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## ORGANIC FARMING AS A KEY PILLAR OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT – RURAL TOURISM, AGRO-TOURISM AND ECO-TOURISM

*Organic production plays an important societal role, secures a market that responds to the demand for organic products and services and provides the public with products that contribute to the protection of the environment as well as to rural development. The issue of ecological tourism as a tool for socio-economic development in the region - raising the living standards of residents, has been dealt with in a study of ecosystem contexts as a chance for entrepreneurship in sustainable tourism. The aim of the contribution is to point out the urgency of solving the situation and clarifying the basic problems in the given issue, with the view of several domestic and foreign authors based on analysis, synthesis and deduction. The Rio + 20 Conference on Sustainable Development launched an inclusive intergovernmental process for the preparation of sustainable objectives in 2012 where one out of 17 targets also concerns the development of green tourism.*

**Keywords:** organic agriculture, sustainable tourism, rural tourism, agro-tourism, eco-tourism.

**Introduction.** Organic farming [2] is defined as "a balanced agro-ecosystem of a lasting nature, based primarily on local and renewable resources. Organic agriculture is based on a holistic understanding of the ecological, economic and social aspects of agricultural production." Whole nature is understood to be a unified whole, and it is the duty of man to direct agricultural production to become a harmonious part of nature. «Natural environment is one of the most recent, most problematic, most substantial problems. Civilization is standing on the crossroads, on one side with the consumer society, and on the other hand the deterioration of life conditions' quality» [1]. The main objectives of organic farming are to produce food in sufficient quantity with high nutritional value; not to use industrial fertilizers and pesticides; to exclude all possible forms of soil, water and air pollution caused by agricultural activity; improve and maintain long-term soil fertility, create conditions for all livestock species that comply with ethical principles and their natural needs; minimize losses through the use of a closed breeding and farming system; maximize local resources and raw materials, promote direct deliveries of organic farming products to the domestic market, create trust between producer and consumer, enable organic farmers and their families to be involved in social and economic development [3].

**Literature review.** As Mokrišová states "Environmental policy has recently become an inherent part of state direct regulation tools as well as managerial systems of many organizations "[6].

TEEB expert Alexander Müller for Agriculture and Nutrition and Head of Studies states that "agriculture is probably the top policy priority in today's global political agenda in view of the widespread effects on food security, employment, climate change, human health and serious damage to the environment. This study will be built on previous TEEB achievements by exploring these issues and the latest developments.

**Article purpose.** The aim of the study is to give an overall picture of agricultural and food systems. This study will provide a detailed view of their dependence on ecosystems and biodiversity, their impact on human and ecological wellbeing and health and the underutilized role of small farmers."

**Presentation of the main research data.** According to Šimková [12], sustainable development is understood as the balance between economic and social development on the one hand and environmental protection on the other. The sustainability system of tourism includes: economic activities; natural resources; infrastructure; technologies used in the agro-sector; the composition of competent bodies; education of competent subjects; social capital; cooperation between entrepreneurs, researchers, politicians and historical features of the country as well as local customs (traditions, festivals, crafts and the like).

The pan-European trend in tourism is to create conditions for sustainable travel products. Sustainability covers three target areas: environmental, economic and socio-cultural. The aim is to meet basic needs, to improve living standards for all, to enhance the protection and management of ecosystems and to create conditions for a safe and prosperous future. Sustainable tourism is perceived as an instrument of regional

development. It is essential that the product of tourism offered by these countries bears the principles of sustainable development. The issue of sustainable agriculture is often defined in a very vague manner and is also intertwined with terms such as low-input farming, alternative agriculture, organic farming, regenerative farming, organic crop production, etc. All these terms define other objectives and methods of crop production, although sometimes it can overlap with the means and objectives of sustainable agriculture [8].

Conventional agriculture is an intensive agricultural large-scale production, which aims to reduce costs on agricultural production and increase agricultural yields. The opposite is organic farming, which develops relatively quickly and receives considerable state support. It is expanded in many countries (e.g. Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Austria, but also the Czech Republic and Slovakia). Table 1 shows the difference between organic and conventional agriculture:

**Table 1**

**Difference between organic and conventional agriculture\***

<b>AGRICULTURE</b>	<b>ECOLOGICAL</b>	<b>CONVENTIONAL</b>
Land	manure and compost increases the natural fertility of the soil, fertile soil supplies the plants with nutrients	fertilization with animal faeces from grate dwelling and mineral fertilizers that degrade the soil structure
Protection (diseases, pests)	prevents the occurrence of pests, tolerates limited presence, uses more natural means (e.g. bacterial)	destroys pests and plant diseases with synthetic pesticides, which often kill beneficial organisms. The apple trees are sprayed more than twenty times per vegetation.
Weeds	they are regulated by preventive (sowing) and mechanically (dragging, kneading)	they are eradicated chemically (herbicides)
Genetically modified organisms	must not be used	their use is not regulated
Animal breeding	according to the needs of the animal (outboard for animals, grazing, bedding, plenty of space ...)	according to the needs of the man (as many animals as possible for the smallest space, minimum labour)
Animal nutrition	own feed, corresponding to the needs of the animal	according to the short-term economic interests of humans (e.g. feeding of meat-bone meal to herbivores)
Treatment of animals	preventing disease, not using preventive antibiotics, preferring natural and homeopathic medicines	often preventive administration of antibiotics (rabbits)
Environment	takes care of the landscape, does not burden it with chemicals, it does not pollute water, soil, air	has a devastating effect on the landscape and the individual components of the environment
Countryside	promotes employment, revitalizes countryside	employs people in chemical companies, in big cities

\* It is made by the author on the base of source: EFA, 2009

From the very beginning, agriculture had and has had many environmental consequences. The very nature of growing crops in the fields means great interference with natural processes: the original ecosystems have been replaced by new agro-systems developed by people [7]. The idea of sustainable tourism points to the creation of a sustainable site, especially dealing with social and ecological views and the development of the territory. It puts emphasis on creating a balance between nature conservation (so-called genius loci) and the impact of tourism as part of the local community. In this context, it is necessary to strive for such a type of tourism that would minimize negative impacts on

the development of the environment and the community. Robert Jungk is the author of the so-called idea of new tourism, in which it is divided into light and hard tourism. The essence of hard tourism is the classical assumption of economic outputs as a result of macroeconomic variables [12].

The Rio + 20 Conference on Sustainable Development launched an inclusive intergovernmental Sustainable Development Process (SDP) in 2012.

An open working group of 30 UN member states in September 2014 presented how sustainable development should look. This proposal contains a set of 17 goals (Tab.2).

Table 2



\* it is made by the author on the base of source: [http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/sk/topics/sustainable\\_development\\_goals.html](http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/sk/topics/sustainable_development_goals.html)

The 15<sup>th</sup> objective also addresses the issue of green tourism development, namely its purpose is to protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, to manage the forestry sector sustainably, to combat the changeover to the desert and to stop the country's degradation and loss of biodiversity. An interesting view on the agriculture segment from the human rights aspect is offered by Sedláková.

Agriculture, textiles and mining are included among the three sectors where the human rights are frequently violated. Therefore, the Benchmarking for Human Rights has also focused on 98 companies involved in these areas. Most leaders have reached a score of 40-49%. In agriculture, 54% of the world's

rated companies have achieved a human rights gap of only 20–29%. Therefore, CSR assessments need properly to set up mechanisms that can help businesses start and control the success of their policy in CSR i.e. in the areas of economy, environment and social area [10].

Within the framework of the Horizontal Priority of the National Strategic Reference Framework, the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic has developed a Horizontal Sustainable Development System for 2014–2020 whose main objective is to ensure environmental, social and economic sustainability of growth, with special emphasis on the protection and improvement of the environment based on the rule "Polluter pays".

Table 3

**Priorities and objectives of sustainable development\***

<b>The specific objective is to strengthen the environmental aspect of development:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Support for the transition to a low-carbon economy in all sectors,</li> <li>➤ Promotion of adaptation to climate change, risk prevention and management,</li> <li>➤ Protecting the environment and promoting the efficient use of resources,</li> <li>➤ Promoting sustainable transport and removing barriers in key network infrastructures.</li> </ul>
<b>Strengthening the economic aspect of development and strengthening research, technological development and innovation:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ improving access to information and communication technologies and improving their use and quality,</li> <li>➤ increasing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises,</li> <li>➤ investing in education, skills and lifelong learning,</li> <li>➤ Strengthening institutional capacities and efficiency of public administration.</li> </ul>
<b>Strengthening the social aspect of development:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ promoting employment and labour mobility,</li> <li>➤ promoting social inclusion and combating poverty.</li> </ul>

\* It is made by the author on the base of source: <http://www.hpisahptur.gov.sk/horizontalny-princip-udrzatelny-rozvoj-2014-2020/>

Agro-tourism is such a holiday style that is normally carried out on a farm. For tourists, it means getting acquainted with agricultural production or recreation in the agricultural environment, or it can include the opportunity to help the farm during a

visit [11]. It is a specific form of rural tourism, which, in addition to the immediate use of nature and the rural environment, is characterized by a direct relationship to agricultural activities or to agricultural functions [9].

**Conclusions and prospects.** The aim of real rural tourism and agro-tourism is to keep rural people in their homes, to give them the option of additional income, or even to create primary income sources, to maintain and revitalize the traditions of our ancestors, to restore the cohesion and pride of the community's citizens, and to attract young people to return to rural living where they can create a full-fledged life for their children, all without a devastating impact on the environment and the culture that is typical for mass forms of tourism [4].

The success of organic farming is conditioned by the beauty of the surrounding countryside, the traditions, but above all the high quality service and the quality of the environment. Marketing is an indispensable and integral part of rural tourism and agro-tourism. According to Marinicová marketing is understood as the art of discovering, creating and delivering value that meets the needs of the target market. Market behaviour in the marketplace is seen in modern marketing management as a value relationship between the benefits offered by the product and the counter-value it has to be paid for or be provided for it. Identifying this value relationship is the most important element of the entire marketing concept that must be acquired by the

entities promoting these services [5]. Each region or municipality must therefore search what the local region can offer, what cultural and national traditions are typical for it. And this variety and incomprehension in the offer is the greatest advantage of sustainable tourism in the form of rural tourism, which has not yet been sufficiently traded on the tourist market. Rural tourism can be developed in the form of agro-tourism, which is associated with agricultural operations and in the form of eco-tourism, which is associated with tourist services provided by an organic farm. An important benefit of the development of organic farming in the context of sustainable tourism development through agro-tourism and eco-agro tourism is also its social and cultural dimension that it carries. It is not just the contact of the host and the guests, but also the better cooperation and the feeling of belonging among the residents. Creating different communities that enable the production of better and richer products of ecotourism is also an important element of the social development of the region and the countryside.

The article originated in the research role of a transnational project IG-KEMM 01/2017-3.3.9 Business trend analysis in a changing Europe.

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