



GUIDEBOOK FOR RURAL TOURISM



This Guide's primary purpose is to provide useful tools for women from rural areas, but also for all others, who want to engage in, or are already engaged in rural tourism.

This Guide deals primarily with rural tourism on rural farms (agritourism).

It provides a wealth of useful information, advices and recommendations that can be practically applied very simply.

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1. RURAL TOURISM

Rural tourism has a high potential to stimulate local economic growth and social change because of its complementarity with other economic activities, its contribution to GDP and job creation, and its capacity to promote the dispersal of demand in time (fight seasonality) and along a wider territory.

UNWTO understands Rural Tourism as "... a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle / culture, angling and sightseeing".

According to UNWTO, "rural tourism activities take place in non-urban (rural) areas with the following characteristics: low population density, landscape and land-use dominated by agriculture and forestry and traditional social structure and lifestyle".

A. Rural tourism and women in rural areas

Empowerment of women is of particular importance in rural areas. Rural tourism led by women not only creates jobs and contributes to economic growth, but also has a significant impact on local communities. In addition, women in rural areas are powerful drivers of change as they contribute to a more inclusive and a society based on justice, especially if they are given equal opportunities and resources to start and develop their business in rural tourism.

Women's empowerment is considered to have five components:

- Improving the sense of self-esteem;
- The right to have their own choice;
- The right to have access to opportunities and resources;
- The right to have the power to control their own lives, both inside and outside the home;
- Empowering them to influence the direction of social change in order to create a fairer social and economic systems, at the national and international level.

In order to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, improving the conditions for doing tourism is a significant step forward, and in this sense, a commitment to gender equality and empowering women to start their own business in tourism is necessary. Rural tourism is an opportunity to encourage a greater number of women to start their own business, because they are the most important pillars of rural farms and, as such, have an ideal opportunity to relatively easy start their own entrepreneurial venture.

The interventions of the state, local self-governments, as well as various business and other associations and civil society - such as the promotion of the principle of equal pay for the same work, the fight against sexual harassment and reduced discrimination give a significant impulse to the improvement of the position of women, but they are not enough. Given that, statistically, the number of women in the society as a whole is greater than the number of men, women make up the majority of the workforce. This also applies to tourism. However, employment in tourism is still gender unequal. As a rule, women do lower-paid jobs, and workplaces are full of gender stereotypes (for example, the profession of maid is primarily intended for women, and as a rule, it is less paid than some other positions that are mainly intended for men). Because of this, it is necessary to encourage women to take their destiny in tourism into their own hands.

Lack of education or formal training, threatens the more active participation of women in the tourism business, but formal education alone is not always a necessary condition. More often, the problem is

a lack of basic information. This is especially true for women in rural areas and villages. Training has proven to be essential for the success of entrepreneurial initiatives, and to be truly effective, training must go beyond the clichés of formal education and include training in "soft" skills, training specific to the context of rural tourism, and training in communication technologies, marketing and specific skills for rural tourism. In addition, it is essential that the training is designed in a simple and receptive way, to ensure that awareness and skills can be developed with a minimum of effort in order to make the most of rural tourism to contribute to women's empowerment.

As one of the positive consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the breaking of cultural and technological barriers that previously prevented remote work has initiated, creating a shift in the traditional ideals of how and where work takes place and giving us the opportunity to work and successfully promote our tourism business from the remote locations and rural areas. Moreover, this distance becomes a comparative advantage. However, the "women's" business in tourism is more threatened than the "men's" one due to a series of daily duties in the rural household that are often more pronounced for women, such as unpaid work at home (e.g. childcare).

One of the crucial conditions for starting one's own business is often the possession of economic resources in various forms. When it comes to rural tourism, it can be an additional problem for women, because, according to research conducted by UN WOMEN - the United Nations Agency for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, in Eastern Europe only 16% of potential female entrepreneurs are the owners the means for entrepreneurship (equipment), while only 6% of them are the owners of the land. This is a consequence of traditional inheritance, where the owners of land and buildings in the countryside are mostly men and property is inherited through the male line.

In the EU, on average, about 30 percent of agricultural farms are managed by women. Most of the women in the village are actively involved in agricultural and domestic work and other activities that ensure the daily survival of their families. Despite all that, women on agricultural farms enjoy fewer rights than men and struggle with gender discrimination, which, according to the UN, is the biggest obstacle in efforts to empower them.

In Slovenia, the share of women who work as breadwinners and family members on farms is 46%, which is higher than the EU average (42%). Almost a third of farm owners are women, which increases their managerial role on farms. They could begin to adequately supplement their work on the estate with various forms of tourism on the estate, which requires education and additional empowerment. Potential entrepreneurs in rural tourism who come from rural areas are three times more likely to experience the problem of lack of financial resources when establishing their own business than those who come from urban areas.

Complicated procedures for starting one's own business in rural tourism are most often perceived as an additional obstacle and, interestingly, more so among young women than among middle-aged and older women, which further supports the thesis that these obstacles are more imaginary than based on real obstacles, primarily due to lack of adequate information and training. It is interesting that the obstacle to start your own business in tourism, in the form of a lack of facilities and funds, is more often faced by women from urban areas than those from rural areas, so this is also an argument that rural tourism is an ideal opportunity for the economic emancipation of women.

When it comes to problems and obstacles related to the running of business, success and developing of businesses in tourism, active and former businesswomen (whose businesses have closed down) most often cite problems related to their position on the market, then the costs of office premises, equipment and materials, and finally complicated regulations and administrative procedures. When it is taken into account that there is already a significant fund of available facilities and equipment in

rural areas, as well as when adequate training is added to that base, the chances of women starting their own venture in rural tourism increase significantly.

In addition to these problems, which can be considered as general business running problems, the perception of gender-specific problems and possible discrimination during the initiation and management of one's own business in rural tourism are additional obstacles that can only be overcome by intensive work with women and by providing quality support during the entire process of establishment and running of a rural tourist household.

In the aforementioned UN WOMEN survey, a fifth of active female entrepreneurs and 17% of former female entrepreneurs stated that they experienced different treatment compared to their male colleagues. A clear majority of respondents (76% active and 80% former businesswomen) believe that women are not accepted or taken seriously in business. The majority of active female entrepreneurs (51.2%) and almost half of former entrepreneurs (46.2%) believe that women have a harder time in business than men. As the reason for this, they most often state that women are more burdened with family and household care, various forms of discrimination and gender prejudices.

When we say entrepreneur, we mean a successful, independent business woman who runs her own business, that is, who lives the business she runs. In other words, we are talking about a female person who deals with a specific business philosophy, which is based on the awareness of constant changes and constant improvement, with quick adaptation to the needs of the market. Entrepreneurs in rural tourism refer to women who are founders and owners of businesses, but who are also property managers in the broadest sense, with additional duties related to the management of the farm, but also the family that lives and works on it. They are both directors and full-time employees who run a rural tourism business in order to make a profit, but at the same time they are not free from the daily duties related to managing the farm and taking care of the family, which further complicates their position.

Due to the numerous obligations and social roles they have, many women give up their ideas and do not want to try their luck in entrepreneurship. Obstacles for them are also various socio-economic factors such as: the influence of social status and perception, institutional factors, family life, economic and property inequality, age, work status, education and household income. All these listed factors are just some of the reasons why women have a harder time deciding to start a business in rural tourism and why it is left to the male members of the household.

With adequate education and support, more and more women start businesses in tourism, but they still face challenges in running their businesses.

The latest analyses of rural tourism have shown that most of the work in this area is done by women. It can be said that, without the participation of women, rural tourism would not be possible. Active participation of women in rural tourism changes the role of women in the household. With several new tasks, especially in the tourist season, changes in her role can have a big impact on the family structure. In this way, women earn their "own" money, which improves their economic situation and social status.

Where women are the initiators of new agritourism activities, they thereby create a situation that ensures their independence, control and self-esteem.

The development of rural tourism could encourage the development of female entrepreneurship, which could be a factor in the development of rural tourism in rural areas. The direct economic effects

of female entrepreneurship in rural tourism are the provision of additional income to women in rural areas, that is, their economic empowerment.

The development of rural tourism and female entrepreneurship can reduce and even stop the depopulation of rural areas and enable a more even development of rural areas and regions.

B. 7 main challenges faced by women in running a business in rural tourism

Although progress in gender equality is evident, women in rural areas still face significant difficulties when running their own businesses. For example, women in rural areas often face financial constraints, limited access to education and training as well as gender bias and discrimination. Promoting gender equality in rural tourism is crucial to ensure that women have the same opportunities to succeed in rural areas as men. Women can overcome the barriers that prevent them from starting and expanding a business when they have equal access to education, money and resources. In addition, eliminating gender bias and discrimination in rural areas will contribute to a more inclusive and diverse workforce, which will benefit not only women but society as a whole.

The seven key obstacles for women in rural tourism are:

1. Limited access to financial resources

Not all female entrepreneurs are lucky enough to have their own funds. Some have to start their entrepreneurial ventures, relying on loans. It is not unusual for women to be denied loans due to gender and cultural prejudices, and a particular problem is the issue of property ownership, because if women are not owners, it is harder for them to secure guarantees for loans.

2. Balancing responsibilities

A large number of women are not only entrepreneurs - they have families and other duties in the rural household. The demands of personal and professional duties may pressure a woman to give up running a tourism business. Her family expects her to be a mother and a wife, while her job requires her to be a leader and show commitment. It is even more difficult for women who do not have social support, because they have to carry all the burden alone.

3. Inadequate support system

What would women achieve if they had the perfect support system? Problems or failures in business can be the result of a lack of an adequate support system. In business, no one is an island. Women usually face significant obstacles, from lack of relevant information or lack of emotional support. They also need mentors to guide them on this new path. The support system is often invisible or completely inaccessible, forcing women to delay starting their business.

4. Gender inequality

Laws, culture, religion and politics are built on patriarchal foundations with the male principle in the central focus. Women must thrive in a man's world while facing stigma and discrimination. Although laws and policies have recently been changing in favor of gender equality, real changes are still not evident everywhere.

5. Limited knowledge

Empowering women through the improvement of knowledge is only the beginning of the long road to business success. Life is a daily learning process where every day comes with new information. Unfortunately, women from rural areas have limited access to this information and new knowledge.

6. Unfavorable social conditions

Among other challenges that women face, there are many social restrictions - traditional patriarchal norms in the countryside, religion, prejudices, stereotypes... all of which prevent women from running their own businesses.

7. Self-confidence

Women need to stand behind their success and let the people around them recognize it. Self-confidence is an essential part of prosperity and growth. When a woman leads, others follow. Self-confidence also comes from the support provided by the environment. If there is a good support system, there is a greater chance that they will decide to make that step and enter the world of entrepreneurship.

C. Types of rural tourism

The rural tourism can be divided in many branches. In this Guide, we will use the division made by the Croatian Ministry of Tourism, in its Manual for rural tourism, from the year 2011.

Village tourism, agritourism, touristic family farm, rural household, rural tourism - these are all terms that farm owners who deal with, or intend to deal with the provision of touristic services on their farms inevitably and almost daily encounter. Considering the frequent use of the mentioned terms, there is often confusion among farm owners which term is correct.

Rural tourism is the broadest term that includes all tourist services within rural areas, including, for example, hunting, fishing, tourism in nature parks, winter tourism, rural tourism, ecotourism, health tourism, cultural tourism, etc. Rural tourism is not necessarily a supplementary activity to the economy, which generates additional income, but it can also be a professional activity (e.g. a small family hotel, equestrian center, etc.). At the same time, the term rural area is generally not strictly defined, but is understood as area in which the following predominate: natural environment, rural environment, small settlements and villages, hamlets, isolated agricultural holdings etc. with agriculture and forestry as the main economic activities.

Village tourism is a narrower term than rural tourism, and at the same time a broader term than farm tourism (tourist rural family farm) and is related to the environment of the village and its immediate surrounding and all its activities (agriculture, manifestations, gastronomy, folklore, ethnology etc).

Finally, tourism on a rural household or a farm or agritourism, exclusively refers to a form of tourist service that is an additional activity on a farm with live agricultural activity, where farm products are offered.

Agrotourism is a form of village tourism, while village tourism is a form of rural tourism. The emergent forms of rural tourism are explained in the following scheme:

RURAL TOURISM

- village tourism
- tourism in national parks and nature parks
- adventure tourism
- wine tourism
- gastro tourism
- health tourism (spa)
- hunting tourism
- religious tourism
- fishing tourism
- cultural tourism

VILLAGE TOURISM

- agrotourism
- rural camp
- tasting room
- traditional villages
- picnic areas
- ethnographic collections
- rural holiday house
- village events
- rural B&B (bed and breakfast)
- folklore
- rural family hotel

AGROTURISM

- overnight services
- catering services
- other services at a tourist family farm

Among the types of rural tourism, tourism on rural farms (farm tourism), which in some countries is also called agrotourism, is the most recognizable.

Farm tourism, due to its diverse offer, is the first thing that comes to mind when rural tourism is mentioned. All cultural, economic, traditional and modern characteristics of the rural areas are reflected on rural farms, which makes them an authentic representative of "rural".

Tourism on rural farms allows people that live in the countryside to expand their activities and enriches the value of their products (added value). Rural tourism on agricultural households includes all types of tourist services that a rural household can provide on its property, as a whole or on individual parts of it, which can be physically separated.

2. IS RURAL TOURISM FOR YOU?

Rural tourism is an important part for many rural households. Rural tourism activities have the potential to increase rural households' revenues and support their sustainability. However, rural tourism activities won't suit every rural household. Before starting a rural tourism as business, it is recommended that a person should spend some time assessing the potential that these activities have for their operation, and carefully planning the business and marketing elements of their operation. This guide will help with all the planning that goes into running successful rural tourism operations.

A. Assess Your Goals

It is critical to set realistic goals for your operation. Depending on your situation, these goals can vary greatly. Here are some examples:

- Earning additional revenue
- To diversify household income to make a profit
- Starting a new career
- Getting a new knowledge
- To meet new people, their habits and experiences
- Increasing opportunities for family members to work at home
- Expanding opportunities for family members to stay at home
- Educating the community
- To provide fun and enjoyment to others without making a profit

Nevertheless, of the motivation for starting a rural tourism operation, it is important to develop both long-term goals and short-term objectives. Setting realistic goals will assist you in making important decisions regarding your new business in rural tourism.

B. Personal assessment

Rural tourism activities are dramatically different than most traditional farming responsibilities. A tourist who visits your rural household may want to participate in various activities, such as harvesting grapes, feeding animals, cooking jam and many others. These tourists often do not come from a farming background and will ask many questions that may seem trivial about daily farm activities. A successful rural tourism host must be willing to share information about the farm and spend the time to make tourists feel welcome.

The ideal rural tourism host requires many of the same personality traits that make a good host at any tourist attraction or kind of service industry. It is important that a rural tourism host critically evaluate their personality type before developing an agritourism operation.

Some important questions that you should ask yourself:

Personal Qualities:

- Are you a good planner/organizer?
- Do you have creative ideas?
- Do you have a high level of energy and enthusiasm?
- Are you enjoying doing new things?
- Can you adapt to change?
- Do you enjoy communicating and dealing with people?
- Can you establish contact with unknown persons relatively quickly?

- Do you enjoy entertaining guests?
- Do you like crowds?
- Are you a good communicator?
- Are you patient?
- Are you organized?
- Can you create a warm, safe, and inviting atmosphere for tourists?
- Can you manage the additional business responsibilities associated with rural tourism?
- In addition to your core business, can you also deal with receiving guests?
- Would you mind if your guests occasionally interfere with your daily work?
- Are you willing to work and "entertain" visitors on weekends, evenings, and holidays, when they are most often available to come to your farm?
- Would you be willing to share a part of your family life with guests staying at your tourist farm?
- Can you successfully resolve conflicts between people?
- Do you have creative ideas?
- Do you have a high level of energy and enthusiasm?
- Are you enjoying doing new things?

Business Experience:

- Are you motivated to take on a new enterprise?
- Have you managed any similar business before?
- Do you have at least draft business plan for new business?
- Are you willing to take risks?
- Do you have a friend, family member, or business advisor with whom you can talk about goals and how a new venture might affect your operations?
- Can you take the time to look at your rural household from a tourist's perspective and make changes so that it is more accommodating of your guests?
- Are you willing to keep detailed income and expense records for your new business?
- Are you interested in exploring new marketing techniques and resources to help you communicate your rural tourism offerings?
- Are you ready to help guests find information about attractions in the area (natural and cultural, museums, events, transport connections, shops, restaurants) and be available for their inquiries?
- In case of bad weather, can you organize additional activities for the guests?
- Are you ready to cooperate with other persons (other owners of rural tourism, tourist guides, owners of restaurants, etc.) in organizing tourist services and hosting tourists?
- Are you ready to cooperate with local authorities and other providers of tourist services on improving the conditions of stay for tourists in your area?

Skills:

Do you have at least basic knowledge on:

- Business planning
- Art/Design
- Advertising/public relations
- Media experience: writing/social networks/website/radio/TV
- Teaching
- Crafts

If you answered "no" to many of these questions, perhaps a rural tourism does not fit your personality type. If you answered "yes" to many of them, rural tourism may be a viable option for you. It is important to remember that successful rural tourism focus on creating an enjoyable experience for

visitors. If your personality does not fit well, perhaps another family member or an employee may be better suited for this role.

Time Assessment:

Some important questions that you should ask yourself:

- How much hours of free time do you have per working day?
- How many of them are you willing to invest in rural tourism?
- How much hours of free time do you have on weekends?
- How many of them are you willing to invest in rural tourism?
- Do you think it is enough for the level of services you want to provide to the tourists?

Who else can support you and work with you?

- Are the members of your family supportive of this new venture?
- Are some friends supportive of this new venture?
- Can you find adequate work force available, in case you need them?
- Do they possess required skills?
- Can they dedicate required time?
- Do you think it is enough for the level of services you want to provide to the tourists?

In order to successfully engage in rural tourism, it is desirable that you have the following qualities:

- Kind - All activities towards the guests should take place in a friendly manner with cheerfulness and a smile, even in situations when the guests will address you with a less friendly and upset tone.
- Hospitable - The ability to show to the guests that you are pleased with their stay / presence at your family farm.
- Attentive - Being available to the guest in such a way that the guest gets the feeling of your commitment to him, while keeping space and time for your own intimacy and needs.
- Patient - Suppress emotional tensions and do not show them towards the guests and always treat guests in a calm tone and talk calmly
- Improviser - At any moment, be able to create a proposal of activities that could be interesting to the guest, for example, in the case of a rainy day.
- Diplomacy - If there is a conflict between the guests themselves, guests and neighbors, guests and locals, guests and the hosts, resolve the conflict as quickly as possible, in a diplomatic manner and do not be on either side of the conflict, but calmly mediate. Also, if the guest asks for the impossible, or feels that he has been damaged and did not receive adequate service for which he has paid, you should also be able to calmly find a compromise. Don't let your guests' actions visibly upset you.

C. Location Evaluation

Location is one of the key questions for your rural tourism. You have to assess tourism potential of your location, both in context of wider region and your property. It is based on the premise that the region and your property are the 'foundation stones' for rural tourism activities; the more attractive the region and property are, the more likely you are to attract visitors and the more likely you are to develop a successful rural tourism business.

This tool can help evaluate your rural tourism potential on two fronts:

1. Your individual households' potential based on your regional characteristics
2. Tourist potential of your location

1. Households' potential based on your regional characteristics

By the term "region" you can mean a territorial area with its own geographical characteristics that differs from the surrounding areas.

I. Natural heritage.

Within this section, you should analyze the tourist potential of nature and living environment in your region:

- In your region, there is one of the most famous natural attractions in your country, which is visited by a large number of tourists every year;
- Your region is characterized by natural diversity. There is a lot to see in the region and there is something for everyone. There are mountains and plains, there are also lakes, rivers and streams. In general, tourists like to travel through the region and enjoy nature;
- Fauna - the animal world is an important tourist potential in your region. There are plenty of harmless wild animals that are easily accessible to tourists. Or maybe there are some unique species in the region that attract tourists;
- Flora – various plants are an important tourist potential in your region. The flora is very rich and diverse, there are some unique species that attract tourists;
- Water – there are either natural or artificial water areas. At least some of them have opportunities for recreational activities.

II. Cultural heritage.

Within this section, you should analyze the tourist potential of the cultural heritage in your region:

- In your region, there is one of the most famous cultural and historical attractions in your country, which is visited by a large number of tourists every year;
- Your region has rich cultural and historical content. A lot is invested in the preservation of cultural and historical heritage;
- A large number of active museums and other cultural institutions show the connection of this region with its past, as well as the readiness to preserve cultural heritage;
- Visitors to this region can enjoy many attractions. Different events are held regularly and there is something for everyone. There is a number of cultural, musical and other festivals and fairs;
- What makes this region stand out is the warm welcome to all visitors, as well as the respect and appreciation of diversity.

III. Active vacation.

Within this section, you should analyze the tourist potential for active vacations in your region:

- In your region, there is one of the most famous locations for active vacations in your country, which is visited by a large number of tourists every year;
- Sports facilities in the region are developed and provide an opportunity for tourists to enjoy various sports activities;
- The region can boast of offering various opportunities to tourists, such as the possibility of walking in nature and riding bicycles on marked trails, horse riding and many other activities;
- The region also offers water-related activities such as fishing, boating and swimming;
- For those who are more interested in extreme adventures, the region offers a large number of such activities. Some of the activities are off-road driving, cave exploration, rock climbing and many others.

IV. Services.

Within this section, you should analyze the services that tourists need in your region:

- Your region is one of the best known in your country for the quality of services for tourists;
- Your region is known for a large number of well-stocked shops, a good network of banks and a post office. In addition to classic stores, you can also find various specialized stores, while tourists themselves may also find shops with different souvenirs from the region. Internet and telephone network coverage in the region is good. All this fully meets the needs of residents, as well as the needs of tourists;
- The region has a wide range of facilities for the repair and maintenance of cars and bicycles;
- Hospitality and tourism are very important in this region, so you can see a wide variety of catering facilities, hotels and restaurants that offer different types of food and drinks, both domestic and foreign. In addition to all that, local residents and tourists have the opportunity to visit cinemas, theaters and many other cultural and entertainment facilities;
- Accommodation for tourists in the region is offered by various hotels, motels, camps and guesthouses.

V. Tourist infrastructure.

Within this section, you should analyze the infrastructure that tourists need in your region:

- Your region is one of the best-known in your country in terms of the quality of tourist infrastructure;
- Transport services in the region include the use of different types of transport, as well as the possibility of renting different types of vehicles (cars, bicycles, boats...);
- Security is at a high level in the region. Medical services are available 24 hours a day;
- All public areas in the region are maintained to be clean and tidy, both for local residents and tourists;
- Tourists are provided with a large amount of information, as well as support for easier navigation during the visit. To make it easier for tourists to navigate, maps, brochures, local guides, interpretation of local attractions and many other types of support are offered. Tourist information centers also provide assistance to the region.

VI. Attitude towards tourists.

Within this section, you should analyze the attitude towards tourists in your region:

- Your region is known for its excellent attitude towards tourists. This region has great potential in tourism, which is why a lot of energy and resources are being invested in order to attract as many tourists as possible. The data shows that the number of visitors is increasing, which shows us that the region is moving in the right direction;
- Tourist infrastructure is at a satisfactory level and meets the needs of tourists;
- The region is known for its warm welcome, so local businesses meet the demands of all visitors;
- Understanding and respect for diversity and other cultures is one of the main postulates of the region. Visitors from different cultures are served in a cultured and cordial manner, full of understanding;
- Experiences of visitors to this region are very positive. Visitors to the region always feel welcome and accepted.

VII. Traffic.

Within this section, you should analyze the traffic infrastructure that tourists need:

- Your region is one of the best known in your country for the quality of the transport infrastructure for tourists;
- This region has a high-quality road system, which facilitates travel for visitors;
- The roads in this region are in good condition, and allow easy navigation. There is also extensive road and tourist signage;

- Main access roads allow traffic to flow freely and unhindered at all times;
- Visiting this region allow easy visiting of other nearby attractions. Also, the region borders other states.

VIII. Tourist attractiveness.

Within this part, you should analyze the general tourist attractiveness of your region

- Your region is one of the more famous destinations in your country;
- Easy access to the region is provided by the airport, quality roads and the highway;
- The tourism industry in the region does not depend on the season and climate. Also, it does not depend on any specific event or specific festival;
- The tourist market is large enough. This market has great potential for business and investment;
- The region provides the opportunity to connect and cooperate with others who are engaged in tourism in the region.

2. Tourist potential of your location

Analysis of the tourist potential of the micro location of your property

I. Natural heritage.

Within this section you should analyze the natural heritage of your location/property:

- Your location/property is in the center of one of the more famous natural attractions in your region;
- An incredible view, interesting reliefs and exceptional beauty make the property/location extremely attractive;
- The location/property has a very rich and diverse flora. There are certain species that are native and that attract tourists. In addition to the very rich and diverse herbal life, you can see a considerable amount of animals, which also attracts a large number of visitors;
- There are lakes, rivers and streams which makes activities such as fishing, swimming and boating possible;
- The location/property is in a very good position. This position is affordable and close to various attractions.

II. Tourist offers.

Within this section, you should analyze the tourist offer of your location:

- Your location/property has a significant tourist offer;
- An important fact is that there are historical and cultural landmarks near the location/property. Some of these landmarks are indigenous sites, artifacts, museums, and other historically important locations;
- Visitors are interested in the different and varied activities that take place on the site/property. These activities include agricultural, industrial and commercial ones. Agricultural activities that can be interesting may be production and harvesting;
- There are various opportunities for active rest and recreation in the area. Some of the possibilities are hiking, horseback riding, national parks, and more;
- In addition to the already mentioned features and possibilities, the location/property has many other interesting offers for potential visitors, such as examples of old equipment or a large number of souvenirs.

III. Infrastructure on the site.

Within this section you should analyze the infrastructure of your site/property:

- Your location/property has all the infrastructure needed by tourists. The property has good access, electricity, internet, water and sewage, and waste water is treated;
- The roads, the entrance to the site/property, as well as the parking space meet current requirements. There are possibilities to increase the capacity, if necessary;
- Food and accommodation services are available on the site or in the immediate vicinity, in order to meet the demands of tourists;
- In the immediate vicinity there are playgrounds for children, various promenades, and for barbecue lovers there are designated areas for picnics and barbecues;
- Visitors can be safe, because the security of the facilities and visitors is maintained at the highest level.

IV. Business potential.

Within this section you should analyze the human and business potential of your location/property:

- Your location/property has the necessary human and business potential to meet the needs of tourists;
- In order to meet the demands and needs of the visitors, the qualified labor is available;
- You have the necessary knowledge to run a business, or you are ready to acquire it quickly;
- The time you spend on your other jobs will not affect your time dedicated to jobs in rural tourism;
- You have a completely unique tourist product, which no one else has to offer.

If you agree with most of these statements, rural tourism may be a viable option for you.

If you don't agree with many of them, maybe your location/property is not the best for rural tourism.

USEFUL TOOLS

There are some useful tools that can help you assess whether rural tourism is for you:

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT

Personal Qualities	Yes	No	Improve
Are you a good planner/organizer?			
Do you have creative ideas?			
Do you have a high level of energy and enthusiasm?			
Are you enjoying doing new things?			
Can you adapt to change?			
Do you enjoy communicating and dealing with people?			
Can you establish contact with unknown persons relatively quickly?			
Do you enjoy entertaining guests?			
Do you like crowds?			
Are you a good communicator?			

Are you patient?			
Are you organized?			
Can you create a warm, safe, and inviting atmosphere for tourists?			
Can you manage the additional business responsibilities associated with rural tourism?			
In addition to your core business, can you also deal with receiving guests?			
Would you mind if your guests occasionally interfere with your daily work?			
Are you willing to work and "entertain" visitors on weekends, evenings, and holidays, when they are most often available to come to your farm?			
Would you be willing to share a part of your family life with guests staying at your tourist farm?			
Can you successfully resolve conflicts between people?			
Do you have creative ideas?			
Do you have a high level of energy and enthusiasm?			
Are you enjoying doing new things?			
Business Experience	Yes	No	Improve
Are you motivated to take on a new enterprise?			
Have you managed any similar business before?			
Do you have at least draft business plan for new business?			
Are you willing to take risks?			
Do you have a friend, family member, or business advisor with whom you can talk about goals and how a new venture might affect your operations?			
Can you take the time to look at your rural household from a tourist's perspective and make changes so that it is more accommodating of your guests?			
Are you willing to keep detailed income and expense records for your new business?			
Are you interested in exploring new marketing techniques and resources to help you communicate your rural tourism offerings?			
Are you ready to help guests find information about attractions in the area (natural and cultural, museums, events, transport connections, shops, restaurants) and be available for their inquiries?			
In case of bad weather, can you organize additional activities for the guests?			
Are you ready to cooperate with other persons (other owners of rural tourism, tourist guides, owners of restaurants, etc.) in organizing tourist services and hosting tourists?			
Are you ready to cooperate with local authorities and other providers of tourist services on improving the conditions of stay for tourists in your area?			
Skills	Yes	No	Improve
Do you have at least basic knowledge on:			
Business planning			
Art/Design			
Advertising/public relations			
Media experience: writing/social networks/website/radio/TV			
Teaching			
Crafts			

If you answered “no” to many of these questions, perhaps a rural tourism does not fit your personality type.

If you answered “yes” to many of them, rural tourism may be a viable option for you.

TIME ASSESSMENT

How much hours of free time do you have per working day?	
How many of them are you willing to invest in rural tourism?	
How much hours of free time do you have on weekends?	
How many of them are you willing to invest in rural tourism?	

Do you think it is enough for the level of services you want to provide to the tourists?

Who else can support you and work with you?

Who	Roles	Skills/Qualities	Available Time (hrs/wk)

Do you have enough support for your rural tourism?

EVALUATION OF THE TOURIST POTENTIAL OF THE REGION

Rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

No - not true or mostly not true

Maybe - it's partially true

Yes - it is true or mostly true

1. Natural heritage.	Yes	Maybe	No
In your region, there is one of the most famous natural attractions in your country, which is visited by a large number of tourists every year;			
Your region is characterized by natural diversity. There is a lot to see in the region and there is something for everyone. There are mountains and plains, there are also lakes, rivers and streams. In general, tourists like to travel through the region and enjoy nature;			
Fauna - the animal world is an important tourist potential in your region. There are plenty of harmless wild animals that are easily accessible to			

tourists. Or maybe there are some unique species in the region that attract tourists;			
Flora – various plants are an important tourist potential in your region. The flora is very rich and diverse, there are some unique species that attract tourists;			
Water – there are either natural or artificial water areas. At least some of them have opportunities for recreational activities.			
SUBTOTAL			

2. Cultural heritage.	Yes	Maybe	No
In your region, there is one of the most famous cultural and historical attractions in your country, which is visited by a large number of tourists every year;			
Your region has rich cultural and historical content. A lot is invested in the preservation of cultural and historical heritage;			
A large number of active museums and other cultural institutions show the connection of this region with its past, as well as the readiness to preserve cultural heritage;			
Visitors to this region can enjoy many attractions. Different events are held regularly and there is something for everyone. There is a number of cultural, musical and other festivals and fairs;			
What makes this region stand out is the warm welcome to all visitors, as well as the respect and appreciation of diversity.			
SUBTOTAL			

3. Active vacation.	Yes	Maybe	No
In your region, there is one of the most famous locations for active vacations in your country, which is visited by a large number of tourists every year;			
Sports facilities in the region are developed and provide an opportunity for tourists to enjoy various sports activities;			
The region can boast of offering various opportunities to tourists, such as the possibility of walking in nature and riding bicycles on marked trails, horse riding and many other activities;			
The region also offers water-related activities such as fishing, boating and swimming;			
For those who are more interested in extreme adventures, the region offers a large number of such activities. Some of the activities are off-road driving, cave exploration, rock climbing and many others.			
SUBTOTAL			

4. Services.	Yes	Maybe	No
Your region is one of the best known in your country for the quality of services for tourists;			
Your region is known for a large number of well-stocked shops, a good network of banks and a post office. In addition to classic stores, you can also find various specialized stores, while tourists themselves may also find shops with different souvenirs from the region. Internet and telephone network coverage in the region is good. All this fully meets the needs of residents, as well as the needs of tourists;			

The region has a wide range of facilities for the repair and maintenance of cars and bicycles;			
Hospitality and tourism are very important in this region, so you can see a wide variety of catering facilities, hotels and restaurants that offer different types of food and drinks, both domestic and foreign. In addition to all that, local residents and tourists have the opportunity to visit cinemas, theaters and many other cultural and entertainment facilities;			
Accommodation for tourists in the region is offered by various hotels, motels, camps and guesthouses.			
SUBTOTAL			

5. Tourist infrastructure.	Yes	Maybe	No
Your region is one of the best-known in your country in terms of the quality of tourist infrastructure;			
Transport services in the region include the use of different types of transport, as well as the possibility of renting different types of vehicles (cars, bicycles, boats...);			
Security is at a high level in the region. Medical services are available 24 hours a day;			
All public areas in the region are maintained to be clean and tidy, both for local residents and tourists;			
Tourists are provided with a large amount of information, as well as support for easier navigation during the visit. To make it easier for tourists to navigate, maps, brochures, local guides, interpretation of local attractions and many other types of support are offered. Tourist information centers also provide assistance to the region.			
SUBTOTAL			

6. Attitude towards tourists	Yes	Maybe	No
Your region is known for its excellent attitude towards tourists. This region has great potential in tourism, which is why a lot of energy and resources are being invested in order to attract as many tourists as possible. The data shows that the number of visitors is increasing, which shows us that the region is moving in the right direction;			
Tourist infrastructure is at a satisfactory level and meets the needs of tourists;			
The region is known for its warm welcome, so local businesses meet the demands of all visitors;			
Understanding and respect for diversity and other cultures is one of the main postulates of the region. Visitors from different cultures are served in a cultured and cordial manner, full of understanding;			
Experiences of visitors to this region are very positive. Visitors to the region always feel welcome and accepted.			
SUBTOTAL			

7. Traffic.	Yes	Maybe	No
Your region is one of the best known in your country for the quality of the transport infrastructure for tourists;			

This region has a high-quality road system, which facilitates travel for visitors;			
The roads in this region are in good condition, and allow easy navigation. There is also extensive road and tourist signage;			
Main access roads allow traffic to flow freely and unhindered at all times;			
Visiting this region allow easy visiting of other nearby attractions. Also, the region borders other states.			
SUBTOTAL			

8. Tourist attractiveness.	Yes	Maybe	No
Your region is one of the more famous destinations in your country;			
Easy access to the region is provided by the airport, quality roads and the highway;			
The tourism industry in the region does not depend on the season and climate. Also, it does not depend on any specific event or specific festival;			
The tourist market is large enough. This market has great potential for business and investment;			
SUBTOTAL			

	Yes	Maybe	No
TOTAL			

Summarize the number of responses for each category (yes, maybe, no):

- If you have the highest number of answers under YES - your region probably has a high tourism potential
- If you have the highest number of responses under MAYBE - your region probably has moderate tourism potential.
- If you have the largest number of answers under NO - your region probably does not have significant tourism potential

EVALUATION OF THE TOURIST POTENTIAL OF YOUR LOCATION

Analysis of the tourist potential of your location or property.

1. Natural heritage.	Yes	Maybe	No
Your location/property is in the center of one of the more famous natural attractions in your region;			
An incredible view, interesting reliefs and exceptional beauty make the property/location extremely attractive;			
The location/property has a very rich and diverse flora. There are certain species that are native and that attract tourists. In addition to the very rich and diverse herbal life, you can see a considerable amount of animals, which also attracts a large number of visitors;			
There are lakes, rivers and streams which makes activities such as fishing, swimming and boating possible;			
The location/property is in a very good position. This position is affordable and close to various attractions.			
SUBTOTAL			

2. Tourist offers.	Yes	Maybe	No
Your location/property has a significant tourist offer;			
An important fact is that there are historical and cultural landmarks near the location/property. Some of these landmarks are indigenous sites, artifacts, museums, and other historically important locations;			
Visitors are interested in the different and varied activities that take place on the site/property. These activities include agricultural, industrial and commercial ones. Agricultural activities that can be interesting may be production and harvesting;			
There are various opportunities for active rest and recreation in the area. Some of the possibilities are hiking, horseback riding, national parks, and more;			
In addition to the already mentioned features and possibilities, the location/property has many other interesting offers for potential visitors, such as examples of old equipment or a large number of souvenirs.			
SUBTOTAL			

3. Infrastructure on the site.	Yes	Maybe	No
Your location/property has all the infrastructure needed by tourists. The property has good access, electricity, internet, water and sewage, and waste water is treated;			
The roads, the entrance to the site/property, as well as the parking space meet current requirements. There are possibilities to increase the capacity, if necessary;			
Food and accommodation services are available on the site or in the immediate vicinity, in order to meet the demands of tourists;			
In the immediate vicinity there are playgrounds for children, various promenades, and for barbecue lovers there are designated areas for picnics and barbecues;			
Visitors can be safe, because the security of the facilities and visitors is maintained at the highest level.			
SUBTOTAL			

4. Business potential.	Yes	Maybe	No
Your location/property has the necessary human and business potential to meet the needs of tourists;			
In order to meet the demands and needs of the visitors, the qualified labor is available;			
You have the necessary knowledge to run a business, or you are ready to acquire it quickly;			
The time you spend on your other jobs will not affect your time dedicated to jobs in rural tourism;			
You have a completely unique tourist product, which no one else has to offer			
SUBTOTAL			

	Yes	Maybe	No
TOTAL			

Summarize the number of responses for each category (yes, maybe, no):

- If you have the highest number of answers under YES - your location/property probably has a high tourist potential
- If you have the highest number of responses under MAYBE - your location/property probably has moderate tourism potential.
- If you have the highest number of answers under NO - your location/property probably does not have significant tourist potential

3. TOURIST OFFER

It can be said that tourists - consumers of rural tourism mostly belong to the group of above-average educated people, who prefer lesser-known destinations and holidays outside the main season, and are motivated to find out more about the local culture, to learn about the local lifestyle and are caring for the environment.

Important groups of visitors in rural tourism are:

- One-day visitors - a particularly important group from larger urban centers (further growth in demand is expected)
- Visitors on short vacations - the division of vacation days into several shorter ones as a general trend is also visible in rural tourism, where it is expected to experience more in shorter time.
- Families with children - they are a particularly important group, and their special needs should be taken into account, such as safety and entertainment for children.
- The third age - rural destinations are popular destinations for senior population that appreciates rural tradition, peace and opportunities for light recreation (e.g. walks). It is important to take into account the special needs of this segment, such as safety, comfort and eating habits (possible dietary requirements).
- Special interests - in the last ten years there has been a noticeable increase in interest in rural areas among special interest groups, such as cyclists or walkers, but increasingly also very specialized groups such as wine-gastronomists, bird watchers and ethnology enthusiasts.
- Groups - primarily groups of school children, youth groups (various clubs and associations), special interest groups.
- People with special needs. Service providers must pay attention to infrastructural details, such as: wheelchair ramps in places where there are stairs, bathroom doors at least 75 cm wide, etc.

What do guests expect?

Generally speaking, guests' expectations are:

- What they see need to correspond to what you promoted and presented in your promotion
- Everything is clean, tidy and well maintained
- It's easy to get to, the parking lot is big enough
- They can easily orient themselves, the movement is logical
- The staff is visible, accessible, friendly and provides instructions
- Guest facilities are safe and accessible for all guests, especially small children, the elderly and people with disabilities.
- Restrooms and drinking water are available for off-site activities
- WiFi is available outside the facilities
- Payment can be made with cards

A. Offer in rural tourism

A tourist product is an object or mean of exchange on the tourist market.

A tourist product is an interconnected set of individual products and services of different origins that tourists use during a tourist trip.

A tourist product can be defined as the total of experiences of tourists that meet their expectations. This includes experiences with accommodation, gastronomy, natural and cultural heritage, activities, entertainment, transportation, etc.

B. Your tourist offer

Today, it is not enough to provide only quality accommodation and food to tourists. Tourists need a new offer, more intense experiences, new knowledge, more fun, recreation, sports, and adventure. They need to be provided with an offer that will be maximally adapted to their individual interests and requirements.

In addition to your basic tourist offer (accommodation, food or presentation of traditional values), you should think about additional contents that could attract tourists to stay "an extra day" (from a few hours to a few days). This is significant from the economic side, because you can charge for the additional offer separately or as part of a wider package, but with a higher price.

The following is an overview of ideas and practical advices on how you can enrich the tourist offer.

I. Active

These activities can improve the quality of time that tourists spend on your farm or facility:

- **Cycling.** Tourists can ride bicycles on special bicycle paths, local or rural roads, but also on forest paths and more difficult terrains. Get new or repair your old bikes and rent them out to tourists. Equip yourself with simple tools for bicycle service (pump, spare tires, valves, etc.). You can also organize a small cycling competition for your guests
- **Walking in nature.** A walk in nature offers the opportunity to simply get to know new places and experience a series of beautiful experiences. Prepare a map with marked trails, mark some of your trails, clearly present to tourists the difficulty of the trails and the time required for them. Include a nature walk in your tourist offer.
- **Walks through the nature with a guide.** This walk should, in addition to beautiful landscapes and forest areas, present tourists with the wealth of flora and fauna. Teach the tourists about the rare plant and animal species from your area and base the story on your experiences with those species. In certain places, you can place panels or information boards that would supplement your explanations.
- **Boating.** If there is a river or lake, get an adequate boat and enable tourists to get to know your area from the water perspective. Pay attention to security issues.
- **Ball sports.** Football, volleyball or badminton - it doesn't need to be only on arranged sport fields. It feels good to play on grass or sand. You can hang a rope between two trees in your orchard or yard and easily mark the terrain.
- **Swimming pool.** Set up a pool in the backyard. Use solar energy to heat it to extend the season
- **Wellness and spa.** Create an oasis of peace and relaxation in a part of your household. Provide facilities for tourists even when the weather is bad outside.
- **Archery.** Shooting a target with a bow and arrow is a good way to spend time in the area around the object. The bow and arrow can be made of wood and string, and the target can be a painted wooden board or a sandbag. You must point out the safety of the participants, as unwanted injuries may occur.
- **Bird watching.** Create a poster with photos and descriptions of birds that are seen in your area. Make a map with the places from where you can watch the birds and place a bench in those places. Get binoculars and rent them or just give them away for free to tourists.

- **Rock climbing.** An extreme sport that requires good equipment and well-tested terrain. It is usually organized in cooperation with professional clubs.
- **Horse riding.** Tourists, especially children, can ride horses in the fenced area. You can also organize a riding school and charge extra.
- **Driving quad bikes.** You may already have an ATV that you use for more difficult trails. Rent it out to tourists who have the proper driving license.
- **Sledding.** Sledding is not only an activity for children, but for the whole family. Prepare a suitable trail in your neighborhood and suggest it to your tourists as an activity they can do.
- **Hunting and fishing.** Hunting is usually carried out in cooperation with specialized hunting associations. Help fishermen to buy a fishing license. You can rent fishing equipment or a boat to fishermen.
- **Mini golf.** This can be a funny way for guests to spend part of the day. It could be a small area behind the house, where you would dig a few holes and put up a few obstacles for the ball. You can find creative schemes for mini golf courses on the Internet.
- **Playroom for smaller children.** If you are skilled in woodworking, you can set up small houses where children will enjoy spending time.
- **Walking along challenging hiking trails.** Only for the most physically fit tourists. The dangers that can happen during the walk should be mentioned several times.

II. Learn something new

Tourists are interested in seeing something new. They also want to learn how the things were done in past. You can organize workshops on topics that are your specialty and where you know the answers to all questions. Prepare the space for the workshop. It can be an already existing space: garage, barn, stable, workshop, kitchen, basement, etc. You can create a completely new space, specially prepared for presentations. Pay particular attention to the limitation of the number of tourists who can listen or actively participate in the workshop or training (e.g. sufficient number of tools, chairs, gloves, etc.).

- **Culinary workshop.** You need a kitchen where you will prepare local dishes together with tourists. When you prepare them together, try them together.
- **Preparation of takeaway products.** Workshop for making local specialties, brandy, jams, sweets. Together with the tourists, make a final product that they can either consume and take home.
- **Sheep shearing.** Show how sheep are sheared. Then let the tourists try it themselves. Explain what happens to the wool afterwards.
- **Spinning of wool.** Show how wool is spun. Tourists can use the spindle and shape the woolen threads themselves. You can make small spindles on which they can spin some wool themselves, which they can take with them. Small spindles can also be sold as individual souvenirs.
- **Herb harvesting.** Organize herb picking with expert guidance. You can show tourists how the harvested plants are made into different wreaths that they can take with them. You can emphasize medicinal herbs.
- **Astronomy.** Get a home telescope and set up a star chart of the sky. It requires a good knowledge of astronomy, accompanying maps, a good view of the sky and good weather.
- **Production of organic food.** Presentation of the production process and its importance for the environment. You can make the presentation in the garden or in a place where organic products are displayed. The presentation may be associated with a “pick and choose” sale.
- **Mowing.** First, explain what is needed for mowing (scythe, hammer, anvil...). Show how to hold the scythe properly and be patient. Keep in mind that the tourists will not be able to do the work for you, they will only mow a few swaths while taking pictures.

- **Pumpkin carving.** An art workshop that everyone will remember. You can make simple models that participants can make themselves. You can later decorate the pumpkins with candles, but also with various other decorations from nature.
- **Feeding domestic animals.** This is an activity mainly intended for children. The maximum safety of tourists and animals must be taken into account.
- **"Plant your tree".** Tourists can plant a tree in the selected place. That tree may have a small plaque with the name of the person who planted it. It is not good to plant a tree when the vegetation does not allow it, because a failed planting can have a negative effect on tourists later.
- **Kneading and baking bread in an old oven.** You can show tourists how to knead the bread that would later be offered to them during the meal.
- **Wine and brandy tasting.** This activity is mainly organized on farms that make wine or brandy. But if you are in a wine region, organize a tasting of several different wines from the region. The tasting is accompanied by carefully selected food. Prepare the drinks and food that you will serve on time and think about the musical accompaniment of the whole event.
- **Tasting of products from the farm.** If you produce several different products, present them to tourists.
- **Basket weaving.** A forgotten skill that can be shown to tourists and in which they can participate. It can be presented in different stages of work (material preparation, bottom treatment...). Perhaps it is best to involve tourists in the final stage of weaving.
- **Making charcoal.** Tourists can be involved in the process of making charcoal, from wood sorting and burning to charcoal extraction.

III. Services

Services provided in a rural environment are different from those in an urban environment. That is why the mentioned activities can be interesting for tourists coming from cities:

- **Holiday on a farm** - Spending a leisurely holiday close to animals gives a feeling of closeness to life in nature.
- **Events.** Weddings, birthdays, corporate and other events - Many people want to have something different for "their day" than the boring celebrations in restaurants. The organization of such events requires the necessary experience of the host.
- **"Lunch on the grass".** Eating in nature is something that city dwellers rarely have the opportunity to do. You can offer a complete meal or just a space where guests will bring their own food, and you will provide them with the infrastructure.
- **Camping.** At the camping site, it is necessary to arrange plots where it is possible to set up tents. Ensure the use of electricity and toilet facilities.
- **Themed dinners.** You can offer to organize various themed programs with accompanying program (traditional games and adequate music).
- **Equipment rental.** Boats, fishing equipment, camping equipment, bicycles... It is necessary that in your environment there is the possibility of using rented equipment.

IV. Direct sale of products

With this type of selling, you can skip the wholesale and will be able to charge a higher price for your products or services

- **"Pick and choose"** - fruits, vegetables, flowers, Christmas trees. This is a sale where tourists come to your orchard, vegetable garden, etc. they look around and choose specifically which fruits to buy and pick them themselves. After that, the products are measured and charged per kilogram or per piece

- **Product delivery to specific addresses.** Offer delivery – to tourist home, businesses, restaurants
- **Selling your products online**
- **Sale of gifts.** E.g. "basket of local products" - tourists or companies give away local products to their friends or business partners
- **Roadside sales.** Selling on the road (usually in front of your own farm). You can make a small stand where seasonal products are presented.

V. Special events

These events are an excellent opportunity to see what other service providers in rural tourism are doing and to gather important contacts, both with potential tourists and potential partners.

- **Festivals.** Can you organize your own festival. If not, organize the visit to festivals organized by others
- **Wine tours.** Connect several wine producers and there you have it, a new gastronomic offer.
- **Find the treasure.** Create your own digital lost treasure hunt game app.

USEFUL TOOLS

WHO ARE YOUR GUESTS?

In the following list, try to more precisely define the profile of your guests and what you can offer to them:

Describe the categories of your guests (e.g.: school excursions, pensioners, young people up to 25 years old and similar)	What do you offer to them? List all tourist products that are intended for each individual category of guests

WHAT DO YOU OFFER TO YOUR GUESTS?

In the following list, describe in detail at least 3 tourist products from your tourist offer:

Name of the tourist product (e.g.: quad bike ride, culinary workshop, lunch on the grass, etc.)	Detailed description of the tourist product. Answer the questions: where, how, how much, when, who, for whom...

4. FINANCE

A. Identify Your Financial Goals

It is important to understand the connection between a good idea and a financially feasible idea. Start your new venture without debt; use what you have and determine if you are suited for agritourism before borrowing money.

Develop a business plan to start an agritourism venture with little capital investment from yourself, friends, family or banking institutions. Test the venture and then adjust your business plan accordingly.

Find your financial comfort zone by answering these questions:

- Do I have cash on hand to start a business?
- Will I need to get a loan?
- Do I feel comfortable borrowing money?

Assessing your financial resources can be difficult. In most cases, it's a good idea to involve other family members and outside professionals to assist you in making that decision.

B. Sources of finance

One of the most important questions in any analysis for dealing with rural tourism is how to provide the necessary financial means.

That is why it is necessary to create a detailed business plan or cost sheet that would define the size of the investment and the amount of funds needed for the realization of the project. This will help you realistically plan the amount of funds you need.

There are several sources of finance for rural tourism.

Sources of finance can be:

- Internal / External
- Non-refundable / Refundable
- Private / Public
- Domestic/Foreign

Some of the possible sources of finance can be:

- **Self-financing** (Self-financing is a method of financing in which one's own funds are used. Funds are a result of previous operations, through accumulated profits, i.e. savings; the cheapest and safest source of financing, which enable the greatest degree of independence)

- **Loans** (mainly through commercial banks; loans are available for various purposes; in the last few years, banks have extended repayment terms and slightly increased maximum loan amounts, but there is an increase in interest and associated costs; the global financial crisis affects banks to apply a much more conservative financing policy; obtaining a loan has become much more difficult and demanding because banks require a very thorough analysis of the client's rating)

- **Joint investments** (or: joint venture - a special way of investment by two or more independent companies or persons who jointly invest funds in a certain business activity. It is a specific form of connection by pooling capital on a joint project or venture, or in some form of business cooperation)

- **Foreign direct investment** (Investment of a foreign person in a domestic legal entity when foreign investor acquires a stake or shares in the basic capital of that legal entity (enterprise); in other words, foreign direct investment means the investment of foreign capital by a resident investor (enterprise) of one country in resident (enterprise) of another country in order to achieve common interests).

- **Leasing** (Leasing represents one of the ways of financing and investing in fixed assets for a specific asset, and appears as an alternative to own funds and bank loans, the essence of leasing is that the user does not acquire the ownership of the asset until he fully repay the leasing costs; word leasing originally means to rent, lease).

- **Donations** (Grants; gift in the form of money, assets, ownership or services)

- **Public-private partnerships** (Public-private partnership is defined as a form of cooperation between private and public partners who work together on the implementation of investment projects and the provision of public services; they mainly relate to the construction and use of infrastructure)

- **Investment funds** (Investment funds are a form of collective investment that aims to collect funds from several investors and place them on the capital market, by buying company shares, bonds and others, usually with the aim of increasing their value, and then reselling them for a profit).

- **European Union funds** (the EU finances a number of projects and programs; strict rules are applied to ensure that the money is spent in a transparent and responsible manner, and the use of the funds is under constant supervision; EU financial resources are available in different forms: as grants, usually awarded through public calls, better known as calls for proposals, subsidies managed by national and regional bodies, loans, guarantees and equity as forms of financial assistance to support EU policies and programmes, etc.)

- **State support** (subsidies, incentives, premiums, regressions, credit support from state or local self-government budgets)

- **Securities** (Securities represent documents that promise payment of money, interest, earnings or dividends; securities in the narrower sense are investment instruments, i.e. those securities where there is an investment risk that is compensated by potential earnings).

- **Alternative sources: crowdfunding, business angels...** (New forms of financing that are different in purpose and form; Crowdfunding is a way of financing projects through the collection of several small amounts of money from many people, usually via the Internet; business angels are individual investors who provide financial support to small start-up companies or entrepreneurs).

The most important sources of finance are: self-financing (own funds), loans and grants (subsidies).

C. Own funds

Investing one's own funds, assuming that they are available, is the fastest way to realize a project in rural tourism. This is the least risky approach, because there is no obligation to return the money as in the case of loans, there is no encumbrance on real estate (mortgages), which are often (almost always), taken as a guarantee for loan repayment when taking out a loan. It is also the cheapest way of investing, because it is not burdened with interest and other costs. In the simplest terms, investing your own funds, if possible, is the best way because at the very beginning of the business, when the income is not regular and secure, you are not burdened with returning the investment as soon as possible, as well as returning the loan with associated interest. Unfortunately, own funds very often do not exist, or at least they are not sufficient, so it is necessary to go for additional sources of financing.

D. Loans

For the realization of any entrepreneurial venture, as well as for the formation and improvement of a rural tourist household or a rural tourism project, the most common source is loan, whether taken directly from commercial banks or through programs subsidized by ministries or various organizations or programs.

If there is a choice, it is certainly best to take the cheapest loan (with the lowest interest rate and the longest "grace period" - the period until the loan repayment begins). If they are available, it is good to go for those loans that are dedicated directly to rural tourism.

E. Grants (donations)

If you need a small amount of money to start business in rural tourism, you can try to secure funds through various programs that offer them in the form of grants - donations. These are funds in the form of gifts, which you do not have to pay back, but you must count on, sometimes, complex procedures, a time frame that is not always in accordance with your needs, and the necessity that these funds must be spent strictly for their purpose, in accordance with the rules of the donor program.

The state, usually through the relevant Ministries, implements several programs to encourage the development of entrepreneurship with financial support (e.g. for beginners in business). Through these programs, the state offers grants in a certain percentage of the total investment. Specific conditions are determined separately for each individual program and public call. Usually, the procedures for obtaining these funds are relatively simple, and there are a number of institutions and organizations that provide help and support for applying (e.g. regional development agencies).

In addition to this, the state also has special programs for women entrepreneurs and young people, for development projects, self-employment, etc.

Grants for projects in rural tourism can be found also in various bilateral programs, funds of the European Union, but also through the projects of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which offers financial and advisory services to entrepreneurs, especially women and young people.

Smaller amounts of grants, very often, can be found in the programs of local self-government units.

The fact is that it is relatively difficult to get a loan to start a business if you do not already have previous results in business and the so-called good credit history. Bankers want to see that you have already achieved success in a certain type of business before they show a willingness to take a risk. To get started with your business, you can do the following:

- Visit a commercial bank or other financial organization and offer your property as a pledge (mortgage).
- Find equipment through the leasing program.
- View all national, EU and other donor programs that support start-up programs in tourism.
- Self-financing through own savings or other personal investment mechanisms.
- Borrow from your friends and relatives.
- Make all purchases on credit and save cash for emergencies.

Each of these options has its advantages and disadvantages.

If you apply for loans from commercial banks, subsidized loans or funds from donations, it is very likely that you will need a business plan.

Organizations/programs that offer funds may have their own business plan format, which may differ in some details, or they may ask you for a business plan in free form. You can entrust the creation of a business plan to a specialized organization or an individual, however, you can also create it yourself. Basically, when you have a clear idea in your head about your future business, creating a business plan is not too complicated, and once you have drawn it up, you can easily adapt it to the required form, because all business plans have similar elements.

F. Business plan

A business plan should answer questions such as "what kind of business idea it is about" and "whether this idea can be successful (lead to profit) on the market".

The business plan consists several parts that analyze your idea for rural tourism more deeply.

The basic elements of the business plan are as follows:

- Description of the business idea; what is your main product/service, who are the main customers
- Market analysis (existing offer, competition, characteristics of your customers (tourists), distribution channels, analysis of your prices
- Location analysis
- Necessary investments and their dynamics as well as sources of financing
- Financial projections of operations in the future (future income and expenses)
- Risk analysis

In the first part of the Business Plan, define:

- What is your main product or service?
- Who are the customers of services or products and what characterizes them?
- What are your previous knowledge and experiences?
- Do you have special skills or advantages that allow you to successfully do your planned job?
- What are your weaknesses in doing the job?
- What are the expected environmental changes (micro and macro) in the future?

Based on those information, you can see whether your idea is viable, what your strengths are, and what aspects you still need to improve.

Market analysis aims to determine the most important market trends that are the subject of your business venture. Try to analyze:

- What are the supply and demand in rural tourism;
- What is the competition looks like now and potentially in the future;
- Characteristics of rural tourists (who are the customers and what habits and expectations do they have);
- Possible distribution channels of your product or services to customers;
- How the rural tourism market will develop in the future;
- Is your product or service specific compared to competitors;
- Price levels

With that information, you can evaluate the position of your idea when it appears on the market.

Take a closer look at the following elements. They will be useful to you when you begin providing a tourist service or selling products:

- Specificity - what is different in your production process or when providing your tourist service compared to competitors;
- Experience – your specific experiences as additional advantages;
- Location - analysis of location as one of the most important elements;
- Legal regulation - overview of the regulations in rural tourism and their possible effects on your idea.

After this analysis, you will receive information based on which you can improve your service or product, so that your offer it as competitive as possible.

When considering investment opportunities and sources of financing, it is important to do the following:

- Analyze the necessary investments and dynamics of realization;
- Consider the available sources of financing for starting a business idea, as well as the costs of those sources (e.g. interest on loans);
- Determine the financing structure of the business venture and, if the project involves the use of external funds, the calculation of the loan repayment plan.

The basic problem of the decision on your investment is related to the difference between investing today and expecting profit in the future. In this sense, the assumptions on which the financial projections of the business are based should be reviewed and analyzed, and this especially include:

- Assumptions on sales projection - expected income based on assumptions about the number of your products and services and their structure, price and seasonal price fluctuations, various intermediary fees and taxation on services and products;
- Assumptions and projections of the costs - costs such as costs related to the provision of services (variable costs), but also those that do not depend on the number of services provided (fixed costs), should be analyzed separately. Variable costs include labor costs (even if the business is run by a family and there is no money spent on employee costs, the amount of time spent should be taken into account at least for the reason that that time can be used in other ways), costs of raw materials and materials for preparation of food and drinks, costs of inventory, maintenance costs. When it comes to fixed costs, along with depreciation and various utility fees, the cost of external sources of funding for investments (interest cost and annuity) should be determined;
- Review of possible deviations from assumed amounts and quantities related to both income and expenses.

After that, the projected revenues and expenses should be compared, as well as the impact of various taxes, and the overall effects of the business should be reviewed based on:

- Profit and loss ratio, i.e. net profit,
- Cash flow, which determines the available money after all costs.

Possible deviations from the planned volumes should be also included in the calculation.

Projection of profit and loss ratio and cash flow is the basis for evaluating the profitability of investment and start of a business venture.

Finally, it is necessary to consider the most important risks related to business idea, namely those that can be influenced (for example, risks related to sales, the number of intermediaries, etc.) as well as those that come from the wider environment and that cannot be influenced (for example, taxes, traffic availability and many others).

After all these analyses, you get a complete picture of your business idea, and that complete picture is called a business plan. If the business plan tells you that you should continue to work on the realization of your idea, then you should start collecting the financial resources that are necessary for the concrete realization of your idea.

G. Break-even analysis

A break-even analysis can help you determine either the minimum number of product units you need to sell to break even, or the minimum price you need to set for each unit to break even. Both formulas are based on two variables: your fixed costs and your variable costs.

Fixed Costs (FC) do not vary with the number of guests entertained or units of a product sold. EXAMPLES: construction/repairs; taxes and insurance; marketing; depreciation...

Variable Costs (VC) will vary with the number of guests or units of a product sold. EXAMPLES: employee wages; fuel; cost of food...

Sample Break-Even POINT Analysis:

Your Question: How many years do I need to operate at a given price to break even?

1. Start with what you know:

You will need to fix the parking area, purchase a furniture, and add lighting, so your fixed costs will be €25,000.

Costs of labor per guest will be €5, and €18 in meals for your guests. Your variable costs per guest is €23.

The price per night will be €45/person, and you're confident you can get at least 300 per night stays per year, so your unit price is €13.500.

2. Break-Even POINT Formula:

Total Fixed Costs/(Unit Price - Variable Costs) = Break-Even Point

$$€25,000 / (€13.500 - €6.900) = 3.7.$$

So, with 300 overnight stays per year at your €45 price, you will have to operate 3.7 years in order to break even!

Sample Break-Even PRICE Analysis:

Your Question: What should be my price per overnight stay in order to break even?

1. Start with what you know:

Based on previous example, your fixed costs will be €25,000.

Based on previous example, your variable costs per guest are €23.

You know you have capacity to provide 500 overnight stays a year.

2. Break-Even PRICE Formula:

(Total Fixed Costs/Number of Units to be Sold) + Variable Costs = Break-Even Price

$$(€25.000 / 500) + €23 = €73$$

Based on this, if you want to break even after one year, with a full capacity, your price per guest should be no less than €73.

H. Setting Realistic Income Goals

Spend time identifying what your income goals are. These might include:

- Break even or turn a profit in the first year.
- Provide supplemental income while holding a full-time job off the farm.
- Earn all of your (your household's) income from farming (within a specified time frame).
- Meet current and long-term family income needs (college tuition, health insurance, retirement).
- Expand farm income enough to allow your children to become partners in the farm business.

I. Income sources in rural tourism

Rural tourism is being promoted as a way to generate additional income for the farm, and there are many ways to generate sales.

This chapter describes possible income sources.

A rural tourism business plan is the best way to show how the income streams and the new expenses balance to provide a new source of profit.

Some of the income sources may be:

- Tickets for events
- Tourist tours' fee
- Sale of fresh agricultural products
- Sale of processed agricultural products
- Selling souvenirs
- Fee for skills acquisition - workshops
- Tasting fee
- Renting an object
- Accommodation
- Food

For any fees that you charge, it is important that you provide them in accordance with applicable standards and that you check that they are charged in accordance with applicable regulations.

Tickets for events

Tourists are willing to pay an entrance fee to attend events or participate in events. Keep in mind that tourists are willing to pay the entrance fee for some unique experience. Admission may be charged for events and activities. A number of events can be organized in rural tourism. From grape harvesting, mowing, bicycle race, archery competition, boat race, folklore show to a music festival or the celebration of an authentic custom, holiday or other important date.

The price of tickets can be formed in several ways:

- Adults can pay one price and children and pensioners another, lower price
- Group discounts may be introduced
- A discount can be given if they buy some products on the farm or if they have booked accommodation.

Consider organizing an event that would attract tourists.

Tourist tours' fee

If you organize a tour (e.g. visiting the farm with a guide) you can charge a fee. The guide can be you, or someone else who has enough knowledge about your farm. Tourists who are willing to pay this fee usually want to know the authenticity of life and work on a farm, some details of production processes, technological specifics and other unique experiences that your farm can offer them.

The fee for the tour can be formed in several ways:

- Adults can pay one price and children and pensioners another, lower price.
- Group discounts may be introduced
- A discount can be given if they buy some products on the farm.

Sale of fresh agricultural products

One of the reasons why tourists come to the farm is to buy fresh agricultural products at producer prices. In addition to the direct sale of fresh products, you can also introduce the "pick and choose" activity, where tourists pick their own products. As there is a growing interest in healthy food, and as people increasingly want to know from whom they are buying what, this type of income has a growing perspective.

Sale of processed agricultural products

Many farms are increasingly working to expand the sale of their value-added products. This can include everything that you can process on your farm, i.e. all processed products from agricultural products (cheese, butter, jam, compote, squeezed juices, pickled products, dried fruit, sauces, spreads, etc.). Consider offering some of these products as souvenirs or gifts.

Selling souvenirs

Why shouldn't your farm have its own souvenirs? Why not also sell souvenirs related to the region you are in on your farm? First of all, it is desirable to have authentic souvenirs that are related to your farm and that were made there: decorations, handicrafts, country antiques, etc. You can always add classic souvenirs to them: hats, t-shirts, pendants, etc.

Fee for skills acquisition – workshops

The point of holding workshops on the farm is to charge a fee for experience and expertise. The possibilities of different educations are almost unlimited. Tourists like to stay active and be engaged in acquiring new knowledges and skills. You can organize educational workshops on various topics, such as: culinary workshop, preparation of takeaway products, sheep shearing, wool spinning, hay cutting, pumpkin carving, basket weaving, charcoal making, etc.

Like other fees, the fee for workshops can be formed on different principles, such as depending on the number of participants or otherwise.

Tasting fee

Tasting can be organized for almost anything authentic that you produce on the farm. Apart from wine or brandy tastings, you can also organize tastings for many other products. Farms that grow or produce some authentic edibles may consider charging based on the tasting experience. For example, an orchard can offer a tasting of old varieties of apples or plums. If you produce milk, you can offer tastings of cheeses, spreads and other dairy products. If you already dry meat for your own needs, you can offer a tasting of meat products. It is important that the tasting area is clean, tidy and that hygiene complies with all regulations.

The price is usually formed per person. You can give the participants of the tasting some discount for the purchase of the product.

Rental of facilities

Another way a farm can make money from visitors is by renting out the farm, some parts of it or farm facilities. The empty barn can be used for dance lessons, smaller weddings, family gatherings, birthdays, religious events, meetings and the like. You can also rent an empty barn or other facility to others who are engaged in tourism for some of their events or activities. The beautiful lawn can be rented for picnics or other special events.

Make sure that everything you rent is clean and tidy, that there is access to water and toilets.

You can form the price according to the time of use (an hour and a half day, a whole day) or per person.

Accommodation

You can offer accommodation in any structure that complies with regulations and is categorized. It can be a room, an apartment, a house, a tent, a trailer, a large barrel, and the like. The accommodation should have an adequate bathroom, toilet and other accompanying facilities, in accordance with its categorization.

The fee can be per unit (room) or per person. Don't forget discounts for children.

Food

Apart from the fact that tourists need to eat, they usually like to eat local and authentic food. Offer them some of that, according to your food preparation capabilities. You can form the price per meal or per group or in some other way.

USEFUL TOOLS

EXERCISE

Calculate the price for one of your tourist products/services.

BUSINESS PLAN MODEL

1. DESCRIPTION OF PRODUCT/SERVICE

List of questions to help you fill in the table:

- What is (are) the product(s) - description of physical characteristics: size, weight, color, packaging...
- What is the service (describe the type of service),
- Who are the customers / consumers (current and potential),
- What makes you different from the competition?

- Emphasize advantages/disadvantages, weaknesses/strengths

Service/product description	Competitive advantages

2. BUYER/CONSUMER PROFILE

Consider who the customers/consumers are for existing or new products or services. Show who are the main buyers of products/services by market segment (including domestic and foreign markets).

A list of questions that may help answer:

- What is the payment system?
- Is the seasonal factor decisive?
- Is the customer a user at the same time?
- How did you organize the sale?
- List your most important customers...

Byer/consumer	Description

3. COMPETITION PROFILE

List of questions to help you fill in the table:

- Make a list and briefly describe your direct competitors, as well as what are their strengths / weaknesses in comparison to each other and to you?
- What are the success factors for you / differentiation in relation to the competition?

Main competitors (company/person)	Product	Price	Main strengths/weaknesses	Comment

4. SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

5. PRICE STRATEGY, PURCHASE AND SALES PLAN, FIXED AND VARIABLE COSTS

List of questions to help explain pricing strategy:

- How do you determine your prices in relation to the competition?
- What pricing policy do your competitors have?
- Can your price give you a competitive advantage?
- Have you considered the competition's reaction to your prices?

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6. SALES PLAN AND CALCULATION OF TOTAL INCOME

No	Product/Service	Unit	Price	Sales volume by year			Income by year		
				First year	Second year	Third year	First year	Second year	Third year
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 = 4x5	9 = 4x6	10 = 4x7
1.									
2.									
3.									
	Total								

7. PROCUREMENT PLAN (VARIABLE COSTS)

Required quantities of materials, packaging (variable costs) for each product/service – (shorten or expand the table as needed)

No	Material needed	Quantity of material per product	Production volume for the first year	Required amount of material in the first year
1	2	3	4	5 = 3 x 4

1.	Material 1			
	- for product/service 1			
	- for product/service 2			
	Total material 1			
2.	Material 2			
	- for product/service 1			
	- for product/service 2			
	Total material 2			

8. FIXED COSTS

No	Cost	First year	Second year	Third year
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Gross wages (total for all workers)			
2.	Electricity			
3.	Utilities			
4.	Internet			
5.	Heating			
6.	Depreciation of buildings and equipment			
7.	Loans (if any)			
8.	Promotion costs			
9.	Bank fees			
10.	Insurance costs			
11.	Other			
12.	Total			

9. LIST OF EXISTING FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT AND FIXED COSTS

List of the buildings, their characteristics and value (please provide a list of all buildings and land that will be used):

No	Building	Characteristics	Value
1	2	3	4
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

List of existing work equipment, their basic characteristics and value:

No	Equipment	Characteristics	Value
1	2	3	4
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
TOTAL:			

10. FINANCIAL PLAN

List of all necessary investments for the smooth performance of the activities - adaptation of the buildings, equipment, tools, other necessary investments, etc. and their basic characteristics:

No	Investment	Characteristics	Value
1	2	3	4
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
TOTAL:			

5. MARKETING

Marketing refers to any actions taken to attract an audience to the product or services through high-quality messaging.

Strong marketing can set you apart and ensure that your outstanding products and experiences are enjoyed by those they are intended for.

The “Five P’s of Marketing” give structure to a marketing plan and encourage you to be inclusive as you consider your product, price, placement, promotion, and positioning.

In rural tourism, Five P’s can be described as following:

1. PRODUCT

PRODUCT is what you offer to your target market:

- Goods: Vegetables, meats, value-added products, baked goods, handcrafted items...
- Experiences: Tours, farm stays, dinners, tastings, festivals, weddings...

Remember all the “products” experienced by visitors, including:

- Signage
- Employee courtesy (each guest can influence 100 other potential customers)
- Visual appeal and cleanliness of your household (view the “product” through the eyes of your customer)
- Convenience and availability of parking
- Recipes or information on how to cook/prepare domestic products
- Ancillary services (e.g., accepting credit cards, food for purchase, bathrooms, accommodations)
- For those with special needs: the elderly, persons with disabilities, parents with strollers.

Customer Service Tips:

Guests may come to your household as part of a wider tour of the area. To be most accommodating, make sure you and all of your family members/employees can answer these questions:

- What other attractions should I visit while in the area?
- What accommodations are available nearby?
- Are there any good places to eat?
- Is it possible to rent bicycle, ski equipment, or similar nearby?
- Where is the nearest gas station?
- Are there any special events happening nearby?
- Are there retail stores nearby?
- What other farms can I visit?

2. PRICE

PRICE is what you charge for your products/services.

Setting an appropriate price point for each product or experience is critical. It's also essential that you pay yourself fairly. There are two approaches to pricing: be a low-cost leader or provide a "value-based" product or service. As a low-cost leader, you are a margin-driven business requiring a high volume of sales. Your customers don't expect quality; it's a bonus, not a requirement.

With a value-based approach, customers are willing to pay what they consider a fair value for the quality and unique features and benefits they anticipate from your product. "Fair value" varies with the target audience. What is considered expensive to one might be considered cheap to another. Therefore, you need to know what is driving your target market's purchasing decisions and what these individuals consider a fair value for the features and benefits of your product so you can price your product accordingly and convey a message that will resonate with these customers.

Tips to help you identify your starting price points:

- Know your full costs.
- Conduct a break-even analysis to determine your costs of production.
- Don't be afraid to charge a fair price for what your product is worth.
- Understand the market landscape around you: Analyze competitors' pricing; Conduct research on target customers' willingness to pay for the products/experience

3. PLACEMENT & DISTRIBUTION

PLACEMENT & DISTRIBUTION means the distribution channels you use to reach your target market, or how visitors will access your products and experiences.

With an agritourism business, one goal is to sell rural household experiences which can only be offered in the village. Another goal may be to stay connected with tourists through sales of other products after they have left your household. Therefore, your household itself is a distribution channel, and your website with an online shop, or online event registration system may be others. When inviting your guests, make sure it's safe and welcoming.

Tips:

- Minimize risk of injury to your visitors
- Maintain a high level of aesthetic appeal
- Make it easy for visitors to identify driving directions to your household (Make sure your address is accurate on Google Maps; Make sure your website, Google listing, and social media accounts all clearly include your hours/days/seasons of operation.)
- Product availability for seasonal items
- Restroom facilities
- Offer preparation tips and recipes
- Provide benches for resting and areas where children can play.
- Consider accessibility issues and the needs of parents with baby strollers, elderly visitors, and persons with limited mobility

4. PROMOTION

PROMOTION is the strategy you use to raise awareness of the product or service you offer to your target market. Promotion is often confused with the term „marketing“, but is only a part of it.

There are an overwhelming number of places where you can display your rural household and many methods for promoting your offer. Prioritize your promotion strategies around your customers, based on what you learn from your customer profile. Where and how are they accessing information?

Look for opportunities to minimize expense and maximize investment. Do a cost-benefit analysis for each strategy to select the mix that uses your marketing money most efficiently. How many people will it reach? What does it cost? Will it directly generate sales or just build awareness? Focus on action-oriented messages that engage the audience.

Once you get tourists to your household, make it standard practice to ask them how they learned about you. This will help you determine whether your marketing is effective and where you need to make adjustments.

Explore paid and free marketing options, and be open to unlikely partnerships. These might include collaborations with a hotel in town, a ski resort nearby, a restaurant to whom you wholesale produce, arts and crafts organizations that could co-host an event, a neighboring farm, or your school. You might collaborate with area artists/professionals to provide complementary services, such as a yoga class or weekend retreat that includes preparing a healthy meal and simple arts workshop.

These partnerships can offer you access to partners' markets, in addition to your own.

Tips:

- Whatever you do, make sure what your customers see online is what they see when they get there
- Spread the word about your agritourism offerings through:
 - o Social media
 - o press releases
 - o Road signage,
 - o Travel and tourism websites and blogs
 - o Radio or television
 - o Print media (newspapers, magazines, visitor guides)
 - o Rack cards/brochures
 - o Product packaging
 - o Branded merchandise (hats, cycling jerseys, totes, mugs, water bottles)
 - o Your website etc.
- Photos and videos can make or break your marketing efforts, particularly in this era of social media. When using photos and videos in social media or in publications, remember:
 - o Only use photos/videos on which you have copyright permission
 - o Only use high quality images and videos that are clear, not blurry (consider to engage professional photographer to make them for you).
 - o Crop photos to cut out unattractive piles of clutter or junk. Share images that showcase the clean and safe parts of your household.
 - o Sometimes less is more. For example, when taking a photo, ask yourself, "Will the viewer be able to instantly know what my subject is?" Also, instead of sharing four photos of your just-picked carrots, choose the best one.
 - o When posting photos of food, make sure it looks appetizing. Ask yourself: If the person viewing the photo would want to eat it?
 - o There is a strong interest from people coming to take pictures of whatever they find interesting. The more you add in the household, like a mural, a piece of art, an

interesting landscape design—anything unusual or unique draws people attention. Their photos on social networks will be free promotion for you.

5. POSITIONING

POSITIONING is the process of creating a unique impression for your product/service in the minds of your customers.

Start by asking yourself, “How do I want my customers to describe my household?” What adjectives would you want them to use? “Friendly”? “Casual”? “Sustainable”? This process is commonly referred to as brand development.

Tip: Once you’ve determined what kind of “brand” you have, make sure all your marketing materials reflect that brand. Keep a consistent look and feel across:

- Signage on the farm
- Advertising and promotional materials (print and online)
- Employee apparel
- Contact information — email, voicemail, etc.

USEFUL TOOLS

For comprehensive and thorough planning of your promotional/marketing activities, as well as for monitoring their effects, you need to create a marketing plan. The marketing plan itself can be a complex document, however, for planning the promotion of the rural tourism business, you can use a simple matrix - a promotion plan:

Activity	Deadline	Responsibility	Costs	Note
Logo design	1/2/2024			
The story about us	1/2/2024			
Production of a promo brochure	1/2/2024			
Distribution of the brochure	1/3/2024			
Visit to the fair in...	22/6/2024			
Making a T-shirt with a logo	1/8/2024			
Staff training	1/9/2024			
Production of household signage	1/11/2024			

The following are some useful tips that can help you better present and promote your rural tourism:

PRESENTATION OF YOUR TOURIST HOUSEHOLD

You have welcomed guests to your property. It is important to present your tourist household and your surroundings in a good light. You should think about what you want your guests to take with them when they leave: good impressions, positive experiences, new knowledge and purchased (or gifted) products.

What should you pay attention to when preparing the presentation of your tourist household?

Define a special location for group/family photos. This place should contain something with the characteristics of your household (a logo or a board with the name of the tourist household, a product that is specific for your tourist household or something that is unique and intangible, e.g. a panorama in the background...)

Pay close attention to hygiene. Check the cleanliness of your bathrooms and hand-washing areas (fountains, etc.), especially if visitors come into contact with domestic animals before meals.

Place waste bins in multiple locations. Provide the possibility of sorting waste of different origins into separate bins (eg organic waste, plastic, glass and metal).

Presentation schedule

Prepare a program for the presentation that is flexible enough to fit the interests of different types of visitors.

Place information boards that clearly show the safety prerequisites (if any).

View your presentation from the perspective of your guests.

Choose a topic that you will "pass" through the presentation, which is related to your household (e.g. recycling, organic farming, food quality, humane treatment of animals, care for environmental protection, protection of cultural and historical heritage...)

Encourage discussion about the production process. For example, from tomato seeds to tomato juice served to visitors, from cow to cheese and sour milk or from lamb to woolen socks. Emphasize where your products can be used.

Choose three to five things that you will specifically introduce during your presentation. What would you like your guests to learn at the end of the presentation? Whenever possible, try to make the presentation interactive (to involve the guests, ask them for their opinion or similar experiences). For example, you represent your apple orchard. First you show, if you have, the different ages of the trees. Explain what you do in the apple orchard during the year. Describe how much fruit is per tree (to make the presentation more interesting, you can compare the weight of the picked apples with, for example, "the fruit weighs the same as two cars". Tell why you grow apples here (soil, climatic conditions...). Describe the processes that the product goes through before it reaches the customer. Explain also the problems you encounter, the diseases that attack apples, the price change in the market. But don't be boring to your visitors, they are here for recreation, relaxation and education.

Be prepared for the presence of children. Prepare for them the opportunity to touch seedlings, small domestic animals, etc. but take care of the safety of children and your products.

Think about how many people you can present to in the same time, and how to make presentation more effective. Try the presentation with other members of the household. Walk the path you plan to take visitors through the presentation.

Information about the presentation

If necessary, explain to the guests where the parking space for the mini-bus or other vehicles used by the visitors is located

Recommend how visitors should dress. For example, shoes should be closed, without high heels and comfortable. Recommend guests to bring hats or caps in the summer and warm clothes in the winter. Agree on a meal. Will you be hosting a meal at your place? If there is a need to organize a picnic meal, do you have a well-equipped place for it?

Instructions to be given to visitors before the start of the presentation

Introduce yourself and politely set the rules of conduct during the presentation. Children should be advised that: they should not touch the stones, they should not move away from the group, they should listen carefully and raise their hand when they want to ask something.

Prepare visitors for common features of a farm such as: unpleasant smells, insects and flies or dust. Of course, as much as possible, try to reduce these negative characteristics.

Conducting a presentation

Walk at a pace that is appropriate for the size of the group and the age of the visitors. Children can be encouraged to repeat a few new words that you have previously explained to them.

Only answer questions you know the answer to and limit your comments to your household.

The final part of the presentation

Allow time for questions.

You can finish the presentation with information about how and where they can buy or order your products.

Escort the group to the car or mini-bus, thanking them for their visit. Encourage them to come again.

APPEARANCE OF THE STAFF

General		Jewelry		Appearance	
preferably	undesirable	preferably	undesirable	preferably	undesirable
smile	chewing gum	maximum one earring per ear	glittering jewelry	clean and tidy hair	hair covers the face
hygiene and checking the	smoking	discreet earrings up to 3 cm long	large sports watches	long tied hair, rubber band black or silver	hair over shoulders

appearance of the teeth					
fresh smell and cleanliness	unpleasant body odor	one ring or wedding ring	long earrings	minimal make-up: blush, mascara, lipstick	greasy, wet and with lots of gel
perfume with light notes	strong parfums	one necklace	visible tattoos	well-groomed, preserved and polished nails	offensive hairstyle
			rings on thumb and forefinger		without makeup
			textile or rubber collars		shiny face
					too much makeup
					glitter
					dirty or bitten nails

TIPS FOR WRITING PROMOTIONAL TEXTS

When presenting your work (writing text for internet presentations, brochures...) what can you state as your strengths?

- A description that distinguishes your product or service from other attractions (e.g. restaurant on an organic farm, accommodation on an animal farm...)
- How long have you been working at this job (e.g. a family tradition of wine production spanning over a century...)
- Successful people that are involved in your work (e.g. the winner of the fish soup preparation competition will prepare for you, the winner of the beauty contest will meet you...)
- Your location (e.g. in the heart of the National Park, 15 minutes from the banks of the river, in the city center...)
- Size (e.g. on 8 hectares of forest complex)
- Benefits from your products or services (e.g. feel the magic of the mountain, fulfillment of childhood dreams)
- Services (active vacation for young people, special attention for the elderly)
- Your price (e.g. affordable family adventure)
- Your reputation (e.g. the winery has won awards at fairs abroad)
- Your offer is different (escape from everyday life, unique vacation...)

EXERCISE

- Write a short promotional text for your business
- Write a promotional text for one of your tourism products
- Write a promotional post for one of the social networks and publish it immediately

6. HOW TO DEVELOP A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

And finally, here are some practical tips to help you work successfully and sustainably.

11 steps to grow your business

Here are 11 steps that will help the growth of your business - your rural tourism.

You should go through these 11 steps in every couple of years:

1. Carefully record all your resources.
2. Get informed. Participate in presentations, promotions, conferences and workshops, talk to others involved in rural tourism nearby. Explore what's available online.
3. Find out what do the others do in rural tourism. Talk to neighbors and other entrepreneurs about their businesses. Visit them. Look at what the people do in neighboring countries.
4. Consult potential customers - tourists. Ask relatives, friends and neighbors about products or services that you plan to provide. Are they interested? Are they willing to pay the prices you have planned? What are they looking for?
5. Research the market, your competitors and potential collaborators. Explore what's available online.
6. Network. Join associations, clusters, clubs... You are stronger together.
7. Study. Contact organizations for business support: regional development agencies, chamber of commerce, local action group, local tourism organization, etc. Go to trainings and workshops. Follow online courses.
8. Get insured. Insure not only property, but also everything else that can cause problems in your business.
9. Create a business and marketing plan. Write them down!
10. Start small and stay frugal in the beginning!
11. Learn from your experience, adapt and expand only when you know that your new business in rural tourism meets the goals you set from the beginning.

Golden tips for success in rural tourism

You have started walking your 11 steps, from the first step and recording the resources, then the second step where you get informed and so on. Always keep in mind these golden tips for success in rural tourism:

- **Choose something you like to do** - Most people start a new business to earn more money. Your genuine enthusiasm for your work is part of what makes you unique. If you are not doing something you love, you will hardly have enough energy and motivation.
- **Estimate time and knowledge** - Carefully analyze and assess whether you have enough knowledge and skills for this job. Calculate well how much time you will need to devote to this work and assess whether you have enough of it. This applies both to you and to everyone else who works with you

- **Get off to a successful start** - A good start is very important. Do not rush to start work. Do not move until you are fully prepared. You can only make a first impression once. This also applies to any new tourism product you introduce.
- **Ensure quality** - Offer a high-quality product or service. Direct sellers often combine high quality with some unique feature to differentiate their products/services. A great experience or quality product is more important for attracting consumers than a low price.
- **Start small and grow slowly** - Starting small usually means less of your own involvement and less money invested in order to make mistakes less expensive. Remember, small operations are easier to manage.
- **Keep good records (production, financial, marketing...)** - Trying to manage a business without good information is like trying to find an address without a map. Good information and records are essential to analyze whether or not you are meeting your goals and to understand why your goals are being met or not.
- **Do targeted promotion** - Promotion for the sake of promotion serves no purpose. Precisely define who you want to contact, in what way and through which communication channels. Define a realistic budget for promotion.
- **Safety first** - Do everything necessary to ensure that both you and your guests are completely safe from any unforeseen events at all times.
- **Provide more than just a tourism product** - Successful ones always offer more than a product or service. They provide experience, emotions, interactions...
- **Cooperate** - Partnerships can help you reach new guests or even keep old ones.
- **Be informed** - You need to be informed about every aspect of your business, consumer preferences, competition, finances, etc.
- **Plan for the future** - Planning is essential for success. In planning, be realistic in terms of goals, price, costs, time, etc. Be flexible and understand that even the best plans can go wrong and things change.
- **Evaluate continuously** - Things are always changing. You must constantly monitor and evaluate what is happening around you. It's impossible to know if you're achieving your goals without taking the time to evaluate.
- **Be persistent** - It takes a lot of persistence just to figure out how to make a travel product and maybe more time to market it. Defining the target group and how you will address them also takes time. So be persistent and persevere. Ideas take a long time to become reality.
- **Make your work a pleasure!**

Sustainable business

Your business needs to be sustainable. Sustainable business is much more than just taking care of the environment. Sustainable business also means that you need to ensure that your business model and all business activities are resilient enough to thrive in the long run. Being a sustainable also means that you should take responsibility for all the impacts of your business and do your best to mitigate any negative impacts. A sustainable business can also improve your reputation and marketing, as well as increase sales and profits.

Tourists, like all other consumers, are increasingly influenced by the impact of their purchasing power on society, and therefore on health and the planet. Like all other consumers, tourists are more likely to "buy" from those who operate according to their value system. It is estimated that 2/3 of people are willing to pay more for sustainable services or products, and that percentage rises to 3/4 when we focus on millennials (born from 1981 to 1996), who currently have the highest purchasing power. Younger generations (who are even more concerned about sustainable consumption) will continue to drive this demand as their purchasing power increases with age.

How to do business sustainably?

Sustainability is an extremely broad term, but in its simplest sense it focuses on creating positive impact on environment for long-term.

Here are some suggestions to help you create a sustainable business:

- Reduce environmental impact –from reuse and recycling, switching to LEDs, reducing plastic use, reducing CO₂ emissions, introducing energy-efficient appliances, to adopting a circular business model.
- Ensure a sustainable supply chain – once you understand what it takes to run a sustainable business, you can ensure that your suppliers also contribute (or support them to adapt).
- Involve the people you work with – embed your goals into the culture of your rural tourism. Explain to employees, relatives, colleagues and those who help you why sustainable business is important and beneficial for everyone, set goals, collaborate on ideas
- Support the people you work with – develop a positive culture, invest in the development of employees and others who work with you, pay employees and your supply chain fairly, be transparent in your communications, hire locally where possible to improve your community, offer incentives and rewards for excellent work.
- Introduce new technologies – technology can greatly benefit your business by providing data that you can learn from, helping to minimize inefficiencies, understand finances, improve relationships with tourists and suppliers and react to trends much faster than your traditional competitors. It can also help you access new markets.
- Prepare for bad times - diversify your offer, expand your customer base, understand your competitors and stay one step ahead, have a plan B, keep up with trends
- Enable innovation - enabling collaboration and exchange of ideas in your business will empower everyone to think "outside the box", to create and share ideas, test them, put them into practice and help your rural tourism grow. A sustainable business must be able to adapt quickly, which is not possible if innovation is stifled.
- Give back to the community - donate your products or a percentage of your profits to a local charity, organize a charity event, allow your staff to volunteer for a few hours somewhere or be a mentor to someone. Involve the people you work with in deciding how and where to give back to the community.

USEFUL TOOLS

THE FIRST IMPRESSION

Description	Yes	No	To be improved
Easy to find your household			
Signposts at key intersections clearly direct visitors to the location?			
Household marked on Google Maps and/or other navigation system?			
Upon arrival			
Is there a well-placed household sign?			
Is it easy to find the entrance?			
Is there good visibility for safe entry and exit?			
Is there a logical traffic flow?			
Parking lot			
Is it easy to figure out where to park?			
Are there signs directing you to the parking area?			
Are there barriers that define the parking space?			
Is it easy to park once you find a parking lot?			
Are the parking spaces marked?			
Is there enough room to slide in/out?			
Paths			
Relatively flat?			
No holes?			
No mud?			
No dust?			
Paved for easy walking?			
Open space			
Mowed lawn			
Beautifully landscaped area			
Attractive flower arrangements			
Can vintage farm equipment be seen?			
Is there seating - picnic tables/pavilions/benches?			
Is there a designated area for children?			
Are there signs with instructions/information?			
Is area clean of trash?			
Are tripping hazards eliminated?			
Are farm equipment, fuel and chemicals out of reach of guests?			
Is there soap/water, antiseptic lotion for visitors?			
WiFi available			

STAFF

Check out some employee characteristics in the following list:

Description	Yes	No	To be improved
The appearance of the staff is neat and clean			
Staff wears a uniform or name tag			
Staff greets guests			
Helpful, kind, cheerful, professional,			
Well informed about the tourist household			
Staff is not overbearing			
Asks guests where you are from, how you heard about us, etc.			
Know about tourism in the area, gives suggestions and instructions			

OFFER

In the following table, list what a tourist can see, do or buy in your place:

What can a tourist see here?	Anytime	Only upon prior notice
What can tourists do here?	Anytime	Only upon prior notice
What can a tourist buy here?	Anytime	Only upon prior notice