



## **LOGISTIC PROCEDURES IN THE PROMOTION OF AGRITOURISM**

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### ***Abstract***

The article concerns logistic procedures in the promotion of agritourism services used by farmers engaged in agritourism and by agritourism associations, local authorities in municipalities and agricultural advisory centers. On the basis of the literature, various promotional instruments used by rural service providers and by these entities in the communication processes with the market were shown. Logistic aspects concerning planning and implementation of agritourism development were presented, mainly the role of agritourism information and promotional activities in these processes.

Farmers providing agritouristic services most often use various forms of promotion. Among them, they use online advertising, publishing houses, including catalogs, trips to agritourism fairs, personal sale and different forms of public relation. In the agritourism promotion they often have support from local authorities, agritourism associations and agricultural advisory centres. All promotional activities undertaken by farmers themselves and with the support of these entities constitute an important part of agrotourism logistics.

**Keywords:** logistics, promotion, agritourism.

## INTRODUCTION

Agritourism is a form of rural tourism where tourists spend their leisure time on active farms. In Poland, the development of agritourism relies mainly on attractive natural qualities of the environment and an appropriate level of transport infrastructure (Nowakowska-Grunt *et al.* 2017). Most often, tourists choose tourist farms located in lake districts, in mountain regions or within short distances from national or landscape parks. Environmentally attractive areas, including many protected ones, represent a very important motivating factor in the process of choosing from a range of tourist farms.

The development of agritourism services in rural areas is also determined by marketing and logistics operations. In the case of the former, apart from a properly prepared offer, an important role is also played by promotional activities undertaken by rural service providers or developed by those entities for which acceleration of agritourism is important. These include commune authorities and district authorities local authorities, agritourism associations, which bring together farmers running tourist farms, and agricultural advisory centres. With regard to logistics operations focused on the promotion of agritourism, no research on this process has been undertaken so far on a broader scale. Promotion of specialisation appears to be something natural, a consequence of any globalisation (Brzozowska *et al.* 2017), also in agritourism. Today, innovativeness, which is associated with specialisation, impacts competitiveness of tourist farms. In this context, of importance are not only financial resources of a tourist farm, but, above all, human and social capital (Sala 2015). In a free market economy, implementing innovative solutions allows farms to stay competitive, and thus attractive and profitable.

However, for innovation in agritourism to be created, certain conditions need to be fulfilled. Based on analysis of the development of innovations, we can distinguish elements that comprise innovative systems. Globalisation processes contribute to the modification of the development of agritourism and significant innovation. There is a shift towards increasing tourist farms' competitiveness, decreasing the impact of government institutions, and changing the ownership structure, manifested in a continuous increase in the role of private capital in allocation decisions. Innovations in agritourism services are a consequence of multiple network relationships among the elements of agritourism environment that comprise the system (Sala 2015).

Innovativeness in agritourism is associated with information. Numerous studies addressed the issues of the flow of agritourism information as determining promotional activities and as an element of logistic processes. It is important to bear in mind that logistic processes should be assessed both in terms of ensuring an efficient flow of resources and the level of generated costs (Mesjasz-Lech 2012), also with reference to agritourism.

Logistics occupies an important place in promotion of agritourism services. In this aspect, it is most often defined as a process of planning, executing and controlling an economically effective flow of raw materials, materials and relevant information from the point of origin to the point of consumption.

In the case of entrepreneurship-based agritourism (Kościelniak *et al.* 2017) vs agritourism, logistics in promotional activities involves effective provision of information about the services of tourist farms intended for potential tourists. It is also used to promote agritourism among the various organisations and entities mentioned above, as well as between them and direct agritourism operators, i.e. farmers.

## **RESEARCH AIM AND METHODOLOGY**

The aim of the paper is to present the aspect of logistic processes in promotional activities in the area of agritourism. To achieve such a goal, the authors presented the most important issues regarding agritourism logistics on the basis of literature. The flow of information is connected with logistics in agritourism, and thus various types of promotional activities. That's way they were also presented in the article and the most important institutions which support owners of agritourism farms. To achieve this goal, the results of research carried out in 2014 in 84 agritourism farms by one of the authors of this work were also used.

The paper describes the essence of agritourism as a specific form of rural tourism and its most important characteristics. It defines the concept of promotion of agritourism services, presenting its different types as well as entities and organisations engaged in the communication with the market. It also presents forms of cooperation of farmers running tourist farms with agritourism associations, local authorities and agricultural advisory centres in the area of promotional activities, with special reference to cooperation among the individual entities.

The publication is a form of a discourse in relation to the opinions and comments present in the literature which argues with various perspectives on the subjects of a policy for promotion of agritourism services, logistics in the activities of entities propagating recreation in the countryside and the most important and effective promotion tools.

### *Agritourism as the basic form of rural tourism*

Rural tourism is one of the most popular forms of spending leisure time in Poland. It involves tourist trips to the countryside, whether by individual persons, families, groups of friends or members of clubs and associations. According to Dębniwska and Tkaczuk (1997), „rural tourism is one that takes place in rural areas and is adjusted to the conditions existing there, and uses natural local resources in a rational way”. Drzewiecki (2001), in turn, claims that „rural tour-

ism is a form of recreation that takes place in the setting of the „real countryside” and involves various types of recreational activities connected with the nature, hiking, health tourism, sightseeing, as well as cultural and ethnic tourism”.

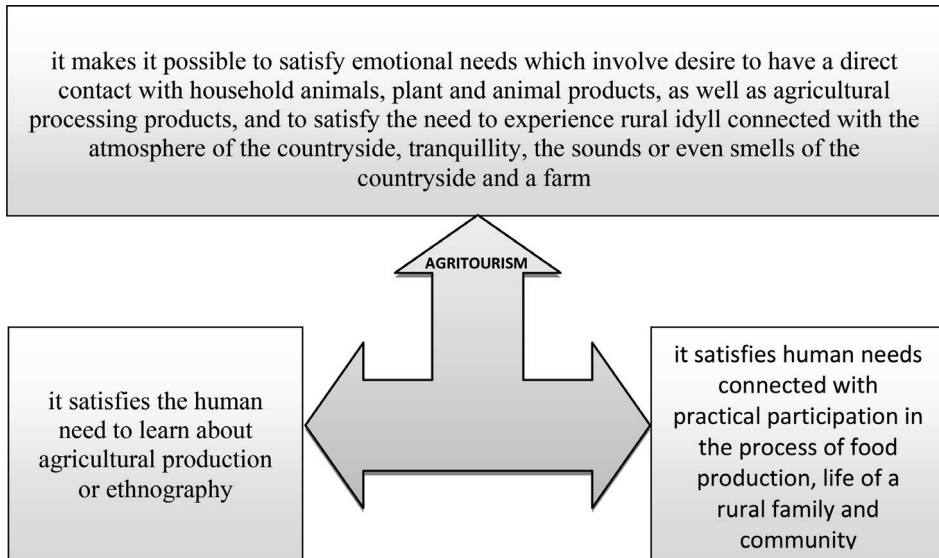
Tourists spending their holidays in rural areas, depending on the type of tourism and often also their budget, stay in various facilities providing accommodation services, using the services of typical hospitality facilities, such as hotels, motels, pensions or guest houses located in rural areas. Often, they choose camp sites, or, in the case of tourists hiking in the mountains, mountain hostels which provide accommodation and gastronomic services. However, given the low prices, the most popular accommodation options in rural areas include private accommodation (commonly known as „rooms to let”) and tourist farms. The latter are run by farmers who let rooms in their own houses to tourists, with profits from tourism activities being their additional or alternative source of income.

Multiple definitions of agritourism emphasize its direct connection with agriculture. Sikora (1999) writes that agritourism is „tourism connected with a stay on a tourist farm involving various forms of spending leisure time and tourism services provided within a farm”. Meyer (2004) thinks that agritourism is „a form of rural tourism that allows tourists and one-day visitors to experience a direct contact with a functioning agricultural, gardening, orchard or fishing farm and participate in the day-to-day life of a family who is professionally and personally connected with such activity”. Two important issues need to be highlighted in this definition. First, tourist farms also include gardening and orchard farms, i.e. those which are not engaged in animal husbandry. Second, for tourists, who usually live in the city, participation in the work of a farmer’s family, in the crop production or livestock production, is a significant form of recreational services.

A broader view of the phenomenon of agritourism is presented by Sznajder and Przezbórska (2006). The authors distinguish its three basic characteristics, as presented in Figure 1.

In Poland, agritourism is most often associated with small family-run farms. It is often there that significant material and non-material values of folk culture originate and are preserved, defining the identity of communities (Żmija and Szafrńska 2015). Cultural and historical heritage is, next to natural qualities of the environment, one of the most important factors in the development of agritourism services (Brzozowska 2013).

Thus, agritourism determines the socio-economic development of rural areas. It has an advantageous and positive impact on the life in the village and that of individual tourist farms, which provide basic services (accommodation and sometimes food) and complementary ones, mainly including active forms of recreation within a farm and outside (Mikuta and Żelazna 2004).



Source: own work based on Sznajder and Przebórska (2006)

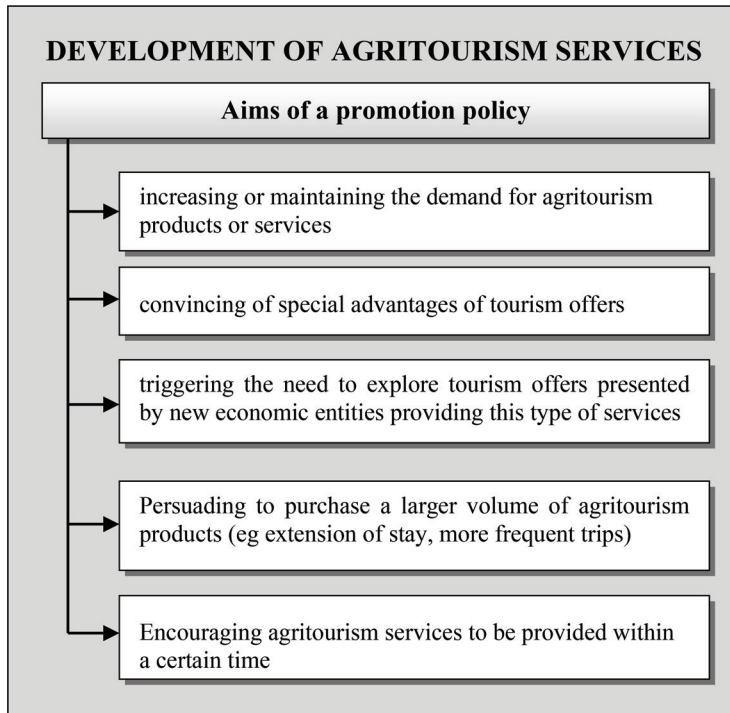
**Figure 1.** Characteristics of agritourism

*Promotion and types of agritourism services implemented by rural service providers*

The development of agritourism is mainly determined by effective promotional activities. Promotion of agritourism services aims to provide potential tourists with information about the attractions of the different tourist regions, their natural values of the environment and cultural values, but also about the benefits of staying on tourist farms. Detailed aims of a promotion policy in the development of agritourism services are presented in Figure 2.

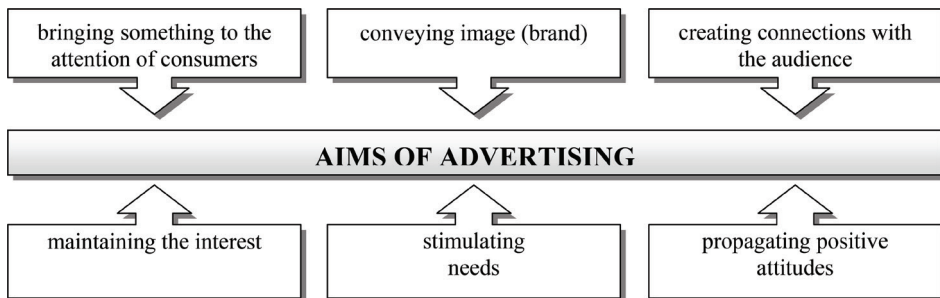
We have to agree with Sikora (2006) that promotion in agritourism is a complex process, as there is no one pattern for its effectiveness and efficiency. However, it has been empirically demonstrated that services on the specific and multifaceted agritourism market should be promoted by implementing various marketing instruments and available forms of communication with the market.

The above-mentioned tools for communication with the market in agritourism activities are also highlighted, among others, by Mikuta and Źelazna (2004), Jalinik (2005), Jalinik (2009), Sawicki and Mazurek-Kusiak (2010), Kuźniar (2013), Roman and Niedziółka (2017).



Source: own work based on Łęczycki (2002)

**Figure 2.** Detailed aims of a promotion policy in the development of agritourism services



Source: own work based on: Kruczek and Walas (2004)

**Figure 3.** Aims of advertising in agritourism

The most popular form of communication with the market in agritourism is advertising, which is a tool of targeted, paid, impersonal, mass audience directed

flow of market information using special means of communication. Advertising is now credited with underpinning enterprises' market success and is regarded as one of the most important instruments of a company (Kamińska and Szymańska 2016). The main aims of advertising are presented in Figure 3.

A tourist farm can use a range of advertising media, such as the Internet, daily press, industry magazines, the radio, TV, mail, outdoor advertising (display-boards, billboards, posters, leaflets), or catalogues (Jakubczyk-Gryszkiewicz and Gryszkiewicz 2007).

Presentation, which is the basic yet expensive instrument of promotion most often takes place during tourism exhibitions and fairs. The exhibitors at exhibitions usually include agritourism associations and representatives of commune authorities local authorities who wish to present the offer of tourist farms operating in their territory (Knecht 2009).

Public relations in agritourism refers to intentional activities of rural service providers through which they aim to create confidence in themselves and their products in potential customers, and to build and maintain a positive image of a tourist farm (Mikuta and Żelazna 2004). Forms of public relations include, among other things, tourism exhibitions and fairs, conferences, cultural events in the countryside, harvest festivals and other festivals.

Sales promotion in agritourism involves all material resources designed to quickly increase the sales, increase the attractiveness of a product, and make a consumer more inclined to buy a product by adding a unique advantage to it. They mainly take the form of price discounts and various kinds of gifts (Kruczek and Walas 2004). Small gifts handed to guests when they are leaving a tourist farm include in particular food products and local craft products (Mikuta and Żelazna 2004).

Personal selling in the case of agritourism most often takes place during a telephone conversation between a tourist farm owner and a potential tourist. It may also take place during talks conducted at agritourism fairs between a farmer offering rooms to let in his/her house and a person seeking to spend leisure time in the countryside.

As the example of using different types of promotional tools, the results of the surveys conducted with the owners of 84 agritourism farms in five communities in the Nowy Targ County in 2014 can be presented. It turned out, that service providers used various promotional tools in agritourism. By far the largest number of them, namely 74 used internet. They had their offer posted on the official website of their community. Moreover 20 of them were also promoted on the website of the agritourism association they belonged to. 28 farmers also promoted their agritourism farms in various types of publishing houses, mainly in catalogues. 9 owners, including 7 associated in the association, offered their services at agritourism fairs, too. Supplementary promotion, especially in the form of price reduction, was used by 14 farmers (Niedziółka 2014).

### *Logistics in agritourism*

As agritourism is part of agribusiness, we should look first at the logistics process from the perspective of its development. Logistics can be an important contributing factor to the improvement of competitiveness and effectiveness in agribusiness. In this context, it is most often defined as management of the operations of moving and storing goods to enable the flow of products from their places of origin to the places of consumption, and as management of product-related information (Klepacki 2016).

In the economy, logistics is becoming increasingly important. By managing the flow of loads „from one place, savings in terms of both costs and time can be achieved” (Baran *et al.* 2008). Logistics makes it possible to overcome time and space when carrying out the movement of goods (Kiperska-Moroń and Krzyżaniak 2009). It is thus necessary to centralize the different areas within an enterprise, such as production, marketing and accounting. Most often, operations undertaken as part of logistics are connected with movement and transport, warehousing and storing, packing, handling of materials, stock level controls, order delivery, demand forecasting, customer service, location of plants and warehouses, and waste collection and disposal (Coyle *et al.* 2007). The basic aim of logistics focuses on ensuring adequate efficiency of the flow and an appropriate level of customer service while minimising incurred costs (Zielińska and Lejda 2010). The key objective is customer satisfaction. All activities undertaken within the supply chain should be oriented to satisfying customers’ needs. They may be anticipatory in character, i.e. result from earlier analysis of the environment and resources, or adaptive, i.e. aim to adapt to the current, turbulent situation of the market and environment (Wicki and Rokicki 2011). Tourist farms engage in both anticipatory and adaptive activities connected with the services they provide.

The concept of logistics in marketing and promotional activities of agritourism has not been properly explored and elaborated on for far. Niedziółka made an attempt several years ago to define this phenomenon, describing logistics in promotion of agritourism services as „a process of the flow of information about agritourism goods and services to those potentially interested in practising agritourism and to tourists who are already staying with rural accommodation providers with or without the participation of certain entities and institutions” (Niedziółka 2012).

In the table below, examples of logistics activities in agritourism are presented.

Information flow is a key factor in a policy for promoting agritourism services. Information plays a very important role in every form of tourism and is one of the most significant determinants of the development of tourism industry. Piwnik (1995) defines tourist information as provision of any data that is of interest to a tourist, such as:



- about tourist and tourist-related infrastructure (accommodation, food, communication facilities),
- about tourist attractions, including recreational ones,
- about health beneficial values and forms of environmental protection (national parks, landscape parks and others),
- about regulations to be followed by foreign tourists, how to move around border zones,
- about the addresses of sales outlets, dates of fairs, shows, exhibitions, facilities to be used for tourist-related purposes.

**Table 1.** Examples of logistics activities in agritourism

Activity	Ways of activity
Flow of information	Cooperation in the field of promotion and information between individual farmers and local authorities, agritourism associations.
Using by providers various tools in agritourism promotion	Internet advertising on the official website of the commune, tourist fairs, public relation, personal sail, publishing, mainly catalogs.
Creating an interesting offer, agritourism product	Creating a brand-name product for example for recreation or accommodation.

Source: own work

In logistic activities with regard to promotion of agritourism, an important place is occupied by cooperation between farmers engaged in agritourism and various entities. The latter include agritourism associations, whose main aim is promotional activity, gmina local authorities, which often cooperate with individual providers of agritourism services and associations, and agricultural advisory centres.

Such centres are worth mentioning in terms of their activity in the area of organising agritourism courses and trainings.

Logistics in agritourism, in the aspect of institutional support can be illustrated by an example of two rural communes belonging to the Nowy Targ County: Krościenko nad Duanjcem Łapsze Niżne. In both rural commune the surveys were carried out with 20 owners of agritourism farms. Survey results relating to logistics in agritourism showed, that in the first commune five service providers in the past received support in the promotion of their services. They received help from the agritourism association, local government authorities and agricultural advisory center. In the second commune, only four farmers benefited from the support of self-government authorities in the field of agritourism training. Most of the owners of agritourism farms in both communes use internet in their promotion, 17 and 16 people respectively (Niedziółka 2014). It is necessary

to add, that Nowy Targ County is a typical attractive tourism region with many natural tourist values. In rural areas with little tourist attractions, agritourism is poorly developed and thus logistics in this sector is poor, too.

#### *Promotional activities of agritourism associations*

Agritourism associations play an important role in the development of agritourism in Poland.

They are organisations that support tourist farms, with their statutory objectives usually including: informing about natural values of the environment and cultural values of a particular area, and creating, publishing and distributing maps, brochures and catalogues presenting agritourism offers (Sznajder and Przezbórska 2006).

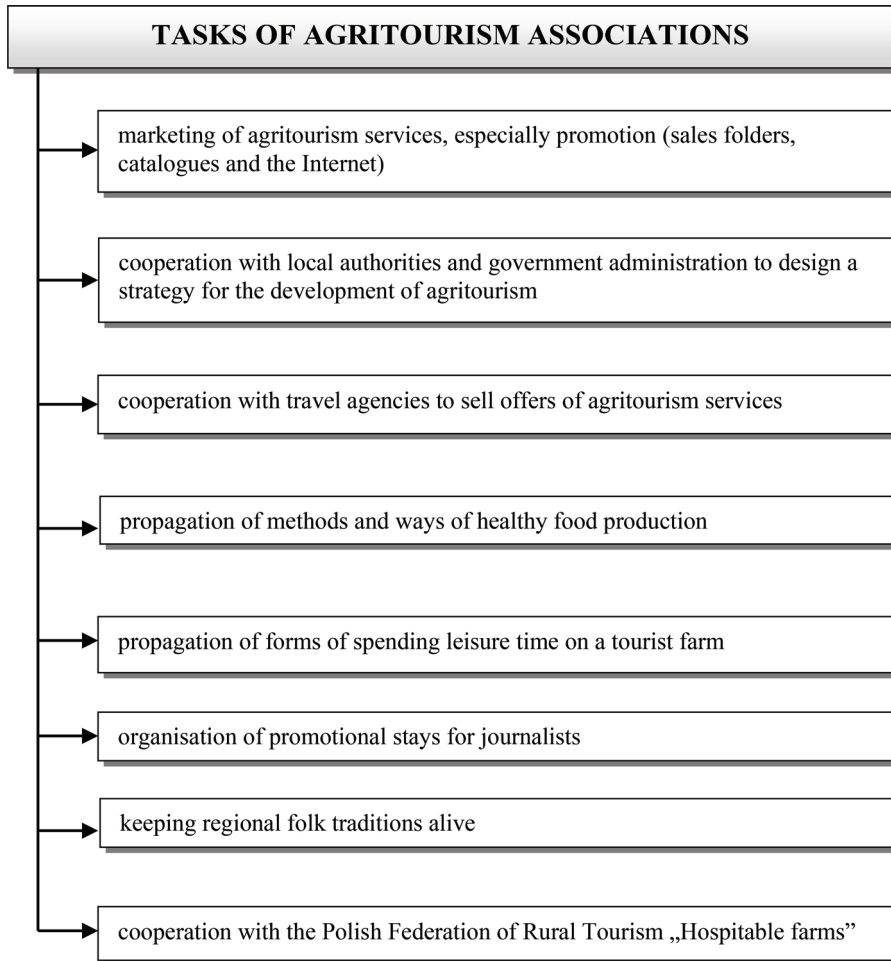
Basically, such associations bring together farmers engaged in agritourism and support their activity mainly in promotional activities. This is manifested, among other things, in organisation of trips to agritourism fairs and exhibitions and in publishing activity aimed at promoting offers of stays on tourist farms. These institutions organise or co-organise, usually in cooperation with gmina local authorities or the agricultural advisory centre, agritourism courses and trainings for their members as well as farmers planning to run tourist farms (Figure 4).

In logistic activities as part of the promotion of agritourism, the associations need to actively cooperate as part of their own activities and work with the local authorities, usually at a gmina level, agricultural advisory centres and powiat and regional divisions of the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture – in this case, mainly in the aspect of joint organisation of agritourism courses, and also promotion.

#### *Logistics activities of the local authorities in promotion of agritourism*

In promotion of agritourism services, a very important role is played by gmina local authorities. Their activities as part of communication with the market determine whether tourists will visit a particular gmina and stay on tourist farms.

Official websites of many communes in Poland contain information about facilities providing accommodation services. They also include tourist farms, which most often provide rooms to let for guests. Apart from online advertising, local authorities also promote agritourism services in a variety of publications, such as catalogues or brochures. Sometimes, they co-organise, for example with an agritourism association and an agricultural advisory centre, trips for tourist farms' owners to agritourism fairs.



Source: own work based on: Filip and Lechwar (1998)

**Figure 4.** Tasks of Agritourism associations

Local authorities in rural communes with attractive natural values often cooperate in the development of agritourism with agritourism associations, agriculture advisory centres and with local action groups, to which they often belong. In the field of agritourism promotion, local government authorities cooperate with agrotourism associations. (Sznajder and Przezbórska 2006). Cooperation between local authorities and agricultural advisory centers is most often seen in the organization of agrotourism courses (Sikora 2012).

Local authorities devise, or have devised, a strategy for gmina development, which is one of basic instruments in tourism management. Such a document, which usually covers a period of a dozen or so years, should address issues connected with the tourism market, planning of tourism development, building of tourist infrastructure, promotion, and training of staff for tourism-related purposes.

According to Balińska and Sikorska-Wolak (2003), in rural areas, especially those with attractive environmental, cultural and infrastructure resources, which make them good places to pursue leisure and recreational activities, agritourism should become an important element in the gmina's development strategy. Strategic documents should address essential issues connected with the development of agritourism, namely: promotion of agritourism undertaken not only by service providers but also by the particular gmina, and the need for a gmina's cooperation as part of promotional activities with farmers engaged in agritourism, agritourism associations and agricultural advisory centres.

A strategy for tourism development, including agritourism, in a rural gmina, is an important tool for management of the local tourism economy in the countryside. It is a prospective and long-term plan of action (Michałowski and Ziółkowski 2002). Therefore, the process of formulating the strategy should involve choosing the most important objectives and tasks to be implemented.

Wiatrak (2005) thinks that the effectiveness of a strategy depends on how it is developed, with an important role played by information. That is why designing the strategy should – according to this author – involve: research of the tourism market, planning of the development of agritourism, building of tourist and tourist-related infrastructure, training of staff to work in tourism, promotion of agritourism, and formulation of conclusions for the future.

Marketing strategies for the development of agritourism are closely connected with the improvement in the standard of provided services. They may impact the quality of provided services, accommodation, food and recreational services. A marketing strategy in agritourism often presents the gmina, powiat or voivodeship as an agritourist region in order to attract investors, sponsors and other organisations willing to cooperate and invest in agritourism activity (Wiatrak 2005).

A strategy for agritourism development in a gmina should be implemented according to the principles of sustainable development, i.e. a concept connected with conservation of natural and cultural environment. It is worth adding that sustainable development of rural areas is among the most important issues in the concept of development within the European Union, therefore it should be implemented in the context of the broadly defined idea of sustainable development (Popławski 2009). Naturally, the issues of sustainable development of rural areas also apply to agriculture and agribusiness, which are key factors in the development of agritourism. Sustainable agriculture should have the following characteristics (Czyżewski 2015):

- natural resources should be used in a way that enables them self-renewal,
- agricultural production growth should only be achieved through increase in the productivity of resources, rather than their consumption,
- it should be minimally vulnerable to fluctuations and shocks.
- it should be a symbiosis of agricultural and eco-regional objectives.

Such a vision of sustainable agriculture may certainly contribute to an even more intensive development of agritourism in the future. Both livestock husbandry and plant production, implemented in compliance with the concept of sustainable development, should play an important role in the development of agritourism services in Poland. Sustainable agriculture may involve, among other things, production of organic food (Runowski 2009). Combined with agritourism, it will be a good quality tourist service and a unique product for tourists.

To sum up, logistics in agritourism is a very important factor in the development of this form of rural tourism. Logistics concerns effective flows of information about tourist services provided by farmers. In logistics, rural service providers are often supported by agritourism associations and also by local authorities and agricultural advisory centres.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

One of the most important and effective factors in the development of agritourism services is their promotion. Farmers running tourist farms and entities engaged in the development of agritourism should implement a promotion policy following logistic procedures, including through appropriate cooperation between each other.

Logistics in promotion of agritourism is manifested in the activities of agritourism associations, local authorities and agricultural advisory centres. Such entities, mainly the first two ones, aim to inform possibly the widest group of potential customers about the benefits of spending leisure time in the countryside and using accommodation, food and recreation services on tourist farms.

Cooperation among various entities in promotional activities in agritourism involves implementation of a range of forms of communication with the market, such as online advertising, publications presenting agritourism offers, or trips to tourism exhibitions and agritourism fairs. There are also other tools used by individual farmers and the above-mentioned entities to communicate with the market. In order to promote recreation on tourist farms, they implement various forms of public relations, sales promotion and personal selling.

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Received: 14.05.2018

Accepted: 23.08.2018