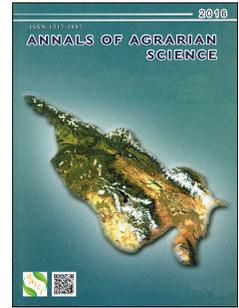


Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S1512-1887(17)30109-4

DOI: [10.1016/j.aasci.2017.07.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aasci.2017.07.008)

Reference: AASCI 142

To appear in: *Annals of Agrarian Sciences*

Received Date: 22 March 2017

Revised Date: 1512-1887 1512-1887

Accepted Date: 28 May 2017

Please cite this article as: O. Paresishvili, L. Kvaratskhelia, V. Mirzaeva, Rural tourism as a promising trend of small business in Georgia: Topicality, capabilities, peculiarities, *Annals of Agrarian Sciences* (2017), doi: 10.1016/j.aasci.2017.07.008.

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Rural tourism as a promising trend of small business in Georgia: topicality, capabilities, peculiarities

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Received 22 March 2017; Accepted: 28 May 2017

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ABSTRACT

The article analyses prospects for the development of small tourism business in Georgia, in particular in rural settlements – so-called "rural tourism" (agritourism, farming tourism) which is a fast emerging sector of small entrepreneurship.

Capabilities and conditions for the development of rural tourism are examined for different regions of Georgia. As it is noted, there are distinguishing characteristics in each region (natural environment, economic level, traditions of economic management, rules for family farm arrangement, rituals and customs, etc.) which differ regions from each other.

Careful consideration is given to the objects which are of interest for agritourists in rural settlements in Georgian regions: Kakheti, mountainous area of Georgia (Svaneti, Racha-Lechkhumi, Mtskheta-Mtianeti), Achara, Guria, Samegrelo, Imereti, Shida and Kvemo Kartli, as well as to the issues of readiness for their acceptance.

It is emphasized in the article that the development of rural tourism in the country will promote economic growth in the regions, ensure employment of local people, improve their well-being, and, what is most crucially for mountainous regions, solve pressing demographic problem (depopulation of villages, ageing of population, young people's migration to urban areas, etc.).

Keywords: Rural tourism, Agritourism, Small business, Income source, Family guest house.

Current situation in economic development of Georgia puts forward a task of looking for new forms of economy management taking into consideration the interests of both producers and consumers. One of such forms of economy management is small business: its development is in the interests of the state because it provides employment for a considerable part of population.

One of the fast-emerging sectors of small business is small tourism business in rural settlements (so-called "rural tourism") which is well represented in such countries as Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Great Britain, France, Italy and others. Noteworthy is the fact that according to some sources, in the EU countries 10-20% of the income from tourism industry falls to the rural tourism.

Some of the abovementioned countries are very similar to Georgia by their physical-geographic parameters (land area, landscape, population size, natural-recreational potential, etc.) which suggests us that gathered experience in these countries in a number of spheres may be of use for the development of small tourism business in Georgia [1].

Rural tourism is a sector of tourism industry targeted at using natural, cultural-historical and other resources and peculiarities of rural settlements for complex tourist product development.

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