

## **AGRI-ECOTOURISM IN BELARUS: CURRENT PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS**

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Today, agri-ecotourism is one of the fastest growing areas of the country's tourism market and an excellent opportunity for residents of large cities and foreign tourists to get a good rest in ecologically clean corners of our Republic, as well as to enjoy its picturesque landscapes.

Forest occupies 8.3 million hectares or 40 % of the territory of the republic. The average age of the forests is 56 years. In the forest fund there are more than 11 thousand lakes, 20 thousand rivers and streams, numerous marshlands and dry meadows, protected areas, which form a favorable environment for health improvement and recreation [2].

Belarusian color is the main peculiarity of farm tourism estates which architecture reflects the national style. Its hosts create special cultural programs. Here you can hear local legends and authentic songs, master Belarusian dances and take part in old folk rites, for example, sing Christmas carols and celebrate Shrovetide or Kupalle. You can even arrange a wedding which will be held according to Belarusian traditions.

One of the forms of tourism is themed festivals organized on the basis of hunting complexes of forestry enterprises. Some of these events have acquired an international format. For example, the Hrodna forestry enterprise and the Hrodna State Production Forestry Association are organizing the festival "Revival of hunting traditions under the patronage of St. Hubert" on the territory of the Augustow Canal.

In some cases, forestry enterprises offer tourists other entertainment and activities. Zhlobin, Uzda, and Kapylsk forestry enterprises organized the residences of Father Frost for children during the New Year holidays. A distinctive feature of the Uzda forestry enterprise was the organization of the Kupalye holiday on the basis of its hunting complex.

Agro- and eco-tourism in Belarus is becoming increasingly popular with tourists. These days owners of farm tourism estates, farmers, craftsmen and representatives of tourism business form clusters and offer a wide range of services to their guests. They also offer unique programs and present their own brands [3].

Agritourism management has obvious advantages. First of all, the project of agritourism has been counted on revival of the village. Now the concept “agroland” loses the initial meaning. The thing is that the project of rural tourism became a favorable cover for conducting hotel and restaurant business. This activity supposed to be liable by much bigger taxation than agrolands. The sizes and profits of such complexes many times exceed profit of agrolands. Also there is a question of how many people the agroland can accept. The greatest income to owners of agrolands is brought by holding mass actions (weddings, entertainment programs for children, etc.). Yet, it is difficult to place all guests in ten rooms. The solution of these problems is proposed by Valeria Klitsunova – the head of BPA “Rest in the Village” [1].

To understand agritourism management in Belarus is necessary to carry out a serious analysis of all industry in order to divide agrolands into some categories. It depends on profitability, specific and direction of activity. And then it is necessary to approve the corresponding taxation. It will help to reveal what of them are real agrolands and what are activities of individual entrepreneurs. The analysis of reaction of the undertakes owning travel agencies, hotels, restaurants, etc. has shown that they complain about the fact of paying a taxation as individual entrepreneurs while the subjects owning the similar enterprises registered as agrolands pay a many times smaller taxation. Honest owners of agrolands have also suffered from this situation. There is an economic benefit for the state: identification among subjects of agritourism owners of hotel and restaurant complexes and transformation them in individual businesses can increase tax collecting.

Despite the absence in the Belarusian legislation of a precise definition of “ecotourism” and system statistics for this sector, we will also try to assess its development. In our research, we will be guided by the definition of the International Ecotourism Society (TIES, 2015). Thus, by ecotourism in Belarus, we mean services not related to the organization of hunting and fishing, provided by the administrations of specially protected natural areas, forestry enterprises, agro-estates and other entities of tourist activity. In recent years, such forms of ecotourism as safari travel, combining educational recreation and active entertainment, as well as tours along eco-trails with walking and cycling, rafting on rivers on boats and rafts, bird watching, photo hunting have been developed in Belarus.

From our point of view, ecotourism cannot be limited only by the boundaries of protected natural territories. Although it is generally accepted that these territories can play a key role in the development of the tourism sector. Moreover, it should be understood that tourism is a type of economic activity that carries a recreational load on natural ecosystems. In this regard, the development of tourism in protected areas should be scientifically substantiated and monitored as much as possible corresponding to the concept of “ecotourism” to ensure the preservation of the environment.

The Belarusian authorities have identified a list of 39 perspective protected natural areas for tourism development. Among them are 4 national parks and 35 reserves of republican significance. The National Strategy for the Development of the System of Specially Protected Natural Areas is in force until January 1, 2030.6 To manage the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve, national parks and some other reserves, state environmental institutions (SEIs) have been created to promote the development of sustainable ecotourism. As of August 2020, 25 SEIs managed 28 reserves of republican significance and 5 SEIs managed the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve and national parks. In these protected areas, 209 tourist routes and ecological trails are organized. Including in the studied region of Polesie, there are tourist routes and trails in the Pripyatsky National Park and in 10 wildlife reserves (“Pribuzhskoe Polesie”, “Vygonoshchanskoe”, “Zvanets”, “Srednaya Pripyat”, “Luninsky”, “Olmanskiе swamps”, “Prostyr”, “Sporovsky”, “Vydritsa”, “Dnepro-Sozhsky”).

When assessing the potential of the tourism industry, it is necessary to take into account a certain paradox. In Belarus, the conditions for the development of ecotourism based on the forest fund are worse in those areas where the percentage of forest cover is the highest. This also applies to Polesie, where a number of areas with high forest cover (50 % and more) have a reduced recreational potential due to high waterlogging and inaccessibility [4].

In the future, the network of specially protected natural areas in Polesie is likely to expand, and its potential to provide ecotourism services will also increase. A significant part of the promising territories, included in the national ecological network, is concentrated along the Pripyat River and its tributaries.

To sum up, Belarus has great potential for developing agro-ecotourism and bringing it to the forefront, but the available resources are still not sufficiently developed in the tourism sector. In our opinion, for the development of ecotourism it is necessary to open national nature reserves for tourists and establish strict control over the preservation of the reserves. It should be noted that regions with high forest cover are poorly utilized for tourism purposes. Therefore, in addition to promoting traditional ways of forest recreation, we offer the use of elements of outdoor activities with the use of animation, such as rope town, cross-country, buggy riding, et cetera.

In conclusion, we note that domestic tourism in our country is not sufficiently well advertised, so Belarusians prefer abroad to their homeland.

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### **GREEN ECONOMY: NECESSITY, TREND OR POSSIBILITY**

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1. The aim of the research is by means of analysis define the role of green economy in the society.

2. The purpose of the research is to influence the readership on the importance of green economy.

3. Green economy is the system of economic activities related to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services that results in improved human well-being over the long term, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.

4. There are three main stages in the history of green economy: The concept of Green Economy is not an entirely new concept. It was first mooted in a pioneering 1989 report for the Government of the United Kingdom by the London Environmental Economics Centre (LEEC) in a publication “Blueprint for a Sustainable Economy” authored by David Pearce, Anil Markandya and Ed Barbier. The report was commissioned to advise the UK Government if there was a consensus definition to the term “sustainable development”. Apart from in the title of the report, there is no further reference to green economy and it appears that the term was used as an afterthought by the authors. In 1991 and 1994 the authors released sequels to the first report. At that time the concept didn’t get wide recognition.

With the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2007 and the failure of most countries to move onto a sustainable development path, it has become evidently clear that the current development model is not yielding the desired outcomes on all fronts: economic, social, and environmental. That when the “Green economy” came into play. In 2008, the term was revived in the context of discussions on the policy response to multiple global crises. Since October 2008, the United Nations