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IDENTIFICATION OF RURAL AND AGRI-TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

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ABSTRACT. Economists commonly refer to “products” and “services”, but in aligned with agricultural tourism and rural tourism these terms are supplemented with “experience”, “adventure” and “imponderability”. Each of these latter terms helps to explain the experiences of the tourist, where a wide variety of products, services, experiences and adventures are offered. An analysis of recent agri-tourism and rural tourism products reveals that some of them are rural or agriculturally elated and the others are “artificial” and do not belong to rural areas. As a result there is a necessity to arrange and classify rural and agri-tourism products and services. To assist in resolving the confusion and misunderstanding rural and agri-tourism products and services matrix has been developed. Rural and agri-tourism products and services have been grouped into nine clusters, including: accommodation, gastronomy, real agri-tourism, direct sale, ethnography, sport, therapy and health-related products, recreation, entertainment.

Key words: agritourism, classification, imponderables, product, rural tourism, service

Introduction

Rural and agri-tourism have remarkably increased into importance for many world's economies. During the last years rural areas of many countries stopped to be linked to agricultural production, because of the evolutionary economic and social changes of them. Rural areas have overtaken many non-agriculture functions allowing their inhabitants for finding sources of income in different more effective sectors of economy. At the same time small scale rural and agri-tourism, once as an off-farm diversification and shift from agriculture toward tourism, and then shifted to create niche and new market opportunities within an expanding market have become the phenomenon of the turn of the 20th and the 21st centuries. At the European Union level rural and agri-tourism are considered to be crucial “mode of lifting rural areas out of a situation of migration and economic decline” and appropriate policies have been implemented to support its development (**Hjalager** 1996). Tourism became an integral component of the multifunc-

tional rural development as it seems to offer “a natural development path” for rural Europe, particularly in the most disadvantages areas. However, the Central and Eastern European countries have stayed far behind the other European countries as they have just started the process of changes of agriculture and rural areas. In some of them, e.g. in Russia the concepts of rural and agri-tourism are almost unknown despite tremendous potential for such activities there.

The literature contains several definitions of rural and agri-tourism (**Lane** 1994, **Tourism...** 1994, 1995, **Butler** 1998). In general the distinguishing feature of the rural and agri-tourism product is “to give visitors personalised contact, a taste of the physical and human environment of the countryside and (...) allow them to participate in the activities, traditions and lifestyles of local people” (**Tourism...** 1995). However there are at least three important arguments for distinguishing rural and agri-tourism:

- a) necessity to fulfil people’s emotional needs of participation in food production and processing,
- b) necessity to fulfil emotional needs for direct contact with animals, plants and rural atmosphere,
- c) necessity to fulfil human needs for participation in real life of a rural family and a rural society.

Rural and agri-tourism like each economic activity aims to offer and provide products or/and services. A rural or an agri-tourism product is a complex product and the simplest definition resolved in describing elements of it (**Jansen-Verbeke** 1990, **Gannon** 1993, **Middleton** 1996). The rural or agri-tourism product can be characterised as a single good or a set of goods given by nature, history, human activity and is demanded by tourists (**Wiatrak** 1998, **Sikora** 1999, **Gaworecki** 2000). Moreover rural and agri-tourism products and services are usually supplemented with “experiences” (**Roberts** and **Hall** 2001), “adventures” and “imponderables”, i.e. incommensurable values, in particular related to rural and agri-tourism space (beauty of rural landscape, fresh air, tranquillity and silence, rural architecture, etc). Imponderables are neither services nor products, but they enable or facilitate the marketing process of rural and agri-tourism products and services.

Rural and agri-tourism may offer almost unlimited number of products and services. Agri-tourism farms and rural tourism small enterprises may be successful where varied and attractive enough portfolio is offered. An analysis of recent rural and agri-tourism products reveals that some of them are rural or agriculturally related and the others are “artificial” and do not belong to rural areas. As a result there is a necessity to arrange and structure rural and agri-tourism services, products and imponderables. The literature contains several of classifications (**Thibal** 1988, **Grefe** 1994, **Lane** 1994, **Tourism...** 1994, **Butler** 1998, **Roberts** and **Hall** 2001). However, most of them include only a part of the offered services and products of rural and agri-tourism worldwide. On the other hand tourism activities revolving around large holiday areas, hotels, golf courses and ski resorts are difficult to integrate into the concept of rural and agricultural tourism because they have no connection to “rurality” and agriculture.

The main purpose of the paper is to assist in resolving the confusion and misunderstanding of rural and agri-tourism by providing a classification of rural and agri-tourism services, products, and imponderable available worldwide. Rural and agri-tourism products and services have been grouped into nine clusters, including rural/agri-tourism accommodation, rural/agri-catering, real agri-tourism, rural/agri-retail business, ethnography, rural/agri-sport and active tourism, rural/agri-therapy and health-related products,

ecotourism or agri-ecotourism and rural/agri-entertainment. The classification is based on the examples from different countries, including Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, UK, Russia, USA, Canada, and New Zealand.

Method – criteria of classification

Both rural and agri-tourism provide the whole range of services and products. In principle they can be classified by three essential criteria:

- seasonal availability of rural and agri-tourism services and products,
- costs of products and services,
- kinds of activities.

By seasonal availability rural and agri-tourism services, products and imponderables can be divided into two groups: the ones available continuously the whole year around and the others available seasonally. A large number of services, products and imponderables is seasonal and among them there are several temporary ones. They are available in a certain moment or they are not available at all. Flowers blooming for a very short period of time e.g. crocuses blooming only a few days in the early spring meadows of the mountain areas of the South Poland can be the perfect example of temporary imponderables. Some countries are able to provide rural and agri-tourism services and products in shorter period of time while others in longer. In Europe there is a certain degree of correlation between length of access to rural and agri-tourism products and services and geographical longitude and latitude. The countries situated in the north and east of the continent can provide most of rural and agri-tourism services and products for a short period of time only. It is due to the short daylights and severe climate condition during wintertime. Seasonal services, products and imponderables are usually more expensive than the ones provided all the year round.

In many regions of the world, especially in the Mediterranean and tropical countries, rural and agri-tourism services can be provided all the year round, e.g. rural vacation on the Ibiza Island (Spain) can be relatively cheap, because the season lasts there nearly all the year round. “The tourism process” has been organised there like a production line in a factory. Every day some tourists arrive and some leave, and tours, excursions and different events are organised every day. Airplanes, hotels, restaurants have visitors all the year round. Services and products available permanently tend to be much cheaper than the ones available only seasonally. In many countries, for example in Poland, rural and agri-tourism are regarded as a cheap form of vacations. It results from the fact that rural and agri-tourism are in an initial phase of development (**Butler** 1980, **Altkorn** 1995, **Kovács** 1997). The prices offered in such circumstances are often dumping prices. Such a situation can be observed in some Central and Eastern European countries. However, it will slowly but continuously evolve. In the future rural and agri-tourism services and products are likely to be more expensive as the whole rural and agri-tourism process may be organised similarly to the marketing process in mass tourism. The condition of such a change lies in continuous availability of rural and agri-tourism products and services all the year round as it is e.g. in New Zealand.

The third criterion of classification is connected with the type of activities and the one has been used to prepare the below matrix of rural and agri-tourism products and

services. Rural and agri-tourism products, services and imponderables have been divided into nine clusters including:

- 1) rural (agri) accommodation,
- 2) rural (agri) catering business,
- 3) “real agri-tourism”,
- 4) rural (agri) retail business,
- 5) ethnography,
- 6) rural (agri) sport,
- 7) rural (agri) therapy,
- 8) rural/agri-recreation, and
- 9) rural (agri) entertainment (agri-tainment).

Then products and services have been assigned to the above clusters. For example the first cluster – rural (agri) accommodation contains six groups of products and services. Altogether more than 40 product groups have been specified. Each group offers its own set of services, products and imponderables, however, some of them may overlap. For example some products and services can be assigned both to rural and agri-sport and to rural and agri-entertainment.

The below classification matrix is the first step of broader research of rural and agri-tourism enterprises in Poland and up till now no statistical tool has been used for grouping products. In the next step, after collecting quantitative data statistical analysis will be applied. The results of first step experts’ classification are presented in the matrix 1. As the number of new products and services of rural and agri-tourism has been increased dramatically the matrix will be continuously filled up. Moreover, one can argue that the several already existing tourist products and services have to be added to the matrix (e.g. transport of tourists).

Results and findings

Figure 1 contains the result of products and services breakdown by various clusters and groups of rural and agri-tourism activities. Nine clusters and 45 groups of rural and agri tourist products has been distinguished. Some of the clusters and groups are easily understood *per se*, while the others require some more explanation.

Rural and agri-accommodation services

Distinguishing of the rural and agri accommodation cluster is justified by its specific nature. All services and products of the cluster have been divided into six groups. Rural and agri-accommodation services comprise various kinds of accommodation in rural areas. Homestead accommodation, including farm-stays, country-stays, rural home-stays, and rural B&B seem to be the most common and the most tied with countryside and rurality. The above accommodation categories are quite specific for rural and agri-tourism, however the differences between them are very slight. B&B in usual is an “umbrella term” for variety of hosted accommodation that includes a bed for the night and a breakfast in the morning. There are also some specific for agri-tourism forms of accommodation, e.g. sleeping on the hay, camping barns or bunkhouses. However, such

accommodation services cannot be offered in a mass scale. They are connected with some threats both for a farm (e.g. fire) and for visitors (e.g. low sanitary condition, possibility of skin diseases transfer).

Accommodation can be also provided by rural and agri-hotels or motels. Within this scope agri-tourism hosted accommodation businesses and hotels compete between each other. A cheap price of an agri-tourism farm service may be an advantage for a visitor. Agri-tourism farms sometimes have to offer cheaper accommodation. On the other hand they cannot attract clients. Most of visitors and tourists prefer accommodation at hotels or motels. Hotel services' prices are much differentiated depending on quality, standard of services, location, and many other factors (e.g. in Poland from 20 PLN¹ per night). In general tourists expect high quality form hotel services and well equipped, comfortable rooms. Hotels offer additional services as parking places, restaurants, discos, etc. The lower price for agri-tourism accommodation seems to be both an advantage and a disadvantage. Because of lower prices at agri-tourism hosted accommodation some demanding clients do not expect high quality and prefer to stay at hotels or motels.

An idea of rural and agri-hotel and motel services means an agri-tourism accompanying services. A tourist staying a day, participating in various activities at a farm needs an accommodation. In such a case there is no competition between hotels and agri-tourism farms.

Rural and agri-catering businesses (gastronomy)

Rural and agri-catering are an integral part of agri-tourism. Tourist staying temporarily or periodically in a farm have to buy at least some meals. They can buy their meals in restaurants, make their own meals or buy catering services offered by agri-tourism farms or other rural tourism enterprises. There is a great variety of agri-catering services in agri-tourism and rural tourism, however there only three groups are distinguished within that cluster. The variety is connected with source of food products, number and time of meals, places of serving meals, etc.

Foods products may come partly from an agri-tourism farm own production or fully be purchased outside the farm. Serving own food products farms can increase their income. One can divide meals in various ways and by three criteria; for example, by the time of serving meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner, tea, supper), by the place of served meals (in the dinning room or in the kitchen, outside home, in restaurants, etc.), or by feeding patterns (regional kitchen, national kitchen, every-day meals and holiday meals, etc.). The idea of rural and agri-tourism lies in varieties that make the meals very special and different from the meals served by other agri-tourism farms. Each meal may be identified as an individual variant of an agri-tourism product. The unlimited possibility of meals' differentiation causes the farms can be different from each other.

¹ 1 US\$ = 3.77 PLN (23 June, 2004).

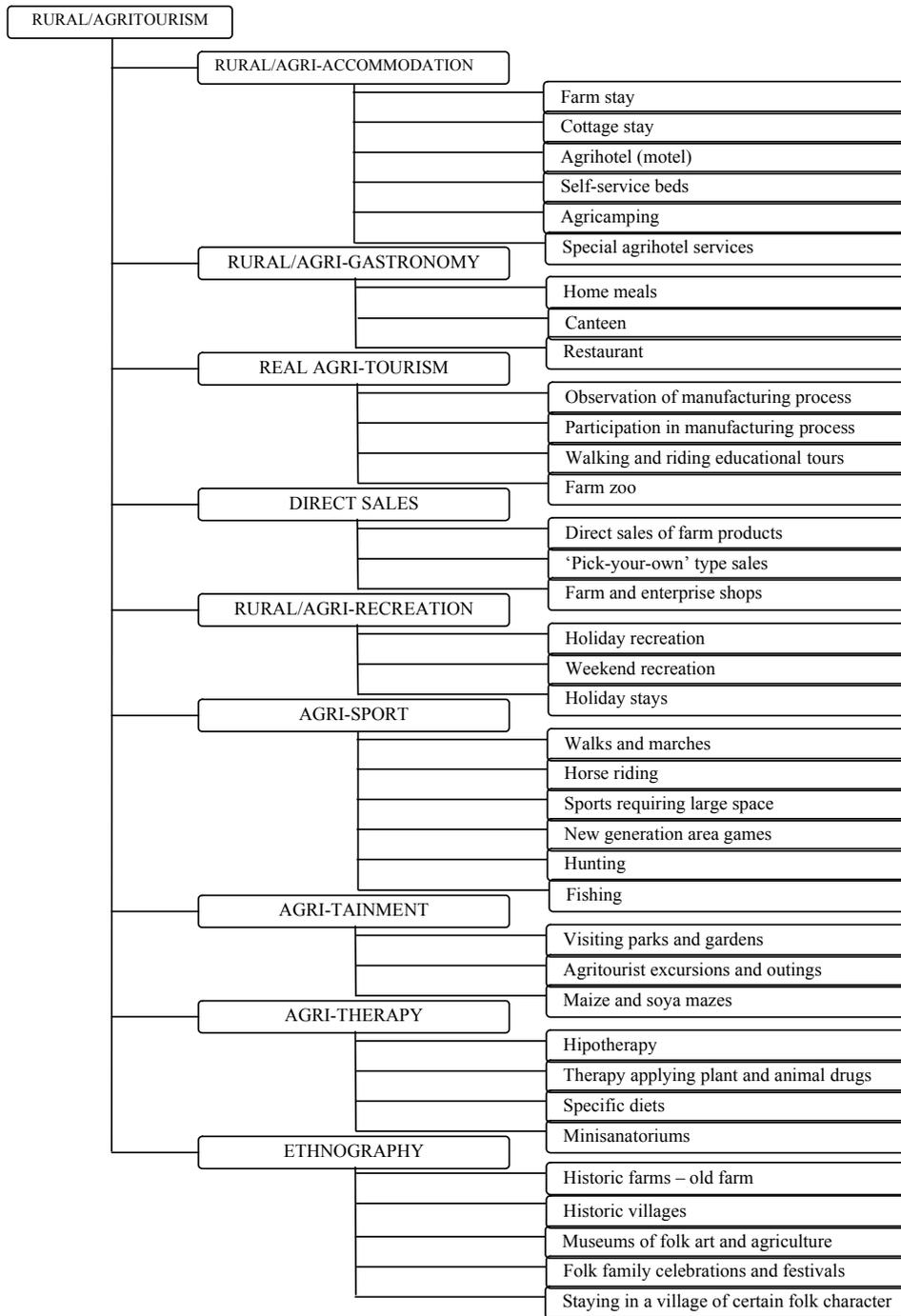
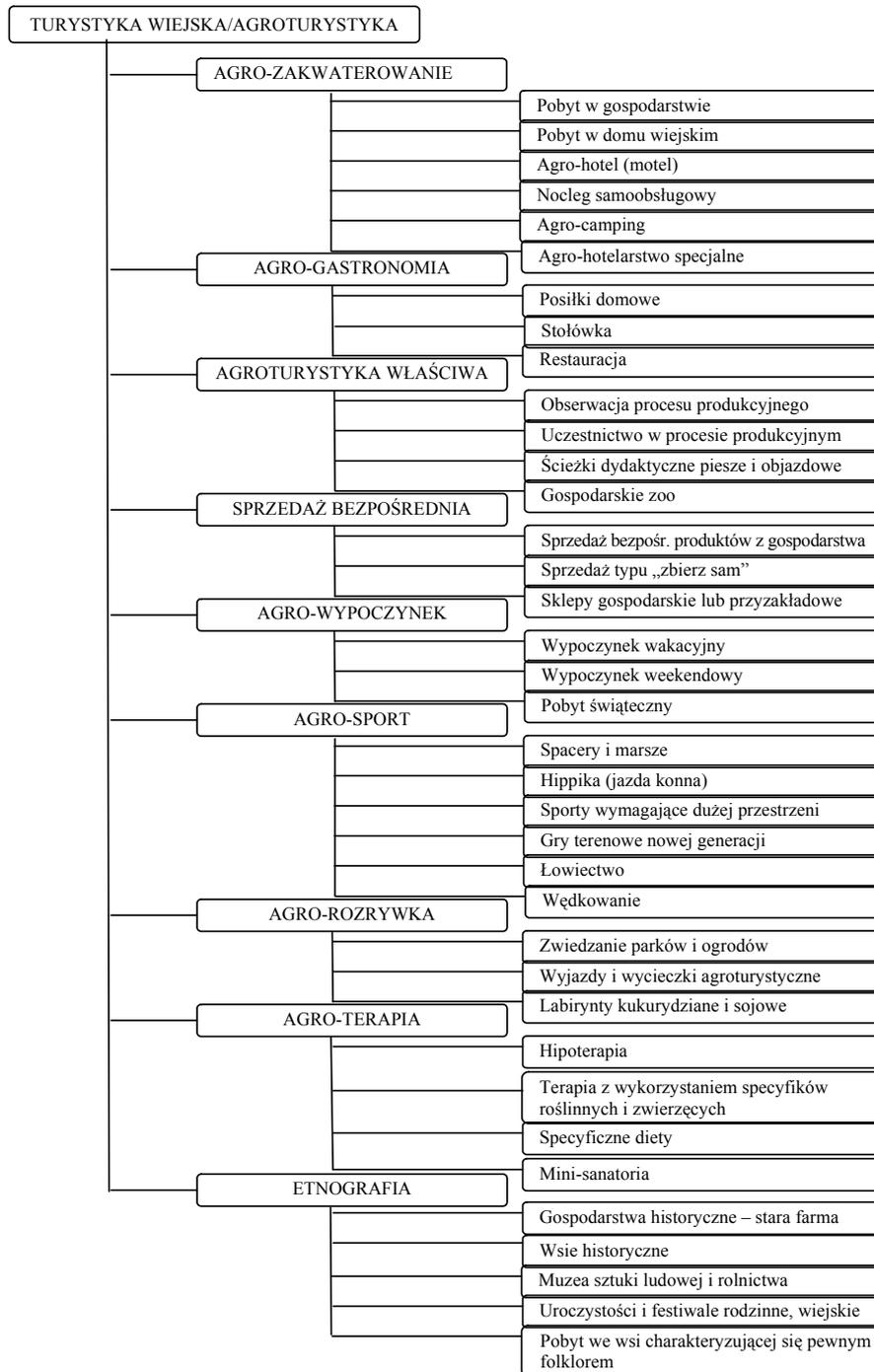


Fig. 1. Classification matrix of products and services offered within rural and agritourism activity



Ryc. 1. Macierz klasyfikacyjna produktów i usług oferowanych w turystyce wiejskiej i agroturystyce

Real agri-tourism (proper agritourism)

This cluster is specific for agricultural tourism (agri-tourism) only. The products and services assigned to it are available on farms exclusively. The products and services not included here may be provided by other than farm operation. Products and services of real agri-tourism comprise of five groups namely:

- observation of agricultural production process, including plant production, animal production and some processing, including guided or individual farm (ranch) tours that are widely offered in various countries,
- real participation in the process of plant production, animal production and processing (e.g. help in cow milking, hay making, etc.),
- animal demonstrations or shows, including cow milking, sheep shearing, angora rabbit shearing, stock selling or cowboys rodeo,
- on-farm signed walking trails;
- direct contact with domestic animals or the nature of farms in different kinds of petting-zoo or safaris.

Observation of the process of agricultural production

The service consists in making possible to observe the whole or the most interesting fragments of the production process. In plant production in usual it is an observation of a part of the process because the whole process lasts several months. Sowing of plants, blooming of orchards and harvesting seem to be the most interesting moments. Tourists can also learn about systems of land use or recognise various plant species. A farm prepared for tourists should have a room with posters e.g. introducing development of land use systems (an example of ethnography product). Some farms can create museums of agricultural machinery (a product of ethnography). Observation of the production process is quite easy in animal production and especially during grazing. Nevertheless it is more difficult or impossible in modern industrial animal farms. An old traditional animal farm where a farmer keeps freely many different breeds of animals may be very attractive for visitors. Processing industry and in particular small enterprises more and more often are open for visits of tourists (an example of rural and agri-retail and operational business in the Figure 1). They organised special glass rooms separating visitors from the production process. This way the process may continue without disturbing it by tourists. Creameries, dairies, wineries and breweries can be the best examples of such services. As they usually sell their products they were included in rural and agri-retail and operational businesses in Figure 1.

Participation in the process of agricultural production

Tourists' participation in the production process is an example of agri-tourism products connected with some risk and it is necessary to have third-party insurance in case of accident. Agri-tourists can take part both in plant and animal production, but rarely in the processing. The activities may comprise: feeding animals, milking cows, turning out animals for grazing, sowing, and harvesting, etc. Modern technology makes difficult, but does not exclude a tourist from the production process. Organic farm staying and

working, very popular in some countries, e.g. offered by WWOOF – Willing Workers on Organic Farms, can be an example both of “real” agri-tourism and agri-ecotourism.

Direct contact with farm animal and rural nature

The service is based on unlimited direct contact between tourists, mainly children, and live animals, including poultry, rabbits, goats, sheep, calves, etc. The children should be supervised by their parents not to hurt animals and not to be hurt. On the other hand third-party insurance in case of accident would be advisable for farmers. A contact with plants and nature is another example. The most favourable are farms of diversified area, e.g. 30 to 50 ha where visitors can walk along educational paths, admire various animals, plants or birds. There are quite a lot of such petting zoo farms in different countries and they usually offer catering services, entertainment or sport services and sometimes accommodations.

Rural and agri-retail business (direct sales)

This cluster is very important for farmers, rural society and food processing companies as well. Farmers have chance to channel food their produce for better prices. It is so attractive for US farmers so that they organise themselves in for example North American Farm Direct Selling Organization. Food processing companies sometimes use concept of agri-tourism for their products promotion. Within the cluster – retail operation business – six groups of products and services were distinguished.

Tourists watching or participating in the production process are more willing to buy products that they observed or produced themselves. Direct sale is an important agri-tourism service. The most often tourists buy vegetables, fruits, honey and various processed home made products. Therefore agri-tourism enterprises organise open-air markets or road stands or stalls advertised very often by the roads. Tourists can consume bought products at once (cafes, restaurants, picnic areas – examples of rural and agri-catering business) or they can take them home.

“Pick-your-own” direct sale

Sometimes farmers offer stays in their farms connected with picking up of various products, e.g. fruits or vegetables. The most often they can pick up strawberries, raspberries, currants, gooseberries, apples, pears, etc. In this aim orchards or berry patches should have well preserved grass intercrop broad enough for visitors picking up their own fruits. This kind of agri-tourism products is very popular in the UK and USA. Such farms usually offer catering facilities, playgrounds for children, parking places and are located not far from the main roads.

Ethnography

Local rural societies produce specific cultural products and goods that are different from other societies. Therefore ethnographic products and services are usually offered

by the whole rural societies than by individual farms. Ethnographic products offered by rural society may include:

- stay within rural society and deal with their life's day-to-day problems,
- stay with rural family and get involved in its life style,
- rural heritage parks, museums of folk art, museums of agriculture, etc.
- specific family, rural or religious holidays,
- folk art, folk poetry and folk music,
- regional, local language.

Historical and modern agri-tourism farm

Agricultural farms unceasingly change their techniques of production. That means that the present technique is completely different than several years ago. Cereal harvesting can be a good example. In the past cereals were mowed with sickle, next were tied in sheaves which were brought to a barn. In autumn cereals were flailed and finally were milled. A treadmill that is almost unknown at present was important machinery powered by animal power. A sickle was displaced by scythe, than by sheaf-binder and finally by a harvester. A threshing machine replaced a flail; the flail was replaced by a harvesting machine. The old machines became useless. Agri-tourism farms usually represent contemporary technique of production, however historical farms using old techniques and old machines can be organised as well. Managing a traditional agri-tourism farm requires quite a lot of expenditures of labour and capital. Because of the fact such a service is offered rarely. In return one can offer a heritage parks or museums collecting exhibits and posters showing old techniques of production. In some regions of the world people can still find examples of cultivation of traditional agricultural production (e.g. horse-drawn farms – see *Agritourism...* 2003).

Rural/agri-sport and active tourism

Sport is an activity that does not seem necessarily connected with agri-tourism. However, agri-tourism and rural tourism enterprises have usually suitable conditions for different tourism activities, especially when the sport discipline is connected with animals or requires a lot of space to practice it. Horse-back riding is a typical agri-tourism product. It may vary from one farm to another and it may comprise various activities connected with horses. In usual agri-tourism farms do not compete with other enterprises in this area. Agri-tourism farms may also offer field sports, various conventional and extreme sports. The competition between sport services providers is less than between accommodation or catering services providers. Introduction of the term "agri-sport" seems to be very reasonable. Some agri-tourism and rural tourism enterprises located close to urban areas offer tennis fields or golf fields. This way they can generate additional income, however offering a high standard of playgrounds and sport fields require quiet high investments. Some extreme sports may be a very interesting offer of agri-tourism and rural tourism enterprises, but they require a lot of expenditures and quite big area. An agri-tourism farm can also offer some equipment to practice sport, e.g. bicycles, especially if there are cycling paths around it.

Agri-therapy (health related products and services)

Agri-tourism can be connected with health services or health-related products. Tourists coming to the countryside may expect possibility of a specific therapy, e.g. horse riding therapy or a special diet therapy, including consumption of “healthy” products (e.g. from Russia – “koumiss” – mare’s milk farms). The other forms of rural and agri-therapy involve api-therapy (use of various bee products) and spas and health resorts in rural areas. At the moment we have no to many examples of agri and rural therapy, however this cluster of products and services is promising one. More and more specifics which are able on farms and rural areas will be offered to tourists.

Horse riding therapy is one of the methods of rehabilitation of disabled persons. Its specific character results from the direct contact with a horse. The presence of the horse makes this therapeutic method unusual and unique, but it is strictly connected with other rehabilitation and therapeutic methods and fully gains from their experience and knowledge. Horse riding therapy aims at restoring people suffer from mental or physical diseases to health with use of horses and horse back riding. The horse back riding therapy allows diminishing balance distempers and to improving immunity response, improving locomotion abilities and ensuring direct contact with an animal and nature, stimulating psychomotor development of a child, relaxing and weakening neurotic reactions. The horse riding therapy includes: horse riding physiotherapy, psycho-educational horse riding, a therapy with a horse, etc.

Rural/agri-recreation

Agri-recreation is another branch of agritourism. It is considered to be the point of agritourism, at least nowadays in Poland. Agri-recreation combines the hotel and gastronomic services for a longer period of time. The idea of agri-recreation boils down to spending free time away from home, on a farm or in rural accommodation. The products and services of agri-recreation are classified according to the length and season of stay in the following way:

- holiday on a farm offered by vacation farms,
- short weekend holiday (1-3 days) or longer holiday (e.g. during long weekends),
- staying at Christmas, Easter or New Year.

Vacation farm is an agri-tourist farm receiving holidaymakers for a holiday lasting from one to four weeks. In Poland the tradition of a two-week holiday is common. Vacation farms usually receive holidaymakers from June to the end of August. This service is the dominant form of agri-tourist services in Poland.

Rural/agri-entertainment (agri-tainment)

This cluster covers big range of activities directly tied to farms and rural areas. The cluster covers agri sports and games as well. Services and products of the cluster very often are offered rather by financial groups than farmers or rural society themselves. For example maize mazes, which spread across the world, are organized on franchising base. Maize mazes require capital, know-how, land and labour. Farmers usually provide land and capital. Seven groups of services and products are distinguished within the cluster named entertainment. Majority of products of the cluster may be provided rather by skilled professionals than farmers themselves.

Conclusions

Following the above review one can conclude that rural and agri-tourism may offer almost unlimited number of products, services and imponderables. Classification of them is provided in matrix 1. Up to now nine clusters and over 40 groups of products are distinguished. Each cluster received its specific and unique name, so the products and services could be easily assigned to it. Further works should be conducted to update the matrix content or even renamed the clusters or groups. This is because agri-tourism farms and rural society provide growing range of services and products.

Farmers and rural society rather seldom offer a single product or service. They offer rather a packet of services and products. A set of services and products offered by given farm or enterprise creates a portfolio (mix) of services and products. A farm will succeed if it can organise and offer an attractive portfolio. Mass tourism exists selling on pretty low price very narrow assortment of services and products only. Agri-tourism has to sell broad range of products and services, but usual they are expensive because of their unique nature.

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IDENTYFIKACJA PRODUKTÓW I USŁUG TURYSTYKI WIEJSKIEJ I AGROTURYSTYKI

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Pojęcia: „produkt” i „usługa” są powszechnie wykorzystywane w ekonomii. W odniesieniu do agroturystyki/turystyki wiejskiej muszą być uzupełnione o pojęcia dotyczące wsi, wiejskości i rolnictwa. Dodatkowo są często uzupełniane przez pojęcia: „doświadczenie” i „imponderabilium”. Liczba i różnorodność produktów i usług w zakresie agroturystyki i turystyki wiejskiej są niemal nieograniczone, powstała więc potrzeba ich uporządkowania w postaci macierzy klasyfikacyjnej. W referacie przedstawiono propozycję takiej klasyfikacji, w której wyodrębniono dziewięć głównych grup i ponad 40 różnych usług i produktów agroturystycznych i turystyki wiejskiej.