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## ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF AGRITOURISM DEVELOPMENT – REGIONAL FOCUS

### *EKONOMICZNE UWARUNKOWANIA ROZWOJU AGROTURYSTYKI – UJĘCIE REGIONALNE*

**Key words:** economic conditions, rural tourism, agritourism, Podlaskie province

*Słowa kluczowe:* ekonomiczne uwarunkowania, turystyka wiejska, agroturystyka, województwo podlaskie

**Abstract.** The article presents the economic conditions of development of rural tourism, including agritourism. Empirical studies were conducted, covering a population of 42 service providers, in 2014 in selected rural communities in Podlaskie province. The analysis of responses shows that the opportunity to earn additional income was the most frequently reported reason for starting the provision of tourist services. At this answer showed mostly people with secondary level of education. The research shows that the own resources of service providers were the main sources of funding agritourism activity. The share of income from agritourism activity in the structure of the personal income of the farmer stood in the middle of the surveyed farms of up to 25%.

### Introduction

Multifunctional rural development in Poland caused the emergence of new forms of rural residents. One of the most common manifestations of entrepreneurship is non-agricultural economic activities. This activity is particularly suitable for farmers with small-area farms [P. Bórawski 2009]. Non-agricultural economic activities in rural areas are often portrayed in the literature as an additional and alternative source of income for rural families [Biernat-Jarka 2004]. In recent times, there was a significant interest in non-agricultural activities of the farmers also among owners of medium and large-area [Zajac 2008].

Often, farm owners are seeking alternative sources of income, and thus to diversify its business. One option is tourism, which is becoming a viable alternative to create new jobs, sources of income and raising the overall standard of living. These are significant economic benefits, the implementation of which contributes to raising the general level of culture, infrastructure, environment, protection of monuments and the environment. This is conducive to promoting the region as well as the cultivation of old traditions and customs.

Agritourism is a form of recreation in rural areas of agricultural character [Młynarczyk 2002], based on accommodation base, the most common form of the nutritional and recreational activities associated with the farm and its surroundings – natural, manufacturing and service [Drzewiecki 1995].

The development of farm tourism provides local people with additional job opportunities [Wojciechowska 2006], use of existing housing stock, land directly on the farm produced food (quality usually much better) while raising the general level of culture, infrastructure, environment, protection of monuments and the environment and natural values – landscape, which in the case of agritourism become integral elements of the product market [Gannon 1990].

In recent years, agritourism services have become a possibility to diversify their sources of income for many farm families. Keeping a traditional farm, very often no longer provides its owners a satisfactory level of income. Currently, many farmers decide to start such activities in rural areas.

It is important to recognize non-agricultural economic activities in rural areas and selected economic conditions of its development. Rural tourism, including tourism is one of the directions of non-agricultural activities carried out by the villagers in northern part of the region of Podlasie.

### Aim, research methods and population characteristics

The aim of the article is to present economic conditions for the development of rural tourism, including agritourism in selected rural communities in Podlaskie province<sup>1</sup>. In order to fully and objectively identify those factors empirical material was collected by the method of sounding and its appropriate research techniques (survey). Research was completed in 2014 during the visit of the research three research groups<sup>2</sup>. The questionnaire was sent to 42 owners of agritourism farms of rural municipalities in the Podlaskie province: Giby, Krasnopol, Nowinka, Płaska, Sejny, Suchowola, Suwałki i Jeleniewo.

Socio-demographic characteristics of the surveyed owners of agritourism farms are presented in table 1.

Among the respondents, the largest group of service providers was women (nearly 60%). It must be remembered that in the conduct of agritourism farms involved is most often the whole family (indirectly or directly). Most owners of farms were in the age group 36-55 years (62%). Farmers taking agritourism were educated people, as over 73% had higher or secondary education. An important element of the socio-demographic characteristics was the duration of the working farm. More than half of the respondents conducted this activity over 5 years.

The study also included labor resources in the analyzed farm tourism. On average, households were made up of 4 people, including 2 persons permanently occupied in farming activities. The vast majority were family members. They were involved in the conduct of agritourism farms, the work of field effect, activities on the farm and other activities. It can be argued that the tested farms were small-area and worked in them, mostly family members of the owner.

### Economic and non-economic motives affecting the taking up services agritourism

The development of tourism in rural areas largely contributes to the improvement of the economic situation of rural residents. It allows you to increase revenues, the creation of new jobs and stimulate the local economy, especially in services. For farmers, this is tantamount to raising the standard of living and, in some cases, provides sustaining farm [Czyżewski, Henisz 2000]. Driving through the farmers additional non-agricultural activities is related to a number of economic and non-economic factors [Kosmaczewska 2007].

If you plan to undertake any activity, you should think not only about the financial results of the project, but also of elements such as: independence, self-reliance, friendly atmosphere at work.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the surveyed owners of agritourism farms  
*Tabela 1. Charakterystyka społeczno-demograficzna badanych właścicieli gospodarstw agroturystycznych*

| Specification/<br><i>Wyszczególnienie</i>  | Total/ <i>Razem</i> |      |
|--|---------------------|------|
|  | n = 42              | %    |
| <i>Sex/Płeć:</i>   |                     |      |
| – female/ <i>kobieta</i>   | 25                  | 59,5 |
| – male/ <i>mężczyzna</i>   | 17                  | 40,5 |
| <i>Age [lata]/Wiek [years]:</i>  |                     |      |
| –20-25   | 2                   | 4,8  |
| –26-30   | 3                   | 7,1  |
| –31-35   | 2                   | 4,8  |
| –36-40   | 4                   | 9,5  |
| –41-45   | 7                   | 16,7 |
| –46-50   | 6                   | 14,3 |
| –51-55   | 7                   | 16,7 |
| –56-60   | 6                   | 14,3 |
| –61-65   | 3                   | 7,1  |
| –66-70   | 0                   | 0,0  |
| – > 71   | 1                   | 2,4  |
| <i>Education/Wykształcenie:</i>  |                     |      |
| – basic/ <i>podstawowe</i>   | 1                   | 2,4  |
| – basically-professional/<br><i>zasadnicze zawodowe</i>                                  | 10                  | 23,8 |
| – secondary/ <i>średnie</i>  | 19                  | 45,2 |
| – higher/ <i>wyższe</i>  | 12                  | 28,6 |
| <i>Start-up year agritourism/<br/>Rok rozpoczęcia działalności<br/>agroturystycznej:</i> |                     |      |
| – 1990   | 8                   | 19,0 |
| – 1995   | 7                   | 16,7 |
| – 2000   | 8                   | 19,0 |
| – 2005   | 13                  | 31,0 |
| – 2010   | 6                   | 14,3 |

Source: own research  
*Źródło: badania własne*

<sup>1</sup> The research was conducted within a broader project connected with agritourism in the Podlaskie province.

<sup>2</sup> Students Scientific „Public Relations” in Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW), Students Scientific „Economists Tourism” at the University of Białystok and „Scientific Circle of Tourism, Ecology and Entrepreneurship” of Agricultural School in Gołdtkowo.

With the start of the business venture may arise such concerns as: the uncertainty of income, job insecurity and orders, the risk of losing their property, taking too much time and energy on business, the opportunity to experience personal failure, and ultimately the bankruptcy.

In the sphere of agritourism direct beneficiaries are the owners of the farm tourism. When deciding to start agritourism activity may accompany them different themes, both economic and non-economic [Stolarska 2005].

The possibility of obtaining additional income was the most frequently reported reason for starting the provision of tourist services. The economic situation of farms often forces farmers to undertake additional activities.

An interesting motive for taking agritourism activity is the opportunity to try something new. They can be eg. a conversation with tourists, joint leisure time activities. In several cases, the motivation commencement of the service agritourism is to use funds from the European Union funds. Themes taking agritourism activity depended on the level of education of farmers. Test results are presented in figure 1. It was noted that the possibility of obtaining additional income showed mostly people with secondary level of education.

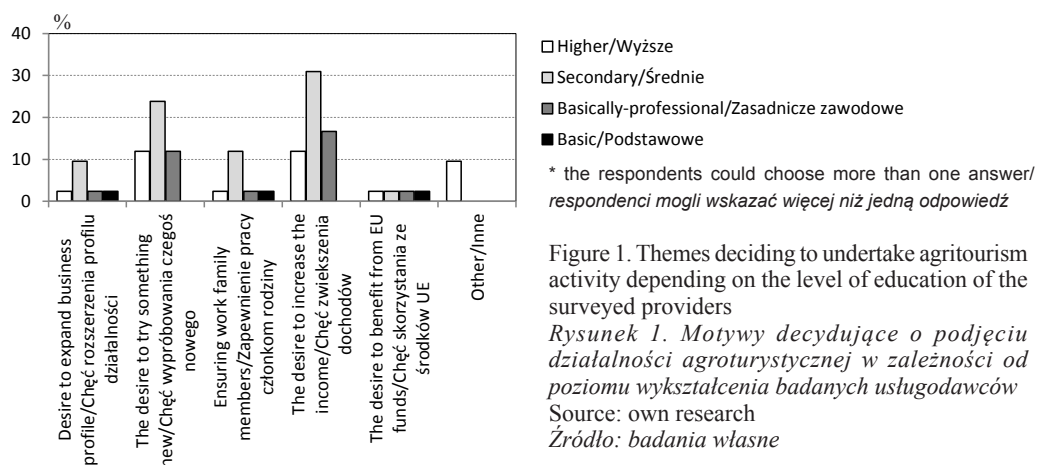


Figure 1. Themes deciding to undertake agritourism activity depending on the level of education of the surveyed providers

*Rysunek 1. Motywy decydujące o podjęciu działalności agroturystycznej w zależności od poziomu wykształcenia badanych usługodawców*

Source: own research

*Źródło: badania własne*

### Sources of financing agritourism activities

Beginning and development of farm tourism can be financed using funds from different sources. These include: structural funds, loans or savings of the farmer and his family. The research shows that the own resources of service providers were the main sources of funding agritourism activity. Every seventh farmer obtain financial support from family and friends. Service providers also benefited from commercial and preferential bank loans and loans from family and friends. For the use of the funds coming from the European Union for the development of tourism only 11 were in favor of owners of farm tourism.

### The share of income from agritourism in the structure of most farmers' personal

Another issue taken in the studies was the proportion of income derived from activities in agritourism in the overall household income.

The share of income from agritourism activity in the structure of the personal income of the farmer stood in the middle of the surveyed farms of up to 25%<sup>3</sup>. The results of research on the subject were made conditional also on the level of education of farmers (Fig. 3).

<sup>3</sup> Similar results were obtained research: Wiśniewska [2008], Ciepela et al. [2013], Przezbórska [2001], Marks-Bielska, Babuchowska [2013].

Research shows that one of the owners of agritourism farms spoke in favor of the fact that rural tourism activity is his only source of income. This may be due to the fact that small family farms occurring in rural areas are characterized by low profitability, which forces many farmers to seek additional sources of income outside agriculture. You will notice that tourism increases the employment and income of its residents. The development of agritourism can be an opportunity to use non-mobile labor resources that occur on the farm and encourage the involvement of the farmer's family members who remain without work. The increase in the number of farms engaged in agritourism contributes to the decline in unemployment in the country.

It should also stress that even small expenses incurred for start-up agritourism not pay immediately. The owners of agritourism farms, most often only partially state reimbursement of expenses. On this state of affairs affects too few people using the rest on individual holdings which may be related, among others, with too few attractive tourist offer, insufficient promotion and seasonality of demand for agro-tourism services.

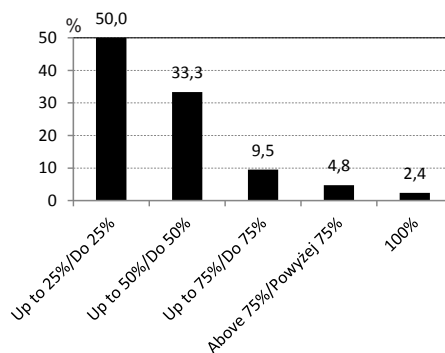


Figure 2. The share of income from agritourism in the structure of most farmers' personal income  
*Rysunek 2. Udział dochodów pochodzących z działalności agroturystycznej w ogólnych dochodach gospodarstwa domowego*  
 Source: own research  
*Źródło: badania własne*

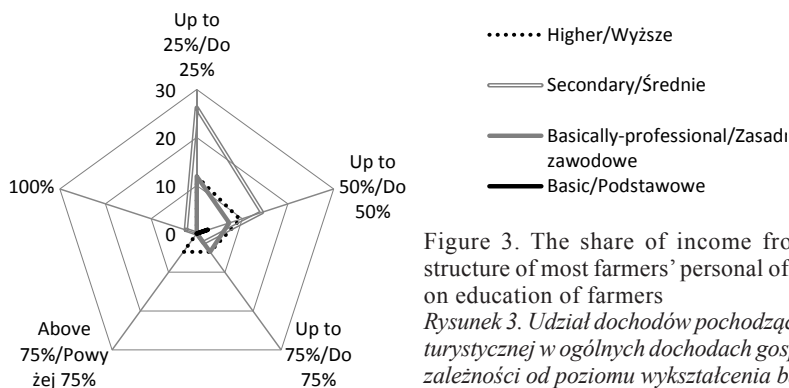


Figure 3. The share of income from agritourism in the structure of most farmers' personal of depending on the level on education of farmers  
*Rysunek 3. Udział dochodów pochodzących z działalności agroturystycznej w ogólnych dochodach gospodarstwa domowego w zależności od poziomu wykształcenia badanych rolników*  
 Source: author's own research  
*Źródło: badania własne*

### Synthesis and conclusions

Based on the study formulates a few generalizations and conclusions:

1. Often, farm owners are seeking alternative sources of income, and thus to diversify its business. One option is tourism, which is becoming a viable alternative to create new jobs, sources of income and raising the overall standard of living.
2. The activities of rural tourism bring a lot of benefits of economic and non-economic primarily service providers agritourism farmers and their families, but also for local communities throughout the country.
3. The possibility of obtaining additional income was the most frequently reported reason for starting the provision of tourist services. Mainly showed people with secondary level of education.
4. The research shows that the own resources of service providers were the main sources of funding agritourism activity.

5. The share of income from agritourism activity in the structure of the personal income of the farmer stood in the middle of the surveyed farms of up to 25%.
6. Agritourism increases employment and income of its residents. The development of agro-tourism can be an opportunity to use non-mobile labor resources that occur on the farm and encourage the involvement of the farmer's family members who remain without work. The increase in the number of farms engaged in agritourism contributes to the decline in unemployment in rural areas.

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### Streszczenie

Zaprezentowano ekonomiczne uwarunkowania rozwoju turystyki wiejskiej, w tym agroturystyki. Badania empiryczne przeprowadzono w 2014 roku w wybranych gminach wiejskich województwa podlaskiego i objęły one 42 usługodawców. Z analizy uzyskanych odpowiedzi wynika, że możliwość uzyskania dodatkowego dochodu była najczęściej deklarowanym powodem rozpoczęcia świadczenia usług turystycznych. Na tę odpowiedź wskazywały głównie osoby ze średnim poziomem wykształcenia. Z badań wynika, że własne środki usługodawców stanowiły podstawowe źródła finansowania działalności agroturystycznej. Udział dochodów z działalności agroturystycznej w strukturze dochodów osobistych rolnika kształtował się w połowie badanych gospodarstwach na poziomie do 25%.

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