NOTES ON THE ROLE OF FARM AGRITOURISM IN A VEGETABLE AND ANIMAL FARM ECONOMICS

ROLUL AGROTURISMULUI DE FERMĂ ÎN ECONOMIA FERMEI VEGETALE ŞI ANIMALE

I.M. PETROMAN [1] , I. CSOSZ[1], S. HOLLIEFIELD[1], CORNELIA PETROMAN[1], DIANA MARIN[1], A. DUMITRESCU[1], LAVINIA SOUCA[1], ANDREEA STAN [1]

[1] Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Timişoara, Agricultural Management Faculty, Timisoara, Romania; i_petroman@yahoo.com

Abstract: *Any farmer who wishes to turn his vegetal or animal farm into an efficient agritourism farm through the implementation of agritourism activities, or who wishes to turn it into an agritourism pension should solve a few extremely important management issues among which the following: financial management, risk management, knowing and observing insurance regulations properly, knowing and observing bio-safety and animal welfare regulations properly, knowing and observing tax regulations properly, knowing and observing labour regulations properly, and acquiring public relations skills.*

Key words*: farm agritourism, management, vegetal farm, animal farm*

INTRODUCTION

If we want to turn a vegetal or animal farm into an agritourism farm, we need to design a very detailed plan of the preparation period for the implementation of rural tourism or farm tourism activities. Such a programme should focus on the following: *4-6 months before the event*: making decisions about the theme and/or activities; identifying target-public and its needs; making decisions about the distribution of activities and facilities around the farm and designing a logistics map of people's activities and movements; developing a budget (costs and profits) for the events an alternative budgets to see how costs and participation can affect the profit; developing a budget (costs and profits) for the event and some alternative budgets to see the way in which costs and participation can affect profit;

contracting and programming service suppliers (food manufacturers, traffic controllers and emergency services, portable toilets and hygiene-sanitary appliances, tent suppliers, etc.; assessing maximum participation to events and designing the number of participants; identifying the type of approach of publicity and developing a publicity budget [1, 5]; *3 months before the event*: revising agreements with service and activity suppliers; contacting the insurance agent; updating website; developing procedures for the approach of accidents and informing local police about the event; checking the calendar of local events and cooperation with other farmers [2, 4]; *1month before the event*: informing the neighbours; setting rout signs announcing the event; developing notices for customers and employees; mowing grass in the parking and alley area; identifying and removing unnecessary equipment; purchasing radio and TV advertising space; distributing press releases; setting signalling (No entrance, No smoking, Parking area, No parking, Price, Limited liability); estimating supplementary aids (supplementary employees, law enforcement forces, clerks, season workers, etc.); calling the waste service; *during the event week*: mowing the parking area; isolating the no entrance area; setting signs; removing useless machines and equipment; establishing a centralised information point; *1 day before the event*: setting garbage boxes; setting hydraulic equipment to low values or even turning them off; ensuring supplementary resources for all situations; setting maps and information notices in as many places as possible [3].

MATERIAL AND METHOD

To point out the role of farm agri-tourism in the farm's economy, we have analysed the types of activities of an agri-tourism farm as primary enterprise, complementary, or supplementary, depending on the farmer's intentions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Setting the bases of a business is, no matter the field, at least risky. The chances of success and, most importantly, of maintaining it, are high if the developer: knows how to ask questions and to whom; understands potential issues; solves the problems before starting the business.

Before starting a rural tourism or an agri-tourism business, any farmer should ask himself the following question: ***What role will farm agri-tourism or rural tourism play in my farm's economy – primary, complementary, or supplementary?***

It is important to note that the role thee two forms of tourism can play in a farm's economy depend exclusively on the farmer's will. Thus:

- as a ***primary enterprise***, agri-tourism is the main activity on an agri-tourism farm; if a farmer decides to open a winery (and also cultivate grapevine), he can offer the tourists:
  - grape tasting;
  - wine tasting;
  - grape picking;
  - must preparation;
  - wine preparation;
  - one or several nights accommodation;
- as a ***complementary enterprise***, agri-tourism is only part of the activities on a farm; if the farm is a fruit farm producing apples, the farmer can:
  - sell half of the apple production to the tourists visiting the farm for grape picking (direct marketing);
  - sell half of the apple production to a wholesaler (wholesale);
- as a ***supplementary enterprise***, agri-tourism is an **alternative activity** that only supports the production of other produce; if the farm is an **animal farm**, the farmer can:
  - invite groups of students several times month to learn about animal husbandry;
  - supply food or several farm-produced fresh produce (meat, milk, eggs, vegetables, fruits, etc.);
  - accommodate the students for one or several nights.

The second question any farmer wishing to turn his farm into an agri-tourism farm is: ***How can I make agri-tourism work on my farm?***

The farmer is not supposed to answer the question, but to take the following five steps:

a) ***Personal assessment***, i.e. analysing his host potential: if he and his family can always be gay and willing to assist the visitors; if he and his family can always keep the farm and the facilities

clean and in good order; if he and his family manage well the expenses of the household and of the farm; if he and his family agree to have their privacy somehow invaded; if he and his family like to meet all kind of people; if he and his family like to talk to foreigners;

b) ***The goals and objectives of introducing agri-tourism***, that should coincide with the already-established goals and objectives of the farm; thus:
   - if the goals of a dairy farm are, for instance:
     - cost control;
     - increasing farm incomes with at least 5% per year;
     - retirement at 65 years of age and transfer of dairy farm to the children;
     - producing high-quality cow milk,

       then the goals of the agri-tourism dairy farm are:
     - increasing income based on fee visiting of the dairy farm;
     - organising tours for local groups (schools, universities, aged people, clubs, organisations, etc.), followed by expanding the offer outside the community.

c) ***Identifying external sources***, i.e. the people with expertise in the field of implementing agri-tourism projects:
   - a farmer from the area ho is already practicing successfully agri-tourism;
   - an extension unit which can supply: extension agents that can facilitate the meeting with farmers already involved in agri-tourism or that can supply advice based on their expertise in the field; materials concerning agri-tourism (alternative crops, marketing, best management practices);
   - the chamber of commerce of the county which can promote agri-tourism activities at county level;
   - an academic extension programme that has the same attributions as the extension unit;
   - a local or regional tourism office that can supply the farmer with: information concerning the tourists that could visit the

area (where they come from, what they like to do, etc.); promotion of agri-tourism activities.

d) ***Assessing internal sources***, i.e. inventorying all produce, services, and resources (physical, natural, human, etc.) the farm can offer, by clarifying the following aspects: the main produce or activity of the farm; the produce or services that could complete the farm; what other movables and immovable (a mill, for instance) already existing on the farm could attract the tourists; if the farm could be an attraction for the visitors and how the farmer could increase the activities (what to add, what to change); if there are farmers in the area that would like to display their produce or to sell them through his farm; if there are farmers in the area that could be interested in an agri-tourism or rural tourism partnership; what other resources would be necessary to involve in agri-tourism (supplementary labour force, financial investments, etc.).

Thus, following the idea of a dairy farm:

- to the already existing resources on the farm: milking equipment; facilities for the storage/cooling of the milk; rooms for milk processing; dairy cows, the farmer should add the following resources necessary for the practice of agri-tourism: a pond measuring at least 4,000 m^2 for fee-based fishing; haymaking fields and meadows (for a golf court); involving all his family in agri-tourism activities; a chart and a tractor for hay transport (and also for sleeping in the hay and playing in the hay); a modern platform for animal manure (in case the visitors would like to know what happens to animal wastes); silos for cow fodder; establishing certain areas for the collection of milk by cistern-trucks from the area (for the visitors to see how milk gets from the farm to the factory); a wide area (for children to play, for different displays of craftsmanship, for bonfires, etc.).

e) Developing a ***business plan*** (for a dairy farm that a farmer wishes to turn into an agri-tourism animal farm).

CONCLUSIONS

Before starting a tourism business, the farmer should make a firm option for one of the following types of agri-tourism farms if he wishes to

be efficient: as primary enterprise, where agri-tourism is the dominant activity; as complementary enterprise, where agri-tourism is only part of the activities on the farm; as supplementary enterprise, where agri-tourism is an alternative activity supporting the production of the other produce on the farm.

The farmer should well weigh advantages and disadvantages of introducing agri-tourism among his activities on the farm: ***advantages*** – agri-tourism activities are small-scale activities, agri-tourism activities are relatively cheap, the farmer can develop his interpersonal and communicative skills, the farmer can share his lifestyle (challenges and satisfactions), income sources are diversified and increased, visitors represent a high-quality value of low volume; ***disadvantages***: supplementary facilities for tourists need supplementary money and time, planning agri-tourism activities can be boring and frustrating, practicing agri-tourism can have a negative impact on the farmer's family, visitors' presence can be a supplementary risk, producing new produce and supplying new services is a long-lasting process.

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