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The Development of Agritourism in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship in the Light of International and National Conditions

Abstract: Podkarpackie Voivodeship is one of the regions of Poland in which the number of agritourism entities is very high. Therefore tourism plays a significant role in its development strategy. The aim of the paper is to identify the current state of agritourism and the changes that have occurred in the region in the years 2000–2016. Specific objectives are to determine the distribution of agritourism farms and their offer, together with a comprehensive analysis of the environmental and socio-economic factors, as well as the impact of the Slovak-Ukrainian border. The report was developed on the statistical materials from the Polish Central Statistical Office, Podkarpackie Agricultural Advisory Centre in Boguchwała and data collected from municipalities and district offices that is published on their websites, as well as through interviews with 100 owners of agritourism farms in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. The research has shown, on the one hand, the decline in the number of farms in the region and, on the other hand, the increase in the diversity of the tourist offer of these entities. Distribution of agritourism farms is closely linked to the attractiveness of natural environment and quality of secondary tourism resources. Traditional agritourism has not yet fully used its countryside, as well as cross-border advantages of its location.

Keywords: agritourism; entrepreneurship; Podkarpackie Voivodeship; rural areas; tourism

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Introduction

Tourism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, yet it plays a significant role in the economic and social spheres. Global revenues from tourism are systematically growing. In 2007 they accounted for 6% of GDP, while in 2015 for 11%. Employment

in this sector exceeded 260 million people (*UNWTO…*, 2015). Tourism affects the development of other areas of the economy, mainly services and infrastructure. At the same time, tourism satisfies the social needs for leisure time, learning about other cultures, their way of life and habits; it also influences health of the society. On the other hand, tourism is a sector that can significantly support the implementation of critical government programs, contributing to stimulating entrepreneurship and local development. An example of this is the development of rural tourism, including agritourism. It results from the policy of multifunctional development of the countryside in Poland, which has been implemented for several years, as well as other initiatives that trigger entrepreneurial attitudes of the rural population (Drzewiecki, 2002; Bański, Stola, 2002; Dorocki, Zdon-Korzeniowska, 2012).

Continuing specialisation in selected agricultural production sectors causes that agriculture in the areas with a high fragmentation of farmland is not competitive, which directly translates into low income of farming population. This situation, especially after 1989 when free-market processes were launched in Poland, forced many farmers to seek additional sources of revenue. The development of tourism in rural areas, including agrotourism, is an example of the diversification of farm activities. Many researchers indicate that the development of agrotourism has economic benefits not only to farmers providing tourism services but also to local communities (Sikorska-Wolak, 2004, 2009; Zioło, 2009; Sikora, 2012). The report of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for the years 2007–2015 clearly indicates that rural tourism has become one of the most widespread forms of alternative tourism, an essential element of which are agritourism farms. According to the Central Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny – GUS) in 2014 in Poland, there were 3756 agritourism farms with up to 9 beds, and 804 offering 10 or more accommodation places (*Turystyka…*, 2015). On the other hand, the research of many authors indicates that the agritourism activity is carried by over 8,000 farms in which there are about 84,500 accommodation places (Kubal, Mika, 2012; Bednarek-Szczepańska, Bański, 2014; Dorocki, Szymańska, Zdon-Korzeniowska, 2015, 2016; Bajgier-Kowalska, Tracz, Uliszak, 2016). Nearly 40% of agritourism farms operating in Poland are located in three voivodeships: Małopolskie, Podkarpackie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie (*Rolnictwo…*, 2015; GUS, 2015). According to the report of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, in 2007–2014, due to structural changes in the economy, the number of people involved in running a farm decreased by 23.6% (i.e. 1.3 million inhabitants). At the same time, in rural areas, the number of non-farm workers increased by more than 35% (*Rolnictwo…*, 2015).

Besides natural and cultural values, one of the most important factors of development of rural tourism, including agritourism, is the demand for it, i.e. The interest of the society (or groups) to participate in various forms of leisure (Zdon-Korzeniowska, 2009). The dynamics of domestic demand for tourist services is growing and it is an important force driving local development. For this reason, many rural communities, as well as individual farm owners, see opportunities for investment in tourism. At the same time, the research indicates that favourable natural and cultural conditions are determinants of development of tourism in rural areas and the tourist offer being prepared (Durydiwka, 2012; Dorocki, Szymańska, Zdon-Korzeniowska, 2013; Bednarek-Szczepańska, Bański, 2014). Other researchers indicate that favourable conditions for the development of rural tourism also include socio-political changes (e.g. development of local self-government,

civil liberties), as well as systemic economic changes, resulting from the principles of the market economy (Dębniewska, 2000; Zioło, 2009).

The Carpathian Mountains are one of the most important tourist regions of Poland and, at the same time, an area where for centuries agriculture (especially pastoralism), forestry, as well as industry, flourished. Since the 19th century, tourism has also been developing here, which in some localities has become a dominant function, for example in the areas where mineral waters occur. Previous studies have shown that in the last two decades, the process of developing tourism functions in rural areas of the Carpathians has intensified (Szpara, 2011; Mitura, Buczek-Kowalik, 2015). It is a field that is characterised by unfavourable size structure of farms and, at the same time, by exceptional natural and cultural values. Moreover, the location of tourist base in the countryside varies considerably. According to the GUS data for 2015, 20% of farms operating in agritourism in Poland were located in two voivodeships in the Carpathian region – Małopolskie and Podkarpackie.

Development of agritourism in Poland

Agritourism is a type of seasonal tourism that uses farms and their surroundings. In the traditional sense, its essence includes serviced accommodation located directly on the farm or self-catering accommodation in the near vicinity of the farm in the countryside. Therefore, by definition agritourism is linked to a functioning farm, and the provision of services offered by farmers should be inextricably linked to the production activity of the farm (Drzewiecki, 2002, 2009; Sznajder, Przezbórska, 2006; Wojciechowska, 2011). There are many definitions of agritourism found in the literature (Phillip, Hunter, Blackstock, 2010; Sikora, 2012). Nowadays, the range of this concept is broader. It is the result of the accepted legal solutions and terminological ambiguity, and, on the other hand, stems from the dynamism of this phenomenon (Wiatrak, 2003; Kubal, Mika, 2012; Bajgier-Kowalska, Tracz, Uliszak, 2016, 2017). In Polish literature, agritourism is understood in a broad sense and includes:

- tourism related to a functioning farm, offering opportunities for exploring agricultural activities, including participation in particular farm work,
- tourism not linked directly to a functioning farm, geared to all forms of recreation in an attractive, non-urbanised area,
- tourism which includes elements of local culture and forms of integration with the rural community (Bieńkowski, 2001; Durydiwka, 2012; Marcinkiewicz, 2013).

Taking into account the number of agritourism farms, the strength of the connection with the farm and the tourist offer, it is possible to distinguish several phases in the development of agritourism in Poland (Sikora, Wartecka-Ważyńska, 2013; Chyc, 2014). The first step began immediately after 1989 and lasted until the mid-1990s. It was evidenced by a natural increase in the number of agritourism farms, and the tourist offer on many farms was limited to accommodation and meals. Agricultural advisory centres and the Office of Physical Culture and Tourism (Perepeczko, 2004; Wojciechowska, 2009; Sikora, 2012) played a significant role in the popularisation of agritourism among farmers. The second phase began in the second half of the 1990s. It was characterised by a further increase in the number of agritourism farms and the establishment of regional associations of those offering accommodation services. The process of categorisation

of agritourism accommodation started, which gave additional impetus for improving the quality of services provided (Drzewiecki, 2002; Marcinkiewicz, 2013).

The third phase, which occurred during the first decade of the 21st century, was related to the reorganisation of the tourism system in Poland. At this stage, the progressive specialisation and much richer and varied tourist offer of agritourism farms were visible (Balińska, 2005; Drzewiecki, 2009; Pałka, 2009; Jagusiewicz, Łopaciński, 2010). At the same time, more and more often entities not running agricultural production were formed under the name "agritourism". This phenomenon escalated particularly in the areas with high tourism intensity (Kubal, Mika, 2012; Bednarczyk, 2014). The fourth phase fell on the second decade of the 21st century and was visible in the development of innovative tourism products. One of the manifestations of this innovation might be thematic and tourist villages (Uliszak, 2013). Examples of good practice were agritourism products referring to local rural traditions (e.g. plantations of herbs, horse-riding, vineyard routes), giving the basis for development of authentic thematic villages (Dorocki, Szymańska, Zdon-Korzeniowska, 2013; Zawadka, 2013; Bajgier-Kowalska, Tracz, Uliszak 2016, 2017). What is worth noting is the fact that the so-called tourist clusters developed. They shared common resources of knowledge and skills, sharing and contributing to its expansion, as well as cooperation and extension of tourist offer.

When characterising the current trends in agritourism in Poland, the shortest possible way to describe it would be: 1) a variety of offers, 2) increasing specialisation and professionalism, as well as decreasing connection of agritourism farms to agricultural production. Agritourism in Poland has become a permanent element in the structure of tourism. At the same time, it is closely influenced by the phenomena related to general changes in the sphere of life. Tourist market research shows that agritourism is popular due to the change in the behaviour of the inhabitants of major urban agglomerations – the main purchasers of tourist services. More and more often they want to experience something new during the holidays. They want to get to know the countryside and its inhabitants, get in touch with the unspoiled environment, rural landscape and healthy food. Lower costs of leisure stay in the agritourism accommodation are also a crucial element (Drzewiecki, 2009; Wojciechowska, 2009; Sikora, 2012). However, a problem important for the future of the classically understood agritourism is emerging. It is the result of the disappearance of agricultural activity, particularly in the beautiful regions of the country, and commercialisation of rural tourism (Hegarty, Przezbórska, 2005; Wojciechowska, 2009; Bednarek-Szczepańska, 2011; Bajgier-Kowalska, Tracz, Uliszak, 2016, 2017).

Methodology of research

Podkarpackie Voivodeship covers an area of 17,846 km², which accounts for 5.7% of Poland's area, and is home to 2,129,000 inhabitants. Rural areas account for 93.3% of the voivodeship area, while 52.5% of the total area is occupied by agricultural land (*Rocznik…*, 2015). The voivodeship is rural-industrial, as 58.7% of the total population is rural, while the urbanisation rate (41.3%) is the lowest in the country. The voivodeship comprises 21 poviats (districts) and four towns with a poviats status, as well as 160 gminas (communes) of which 144 are rural and urban-rural communes.

The study had two goals. The first was to identify changes in the number of agritourism farms, their distribution and offer of agritourism services in the region. Another

goal was determining the national conditions connected with undertaking and running agritourism activities, the influence of the Slovak-Ukrainian border on the development of agritourism, and the type and quality of the agritourism product. The data for carrying out the above-mentioned analyses were collected from the Podkarpackie Agricultural Advisory Centre (Podkarpacki Ośrodek Doradztwa Rolniczego – PODR) in Boguchwała, Central Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny – GUS), Podkarpacki Tourist Portal, as well as websites of poviats and gminas. The data collected from web portals concerned the following information: location of the farm (address, telephone number, website, geographical coordinates), tourist offer (number of beds, availability, accessibility), and tourist and recreational offer. Verification of the collected material was based on the survey conducted in 100 randomly selected farms located in different parts of the voivodeship. These were individual in-depth interviews with farm owners regarding their business and services.

Natural and socio-economic conditions of agritourism development in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship

Podkarpackie Voivodeship is a region of high natural value in the Polish scale. The area is located within the following geographical areas: Sandomierz Basin (northern part), Outer Carpathians (central and southern part), Roztocze Upland (eastern part) and Lublin Uplands (north-eastern part). Height differences in the range of 140 m a.s.l. (Vistula valley) to 1346 m a.s.l. (Tarnica Mount in the Bieszczady Mountains), cause terrain and climate diversity, and thus a large variety of fauna and flora (Kondracki, 2012). An important factor for the development of tourism is the occurrence of areas covered by legal protection, forest complexes and water areas. The most valuable natural areas are Beskid Niski and Bieszczady in the Carpathian Mountains, which are protected by law in the Bieszczady National Park and Magura National Park. Also, the voivodeship has ten landscape parks, 90 nature reserves and 1139 nature monuments. There are also significant mineral water resources and the associated health resort network: Iwonicz-Zdrój, Rymanów-Zdrój, Horyniec-Zdrój and Polańczyk-Zdrój. Natural resources include water reservoirs on the San river (Lake Solina and Myczkowce), as well as other rivers (e.g. Wisłoka) which create favourable conditions for water sports and recreation. Many parts of the Carpathian rivers are waterways accessible to water tourism. Also, there is more than 2500 km of marked trails for hiking in the Bieszczady Mts., Beskid Niski Mts., Carpathian Foothills and the Sandomierz and Solska Wilderness. The research shows that the attractiveness of nature was one of the most important factors taken into account by farmers in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship when undertaking agritourism (*Turystyka…*, 2007).

In 2015, nearly 25% of the employed in the voivodeship worked in agriculture and forestry, which was one of the highest values of this indicator in Poland. The registered unemployment rate was 14.6%, while the unemployed in rural areas constituted the largest percentage in the country – 63.2% (*Sytuacja…*, 2016). These data point to problems in the rural labour market arising from the ongoing restructuring of agricultural activities. Also, this issue is magnified by the difficulties of the agrifood industry in the voivodeship, which affects the surplus of the labour force in agricultural occupations. The working-age population is looking for a variety of employment opportunities, a large part become migrants (Mazowieckie Voivodeship, abroad), while others are diversifying their

agricultural activities, specialising in plant production or services. In the regions with unfavourable conditions for agricultural production (poor soil, terrain), there is an increase in tourism initiatives in rural areas (*Sytuacja…*, 2016). Many researchers point out that the development of rural tourism can significantly contribute to the change in the unfavourable pattern of employment in the countryside of the voivodeship (Kurtyka, 2007; Makarski, 2007; Mitura, 2015).

Historical-cultural factors influenced the specificity of agriculture in the voivodeship. It is characterised by high agrarian fragmentation and small production volume. In 2014 there were 134,100 farms in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, of which 133,900 were individual holdings (*Rolnictwo w województwie…*, 2015). Farms with an area of up to 5 ha (85% of all farms) dominated, with the majority of them with 2–5 ha of agricultural land (43.8%). Only 2.6% of farms had an area of over 15 hectares. The average area of the farm in the region did not exceed 5.17 ha, and the average area of farmland in the farm was 4.40 ha, while the average of the latter for Poland was 10.22 ha (*Rocznik…,* 2015; *Sytuacja…*, 2016).

However, the number of farms in the region is steadily decreasing. According to the 2010 Agricultural Census data, there were 261,400 farms which means that, compared to 2002, the number of farms decreased by 50,400 (by 16.2%). The high level of employment in agriculture in comparison with the existing agrarian structure indicated that a large part of the labour force in the agricultural sector was not fully utilised. At the same time, according to the data of the Agricultural Census of 2002, the level of education of farmers was lower than the average for the country. People with primary (38.5%) and basic vocational education (32.2%) predominated. At present, the percentage of rural population with higher education is about 4%. The dominant direction of production in individual farms is plant production (55%), while animal production is small (13%) in relation to other voivodeships. Cereal and root crops dominate production. (*Charakterystyka…*, 2014).

Cultural heritage plays an important role in the development of rural tourism. Podkarpacie Voivodeship is characterised by the landscape of great cultural and aesthetic values. It is evidenced, among other things, by objects located on selected thematic trails, such as the Wooden Architecture Trail, the Lubomirski Family Nests Trail, the Good Soldier Švejk Trail and the Oil Trail. The UNESCO World Heritage Sites are extremely valuable. These include wooden churches in Blizno and Haczów, as well as Orthodox churches in Radruż, Chotyniec, Smolnik and Turzańsk which are part of the "Wooden orthodox churches in the Polish and Ukrainian Carpathian regions". Also alive is the contemporary culture of the area, cultivated by local artists and folk artists.

One of the voivodeship potentials is its favourable geopolitical location at the Poland, Ukraine and Slovakia borderland. The Borderland is bound by the Carpathians (International Biosphere Reserve) and its culture (until 1939). As a result, many researchers point this out as crucial to the development of rural tourism and agritourism in the region (Bajgier-Kowalska, Rettinger, 2008; Dyrda-Maciołek, Maciołek, 2008; Żmuda, 2008; Balińska, Sikorska-Wolak, 2009). An additional feature is the location of the region on the eastern borders of the European Union, which creates additional opportunities for using this position in the organisation of the tourist offer and the development of partnerships. Unfortunately, barriers to the development of cross-border tourism cooperation include the insufficient number of border crossings for local border traffic, the state of technical infrastructure in rural areas, poor communication accessibility and visa problems with Ukraine.

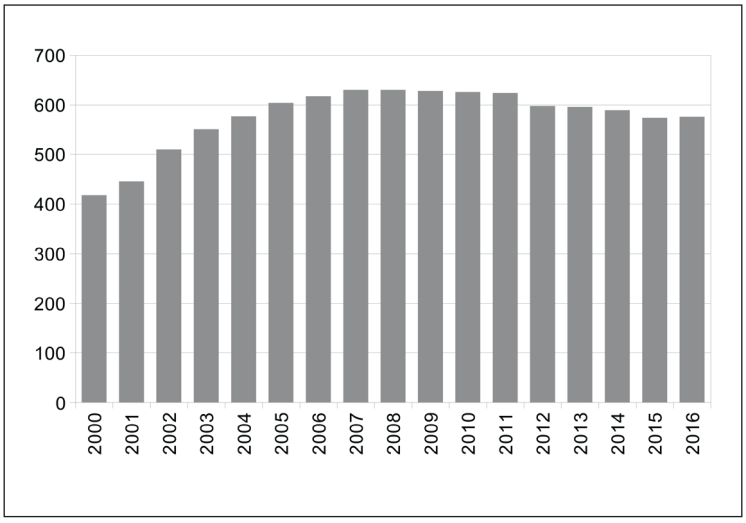
Change in the number of agritourism farms and their distribution

As of March 2016, the Podkarpackie Agricultural Advisory Centre in Boguchwała registered 576 agritourism farms with 5,847 beds. The data collected by the authors from the Podkarpackie Tourist Portal showed that the number is higher and amounts to 610 (as of July 2016), with 5,628 beds available. On the other hand, according to the criterion adopted by GUS (10 and more beds) in 2015, there were 67 agritourism holdings offering 1,089 beds. Differences in the number of agritourism farms are due to the adopted legal regulations on business activity and the income tax law, as well as the dynamics of the phenomenon not always possible to grasp (e.g. not reporting the start or end of the business activity).

In the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, agritourism farms have been operating since 1992. According to the data of the PODR in Boguchwała and GUS, in the analysed period (2000–2016) there were changes in the number of agritourism farms. In the years 2000–2007 there was an increase in the number of such objects, but after 2007 their number decreased (Fig. 1). At the same time, there is a steady growth in the number of beds. Compared to the year 2000, in 2016 the number of agritourist farms increased by 37.8%; compared with the 2007, when their number was the highest in the region (630), it was down by 8.6%. The number of beds remained at a similar level (Fig. 1). These data indicate, on the one hand, the decrease in the interest of farmers in agritourism in recent years, and on the other hand, the expansion of already existing facilities and the increase of accommodation places. Similar processes are observed in other voivodeships (Wojciechowska, 2011; Bajgier-Kowalska et al., 2016, 2017).

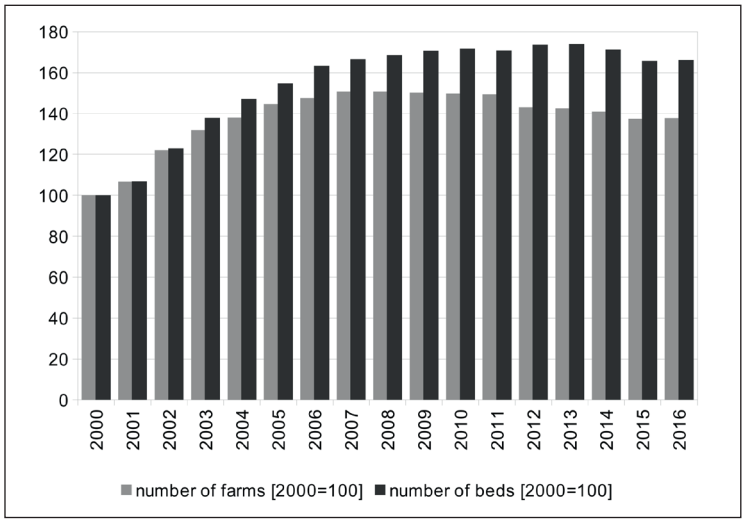
The dynamics of changes in the number of agritourism farms in the voivodeship is close to the national one (Fig. 2). Over the period of 8 years (2000–2008), the number of agritourism units increased from 418 to 630, according to some researchers even to 1074 (Sikorski, 2013), and the number of beds from 3,520 to 5,931. In this period, the number of agritourism farms increased by 50.7%. In the same period in Poland, the number of agritourism farms increased from 5,789 to 10,200, i.e. by 76.2%. The presented data indicate a substantial increase in accommodation in the region in 2002 and between 2005 and 2007. It is characteristic of both the Podkarpackie Voivodeship and the whole country (Fig. 1). However, in the case of Poland, in 2003 the number of farms decreased by a half compared to 2002 (from about 6,500 to about 3,300). However, in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship according to the PODR the number of agritourism farms slightly increased – from 510 (2002) to 551 (2003), and according to the Institute of Tourism, it decreased by 31.1% from 534 (2002) to 369 (2003). Significant data differences for 2002 and 2003 were due to the change in data collection methods by the Institute of Tourism. Another particular period is 2011–2016. According to the PODR, in 2011, there were 624 agritourism holdings in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, and in the following years their number was decreasing systematically – in 2016 there were 576 of them, i.e. 7.7% less than in 2011 (Fig. 2). It should be noted that in the analysed period of 16 years (2000–2016), regarding the number of agritourism farms, the Podkarpackie Voivodeship maintained its top position in the country, i.e. second place (2005–2009) and then third (GUS 2015). Also concerning the number of beds, the region exhibited a high growth dynamics (Fig. 2). In the analysed period, 2,322 new beds were installed. The analysis of the web pages of agritourism farms has shown that farms in the region are dominated by farms with

Fig. 1. Number of agritourism farms in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship in the years 2000–2016



Source: own work based on the date of GUS, Institute of Tourism, PODR in Boguchwała Jagusiewicz, Łopaciński (2010)

Fig. 2. Dynamics of changes in the number of agritourism farms and beds in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship in the years 2000–2016



Source: own work based on the data from the PODR in Boguchwała

9 and fewer beds – 87.5%, hence the GUS statistics (from 2010) do not indicate them. These farms offer over 4,700 beds, constituting a valuable complement (about 52%) of available tourist accommodation in the region.

In 2016, agritourism units were located in the area of all poviats (districts) in the voivodeship (Fig. 3). Most of them were in four poviats: Lesko (173), Bieszczady (79), Krosno (62) and Sanok (61). They offered a total of 3,909 beds, i.e. 69.5% of the

agritourism base in the region. Year-round facilities (82%) dominated. A relatively large number of agritourism farms were present in Przemyśl and Jasło Poviats (over 30). On the other hand, the lowest number of agritourism accommodation units was located in the poviats in the northern part of the voivodeship: Mielec, Tarnobrzeg, Stalowa Wola and Kolbuszów (below 10) and in the Przeworsk Poviat (Fig. 3). It is evident that the agritourism was dwindling in typical tourist poviats. An example of this is the Bieszczady Poviat where, according to the web portals, in 2008 existed 85 agritourism farms (Bajgier-Kowalska, Rettinger, 2008); in 2011 there were 119 units, and in 2016 their number decreased to 79, i.e. by 23.6%.

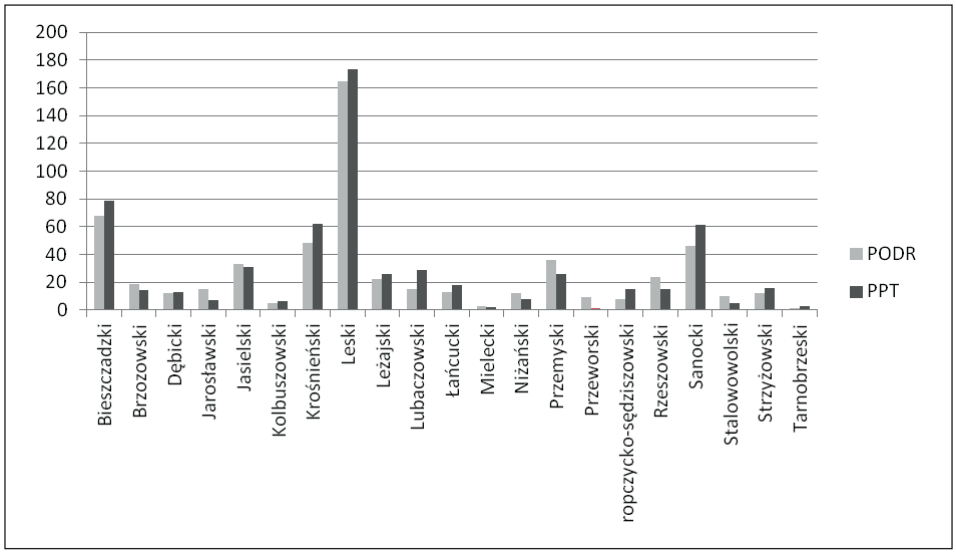
Owners of agritourism facilities are aware that the Internet helps them find potential customers. It is evident in the number of farms presenting their offer on the Podkarpackie Tourist Portal (Podkarpacki Portal Turystyczny – PPT) (Fig. 4). Differences in the number of agritourism farms between the PODR and PPT data concern mainly poviats with the highest tourist attractiveness. On the tourist portal, there were much more of them than in the data from the PODR (Bieszczady, Lesko, Lubaczów, Krosno and Sanok). On the other hand, in typical rural poviats, a smaller number of farms placed an offer on a tourist portal and cooperated more with the PODR (Jarosław, Przeworsk, Rzeszów).

The analysis of the available data indicated that agritourism units were available in 100 gminas (62.5% of all gminas) (Fig. 3, Fig. 4). It had not changed since 2007 (Mitura, Buczek-Kowalik, 2015). The concentration of such farms occurred mainly in the gminas located in the south-western and south-eastern part of the voivodeship. The largest number of agritourism farms operated in the following gminas: Solina (83), Ustrzyki Dolne (43), Lesko (25), Rymanów (22), Olszanica (20), Baligród (18), Czarna (13), Lutowiska (12), Bukowsko (11) and Bircza (10). These were mostly gminas with tourist traditions dating back to the 1960s, as well as those with tourist and spa infrastructure. There were bathing spots, ski lifts and trails, tennis courts, terrain for paragliding (e.g. Dział Mount), and hiking trails and paths. Tourists seeking active leisure could enjoy a rich and varied offer such as hiking, cycling, car and horse rides, cross-country skiing and ski competitions, as well as various artistic and culinary events (e.g. The International Wine Days in Jasło). The experience of local authorities, as well as farmers renting accommodation in organising tourist activities, became a valuable asset supporting the development of agritourism in these gminas. Moreover, in the consciousness of many inhabitants of the country these areas are associated with clean air, an oasis of peace, as well as beautiful landscapes and forest areas, which is a significant "added value" stimulating demand and interest in agro-tourism offers.

Agritourism was developing much slower in the areas of the Foothills and Vistula lowlands (Fig. 4). However, even in these areas there were gminas that were standing out from the rest of the poviat in terms of the number of tourist units, e.g. Brzostek (6), Frysztak (10), Wielopole Skrzyńskie (6), Dynów (6), Łańcut (9). Regarding accommodation offered (Fig. 5), the farms in the gminas in the south of the voivodeship were at the top: Solina (1167), Ustrzyki Dolne (553) and Rymanów (279) and in the north in the gmina of Kuryłówka (122). In the latter gmina, this was cheap accommodation offered under the name of agritourism for truck drivers.

Distribution of agritourism farms corresponded with the tourist attractions of the region (Fig. 4). The first of the clusters was located in the south-eastern part of the voivodeship, in the Bieszczady Mountains, the second one is smaller, in the south-western part

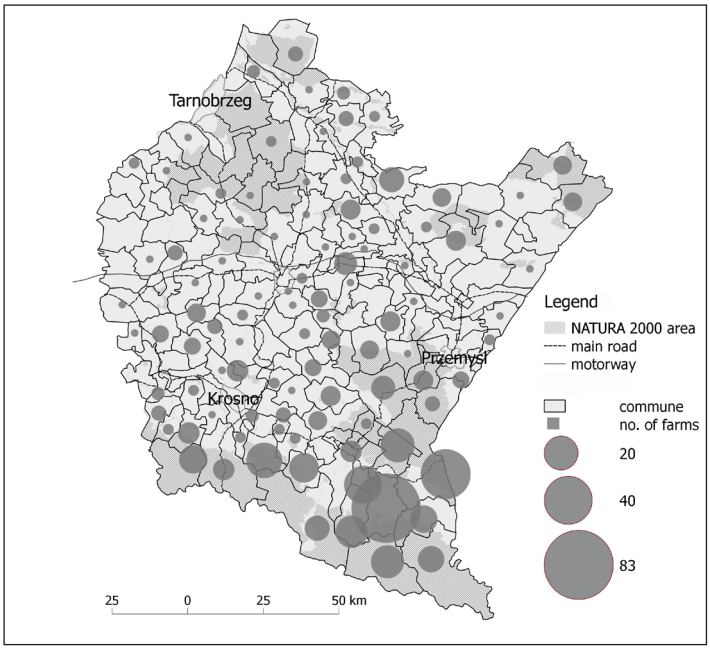
Fig. 3. Number of agritourism farms in the poviats (districts) of the Podkarpackie Voivodeships in 2016 according to the PODR and PTT data



PODR – Podkarpackie Agricultural Advisory Centre; PPT – Podkarpackie Tourist Portal

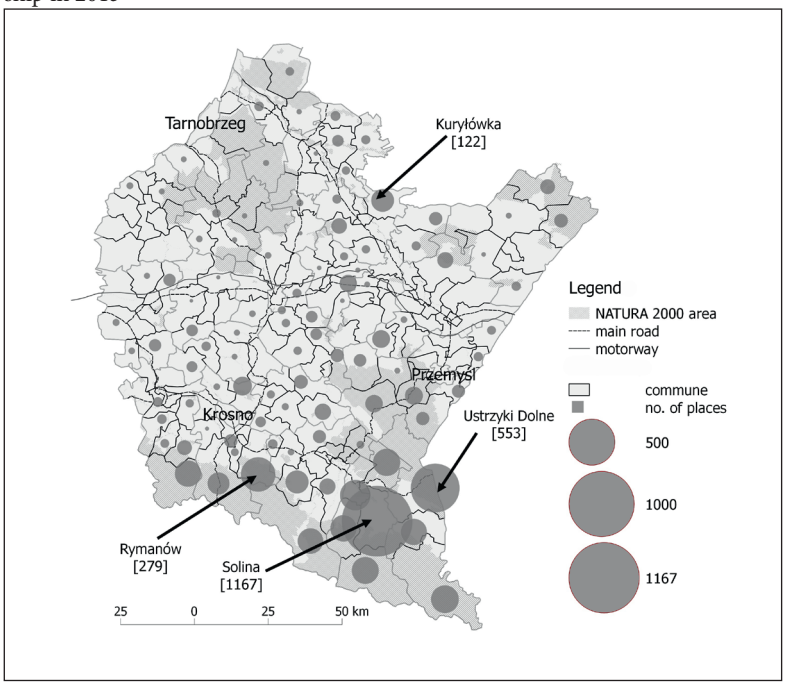
Source: own work based on data from the PODR in Boguchwała, http://epodkarpacie.com/index.php?page=offers&offer_id=579

Fig. 4. Number of agritourism farms by gminas (communes) in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship in 2015



Source: own work based on data from the PODR in Boguchwała and surveys

Fig. 5. Number of beds in agritourism farms by gminas (communes) in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship in 2015



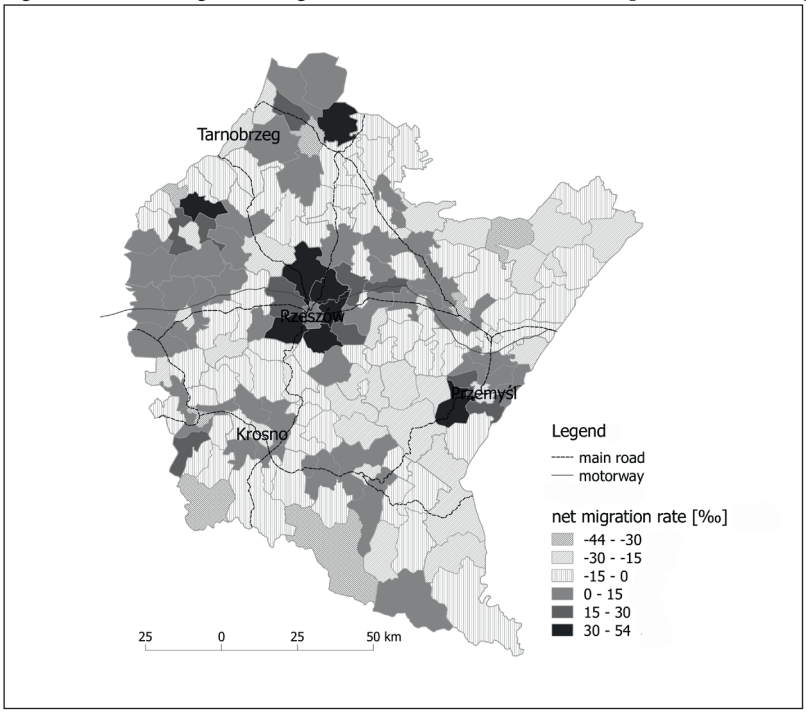
Source: own work based on data from PODR in Boguchwała and surveys

of the Beskid Niski Mountains. Another cluster was in the area of southern Roztocze Upland, in the north-eastern part of the voivodeship and single groupings in the foothills – Strzyżowskie Foothills, Dynowskie and Przemyskie. These are the most attractive areas concerning nature, landscape and culture. Many of these offers were more of a rural tourism than a classic agritourism, as confirmed by surveys. The lowest number of agri-tourism farms was recorded in the Sandomierz Basin. On the other hand, the direct neighbourhood of Rzeszów – the capital of the region and typical industrial cities – Tarnobrzeg, Mielec and Dębica, did not constitute a stimulus for the development of agritourism. It was influenced by several factors. One of them was the perception of these cities by tourists as unattractive, which did not translate into the demand for accommodation, as is the case with Kraków, Warsaw or Poznań. Secondly, a large proportion of inhabitants of Rzeszów, as well as other industrial towns of the voivodeship, moved there as a result of earlier rural-urban migration processes. If they take holiday trips, it is to the south of the voivodeship – Bieszczady Mountains, Beskid Niski Mountains, Lake Solina. It is confirmed by data on the migration balance in the region in 2010–2014 (Fig. 6).

Tourist offer and examples of agritourism innovations

The analysis of profiles of all agritourism farms on the websites and the results of surveys conducted in 100 randomly selected farms showed that agritourism activity is registered mainly by women (45.5%), while only 21.7% of farms are registered by men. On

Fig. 6. Balance of migration in gminas (communes) of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship



Source: own study based on GUS (Central Statistical Office)

this basis, it can be inferred that the revenue from this activity is rather small. A large group of owners of the farms surveyed (70%) declared the completion of various types of courses and training in agritourism. In the light of investigations, it is clear that few farmers start their own agritourism business, most of them were engaged in such services for more than five years. A detailed analysis of the tourist offer showed that most of the agritourism farms (88%) operate year-round. The highest percentage of these farms is located in the attractive areas of nature landscape – Bieszczady Mountains, Beskid Niski Mountains and Carpathian Foothills. An important aspect of the agritourism business is the possibility of enjoying full boarding. Most of the farms offer full boarding (60%), most in the Bieszczady Mts. (66%), which is probably due to lower access to bars, restaurants and shops in the region. Apart from healthy food, often based on products from their farm, the advantage of the farm is also the price. The cost of full boarding usually does not exceed 50 PLN, a significant value for tourists which increases the attractiveness of the offer of the farm; for the owner it is an additional source of income. It should be emphasised that only 30% of agritourism farms carry out agricultural activities and offer the purchase of fresh agricultural produce from their farm. They occur mainly in the Bieszczady Mts. and the Beskid Niskie Mts., and less in the Strzyżowskie and Dynowskie Foothills. In the surveyed farms, the standard of service is varied. Tourists have rooms with shared bathrooms (40%) and en-suite rooms (60%), kitchenette (95%). More and more households are investing in the development of new technologies. A TV in a room has become a standard and internet access is steadily increasing. In response to the current fashion

of spending free time in contact with nature and consumption of organic products, more than 2,000 farms in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship are certified ecologically, including part of agritourism farms, moving to eco-tourism (PODR in Boguchwała, Jarecki, Bobrecka-Jamro, 2010). These farms accounted for 1.4% of all agritourism farms in the region in 2015. They produce goat and sheep cheese, freshly squeezed juices and traditional bread.

A modern tourist who uses agritourism services expects a rich and diverse tourist offer. The agritourism farms of this region offer, above all, opportunities connected with the proximity of forests, water reservoirs and rivers, as well as varied terrain. There are such attractions as mushroom picking and forest fruit picking, bathing, fishing, sailing, canoeing, walking and hiking on hiking trails. Farms located in the south-eastern part of the region, benefiting from the rich natural resources of the Bieszczady Mts., are particularly attractive. Products related to cultural heritage appear rather rarely. Those offered include participation in wicker workshops (Nisko, Biłgoraj), tissue-paper art (Brzozów, Sanok), pottery (Medynia Głogowska), wool felting (Ustrzyki Dolne), sculpting or painting, baking bread and taking part in local festivals and fairs, presenting regional products and folk items, as well as regional songs and dances.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the interest of local governments to support such initiatives which is reflected in the increasing number of companies taking part in such events, as well as a growing number of viewers, both tourists and locals. Many of this type of initiatives are undertaken in the poviats of Bieszczady, Lesko, Krosno, Sanok and Przemyśl. They are heavily advertised on local television, the press and over the Internet. This offer is complemented by a programme of local tourist offices that have prepared one-day trips to attractive destinations in Slovakia (Bardejov) and Ukraine (Lviv, Truskavets).

As part of their offer of recreational activities, agritourism farms provide playgrounds for children (42%), bonfire and barbecue spots (98%), bicycle rental (77%), sports and leisure equipment rental (48%), horse riding, carriage rides or sleigh rides in winter (38%), guided tours (25%), and the use of nearby ski lifts, tennis courts and swimming pools.

An innovation is agritourism educational farms. At present, there are 13 such farms in the voivodeship. They were created mainly in naturally and culturally attractive locations, in the poviats of Ustrzyki (2), Krosno (2), Sanok (1), Strzyżów (1), Lesko (1), Leżajsk (1), Bieszczady (1), Przeworsk (1), Przemyśl (1), Łańcut (1) and Rzeszów (1) (http://www.krainasanu.pl/zagroda-edukacyjna/). Educational farms are projects run by farm owners and their primary objective is to educate young people and tourists in the activities of plant and animal production or processing of agricultural produce, to raise environmental and consumer awareness and to educate in the field of material culture, traditional crafts, handicrafts and folk art. The modern approach to education makes a farm an attractive place to conduct lessons which integrate theory with practice in many subjects.

Another innovation is the tourist clusters. The most well-known is the Bieszczady Cross-Border Tourist Cluster, which unites the entities in the Bieszczady Poviat and the regions of Staryi Sambir and Turka in Ukraine, interested in developing tourism and preparing tourists for attractive leisure options. Another tourist cluster is the "Strug Valley". It associates the owners of agritourism farms, as well as those who plan to do business in this field. At present, this cluster consists of 11 members.

Conclusions

In the light of the analyses of the selected elements of the agritourism development and survey research, the Podkarpackie Voivodeship has a great potential for development of agritourism. Factors contributing to the development of this activity are: natural values distinguishing the region on the national scale (environment quality, Beskidy landscapes, geological formations, mineral waters); cultural values (multicultural past and present, history of the oil industry); functioning spa tourism (opportunity to use accommodation and accompanying services – transport). What limits the development of tourism in rural areas is the peripheral location (distance from large urban agglomerations), quality and accessibility of infrastructure (road and communal), and lack of marketing strategy (promotion of the region in the national media). Also, the ageing of the rural population and the outflow of the young population contribute to reducing the interest of farmers in the agritourism business in the region.

Detailed surveys and analysis of statistical data indicate that in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship:

- agritourism is an additional activity that is undertaken mainly by women,
- the interest in agritourism in the region is high, as has been indicated by the rapid growth of such entities since the 1990s, significantly contributed by the EU funds dedicated to promoting such initiatives among farmers,
- at present, the number of agritourism units is decreasing, especially in the areas of high tourist attractiveness (e.g. The Bieszczady Mountains, Beskid Niski Mountains), and at the same time in some gminas so far considered by tourists less attractive – it is growing (e.g. located in the Dynów Foothills, Przemyskie Foothills).
- over half of the agritourism farms in the region are located in the southern part of the voivodeship, including a significant part of them on Lake Solińskie and Myczkowskie Reservoir and in the Beskid Niski Mountains,
- a relatively large number of agro-tourism farms is connected with a functioning farm, mainly in the northern part of the voivodeship (southern Roztocze Upland) and Foothills (Strzyżowskie, Dynowskie, Rzeszowskie),
- in the Bieszczady Mts. and Beskid Niski Mts. a large number of agritourism units offer typical leisure and recreation activities in rural areas,
- the offer of agritourism farms is varied, created primarily from the values of the natural environment, and gradually incorporates cultural values along with local events,
- the transboundary location is currently poorly utilised, as the infrastructure in the Polish-Slovak-Ukrainian border is insufficient, and the region is poorly advertised in the national media.

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