Agrotourism as a factor of sustainable rural development

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Abstract. The article substantiates a new integrated approach to the development of rural tourism, contributing to the sustainable development of rural areas. The authors analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the further development of agritourism, as well as opportunities and threats. Using a common indicator of the joint development of agriculture and rural tourism, the researchers assessed the opportunities for sustainable development of rural areas in Russia. As a result of research, the authors proposed a concept for the development of agritourism in Russia.

1. Introduction
Agritourism in Russia is a dynamically developing type of activity in the agricultural territories of the country. Currently, this type of vacation has not yet gained much popularity among Russian tourists, as, for example, in European countries, but every year it is becoming more and more popular.

The purpose of agritourism in Russia is to form a new integrated tourism product that contributes to the sustainable development of rural areas. In turn, the sustainable development of rural areas can be understood as the optimization of development parameters, regarding for the limits of growth, objectively set by the internal characteristics of the system and external factors.

The relevance of the development of agritourism in Russia is stipulated by:

- low level of socio-economic development in rural areas;
- ongoing outflow of residents from the village;
- lack of opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises that are not capable of modernization or cooperation to engage in another type of activity;
- remoteness of inland rural territories from large centers;
- low level of development of organized domestic tourism;
- demand for inexpensive vacations.

Estimated by the Federal Tourism Agency the current share of rural tourism does not exceed 2% of the entire tourism market in Russia; and its social basis is a small layer of large cities’ residents having higher education and income ranging from average to above average. However, in many European countries income from the tourism industry ranges from 15 to 30% of the total income. It should also be noted that different countries are building up completely different concepts of agritourism development (table 1).
Table 1. Agritourism development concepts in selected countries.

| Countries                  | Varieties of Concept                                                                 |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| European countries         | Small family hotel development in local provinces                                    |
| Tropical countries (Sri Lanka) | Large private tourist centers focused on the use of rural tourism resources operate within the tourism industry |
| Tropical countries (Malaysia) | Establishing agricultural parks, being mainly state organizations promoting national agriculture and generating tourism income |

According to the Federal State Statistics Service, the unemployment rate among rural residents (8.0%) exceeds the unemployment rate among urban residents (3.9%). In December 2018, this excess was 2.1 times. This is the largest group of unemployed in Russia [1]. Total rural employment is constantly falling. These problems orient towards a growing interest in rural tourism, as one of the ways to the unemployment problem solution. Taking into account the real and predictable situation in the agricultural labor market, due to the expected modernization of the industry, the enormous importance of small business development in the countryside especially outside the agricultural sector becomes obvious. The problem of rural employment, despite certain advances in its solution, remains acute, especially in consideration of the inaccuracy of information on levels of employment and unemployment [2]. Below are the types of activities that rural residents would engage in if they lost their jobs and with state support, according to the 2018 polls: agricultural entrepreneurship - 31.2%; rural tourism - 7.9%; trade in agricultural goods - 22.3%; consumer services - 11.7%; folk crafts and crafts - 26.9% of the total number of respondents.

As we can see, rural residents mostly do not see “agritourism” as a solution to their problems. Most of them prefer traditional activities. But at the same time, more than 60 percent of respondents are going to work in tourism-related areas (in trade, folk crafts, etc.). On the other hand, the demand for travel to the countryside is based on an important trend - the desire to gain experience and lively impressions. Industrial countries have reached a stage where the driving force for economic growth is no longer the desire of people to consume more goods, but their desire to receive “live impressions” and experience” [3].

2. Analysis of the potential of agritourism in Russia

Agritourism, as a form of individual relaxation, satisfies the needs of various groups of the middle class [4]. Agrotourism is one of the promising directions of tourism development, which has strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of development (table 2).

Table 2. SWOT analysis of the development of agritourism in Russia.

| Strengths                                             | Weaknesses                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Availability of natural resources                     | Lack of regulatory support for this type of activity             |
| High agricultural potential                           | Lack of standards and regulations applicable in the field of rural tourism, as a special sector of industry |
| Diversified orientation of peasant and small holdings | Lack of qualified personnel                                     |
| The potential of Russian culture and traditional Russian hospitality | Low living standards of the rural population, respectively, the lack of comfortable conditions for tourists’ accommodation |
|                                                       | Limited external communications in rural areas                   |
|                                                       |                                                                  |
| Opportunities                                         | Threats                                                          |
| Favorable investment climate for the                  | Loss of market due to low level of service                       |
|                                                       |                                                                  |
| Implementation of agro-tourism development projects | Rising prices for agritourism services and, as a consequence, a reduction in the flow of inbound tourists |
| Creation of additional jobs | Socio-economic and political destabilization in Russia |
| Rural small business development | Growth of problems associated with environmental degradation |
| Rising incomes and improving living standards of rural residents | Lack of synchronization of government support measures |
| Revitalization of social infrastructure in rural areas | Increasing tax burden on tourism industry enterprises |
| Promoting the protection of local attractions | Significant risks are connected with a possible increase in the environmental burden on tourist areas, in which the tourist flow will grow rapidly. |
| Raising the cultural level of the rural population | |
| Reducing the migration of rural youth to the city | |
| Expanding the boundaries of the tourist season | |
| Attraction of foreign tourists | |

Conducted SWOT - analysis indicates the huge potential of agritourism in Russia. Our country has unique climatic, cultural and historical features that create ideal conditions for the development of rural tourism [5]. However, in the administrative sense, rural tourism is a concept that is still practically non-existent. Logically, it is at the junction of agriculture and traditional tourism, but in practice there is no single economic policy for the development of rural tourism in Russia. The term itself is mentioned only in some State Standards as well as recently introduced as a separate amendment to the Federal Law "On Peasant (Farm) Farming". However, at the moment there is not a single regulatory document that defines what exactly is included in the concept of rural tourism. Accordingly, there is no distribution of competencies between various departments for regulating the development of this type of tourism. On the one hand, it is good since excessive regulation can kill a nascent industry. On the other hand there is a lack of support from state bodies or public organizations. In Europe, agritourism is most often regulated by agricultural or general economic departments, rather than state bodies. After all, rural tourism is primarily a way of solving social problems of the village (jobs, preserving the village, etc.) and supporting farmers, and only in the second place is an instrument for the development of domestic tourism. In addition, the automatic application of national tourism rules and regulations to rural tourism will simply paralyzes the development of the industry (it is completely impossible to evaluate accommodation facilities in rural tourism according to the general rules of the tourism industry) [6].

3. The concept of sustainable development of agritourism

It is possible to assess the attractiveness of the Russian Federation for the development of agritourism from the point of view of the joint development of agriculture and rural tourism on the rating basis of Russian regions developed by the World Tourism Organization experts (table 3).
Table 3. Suitability of Russian regions for joint agricultural and agro-tourism activities (a 10-point scale rating).

| Sector                          | Regions of Russia |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
|                                | Central | Northwestern | Southern | North Caucasian | Volga | Uralian | Siberian | Far Eastern |
| Agriculture                    | 5       | 2            | 9        | 7                | 7     | 2       | 3        | 2           |
| agritourism                    | 9       | 8            | 7        | 3                | 3     | 8       | 8        | 7           |
| Aggregated indicator for both  | 7       | 5            | 8        | 5                | 5     | 5       | 6        | 5           |

As follows from the above estimates, the opportunities for agriculture and the development of agritourism in the regions of the country are very diverse. At the same time, regions in which farming is cost-effective have low conditions for the development of agritourism. And vice versa, in the presence of optimal conditions for the development of agritourism, indicators of agricultural production are at middle and below middle levels. Simultaneous farming and rural tourism can compensate for seasonal fluctuations and natural peculiarities of the regions of Russia.

Taking into account the specificity and diversity of regional conditions in Russia, it is obvious that the national concept of the agritourism development should not be reduced to one direction (model). The concept should include several models that are promising for the conditions of Russia, and in different regions different models could be used as the basis for the development of concepts, depending on the goals that are set in a particular case.

The following directions (models) could be promising in the conditions of Russia:

I. Creation of regional agro-tourism networks through the development of small, family and individual agro-tourism businesses based on existing rural tourism resources: accommodation facilities (small family hotel facilities) and agro-tourism infrastructure (including various agro-tourism facilities and types of business related to agro-tourism). The organization of an efficiently operating network of private agritourism farms in the territory of the tourist region implies the creation of a state support system at the center or, at least, at the regional level [7].

II. Re-creating the socio-cultural environment of a historical settlement - a “historical village”, a “national village” or another type of settlement (nomad camps, etc.), re-creating the socio-cultural environment of other historical objects (noble and merchant estates, monasteries, etc.).

III. Creation of large and medium-sized specialized agritourism facilities focused on the reception of tourists and their good rest arrangement. These can be specialized centers (sports, cultural, culinary, etc.), stylized “agrotourism villages”, as well as “fishing”, “hunting villages”, etc.

IV. Creation of state and private agricultural parks as large multifunctional tourist, exhibition, advertising and exhibition, cultural and propaganda, research and production, etc. complexes with accommodation facilities and appropriate infrastructure.

Each of the listed agritourism models has been tested to this or that extent in world practice [8]. The concept of agritourism development in Russia should be comprehensive: due to the enormous variety of conditions in the territory of our country, all these directions (models) can be incorporated into it, and their practical implementation will depend on regional characteristics. Each of the models
considered requires a different degree of participation of authority structures of three levels. This aspect should be considered when developing regional integrated concepts and model selection.

In addition to the political support of the authorities of three levels, the key to the agritourism development is the solution of legal, financial, informational and organizational support problems, as well as the personnel training. However, the production of agro-tourism product is basically of collective nature and requires partnerships of the authorities - business - the local community.

The implementation of a comprehensive concept for the agritourism development, based on the Strategy for the Development of Tourism in the Russian Federation until 2035, consists of the following stages: formation of a base for rural tourism development; sustainable growth and developed market [6].

The formation of a rural tourism development base covers the periods from 2019-2025. This stage provides for solving the problems of optimizing legislation, designing federal and regional development programs and state support for rural tourism, creating a personnel training system and personnel reserve, developing rural tourism infrastructure, replicating the successful experience of existing rural tourism facilities and launching new pilot projects.

Sustainable growth: period 2025–2030. It is expected that the potential accumulated at the previous stage will create a cumulative effect and will ensure a rapid increase in the number of rural tourism objects, the number of overnight stays and, accordingly, the direct financial effect from the development of rural tourism.

Developed market: 2030-2035. At this stage, there may be a slight decrease in the number of rural tourism objects due to the transition of the market to a mature stage of development, but at the same time, the profitability of existing facilities, the number of overnight stays and the total revenue for the industry will continue to grow. Also, the experience gained will allow us to make additional adjustments to the existing mechanisms of state support and rural tourism regulation. In addition, at this stage, the manifestation of the long-term effects of rural tourism development will become apparent: increasing the financial sustainability of farms, increasing the quality of life and consumption in rural areas, increasing the recognition of Russian farmers' products, including on the world market, owing to rural tourism.

![Figure 1. The expected dynamics of growth in revenue from rural tourism, 2019 - 2035, billion rubles.](image)

4. Conclusion
Expected results of the implementation of the agritourism development concept in the Russian province:
- volume of the agritourism market by 2035 will amount to 50 billion rubles. per year (growth by the current level – 7 times);
- creation of approximately 60 thousand new jobs in the countryside;
- need for state support to implement the goals and objectives of this concept will be about 15 billion rubles for the entire period;
- expected amount of direct tax revenues, with regard for the use of a uniform agricultural tax rate, for the entire period of the concept implementation will be about 7 billion rubles. With regard for the multiplier effect for other sectors of the economy it will account for 20-30 billion rubles. Thus, payback of the public investment in the implementation of this concept for the agricultural tourism development in Russia will be ensured.

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