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The Essence of Agroecotourism and Its Role in The Development of Rural Areas of Uzbekistan

Khaydarov O. Z

1. Senior Lecturer of the Department of Tourism Samarkand Institute of Economics and Service

* Correspondence: oybek.khaydarov@mail.ru

Abstract: The article examines the essence of agroecotourism and its role in the socio-economic development of rural areas of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The content of the concepts of "agro-tourism," "ecological tourism," and "rural tourism" is revealed, and the need for their comprehensive consideration in the context of sustainable development of the regions is substantiated. Special attention is paid to agroecotourism as a promising direction for diversifying the agricultural economy, based on the rational use of natural, cultural, and socio-historical resources of rural areas. The main factors influencing the development of agroecotourism, including socio-economic, economic-geographical, natural-climatic, organizational, and social factors, were analyzed. The conditions and prerequisites for the effective functioning of agroecotourism, as well as its significance for the state, rural areas, and tourists, have been determined. The conclusion was made that the development of agroecotourism contributes to the growth of employment, improvement of the living standards of the rural population, preservation of cultural heritage, and the formation of sustainable demand for local goods and services.

Keywords: Agroecotourism, rural tourism, sustainable development, rural areas, tourism infrastructure, economic diversification, environmental resources, cultural heritage, employment, Republic of Uzbekistan.

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1. Introduction

Agroecotourism - trips made for the purpose of ecological education and training of tourists. However, modernity demands the inclusion of another, broader meaning in the concept of agroecotourism, not limited to the goals of environmental education. The emphasis on ecological education and upbringing creates an inclination to attribute all trips with natural science purposes to agroecotourism. For this reason, visiting nature museums is almost always equated with a form of ecological tourism [1]. But the main goal of an agritourist is not natural science education, but the consumption of ecological resources, including information resources. Ecological resources are the properties of the natural balance of components of the natural environment (animals, vegetation, soil, climate, relief, etc.), which were formed without the active influence of human activity. The main value of ecological resources is their naturalness. It is precisely this that attracts tourists from cities where people constantly feel the negative impact of polluted air and water, noise, and social conflicts. By consuming ecological resources, vacationers gain a health-improving and cognitive effect.

Literature review.

Agrotourism is precisely the new sphere of activity and research, where the interaction of both economic and non-economic directions, both at the global and national levels, is observed, in particular, the provision of domestic and international tourist services, the development of the economy of regions and agricultural production, the solution of global environmental and social problems, the preservation of cultural heritage and national traditions [2]. Individual aspects of these areas, if we consider each of them as independent, have been sufficiently studied in domestic and foreign science.

Rural tourism is a sector of the tourism industry that uses the natural, cultural-historical, social, and other resources of rural areas to create a comprehensive tourism product. It includes all types of recreational activities in rural areas: pilgrimage, hunting, fishing, etc. A mandatory condition for this type of tourism is the placement of tourists in rural areas [3].

One of the Uzbek scientists, S.F.Allayorov, also put forward in his research the definition of rural tourism and its characteristics, the creation of new tourist routes based on attracting people to rural tourism, and increasing the number and attractiveness of tourist products. The main views of the scientist are that there are many types (industries) of tourism, for example, rural tourism, ecotourism, sports tourism, medical tourism, etc. He emphasizes that the separate development of each sector in the country ensures a continuous flow of foreign citizens, therefore, it is important to pay attention to each sector of tourism and develop these sectors by creating a favorable infrastructure and conditions for visitors to the country from abroad [4].

Dejan Dašić, Dragan Živković, Tamara Vujić also point out in their research and scientific studies the potential of rural tourism in the development of rural areas of Serbia, the implementation of specific aspects of agrotourism, and the use of agrotourism in the development of agriculture [5]. Considering that rural areas of Serbia are facing serious economic and demographic problems, rural tourism can be one of the answers to the question of how to revitalize rural areas. They believe that the development of tourism in Serbian villages can make a significant contribution to creating jobs, as well as maintaining jobs for the population and increasing their interest in staying in the region and creating new business opportunities.

Yoriyeva Farangiz Murodilloyevna also worked on issues of rural tourism and agrotourism. The scientist's research discusses the role of agrotourism in the development of rural areas of Uzbekistan [6]. Market economy analyses show that today agrotourism is one of the fastest growing and most profitable types of tourism. There are sufficient opportunities for the development of rural and agrotourism in our country. Agrotourism is an effective way to develop the country's economy and improve the lifestyle of the population. She puts forward the idea that if the problems that hinder the development of this sector in Uzbekistan are identified and practical work is carried out to solve them, many effective results can be achieved in the tourism market.

2. Materials and Methods

This research aims to examine the essence of agroecotourism and assess its role in the socio-economic development of rural areas in Uzbekistan. To achieve this objective, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods was employed, ensuring a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the subject.

The study is grounded in theories of sustainable development, rural development, and tourism economics. Concepts related to agroecotourism, ecotourism, and diversification of rural economies serve as the theoretical basis for analyzing the role of agroecotourism in improving rural livelihoods and preserving environmental and cultural resources [7].

The applied research methodology provides a comprehensive and objective assessment of agroecotourism's role in rural development. It allows for the formulation of practical recommendations aimed at enhancing agroecotourism as a sustainable tool for improving the socio-economic conditions of rural areas in Uzbekistan.

3. Results and Discussion

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, among all types of rural tourism [8], agritourism and ecotourism are the most widespread. Agroecotourism is understood as the temporary stay of citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan, foreign citizens, and stateless persons in rural areas of the Republic of Uzbekistan for the purpose of recreation, health improvement, familiarization with the natural potential of the republic, national cultural traditions without engaging in labor, entrepreneurial, or other activities [9].

The main goals of agroecotourism are recreation, health improvement, and the opportunity to familiarize tourists with the natural potential of the republic and national cultural traditions. The object of agroecotourism is a rural estate - a house in a rural area on an improved territory with isolated furnished rooms and kitchens. Being a kind of agritourism farm, the agro-house represents a mini-hotel in rural areas.

The development of agroecotourism as a promising direction of the country's economy as a necessary condition provides for:

1. availability of free or conditionally free housing stock in rural areas;
2. sufficiently high level of comfort and good condition of this housing stock;
3. systematic state support for agro-tourist farms: adoption of a political decision on supporting rural tourism as a service sector;
4. organizational support: creation of special structures that provide systematic assistance and are engaged in organizing this tourism sector, as well as the introduction of information technologies that allow creating a large-scale agritourism market in virtual form [10];
5. regulatory and legal (adoption of relevant laws and state programs), informational and advertising and information support for the promotion of aggregate national and regional agro-tourism products;
6. financial support (system of preferential lending to agro-tourist farms)

Compliance with these requirements will make agroecotourism a promising strategic direction for the development of rural areas, one of the types of productive non-agricultural business, beneficial both for rural residents and local authorities, since developed tourism infrastructure has a favorable impact on the economic and social life of territories, allows increasing tax revenues to the local budget.

An important condition for organizing agritourism activities is the development of accommodation facilities in rural areas. This implies either the presence in rural areas of free or conditionally free housing stock: houses, estates, cottages, originally not created as hotels, but suitable for their re-equipment as means of accommodating tourists, or the construction of special agro-tourist facilities - means of accommodating tourists performing the function of rural hotels.

Organizing food for tourists alongside nightclub services is an important component of agro-tourism activities [11]. In addition to accommodation and meals, reception in a rural household involves the provision of a multitude of additional services (recreation, health improvement, entertainment organization services, excursion services, transfer services, etc.).

It should also be noted that agroecotourism is not only a tourist's stay in a rural house, but also the functioning of the entire infrastructure of the rural region, including good transport links, places for leisure, information services, places for selling souvenir products, shops, restaurants, cafes.

It is for this reason that a large number of diverse factors influence the functioning of agroecotourism, which can be grouped [12].

The nature of the factors of the socio-economic group lies in the level of economic development of the region:

1. level of well-being and solvency of the urban population - potential tourists;
2. employment and living standards of the rural population - the receiving party;
3. quantity and quality of free (conditionally free) places for tourists;

4. number of food, entertainment and other facilities providing services to tourists;
5. development of local infrastructure.

The influence of factors of the economic-geographical group is based on the remoteness of rural tourism sites and places of permanent residence of potential tourists (geographical factor), as well as the ability of tourists to reach recreation areas (economic factor). In this group, the following factors can be distinguished:

1. distance from the objects of rural tourism of the "suppliers" of tourists, who traditionally act as megacities, as well as large industrial and regional centers;
2. development of tourist infrastructure that ensures travel of tourists to and from the place of recreation.
3. Natural and climatic factors influence the flow of tourists and their seasonal changes. The factors of this group include:
4. intensity of use and condition of resort-recreational zones traditionally used by urban residents for unorganized recreation;
5. the state of the environment and the ecological situation in agroecotourism areas;
6. seasonal state of the natural environment and the possibility of satisfying tourist interest in certain objects;
7. seasonal nature of individual objects of tourist interest

Organizational factors were identified as the next group of factors influencing agroecotourism. Based on the name of this group of factors, it can be seen that they influence through the organization of agroecotourism and the provision of tourist services. The following may be included in this group [13]:

1. organization of the agroecotourism management system;
2. information support for agroecotourism;
3. regulatory and legal support for the functioning of agroecotourism;
4. regulation and support of agroecotourism by state authorities and local self-government bodies;
5. availability of tourism organizers in the regions, their organizational and legal formalization and preparation to serve tourists;
6. qualification of personnel of agroecotourism facilities;
7. quality and assortment of the offered tour product [14].

Social factors also have a significant impact on rural tourism, which should include:

1. state of public order in the region (criminogenic situation);
2. ensuring the safety of stay for tourists in the region;
3. opportunity to receive timely and high-quality medical care in the region

The significance of this type of tourism activity for the state as a whole, the rural area, and tourists is manifested in many aspects, which can be traced from the table given below (Table 1).

Table 1. The importance of agritourism for the state and rural areas of agroecotourism

For the state	For rural areas	For agroeco-tourists
Budget replenishment	Additional income	Active recreation in rural areas
Reduction of unemployment	Creation of new jobs	Consumption of fresh food products
Activation of the activities of the rural community	Improvement of rural infrastructure	Direct contact with nature
Propaganda of national cultural traditions	Activation of the rural community	Participation in the life of rural society
Use of preferably inexpensive resources, primarily natural, socio-	Impulse for the development of other sectors of the economy (transport,	Study of the culture of the region, its historical and natural heritage

cultural, and historical heritage	construction, trade, culture, crafts and trades)	
Inflow of additional investments and income	Preservation of the culture and historical heritage of the rural region	Acquisition of new skills and experience in rural life
It identifies destructive layers and is aimed at creating conditions for successful development and quantitative growth of local society.	Acquiring new knowledge, skills, and improving the qualifications of the rural population to organize the reception of guests	Study of the production cycle, observation of domestic animals
Development of business and cultural ties	Increasing the self-esteem of rural residents	Cultural enrichment, development of interest

Thus, agroecotourism contributes to the diversification of the local economy, the formation of demand for local goods and services, the emergence of new sources of income for farmers and individuals, and the activation of the rural population in the development of a new type of activity [15].

4. Conclusion

Based on the results obtained during the above research work, the following conclusions and suggestions were reached:

1. Agroecotourism is a complex area of tourism activity that combines elements of agrarian, ecological, and rural tourism and is oriented not only towards environmental education but also towards the consumption of ecological, cultural, and informational resources.
2. The development of agroecotourism in Uzbekistan is a promising tool for the socio-economic development of rural areas, contributing to the creation of new jobs, reducing unemployment, and increasing the income of the rural population.
3. The effective functioning of agroecotourism requires the availability of free housing in rural areas, developed tourism infrastructure, a food system and additional services, as well as state support and regulatory and legal regulation.
4. The development of agroecotourism is influenced by a set of factors, including the level of economic development of the regions, transport accessibility, natural and climatic conditions, organizational management structure, and social security.
5. Agroecotourism has a positive impact on the preservation of national cultural traditions, historical and natural heritage, and also contributes to increasing the social activity and self-esteem of the rural population.
6. The development of agroecotourism stimulates intersectoral ties and has a multiplicative effect on the economies of rural regions, activating the development of transport, trade, handicrafts, and the service sector.
7. In general, agroecotourism should be considered as a strategic direction for the sustainable development of rural areas of Uzbekistan, ensuring the balance of economic, social, and environmental interests of the state, the local population, and tourists.

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