

- information centres throughout Poland
- Polish state tourist offices in foreign countries
- tourist and trade fairs in Poland and Germany.

Work with the travel trade

Opportunities for international tour operators to use Polish agritourism projects should be pursued. This will require farms being prepared to pay commission to agents, and this should be indicated in print. International operators will require easy booking procedures and a trade contact point and central reservation system should be established. An agency should be appointed to handle this service within Poland: this might be a role for the Gromada Agency, working on behalf of the new Polish Agritourism Association. The new product should be promoted to tour operators through mailings, features in trade press and newsletters and work at trade fairs. The Irish Farm Holidays Association has developed good central booking systems and many trade contacts; it may be worth talking to them about this.

Specialist tour operators also provide opportunities for marketing more specialised rural tourism products such as ecotourism packages involving wildlife appreciation, or walking programmes. These should be identified in the main target countries and contacted personally or through direct mail. Often it is best to work up products with these operators rather than present them with a rigid programme which may not suit their needs.

Media work

A good way of promoting interesting new rural tourism products is through travel features in newspapers and magazines and on TV. This will require considerable work, in Poland and abroad, building up contacts and presenting stories to journalists. In most countries the press offices of the national tourist boards play a key role in this. Press trips should be arranged for journalists to sample the product. Getting coverage in specialist magazines, for instance those covering wildlife and conservation, is an important way of promoting more specific destinations or products relating to ecotourism.

Local information

Attention should be paid to having good information on countryside activities in each local area. Rather than inclusive programmes of activities, European visitors are increasingly looking for information which they can use to plan their own stays in a flexible way. This can be made available by farmers to give to their guests or can be distributed through local information centres. In England the Tourist Information Centres run by the local authorities play an important role here. We suggested earlier in this report that information on rural activities should be assembled at the poviats level. Poviats might consider producing single information brochures outlining the possibilities, perhaps based on countryside maps. These can also help in managing visitors in sensitive areas, directing them away from

During the two seminars we made two presentations. The first outlined the nature and scale of farm tourism in England, the market response and the role of public sector agencies and farm groups in establishing and marketing the product. The second presented the theory behind a community based approach to integrated rural development in Slovenia and how this was working out in practice. A synopsis of both presentations is contained in the Appendix.

In the remainder of this report we give our assessment of the current situation of rural tourism in Poland as seen by us, and then comment on a number of specific issues which arose from our discussions.

Terms used in the report

Two terms used in Poland to describe the kind of tourism we are discussing are 'agritourism' and 'ecotourism'. We found different people using these terms in different ways, so it is helpful to be clear what we mean by them in this report.

agritourism: small scale tourism enterprises which give a genuine flavour of the countryside, offering accommodation or recreational facilities, principally on farms and providing an additional income for farmers.

ecotourism: carefully managed tourism which supports rather than harms the environment, principally for visitors who want to see and understand wildlife and important areas of natural heritage.

We also use the terms 'rural tourism' and 'farm tourism' which are used in England.

rural tourism: all kinds of tourism in the countryside, including agritourism and ecotourism amongst others.

farm tourism: agritourism which is strictly on working farms.

2 RURAL TOURISM IN POLAND - THE CURRENT POSITION

Recent action in Poland

Rural tourism in Poland is not new. There is a long tradition of Polish people taking holidays in the countryside, though this has been mainly in the form of visiting friends or family rather than taking paid accommodation - a tradition known as 'holidays under the pear tree'. Some areas of Poland developed more commercial rural tourism, for instance the letting of self-catering units in the Masurian lakeland or on the coast, and accommodation and facilities for visitors to the mountaineous areas.

Recent political and economic changes and the decline in income from agriculture have led to considerable interest in the last three years in developing tourism to support farmers and rural communities across all areas of Poland. This is seen as an urgent economic need, but also as an opportunity in the light of increased interest in rural tourism by European tourists and the pattern of development of agritourism movements and products in the west.

Agritourism is seen as an opportunity to:

- bring new income to farms without necessarily requiring a high level of capital investment;
- make use of attractive old buildings in the environment;
- provide an additional market for rural products and services of all kinds; and
- attract more visitors to Poland and its lesser known areas.

Over the last two years considerable progress has been made in developing agritourism. This has included activity by the MAFE and the SSTA, increasingly in partnership. Main initiatives include:

- work by the Agricultural Extension Centres (AECs) in identifying around 500 farms which are interested in agritourism;
- preparation of brochures promoting these farms in 15 voivodships, with progress being made in others;
- the setting up of local agritourism associations in some voivodships, run by and for farmers;
- action to establish a national Polish Agritourism Association;
- initial work on gathering information and preparing a national catalogue of agritourism offers;
- bringing in outside assistance to advise on publicity, standards and reservation systems, notably from Gîtes de France;
- training sessions for AEC officers (in Poland and abroad) and also for women on farms;
- initial work by the SSTA to identify barriers to agritourism development, clarify tax and legal questions, and develop a classification system.

Environmentalists in Poland are concerned about falling environmental standards and a lack of environmental awareness in the population. Some of the national parks and landscape parks in Poland are under considerable pressure from visitors, but others are not well known, are very attractive yet have limited infrastructure for visitors. There is a need for better management of visitors in certain areas and for a better balance between the parks.

Some agencies working in this area take a very traditional approach to nature conservation and see visitors as an intrusion and a threat. However, there is also a movement to build bridges between rural economic development and environmental protection, and increasingly local communities themselves are wanting to pursue this approach. Ecotourism is seen as very important in this as it:

- enables communities to see some economic return from caring for their environment;
- helps to educate the public;
- helps to provide a new source of income for environmental protection work.

An environmentally sensitive approach to tourism, involving local communities, is seen as important across the whole country, not just in the park areas.

The Institute for Sustainable Development has been seeking to show communities how they can help both their economy and the environment by following a particular course, which may include ecotourism. Initiatives have included:

- developing a model for gminas to follow and promoting this to gminas;
- preparing strategic plans for certain areas such as the cross-border area in the east;
- seeking to establish practical programmes in one or two areas;
- identifying political, legal and other barriers and making representation about this.

Assessment of the current position

We were very impressed with the considerable steps which have been taken in Poland within a short time. From our discussions and also from what we saw ourselves in the Elbląg area, we make the following assessment of the current position as a basis for developing rural tourism.

Strengths

- Considerable professional knowledge and awareness within the agencies.
- Great enthusiasm and an excellent momentum for action.
- Well established agricultural extension service operated through the Agricultural Centres across Poland, with a tradition of work in the home economics field based on women advising women.
- Very attractive countryside, with varied farm types, little fields and traditional methods of farming adding to the rural atmosphere.
- Many skills and interests within the farming community, including cooking, woodwork, crafts, fishing, knowledge of local history, etc.
- Pleasant house interiors, well kept.
- Many lesser-known natural areas, parks and forests with considerable wildlife interest.

Weaknesses

- Poor architecture on many farms; buildings appear modern and unattractive from the outside.
- Low standards in some homes, especially with respect to plumbing.
- Small farms with financial burdens and no money to invest.
- Lack of business management and marketing knowledge on farms.

- Limited experience of self-help and community initiatives; a mentality of waiting for others to do things.
- Poor physical infrastructure in some villages and communities.
- Great variation in quality and style between the marketing brochures which have been produced.
- Lack of coordination of activity between voivodships and too much competition between them, dissipating effort such as in marketing.
- Limited visitor infrastructure in many national and landscape parks.
- Insufficient marketing and distribution systems within Poland and externally, such as information centre networks, national tourist offices etc.
- Lack of knowledge of markets and marketing mechanisms.
- Too little money to assist training and marketing and provide help with investment.

Opportunities

- Growing international markets for rural tourism (we identify the main target markets below)
- Better coordination possibilities through the new Polish Association of Agritourism
- More efficient marketing opportunities possible using the new national catalogue which is being developed
- The chance of a centralised classification and registration to check, maintain and publicise standards
- Local authority reorganisation - creating larger voivodships which will benefit marketing, and smaller units (poviats) for the coordination of work between farmers
- Possibility of further help from western countries in training and examples of good practice.

Threats

- Too little commitment to agritourism and ecotourism, partly because it falls between the agriculture and tourism ministries and could be seen as too marginal by each of them.
- Too many farmers developing agritourism leading to oversupply and insufficient business for each; farmers may then become disillusioned.
- Weak domestic market within Poland with people unable to afford to pay to stay on farms.
- Unhelpful tax regulations making it uneconomic for farmers to enter agritourism.
- Too little environmental awareness and controls leading to harmful development.
- Inflexible attitudes in national parks preventing environmentally beneficial initiatives.
- Increasing competition from other Eastern European countries.

The strategy should be to build on the strengths, use the opportunities, overcome the weaknesses and minimise the threats. In the next section we comment in more detail on a number of specific issues which arise from this assessment.

3 ISSUES TO ADDRESS IN DEVELOPING RURAL TOURISM

1 Commitment from the State

We believe it is very important for ministers to recognise the very valuable role that ecotourism and agritourism can play in the rural economy and society of Poland. This has been recognised in most EC countries, not least in the UK.

The concept of sustainable rural tourism (or ecotourism) has been embraced by the environmental agencies in England. The national park authorities recognise that the maintenance of viable farming communities within the parks is essential for their maintenance and they have therefore been keen to help enterprises establish and market tourism offers which are sympathetic to the environment. For example, they have issued practical advisory publications with case studies to assist enterprises in sound practices.

In England approximately 15% of farms are involved in farm tourism, contributing on average 36% of their total farm income. State agencies and local authorities played a very important role in securing this level of activity. Although it is a free market, we have found that very small enterprises of this kind do need help and coordination.

From our experience in England, areas where we believe state involvement is critical are:

- maintaining an advisory service which is free or cheap to access
- providing well targetted financial incentives
- providing marketing support at a local level and nationally
- organising an objective classification system centrally so that the same standards can be applied across the whole country.

We expand on a number of these below.

2 Regulations and taxes

A major problem in Poland at the moment is the disincentive created by legislation and taxation policy. It is clearly important that punitive taxation is reduced. On the other hand some regulations are necessary in order to ensure good standards and safety. There should be no additional tax penalty from having a second enterprise which is not directly related to a benefit to the farmer or cost to the community. While we can't say precisely how this can be resolved, as the issue goes beyond agritourism, it may help to understand the principles and basis of the system in England.

In England there is no legal requirement for a farm tourism enterprise to be registered as such. There are, however, some other regulations with which most enterprises have to comply. The main ones include:

- Planning Permission (spatial/land use planning). If a few spare bedrooms are being used in the farmhouse this is not necessary, but for a larger enterprise or if new building is involved, permission from the local authority must be sought and designs approved.
- Fire regulations. Accommodation sleeping more than 6 guests needs a certificate from the fire officer (a local authority officer) and fire safety work may need to be done before this is given.
- Food hygiene. Anybody preparing food for guests has to undergo basic training in hygiene and obtain a certificate from the local authority. All premises where food is prepared have to be registered and meet simple hygiene standards.

In England the main national taxation system puts no additional burden on the farmer who develops farm tourism other than in proportion to the new income he receives. Farmers can either add their tourism income to the farm income and then pay income tax on the total sum at the normal fixed percentage, or they can pay tax on the two incomes separately. They can choose which is best for them and this will vary from farm to farm according to their circumstances.

Local taxation, which pays for local services, is more complicated. Here, a farm tourism business has to pay an additional fixed sum irrespective of the amount of additional income it brings, so this can be a disincentive to farmers, though the amount of this tax is quite low. In any case, farms which accommodate 6 guests or less within the farmhouse do not have to pay this additional tax. It is felt that this local tax is justified as tourism enterprises do put some strain on local services such as roads, waste disposal etc. However some farmers don't like this tax and many people believe that all taxes, including these local ones, should be directly related to income.

3 Financial incentives

Our discussions in Poland suggest that there is a need for two improvements in the area of financial incentives:

- better information about the credit arrangements and schemes which do exist;
- a specific centralised credit scheme to assist agritourism.

In England we are developing 'one stop shops' in rural areas, which are offices holding information about all the assistance schemes which are available. In

Poland the Agriculture Centres should perform this function, with regular information fed to them by all relevant ministries and agencies. This will help to increase farmers' confidence in the system.

If possible a national grant or loan scheme should be developed to assist agritourism. Again, schemes have been available in England, both through the Tourist Board and the Ministry of Agriculture, with each covering different types of enterprise so they don't overlap. They proved very important in:

- securing initial interest from farmers in the idea of farm tourism;
- making farmers develop financial business plans, which was a requirement of assistance;
- making projects viable which would not have been otherwise (especially the conversion of old buildings to self-catering units)
- encouraging farmers to raise the standards of the facilities they provide.

At a time of severe restrictions on financial resources, we suggest that two approaches are considered. Both have been followed in England at different times. These are:

- restricting assistance to certain parts of the country (such as certain voivodships) which can demonstrate both economic need and tourism potential;
- providing the assistance only for very specific types of activity. Good options for this in the Polish context would be:
 - help with bathrooms/plumbing in farmhouses (in Wales at the moment the Tourist Board grant to farms is focussed on this, providing a grant of between 25% and 50% of the capital cost);
 - assistance restricted to the renovation of disused old buildings (in England there is a 'Redundant Buildings Grant' for this purpose with grants of around 25% of capital cost).

Both soft loans (low interest rate) or grants might be considered. Both have been tried in England but most assistance is through grants as these are less costly to administer.

A scheme of favourable loans for specified projects could be established through a partnership programme with identified banks. However, these kinds of arrangements have not been pursued in England, and it is generally felt that direct government grants are more effective.

Financial incentives might also be provided through the taxation process, such as enabling all capital investment in a project to be set against taxable income so reducing the tax burden, or full tax exemptions during the first period of operation.

4 The development process

We suggest that development assistance and advisory work should be planned at three levels.

i Work at a national and international level

The main activity should be to develop expertise within the Agricultural Centres and other agencies working at a local level, and provide them with training materials which they can use with farmers and communities.

The role of the Agricultural Centres is critical in stimulating interest amongst farmers and providing professional support. In England, extension workers of the Ministry of Agriculture (ADAS) played a key role in the development of farm tourism, but the Agriculture Centres in Poland seem even better established to undertake this work because of their greater tradition of working with women on non-agricultural activities. The agricultural extension service has also played a major role in Slovenia.

Requirements are:

- More money to be made available to train advisory workers in basic skills, such as business and financial aspects of agritourism, marketing, sound environmental and ecological practice etc.
- Opportunities for advisory workers to see examples of good practice elsewhere, including visits to other countries. The possibility of more EC assistance to fund these trips should be investigated, including through the PHARE programme. Visits should also include farmers themselves who are representatives of local groups or associations (see below). Visits should include both examples of agritourism and ecotourism.
- The preparation of simple advisory booklets for the Centres to use as training aids with farmers, using pictures, checklists etc. An example is the publication 'Harvesting the benefits from visitors to the countryside' produced jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture, Tourist Board, Countryside Commission and Rural Development Commission in England (a copy has been supplied to the MAFE in Poland).

ii Work at a voivodship or poviat level

This could include:

- Direct advice to individual farmers on a person to person basis, to be available through the Agricultural Centres, including information on

financial assistance, regulations, types of enterprise opportunity, markets, business planning, ecologically sound practices, etc. In England farmers now pay for this advice, though in the past the initial visit to the farm was free. An important task is to advise farmers when agritourism is not right for them and making sure they do not make wrong investments, as well as helping others where there are good opportunities.

- Establishing training seminars on the above subjects for farmers to attend. These might be subsidised and money will need to be found for this; the farmers could be expected to make a small financial contribution.
- Using imaginative ways of stimulating good practice, such as videos to be used as training aids, prizes for good cooking, design etc. (These techniques have been used effectively in Slovenia).
- Holding meetings at a local level (within gminas) to put over the ideas of agritourism and ecotourism and the assistance which is available. This might also stimulate joint community initiatives within gminas (see below).
- Establishing groups or associations of agritourism operators, and helping them to establish their own priorities and activities. The Agricultural Centre staff can then step back from the groups to some extent. (Again, this happened in England).
- Identifying a set of themes, attractions, activities, events (such as existing local markets) which provide visitors with a special rural tourism experience in each voivodship or poviat. These could well include 'ecotourism' aspects such as opportunities for nature study and interpretation of the natural heritage. It should include walking routes and cycling routes. In some cases this might just require bringing together information; in other cases there will need to be a plan of development work on the ground. Partners in working up these opportunities might include:
 - local Agricultural Centres
 - the agritourism associations
 - local authority officers
 - national or landscape park officers (if relevant)
 - input from individual communities/gminas (see below).

This activity would be appropriate either at the level of existing voivodships or of the new poviats. The latter have the advantage in being smaller and therefore easier for forming cohesive groups.

iii Work at a community (gmina) level

We recommend a more integrated approach to rural development, society, the environment, agritourism and ecotourism at a local community level. This approach has been adopted in Slovenia and a case study example was given during our presentations in Warsaw and Elbląg and is summarised in the Appendix. The approach appears to be similar to that advocated in Poland by the Institute for Sustainable Development.

In the context of tourism, the approach is particularly useful in helping to improve the general appearance and infrastructure of local villages and communities, aspects which benefit local residents as well as visitors. It can also help in stimulating ideas amongst local farmers about possible agritourism opportunities which they can pursue individually or jointly. In some areas it can help to involve the community in environmental protection, environmental interpretation and ecotourism opportunities.

In Slovenia the Ministry of Agriculture set up a special programme to assist local communities identify their own development and environmental action programmes, with a small amount of seed money to enable this to happen. This has now been taken up by 50 local communities all over Slovenia.

The essence of the approach is to form groups within the community who together look at where the community has come from, what the vision is for the future and what steps need to be taken to achieve it. Working groups may be formed to look at different aspects, including economic activity and the environment. Training on particular subjects can be given to match what the groups decide they need. After initial help the groups become self-motivating.

We suggest that one or two voivods or poviats are selected as pilot areas and within them a small number of gminas could be identified for community level activity. Resources could be concentrated in these pilot areas over a 1 to 2 year period. These could act as demonstration projects. Lessons learned from them could be applied elsewhere in Poland. The voivods or poviats selected could include:

- a better known tourist area, possibly including a national park or landscape park. The Masuria area may be especially appropriate;
- a lesser known area, with agricultural problems yet with some potential to appeal to visitors. This might be in central or south eastern Poland.

Identifying areas to concentrate resources and act as pilots is very common in England, where special Tourism Development Action Programmes have been established involving local project officers.

5 Markets and marketing

Target markets

We suggest that the target markets for rural tourism in Poland fall into three groups. In order of importance these are:

- The domestic, Polish market. Although this market is currently quite weak owing to the economic situation, we believe that it will become the largest market. In England, under 20% of visitors to farms come from other countries and the percentage is lower than this for German farms.
- The German market. This is already an established market in rural Poland. Many German visitors are now coming for family reasons, commonly known as 'heimat tourism'. Far greater potential in the medium term lies with people simply coming to explore different areas, to enjoy the countryside, to walk, cycle, ride, and tour.
- Other international markets. The main additional markets are likely to be:
 - Other Europeans - Eastern Europeans, Scandinavians, Dutch, British;
 - Americans, especially those with family roots in rural Poland.

It is important to consider the types of market that rural tourism enterprises in Poland are likely to attract - what people are looking for. We suggest that this can be broken down into five components:

- a General countryside holidays. People wanting good value accommodation in the countryside with things to see and do in the area. Activities might include walking, visiting attractions, some interest in wildlife areas (but not specialist). Mainly couples, but some families.
- b Touring holidays, staying one or two nights in each place. This is how almost all Europeans, including Germans, use farms in England. Here people are mainly looking for good value accommodation and countryside activities are of little importance.
- c Family farm holidays. Holidays where the farm is an important aspect, enabling young children to see animals and experience farm life. Stays may be for a week or more. Self-catering accommodation is popular. Many German and Austrian farms offer these kinds of holidays for families.
- d Specialist rural activity holidays, including riding, fishing, shooting, hunting. This is a small market but valuable market.
- e Specialist wildlife/eco holidays. Opportunities for those with a specialist interest to come to wildlife areas to watch birds etc. Again, a small but valuable market.

A marketing strategy should be developed which addresses the needs of each of these markets.

A common feature of agritourism elsewhere in Europe is the high proportion of direct booking between visitor and farmer rather than using travel trade intermediaries. Visitors are looking for well distributed information, easy to use, from which to make a selection. This may also apply in Poland. There is a role for the travel trade though, especially in more specialist markets.

The marketing activity planned might include the following elements:

Distribution of a national catalogue

A national catalogue is being put together. We believe this should be given top priority. It creates a national brand image for all farms across the whole country. It is particularly useful for the touring market but is relevant to other markets as well. It has potential to be used by Polish and foreign visitors and should be designed with at least indexing in German and English, if not full translation. A key question is whether it should be free or have a cover price. This will depend partly on its size. There are advantages in making it a book which people buy, because this means that it can be distributed through bookshops. The main national agritourism guides in England, France, Germany and Italy have to be purchased. Distribution opportunities to consider are:

- bookshops and information centres in Poland
- bookshops in Germany - possibly finding a joint Germany publisher and distributor, such as the ADAC
- through Polish state tourist offices in foreign countries
- featured in main national promotional print for Poland, and also with its own separate promotional flyer leaflet (supported by a promotional flyer leaflet with a coupon, so people can send off for it)
- supported by posters and national advertising (again with a response coupon)
- direct mail to all major travel trade agencies who feature Poland (either the catalogue itself or flyer leaflet).
- Poland stands at international tourism fairs.
- through the farms featured in the guide, so that visitors using one will go on and use others.

Distribution of regional catalogues

We believe that the production of separate agritourism brochures by each of the existing voivodships does not make sense. There are too many of them and each will have limited impact. Rather, we suggest that brochures should be produced at a regional level, possibly through the new larger voivods when they come into being. These brochures could then be used as part of the marketing of these new regions as destinations. The brochures would be free. Distribution would include:

- response to regional marketing and advertising in Poland and Germany

- information centres throughout Poland
- Polish state tourist offices in foreign countries
- tourist and trade fairs in Poland and Germany.

Work with the travel trade

Opportunities for international tour operators to use Polish agritourism projects should be pursued. This will require farms being prepared to pay commission to agents, and this should be indicated in print. International operators will require easy booking procedures and a trade contact point and central reservation system should be established. An agency should be appointed to handle this service within Poland: this might be a role for the Gromada Agency, working on behalf of the new Polish Agritourism Association. The new product should be promoted to tour operators through mailings, features in trade press and newsletters and work at trade fairs. The Irish Farm Holidays Association has developed good central booking systems and many trade contacts; it may be worth talking to them about this.

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Local information

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pressure points and promoting sites with more capacity.

Road signs

One part of the market, which may become more important in due course, will simply be touring, looking for accommodation to stop at without pre-booking. To serve this market, and create more awareness of agritourism enterprises, a standard sign might be designed for use on roadsides. Gîtes de France have a sign like this for their properties.

A final and important point on marketing is the need to present warm, welcoming images in brochures which bring out the strengths of the individual properties and the hosts and convey attractive rural themes. The brochures in Poland which we have seen do not do this well. The pictures tend to be of the facades of buildings, which are often their least attractive aspect. Less attractive buildings might be enhanced by showing the family outside, or some animals, or possibly interior shots. Written descriptions also tend to be rather technical and lack warmth. German and Austrian Brochures, for example those from Bavaria or Tirol, use strong photographs of rural themes to convey the image - apples, young calves, children in the hay, tables full of local produce ...

6 Standards and classification

Insuring that all agritourism enterprises reach at least minimum standards is a fundamental requirement. There are two reasons for this:

- First, poor enterprises will lead to consumer complaints and give a bad reputation to the whole concept of agritourism.
- Secondly, it is very clear from our research that visitors are looking for an assurance of good standards before they try this form of accommodation and being able to show this through an official mark or symbol is very helpful in marketing agritourism.

All members of the Farm Holiday Bureau (agritourism association) in England have to be inspected by the Tourist Board, and the Bureau has found this to be an very valuable and essential requirement in winning respect from consumers. It was very important that the inspection and classification was seen to have been carried out by an objective external organisation, rather than internally.

The most important basic requirements are for: cleanliness; good sanitation and bathroom facilities; basic comfort, such as beds; good heating; and a good standard of furnishings. It is also important to identify different levels of facilities and quality above these minimum standards, through a classification scheme.

We believe that it is essential that there is one classification scheme run centrally across the whole country. Without this, it is very easy for standards to vary, which can be bad for visitors and unfair to farmers. In England, the scheme is run by the English Tourist Board centrally but administration and inspection is carried

out locally by the Regional Tourist Board working under contract to the English Tourist Board and meeting their criteria. Some arrangement like this may be appropriate in Poland. In France, there are national standards and classification grades established by Gîtes de France which apply across the whole country. In Germany the DLG (Agricultural Society) have special national criteria which farms have to meet to qualify for their 'DLG-Gütezeichen' mark.

There is no separate classification scheme for agritourism in England. Farms are simply included in the same scheme which is run for all types of accommodation from two room cottages to de luxe hotels. There are different criteria and symbols for serviced accommodation, self-catering accommodation, and camping/caravan sites; whether these enterprises are on farms or not makes no difference to the way they are classified. The process involves a detailed form being filled out by the farmer and then an annual inspection by a trained inspector who checks the information on the form and the general standards he sees. Initially the scheme was heavily subsidised by the state but now enterprises pay quite a lot for the inspection as they know it helps to bring them business and so the scheme has become almost self-financing. We are making information about the English scheme available to the SSTA in Poland.

7 Activity at different levels

It might be helpful to summarise the activities we recommend at the different levels, especially in the light of reorganisation of local authorities.

National Level - SSTA, MAFE, Polish Agritourism Association

- Assistance for training agricultural advisors and extension workers
- Training materials and advisory publications for farmers
- Removing barriers to development
- Developing financial assistance schemes
- Creating a national catalogue
- National and international marketing
- National classification scheme

Regional level (new voivodships)

- New agritourism brochures
- Regional marketing

Poviat level

- Advice and training work by Agricultural Centres (probably covering more than one poviat)
- Establishing and assisting local agritourism groups and associations
- Identifying and developing a set of rural activities and attractions (walking, wildlife interpretation etc.); providing local information material on these

Gmina level

Community-led approach to integrated development and enhancement of the rural economy, society and environment, including identifying agritourism and ecotourism opportunities.

4 EXAMPLES OF AGRITOURISM AND ECOTOURISM

This report has been mainly about processes to achieve development rather than the products themselves, since these were the subjects on which the people we met in Poland said they needed advice. However, we felt it might help just to list some few examples of different kinds of rural tourism products elsewhere in Europe and which may offer opportunities in Poland. This list is in no special order.

- In England local groups of 'farm attractions' have been formed at a county level (poviat size). These include open farms where farm processes are shown to tourists - they can watch milking, see lambing etc., as well as displays of old farm machinery, rare breeds of animals etc.
- Farm shops selling produce can be a useful visitor attraction. In France, special farms offering 'vente directe - produits de la ferme' (fresh produce sales) and 'goûters a la ferme' (places to see production and taste - eg cheeses) are separately labelled in a main agritourism guide. In the Austrian Tirol farms offering special produce to buy are also listed in the agritourism brochure and there is a central telephone number for enquiries about this.
- Farm restaurants are popular in some countries. Again in France there is a special category of 'Ferme-Auberge' which are farm restaurants using local produce. The special labelling and marketing is important in putting the concept across.
- Farm and produce themes can be used to encourage touring. An example is the Via di Chianti signposted route in Italy linking vineyards and wine tasting stops.
- Accommodation on farms can take many forms. In the Lake District and Peak District National Parks in England, farmers have been grant aided to provide 'camping barns' - very simple shelters with sleeping platforms, toilets etc. for walkers and youth groups. The barns form networks with linking paths. They are owned by the farmers, who earn the income, but are marketed by the National Park Authorities who make the bookings.
- In Germany there is a strong market for 'Wandern ohne gepäck' and 'Radwandern ohne gepäck', programmes where individuals walk or cycle between accommodation locations with their luggage transported for them. These are arranged by local accommodation groups or by local authorities.
- In Holland, in a sensitive nature area under visitor pressure, the '1000

bicycles scheme' has been established, promoting transport in the area using bicycle hire, bicycle routes and linked water busses on the canals. This mix of excursions by bicycle and water may offer potential in lakeland areas such as Masuria.

- In France '12 Voyages au Naturel' is a set of high quality eco-tourism packages involving walking and wildlife interpretation created in 12 different Nature Parks and involving local guides. The programme was put together by the Federation of National and Nature Parks and is marketed by a commercial agency appointed by them.
- In Germany parts of the Bavarian National Park are strictly controlled as far as visitor access is concerned. However, some of the village communities round the park have developed packages for visitors, involving accommodation and planned excursions into the park.
- In Ireland the National Tourist Board has established a marketing programme for ten lesser-known rural communities. Called 'Irish Country Holidays' it involves a simple package where visitors stay in local accommodation, have a special visit to see a real working farm, are given a detailed information pack of countryside activities, and meet a special community host who will give them more information and help to arrange any activities for them. The package is marketed by the Tourist Board internationally and has been taken up by tour operators.
- In Britain a conservation organisation, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, organises many holidays for groups to spend a few days undertaking practical conservation work (building walls, restoring wetland habitats etc.), often in national parks. 600 different programmes are run across the country each year and promoted in a national brochure; and demand is growing.
- In Wales, the 'Mid Wales Festival of the Countryside' is a special programme of hundreds of events and simple recreation opportunities (guided walks in woodland, local craft markets, folk music evenings etc.). Many of these events would be happening anyway as part of local cultural life, but they are specially identified for tourists in a printed magazine which is used to market the area.
- In England, the Big Apple is a local community festival celebrating apples and cider. It is a visitor attraction but also educates people about the need to preserve old orchards in the countryside and traditional varieties of apples. Various events are put on by village people and the money raised helps the local church, school, community hall etc. as well as tourism enterprises.

5 CONCLUSION

Good progress is being made in the development of rural tourism in Poland and we are impressed with the professionalism of the staff who are involved in this. This activity now requires greater recognition and resources from within the relevant ministries.

Sound development takes time. Everyone involved, especially the farmers, should not expect too many results quickly. This is a long term process but with good potential to benefit the rural economy of Poland and create a valuable new tourism product in line with market demands.

This report has covered some general principles and made some practical recommendations. It is not for us to say exactly what should be done in Poland. Those who are working on this subject every day and know the conditions are better placed to make judgements. However, we hope the report will stimulate some ideas and will be of some help.

APPENDIX

Summary of presentation by Richard Denman on farm tourism in England

In England the term 'rural tourism' is used to refer to all tourism in the countryside, and 'farm tourism' to tourism on working farms.

Around 15% of farms in England are involved in farm tourism (up to 23% in some areas). 9.5% of farms provide accommodation for guests staying overnight.

Farm tourism is a traditional activity but has been growing rapidly. Over 30% of farms started their tourism business in the last 5 years. Up to 10% of all farms are planning to go into tourism for the first time.

There has been a major decline in farmers' income from agriculture in the UK (from an index of 100 in 1975 to just 34 by 1991), so economic factors are the main cause of interest in farm tourism. However additional reasons are to make good use of old buildings, to keep a family member at home and provide a form of social interaction for farmers. Where farms have tourism it contributes at least 30% of total income to the farm, on average.

Kinds of enterprise common in England include bed and breakfast (on 4.5% of farms, around 5000); self-catering cottages, flats or converted barns (on 3.5% of farms), caravan and camping sites (on 4.5% of farms) and bunkhouses for young people and groups. Around 200 farms are open to the public as day attractions or museums where families can see animals and watch farming activities. Some farms provide farm walking trails, farm restaurants, fishing ponds, riding, or special produce shops.

The large majority of people who stay on farms in England are British people (80% of those who stay in Bed and Breakfast and 95% of those who stay in self-catering establishments). Most people using Bed and Breakfast are couples staying 2 or 3 nights and those using self-catering are families staying one week. Many British people who have not stayed on farms before are interested in doing so in the future (around 45% of the population is interested, 15% saying they are 'very interested').

Research shows that the key requirements of people staying on farms in England are cleanliness, a comfortable bed, plenty of hot water, wholesome food and good balance of privacy yet interaction with the host. People are looking above all for an attractive setting, things to see like old villages and historic towns, places to walk and some farm atmosphere. People also go to farms because they offer value for money. In England the average charge for B&B per person per night, without bath is 350,000 zloty and for a cottage for a week sleeping 5 people is 7.1 million zloty.

The main organisation for farm tourism in England is the Farm Holiday Bureau, a self-funded and self-organised body of around 1000 member farms. Although only a minority of farms involved in tourism are members, it has been very successful as a marketing and coordinating body. Members are organised into around 70 local groups of farms who help each other by passing business between themselves, mutual advice and local marketing. At a national level the Bureau markets farm tourism through a published guide book which is distributed mainly in the UK but also internationally. It also undertakes press publicity, advertising, advice on regulations, training sessions for members and other functions.

Public (state) sector assistance for farm tourism has been vital in establishing this industry. This has included:

- Work by ADAS, the agricultural extension service under the Ministry of Agriculture, to provide advice to farmers and set up local groups.
- Financial incentives in the form of grants (not loans) covering around 25% of the capital cost of certain investments, such as building conversion and improvement. At certain times grants have been available both from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Tourist Board. Currently they are not available in England but are in Scotland and Wales.
- Supporting marketing at a national and local level. For example, many local authorities printed the brochures for local groups.
- Organising training sessions and materials. A recent example is an advisory booklet for farmers thinking of tourism, telling them the questions they should be asking themselves. An important task is to stop farmers investing where this is not right for them. The booklet was produced jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture, Tourist Board and environmental and rural development agencies.

- The accommodation inspection and classification scheme organised centrally by the English Tourist Board.

The presentation ended with some slides illustrating examples of farm tourism in England.

Summary of presentation by Marko Koščak on work in Knežja Vas in the Trebnje Community, Slovenia

The presentation was divided into two parts. The first covered the theoretical approach to community development at a local level, the second illustrated how this had worked in practice.

The approach is based on the belief that community and individual development must be parallel. The model used in Slovenia was the 'General Management Approach' (GMA) to taking decisions step by step. This approach was used in Slovenia for training groups of advisors and later for training farmers in small communities.

GMA provides a problem solving methodology which is based on systems thinking. It helps the user solve problems through:

- examining strengths and weaknesses of each part of a given situation;
- determining how these strengths and weaknesses can be used to advantage;
- determining how the opportunities of the working environment can be developed and its risks minimised.

The methodology can be used for the management of any situation, including a family farm business, a co-operative, the integrated development of a rural area, and the development of any enterprise or business.

The goal is to:

- help people solve their problems
- improve living standards for family members
- improve the viability of the farm enterprise
- develop alternative income-generating activities where necessary
- improve rural living.

Fundamental to the GMA is the use of key questions to establish: **the current position; the future objective; and the approach to achieving it.** It is a route map for farm families and others who need direction to show them **where they are going and how to get there.**

The presentation on Knežja Vas showed with the help of slides the integrated development of the community in the area of Suha Krajina. It illustrated the reasons for the decision to choose this particular location and described the GMA process. Key points brought out were the:

- importance of peoples' participation from the beginning
- importance of training the farmers and the farmers' wives
- importance of preserving traditional local architecture
- importance of local fairs, cultural life and contacts between farmers
- possibilities for development of different activities through the GMA process
- importance of environmental protection
- possibilities for farm based businesses like agritourism, horse centres, local shops, craft products etc.
- possibilities for community enterprise and products
- need to demonstrate some practical, visible progress to maintain peoples' interest.

The major focus was on training farmers and their families in order to meet the aims and goals of the community and individual development.

In this context a video film "Suha Krajina" was used to motivate local people to respect traditional architecture and use local and natural materials for the construction of farm houses and farm buildings. It was divided into the following parts: problems, qualities and proposals. Film was also used in Slovenia to help extension service officers when working with people.

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