourism.

Rural areas account for about 90% of Serbia and about 43% of the total population live in them. Rural tourism in Serbia does not have a long tradition; 70's of the 20th century can be considered as the beginning of development of rural tourism and villages Seča Reka, Sirogojno etc. as pioneers. Although Serbia has a diverse structure of attractiveness, it is not accompanied by an adequate profile of tourist products. Before that rural tourism rarely appeared in the tourist offer of Serbia. Fragmented and dispersed peasant land properties, orientation to the other forms of tourism and massiveness, insufficiently developed awareness of environmental values, are just some of the factors that have contributed to the weak development of this form of tourism. Considering all key tourist attractions initial offers were profiled some 20+ years ago. The same remained non-modernized because of the absence of Serbia from international tourist market, and thus without greater bargaining power towards buyers.

By their specificity, ethno houses stand out primarily due to their entire economy. They are built in traditional style of folk architecture of Serbian population and population of Slovak, Romanian, Bunjevac, Croatian and others ethnicity in Serbia. Also, they have elements of individual agricultural holding, where the base is preservation of traditional agricultural activities, based on multi-ethnicity, folklore, customs, and represent the cultural heritage. In the territory of Serbia, several distinctive ethno houses stand out: in Belo Blato (municipality of Zrenjanin), in Torak (municipality of Žitište), in Kovačica, in Tršić (municipality of Loznica), in Struganik (municipality of Mionica), in Ravni (Knjaževac), salaši in

Vojvodina (municipalities of Subotica, Sombor, Novi Sad, Srbobran, Bečej).

Rural tourism refers to a range of activities, services and additional contents organized by rural population. Ethno-settlements, which represent the old village Serbian folk architecture, represent a space that combines mentioned activities. In the territory of Serbia, there are following ethno-settlements: Sirogojno (municipality of Užice), Koštunići (municipality of Gornji Milanovac), Drvengrad (Mećavnik).

Table 3: *Villages in Serbia in which rural tourism is the most developed*

Municipality	Villages engaged in tourism
Kosjerić	Seča Reka, Donji Taor, Mionica, Skakavci
Kragujevac	Ramaća, Stragari, Kamenica, Duleni
Knić	Borač, Žunje, Grabovac, Lipnica, Bare
Ivanjica	Lisa, Kušići, Katići, Međurečje, Devići
Gornji Milanovac	Koštunići, Savinac, Pranjani, Gojna gora, Brusnica, Bogranica
Valjevo	Petnica, Stave, Popučke, Valjevska Kamenica
Kraljevo	Lopatnica
Čajetina - Zlatibor	Gostilje, Trpkovo, Ljubiš Rožanstvo, Sirogojno,
Ljubovija	Ljubovija
Sokobanja	Trubarevac, Jošanica, Mužinac
Sombor	Bezdan, Doroslovo, Stapar, Bački Monoštor
Knjaževac	Vlaško Polje, Kalna, Crni vrh, Vrtovac
Subotica	Palić, Kelebija
Majdanpek	Mišin breg, Rudna glava, Crnajka

Source: *Internet Serbia Travel News, Village idyll*, <http://istnews.com/202-seoski-turizam-srbije/>

The use of services of rural tourism by domestic and foreign tourists has changed over the last decade. Growth was especially recorded in visits to rural areas by domestic tourists thanks to the distribution of vouchers to all adult citizens whose income is less than 60,000 RSD from the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Communications. All the vouchers of 5,000 RSD worth have been distributed to citizens of the Republic of Serbia in the last three years, and the results of increasing visits to spas, mountains and ethno houses suggest an obvious increase in the provision of tourist services of that type in rural areas.

On average, rural tourism in Serbia covers 408,580 overnight stays, or about 6.2% of the total number of overnight stays in Serbia. Domestic visitors account for nearly 100% of all rural tourism visitors in Serbia

(Tourism Development Strategy in Serbia from 2015 to 2020). The average price of housing in mentioned buildings for accommodation of rural tourist is 15 Euros, which means that the average income of rural tourism based on accommodation-catering facilities is about 6.2 million Euros. Locally added value and multiplied effects of rural tourism in Serbia cannot be precisely determined, because there are no appropriate parameters to express that. According to the estimate of authors of the Tourism Development Strategy in Serbia from 2015 to 2020 (Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications Republic of Serbia, 2016), rural tourism in Serbia covers 9.6% of the total number of overnight stays, with estimate of market potential from 1,000,000 to 1,500,000 overnight stays in rural tourism, and the share of foreign guests in the total number of overnight stays will be 15%. A particular asset in the increase in the number of overnight stays in the upcoming period are the spas and mountains that made Serbia famous in the region and the world. The latest statistical data on tourist trade in the spas and mountains in the Republic of Serbia indicate that there is a growth in trade comparing with preceding period (Table No. 4 and 5, the column arrivals / index), which confirms that the aforementioned estimates are real and that the flow of growth of tourist trade goes according to the predicted plan. Of course, this course will certainly be the base for future strategies of growth and development of rural tourism in the Republic of Serbia, which should also include the prediction of socio-political measures for the return of young people, especially young couples, to the village. Reforms in agriculture, with significant financial and material support of the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Social Policy, Ministry of Economy and Tourism will adopt and apply necessary measures that countries in the region successfully applied (Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovenia).

Tourism trade in spas in Serbia, expressed by the total number of tourist arrivals (670.044) in 2019 increased by 12% compared to the same period in 2018. The increase in the number of arrivals of domestic tourists (547.239) was 12,2%, while the increase in the number of arrivals of foreign tourists (122.805) was 12,1%.

The total number of nights spent in spas in 2019 (2.781.627) increased by 9,4% compared to the same period in 2018. The number of nights spent by domestic guests (2.427.434) increased by 9% and the number of nights spent by foreign tourists (354.193) increased by 12,1%. In terms of the tourist turnover, Vrnjačka Banja is the leading tourist destination, which has grown by 14,4% in terms of tourist arrivals (283.491), or 10,9% growth

in nights spent (907.892). Sokobanja recorded the largest increase in total arrivals (23,4%), while Gamzigradska Banja recorded the largest increase in total overnight stays (35,1%).

Table 4: *Tourist trade in the spas of Serbia in 2019*

January - December 2019.	ARRIVALS					
	Total	Index	Domestic	Index	Foreign	Index
The Republic of Serbia	3.689.983	107,6	1.843.432	107,2	1.846.551	108,0
Spa Centers	670.044	112,3	547.239	112,3	122.805	112,1
Vrnjačka Banja	283.491	114,4	230.887	115,2	52.604	111,1
Sokobanja	124.877	123,4	108.151	122,9	16.726	126,8
Arandjelovac- Bukovička Banja	32.885	97,9	27.198	100,2	5.687	88,2
Mataruška Banja	394	92,5	374	93,5	20	76,9
Banja Koviljača	24.322	100,7	18.725	100,6	5.597	101,1
Prolom Banja	18.227	102,9	14.343	100,8	3.884	111,5
Gornja Trepča	12.269	105,6	10.808	106,8	1.461	97,5
Vranjska Banja	3.050	133,5	2.890	136,4	160	97,0
Banja Kanjiža	12.892	104,7	8.811	110,7	4.081	93,8
Banja Junaković	10.630	102,8	8.813	105,8	1.817	90,4
Banja Vrdnik	28.700	103,2	23.249	102,5	5.451	106,4
Banja Rusanda	1.315	103,9	1.202	100,0	113	176,6
Banja Palić	33.668	111,4	20.779	113,2	12.889	108,6
Selters Banja	5.612	100,4	5.399	100,3	213	104,4
Lukovska Banja	12.877	93,6	11.428	95,3	1.449	82,4
Gamzigradska Banja	2.072	110,2	1.685	95,4	387	336,5
Ribarska Banja	9.810	95,8	9.400	95,0	410	118,5
Sijarinska Banja	8.742	109,3	8.395	109,5	347	103,9
Banja Vrujci	10.542	96,8	9.910	96,9	632	95,9
Niška Banja	3.728	83,7	2.612	78,6	1.116	98,8

Source: *Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2020, Tourist traffic, December 2019, <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2020/Pdf/G20201020.pdf> (28 February 2020)*

Tourist trade in the mountain centers of Serbia, expressed by the total number of tourist arrivals (638.521), increased by 7% in 2019 compared to the same period in 2018, while the total number of nights (2.302.273) increased by 5,9%. The number of arrivals of domestic tourists (502.607) increased by 5,9% compared to the same period in 2018, while the number of arrivals of foreign tourists (135.914) increased by 11,5%. The largest

increase in the total number of arrivals was recorded at Goč (30,5%). Of the other mountain centers, the largest increase in the number of arrivals was recorded at Divčibare (12,1%) and Tara (10,2%).

Table 5: *Tourist trade in the mountains in Serbia for 2019*

January - December 2019.	ARRIVALS					
	Total	Index	Domestic	Index	Foreign	Index
The Republic of Serbia	3.689.983	107,6	1.843.432	107,2	1.846.551	108,0
Mountain centers	638.521	107,1	502.607	105,9	135.914	111,5
Zlatibor	237.064	109,1	168.067	105,9	68.997	117,8
Kopaonik	135.613	102,7	107.422	101,6	28.191	107,1
Tara	69.847	110,2	64.635	110,8	5.212	104,2
Mokra Gora	16.325	112,1	7.747	109,3	8.578	114,8
Divčibare	42.130	98,8	41.195	99,7	935	70,4
Ivanjica	13.075	105,3	11.584	106,3	1.491	97,7
Zlatar	16.506	102,2	14.637	102,8	1.869	97,5
Rudnik	4.400	99,5	4.400	99,5	-	-
Stara Planina	21.873	106,6	17.342	105,9	4.531	109,6
Goč	12.513	130,5	12.511	130,4	2	-

Source: *Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2020, Tourist traffic, December 2019, <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2020/Pdf/G20201020.pdf> (28 February 2020)*

In the same period, the number of overnight stays of domestic tourists (1.919.201) increased by 4,9% and foreign (383.072) by 11% compared to the same period in 2018. The largest increase in the total number of overnight stays in 2019 was recorded in Tara (91,8%) and in Mokra Gora (64,9%). The number of tourist arrivals (237.064) and the number of overnight stays (777.057) was led by Zlatibor.

Despite the well-equipped accommodation facilities and somewhat thoughtful program of stay, the problems in the further development of rural tourism to be worked on in Serbia are:

- Insufficient education of rural households about the way of accepting and hosting visitors, especially those close to spas and mountains;
- Insufficient number of tourist points in the villages, especially in mountain villages and spas, which are engaged in this type of tourism and poor connection with municipal tourism organizations and the Tourist Organization of Serbia,

- Insufficient and inadequate infrastructure (modern access roads, sewerage, hygienic drinking water and other ancillary facilities like a health clinic, post office, shops, restaurants).

Conclusion

The presented results from the research are focused on showing a clear picture of the state of the rural areas in the field of agri tourist potential. Reforms since 1945 to date have not given long-term results, and the wars of the nineties had a devastating and destructive impact on agrarian and tourist potential of our society. Today's economic trends and the Euro-integration processes in the region indicate that significant reforms are needed in the field of agrarian and tourism policies. In the last three decades, the agriculture of the Republic of Serbia lost about 1/3 of the total area, and most of all arable area. One of the reasons for abandoning the cultivation of agricultural land is also very low selling price of agricultural products in larger settlements.

Associations in agricultural cooperatives as the only form of survival of small family agricultural estates are the only sustainable solution that we see, and such agricultural structure in Serbia would be different and more effective than today. Today small family agricultural estates with land property of about 2 ha make up a quarter of all agricultural family estates, where the average economic value of family agricultural estate is around 5,000 Euros. As such it is unsustainable in the competition in the global market and liberalized legal framework of trade of agricultural products, reproductive materials, machinery and equipment. Without the survival of more than a half of agricultural family estates and households, the rapid emptying of not only over a thousand villages in Serbia, but also a large and strategically important border areas of Serbia will continue to happen.

Presented statistical data on tourist trade in the rural areas, spas and mountains in the Republic of Serbia indicate that there is a growth in trade compared to the previous period, which confirms that the strategic estimates of the growth of tourist trade in rural areas were real and that the current growth flow is going as planned. However, despite relatively well-equipped accommodation facilities and somewhat thoughtful program of stay, problems in further development of rural tourism in Serbia are the insufficient education of interested agricultural households about the method of accepting and hosting visitors, the insufficient number of tourist

points in the villages, fewer young people in the villages, poorly developed infrastructure and road network.

It is expected that this course will be the base for future strategies of growth and development of rural tourism in the Republic of Serbia, which should also include the prediction of policy measures for the return of young people, especially young couples, to the village. Reforms in agriculture, with significant financial and material support of the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministries of Social Affairs, Ministry of Economy and Tourism will adopt and apply the necessary measures that countries in the region successfully applied.

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