

# Solutions for Destination Management on Agri-Tourism Farm

Ioan Petroman, Cornelia Petroman, Diana Marin, Constantin Buzatu, Adrian Dumitrescu,  
Ștefan Coman, Andreea Stan, Daniela Avramescu

*Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine from Timisoara,  
Faculty of Agricultural Management, 300645-Timișoara, Calea Aradului, 119, România*

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## Abstract

Farm tourism can be an alternative to agricultural jobs in rural communities with real agri-tourism potential. To improve destination management, we need to implement a type of management based on knowledge management. A second type of management that is a must in farm tourism is the integrated management of agri-tourism destination quality based on a code of good practices in the integrated management of quality. In order to improve agri-tourism management quality, we need to apply best management practices, i.e. 15 basic principles that contribute to the improvement of farm tourism management. These three types of management, if implemented on any agri-tourism farm, can contribute to the improvement of destination management.

**Keywords:** agri-tourism farm, improvement, management, solutions

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## 1. Introduction

Any farmer who wishes to turn his **animal farm** into a vegetal or animal agri-tourism farm and any owner of a rural boarding house who intends to turn his house into an agri-tourism boarding house will have to solve a few extremely important management issues [1, 3, 5, and 9]. Among these apparently minor issues of great importance for the good functioning of an **agri-tourism animal farm** we need to mention the following: **knowing financial management** through productivity analysis; cost analysis and monitoring of inputs and outputs; **knowing risk management** through: the contact with state and local agri-tourism and rural tourism organisations and with key-consultants (insurance agents, lawyers, accountants, financial managers); developing risk management plans concerning farm safety, produce, insurance level, preventive measures; inventory of possible risk areas (employees, farm,

finances, produce, and understanding of the laws and rules concerning health and safety [2]; **properly knowing and applying regulations in the field of insurance** (fire insurance, goods insurance, machines insurance, life insurance, health insurance, etc.); **properly knowing and applying regulations in the field of animal bio-safety and welfare** [6, 7]; **properly knowing and applying regulations in the field of taxation**; **properly knowing and applying regulations in the field of labour**: employee benefits; employee training; employee compensations; employee communication; assessment of performance; manager's functions and responsibilities; keeping high morale among employees; issue solving; employee selection; job profile and establishment of organisational structure; **properly knowing and applying regulations concerning**: "good practices" [4, 10] in the food industry (buildings, equipments, maintenance; design, construction, lighting, ventilation, sanitary equipment, equipment cleaning, material manipulation, pest control); food services; organisation of small zoos and domestic animal exhibitions; land planning;

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\*Corresponding author: Petroman Ioan,  
Email: [i\\_petroman@yahoo.com](mailto:i_petroman@yahoo.com)

health; **acquiring the skills necessary in public relations**: communication skills; inter-personal skills; patience.

In order to achieve these goals, we need to observe a very detailed programme of the implementation of rural agri-tourism or farm tourism activities and the principles of destination management [8, 11].

## 2. Materials and methods

To achieve this scientific approach, we have analysed in detail the way in which destination management impacts the development of a potentially real agri-tourism area to develop solutions that contribute to the improvement of destination management on agri-tourism farms that develop both agricultural (plant growing and animal breeding) and agri-tourism activities. The reason why we insist on this aspect is that, on one hand, foreign tourists interested in this type of tourism are already familiarised with this hybrid tourism and, on the other hand, Romanian tourists possibly interested in this type of tourism are not at all attracted by the perspective of carrying out agricultural activities: we should, therefore, offer them something else besides fruit picking or farm activities, e.g. some form of entertainment.

## 3. Results and discussion

One of the most important aspects of management in farm tourism is, no matter the type of tourism practiced, **destination management**. This type of management is defined as the **management of the flow of information from services providers and agri-tourism services directly to the consumers or indirectly, through commercial agents**. **Destination management** is the type of management based on **knowledge management** that, in the informational infrastructure constituted from methodologies, technologies, and practices, allows the development of necessary mechanisms and their access to reach certain goals in a business [1, 11].

We consider that the main steps in knowledge management are as follows: accessing valuable knowledge from external sources; facilitating the increase of knowledge volume; generating new knowledge; integrating knowledge into processes,

produce and/or services; measuring knowledge value and management impact; representing knowledge; transferring existing knowledge to all involved parties; using accessible knowledge in decision-making.

Technological components are extremely important in the **management of theoretical and practical knowledge concerning farm agri-tourism** nowadays for reasons more than obvious [4]. These components are as follows: a **collection of documents** (a database that contains a large number of digital objects – documents, photos, notes, texts, etc. – usually called a knowledge base); a **graphical representation** for the virtualisation of the semantic content of the database whose main component is a system of keywords in which each element of the document collection is associated with a set of keywords grouped into classes to ease the search; an **access system** that offers browsing and navigating instruments allowing the introduction of new information, the establishment of attributes for these information, and the management of allowances and properties. The second type of management absolutely necessary in farm agri-tourism management is the **integrated management of quality in agri-tourism destinations**. To improve destination management on agri-tourism farms, we need to develop a code of good practices in the integrated management of quality (IMQ) in agri-tourism destinations (Table 1).

This is how we can design all the necessary elements of a quality agri-tourism activity on the farm – *attractions and events; accommodation; marketing and communication; environment and infrastructure; reception, guidance, and information; local products and gastronomy; recreation in the countryside: attractions and events*, with preservation of authenticity and distinctiveness; *accommodation* at comfort standards common to civilisation, with preservation of traditional elements; *marketing and communication*, with preservation of visitor contact and through the broadcasting of messages and images that do not engender false expectations from the visitors; *environment and infrastructure*, with good transportation conditions and with preservation of environmental quality; *friendly reception, guidance, and effective information* of the visitors no matter the time and place; *local products and gastronomy*,

**Table 1.** Code of good practices in the Integrated Management of Quality (IMQ) in rural tourism

Goal of IMQ	- improving visitor satisfaction
IMQ tries to improve:	- local economy;
	- environment;
	- life quality of the local community.
IMQ suggests:	- establishing objectives;
	- cooperating;
	- understanding visitors;
	- establishing standards;
	- getting feed-back from visitors;
	- improving;
	- checking impacts.

through the strengthening of the relationship between gastronomy, food production, agriculture, and farm aspect maintenance; *recreation in the countryside*, through hitchhiking, cycling, and sports that can be practiced in the countryside.

A third type of management essential in farm agri-tourism is “**best management practices**” based on the following main aspects: developing good community relationships; maintaining a safe, accessible environment; offering authentic

experiences at the farm; offering educational experiences; offering proper public facilities; offering excellent personalised services; planning financial future.

Starting from these aspects, and aiming at improving destination management on agri-tourism farms, we need to develop a code that contains 15 principles that contribute to the improvement of farm management (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Principles of the code of good management practices

Principle	Details
Care of details	Supplying enough information, checking the equipment, supplying supplementary services
Authenticity	Honouring and celebrating special rural heritage by real presentations
Clear communication	Effective communication with all involved parties
Commitment	Transmitting enthusiasm to all the parties involved
Distinctiveness	Supplying special and distinct features and destination flavour
Sustainability	Management of tourism impact
Inclusiveness	Equal treatment for all the visitors, including special needs ones
Integration	Care for quality should be integrated in all the tourism functions of the destination
Interdependency	Interdependency between tourism, agriculture, crafts, transportation, and local services
Monitoring	Monitoring and assessing the impact on visitors, enterprises, environment, and local community
Consumer orientation	Closeness to the visitor, understanding his needs, and checking the way in which these needs have been met
Partnership	Cooperating with small tourism enterprises, tourism organisations, and community
Rationalisation	Giving-up sub-standard activities, or combining them to produce superior activities
Market realism	Informed and realistic assessment of the area potential on the market, with identification of very genuine competitive points
Time	Planning constant steps to take

## Conclusions

Agri-tourism potential cannot be valorised if the people involved in tourism, tour-operators and

tourists, have no access to a few elements necessary to practice tourism: a travel agency that recommends the best places to practice farm agri-tourism; a means of transport that takes you to the

wanted place; a place to be accommodated; a place to get good food; one or several places to have fun as you wish.

The appearance of new distribution channels and of changes of power structures has led to changes of priorities in the field of distribution and of managerial decisions now that distribution has become, for many tour-operators, a critical aspect of strategic management.

Of all the reasons why any tour-operator should be successfully distributed, we can mention the following: *profit margins are narrow*: many travel agencies obtain small profits with high costs of distribution therefore this is the field in which managers can save money; *distribution is a very competitive sector*; *intermediary power is high*, which makes this aspect of marketing mix important; *global market enhances* a proper distribution of management; *tourism product perishability* and the necessity associated to it of removing any stock in excess at the last minute; *information intensity* is crucial in decision-making, since it needs to reach consumers properly and timely – hence the crucial importance of the management of the flow of information.

Another important role is that of the integrated management of tourism destination quality, and the solutions to be applied should include a code of good management practices.

Best management practices should be based on minimum 15 principles that contribute to the improvement of agri-tourism farm management through the development of new products and specific brands.

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