

RESEARCH REGARDING THE IMPLICATIONS OF AGRITOURISM IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL AREA OF ARAD COUNTY

ADAMOV TABITA CORNELIA¹, IANCU TIBERIU*¹, MATEOC-SÎRB NICOLETA¹,
PÎRVULESCU LUMINIȚA¹, SĂLĂȘAN COSMIN, RAMONA CIOLAC¹,
ANKA ȘUBA¹, FIRU-NEGOESCU ADRIAN¹

¹*Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine "King Michael I of Romania" from Timisoara, Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism*

*Corresponding author's e-mail: iancutiberiu10@gmail.com

***Abstract.** Preserving a rural world, with everything that is has significant in economic, social, cultural terms, involves the initiation and development of rural tourism. Rural tourism and agritourism can participate in maintaining the viability and stability of rural localities, in particular condition of the depopulation phenomenon, which is obviously manifested by the departure of young people to urban areas and the abandonment of old households and land. [1,5]*

The interference between the rural environment, a particularly fragile environment and the dynamism imposed by the tourist phenomenon raises the issue of the possibility of developing agritourism in the rural area of Arad County, giving it the possibility of economic and social revitalization.

Key words: rural area, economic, social and cultural dimension

INTRODUCTION

Romania benefits from a favorable environment for rural tourism, the archaic activities and folk traditions are well preserved, offering a unique character to those from the urban environment. The peasant household continues to be a landmark for the values of the Romanian people. Thus, the world of the village becomes the main object of the tourist attraction, offering another dimension, mystifying the life of its inhabitants. [1,4,8]

Preserving a rural world, with everything that is significant in economic, social, cultural terms, involves the initiation and development of this form of tourism. Also, tourism can participate in maintaining the viability and stability of rural localities, given that the phenomenon of depopulation is obviously manifested by the departure of young people to urban areas and the abandonment of old households and land. [3,7,16] The meeting between the rural environment, a particularly fragile environment and the dynamism imposed by the tourist phenomenon raises the issue of risks generated by restructuring. However, we can say that agritourism must become an alternative to the problems of agriculture and rural areas. [1,5,10,12]

Agritourism can stimulate the expansion of other branches of the village: the local agri-food industry (milk and meat products), the berry processing industry, handicrafts (products for decorating the interiors of homes or souvenirs for tourists) or small craft industry and so on, creating new jobs.

The diversification of activities, carried out in rural areas through tourism, has special implications in the spectrum of socio-political life, through: the occupational diversification of the rural population, especially the young; changing age and gender structures, depending on new occupations; preservation of existing socio-cultural models, popular traditions and local architecture; the possibility for more economically disadvantaged socio-cultural structures to benefit from agricultural and tourist resources, from the rural environment, at moderate prices; ensuring for tourists, in general, alternative holidays, at the same time as increasing the degree of knowledge and appreciation of traditional rural life; increasing the quality of life of the local population, as well as the degree of training and knowledge of it, forging friendly relations between locals and tourists, between different localities (Romanian or foreign), through contact with tourists

from different socio-economic areas, but also spiritually -cultural; creating a favorable external image of Romania, through the contact of foreign tourists with ethno-culture and the natural and hospitable ambiance of the Romanian village. [2,9,14]

The promotion and development of rural tourism must not ignore the negative impact it can have on the environment (disappearance of some species of flora and fauna, other natural monuments, overuse and exceeding the capacity of ecological support, disappearance of agricultural and forestry lands, increasing the degree of urbanization, etc.).

Romania has great possibilities for the development of rural tourism, its practice being not only possible, but also very necessary in the current stage. The realized monetary incomes will lead to the raising of the level of civilization of the Romanian village, and its inhabitants, through the special hospitality, could radically change the image of Romania in the world. [6,8,10,13]

Arad County benefits from a favorable positioning, being a true "gateway" of Romania's access to Western Europe, the county being located in the western part of Romania and connected to major roads.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper highlights the implications that the development of agritourism has on the development of the rural area of Arad County. In order to highlight the agritourism activity stage of development, in the studied area, we used as a research method, the statistical analysis of the data provided by the National Institute of Statistics as well as various local information sources. Based on the information used, a series of conclusions were drawn regarding the effects produced by the rural tourism activity on the rural communities of Arad.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Arad County is located in western Romania, at the intersection of important national and international traffic arteries. Gateway between Western Europe and southeastern continent, Arad County has 4 border crossing points on the border with Hungary: Nadlac, Varsand and Turnu for road traffic of people and goods, Curtici by railway.



Figure 1. Physical map of Arad County

The tourist potential of Arad County is offered by its natural, anthropic and cultural heritage. From a natural point of view, in this county there is a varied relief characterized by large forested areas, valleys, valley, depressions and meadows, some concentrated in protected areas: Dealul Mocrea-Ineu Mixed Natural Reserve, Moneasa Mixed Nature Reserve, Mocrea-Ineu Dentrولوجical Park, Lunca Muresului Natural Park, etc. We can talk about the existence of mineral and geothermal springs.

The geographical and ethnographic characteristics of the Arad rural area represent elements to be considered by most tourists who want to spend their vacation in the country, away from the urban agglomeration.

The current agritourism offer proposes:

- rural guesthouses: Siria, Cladova, Minis, Julita, Halmagiu, Brusturi, Galsa, Paulis, Buteni, Cladova
- traditional crafts: pottery - Tarnavita, Barsa; fabrics: Sicula, Almas; wickerwork: Ineu, Fantanele, Beliu; naive painting: Brusturi, Halmagiu;
- curiosities: water mills - Brazii, Secas, Iacobini, Troas;
- places of worship, tourist objective: wooden churches from the 15th century. XVIII -XIX (Obarsia, Corbesti, Rosia, Petris, Troas, Poiana, Magulicea);
- traditional holidays:
- fairs - the Girls' Fair on Mount Gaina; Codrenilor Fair-Vasoiaia;
- summer habits: New bread feast - Pecica, Beliu;
- autumn customs: "When picking grapes in the vineyard" - Siria, "Grape Ball" - Pancota;
- winter customs: caroling on Christmas Eve; "Dubasii from Savarsin";
- cultural events entered in the tourist circuit:
- „Festival of song and game from Tara Zarandului” from Moneasa;
- The parade of the folk costume and the Crafts Fair - Moneasa;
- The folk festival "At the source of song and longing" - Lipova;
- „Fanfare Parade” - International Fanfare Music Festival - Buteni;
- local gastronomy:
- culinary specialties - cheeses made from cow's milk, sheep or buffalo; meat preparations: sausages, mayo, smoked bacon;
- pies - "returns" with cabbage, potatoes or cheese; cozonaci - rope with poppy or walnut;
- wine tastings produced in the Minis-Maderat Vineyard, at the wineries from: Pauliș, Minis;
- traditional methods of producing fruit brandy.

The analysis of the agritourism offer

The existence of a high agritourism potential from the rural area of Arad County allowed the creation of tourist products specific to the rural environment and the creation of rural and agritourism tourist guesthouses, to accommodate tourists who prefer this form of tourism. The picturesque mountainous rural areas, the variety of fauna and flora, the rich hunting and fishing background, the thermal and mineral water springs, combined ethnography and folklore offer favorable conditions for the possibility of practicing rural tourism.

Currently, at the level of Arad County, there is an evolution of the number of accommodation units specific to the rural environment, predominant being the units of tourist and agritourism guesthouses, table 1. From the total structures to be received with accommodation function, 58.6%, are represented by these two types of accommodation structures. Regarding the agritourism guesthouses, there is a spectacular increase of them, in the period 2000-2019, their number increasing almost 5 times.

Table 1.

Tourist reception structures, Arad County, (number)

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total	63	85	138	145	145	140	167	157
Motels	-	5	4	4	4	4	6	4
Tourist villas	7	8	10	9	9	8	9	7
Tourist chalets	1	1	2	4	4	4	5	3
Tourist houses	-	4	5	3	3	3	3	2
Tourist pensions	-	20	46	49	49	48	57	53
Agritourism guesthouses	-	8	24	25	24	21	35	39

Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/> [17]

Table 2.

Distribution of tourist accommodation units, on the localities of Arad County

Accommodation unit type	Locality	2005	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
	Total	85	138	145	145	140	167	157
Tourist pensions	Arad	13	33	36	37	36	43	42
	Curtici	:	2	2	2	2	2	1
	Lipova	1	2	3	2	3	5	4
	Nădlac	2	4	3	3	2	2	2
	Pecica	:	:	1	1	1	1	1
	Sebis	:	2	2	2	2	3	2
	Paulis	:	:	1	1	1	1	1
	Total	20	46	49	49	48	57	53
Agritourism guesthouses	Arad	:	:	:	:	:	3	2
	Chisineu-Cris	:	:	1	1	1	1	1
	Ineu	:	:	1	1	1	1	1
	Bata	:	:	1	1	1	1	1
	Buteni	:	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Ghioroc	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Halmagiu	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
	Livada	:	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Moneasa	2	4	2	2	1	3	4
	Paulis	1	2	4	4	2	3	3
	Savarsin	:	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Semlac	:	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Siria	1	3	1	1	1	2	2
	Vladimirescu	1	4	5	4	4	6	7
	Zimandu Nou	:	:	1	1	1	1	2
Total	8	24	25	24	21	35	39	

Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/> [17]

Table 2 shows the evolution of accommodation structures, on the localities of Arad County. The analysis of the territorial distribution of agritourism guesthouses, at the county level, indicates that 11 of the 39 agritourism structures are concentrated in the mountainous area of the county, meaning 28.2%. The locality where the largest number of agritourism guesthouses is registered is Vladimirescu, 7 guesthouses, 17.9% of the total.

Table 3 presents the situation of the existing accommodation capacity for the main accommodation structures, existing in the rural area of Arad County.

Table 3.

Tourist accommodation capacity in operation, by reception structures and localities of Arad County

Accommodation unit type	Total	2000	2005	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
		4684	4850	5554	5695	5551	5456	5898	5446
Tourist pensions	Arad	:	336	712	869	889	850	965	943
	Curtici	:	:	31	31	31	31	31	12
	Lipova	:	12	44	56	44	56	81	63
	Nădlac	:	21	75	33	33	29	29	27
	Pecica	:	:	:	26	26	26	28	28
	Sebis	:	:	43	43	43	43	55	43
	Paulis	:	:	:	9	7	7	7	7
	Total	:	462	983	1097	1105	1074	1196	1123
Agritourism guesthouses	Arad	:	:	:	:	:	:	105	56
	Chisineu-Cris	:	:	:	41	41	78	102	102
	Ineu	:	:	:	14	20	20	20	20
	Bata	:	:	:	10	10	10	10	10
	Buteni	:	:	30	64	56	56	56	56
	Chisindia	:	:	:	:	:	:	8	8
	Ghioroc	:	8	9	9	9	9	9	9
	Halmagiu	:	24	25	25	25	25	35	35
	Livada	:	:	20	20	20	20	20	20
	Moneasa	:	18	40	23	23	13	84	116
	Paulis	:	14	26	69	69	40	46	46
	Petris	:	:	:	:	:	:	10	10
	Savarsin	:	:	31	37	28	28	37	37
	Semlac	:	:	10	14	14	14	14	14
	Siria	:	16	44	16	16	16	28	28
	Sistarovat	:	:	:	:	:	:	12	12
	Socodor	:	:	:	:	:	:	6	6
	Tarnova	:	:	:	:	:	:	8	8
	Vladimirescu	:	18	83	135	117	117	151	194
	Zimandu Nou	:	:	:	27	27	27	27	33
Total	:	113	372	536	533	524	804	856	

Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/> [17]

At the county level, the existing accommodation capacity in guesthouses has an upward trend. In 2019, the existing accommodation capacity of these accommodation structures represents 15.72%.

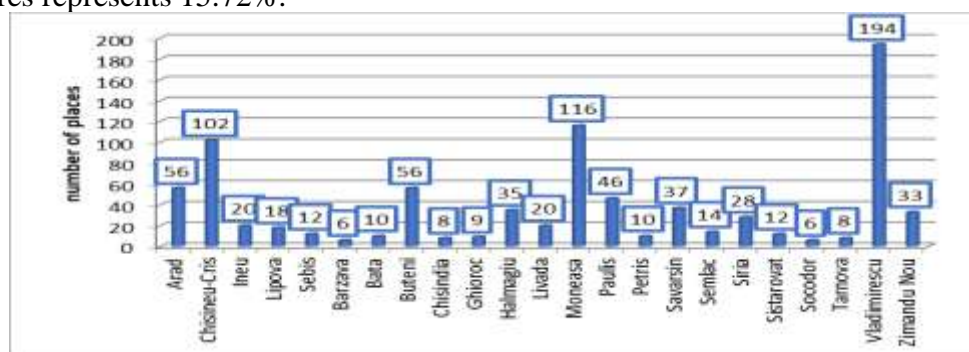


Figure 2. The existing accommodation capacity, in the agritourism guesthouses from Arad County (number) [17]

Out of the total of 856 existing places, in the agritourism guesthouses from Arad County, almost half, 48.13%, are concentrated in the accommodation units located in Chisineu-Cris localities - 102 places, Moneasa - 116 places and Vladimirescu 194 places.

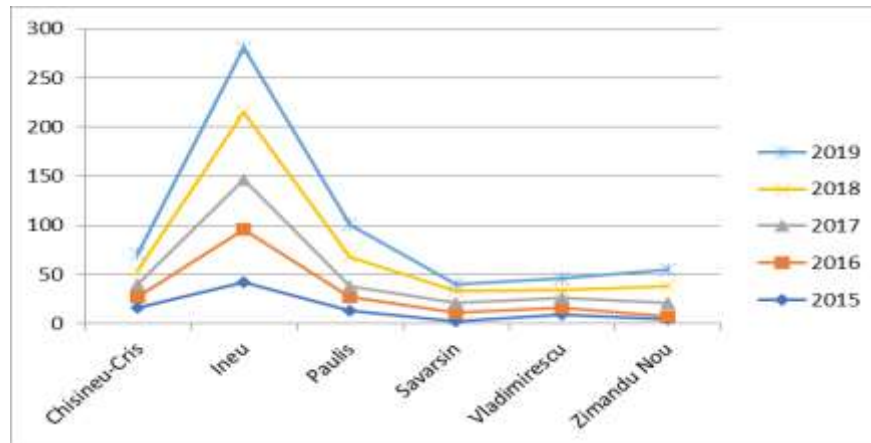


Figure 3. Net utilization index of operating tourist accommodation capacity, in the agritourism guesthouses from Arad County, [17]

The index of net utilization of tourist accommodation capacity is an indicator on the basis of which the efficiency of the use of accommodation units can be established. It represents the most expressive and cumulative indicator regarding the evaluation of the tourist activities of the tourist structures with accommodation function. The average occupancy rate of agritourism guesthouses, at the level of Arad County, presents different values, on the main destinations. The highest value of the use of the accommodation capacity in operation, proper to the agritourism guesthouses, was registered in Zimandu Nou locality, in 2019, the degree of use was 14.17%, higher than the county average, 12.14%.

Rural tourism and agritourism are forms of tourism preferred by both domestic and foreign tourists. Addressing both categories of tourists in equal measure, it is necessary for the rural tourist offer to meet their needs. Thus, we must consider a series of programs aimed at increasing the quality of tourist services, the degree of customer satisfaction being determined primarily by the quality level of services. The development of the offer tourist and the increase of the quality of the tourist services must be supported by a series of campaigns for the promotion of the Romanian rural tourism.

The analysis of agritourism demand

Changes in the lifestyle and mentality of tourists have led to the permanent intensification, in the current period, of the population's demand for rural tourism, forms of tourism that involve the presence of tourists in nature and active participation in specific tourism activities.

Lately, a growing number of foreign tourists come to visit the Romanian countryside, spending their holidays in these areas. Many of them choose agritourism as a form of tourism, practiced individually or in groups.

Tourist arrivals are the most important economic indicator used in the analysis of tourist traffic. It is a physical indicator, having a quantitative expression that allows the identification of tourists' preferences for the existing agritourism areas and guesthouses existent in Arad County.

Table 4.

The evolution of tourist arrivals, in the agritourism guesthouses, on Arad County

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Arad	1886	2702	2394	3380	1488
Chisineu-Cris	488	527	887	663	891
Ineu	2537	3931	3715	4960	4839
Buteni	194	188	207	290	346
Livada	344	199	168	148	101
Paulis	2205	2213	1773	3771	6193
Savarsin	173	312	482	659	470
Siria	102	104	86	270	147
Vladimirescu	1179	1096	1485	2525	4162
Zimandu Nou	342	265	132	307	306

Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/> [17]

The arrivals of tourists in the existing agritourism guesthouses at the level of Arad County, on the main representative localities for agritourism activity, are presented in table 4, the presented data indicating a fluctuating evolution, during the analyzed period.

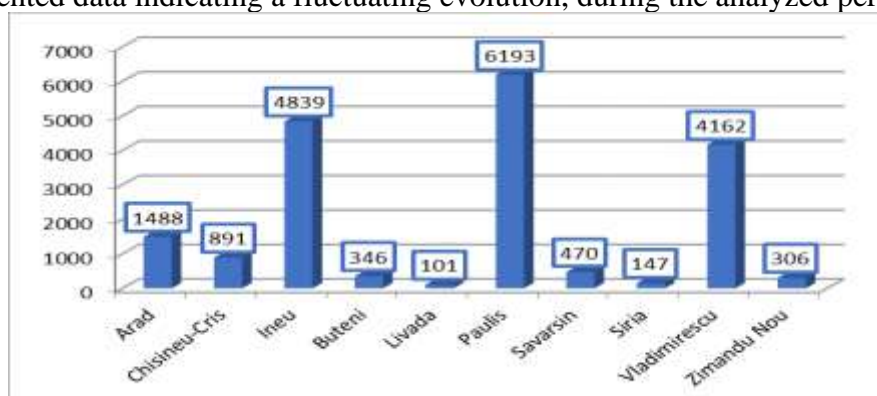


Figure 4. The arrivals of tourists, in agritourism guesthouses from Arad County, 2019, number, [17]

In 2019, most tourists were registered in agritourism guesthouses, in Paulis - 6193 tourists, followed by Ineu - 4839 tourists and Vladimirescu - 4162 tourists. These three localities concentrate 58.11% of the total number of tourists staying in agritourism guesthouses in Arad County.

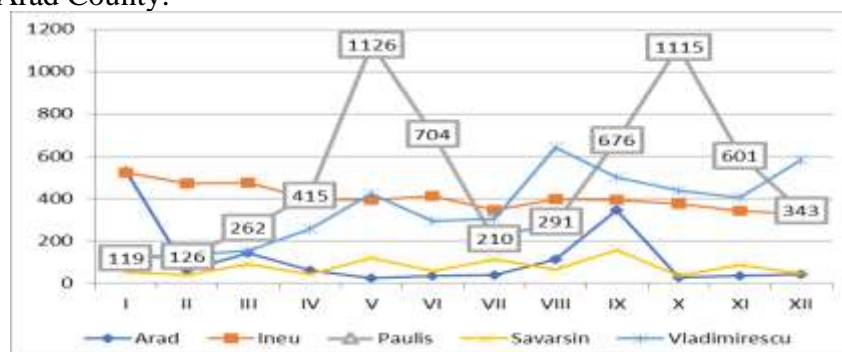


Figure 5. Arrivals of tourists, in the agritourism guesthouses from Arad County, on Monday, year 2019 (number of tourists), [17]

Tourist arrivals in Savarsin and Ineu localities, in 2019, show a somewhat uniform evolution, while in Arad, Vladimirescu and Paulis localities, the concentration of tourist arrivals is identified in two more obvious periods (May-June and September- October).

The evolution of tourist overnight stays, in agritourism guesthouses, at the level of Arad County, indicates a fluctuating trend, as well as the evolution of tourist arrivals. The localities of Arad, Ineu, Paulis and Vladimirescu registered, in 2019, the highest values, in terms of the number of overnight stays. These four localities concentrated 63.81% of the total number of overnight stays in Arad County.

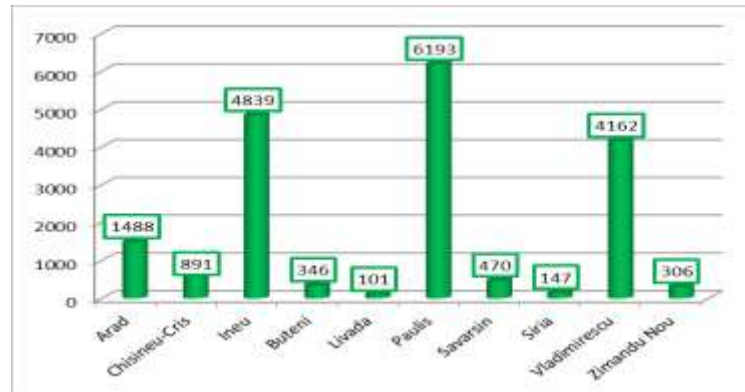


Figure 6. Overnight stays of tourists in agritourism guesthouses from Arad County, 2019 (number of tourist overnight stays), [17]

The low value of the average length of stay, from the agritourism guesthouses, existing in Arad County, highlights the fact that for the most part, accommodation units are used for less than one day, which indicates the suitability of these units, at county level, for day trips. In this sense, it is necessary to adopt a policy aimed at increasing the average length of stay of tourists in farmhouses from Arad County, by developing new packages of attractive tourist products, organizing events at the weekend, diversifying leisure activities, etc.

CONCLUSIONS

The tourist potential of Arad County is offered by its natural, anthropic and cultural heritage. From a natural point of view, Arad County has a varied relief characterized by large forested areas, valleys, depressions and meadows, some concentrated in protected areas, mineral and geothermal springs. The anthropic tourist heritage is represented by historical objectives, monasteries, historical and architectural monuments and a rich rural potential with many specific traditions and customs.

Agritourism offers the chance to solve both the problems of the village, by providing a non-agricultural source of income, as well as a viable alternative for the citizens in order to maintain ties with traditional cultural values.

Arad County has a rich tourist potential, especially agritourism, concentrated mainly in the mountainous area of Arad County, but also in the related rural area.

In terms of tourism potential, the area under study is as follows:

- a rich natural tourist potential, well-marked in the mountainous and depression area, the localities at the foot of the Zarand Mountains being recognized for their remarkable natural potential;
- the anthropic tourist potential is very rich and diversified, being found in the city of Arad, as well as in some rural localities: Savarsin, Halmagiu, Moneasa and Buteni;
- the precarious quality of the transport infrastructure, the uneven distribution of the tourist potential, be it natural or anthropic, at the county level as well as the poor representation of the urban-household infrastructure, determine a development of tourist activities, with a lower efficiency;

- the problems specific to the rural areas with agritourism potential, related to the tourist infrastructure and the transport and urban-household infrastructure in the rural areas, determine the existence of an agritourism activity, below the level of the owned potential;

- the arrivals of tourists and their overnight stays in agritourism guesthouses are very low, determining a subunit value of the average length of stay, thus indicating that the tourist units;

- anthropic tourist resources (cultural-religious, ethno folkloric manifestations, architectural monuments and historical heritage) can be basic elements in identifying a tourist circuit or a complex tourist product, specific to Arad.

REFERENCES

- [1]. **ADAMOV TABITA CORNELIA**, 2020, *Economia turismului și agroturismului*, Editura Eurostampa, Timișoara
- [2]. **CĂLINA A., CĂLINA J., IANCU T.**, 2017, Research regarding the implementation, development and impact of Agritourism on Romania's rural areas between 1990 and 2015, *Environ. eng. mgmt. J.* 16, pp. 157–168
- [3]. **CIOLAC MARIANA RAMONA**, 2009, *Management în turism rural și agroturism*, Editura Eurostampa, Timișoara
- [4]. **CIOLAC RAMONA**, 2016, Agrotourism-representative issues and pro arguments, *Scientific Papers: Animal Science and Biotechnologies*, vol.49 (1)
- [5]. **CIOLAC RAMONA, ADAMOV TABITA, IANCU T., POPESCU GABRIELA, LILE RAMONA, RUJESCU C., MARIN DIANA**, 2019, Agritourism-A Sustainable Development Factor for Improving the 'Health' of Rural Settlements. Case Study Apuseni Mountains Area, *Sustainability*, vol. 11, Issue 5
- [6]. **CIOLAC RAMONA, IANCU T., BRAD I., POPESCU GABRIELA, MARIN DIANA, ADAMOV TABITA**, 2020, Agritourism Activity-A "Smart Chance" for Mountain Rural Environment's Sustainability, *Sustainability*, vol. 12, Issue15
- [7]. **GUȚU OANA ANDREEA, ȘUBA ANKA, IANCU T., ADAMOV TABITA**, 2019, Capitalization possibilities of tourism potential of Transylvanian village through agritourism, *Lucrări Științifice Management Agricol*, vol. 21(3)
- [8]. **IANCU T.**, 2014, *Economie agroturistică*, Editura Eurostampa, Timișoara
- [9]. **IANCU T., BRAD I., ADAMOV TABITA, STANCIU S., PÎRVULESCU LUMINIȚA, POPESCU GABRIELA**, 2017, Characterization of rural tourism activity in the mountain area, *Lucrări Științifice Management Agricol*, vol. 19(1)
- [10]. **IANCU T., ADAMOV TABITA, STANCIU S., PETROMAN I., POPESCU GABRIELA, MILIN ANDA**, 2019, The role of tourism in sustainable economic development, *Proceedings of the Multidisciplinary Conference on Sustainable Development*, vol. 2
- [10]. **IANCU T., ADAMOV TABITA CORNELIA, PETROMAN I., CLAUDIA SÎRBULESCU, MILIN ANDA, ȘUBA ANKA, PASCARIU L.**, 2020, Agritourism-supplementary income source for the rural population, *Lucrări Științifice Management Agricol*, vol. 22(1)
- [12]. **MATEOC-SÎRB NICOLETA, OTIMAN P.I., MATEOC T., MANESCU CAMELIA**, 2018, Evolution of romanian village since the great union of 1918, *Transylvanian review*, vol. XXVII (2)
- [13]. **MĂNESCU CAMELIA, MATEOC T., IANCU T., CRISTINA ADA-FLAVIA, POPESCU A., MATEOC-SÎRB NICOLETA**, 2015, Research on the influence of regional policy development of rural communities, *Scientific Papers Series Management*,

Economic Engineering in Agriculture and Rural Development, ISSN 2284-7995, Volume 15, Issue 1

[14]. **MILIN IOANA-ANDA, MERCE IULIANA IOANA, IANCU T., ȚIGAN EUGENIA**, 2018, Current Ways to Measure Tourism Activity Current Ways to Measure Tourism Activity, Proceedings of the International Conference on Life Sciences, vol. I

[15]. **POPESCU GABRIELA, ADAMOV TABITA, DINCU ANA MARIANA, IOSMIM IASMINA**, 2016, Positive and negative trends of the Romanian tourism, Book 2: Political Sciences, Law, Finance, Economics And Tourism Conference Proceedings, Vol. V

[16]. **PIRVULESCU LUMINIȚA, MAREAN MARINA MIRABELA, IANCU T., POPESCU GABRIELA, SIRBULESCU CLAUDIA, ADAMOV TABITA CORNELIA**, 2017, The role of tourism in socio-economic development of Romania, Journal of Biotechnology Volume 256S

[17]. ***<http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/>