

THE MAIN PROBLEMS OF AGRO-TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN AND THE NEED FOR REFORMS

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Abstract. *In this article, the standards and regulations used in the field of agrotourism as a specific field of the tourism industry, the standards and regulations applicable in the field of hotel and recreation business in Uzbekistan, the activities of entrepreneurs who want to engage in small family hotel business in rural areas, and the necessary conditions for the successful development of the field of agrotourism are considered.*

Keywords: *agrotourism, hotel, industry, standard, business, innovation, status.*

Introduction. In recent years, agrotourism has been recognized as one of the most promising areas of the tourism industry. The direction of agrotourism is very well developed in Europe. Targeted work on the development of this sector is also being carried out in Uzbekistan. The main goal of developing this type of tourism is to strengthen the socio-economic status of villages. The rapid development of agrotourism is associated with the increased demand for this type of recreation by foreign tourists and local residents. Studies show that a large number of city dwellers increasingly prefer to spend their holidays in the countryside. The development of agrotourism creates new jobs in agriculture, increases the cultural and intellectual level of the population, and also helps to restore and develop national crafts, customs, and rituals. However, the ongoing work is not enough to reveal the potential of the agrotourism sector. This field is waiting for innovative steps and also has a number of problems waiting to be solved.

Agrotourism is a branch of the tourism industry that directs the use of natural, cultural, historical and other resources of rural areas and their specific features to create a comprehensive tourist product. This includes tourist accommodations located in villages or small towns without industrial and high-rise buildings.

Although agrotourism is recognized as a new direction in the field of tourism, it has not been around for several decades. In Europe, the country of Austria is shown as the homeland of agrotourism. The reason for this is the developed agriculture and the scenic Alpine system. Agrotourism began to develop in Europe almost 200 years ago. At that time, the 1st association of agrotourism was formed in France. In the 50s of the 20th century, the economic, political and social potential of this direction began to be clarified in France [3]. Today, in Europe, agrotourism is considered as a factor of rural development, preservation of folk traditions, development of rural infrastructure and employment of rural population.

The land of Uzbekistan, as a land where ancient civilizations and cultures were born and developed, has a huge tourist potential, and in terms of its attractiveness, it is no less than the best tourist destinations in the world. The direction of agrotourism also has great potential as a promising direction of the tourism industry.

Research methodology. Systematic approach, abstract-logical thinking, grouping, comparison, factor analysis, selective observation methods were used in the research process.

Analysis and results. The villages of the land of Uzbekistan with their own traditions, various holidays, folklore, favorable climate and natural conditions create a basis for the

development of agrotourism. In this regard, the first steps are being taken based on the targeted plan.

According to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures for the further development of the tourism sector in the Republic of Uzbekistan", the State Committee for Tourism Development has started to form a list of citizen assemblies (towns, villages, villages) with tourism potential since 2019. If no less than 20 family guest houses are created in the areas of citizens' gatherings and at least 5 different types of services are provided for tourists (except accommodation and/or food services), they are given the status of "tourist neighborhood", "tourist village" or "tourist farm". Through this status, they can enjoy several privileges [4].

In 2019, the "Anor" international agrotourism festival was held in the village of Varganza, Kitab district, Kashkadarya region [9]. As part of this festival, Varganza was awarded the status of the 1st agrotourism village. It is known that this village is famous for its delicious pomegranates. That is the uniqueness of the territory. A number of interesting events related to the pomegranate fruit were held within the festival. Also, in Uzbekistan, agrotourism is relatively developed in Jizzakh and Navoi regions, on the northern slopes of the Nurota mountain range. Guest houses were established in villages such as Eskiforish, Ukhum and Khayot [3].

Despite the targeted systematic work being carried out, there are several problems waiting to be solved that hinder the development of agrotourism in the conditions of Uzbekistan. Below are some of these problems and suggestions and recommendations for their solutions:

-Currently, a clear policy on the development of agrotourism in Uzbekistan has not been formulated, and regulatory legal documents related to the development of the sector have not been adopted.

The concepts of "agritourism" and "rural tourism" have not yet been defined in the state normative legal documents regulating activities in the field of tourism and in the documents of the state program in the field of tourism.

Standards and regulations applied in the field of agrotourism as a specific field of the tourism industry have not been developed. It should be noted that the standards and regulations in force in Uzbekistan in the field of hotel and recreation business do not fully correspond to the activities of entrepreneurs who want to engage in small family hotel business in rural areas.

The development of the appropriate regulatory and legal framework for agrotourism activities is a necessary condition for the successful development of this sector of the tourism industry in Uzbekistan.

The socio-economic importance of agrotourism is not fully understood.

Despite the large-scale work being done, agrotourism is not considered as a global sector of the economy, but as a branch of tourism. As of July 1, 2021, the number of rural residents in Uzbekistan is 17,195,400 [5]. This means 49.3% of the total population. Agrotourism can become an effective tool for the development of rural areas. Ensuring economic and demographic stability in rural areas is an important factor in the prospective development of these areas. It should be noted that in this situation, the tasks of the state will be to determine the priorities for the development of agrotourism, to focus on the most valuable resources of the country, and to support growth points. It is also important to thoroughly study the market situation and identify opportunities and risks that businesses may face.

Failure to create an economic mechanism to support investors investing in the field of agrotourism;

Recognizing the high socio-economic importance of agrotourism development in rural life, it is necessary to create a mechanism for subsidizing investors in this field. Granting these funds with non-refundable privilege creates an opportunity for the investor to cover part of the spent funds and ensures the investment attractiveness of the sector. In this case, the state assumes a certain amount of the investors' risk. The implementation of subsidies will significantly increase the volume of investments in the field of agrotourism. As a result of the development of the agrotourism complex, these subsidies return to the state budget in the form of taxes.

Existence of personnel problems in the field of agrotourism;

Another problem that needs to be solved is the lack of qualified personnel for the organization and management of agrotourism activities. The emphasis of higher educational institutions on theoretical knowledge is the cause of insufficient formation of practical knowledge and skills in students. There are also the following problems in the personnel training system for such an external field:

Lack of qualified teaching staff with sufficient experience in the field of agrotourism;

Educational and methodological support in the educational process does not fully meet the real needs of the tourism sector;

There is a significant gap between the needs of industry and the offerings provided by educational institutions;

Absence of a system for monitoring the personnel needs of tourism and other business objects related to it in the training of specialists based on industry orders;

that the practical skills and qualifications formed in the course of education of graduates are not compatible with the academic level provided by higher education;

There is a demand for agrotourism graduates in the labor market, and at the same time, there is a lack of qualified personnel in the field of agrotourism. This situation is related to the fact that graduates do not have enough practical skills for certain training requirements;

In the field of agrotourism lack of interaction between operating enterprises and higher education institutions on the issues of organizing and conducting training, production and pre-diploma internships on the basis of these enterprises. This does not allow graduates to act in real competitive conditions and apply existing theoretical knowledge;

Also, the activity of specialized secondary educational institutions that train personnel for this field is not satisfactory. It must be admitted that nowadays in Uzbekistan there are only a handful of enterprises that are engaged in agrotourism activities and can offer jobs to highly qualified personnel. The solution to this problem can be found in the system of training qualified personnel for agrotourism complexes and the increase in the number of entrepreneurs engaged in this activity. If the agrotourism complexes are considered as practice bases for students, the trained qualified personnel will serve for the development of agrotourism. Within this activity, there is a dual need.

Another solution to the problems related to the personnel training system is the development of joint educational programs by higher educational institutions based on cooperation. Agrotourism activity is such a direction that requires personnel who have knowledge not only in the field of tourism, but also in the field of agriculture. For this reason, it is important to cooperate with training centers for the tourism sector and training centers for the agriculture sector.

The development of agrotourism in the conditions of Uzbekistan is at its starting points. Despite the existing real examples of the organization of agrotourism activities, the system of measures for the development of agrotourism in Uzbekistan has not been clearly formed. It should also be noted that there is no legal framework for special regulation of agro-tourism activities. Also, the interest of investors in this area is very low or the investment attractiveness of the area is not sufficiently researched. However, it is inappropriate to interpret these cases as a lack of demand for the sector. As a result of the research, it can be easily stated that there is a huge unsatisfied hidden demand for recreation in rural areas among urban residents of Uzbekistan. These factors show that Agrotourism has great potential both as a business and as a means of regional development.

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