

## THE POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL – AGROTOURISM IN HUNGARY

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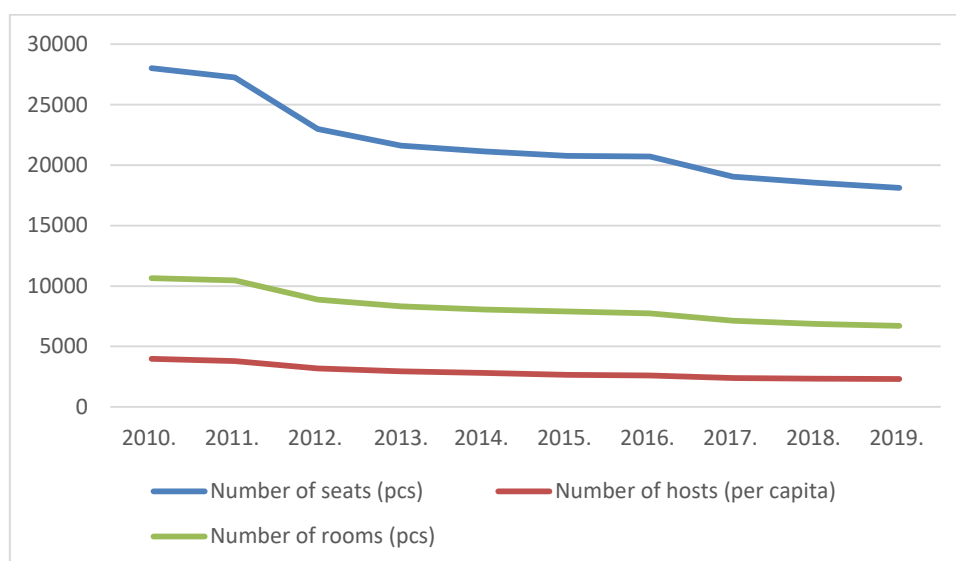
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**Abstract.** *As a consequence of the pandemia of coronavirus 19, in 2020-21, there is an increasing demand for the internal tourism, and among the alternative touristic products, the village- and agrotourism gaining higher popularity, as the other rural lifestyle touristic products. Thus, as a result of this fact, the Hungarian Touristic Agency, and The National Union of Rural-and Agrotourism (FATOSZ), together with the Government, decided to increase the quality of the touristic products. The aim of the ammendment of the National Strategy of Development of Tourism 2.0, is to establish sustainable, quality, rural tourism, and taking working people in agriculture into tourism. It benefits supplementary income for local people working in agriculture, and thus helps to implement integral rural development. Within the rural tourism, the agrotourism connected directly to the agricultural production, to the produced products, the realization of them, and running of the accomodation. To implement sustainable tourism, the responsible tourist aim to do the less impact on the environment and culture of the visited countryside. The caused harm is minimized by a responsible tourist, and interested in active way of life, and get acquainted with the local folk art.*

**Key words:** rural – and agrotourism, qualitative developments, sustainable development

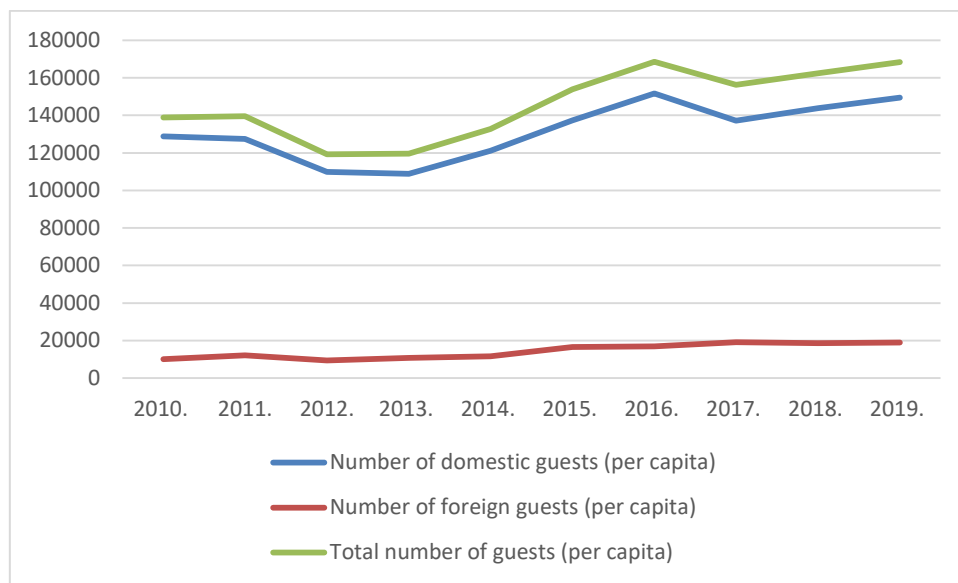
**1. Introduction.** The number of bed places, as well as number of available places decrease on the half from 2010 (Figure 1.) The legal classification of accomodations changed in autumn of 2009, and the prior classification changed from private accomodation on other accommodation (Remenyik & Sikó, 2007a). From 2010 the village-rural accomodation services were changed in classification, into other accomodation, at settlements with under 5000 inhabitants, therefore the decrease shown at figure 1. does not resembles the reality. We may suppose, that significant part of the hosts in 2010, stayed in settlement with inhabitants higher than 5000 (Remenyik & Sikó, 2007b). In the period of 2010 and 2019, the number of active units in rural tourism declined by more than 1000 units, what is representing nearly 25%. The largest decline was observed between 2011 and 2012, when the number of rural accomodation declined by 16, 1%. In the next few years may In the nex few years, In the next few years the accommodation operators can produce a significant increase in tourism products, if the favourable conditions are well exploited, as well as the awarded grants, (180 billion Fts). In the period under examination the number of rooms and beds ranged in a similar level during the period considered.



**Figure 1. The number of seats and hosts in rural tourism. (pcs) (Hungarian Statistical Office 2021a)**

The target group of the domestic rural tourism consists of those families with few children (Dashper, 2014). The economic and financial crisis started in 2009, decreased the most their their discretionary incomes (Molnár&Remenyik, 2017). In Hungary from 2014 the turism industry started a very rapid growth, however the number of domestic tourists in rural tourism increased more rapidly as the number of ourists from abroad. (Figure 2.)

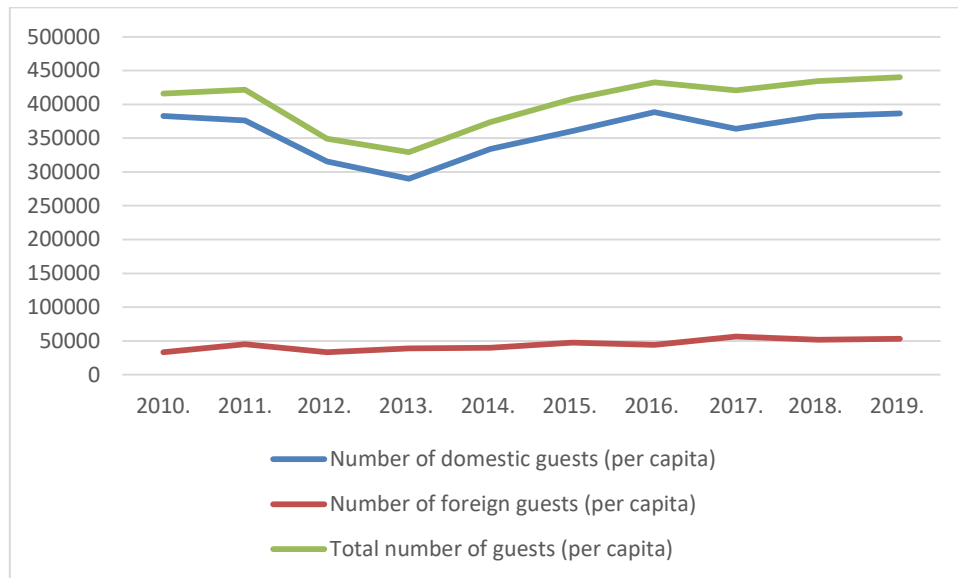
In the considered period the number of the domestic tourist was the highest in 2016, 150 655 guests, and this value shows a 28, 2% increase comparing with 2013.



**Figure 2. Number of domestic, and foreign guests in rural accommodation (per capita) (Hungarian Statistical Office 2021a)**

The change in the number of overnight stays affected by the decrease in the average overnight stay (Figure 3), the increase in numbers would be essential to modernise and improve quality in accordance with the requirements of the age. This is a good initiative for the quality label scheme developed by the FATOSZ (National Union of Rural and Agrotourism). In the case of domestic residents, the average duration of the stay during the period under consideration was the largest of 3 nights in 2010 and 2011. Studying foreigners was the highest in 2011, 3.7 nights. It is noted that the average length of time for foreign guests was over 3 nights in most of the years. On the other hand, in the case of domestic customers, most of the number

below 3 nights is the most characteristic. This is explained by the fact that in most cases tourists from abroad have made a longer journey to a particular settlement than domestic customers, so that it is not appropriate for them to arrive for a short period of time to turn off (Dupeyras&MacCallum 2013). During the year 2019, the average duration of the customer's overnight stay decreased to 2, 6 overnight.



**Figure 3. Number of overnight stays in rural areas (nights) (Hungarian Statistical Office 2021a)**

The number of guests in rural lodgings, examined in the county distribution, may be said that the most visitors arrived into county Heves and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, but the number of guest as approachin in Vas and Győr-Moson-Sopron County, where the quality of accommodation has been renewed. Most of the seats are provided by region of Northern- Hungary by 31%, representing 5 704 pieces. It follows this West- Danube region, (18%) with a capacity of 3 313 seats. In rural accommodation, the Pest County provides the lowest capacity by (5%), which represents 932 seats. Hungarian Statistical Office's data indicates that in most Regions between 2017 and 2019, there has been a decrease in the number of seats, however in the North-Region and South Plane-region the numbers of seats increased due to Union tenders.

**2. The impact on Rural lifestyle tourism.** The pandemic has not only contributed to the development of domestic tourism but also increased interest in remote accommodation from central infected areas.

As a result, the average prices of rural accommodation increased by 20% in 2020 compared to the year 2019, and rural accommodation showed the greatest improvement of all types of accommodation (Hungarian Statistical Office, 2021b). The special possibilities provided by accommodations backyard, in many cases, have remained attractive in the tourism market by their own pool, cookery facilities, nature-close recreational programmes (2021). Another factor in growth may be the shortening of the season, visiting period lasts from May 2020 till early autumn, which is less than the average, so that accommodation owners can compensate shortfall, they have to raise their prices. As a result of the pandemic, the demand is not stable, the economic situation is not safe, the occupancy rate of the capacity is not secured, thus the repayment of credits can also cause problems later. On the basis of the tourism website, the President of the FATOSZ asked the members of the association not to choose price reduction as method of problem solving, but by expanding their service package. With regard to the degree of time spent in rural tourism, we believe that the number of foreign guests could be increased by focusing on the development of accommodation, and hosts in particular specialize in their tourism products and developing appropriate marketing. These measures would increase the number of both domestic and foreign tourists (Streifeneder, 2016).

**3. Development of the quality tourism.** During our research, we have completed five deep interviews with the leaders of civil society organisations in rural tourism, both on the Hungarian and Austrian sides (Sommerauer, A.<sup>1</sup>, Szalók, Cs.<sup>2</sup>, Szirbik, I.<sup>3</sup>). We were trying to understand how the Austrian model was better than Hungarian. How can we build quality tourism in our country? In the area of the renewal of rural tourism, it is also important to develop sustainable and hospitable tourism. According to our 250-key questionnaire, the people in North Hungary are

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<sup>1</sup> Sommerauer A. secretary of Urlaub am Bauernhof

<sup>2</sup> Szalók Cs. chairman of FATOSZ

<sup>3</sup> Szirbik I. chief of Village Development Academy

considering the West-Danube Regio to the most hospitable destinies. This is not surprising, since the development of tourism products has started in the region of northern Hungary. The intertwining of health tourism has played a major role in rural tourism, since the Egerszalók's spa and climate conditions of Mátraszentimre have great attractiveness, and dams are of great attraction. Rural tourism in Western Danube Region shows significant development as well. Natural beauty, historical past, and cultural sights also greatly increase the popularity of this region. Those small villages in which any of these have great popularity, so Szalafő, Velem, and Órímagyarósd are well known among the participants of rural tourism.

**3.1. The Role of trade marks.** In Tirol, the Austrians built the system of village and agri-tourism the best, in respect of quality introduction of trade marks provided the most considerable change (Quendler, 2019a). The quality of private accommodation in rural tourism could be increased in a large extent by appropriate quality and / or leisure programmes (Quendler, 2019b). Those host can benefit competitive advantage, that are organized, and providing wide-range of services, focusing on guests (Strelli, 2013). Many things promote these services by offering different sights, landmarks, local attractions, and special natural conditions (WKO, 2018). The seasons also have great impact on the organisation and conduct of recreational programmes. For example, in summer, emphasis should be placed on bathing, tradition, in winter on winter-sports, and different winter traditions, domestic pig slaughter and processing. In spring and autumn, priority will be given to programmes organised to nature hikes, excursions and programmes organized to introduce various agricultural works. It could be said that tourism in rural areas is closely switched to leisure tourism, which can also be seen as a journey from the goal of acquiring an experience (Smeral, 2013). For a long time, people have travelled to change scenery and have recreation, but in the previous decades, consumers and travel habits have, tourists cultural and environmental sensitivity have been transformed. This is due to the increasing number of experienced travellers who know the advantages and disadvantages of the destinations in the competitive sphere, so that they consciously choose their destinations. Those tourism products are more

and more important which provide unique experiences, thus satisfying different individual needs of people. Demand for valent experiences shows an increasing trend, as today's needs are not met by simple rest, recreation-based programmes. (Sasu & Epuran, 2016)

We meet most of the trade marks in the area of accommodation, including the system of sunflower signs, introduced in the area of rural tourism, by the end of 2015, 1031 lodgers registered themselves in this system. This high number shows the need for a step in the quality renewal of accommodation. In rural accommodation, 1 to 4 sunflowers are used according to a number of qualification criteria, separate the external (building, yard) and internal (building, equipment) spaces, the different services and the personal conditions attached to them.

The trade mark bearing the trade mark “village accommodation sunflower” is a trade mark established and operated by the Minister directing Ministry responsible for tourism, the basic purpose of which is to provide, in accordance with the detailed conditions for the continuation of the accommodation service activity and the arrangements for issuing the accommodation service licence, in a solo 239 / 2009. (X) 20.) provide guarantee to the quality of the accommodation service, as provided in the Government Decree. The classification of services is based on a professional survey system drawn up by the National Association of Tourism and Agrotourism and approved by the Ministry responsible for tourism.

In the area of trade marks distribution, the province of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén will lead the line to the second place Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, third and fourth place Heves and Baranya County. All trade marks which issue accommodation may affect rural tourism as a tourist product. However, organic farming should also be labelled with a separate green sunflower ecolabel. The concept of eco-label covers a voluntary certification of a certain level of environmental performance. It is based on objective criteria and may be obtained by any product, factory or service provider which fulfils the required conditions at a given time (Buckley, 2002).

Eco-labels encourage businesses to pay greater attention to the requirements of environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability in their activities and to

behave responsibly to their environment. Eco-labels are suitable for distinguishing products and services that meet environmental, social and economic requirements at a higher level than required by the legislation. This distinguishing sign allows consumers to choose the product with the certificate knowingly and the companies which produce it and sell it can gain a competitive advantage (Statistic Austria, 2020).

**3. 1. 1. DOOR database.** Agricultural products and foodstuffs with protected designations of origin and protected geographical indications in European Union and registered traditional specialities guaranteed are contained in the DOOR database.

The product specification for agricultural products and foodstuffs, the description of the product specifications at the national stage of the uniformed protection procedure, is delivered by the Hungarian Council of Protection of origin (MET).

According to Government Decree 1374 / 2013. (VI.27.) of the Hungarian Council of Protection of origin, MET is a consultative body for the protection of agricultural products and foodstuffs for geographical indications as well as in procedures for the recognition of traditional specialities guaranteed by the Government's consultative body which has given opinions and proposals. The members of the MET shall be representatives of the competent authority branches and experts in the protection of the originals.

Regulation (EU, 2020) No 1308 / 2013 on the common organisation of agricultural product markets (e.g. cheese, dairy products, ham, wine) separately regulates possible derogations from the general rules applicable to products with a protected designation of origin or protected geographical indication, the possibility of creating any mandatory or restrictive national rules. As required by the MET criteria:

In the case of products with a protected designation of origin, all stages of production, processing and production must take place in the delimited geographical area.

In the case of products with a protected geographical indication, it is sufficient that the link exists only at one stage. Therefore, the raw material to be processed may



come from the broader area defined in the specification by more than the delimited area.

**3. 2. The Agrotourism in Austria.** Besides the introduction of trade marks, it was a very important issue in Tirol to strengthen agro-tourism. Austria's rural tourism offers us a wide variety of opportunities, and we can choose a broad range of options after deciding how we want to spend our rest, relaxation, sports or even introducing traditions.

Rural and agro-tourism have been operating throughout the country for the whole year so they could be used during any period of the year. For those who wish doing sport, a good start can be a village accommodation, since it is easy to go hiking, cycling, or bathing. Alpine refuge houses offer delicious food on their terraces with a beautiful view of the mountains in the region.

However, in addition to the starting point, an important location may be a village accommodation, since there can be a number of farmhouses on a number of farms, possibly riding stables, so horse-resorting participants who can take part in the cleaning and care of horses, learn to drive horses or ride horses. Baby and child-friendly accommodations for families with children serve as a large playground for their guests. In these places, there is a daily routine of living with domestic animals, a natural adventure, and a tranquillity in adults, rest. In Tirol, in the vicinity of the village lodgings, I can find wildcats with more animal species. On farms, we can meet even more hives, which can be viewed in a closer way under safe conditions. A number of guests have decided on a farm with weeds, where they can gain insight into the wonderful Gothic world of these plants.

During the holidays, many things can be learned, such as the recognition, exploitation, impact and findability of plants (Radlgruber, 2013). In the nine provinces of Austria, more than 3,000 farm farms can be found. Agricultural production and rural accommodation are closely linked, and Austrian farmers have a major role to play in rural tourism. Among the farmers, for example, there are horse breeders, winemakers, fruit farmers, or farmers. This adds a surplus to Austrian rural tourism, as they can create a special supply for tourists by presenting their farms,

providing their own-grown foods, which can be very attractive to tourists. Rural economies are very varied and the people leading the farm, who are also the householders, the hospitality accompany the visitors all their holiday.

There is a strong emphasis on the preserving cultural traditions that can be accessed by all guests. Householders welcome tourists in their homes and involve them in most of the household chores, so it is possible to collect weeds, cultivate animals, learn new recipes, and work around many other houses.

The quality of the holdings belonging to the “Village holiday in Austria” is regularly checked and the categorization is marked by flowers, while the two flowers are simple and well-priced rural accommodation, accommodations decorated with four flowers, large sports and wellness schemes and a high level of comfort awaiting the guests. However, in all rural accommodation, there is a common natural environment, idyllic, home-made delicacies and warm hospitality.

A number of bio-farms can also be found in Austria, the main component of the rooms and the equipments in them is wood deriving from their own forests. It is highly recommended to try out on the famous hay-bath, it not only smells great, but it also releases stress. So does wellness, which attracts to relax by saunas, infracabine, and surrounding mountains with a beautiful view. The bio-name here is not just an adjective, that sounds good, we can find real content behind it. Most of the owners of accommodations in Austrian rural tourism are in favour of healthy lifestyle, thus provides excellent conditions for visitors with various bio-food and we and wellness treatments providing by natural materials. In the rural tourism keeping traditions has a great role , and in Austria, people living in the country, are holding festives due to the seasonal change. During the September harvest, farmers have a number of events and waiting visiting tourists in their cellars, with good food, drinks. The feasts of the harvest are also held in September. In Styria, apple blossoms is celebrated and thousands of visitors arrive. Every summer in West Austria, the cattle are brought up grazing area to the Alpine pastures and will be taken down at the end of each summer. In Salzburg, Tirol and Vorarlberg, there is a serious tradition of this summer-end event, which is celebrated every year. In Tirol, they make headsets for

animals that march through the streets of communes during the ceremony (Gannon, 1994).

**3.3. Sustainable rural tourism.** The attractiveness of village and agri-tourism is given by the values of the rural, well kept rural environment, agricultural conditions having local and regional attractions, and is the core element, to which a great variety of products could be connected, and presented from the process of production to the guest-table. Touristic products have a common social experience and social responsibility as well as the emphasis on cultural tolerance. Participants in voluntary or charitable tourism typically undertake voluntary work in their leisure travel, typically to support the reduction of the poverty of certain social groups and to restore environmental problems.

This product can also be interpreted as an alternative of pro-poor tourism concept, which aims to help to segregated marginalised social layer. The community-based tourism (community-based tourism), it can also be interpreted as a strategy and product as well.

The planning of tourism, the production, placing on the market and management of tourism products are carried out by the local community, with profits from the sale of the tourism industry, but the community can also associate its values with a partner who is engaged in the development of its economy. A product-based interpretation of Community tourism in this approach can also ensure the preservation and livelihoods of a culture of traditional lifestyles, rural / tribal, often marginalised communities. Quiet and calm areas, free of authentic and possibly environmental harm, are of increasing interest. As MacCannell pointed out in 1973, there are two dimensions of the design of authentic supply (MacCannell, 1973). The so-called “front stage” autologicality focuses on the first meeting of guests on the new cultural environment, to attract attention. In fact this is an artificial credibility developed by the locals, in which the potential of stereotyping is used to attract customers mainly through elements linked mainly by the elements of the physical environment or historical traditions (such as some artificially created Indian reservations or even Hollókő). So-called real authentic supply (“back stage”) is what

a tourist does not see at first, which gives a glimpse into the locals live, that is real and not theatrical. Although it attracts other clientele, they both may have legitimacy. Individualisation, the emergence of individual needs in guests, leads to an increase of the ratio of the travel among individuals or families, or friendship groups as well.

The individual hospitality, service-seeking guest is looking for a smaller, family-faced guest house with a unique image. Many seek those service providers, who are capable to satisfy hobby needs, such as nature monitoring and photography, riding, fishing, cycling, or artisanal activity.

The guests are becoming more and more quality-oriented: they expect an orderly, comfortable, clean, at least the quality of the home, while at the same time a cozy, family type accommodations.

The concept of creativity becomes indispensable and facilitates the attraction of a new customer who is expected to acquire new knowledge of rural debt - cultural, professional, life-style, etc. - by developing diversified supply.

**4. Summary.** In Hungary, the combination of agricultural activities and rural accommodation is not typical, in our view this would contribute to the strengthening of the tourism product. On the other hand, in Austria, there are a lot of farms, economies giving an extra income for accommodation and catering. In Hungary, there are a number of farms in which this is working, so we believe that particular emphasis should be placed on setting up, and supporting such economies. With this initiative, many rural municipalities could develop in the future. The importance of specialisation is present in both countries, but with the presence of agricultural land in Austria, it is easier to develop and dream specific services. However, despite of this, they are trying to specialise in domestic rural tourism, as they are aware of the importance of this. Austria exploits all benefits of its natural and man-made attractiveness in rural tourism. In Hungary, the regions Matra, Bükk and Bakony regions have excellent natural conditions, man-made attractiveness, so from the point of view tourism and rural tourism could as well, become the most visited destinations of Hungary. A number of programs, an event that attracts tourists, even attract these areas.

In conclusion, it could be said that, the introducing of Dr. Laszló Csizmadia's system of sunflowers trade mark launched favourable process in the field of rural tourism. It would be worthwhile to further increase confidence in the visits by introducing additional trade marks, thereby contributing to the development of the responsible village tourist type. The functioning of the trade marks will help the development of local products as well, their participation in the DOOR programme can also get greater visibility, thus they even may become part of the world heritage within a reasonable time.

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