The possibilities of rural development and the potential role of hunting tourism in rural development

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Summary findings, conclusions, recommendations

Rural development is of great significance for the future of both the EU and Hungary. We must reduce migration, create new jobs and focus on sustainability and the principles and goals of environmental protection and nature conservation. For this reason, it is necessary to apply for EU project funding.

EU priorities regarding rural development serve the creation of a 'liveable countryside'. Rural development is connected to tourism that can help compensate for decreasing income from agriculture.

Services related to hunting could achieve a significant role in the development of tourism as they can be harmonised with rural development and with rural and ecotourism. Hunting tourism and game management can be connected to several rural development goals, so it would be important to include them in applications for rural development project funding. Game management and hunting tourism could play a significant role in rural development as they are almost totally independent from geographical and other characteristics.

Hunting tourism is only partly related to the present structure of tourism since the organisational tasks are carried out by hunting organisation agencies. Although the professional and organisational framework of hunting tourism is laid down, its marketing activities and quality standards should be improved.

Hungarian hunting tourism plays a leading role in Europe. It is of special interest to all of us to protect and improve its position.

Rural development and rural regions

According to the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, rural development is a complex activity aimed at making the rural regions capable of serving the society's economic, ecological and social interests permanently.

In order to identify the rural regions, the document issued in March 2004 by the European Commission was based on the comprehensive definition of the OECD. According to that definition, a local region (or local government) is considered rural in case the density of population is below 150 persons/km2. On a regional level, three basic types of region are identified by the OECD:

- Predominantly rural regions, where more than 50% of the population live in 'rural communities' (based on the above definition with the density of population below 150 persons/km2);
- Significantly rural regions, where 15-50% of the population live in 'rural communities';

• Predominantly urban regions, where less than 15% of the population live in 'rural communities'.

The EU enlargement increased the importance of rural regions because of the rural dominance of the new members. The Council of the European Union (2006) states that rural areas amount to 92% of the 25 member states. 19% of the population lives in predominantly rural regions, while 37% live in significantly rural regions. In the 25 member states, 45% of the gross value added is produced by these regions, and 53% of the jobs are also provided by them (according to the definition of the OECD).

Regions and rural development, as well as sustainability are closely related. In rural areas, it is essential to establish high-level services and infrastructure in order to create dynamically developing rural settlements *(Deme, 2003)*.

Rural development serves the maintenance and sustainable development of the countryside, in the process of which the following factors play a key role:

• local participants;

• local resources;

• operating integrations that serve the community's interests;

• living traditions, strengthening the sense of identity.

According to *Csete – Láng (2005)*, „rural policy is the complex system of long-term interests, objectives, means, conditions and operation based on principles. The operative implementation of the rural policy is carried out by rural development, which is a local chain of activities."

The common rural development policy of the EU is based on the Council Decree No. 1257/1999. The basic programmes of rural development for the financing period of 2004-2006 are included in the Agricultural and Rural Development Operative Programme (AVOP), as well as in the National Rural Development Plan (NVT).

The NVT supports six horizontal groups of activities (agricultural environment management, FAUC – Funding Areas with Unfavourable Characteristics, forestation of agricultural areas, funding partly self-supporting farms, supporting producing groups, meeting EU requirements). The majority of these activities – with partly altered conditions – will be included in the New Hungary Rural Development Programme as well.

For the period of 2007-2013, the strategic development tendencies of the agricultural and rural development and the relating main activities are as follows:

The strategic objectives of the present programme period have been defined as the continuation of the previous objectives, and in harmony with the rural development guidelines stated in Chapter 3 of Rural Development Strategic Guidelines issued by the Council of the European Union, which has to be followed according to Par. 9 of Decree 1698/2005/EK. This decree clearly describes the framework and objectives that the rural development policy of the EU wishes to serve.

According to the guidelines mention above, the priorities of the EU in the field of rural development are as follows:

• improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry;

• improving the conditions of the environment and the countryside;

• improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification;

• creating local capacity to increase employment and diversification (leader).

Tasks of the European Agricultural and rural development fund (EMVA)

The group of measures referred to as EMVA 1 states correctly that instead of quantitative results, we should focus on efficiency and quality in agriculture. The

main objective is the modernization of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and improving their competitiveness. The elements of the activity are:

- reducing specific costs;
- technical and technological renewal;
- improving the production structure;
- improving product quality;
- harmonization of production, processing and usage at the level of small regions and regions;
- improving the age structure of entrepreneurs;
- improving hygienic and animal welfare conditions;
- improving conditions of quality assurance;
- improving infrastructural conditions.

Marselek (2006/a) refers to the relationships of environment management and rural development. Funding must serve the creation of a 'liveable' countryside! (EMVA 2 group of measures)

The aim of biomass production and usage is to use the territories that are not suitable for crop production or horticulture. The elements of the activity are:

- compensation of extra costs;
- wide-spread application of technical and technological systems;
- enhancing the use of renewable energy;
- improving production structure and efficiency;
- creating jobs.

The third group of measures serves the improvement of life quality and the enhancement of diversification in rural areas. The aim is to increase rural economic potentials through funding supplementary activities. This is where the development of cooperative networks may play a significant role.

According to *Ficsor (2006)*, it is important to change people's attitudes by supporting innovation clusters where producers, producing groups, producing and commercial cooperatives or temporary groups of producers are integrated and the scientific sphere is also involved. *Marselek (2006/b)* states that the role of regional clusters will be inevitable in increasing competitiveness in the future. First, they could be established at the lowest levels in harmony with the principles of rural development.

The fourth group of measures is based on the specific goals of LEADER, and concentrates on new competitive technologies, the conservation of natural and cultural values, as well as local integration. One of the possible goals is the development of agricultural education and the foundation of a regional professional network. The elements of the activity are:

- enhancement of networking R&D, innovation and consulting activities;
- improving the human, technical and organizational conditions of consulting and educational activities.

The protection of environmental, natural and cultural treasures is also very important.

Rural development and tourism

As the basis of rural economy has weakened due to the fall in agricultural production, a lot of experts recommend tourism as a possibility for breaking out for rural areas. At this point, *Wachtler et al. (2006)* can be mentioned, whose opinion is that the theories of rural development should be thought over due to the results of the international research carried out in recent decades. The concept of sustainable rural development needs a multidisciplinary and plural approach where extremely complex activities have to be taken into consideration.

Among other things, the functions of infrastructure, agricultural technologies, human resources, non-agricultural jobs, institutions and the environment should

be reconsidered, together with their places in the concept.

Probably, the transforming rural areas will be multifunctional, dominated by production and public services. However, their development can be guaranteed through relationships with urban areas. Today, tourism is the economic sector of the country where long-lasting foreign trade surplus can be achieved. The dynamics of the sector is demonstrated by the fact that the number of international tourist arrivals has become 25 times more in the last 50 years *(Wachtler, 2003)*.

At the moment, a significant part of the rural areas is almost not suitable for tourism. In our opinion, a given rural area can be made suitable for the hospitality industry by developing it into an attractive cultural landscape. It is important to know what factors influence tourists when choosing their destinations. Without intending to be exhaustive, we can mention some important aspects:

- closeness of nature, peace;
- how well-prepared the host is, organization of programmes;
- level of accommodation;
- nice environment;
- special services, e.g. horse-riding, thermal waters, wine tours, hunting;
- traditional events, e.g. village days, harvest days, meeting for motorcyclists, castle days, anniversaries.

The objectives of rural development must be defined and grouped so that we can see where game management and hunting tourism can fit in. The system is demonstrated by Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

The objectives of rural development

Rural development			
Non-agricultural objectives of rural development		Agriculture related objectives of rural development	
Development and reconstruction of villages	Development of alternative sources of income, tourism, crafts	Increasing efficiency of farming	Diversification, alternative sources of income, services
Improving the infrastructure of rural areas	Development of the recreational role of rural areas	Supporting sustainable agriculture, eco-farming	Planting forests
Supporting the production of goods characteristic of the region	Environment protection	Looking after nature, the landscape	Reducing the environmental damage caused by agriculture

Source: Compiled by Sarudi, 2003 on the basis of Maácz, M., 2001

Hunting tourism can be connected to tourism development, as well as to alternative sources of income, services. It can also play an important role in the development of the recreational function of rural areas. Game management can also be in connection with several areas. However, the possibilities of hunting can only be developed in a complex, systematic way, involving all the partners concerned *(Fábián, 2006)*.

The habitat of game are forests and agricultural areas. Thus, planting forests, looking after nature and the landscape and supporting sustainable agriculture are the objectives that are important, since a more extensive agriculture will provide a

more favourable environment for game. In the conscious transformation of land use, Hungary falls behind other countries. This backlog can only be reduced but not eliminated by forest planting programmes *(Buday-Sántha, 2006)*. Nowadays, the constraints of our dependence on energy make energy plantations necessary. According to Kerek et al. 2007, there will be 90,000 ha of energy plantations by 2015. This will help 9,000 farmers to earn money in rural areas. Tree plantations created with the aim to provide energy can be connected to the objectives of game management and sewage placement. The relationship between energy plantations, game management, and hunting tourism is a field to be examined by specialists.

The income of game management is basically determined by the sales of hunting to domestic and foreign hunters. The other important factors are hunting-related services such as accommodation and catering, and the income from shot and live game *(Fábián - Marselek, 2005)*.

At present, the Hungarian legal background and the system of funding do not make it possible for game management to get more importance in rural development. It would be necessary to provide better possibilities for game management (habitat management), hunting tourism and hunting-related services within the framework of rural development. Tourism and hunting tourism could play a significant role in the economic stabilization of disadvantaged regions, taking their characteristic features into consideration *(Magda et al., 1999)*. Tourism and hunting tourism can create new jobs and provide the population with additional income.

During working out plans for rural development, the mechanisms to reach the potential target groups must be found along with improving hunting possibilities and involving land owners. The development of hunting and hunting tourism can only be implemented in a complex way, taking the whole system into consideration and involving all the partners concerned.

The new type of using agricultural and other areas must follow a transitory period, during which education and training must be carried out and the legal background must be established.

The possibilities of hunting tourism

In Hungary, the number of foreign guest hunters amounts to 23-25 thousand per year. Generally, they spend 3-5 days in the country, which is annually nearly 100 thousand nights. The majority of hunters arrive in the months of autumn and winter, which is the low season from the point of view of tourism. Foreign hunters expand the so called 'quality tourism' as they spend several nights in the country, and spend high amounts on accommodation, meals, etc apart from paying for the high-value trophy game *(Fábián, 2006)*. In our opinion, it is necessary to emphasise that receiving foreign guest hunters and providing them services could provide jobs for a lot of people.

The following objectives are important to develop this activity:

- increasing the specific incomes through high-quality services;
- offering tourism product packages to hired hunters;
- encouraging hired hunters to buy other tourism products (e.g. thermal baths, ecotourism, health tourism);
- improving the conditions of the hospitality industry;
- including organic food in the menus in catering.

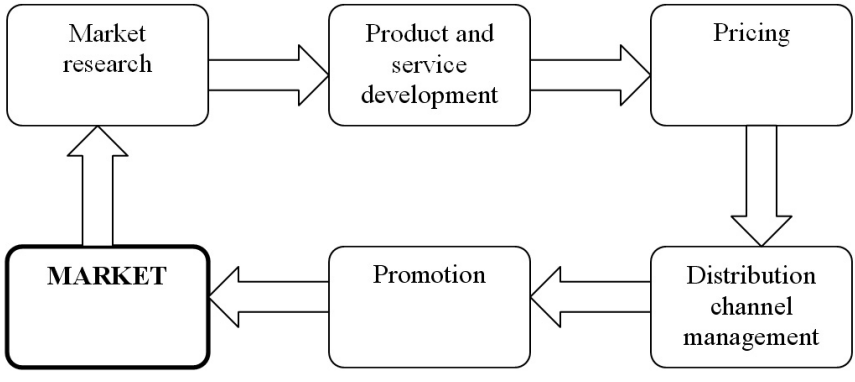
Strategic tasks

The major part of earnings from hunting is generated by foreign hired hunters.

Consequently, it is important to improve this area of tourism. Marketing can play a significant role here as it embraces all the activities aimed at the market and the consumers. The cyclical process is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Marketing as a corporate activity



Source: Tamusné, 2006

Hungary is lagging behind other countries in marketing. If we intend to increase the role of tourism and hunting tourism, we must rely on well-trained marketing organizers. The activities organized on the basis of the marketing concept contain the following stages:

- analysing the well-identified market;
- concentrating on consumers' needs;
- coordinating the consumer-oriented activities;
- satisfying customer needs and making profit at the same time.

According to *Tamusné (2006)*, 'we need to identify the requirements and needs of the target markets and we need to satisfy them more efficiently than our competitors'. The main elements of possible marketing activities could be:

- providing brochures, leaflets, CD's and video recordings for travel agencies in other countries;
- organizing hunting exhibitions, conferences and presentations for potential clientele;
- informing tourist information centres on the hunting possibilities of particular regions;
- discussing the possibilities of rural development, rural tourism and hunting tourism at conferences;
- analysing the target market and target customers and publishing the results to assist suitable business strategies.

In May 2005, the Council of Europe signed a decree about the EMVA possibilities of supporting rural development. Hunting tourism is mentioned in this decree only indirectly, for instance in Article 52, which refers to encouraging touristic activities. Article 18 of the decree contains a possibility for supervision. Hungary could initiate the inclusion of game management and hunting tourism in the list of fundable objectives.

Although the organizational framework of game management and hunting tourism already exist, the reconsideration and improvement of this framework should be considered as a major strategic goal.

The National Regional Development Concept only refers to the role of game ma-

nagement. In its text, it mentions the importance of complex development. 'Game management has to be developed in an integrated way that serves the interests of agriculture, forestry, recreation and environment protection by encouraging the cooperation and partnership of local participants.'

Hunting tourism is only partly connected to the structure of tourism as organization is carried out by hunting organization agencies. These agencies organize the complete hunting process, from the guests' arrivals to their departures. They provide guests with all necessary information with the help of a detailed database. Hunting societies give commission to hunting organization agencies, thus ensuring the mutual interest. *Fehér (2003)* emphasizes the importance of establishing a marketing fund at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development by using the earnings from hunting coupons, which could serve the development of hunting tourism.

The expansion of marketing in Hungarian hunting is a basic task. Apart from the classical German, Austrian and Italian markets, we should enter the French, Spanish, British and North-European markets as well. We should get information about the supply of the surrounding countries as our potential competitors so that we can protect our position. According to *Gereczi (2006)*, the marketing strategy of hunting tourism is to be managed centrally, and community marketing can be its tool. The marketing strategy of Hungarian hunting is being worked out by the Hungarian Tourism Ltd with the involvement of professionals concerned.

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