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## **Producers' Organization Approach in Rural Tourism: Agritourism Cooperatives**

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**Abstract:** Cooperatives are organizations that can make significant contributions to the socio-economic development of rural areas. Agritourism is defined as tourism activities for attracting visitors to areas used for agricultural purposes. Cooperatives help to increase the welfare of the local people lives in the rural areas. Agritourism cooperatives are particular kinds of cooperatives related to agritourism activities. In this study, the development of agriculture tourism has been examined within the producers' organization agritourism cooperatives approach. The contributions of the agritourism cooperatives have discussed with the help of the values and principles of cooperatives. There are only a few samples of agritourism cooperatives worldwide, which focuses only agritourism activities but it should be more common. this study tries to show the necessity of the agritourism cooperatives.

**Keywords:** agritourism cooperatives, rural tourism, agricultural.

## **Introduction**

Over the decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Tourism is now being implemented as an instrument of economic development in many countries (Anonymous, 2007).

For many years, the term “rural development” is meant to mean agricultural development in Turkey and studies have been concentrated on this issue. The expectations of the people living in rural areas could not be responded adequately. Rural development can only be achieved by balanced development of all related sector such as agriculture, industry, and tourism (Celtik 2014)

Different kinds of tourism have emerged in the recent years such as ecotourism, green tourism, soft tourism, responsible tourism, rural tourism, sustainable tourism, special interest tourism (Beeton, 2006). These are all alternatives to mass tourism as a result of high demand in this industry. Rural tourism has various sub-tourism types like ecotourism and agritourism.

## **Rural Tourism and Agritourism**

Rural tourism is a type of tourism takes place in rural areas, providing additional income to the local population, and offering differentiated holiday products to consumers.

Rural tourism, which has developed in the last 20 years, is defined as people's experience in rural areas away from city life for various purposes (Soykan, 2002). Rural tourism provides many benefits to these areas particularly such as employment. Rural tourism consists of agricultural tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism (Aref and Gill, 2009)

In general, Agritourism is defined as applications for attracting visitors to areas used for agricultural purposes. In simple words, it is a visit to a farm or to any kind of agricultural business for tourism.

Agritourism is a commercial investment that combines agriculture and tourism to work in agricultural enterprises engaged in crop and animal production. According to another detailed definition, agricultural tourism is a visit to an agricultural business or any agricultural area such as field, garden; for the purpose of entertainment, education or taking an active role in daily agricultural activities (Anonymous, 2008). Accordingly, it is essential that activities like accommodation in agricultural areas, eating and drinking facilities can be used for both agriculture and tourism at the same time (Çıkın et al., 2009). Agricultural tourism also reveals traditional food, handicrafts and cultural features in the countryside.

As a kind of niche tourism, in agritourism people are looking for an authentic farm experience that connects them with the past, or teaches them something new. Visitors also want to get rid of the stress of everyday life and live a simpler life (Roth and Ochterski, 2016). Tourists can get an experience with agricultural activities such as horse riding, cow and goat milking, and picking fresh fruit and vegetables by themselves.

In agricultural business in order to tend to the agritourism, the number of people working in the business, the business's infrastructure facilities, education level of producers, accommodation facilities for tourists, agricultural products produced in the farm, agricultural activity type, the natural structure are essential (Gümüş 2015).

### **Cooperatives**

According to The International Co-operative Alliance; “A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise” (ICA, 2017). Cooperatives are not associations in which local residents are members, but instead, they are accepted as partners.

Cooperative activities in rural areas have a significant place in terms of increasing competitiveness of agriculture. The development and strengthening of the producer’s cooperatives offer the opportunity for marketing of the local products more efficiently. In this context, cooperatives are one of the most critical tools in rural development (Mrdalj, Todić, 2012).

Agricultural cooperatives provide powerful economic advantages to producers through the accumulation and sharing of resources, access to markets, and the strengthening of the higher returns and bargaining position of their products (ILO, 2017). It also offers benefits for the development of local investments of cooperatives partners. In addition, cooperatives take into consideration the social protection needs of their partners, especially in the crisis periods to protect their economic power.

### **Agritourism Cooperatives and tourism**

It is stated at the UN Sustainable Development Conference (Rio + 20) in 2012 that “well-designed and well-managed tourism” can contribute to sustainable development, employment and economic development processes on a global scale (Rio, 2012).

Cooperative services are designed and managed in a democratic way to respond to the needs of the community (CICOPA, 2017). The vital role of participatory and community-based organizations like cooperatives in promoting tourism has yet to be recognized.

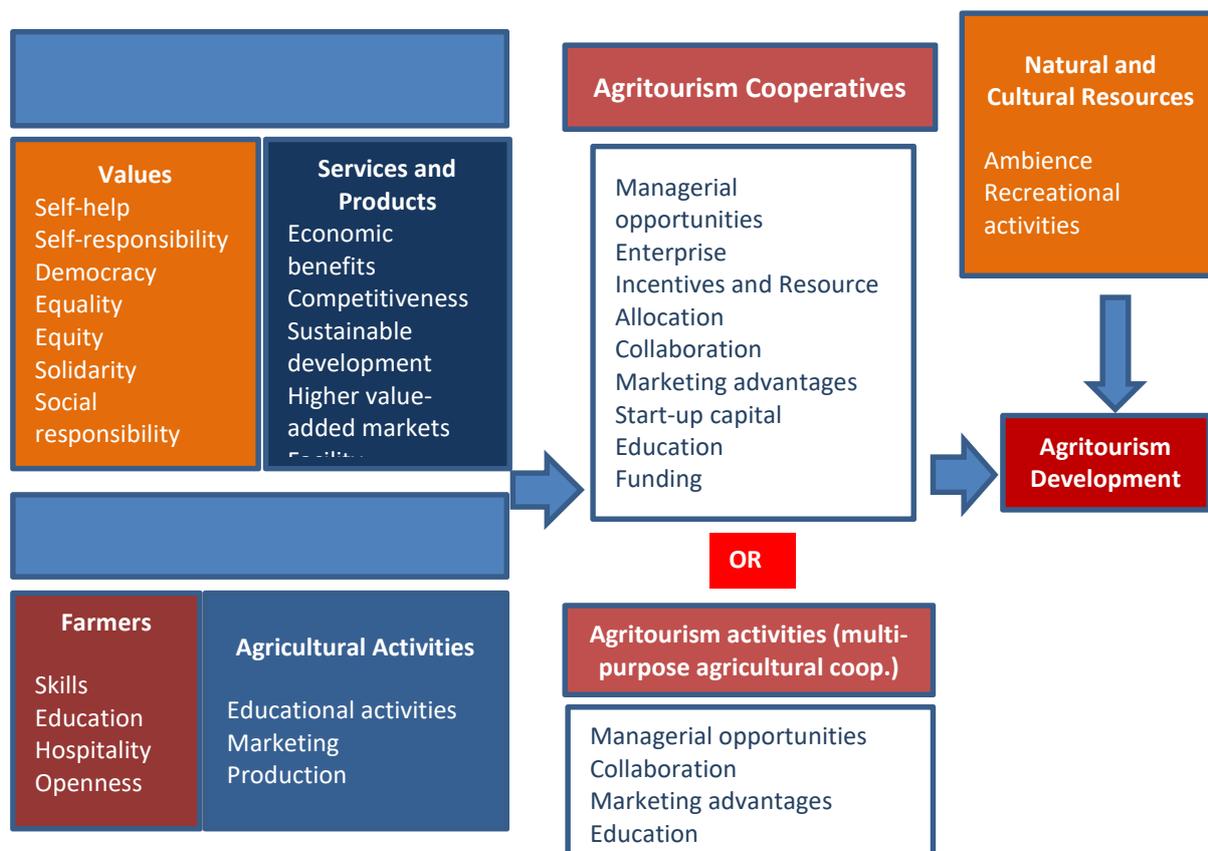
Development of agricultural tourism through cooperatives can be done in two ways:

The first way is to establish «agricultural tourism cooperative» which undertakes all agricultural tourism activities in these provinces. The second way is to develop specific agricultural tourism activities in the context of a multipurpose agricultural cooperative.

As shown in Figure 1, Cooperatives provides some values, services, and products. These values and principles are crucial for the continuation of the ordinary life.

Cooperatives provide their partners with significant advantages in their competitiveness and infrastructure investments, especially economic benefits. It is easier to access funds and incentives as a requirement of institutionalization.

In the development of agricultural tourism, producers should also have qualifications such as education level, farming skill, accommodation facilities. Using all these qualities, they can present agricultural tourism activities such as educational experience, local product marketing. The “agricultural tourism cooperatives” proposed in this study also provide a structure that will accelerate the development of tourism by taking advantage of the characteristics of cooperatives such as management, access to incentives and provision of infrastructure investments. Co-operatives' market power, initial capital, and training will make this process easy and fast.



*Figure 1. Agritourism Development Model through Cooperatives*  
 Sources: This framework was inspired by Gümüş, 2015, ILO, 2017, Aref and Gill, 2009, Mrdalj, Todić, 2012, Iakovidou, 1997.

Besides Multi-purpose agricultural cooperatives have some advantages but not as much as standalone Agricultural Cooperatives. All these provide Agricultural development.

**Agritourism Cooperatives Examples**  
***Agritourism Cooperatives in Greece***

Three main organization are related to the development of agrotourism in Greece:

- 1) The Ministry of Agriculture
- 2) The General Secretariat for Equality
- 3) The Agricultural Bank of Greece

The activities for the foundation of women's agro-tourism cooperative have been undertaken by the General Secretariat for Equality of the Ministry of the Presidency

Main Aims:

- An independent income for farming women
- The promotion of the social and economic role of women in the countryside
- Undertaking of responsibilities by women
- Social incorporation of women

- Creation of activities and jobs in the countryside
- The development of alternative tourism

This women's agritourism cooperative has played an essential role in the development of agritourism in the village. It has succeeded in placing the village on the Greek "alternative tourism" map. It has achieved the creation of home-based hospitality services for tourists while maintaining the natural, social and cultural authenticity of the region. In addition, it has developed new economic activity potential in rural areas boosting local economies and creating employment opportunities for the women (Iakovidou 1997).

### ***Agri and Rural Tourism Cooperative in India***

Main Aims:

- To aware, spread information about Agri & rural tourism to farmers in Maharashtra.
- To build Maximum agri-projects in Maharashtra
- To develop farmers & co-operative organization by gathering.
- To bring together all agritourism centers for marketing.
- To compromise with banks, states, state government for economic help in agritourism.

In this cooperative in India, farmers are inspired by providing training for best quality services. Farmers are guided & trained for Agri & rural tourism to bring the culture of Maharashtra in tourism map in India (Anonymous 2017).

### ***Karaburun Women's Agritourism Cooperative***

Representatives of the women cooperative have visited Petra on the island of Lesbos in Greece in an attempt to make acquaintances and to land to learn from the experiences of women engaged in similar activities.

Main Aims:

- To develop agritourism and to start a local house-boarding business in the Karaburun Peninsula.
- To contribute to family and household incomes

### **Conclusions**

Since people working in the farming sector have relatively low income and low-educated level, providing additional income for them is necessary. The growing demand for visiting the rural areas may provide an essential contribution to the development of tourism in terms of income to the farmers in these areas.

Rural tourism cannot be considered without Agritourism. In some countries, Agritourism is supported as a cooperative extension rather than Agritourism Cooperatives. In some countries, it is known as farm tourism cooperatives. There are only a few samples of Agritourism cooperatives worldwide, which focuses only Agritourism activities but it should be more common. The most important advantage of agricultural tourism cooperatives is that volunteer producers can realize tourism activities by taking advantage of cooperative values and principles.

The institutional structure to be created at this point will be able to make more convenient use of the incentives and play an active role in sharing the income

obtained. Agritourism cooperatives may help the producer to have an additional income.

This help will be in such different ways.

- Farmers may rent their houses for accommodation of agritourists
- Farmers can get help from the voluntary agritourists for their agricultural activities directly.

- Producers may sell Agricultural products. Agritourism is significant when a community is getting organized for involvement in tourism activities.

Cooperatives and other organizations will impact the tourism policy-making process better. Similarly, Agritourism co-operatives need to be considered in order to be successful because they can be affected by the general problems of co-operatives.

Well-planned and integrated tourism in natural, social and cultural areas can contribute to the development of local people.

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