

Agro Tourism for Economic Development of Related Sectors and Sustainable Well-being (Case of Georgia)

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

A huge number of studies point out the importance of sustainable productivity growth in global agriculture, in particular for developing economies. Often, it is considered one of the main driver of sustainable economic growth in agricultural sector. This is true for Georgia as well. Improving agricultural productivity, while conserving and enhancing natural resources, is an essential requirement for farmers to increase global food supplies on a sustainable basis. The success of developing countries in increasing agricultural productivity will have global implications in strengthening the resilience of food markets, enhancing food security, improving wellbeing and promoting sustainability. Besides the agriculture tourism sector in general have had a positive influence on output and productivity, especially in poor economies. Tourism can be one of the most important vehicle for growth and growth-related reforms in under-developed countries. However these countries have many political, institutional and economic problems that must be undressed in order to overcome vicious circle of poverty and increase the level of well-being of nations. It can play significant positive role in addressing these issues. However new and innovative approaches are needed for fostering economic growth and development in global arena and in poorest countries. Agro tourism and related sectors can be one such new way for developing countries struggling with poverty and unemployment. In agriculture the productivity of farms can be improved through economies of scale and the adoption of more technically-efficient production systems. However, long-run productivity growth for the sector as

a whole requires continuous technological progress, as well as social innovations and new business models. For agriculture to respond to future challenges, innovation will not only need to improve the efficiency with which inputs are turned into outputs, but also conserve scarce natural resources and reduce waste. Agro tourism and related sectors can be based on such business models that take into consideration sustainable economic development.

Given paper characterizes the potential of agro touristic areas of Georgia for sustainable economic development, analyzes advantageous geographical location, peculiarities of relief, folk diversity, etc. The article argues that in terms of efficient use of tourism resources, it is possible to develop agroproduct and related sectors with the competitive advantage, maintain the identity of the population, balanced development of local economy, cause an appropriate multiplier effect by creation of business opportunities, employment and income growth, etc. The paper estimates the functions of agro tourism according to the categories; in particular it analyzes the social-psychological, economic, spatial and environmental functions.

The problems existing in agro tourism are revealed based on the survey of experts and tourists, in particular, these problems are underdeveloped infrastructure, shortage of suggested tourism products, low level of services, low level of accessibility to information resources, etc. The following needs are identified for the development of agrotourism and the related sectors by foreign tourists: informing tourists about new services in agro tourism in time, differentiation of products according to focus groups, direct selling of farmers' products to tourists, usage of this advantage by the municipalities with attractive tourism environment and attracting tourists, etc.

The following positive effects that accompany development of agro tourism are identified: development of related sectors, creation of additional jobs, new sources of income for rural population, maintaining production of traditional products and opportunities for entering new markets, increasing employment of young people in agro tourism and related sectors, etc. Based on the identification of the problems, the possibilities for the development of agro tourism and the related sectors in socio-psychological, economic, spatial and environmental directions are suggested.

Given paper also highlights the role of wine tourism in united concept of agro tourism. It is impotent to make distinction among different types of products: products that are directly connected to agrarian environment, agrarian product and agrarian location. In order to reveal the problems in the field of agro tourism researchers use different relevant criteria. Given research emphasises the role of the concept of the place in the development of agro tourism, studies the motivation of individuals toward to the tourism. In given paper comparatively perfect criteria offer by Lane (1992) is used. Lane criteria implies to evaluate the agro touristic places according six factors. The attractive touristic environment is

estimated by the following criteria: historical-cultural heritage, untouched (original) natural heritage, tourism infrastructure, ethno physical environment, agro-cultural landscapes, food products (kitchen).

By using methodology of Lane criterion research results identify most attractive Georgian municipalities for the development of agro tourism according to the average rate of attractiveness of the regions. The paper also substantiates the possibilities for development of related sectors in these Georgian municipalities. Findings of the research suggests that the advantages of different Georgian agro touristic areas are: ancient civilization and culture, untouchable natural inheritance, rich flora and fauna, hospitality and cuisine, rich traditions and etc. Agro tourism does not require big investments and expenditure for organizing recreational and welcoming events for tourists who seek for relaxation in ecologically friendly environment at lower expenses.

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