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RURAL TOURISM AND NON-AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN RURAL AREAS IN POLAND

Abstract

Rural tourism is increasingly incorporated in strategies of development of rural areas in Poland. This paper presents a characterization of the development of rural tourism in the context of other types of non-agricultural activities in the countryside. The socio-economic status of rural areas and the respective needs of the inhabitants of the country were indicated. The basic need is searching for additional incomes for households. Rural tourism represents an example of supplementation of budgets of agricultural households and takes the third place among other types of non-agricultural entrepreneurship (following services for agricultural farms and forestry, services for rural population and retail sales). These activities are performed by families and mainly provided by small-sized agricultural farms.

This paper points to the regions where, due to the advantageous tourism potential, this type of economic activity is developing most dynamically.

The paper was based on the analysis of secondary source materials, with the main emphasis on the related literature, statistical materials and reports from national-scale empirical surveys devoted to the subject discussed.

Keywords: rural tourism, non-agricultural activities, the country

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Introduction

Development of rural areas in Poland is determined not only by the agriculture but also by other forms of non-agricultural business activity. The focus of Rural Development Programmes for the years 2007–2013 and 2014–2020 is on implementation of the strategy of multifunctional development of the countryside and agriculture. This means that the inhabitants of rural areas who want to increase the incomes in their households, including farmers, should focus on development of different forms of non-agricultural entrepreneurship. One of these forms of entrepreneurship is tourist, sport and relax services that accompany rural tourism.

The aim of this paper is to present the development of services connected with rural tourism in the context of other forms of agricultural activity. The paper also emphasizes socio-economic status of rural areas and the respective needs of the inhabitants of rural areas. One of the basic needs of the people leaving in rural areas is improvement in incomes earned. This need can be met by e.g. development of tourist services that accompany rural tourism, including agritourism.

The basis for writing the paper was analysis of secondary source materials, i.e. the literature, statistical materials and the reports from national-scale empirical surveys in Poland containing the results concerning the problem discussed.

1. Socio-economic aspects of rural areas

Rural areas in Poland account for 93.1% of its surface, with 39.2% of population (15.1 million people). Polish countryside is characterized by a distributed network of locations, with 52,000 countryside locations, including 43,000 villages. Among 15.6 million working people in total in Poland, 38.7% worked in the countryside. The number of people working in the agricultural sector in general reached nearly 2 million, which accounts for 12.9% of the employed. Among those working in individual agricultural farms, ca. 98% are people working in their family agricultural farms, with remaining 2% being hired labour, which was relatively high in the group of farms with the surface area of 50 ha or bigger. The people working in Polish agriculture accounted for ca. 20% of the total of people employed in the EU agriculture.

The biggest problem in Polish agriculture is fragmentation of agricultural farms and unfavourable layout of the land used, which limits the effectiveness of the costs of production and competitive position of the farms. Around 50% of the agricultural farms that were present in 2010 were those with the surface area of up to 5 ha. Small farms with area of up to 5 ha were predominant in the Lesser Poland, Subcarpathian and Świętokrzyskie Voivodeships, whereas the biggest percentage of farms with the area of over 100 ha was in the West Pomeranian, Warmian-Masurian and Pomeranian Voivodeships. A substantial number of farms with area of 50 to 100 ha (thus the farms with high production potential) were present in Lubusz, Opole, Lower Silesian, Kuyavian-Pomeranian and Greater Poland Voivodeships.

There were 4.4 million (of 13.6 in total) of households in rural areas in Poland in 2011. The most of the households were connected with agricultural farms. Average number of people living in the household farms in the country was 3.40, compared to 2.82 in Poland in general.

The unemployment rate in 2011 in the country was 14.0% (compared to 12.4% in cities). Among the unemployed, 40% were inhabitants of rural areas. High level was also observed in the unemployment rate among young people (up to 25 years of age). The rate of increase in the unemployment rate in the countryside was higher among the population that worked in their agricultural farms compared to the non-agricultural population.¹ The inhabitants of the country, including farmers, are exposed to the highest degree of poverty, similar to pensioners and people who subsist on non-income sources (e.g. provided by social assistance institutions).

In 2006–2012, the percentage of the people threatened with extreme poverty and living in the countryside was at the level of 2 to 3 times higher than in the cities, whereas this number among farmers was 3 to 5 times higher than those who run their own businesses.

The most serious barriers in development of rural areas include the condition of technical and functional infrastructure as well as social infrastructure.² Considering technical and functional infrastructure, the highly unsatisfactory status is observed in local transport infrastructure and public communication. Almost 50% of road surface in the country is taken by unpaved roads, with

¹ *Narodowy Spis Powszechny Ludności i Mieszkań 2011*, GUS, Warszawa 2012.

² J. Bański, *Geografia polskiej wsi*, PWE, Warszawa 2008, p. 164.

the remaining part that requires modernization and general renovation. Many gminas (gminas are principal units of territorial division in Poland) are located outside the railway networks, including those liquidated. Sanitary infrastructure also does not provide the suitable quality of living to the inhabitants of these areas.

The state of social infrastructure is highly unsatisfactory, with its main goal being meeting social, educational, cultural, health and safety needs in rural areas. This infrastructure shows serious underinvestment and maladjustment to the present needs. Insufficient development concerns in particular health service centres as well as cultural, recreational, tourist and educational centres.

2. Basic needs in rural areas

Socio-economic status in rural areas in Poland poses a serious risk of the increase in the level of poverty and a risk of deepening of the developmental differences between the voivodeships and in individual voivodeships between the city and the countryside. Therefore, it generates the problems that necessitate solutions and the needs to be met. One of the basic needs in rural areas in Poland is the improvement in incomes in small farms. Small agricultural farms, with low production potential, can either be transformed or develop their agricultural production as well as diversify the products offered in the field of non-agricultural activities. All these directions require adequate investments.

Another need is to create the opportunities for employment outside the agriculture without the necessity of changing the place of residence. The highest employment rate (including hidden unemployment), low share of non-agricultural activities in the structure of employment in rural areas, lower (compared to cities) level of incomes of the inhabitants of rural areas and higher percentage of people at risk of poverty point to the need for supporting the initiatives that would help people in the countryside find jobs without the necessity of leaving their own place of residence.³ Therefore, it is necessary to support the development of non-agricultural entrepreneurship, create workplaces and facilitate telework.

³ J. Wilkin, *Polska wieś i rolnictwo w obliczu wielkiej szansy*, in: *Wymiary życia społecznego. Polska na przełomie XX i XXI wieku*, M. Marody (ed.), Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2007, p. 161.

Therefore, the need arises for activation of inhabitants of rural areas and utilization of endogenous potential for local development. It is also necessary to utilize the cultural and tourist potential of rural areas and to stimulate local communities in order to accelerate local economic growth and increase the share of incomes earned by the inhabitants of rural areas on non-agricultural activities.⁴

3. Rural tourism and agritourism as an example of non-agricultural activities in the country

Considering the problems in the country and the respective needs, the European Union create the Rural Development Programme for 2007–2013 and the Rural Development Programme for 2014–2020. The first and the second programmes have implemented the EU's policies that took into consideration the strategy of multifunctional development of rural areas. The aim of this strategy is in particular to ensure proper social and economic conditions of living of rural population, creation of alternative sources of incomes for those living in the country, stabilization of agricultural incomes, modernization of agricultural farms, and ensuring sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas.⁵

The multifunctional development of rural areas in Poland is determined by natural, ecological, economic, financial, and socio-cultural potential of these areas. More specifically, this means initiatives taken or developed by farmers, household members and spouses of farmers, non-agricultural activities or the activities connected with agriculture in order to create non-agricultural sources of incomes and promote employment apart from agriculture in rural areas.

The help within the framework of the Rural Development Programmes is provided for investments connected with starting or development of activities in terms of: services for agricultural farms or forestry; services for population; wholesale and retail sale; craftsmanship and handicraft; construction and installation services; tourist services and services connected with sport, recreation and relax; transport services; communal services; processing of agricultural

⁴ J. Sikora, A. Wartecka-Ważyńska, *Wybrane uwarunkowania turystyki wiejskiej*, Bogucki Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Poznań 2013, p. 34.

⁵ W. Poczta, *Wspólna polityka rolna po 2013 roku – uzasadnienie, funkcje, kierunki rozwoju w kontekście interesu polskiego rolnictwa*, "Wieś i Rolnictwo" 2010, No. 3/2010, PAN IRWiR, Warszawa, p. 81.

goods or edible forest goods; warehousing or storage of goods; production of energy products made of biomass; accountancy; counselling or information services.

The beneficiaries of these activities include people insured based on the Act of December 20, 1996 on social insurance of farmers as farmers, spouses of farmers or household goods members. The examinations carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development on implementation of the Rural Development Programme for 2007–2013 concerning the activity No. 311 “Diversification into non-agricultural activities” within the axis III of this programme, focused on the quality of living in rural areas and differentiation of the economy, showed that the most of the initiatives (82%) are the projects implemented by farmers. Members of their families account for 18% of beneficiaries in total, with those with the status of a household member being 3%.⁶ Therefore, one of the preconditions for the support granted to a beneficiary was to start or develop non-agricultural activity, included into one of the 12 groups defined in the Rural Development Programmes 2007–2013. According to the report “Activity 311: Differentiation...”, these groups were aggregated into 5 groups of supported non-agricultural activities. Diagram 1 illustrates the structure of non-agricultural activities.

⁶ Activity 311 “Differentiation into non-agricultural activities” – information about the results of implementation in 2007–2009, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Warsaw, p. 8.

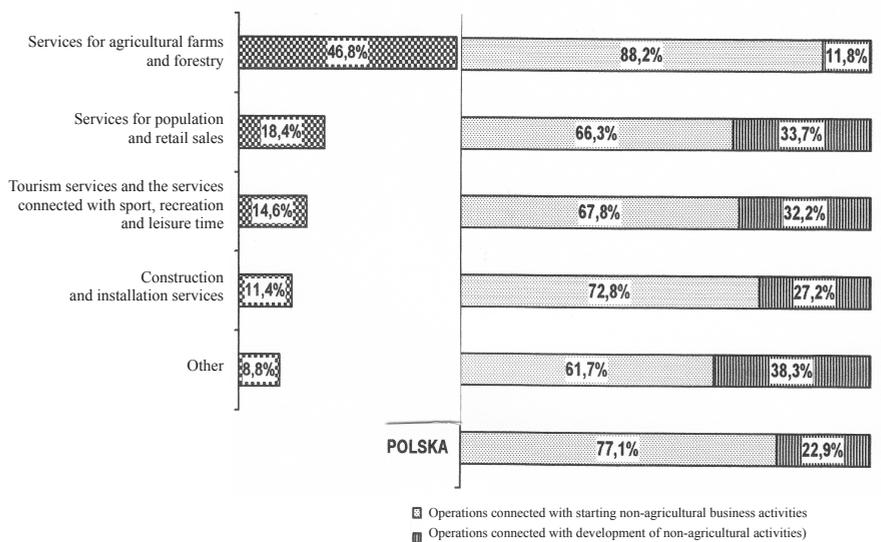


Diagram 1. Types of non-agricultural business activities, including tourism within the framework of the Rural Development Programme 2007–2013

Source: Activity 311 “Diversification into non-agricultural activities” – information about the results of implementation in 2007–2009, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Warsaw 2009, p. 11.

As results from the data presented in the Diagram 1, the activities in the areas of tourist services and the services connected with sport, recreation and leisure time accounts for ca. 15% of non-agricultural activities in rural areas. Comparison of the scope of these activities connected with starting and development of the business activities reveals nearly twice higher level of the operations from the first group (67.8%).

The survey carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development also analysed the type of non-agricultural activities depending on sex and social group of beneficiaries (Diagram 2).

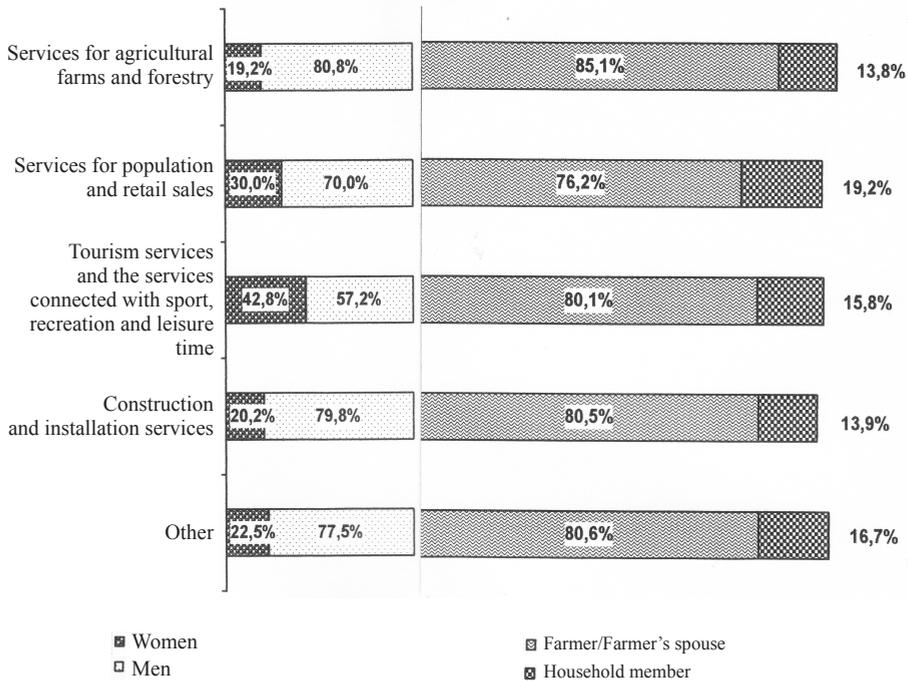


Diagram 2. Types of non-agricultural activities supported, including tourism activities with division into sex and social groups

Source: Activity 311 “Diversification into non-agricultural activities” – information about the results of implementation in 2007–2009, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Warsaw 2009, p. 12.

Analysis also concerned the type of non-agricultural activity depending on gender and the social group of beneficiary. It can be observed that 42.8% of tourism, recreation and other services (e.g. connected with sport and leisure time) are provided by women. They represent the most substantial group of beneficiaries among all the types of non-agricultural activities. Considering the role that a beneficiary plays in an agricultural farm, it can be found that, in terms of tourism services in the country, the percentage of people who performed a role of a manager of the agricultural farm was over 80.1%. Members of farmers’ families (spouse, household member) accounted for 16% of beneficiaries in tourism and recreation services.

The essential problem analysed in the study is the structure of directions of investments in non-agricultural activities, including tourism in rural areas in individual voivodeship. The respective data are presented in the Diagram 3.

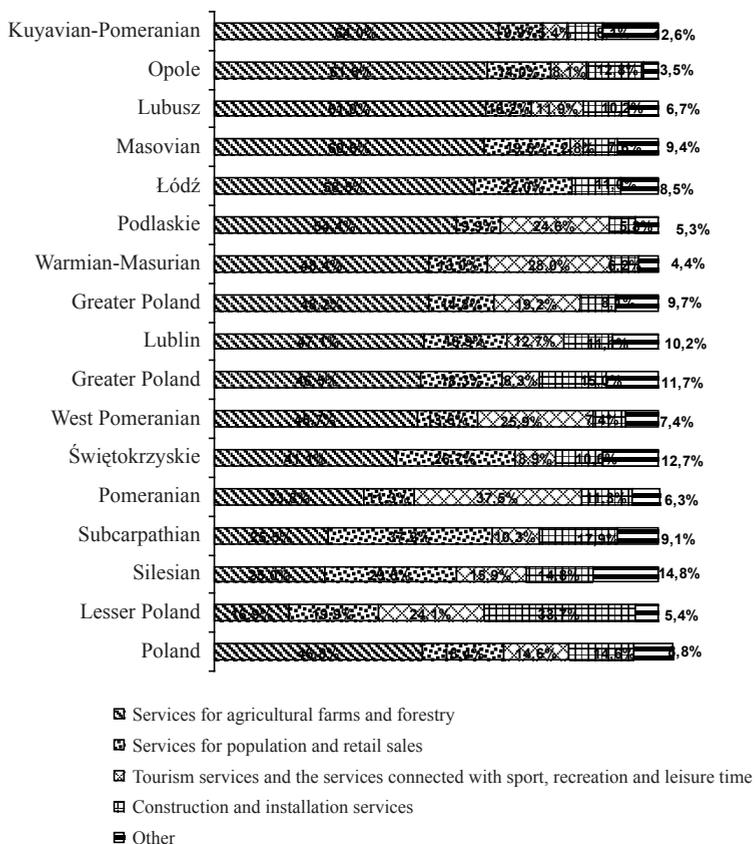


Diagram 3. Type of non-agricultural activities supported, including tourism (according to voivodeships)

Source: Activity 311 “Diversification into non-agricultural activities” – information about the results of implementation in 2007–2009, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Warsaw 2009, p. 12.

The data above show that tourism, recreation, sport and leisure time services in rural areas are best developed in Pomeranian (37.5%), Warmian-Masurian (28.0%) and West Pomeranian (25.9%) Voivodeships. The level in these voivodeships is substantially higher than the mean level in Poland (14.6%). These voivodeships are traditionally the locations of rural holidays, especially due to their structural and functional potential and the natural conditions present. The basic tourist potential of rural areas according to voivodeships

with respect for natural and cultural values, tourism management and economic and infrastructural conditions is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Tourist potential of rural areas according to voivodeships in Poland

Voivodeship	Index w (natural and cultural values)	Index z (tourist development)	Index e (economic and infrastructural conditions)	Typ
Lower Silesia	0.369	0.498	0.624	wCzBeA
Kuyavian-Pomeranian	0.363	0.250	0.368	wCzCeB
Lublin	0.343	0.309	0.036	wCzCeC
Lubusz	0.394	0.294	0.464	wBzCeA
Łódź	0.328	0.141	0.279	wCzCeB
Lesser Poland	0.685	0.987	0.450	wAzAeA
Masovian	0.440	0.174	0.378	wBzCeB
Opole	0.295	0.150	0.364	wCzCeB
Subcarpathian	0.659	0.625	0.275	wAzBeB
Podlaskie	0.449	0.874	0.021	wBzAeC
Pomeranian	0.474	0.955	0.535	wBzAeA
Silesian	0.369	0.355	0.549	wCzBeA
Świętokrzyskie	0.421	0.347	0.158	wBzBeC
Warmian-Masurian	0.468	0.932	0.175	wBzAeC
Greater Poland	0.405	0.208	0.524	wBzCeA
West Pomeranian	0.402	1.000	0.478	wBzAeA

A – the most beneficial conditions, B – average conditions, C – the least beneficial conditions

Source: *Turystyka wiejska, w tym agroturystyka, jako element zrównoważonego i wielofunkcyjnego rozwoju obszarów wiejskich. Raport końcowy*, Agrotec. Polska Sp. z o.o., PAN IGiPZ, Warsaw 2012, p. 50.

The data contained in the Table 1 confirm that the Lesser Poland Voivodeship has the highest tourist potential. All three indices (natural and cultural values – 0.685, tourist development – 0.987, and economic and infrastructural conditions – 0.450) have category A, i.e. the most beneficial conditions (wAzAeA). The investment activities oriented at tourism, recreation, sport and leisure time in the country are also implemented at a good level in this voivodeship (24.1%, Diagram 3). The Pomeranian Voivodeship (wBzAeA) and West Pomeranian Voivodeship (wBzAeA) have very advantageous conditions of tourism potential

in rural areas, conducive to development of tourism in the areas where the index of supporting tourism activities in the country is, 37.5% and 25.9%, respectively, Diagram 3). In conclusion, it can be concluded that the interest in investments and starting tourist activities in rural areas is consistent with present character of tourism potential in rural areas in individual voivodeships in Poland.

The data concerning the support for an additional non-agricultural activity i.e. rural tourism according to the size of agricultural farms seems to be interesting (Diagram 4). It turns out that tourist activity as an additional activity in the agricultural farm was the most often started by farmers working in smaller farms (up to 20 ha). In the farms with the surface area of over 20 ha, the interest in tourism and recreation services was decreasing. The opposite tendency was observed in the services for agricultural farms and forestry. These activities developed more intensively in bigger farms (Diagram 4).

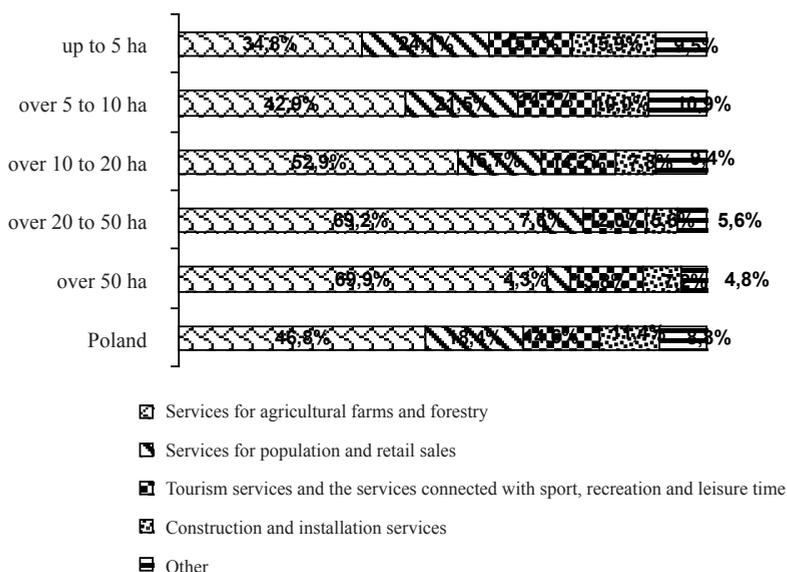


Diagram 4. Types of non-agricultural activities supported, including tourism activities divided according to the size of the agricultural farm

Source: Activity 311 "Diversification into non-agricultural activities" – information about the results of implementation in 2007–2009, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Warsaw 2009, p. 13.

Development of tourism services in small agricultural farms involves not only the necessity of searching for additional sources of incomes as they ceased to be self-sufficient. Supporting tourism activities in these activities is also affected by other factors. For example, by using (often out of the necessity) the low level of fertilizers and chemical means of protecting plants, the farms might offer foods that meet ecological criteria, although they do not have any formal ecological certifications⁷.

Conclusion

Socio-economic status of the Polish countryside, which manifests in e.g. fragmentation of agricultural farms, which are mainly oriented at meeting the current needs of families rather than the market, high unemployment and social poverty, points to the need for searching for incomes outside the agriculture. Development of rural tourism as an example of non-agricultural entrepreneurship is determined not only by the resources of natural and cultural potential of rural areas but first and foremost by the socio-economic needs of the inhabitants of the country. The substantial motivator for revival of non-agricultural entrepreneurship in rural areas is also the policy of the European Union contained in the strategy of multifunctional development of the country and agriculture.

The study shows that services connected with rural tourism account for 15% of non-agricultural activities in rural areas. The most developed services provided are those for rural and forestry farms (46.8%) and rural population, including, retail sales (18.4%). Tourism services are at the third place.

It is remarkable that, compared to other types of non-agricultural activities, tourism activities in the countryside are mainly performed by women (42.8%) with the help of farmer's spouse (80.1%). Therefore, it can be concluded that rural tourism is an activity that involves the families in agricultural farms.

As an additional activity in agricultural farms, rural tourism is most often started in smaller farms (up to 20 ha). In bigger farms, with their areas of over 20 ha, the interest in this type of entrepreneurship decreases.

⁷ J. Sikora, *Agroturystyka. Przedsiębiorczość na obszarach wiejskich*, Wydawnictwo C.H. Beck, Warszawa 2012, p. 215.

Services connected with rural tourism are most often developed in Pomeranian, West Pomeranian and Lesser Poland Voivodeships, i.e. in the voivodeships with substantial tourism potential in the form of natural and cultural values, tourism development and economic and infrastructural conditions.

Development of rural tourism is determined not only by objective conditions but also by subjective factors, inherent in awareness of farmers and inhabitants of the village, motivated in particular by supply-related determinants. There are substantial barriers that continue to be present in awareness and attitudes of the inhabitants of rural areas and limit the development of rural tourism. These difficulties have to be overcome to motivate people in the country, especially farmers, to open towards the needs of non-rural population.

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TURYSTYKA WIEJSKA W DZIAŁALNOŚCI POZAROLNICZEJ NA OBSZARACH WIEJSKICH W POLSCE

Streszczenie

Turystyka wiejska coraz szerzej wpisuje się w strategię wielofunkcyjnego rozwoju obszarów wiejskich w Polsce. W artykule przedstawiono charakterystykę stanu rozwoju turystyki wiejskiej w kontekście innych rodzajów działalności pozarolniczej na wsi. Wskazano na sytuację społeczno-ekonomiczną obszarów wiejskich i wynikające z niej potrzeby mieszkańców wsi. Podstawową potrzebą jest poszukiwanie dodatkowych dochodów w gospodarstwach domowych. Turystyka wiejska stanowi przykład uzupełniania budżetów gospodarstw rolnych i znajduje się na trzecim miejscu wśród innych rodzajów przedsiębiorczości pozarolniczej (po usługach dla gospodarstw rolnych i leśnictwa oraz usługach dla ludności wiejskiej i sprzedaży detalicznej). Jest to działalność rodzinna, w przeważającym zakresie świadczona przez mniejsze obszarowo gospodarstwa rolne.

W artykule wskazano na regiony, w których ze względu na sprzyjający potencjał turystyczny najszerzej rozwija się ta działalność gospodarcza.

Artykuł napisany został na podstawie analizy materiałów wtórnych, głównie literatury przedmiotu, materiałów statystycznych i raportów z ogólnopolskich badań empirycznych poświęconych omawianemu tematowi.

Słowa kluczowe: turystyka wiejska, działalność pozarolnicza, wieś