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PROBLEMS OF RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN RUSSIAN REGIONS

The paper provides an analysis of principle, goals, objectives and functions of rural tourism development in Russian regions, in particular those having difficult economic situation in the agricultural sector. The development of rural tourism has been recognized as an innovative method for meeting a critical national objective of ensuring opportunities for rural population employment. A brief experience evaluation of rural tourism development in the Volga Federal district has been performed.

Keywords: rural tourism; agricultural sector; innovations; Russian region.

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ПРОБЛЕМИ РОЗВИТКУ СІЛЬСЬКОГО ТУРИЗМУ В РЕГІОНАХ РОСІЇ

У статті проаналізовано принципи, цілі, задачі та функції розвитку сільського туризму в регіонах Росії, що мають складну економічну ситуацію в агропромисловому комплексі. Розвиток сільського туризму визнано інноваційним методом вирішення важливої державної задачі – забезпечення зайнятості сільського населення. Проведено коротке оцінювання досвіду розвитку сільського туризму у Приволзькому федеративному окрузі.

Ключові слова: сільський туризм; АПК; інновації; регіон Росії.

Літ. 19.

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ПРОБЛЕМЫ РАЗВИТИЯ СЕЛЬСКОГО ТУРИЗМА В РЕГИОНАХ РОССИИ

В статье проанализированы принципы, цели, задачи и функции развития сельского туризма в регионах России, имеющих сложную экономическую ситуацию в агропромышленном комплексе. Развитие сельского туризма признано инновационным методом решения важной государственной задачи – обеспечения занятости сельского населения. Проведена краткая оценка опыта развития сельского туризма в Приволжском федеральном округе.

Ключевые слова: сельский туризм; АПК; инновации; регионы России.

Introduction. Negative processes in socioeconomic development of the countryside, and particularly in the agricultural sector, are characteristic of Russian regions. Enterprises which were quite promising in the Soviet times, are closing down, there is an increase in the number of unemployed population and significant decrease in the financial indicators of life quality. We believe that development of new activities may facilitate the overcoming of this situation. Tourism may become one of the perspective innovative types of economic activity for the countryside. Tourist industry as a non-productive branch has great opportunities for development in rural areas. It is one of the most important factors of economic growth in the countryside as well as a way to maintain sustainable development of regions (Aleksandrova, 2007). Rural tourism may significantly support local economy and become a leading industry in several Russian regions. Rural tourism is widely developing in many countries of the

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world, while in Russia it is still only a potentially innovative way of problems solution in the agricultural sector.

Rural tourism is a tourist industry sector, which comprises different kinds of tourism connected with the wide use of natural, historical, social and cultural objects and other resources of the countryside for the creation of a complex regional tourist product. Rural tourism does not consist only of a tourist's stay in a country house, it also implies functioning of the whole infrastructure including good transport connection, places of leisure activities, natural or historical places of interest, information centers, service enterprises, traditional crafts workshops etc. Rural tourism can be most effective when organizing children (including of pre-school age) and teenagers' recreation organized during school holidays. Communities working only in the agricultural sector make 30% of their total number in Greece, 24% in Portugal, 17% in Spain and in Ireland, 12% in Italy, from 2% to 7% in Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Great Britain. Statistics shows that 35% of urban residents in the EU prefer spending their vacation in the countryside. This is especially typical for Holland where this number makes 49% (Frolova, 2008).

It should be noted that Russian Federation possesses a unique historic and cultural heritage and recreational resources that could be used for the development of rural tourism. National artistic trades and crafts, landscape monuments associated with the Mari traditional culture, the "sacred" groves and springs, hills and other spiritual objects can represent a great value for the development of rural tourism. The ecological purity of the area is of a particular value and represents significance for successful development of this kind of tourism in the Republic.

Methodology. The purpose of the article defined by the authors is the analysis of the experience in rural tourism development as an innovative solution of agricultural problems in the Volga Federal District. The theoretical base of the study is grounded on the works of the researchers in the sphere of rural tourism, namely I.M. Voloshin (2006), M.M. Voytuk (2009), I.M. Karpova (2010) and others. They have found several components of the destinations which influence the development of this industry, these are the availability of cultural values that can attract a group of tourists as well as accommodation facilities and the objects of culture. A significant contribution in a investigation of the wide range of problems connected with rural tourism development was made by V.I. Belousov (2002), A.I. Kostyaev (2008), V.V. Kuznetsov (2003), Y.P. Mikhailov (2004).

A group of scientists headed by Y.P. Mikhailov (2004) and V.V. Kuznetsov (2003) investigated the problems of rural tourism using the cluster approach. This method of investigation allows defining systematically important industries, taking into account possibilities and threats of countryside development as well as optimizing proposals on the appropriate planning programs of territorial development considering specific social, economic, agricultural and climatic conditions (Barlubaev et al., 2013). The analysis made by the authors proves that the agricultural sector is extremely significant for Russia's economy. Successful promotion and development of rural tourism in Russia facilitate the solution of economic and social problems currently existing in the countryside. Rural tourism may ensure an increase in home gardening, an improvement of education for rural population, as well as it can promote further growth of income and improve the lifestyle in the country side while retaining com-

paratively low costs, it can also become a source of additional revenues for budgets of all levels.

Key research findings. The main program activities aiming at rural tourism development in Russian Federation are as follows:

1. Advertising and dissemination of information in the area of rural tourism development in Russian regions.
2. Establishing the policy on rural tourism considering the needs of the private sector and improving the welfare level of local population along with protection of the environment.
3. Creating favorable conditions for attracting investments into the rural tourism sector.

In Western Europe the support of rural tourism can be explained by the overproduction in the agriculture unlike Russia. Therefore, the approach that implies a combination of both agricultural production and rural tourism development appears to be more reasonable for the country. The economic basis for such an approach is evident. However, not all regions in Russian Federation with good natural and climatic conditions for rural tourism are suitable for agriculture and vice versa (Dubinicheva and Socetov, 2009).

In Russian Federation there is a number of problems in rural tourism which are subject to active state consideration and participation. One of the most important issues of development and improvement of rural tourism in Russia is underdeveloped infrastructure and low number of appropriate countryside territories.

In order to solve this problem a number of activities can be recommended for implementation. They include the creation of large and middle-sized specific agri-touristic objects meant for tourists and organization of proper recreation, e.g. cultural and historic complexes. Such objects can intake a great number of tourists, meeting their needs and creating favorable conditions for high-quality rest.

Another equally important activity aimed at the solution of this problem is organization of state and private agricultural parks as large multifunctional touristic, exhibition, advertising, cultural and promotional, scientific and research, production and the like complexes including accommodation and the related infrastructure. Availability of cultural and historic parks, ethnic culture complexes within the infrastructure of a countryside territory will contribute to economic benefits as well as help solving some social tasks (Zdorov, 2011).

Further essential component that assists in resolving the problems of rural tourism is the creation of regional agritouristic networks by means of developing small-sized, family or individual businesses on the basis of tourism resources now existing in the countryside: accommodation (small and family hotels) and infrastructure (including different objects and types of business connected with rural tourism). Organization of the effective network of private agricultural tourist companies will facilitate the government support system at the federal or regional levels.

Insufficient legal framework a rural tourism is the second crucial problem. The existing federal regulatory acts on tourism and federal program documents in the sphere of tourism are still not mentioning the notion of "rural tourism" at all. Moreover, there are no special standards and norms applicable to rural tourism as a specific sector of tourism industry.

This problem could be solved by the preparation of an appropriate state program implying relevant legal and financial provisions. Such a program could include governmental programs meant for improving tourism macroinfrastructure, financing the countryside infrastructure, a state system of easy-term loans or allocating investment support for tourism companies at the start-up level. At the same time a government concept of rural tourism development and a program for countryside support should be formulated. Acceptance and realization of such a program will significantly influence the development of modern tourism industry in the regions of Russian Federation (Zdorov, 2011).

The key objectives of this program can be the creation of special conditions for attracting private investors, development of the existing tourist resources in the countryside, formation of a network of rural tourist companies as well as improved service for rural population. By realization of a governmental program in the sphere of rural tourism the key projects on rural tourism could be developed in the regions. Many republics and regions of Russia are already working on similar projects, for example, the Road to Home Project (in Leningrad region), the Green Home Project (in Gornyy Altai), the B&B network (in Pribaikalie) (Shilova, 2005).

The third problem to be solved is the lack of qualified personnel for organization of rural tourism.

Within this problem we can note some excessive academism of the related higher education together with evident shortage of practical skills and knowledge and insufficient number of specialised vocational educational establishments that are training special staff for this sphere of professional activity. It is worth noting that in Russia there are no enterprises engaged solely in rural tourism and thus there are no highly qualified employees to be taken as a benchmark (Porter, 2005).

The main solution of this problem consists in establishing such enterprises (enterprises of rural tourism) promoting the emergence of highly qualified specialists. Furthermore, it would allow educational institutions introduce programs for training of specialists in demand. One of the most important factors in establishing such enterprises and introducing such programs by educational institutions is confidence of students that they will be really needed at such enterprises. We see another solution of the problem of human resources in international programs of higher educational institutions for students (Morozov, 2006). Insufficiency of practical training of specialists for rural tourism evidently appears in Russian Federation. International programs can make it possible for students to have internships abroad where rural tourism is a highly developed sphere of tourism business. Cooperation at the level of higher educational institutions specializing in preparing personnel for tourism and agriculture should also be taken into consideration.

As the analysis of the problems in the area of rural tourism showed the opportunities for agricultural activity in Northern and Central Districts are limited while their conditions for rural tourism are close to maximum. At the same time Central Chernozem Districts are very attractive for agriculture while the conditions for rural tourism can be assessed as quite low. The main reasons hindering the development of rural tourism are as follows: the problem of human resources, the problem of infrastructure and the lack of standards and regulations applicable in the sphere of rural tourism as a separate sector of tourism industry. Therefore, in a number of Russian

regions the joint development of agritourism and agriculture can become an efficient mean for improving the level of social and economic development of territories, especially remote and depressive ones.

The development of rural tourism in the Republic of Komi is a real success story for Russian Federation. At present rural tourism plays an important and still growing role in economic development of certain territories in the countryside that possess a significant unused tourist potential and have experienced a fall of employment of local people in the spheres important for the territory development. The program of social and economic development of the Republic for 2009–2015 recognizes rural tourism as one of the most important courses of economy's development. It is based on natural and transportation resources available on the territory of the Republic of Komi that are, first of all, intended for the growth of employment and financial well-being of local people in the countryside. It should be noted that fast development of tourism is of special value in the countryside and the necessity for tourism development in rural areas should be taken into consideration while working on regulatory and other document drafts.

Rural tourism in the Republic of Komi is supported by a number of activities that include financing the construction or renovation of country homesteads, guest houses that can accommodate tourists, advertisement promotion, developing the image of the Republic, educational programs (for seminars and training courses) for people rendering services in the countryside as well as for those who plan to start their own business in tourism.

To attract investments into rural tourism there is a special data pool of unused buildings and investment platforms and technical documentation on them. Nowadays on the territory of the Republic there is a number of successful rural tourism objects. They include mini-hotels, guest houses, tourist farms, objects built on the basis of existing farmers' companies, craft workshops, objects of popular arts and crafts. It is important to note the fact that they plan to support traditional rural fests, to hold a contest of projects in the sphere of rural tourism.

Conclusions. Summing up, a number of problems existing in the functioning of rural tourism in Russia which should be paid more attention have been identified. These problems are associated with the lack of human resources, personnel meeting the requirements of enterprises in the field of rural tourism, lack of regulations for rural tourism and insufficient infrastructure or even its absence in some areas rural. The paper offers special activities facilitating the solution of all these problems. The problems hindering the rural tourism development can be solved at several stages. The first stage is the stage of independent start-ups in the activity of rural business community. The second stage is the targeted development of rural tourism companies by means of external investments. Besides, taking into account the peculiarities of the situation in Russia (low agricultural production, negative level of migration) the third stage should be also planned – it is the establishment of the united agritourist sector on the whole territory of Russia.

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Стаття надійшла до редакції 8.10.2014.