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Agritourism: An Educational Tool for the Students with Agro-Food Profile

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Abstract

Agritourism is an incredible educational tool with varied expected effects on the educational plan. Pupils, students, teenagers and adults understand better: the rural traditional culture, the production and the distribution processes of the agricultural products, the importance of healthy food in people's lives, the preservation of the environment, etc. Educational agritourism is an alternative form of mass tourism for areas where the latter cannot be organized. The educational agritouristic activities for the students with agricultural major envisage: a thorough understanding of the public function of agriculture, raising awareness for healthy food, developing healthy dietary habits, learning the way in which the agricultural products are produced and marketed, first-hand experience along the whole agricultural year. Furthermore, students can have a better understanding of the life in the rural areas and this can make them want to keep the agriculture culture, perpetuate the traditions. They are given the opportunity to experiment new situations and establish an emotional and direct contact with nature. As for the teaching higher education staff, the benefits will consist in the introduction of the environmentally friendly agricultural products in the faculty, in teaching the theoretical and practical knowledge needed for the new agricultural technology.

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1. Introduction

The term agritourism is generally used to describe any type of activity based on the relation between agriculture and tourism. It designates an old concept, the same type designated by the other types of tourism, bounded particularly by practicing tourism in the rural areas: i.e.: agrarian tourism, agricultural tourism, farm tourism, village tourism, countryside tourism and recreational-educational rural tourism. All these forms of tourism tend to focus on the main types of activities practiced by the visitors in the rural environment. The main purpose consisting in becoming accustomed with the customs and the traditions of working the land, raising animals, craftsmanship; each activity leading to developing new knowledge about rural culture (Benea, Petroman: 2006; Mot, Petroman: 2014; Petroman et al, 2014).

The rural tourism is totally opposite to the urban tourism as its main purpose is to become aware of the rural culture, farm activities in rural areas, local authentic values, etc. Thus people will be able to value more the cultural identity (Momir et al, 2014). The rural tourism has other advantages as well, i.e.: learning how to prepare local food, learning about the natural resources and the heritage of the rural communities, etc. Romanian traditional food is not very well known around the world; however “those who have tasted it once will never forget it” (Constantin, 2014). More than this, rural tourism is a benefit for those looking for the specific tranquility of the rural areas, it brings to light the life, art, culture of the rural heritage; “to take part and to learn real activities is the essence of life at the country side”(Petroman 2013, p. 34, our translation).

Even if it is seen as a form of school tourism, the rural tourism and agritourism are less attractive than the adventure tourism, but it can be a strategy, worth taking into consideration, for the training the young people who are preparing to become specialists in various fields, i.e.: technical, biology, forestry, agro-zootechnical, etc.

Specialists make the distinction between the activities inside an agro-touristic farm and those outside it. They think that even if agriculture is the main activity in the rural area, the activities that take part outside the farm such as: craftsmanship, wood sculpture, leisure activities are becoming more and more important (Holmes, Tschanz, 2004; Petroman et al., 2015)

2. Material and method

To emphasize the educative role of the agritourism, we suggest several activities that can contribute to the cultural and educational development of the students who are trained to become specialists in the agro food sector, with emphasis on the activities where the involvement of those willing to learn is directed to favour the implementation of the theoretical knowledge in the practical activities.

3. Results and discussions

The agro-touristic activities have an educative character and they need to fulfill several characteristics: to take part in a rural area or at an agro touristic farm, to bring benefits to the agricultural industry, to have as a basis the activities or products offered by the producers, to have a direct contact between the agricultural producer and the student to be trained or the visitor of the rural residence.

The educational agritourism is a kind of strategy in order to use a farm to attract tourists and students for educative purposes, either for fun or for active involvement in the farm activities or in the rural environment. This type of tourism is also an alternative to increase the income and the potential economic viability of small farms and of the rural community and a way to support the agricultural economy, when the local agricultural producers are no longer competitive.

The educational agritourism can be developed as a basic component of a business model able to support the agricultural entities to promote their activities at various festivals, i.e.: the agro-tour type. It can also lead to set up leisure farms for people interested in exclusive agricultural activities: mostly students, in our case. In these types of activities people cannot only experience common agricultural products, but also food, walks in corn field labyrinths, direct contact with farm animals, contention, cow milking, and equitation.

Several requirements need to be fulfilled so that the educational effect be at the level imposed by the educational trainers:

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