

**AGRITOURISM AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE TRANSFORMATION
IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AREAS
(BY THE EXAMPLE OF BYTÓW DISTRICT)**

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Abstract

Agritourism is a chance in view of attractive for municipal population, healthy and relatively cheap rest. First of all it constitutes an additional earnings source for agricultural farms as well as development of infrastructure of country region. The development of agritourism is one of the ways to improve countryside areas. It helps local communities to get additional income. The most important aim is also to create new work places and diminish unemployment. It is also a chance for small farms to develop and keep production.

The aim of this article is to evaluate the development of the agritourism and its influence on the transformation in agriculture and rural areas in the Bytów district.

Key words: rural areas, agritourism, agritouristic farms, development

INTRODUCTION

Holiday tradition in the country is not a product of recent years, it began in the 19th century. Agritourism not only changes the image of the village itself, along with its development, but it fulfils the changing requirements and demands of tourists. It creates new opportunities for using of rural areas, agricultural buildings and local infrastructure.

The aim of this article is to evaluate the development of the agritourism and its influence on the transformation in agriculture and rural areas in the Bytów district.

Until the nineties of the 20th century the agriculture on the researched area was dominated by agriculture socialized farms. Level of functioning and management of the State Agricultural Farms (the PGRs) determined the state of the economy of communes and the prosperity of the population. The collapse of this sector has been

synonymous with the economic crisis of the whole region (Wiśniewska and Jujka 2005). Restructuring and privatization of state farms resulted in, therefore, quite significant changes in agriculture and the countryside. There was a reduction in agricultural income and unemployment has emerged in the country, to so far unknown degree. These negative occurrences were incentive for farmers to seek for an other revenue sources by launching new activities to use the existing resources.

Condition for the proper development of rural areas is the need to develop forms of entrepreneurship leading to the creation of new jobs and increase sources of income. Agritourism is a form of economic activity, which can develop the surplus of labor and creates the possibility of disposing of agricultural products directly to the farm. Therefore it is a form of management which should be developed, especially in touristic attractive to tourists and precious natural values (Pałka 2003).

Bytów area, due to the natural values, landscape and recreation, has excellent conditions conducive to the tourist services provided by the farmers.

TOURIST VALUES IN THE BYTÓW DISTRICT

The district, thanks to its localisation among hills and forests, belongs to the areas of substantial tourist values. There are 28 lobelio-oligotrophic lakes within the whole Bytów district. As many as 12 lakes are situated in the area of Bytów community. Very well developed hydrographical network is also an important element of the tourism product in Bytów district.

Woodland areas amount to 117 157 hectares. Bytów district belongs to regions with the highest percentage of forest cover (53.4%) in the Pomeranian voivodship. The largest percentage of forest cover occurs in the commune of Studzienice (67.2%). Within the limits of the district there is also a part of “Dolina Słupi” Landscape Park and two separate areas of protected landscape: “Jezioro Bobięcińskie Wielkie ze Skibską Górą” and “Źródłiskowy obszar rzeki Brdy na wschód od Miastka”. The beauty and uniqueness of nature Cashubia caused that there are already 13 nature reserves in this region. There are many hiking and biking paths passing Bytów district. Great attractiveness of Bytów district is determined by varied and rich fauna. Many valuable species of fresh-water fish allow for the development of angling, whereas game widespread in the area contributes to the creation of hunting clubs.

Among the major elements of natural environment within Bytów district we may distinguish landscape parks beside old palaces and mansions (however a little forgotten), which have substantial importance for tourism and sightseeing (for example, trekking camps, bicycle paths). It is so, because they are quite important elements of tourist values for this region. Within the limits of the district there are around 60 landscape parks situated beside old palaces and mansions in which one can find many interesting old trees and shrubs. As far as the mansions are concerned, they have interesting architecture and gripping location (Czapiewska 2003).

The city of Bytów itself as an administrative centre for the whole district, has undoubtedly some merits of a historic city with quite well preserved knight's castle. There are also clear traces of former municipal location and some interesting public buildings erected between 16th and 19th century. Inside the castle, there is West-

Cashubian Museum with rich Pomeranian ethnographic collection alongside of interesting artistic and historic works.

A man can enjoy and benefit from natural gifts and wonders of this area which, in turn, serves as a perfect place for recreation and good rest.

CONDITIONS OF AGRITOURISM DEVELOPMENT

While the links between the countryside and agriculture are weakening, increasingly important in the policy of modernization and structural changes in the village features and will determine a diversification of economic activities, namely the aspiration for multifunctionality, as it was in the late 50's and 60's, for example in the Netherlands, Great Britain, France and Belgium (Hasiński 1999). One of the multifunctionality symptoms of rural areas, caused by the need to seek additional sources of income for farmers, is the development of rural tourism.

Agritourism as a form of recreation in rural areas of an agricultural character goes on a nutrition-accommodation base and all leisure activities associated with active farm (Strzembicki and Kmita 1994). Other authors, including J. Sikora (1999), D. Zaręba (2000), J. Majewski (2003) and M. Drzewiecki (1995, 2001) also indicate the close relationship between agritourism and farm.

Table 1
Quantitative structure of individual farms in the Bytów district in 2006

Commune	Number of farms in total	Size of farms (in ha)							
		1-2	2-5	5-10	10-15	15-25	25-50	50-100	100 and more
Borzytuchom	477	129	128	95	30	38	36	18	3
Bytów	1353	432	353	251	74	92	72	70	9
Czarna Dąbrówka	914	260	189	173	92	109	67	7	17
Kołczygłowy	490	129	123	70	51	87	18	4	8
Lipnica	826	87	80	134	120	164	182	50	9
Miastko	1370	556	300	194	82	105	91	30	12
Parchowo	675	160	166	131	45	66	88	16	3
Studzienice	463	118	104	76	47	59	51	7	1
Trzebielino	336	113	80	47	16	26	45	4	5
Tuchomie	613	246	69	75	51	73	81	11	7
District total	7517	2230	1592	1246	608	819	731	217	74

Source: Dane statystyczne z Wydziału Geodezji...; own research

Bytów district is dominated by farms smaller than 5 hectares (50.8%). The highest proportion of households in this group is located in communes: Bytów (58.0%) and Miastko (62.5%). The largest households (50 ha and more) represent only 3.9% of all households (Table 1). More than 97% of arable land belongs to the 4th, 5th, and 6th class, representing 27.7%, 31.7% and 39.3%. Only 3 hectares of land belong to the 1st class. The weakest soil is located in south-east part of the district, i.e. in communes: Parchowo, Studzienice and Lipnica.

In 1996-2006, the total number of farms increased by 2 723. According to data from Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture in Bytów about 3 500 farms has requested for direct payments during the last 4 years. Other households take smart part in agricultural production, a large number of owners of these new statistical farm land acquired them for recreation and tourism or for the favorable insurance in Agricultural Social Insurance.

Practice shows that other businesses are also interested in the activity of agritourism, and these farms, which are located in areas predisposed to practicing tourism, often quickly marginalize agricultural activities for agritourism.

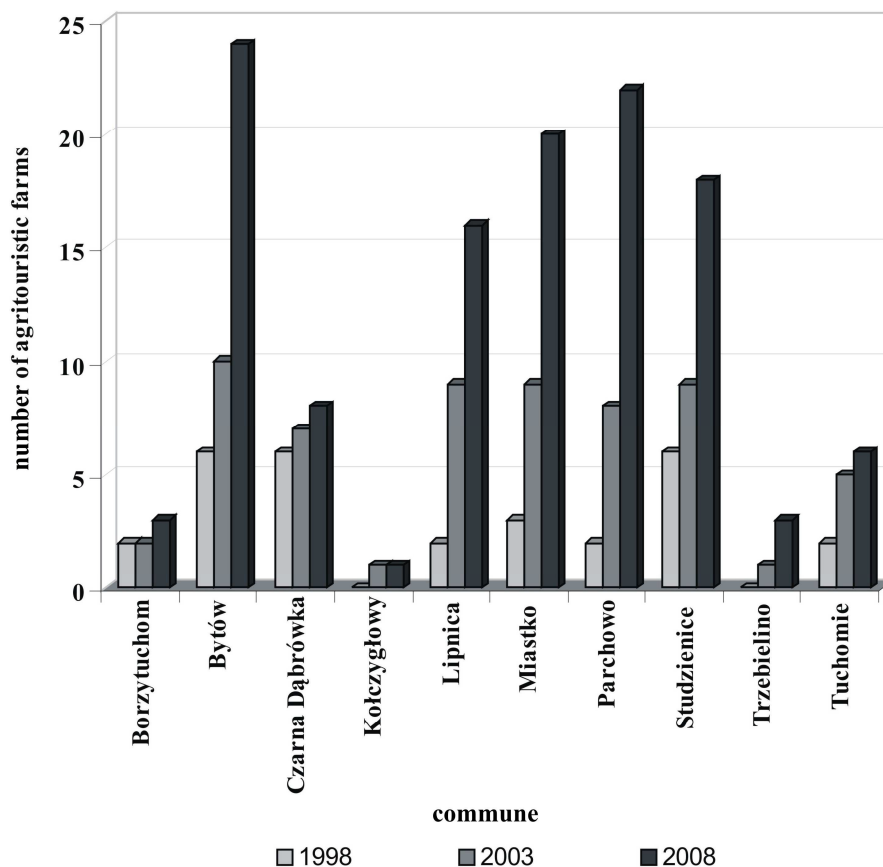


Fig. 1. Development of the agritouristic farms in the Bytów district in 1998-2008

Source: Dane z Wydziału Promocji...; own research

Farms have provided agritouristic services in the Bytów district since 1993. Their number increase annually and the agritouristic product is constantly being supplemented. Currently there are 121 registered agritouristic farms (Fig. 1). However, there are far more agritouristic farms than it is apparent from official data. Existing law treat agritouristic activities as tourism services on the farm, and in its closest vicinity¹. If such activities as running the farm are carried out by the farmer and his family, it is treated as a side occupation earning money and does not require notification to the register of economic activities².

The dynamic development of agritourism occurred in the last years of the last century. The reason for its creation was likely a willing to have an additional source of income, especially in the very difficult period for agriculture associated with adjusting to free market principles. Within ten years the number of households providing services in agritourism has increased several times (from 29 in 1998 to 121 in 2008). There are several causes of agritouristic farms number increase (Hasiński et al. 2004):



Fig. 2. Agritourist farms in the Bytów district in 2008

Source: Dane z Wydziału Promocji...; own research

¹ Act of Law from November, 19th 1999. The law of economic activity; DzU 1999, nr 101, poz. 1178.

² Act of Law from August, 29th 1997 on tourist services; DzU 2001, nr 55, poz. 578.

- search for additional sources of income by rural population,
- desire to raise living standards,
- use of additional resources on their households,
- use of a convenient location of the farm,
- possibility of disposing the products from the farm.

Location of agritouristic farms is strongly linked to the natural and cultural values of the district. Tourists prefer areas with diverse landscape, characterized by a high rate of forest cover and the occurrence of reservoirs and watercourses. For these reasons, the location of agricultural farms have an influence on agritouristic activities (Kacprzak 2004). Distribution of agritouristic farms in the Bytów district varies widely (Fig. 2). Most agritouristic farms placed in Bytów (24), Parchowo (22) and Miastko (20) are very attractive.

In addition to basic agritouristic activities, consisting of providing beds and food to visitors, more and more households enriches its offer with additional activities. For example, it is a production and sales of healthy food, craft, horseback riding, hippotherapy, horse-drawn carriage rides and winter sleigh ride.

Farm owners are trying to gain a competitive advantage by forming own agritouristic product in interesting, sometimes innovative, services or by creating a branded product. For example, agrotouristic farm of Regina Kossak-Główczewska, located on the outskirts of the Bytów city, offers “Robinsons holiday” for tourists, on a private island with an area of 1.3 hectares on the Ostrów Trzebielski Lake of Lipnica commune. The island is an ideal place to relax away from civilization and to organize survival camps. In turn, the manager of agritouristic farm named “Przystanek Alaska” in Gliśno Wielkie (Lipnica commune) has created places inspired by TV show “Przystanek Alaska” for example: Holling’s Bar (attic of an old barn with wooden tables), Dances Morty (stylish dance club in the barn), Ruth Anne shop (with its own bread, dairy products and sweets) or Chris in the morning (computerized mini-broadcasting).

The development of agritourism is one of the planning priorities of Bytów district most communes due to:

- rich, free from pollutions of civilization and distortions of landscapes natural resources, with a high utility in the development of tourist services,
- the favorable location of the district Pomerania, in one of the most popular tourist regions in Poland and on foreign markets,
- the possibility of socio-economic development and tackle the backlog of infrastructure financed by the European Union in 2007-2013,
- the need to create alternative jobs for the rural population in non-agricultural sectors, for which the development of tourist services and support services could be the one of opportunities for rural development (Strategia rozwoju...).

AGRITOURISM AS FACTOR OF ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS

Bytów district is losing its agricultural character. Influence includes: change in social behavior, increased education, changing needs and life goals, workers migra-

tions, enterprise development and services in non-agricultural sectors. Community of rural areas maintaining not only the lowest soil class, is leaving agriculture and expanding forms of non-agricultural economy.

Agritourism is a very specific form of non-agricultural economic activity. Generally, most of enterprising activities are undertaken in the well-developed regions, with high values of economic indicators. In case of agritourism may be the opposite. Agritouristic farms may occur in communes that are characterized by disadvantageous events, including high unemployment, negative demographic processes, a significant percentage of employed in agriculture and also weak settlement network (Gralak 2002).

For many farmers agritourism is one of possible ways of disposing the products and services, especially products manufactured in small quantities, niche products which large manufacturing companies and supermarkets are not interested in. As it turns out that the demand for niche products is sufficient to ensure livelihoods for many manufacturers. Thanks to the outside input, the farms increased own capital that enabled investment. Making investment activities in the agritourism helped in urban development not only for individual households but also to transform the entire village or community.

Agritourism also activates its surroundings. Each agritouristic farm in a rural area provides from several to a dozen jobs. Demand for agricultural products in the region increases, mainly for fruits and vegetables. In addition, the role of trade, transport, telecommunications, construction and handicrafts including artistic using regional traditions also increases. From changing country image, not only tourists but also local village community have some benefits.

The most important aim is also to create new work places and diminish unemployment. It is also a chance for small farms to develop and keep production. Employment of the population in sectors other than agriculture is beneficial because it gives the possibility of employment choice and creates diversity. It not only contributes to increase of population incomes, but also to increase of attractiveness of the village as a place to live and work.

Unemployment in rural areas and lack of prospects for improving standard of living with decreasing income from agricultural production is essential in the development of rural civilization. The expansion of tourism goes with process of developing social awareness. Contact with tourists releases in the inhabitants of the village the need of better infrastructure facilities in rural areas, raises ecological and aesthetic awareness of rural households (Matlegiewicz 2006).

Gradually, with the development of tourism in rural areas, tourism is becoming one of the main factors that stimulate economic situation, triggering further initiatives of local communities – thereby contributing to a systematic improvement of material living conditions of rural families.

Agritouristic activity in the Bytów district is promoted by agritouristic associations, agricultural advisory centers, local governments and other institutions. Activity of farmers in the field of tourism ventures and other forms of economic activity has been aroused by a well-organized system of advising. This is a very important factor for business development of the rural population, including in the tourism services. Based on a very large scale information campaign carried out in the numerous

Table 2

Number of unemployed in Bytów province in 1998-2008

Years	Number of unemployed			Unemployment rate
	total	rural areas	cities	
1998	7632	5231	2401	22.5
1999	9561	6455	3106	26.8
2000	11031	7504	3527	31.5
2001	11889	8021	3868	33.6
2002	11877	7925	3952	33.4
2003	11273	7591	3682	35.9
2004	11201	7465	3736	35.9
2005	10743	7149	3594	34.7
2006	9508	6571	2937	31.6
2007	6383	4388	1995	22.3
2008	5698	3695	2003	20.1

Source: Dane statystyczne z Powiatowego...; own research

training courses, consulting for many villagers are preparing for a start-up assistance in publishing advertising, presentation and sale of tourism, media interest in the issues, development and implementation of assistance programs with foreign funds, initiation of the organizing in regional associations – it is certainly still incomplete list of agricultural advisory.

Agritourism develops better by forming farm groups into larger units, which is consistent with the principles of marketing (Wolf and Sitz 1997). At the test site there are two associations of agritourism – “Agro Kaszuby” Association of Bytów district and Association of Agritourism Development in Tuchomie commune. Thanks to promotional actions, regional agritouristic associations make it possible to reach with their offer a wide range of possible recipients. However, it should be remembered that the main goal of these associations is not only the promotion of leisure in agritouristic places of residence, but also activation of rural areas in a broad sense. Steps which has been taken in this field are also important for the development of tourism in rural areas. On the one hand, they are related to the development of infrastructure (including the tourist one), but on the other hand they are aimed at the protection of both cultural and environmental values of the region (Czapiewska 2009).

CONCLUSIONS

In many countries, including Poland, the functional processes of rural areas has caused the fact that the village is no longer an area in which lives and works only agricultural population. More often people who live there have little in common with agriculture. Transformation of rural and agricultural areas and people living there, also caused the structure of livelihoods changes of the rural population, in which agricultural activities began to play a less role. Previous concepts of villages and rural areas are losing their former sense. In the future can be expected that the only function fully “rural” and dynamically a developmental recreation will become (Drzewiecki 1992).

The most important aspects that have influenced the development of agritourism are countryside nature and landscape but also attitude of local communities and attractiveness of the place. Such as in the European Union, in Poland agritourism is an important element in revitalizing the rural economy and the permanent part of the concept of multifunctional development of rural areas.

Rural tourism brings important benefits for the region, villages, farmers and tourists, which can be presented as follows (Żelazna and Mikuta 2002):

- obtaining income from non – agricultural activities,
- use of free work resources available at the farm and in rural areas, and living quarters,
- counteracting against rural depopulation,
- the creation of new jobs in services associated (trade, transport, living and social services),
- multiprofessionalism meaning appearance of other professions than farmers in response to tourist demands,
- maintenance of the farm, through the use of agricultural products in agritourism activities and income from non – agricultural activities,
- change of lifestyle and model of consumption of the local population,
- experience improvement in entrepreneurship as a result of tourism activities,
- the development of local initiatives and activity of rural community including the development of infrastructure supporting the ecological model of tourism (transport, energy production, waste management, water, etc.),
- local infrastructure improvement,
- preservation of rural heritage and landscape conservation,
- the aesthetics of the village improvement, contact with other cultural models, personal development of the rural population,
- the development of folk art and handicrafts,
- the natural environment protection by promoting forms of tourism which are economically productive, socially responsible and environmentally friendly,
- touristic activities friendly to environment and landscape set up,
- maintenance of the landscape integrity, cultural values and the attractiveness of the village and surrounding area.

Agritourism is a very important opportunity for small communities that are situated far away from big metropolitan areas, for those communities which the only advantage is pure, beautiful nature.

Polish tourism in rural areas, especially the well-promoted agritourism, have been socially acceptable, and reached a certain stage of development. Further relatively rapid changes in this area are only possible in case of increase of the level of knowledge among tourism-makers of these tourism forms and among local governments, who should support and inspire them (Sawicki 2007).

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AGROTURYSTYKA I JEJ WPŁYW NA PRZEOBRAŻENIA
W ROLNICTWIE I NA WSI
(NA PRZYKŁADZIE POWIATU BYTOWSKIEGO)

Streszczenie

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest ocena rozwoju agroturystyki powiatu bytowskiego i jej wpływu na przeobrażenia w rolnictwie i na wsi.

Powiat bytowski, ze względu na walory przyrodnicze, krajobrazowe i wypoczynkowe, ma doskonałe warunki, sprzyjające świadczeniu usług turystycznych przez rolników.

Agroturystyka przynosi istotne korzyści zarówno dla regionu, wsi, rolników, jak i turystów. Przy złej kondycji ekonomicznej wielu gospodarstw rolnych i słabym rozwojem społeczno-ekonomicznym wsi, agroturystyka może stać się czynnikiem usprawniającym warunki życia na wsi. Biorąc pod uwagę problemy wsi i rolnictwa, rozwój tej formy turystyki na prezentowanym terenie może przysporzyć dodatkowych źródeł dochodu dla miejscowej ludności, a także przyczynić się do złagodzenia problemu bezrobocia na obszarach wiejskich. Ponadto stanowi szansę rozwoju, zwłaszcza dla gospodarstw mniejszych obszarowo, o niewielkim udziale produkcji towarowej.

Agroturystyka stanowi tę formę aktywności gospodarczej, która pozwala zagospodarować istniejące nadwyżki siły roboczej oraz stwarza możliwość zbytu produktów rolnych bezpośrednio w gospodarstwie rolnym. Rozwój agroturystyki jest jednym z priorytetów planistycznych większości gmin powiatu bytowskiego.

Prezentowana forma przedsiębiorczości jest szansą rozwojową gmin, zwłaszcza rolniczych, położonych z dala od miast, o niezdegradowanym środowisku naturalnym i wysokich walorach krajobrazowych i rekreacyjnych.