

“Spatial Conditions for Agritourism Development on the Example of Poland and France”

Sławomir Dorocki, Tomasz Rachwał, Anna Irena Szymańska, Małgorzata Zdon-Korzeniowska
Institute of Geography, Pedagogical University of Cracow, Poland

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to present the conditions of agritourism development in Poland and France. As a result of the comparative analysis of the spatial distribution as well as accommodation structure and what farms in Poland and France offer, determinants conditioning the development of agritourism were indicated. This objective was based on the analysis of 1,682 Polish and 1,768 French agritourism farm profiles.

Comparative analysis showed both some similarities and differences between the studied countries. These included the origins of agritourism farms, conditions of their spatial distribution or the quality of services offered. Generally, in the case of both countries agritourism favours activation, improves efficiency and diversification of farm activities.

Key words: agritourism, agritourism farms, agriculture, spatial conditions, Poland, France

Paper type: Scientific study

Introduction

During the economic transformation connected with the implementation of the market economy in Poland, typical agricultural activities encountered significant difficulties, such as the sales of agricultural products, their low prices and rising costs of agricultural production. These problems contributed to the ineffectiveness of alimentation activities and decommissioning of a number of farms. As a consequence, farmers started seeking new, alternative activities and sources of income [Mika 2007; Kubal, Mika 2012]. Agritourism has become one of them.

Currently, agritourism is becoming more and more popular among the public, both in terms of demand, being an attractive form of leisure activities, as well as supply, being an alternative form of agriculture, including accommodation on a farm, as well as various forms of recreation based on the specific qualities of rural areas.

The term “agritourism” is variously understood and interpreted, both in specialist literature and business practice. Agritourism is often identified directly with rural tourism or tourism in rural areas. M. Drzewiecki provides a universal definition of modern agritourism pointing out that “it is a form of relaxation taking place in rural areas of agricultural character, based on a range of accommodation and recreational activities associated with a farm or equivalent and its natural environment, production and services” [Drzewiecki 2009, see Mika 2007; Kubal, Mika 2012]. This definition, however, does not include a full diversity and dynamics of tourism developing in rural areas, as well as a legal aspect of the Act on Freedom of Economic Activity [Ustawa ... 2004] and the Income Tax Act [Ustawa ... 1991].

For agritourism activities their legal considerations are important. According to the tax legislation, agritourism activities supplement farm income activities. On the basis of the Income Tax Act for individuals (art. 21, par. 43), the tax exemption applies to income from renting rooms when the following conditions are satisfied:

- rooms are rented to persons having a rest,
- rented rooms are located in residential buildings,
- the landlord runs a farm in rural areas, and the buildings in which rooms are rented belong to the farm,
- the number of rented bedrooms does not exceed five.

The exemption also includes income derived from boarding the guests renting rooms. In addition, according to the Act on Freedom of Economic Activity, production activities in agriculture, including renting rooms and places to set up tents, selling home-prepared food and providing other services connected with the stay of agritourists on a farm, are not included in non-agricultural economic activities, therefore they do not require registration of a company. This means every farmer who holds a farm and is a policyholder at the Agricultural Social Insurance Fund (*Kasa Rolniczego Ubezpieczenia Społecznego - KRUS*) can run an agritourism farm on favourable tax terms, if at the same time they meet the earlier listed conditions. Despite some difficulties in defining agritourism operators clearly, especially in the real identification of such operators, there is no doubt that the provision of agritourism services is one of the most popular forms of non-agricultural economic activities undertaken in rural areas. It is also one

of the main pillars of the concept of multifunctional development of rural areas.

The purpose of this article is to present the conditions of agritourism development in Poland and France. As a result of the comparative analysis of the spatial distribution as well as

accommodation structure and what farms in Poland and France offer, determinants conditioning the development of agritourism were indicated. This article analyses the major, selected determinants, although one should be aware that the functioning of this sector is also influenced by other factors (Fig. 1).

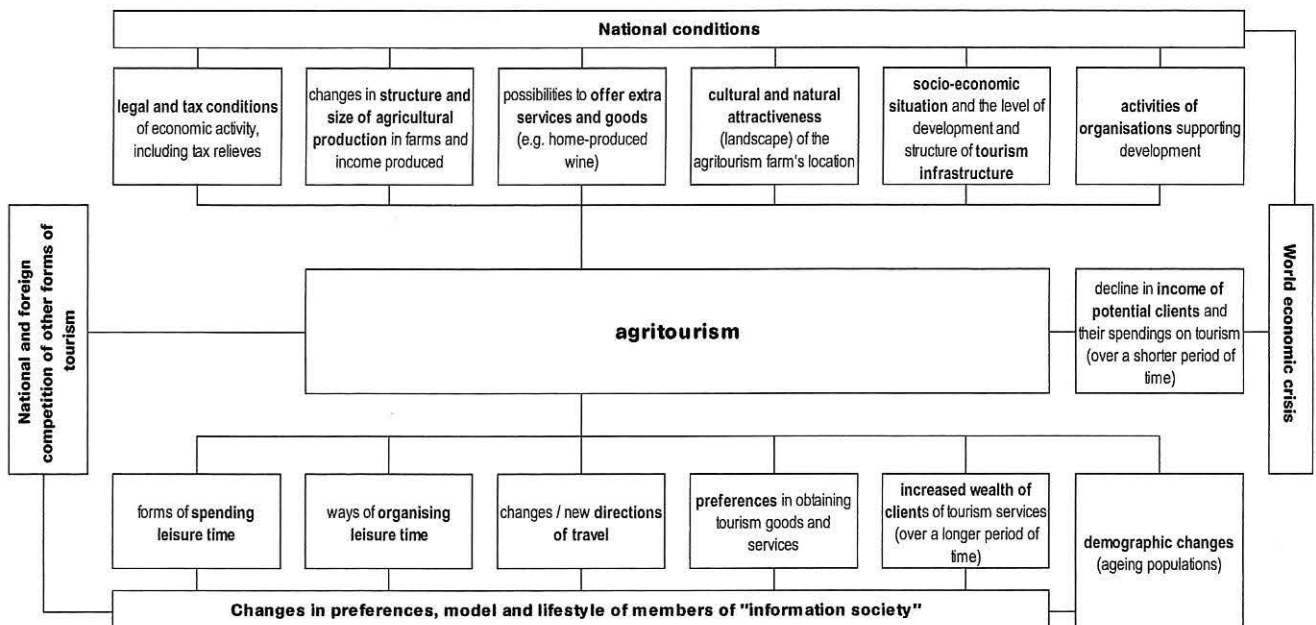


Figure 1 Conditions of agritourism development

Source: own compilation based on Rachwał, Zdon-Korzeniowska 2011

The objective of this article was based on the analysis of 1,682 profiles of Polish agritourism farms associated in and recommended by the Polish Federation of Rural Tourism "A Hospitable Farm" (*Polska Federacja Turystyki Wiejskiej „Gospodarstwo Gościnne”*) and 1,768 French farm profiles, members of the organisation "Bienvenue à la Ferme" (*"Welcome to the Farm"*). The location of individual agritourism farms was based on their GPS coordinates and postal codes. Furthermore, an additional source of information was the statistical data of the Central Statistical Office (*Główny Urząd Statystyczny - GUS*) and *Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques* (INSEE) as well as the results of the research on Polish agritourism farms. These were direct studies using the technique of interview questionnaire conducted between January and March 2012 [see Dorocki S., Szymańska, Zdon-Korzeniowska 2012a, Dorocki S., Szymańska, Zdon-Korzeniowska 2012b; Dorocki, Zdon-Korzeniowska 2012].

Development of Agritourism in Poland and France

The origins of taking a rest in the countryside in Poland dates back to the 19th c., when city dwellers used rural areas for recreation, including health improvement. However, the development of agritourism in the modern sense started only in the early 1990s, when farmers were able to rent lodging to tourists in accordance with the law [Sikora 2012]. Since then there has been a quite rapid development of tourism activity in the country (Fig. 2), which was also of interest to other researchers [e.g. Bajger-Kowalska, Rettinger 2008].

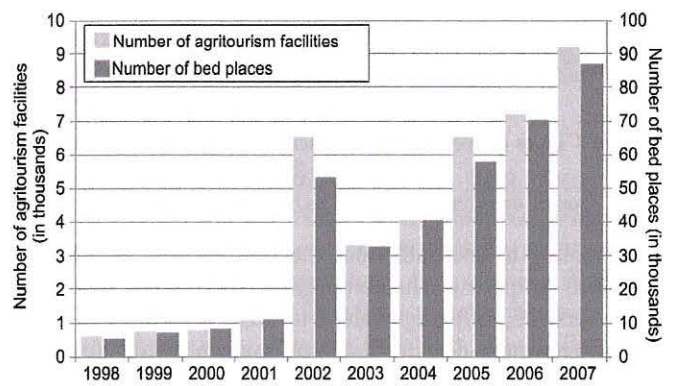


Figure 2 Lodgings and bed places offered by agritourism in Poland in 1998-2007

Source: [Dorocki, Zdon-Korzeniowska 2012; based on the data of 1998-2001: Wiatrak 2003, p. 11; data of 2002-2007 after: Sikora 2012, p. 80]

The rapid increase in the number of agritourism lodgings and bed places occurred at the beginning of the 21st c. (Fig. 2). One of the many factors that have undoubtedly affected this development was Poland's accession to the European Union and the consequent possibility of obtaining financial support to start or modernise agricultural activity. Another factor was the dynamic development of various local, regional and national organisations and associations, which took place in the late 1990s and at the beginning of the 2000s. These organisations contributed largely to support the development of agritourism and popularisation of recreation in rural areas as well as improve the quality and standard of offered services.

The Polish Federation of Rural Tourism "A Hospitable Farm" (*Polska Federacja Turystyki Wiejskiej „Gospodarstwo Gościnne”* – PFTW "GG") is the largest and most important in Poland among organisations dedicated to the dissemination and development of agritourism in Poland. It is a national non-profit organisation bringing together 45 local and regional associations [www.agroturystyka.pl]. It is, therefore, an association of associations, which owns a categorisation system of the Rural Accommodation Base (*Wiejska Baza Noclegowa* – WBN). This categorisation is based on assigning agritourism objects a particular category, proving quality of the facilities and services. This system is modelled on similar systems and categorisation criteria adopted in the European Union states.

In France, the beginning of the development of agritourism dates back to the 1950s [Świetlikowska 2000b]. It should be emphasised that this activity is still poorly developed. The analysis of the structure of accommodation facilities in France in 2011 (Fig. 3) indicates that agritourism farms and developing tourist villages together make up less than 2% of all lodging facilities and provide 2% of stays for a night. Most of them, as many as 56% of all accommodation facilities, are guest rooms. Hotels constitute 26% of the sites, campsites – 14%, and pensions account for 10% of the bed places.

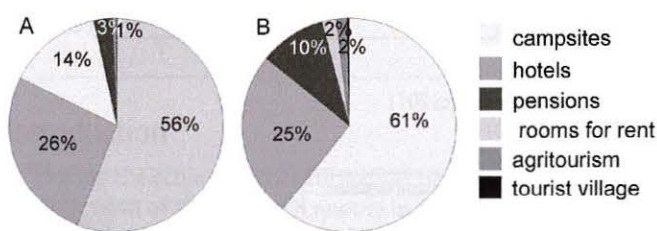


Figure 3 Types of accommodation facilities (A) and bed places (B) in France in 2011

Source: own compilation based on the data of *Gîtes de France*

According to the data from the Chambers of Agriculture in France [http://www.chambres-agriculture.fr] only about 3% of farmers (17,800) are involved in activities related to tourism. Interestingly, despite that rural tourism constitutes 36% of the total revenue from tourism in France and about 20% of direct sales in 100,000 farms [OECD, 2009]. In addition, what is observed is an increase in interest in this type of activity from both farmers (by about 13% since the late 1980s), as well as consumers. This confirms the resilience of agritourism to crisis [see Rachwał, Zdon-Korzeniowska 2011] and a continuous increase in the number of rural tourists, estimated at 200 million visitors annually (of which 20% are foreign tourists) [L'agriculture ..., 2011].

In France, agritourism is defined as any activity performed on a farm [http://www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com]. Tourism activities on a farm typically consist of three elements: providing accommodation, catering, and selling products or services (recreation, sports, culture, etc.).

Tourism organisation in France is in the hands of the Federation "Gîtes de France" ("Lodging in France"), and the organisation "Bienvenue à la Ferme" ("Welcome to the Farm"). "Gîtes de France"

is the oldest organisation of rural accommodation providers in Europe, functioning since 1951. It operates through a network of regional offices, established in all 97 French provinces. The aim of this organisation is to control quality and promote office products, help in booking and selling up bed places as well as the provision of loans or grants for business expansion or modernisation. "Bienvenue à la Ferme", however, is the largest organisation of agritourism operators. This organisation brings together 6,000 farmers and is controlled by a network of Chambers of Agriculture (*Les Chambres d'agriculture*) established in 1920 for farmers to cooperate with the authorities and represent their interests.

The activities of the Chamber also include assisting the market of retail producers, supporting local and regional products, providing training for people working in the agricultural sector, providing agricultural education, offering assistance in the development of entrepreneurship, including the Internet websites, as well as legal and accounting assistance for farmers.

Spatial Distribution of Agritourism Farms

The study on the conditions of spatial location and the offer of agritourism farms in Poland was based on 1,682 profiles of Polish agritourism entities associated and recommended by the Polish Federation of Rural Tourism "A Hospitable Farm". Although the study only included the farms enlisted in their database, it is a representative sample so it can be used to conclude on the total development of agritourism in Poland.

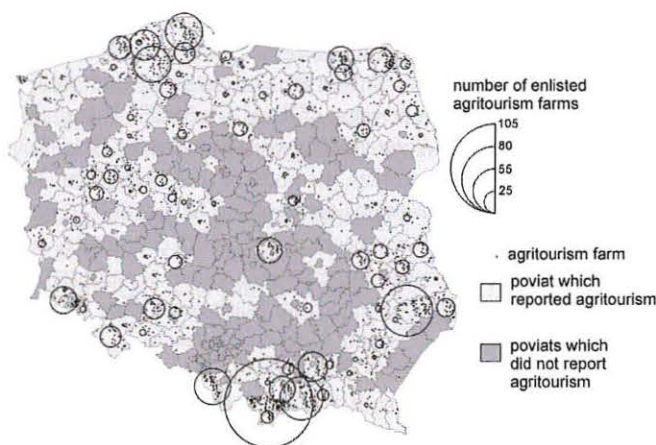


Figure 4 Spatial distribution of the surveyed farms in Poland

Source: [Dorocki, Zdon-Korzeniowska 2012]

The analysis of the spatial structure of agritourism farms in Poland (Fig. 4) shows that rural tourism activities are primarily performed in the most attractive tourist areas with the established traditions of tourist services, such as coastal and mountainous areas, lake districts and poorly urbanised and non-industrialised eastern regions of the country [Sikora 2012], especially in the Carpathians and the Masurian Lake District. Referring to the analysis of the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization of the Polish Academy of Science (*Instytut Geografii i Przestrzennego Zagospodarowania* - IGiPZ) [Turystyka wiejska ... 2012], about 40% of all agritourism farms in Poland are located in the Małopolskie, Podkarpackie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeships.

The most developed agritourism activities are found in the villages located in the immediate vicinity of the most attractive Polish Carpathian mountain ranges: the Tatra and Pieniny (in the belt of the *gminas* from Czarny Dunajec and Kościelisko to Czorsztyn and Krościenko-on-Dunajec), as well as the Beskid Sądecki (Krynica-Zdrój, Muszyna). Intensive agritourism activity is also found in the *gminas* of the northern part of the Bieszczady Mountains, Sanocko-Turczańskie Mountains and Bukowskie Foothills. Some Low Beskid *gminas* also abound in the agritourism base [Turystyka wiejska ... 2012]. The development of agritourism, therefore, appears to be largely related to the attractiveness of the natural environment, including landscape.

The image of the natural and cultural values in *gminas* largely corresponds to the image of tourism assets. The highest level of tourism development is found mainly in the mountainous, coastal and lake district areas and in some of the *gminas* in the vicinity of large cities. An important role in the development of rural tourism is also played by the socio-economic situation and the development of tourism infrastructure. In this context, by far the best position is taken by the *gminas* located in the vicinity of large cities and in coastal areas. It should also be noted that the *voivodeships* of the least favourable conditions for tourism development include Lubelskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Łódzkie and Opolskie *Voivodeships* (Tab. 1).

Table 1 Agritourism potential by *voivodeships*

<i>voivodeships</i>	indicators		
	natural and cultural values	tourism development	economic conditions and infrastructure
Dolnośląskie	0.369	0.498	0.624
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	0.363	0.250	0.368
Lubelskie	0.343	0.309	0.036
Lubuskie	0.394	0.294	0.464
Łódzkie	0.328	0.141	0.279
Małopolskie	0.685	0.987	0.450
Mazowieckie	0.440	0.174	0.378
Opolskie	0.295	0.150	0.364
Podkarpackie	0.659	0.625	0.275
Podlaskie	0.449	0.874	0.021
Pomorskie	0.474	0.955	0.535
Śląskie	0.369	0.355	0.549
Świętokrzyskie	0.421	0.347	0.158
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	0.468	0.932	0.175
Wielkopolskie	0.405	0.208	0.524
Zachodniopomorskie	0.402	1.000	0.478

Source: [Turystyka wiejska ... 2012]

Agritourism is often an alternative form of agricultural activity. It is usually undertaken when farms prove unprofitable and inefficient or in the case of certain restrictions related to the farming in the area, as well as, what is also important, when the local agritourism capacity, the importance of marketing and the implementation of cluster concept in the field of tourism were recognised

[Matlovičová K. *et al.* 2009; Matlovičová, 2008, 2010; Zdon-Korzeniowska 2009; Čuka, Némethyová, Miščíková, 2012]. The reason for this aforementioned lack of profitability and inefficiency may be adverse farming conditions, such as poor soil or relief (mountains) quality. A significant limitation to agricultural activity can also be posed by protected areas (Figs 5A and 5B).

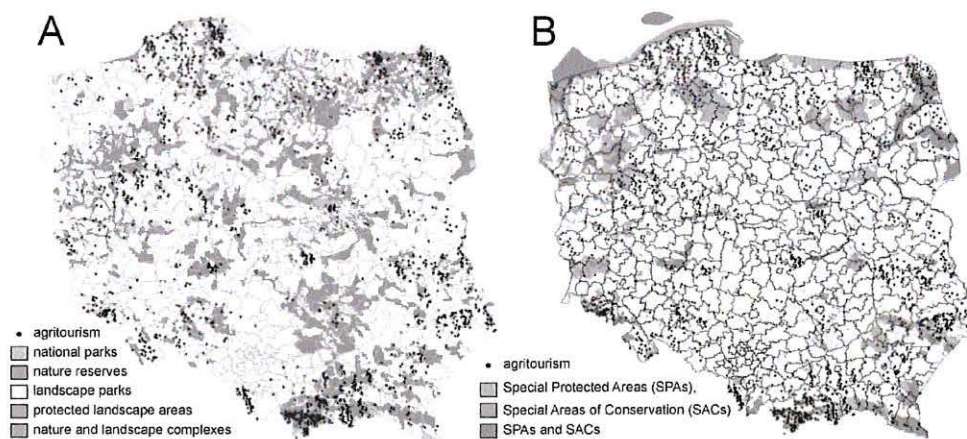


Figure 5 (A and B) Distribution of agritourism farms against protected areas in Poland

Source: [Dorocki, Zdon-Korzeniowska 2012; <http://natura2000.gdos.gov.pl>]

Protected areas preclude conducting intensive agriculture but, on the other hand, being particularly attractive to tourists they are particularly suited to agritourism business. For this reason, agritourism activities are often carried out on the outskirts of national parks and protected areas such as landscape parks, areas of protected landscape (Fig. 5A) or protection areas for birds (SPAs) and habitat (SACs) (Fig. 5B).

The analysis of the spatial distribution and offer of agritourism farms in France was based on the 1,768 French farm profiles, members of the organisation "Bienvenue à la Ferme" ("Welcome to the Farm"). The collected materials indicate that in France agri-

tourism is most developed in the south of the country, mainly in the region of the Massif Central [Mamdy, Guillot, Disez 2007]. The regions with developing agritourism also include the mountainous areas (the Alps, Pyrenees, Jura and Vosges), coastal regions (Normandy and the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts), as well as some other regions (Alsace, Lorraine and Aquitaine). As the most popular the following departments are listed: Aveyron (Central Pyrenees), Haute-Loire (Auvergne), Corrèze (Limousin), Jura (Franche-Comté) and Vosges (Lorraine).

Distribution of agritourism farm in France, as in Poland, is associated with the tourist attractiveness of the regions (Fig. 6).

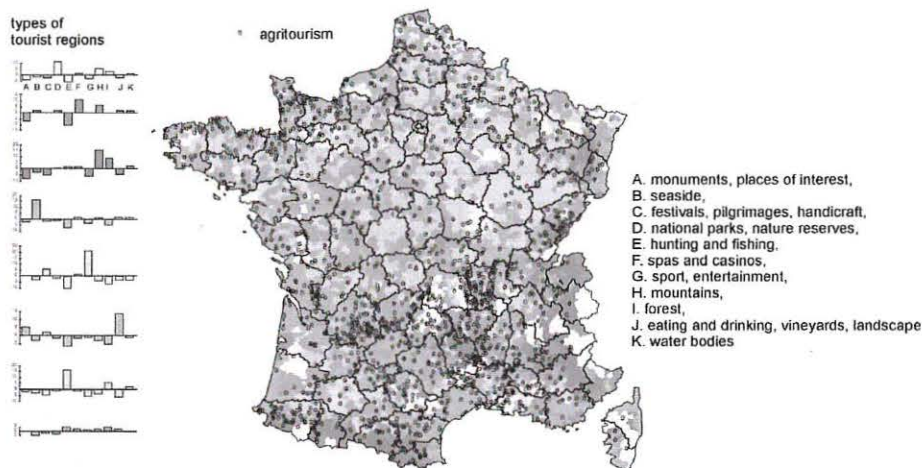


Figure 6 Distribution of agritourist farms against tourist areas in France

Source: [Dorocki, Zdon-Korzeniowska 2012]

Agritourism is growing mainly in the mountain areas, forest areas and the regions attractive in terms of landscape and nature. This is evidenced by the distribution of agritourist farms against the protected areas in France (Figs 7A and 7B). In addition, agritourism is growing in the areas of rich cultural heritage

[Bergeron, 1992] as well as eating and drinking heritage, which is connected with both the history of these areas, as well as the specialisation of agricultural production, mainly grapevine cultivation and wine production and the production of cheese [Augustin, 1992].

Distribution of Agritourism

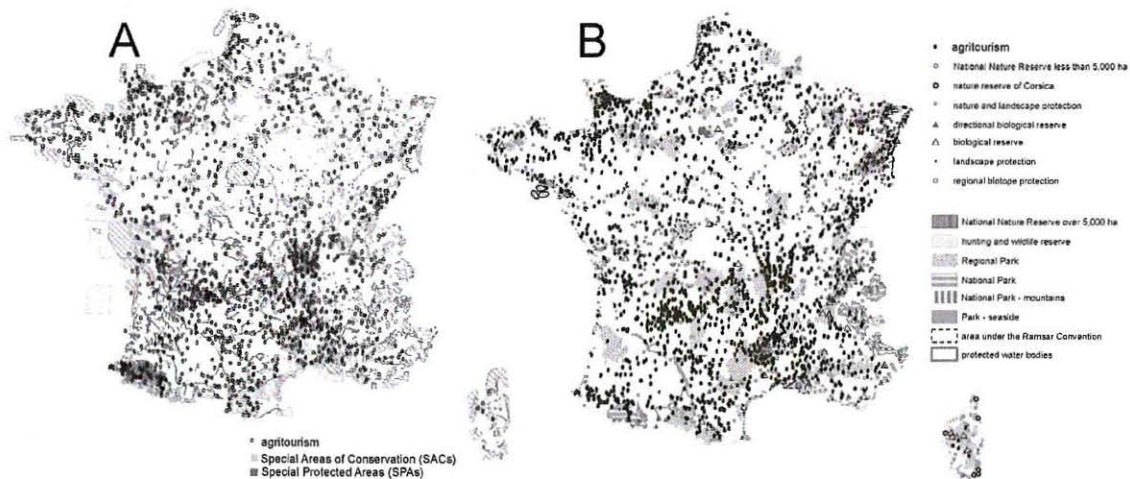


Figure 7 (A and B) Distribution of agritourist farms against protected areas and special protection areas for birds (SPAs) and habitats (SACs) in France

Source: [Dorocki, Zdon-Korzeniowska 2012]

These considerations confirm the belief that the development of rural tourism depends on many different factors which can be arranged in three basic categories, namely natural and

cultural values, tourist development, and economic and infrastructural conditions. In addition, the activity of local actors may be the fourth criterion.

Natural and cultural values should be understood as the elements of the natural and human environment, which are the result of natural processes and diverse non-tourist human activity, and are the object of tourists' interest [Stasiak, Włodarczyk, 2003; Kowalczyk, 2002]. Natural and cultural values are therefore endogenous. However, tourist management includes all facilities and equipment designed to meet the needs of tourism. An important element of agritourism development is also a socio-economic situation and the state of the tourism infrastructure of the area.

Agritourism is a special segment of tourism that can be successfully carried out in protected areas without harming the environment. It enables to keep not only the cultural heritage of the countryside by continuing farming tradition, but it is also a form of economic activity, which allows for the protection and preservation of natural heritage if carried out in a sustainable and responsible manner.

Characteristics of Accommodation and Agritourism Farms' Offer

In Poland, the accommodation base is an essential component of agritourism offer and its standard is an important part of its attractiveness. Accommodation capacity of the studied Polish agritourism farms, on average, is about a dozen bed places per farm. The average number of bed places for all the analysed farms is 14. The farms with the highest average number of bed places (over 20) are located in the following *powiats*: Stalowa Wola (28), Piaseczno (26), Złotoryja (25), Kartuzy, Olecko, Radom (22), Ciechanów, Kamiana Góra, Nowy Dwór, Radomsko, Sejny (21). The highest average number of bed places appears to be in the east and north of the country (Fig.8).

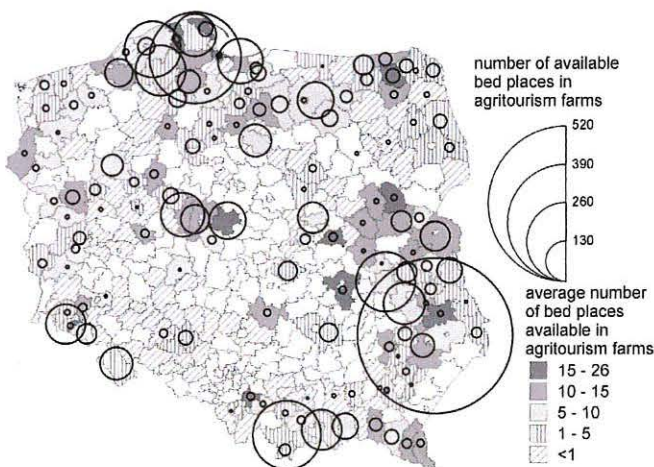


Figure 8 Number of bed places available in the studied farms in Poland
Source: [Dorocki, Zdon-Korzeniowska 2012]

The analysis of agritourism accommodation facilities in terms of the number of facilities subject to categorisation showed that only about 34% of the surveyed facilities had one of the four categories awarded under the categorisation of the Rural

Accommodation Base. When accounted for the largest share, 39% of the objects had the „standard” category, 26.5% of facilities had category I, and 22% - category II. Only 11% of the surveyed facilities had the highest category III proving the highest standard in by Rural Accommodation Base categories.

For comparison, the analysis of the structure of agritourism farms' offer in France showed that only 69% of them offer accommodation services (in Poland, almost 100% of the farms provide accommodation). In France, agritourism offer, to a large extent, is related to educational activities. Approximately 4,200 farmers belongs to the network of educational farms (*fermes pédagogiques*)¹ offering classes implemented in the French school system [http://www.bergerie-nationale.educagri.fr; see *L'organisation ...* 2007]. In addition, due to the specificity of French agriculture, in recent years wine tourism has been growing rapidly. In 2009, almost 10,000 wineries were visited by 7.5 million visitors, including 2.5 million foreigners [*L'agriculture ...*, 2011].

In terms of the accommodation structure, in France chalets and rooms for rent predominate, while the number of large pavilions and camper sites is relatively low. The accommodation capacity of the analysed farms is 17,356 bed places, and is the largest in the south of France, south of the Massif Central, including the Mediterranean and Aquitaine departments. In addition, the Atlantic region with Normandy and Brittany stands out. The average capacity of an agritourism farm in France is 12.8. Larger objects, of the capacity above the average, are located in the regions of the Massif Central, Burgundy, the Alps, Charente-Maritime, Upper Normandy and Flanders.

The standard of rural lodging in France is approved by giving a certain number of “spikes”, and the apartment can be given 1 to 4 “spikes” (the more, the higher the quality). In France, there is little variation of category. Departments with the highest standard of accommodation are concentrated in the regions of Champagne and Burgundy, and the eastern part of the Paris agglomeration. This may have something to do with a rapidly growing wine tourism and weekend tourism activity of the residents of Paris, associated with the development of high-speed rail network [Louis, 2011]. Among the other regions with a high standard of services is Cote d'Azur, Aquitaine and the traditional French holiday destination - Charente-Maritime.

The quality of services, thus, is driven by the proximity of large cities (customer requirements) and the attractiveness of the region (competitiveness and diversity of the rich offer). Most offers of the lowest standard were recorded in Savoy, due to the nature of the services provided, namely in mountain chalets, and in Alsace, which shows a low level of tourism development.

The products offered by agritourism farms are complemented by all kinds of attractions and amenities. They usually stem from the natural and cultural environment, recreation, and sports and cultural offer of the place in which an agritourism farm is located. In addition, there may be facilities offered by the owners within their own agritourism farm.

Attractions offered by the Polish agritourism farms primarily include playgrounds for children (24.51%), a grill/fireplace (18.23%), horse riding (5.2%) and a swimming pool (3.23%).

¹ *L'organisation professionnelle des fermes pédagogiques* (2007), Département Tourisme rural et Education à l'environnement en France, La Bergerie Nationale.

Most frequently offered facility is a parking space (24.51%), rental of sports equipment (23.73%), catering (22.41%), accepting pets (21.1%), access to the Internet (14.05%) and facilities for the disabled (3.53%). From the analysis of the structure of the offer of the Polish agritourism farms it can be concluded that they direct their farm products primarily for family holidays, especially for families with children.

Similarly, French agritourism farms, besides accommodation, offer many other attractions and amenities. The most popular are the holiday vouchers, i.e. social benefits for families. Very often agritourism farms accept pets, quite often accept credit cards and offer parking for buses. Other attractions and facilities include: petting zoo, horse riding, tours of the area, culinary products, tasting drinks, swimming pool, participating in farm work and facilities for a wide range of people with disabilities.

The distinguishing feature of the French agritourism is conducting specialised activities. The offers are targeted to specific, often narrow, consumer groups: gourmets, anglers, hunters, nature lovers, children, families, the elderly, etc. Therefore, there is a large variety of products including, besides the standard proposals, stays in cottages, tree houses or Mongolian yurts, holidays for children or the elderly with care, as well as courses and demonstrations of agricultural production (such as cooking classes or growing crops).

In addition, in most agricultural farms, despite the lack of notification of the service, according to a description of the farm, there is the opportunity to taste and purchase agricultural products, among which the most common include alcoholic drinks, cheeses, vegetables and fruits. In addition, historical heritage is considered the asset. In many offers, the age of the buildings and traditions are highlighted, such as a farm located in a seventeenth-century buildings held for five generations. Moreover, farm descriptions increasingly emphasise the possibility to prepare an individual offer according to customer needs, such as preparing presentations or lectures, themed tours around the area or joint preparation of processed foods.

Assessment of Agritourism Development

Based on the above indicators of agritourism farm standard in Poland and France, the average standardised values of agritourism development were calculated, which allowed to assess the level of development of agritourism in both countries.

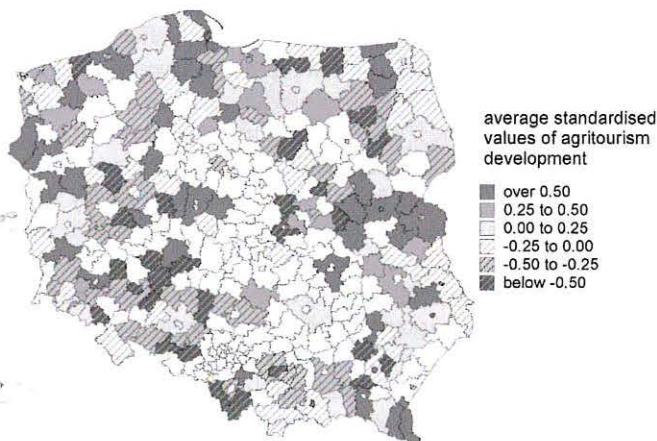


Figure 9 Average standardised values of agritourism development in Poland
Source: [Dorocki, Zdon-Korzeniowska 2012]

The highest values for Poland (Fig. 9) were observed in the region to the east of Warsaw. This is an area of the Siedlce Plateau and the northern part of the Lublin Lake District. This high agritourism activity can be justified by the proximity of the Warsaw metropolis and the agricultural nature of the area which affects the material resources of farmers and their ability to raise capital [Sosnowski, Ciepiela 2012; Ciepiela, Jankowska, Jankowski 2010; Sosnowski, Ciepiela 2011; Ciepiela, Jankowski, Sosnowski 2009]. Other regions with a high level of agritourism development include the eastern part of the Kashubian Lake District, Etckie Lake District, the western part of the Pomeranian Lake District and the Lubuskie Lake District, the Konin region as well as the Bieszczady mountains and the Przemyśl Foothills. The regions with a high level of agritourism activity are also the Warmia region, the area of Roztocze and Lublin, the central Baltic Sea coastland as well as the Świętokrzyskie and Radom areas.

However, according to the standardised level of services offered in France (Fig. 10) high values are recorded in the region of the Massif Central and Brittany and Lower Normandy. These are agricultural regions, which due to natural features show lack of appropriate conditions for typical farming activities [Dorocki 2007]. They show, though, a high tourism, natural and cultural potential. Similarly, the Northern Region with Picardy has a high development value of tourism, stimulated, however, by the peripheral position in relation to the Paris metropolis [Disner 2011] and trans-border tourism [Poulenard 2001].

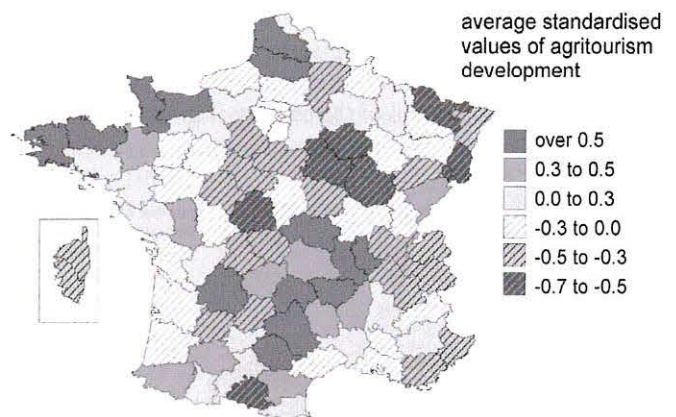


Figure 10 Average standardised values of agritourism development in France

Source: [Dorocki, Zdon-Korzeniowska 2012]

The diversity of these regions may be indicated by the fact that in the North Region there are very few farms offering their agricultural products, but there is a large share of those which offer recreation for children (summer camps), parking for buses, education farms as well as agricultural shows and training. In the North Region, as well as in the whole Paris Basin, all farmhouses offer their services all year round. In the south, however, with the exception of the Alpine region and a few other regions, a large part of agritourism farms operates only seasonally. The area from the Alsace region in the east to the Brittany region in the west looks most unfavourably in those terms. It is the area characterised by good conditions for agriculture, which special-

ises in the breeding and growing cereals and vines. An additional advantage is the close proximity of the metropolitan Paris and its market. So this is a region of farmers – business people competitive on the food market, using new technologies for the agricultural sector and the public support [Pimbert *et al.*, 2001] – where rural tourism is not developing dynamically. Similarly, the Alpine and Mediterranean regions have low rates of agritourism development, which is related to the specific tourism services offered there, such as winter sports (ski resorts), or stays on the premises of a very high standard.

The results of the analysis show that in France agritourism has developed primarily in the areas dominated by traditional family farming, and where agriculture has traditionally been the basis of the economy. Farmers in these areas have a low level of capitalisation, which puts them at a disadvantage in terms of liberalisation and concentration of the food industry. These farmers can only diversify their activities if they go beyond the strictly agricultural activities, i.e. engage in “niche” farming: agritourism and organic farming.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of the development of agritourism in Poland and France, both showed some similarities and differences². In Poland, agritourism activity is mainly connected

with the provision of tourism services, in particular bed places (almost 100% of Polish agritourism farm offers accommodation, while in France less than 70%), while agriculture is only a supplement, often acting as a tourist attraction. In France, on the contrary, the basis for the functioning of an agritourism farm is farming, and tourism is only to supplement it.

There is a significant difference in the quality level of agritourism products offered in both countries. Taking the four categories awarded to the agritourism farms in Poland and France as the quality measure of agritourism accommodation (in Poland: “standard”, 1-2-3 “suns”, while in France: 1-2-3-4 “spikes”) a significantly lower quality of Polish products is noted. Generally, in Poland almost 70% of agritourism farm is uncategorised, and among those categorised the lowest category – “standard” – dominates. However, in France, agritourism farms with category III dominate.

In both countries, agritourism contributes to the activation and raising the efficiency of the farms, especially in less-favoured areas. This is also reflected in the spatial distribution of agritourism farms. Both in Poland and France the location of agritourism farms is generally associated with the tourist attractiveness of the regions, including, for instance, the attractiveness of the landscape, relief (mountains), or the occurrence of the protected areas.

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² The issues connected with the definition of agritourism and the comparativeness of the statistics were dealt with, for instance, by P. Marcotte, L. Bourdeau, M. Doyon, *Agritourisme, agritourisme et tourisme à la ferme? Une analyse comparative*, Téoros 25-3, 2006, pp. 59-67.

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Sławomir Dorocki, PhD
Pedagogical University of Cracow
Institute of Geography
Department of Entrepreneurship and Spatial Management
ul. Podchorążych 2, 30-084 Kraków
e-mail: sdorocki@up.krakow.pl

Tomasz Rachwał, PhD
Pedagogical University of Cracow
Institute of Geography
Department of Entrepreneurship and Spatial Management
ul. Podchorążych 2, 30-084 Kraków
e-mail: T.Rachwal@up.krakow.pl

Anna Irena Szymańska, PhD
Pedagogical University of Cracow
Institute of Geography
Department of Entrepreneurship and Spatial Management
ul. Podchorążych 2, 30-084 Kraków
e-mail: szymanskaa@o2.pl

Małgorzata Zdon-Korzeniowska, PhD
Pedagogical University of Cracow
Institute of Geography
Department of Entrepreneurship and Spatial Management
ul. Podchorążych 2, 30-084 Kraków
e-mail: mkorzen@up.krakow.pl
