

Agritourism for a Green Future: An Ecological, Economic, and Social Perspective

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Abstract

In this context, the article provides a systematic analysis of the functions of agritourism in terms of its contribution to a green economy. The purpose of this study is to provide the rationale behind the potential of agritourism from the perspective of income diversity, resource efficiency, preservation of culture, and promotion of social inclusion in rural areas. This analysis is framed within the scope of the green economy paradigm. The analysis of empirical and conceptual sources shows that agritourism, by creating integration between agriculture and tourism, creates conditions for maintaining added value at the local level, activating family businesses and women's entrepreneurship, and protecting biodiversity and landscapes. At the same time, agritourism is a development model that strengthens urban-rural relations, promotes ecological behavior, and expands the functional content of rural areas. Consequently, it is necessary to evaluate agritourism not as a separate tourism initiative but as an integral part of the green transition, regional development, and sustainable rural policy. In the Azerbaijani context, the cluster approach to regions and liberated territories is of particular importance.

Keywords: Agritourism, Green economy, Rural development, Sustainability, Ecological tourism

JEL Codes: Q01, Q56, R11, Z32

Received: 25.02.2026

Accepted: 21.03.2026

Published: 31.03.2026

<https://doi.org/10.54414/TZDF3885>

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1. Introduction

At the current stage, the assessment of economic development cannot be based solely on growth rates and expansion of production. Climate change, degradation of water and soil resources, loss of biodiversity, income instability in rural areas, and regional development disparities require a new content of economic policy. In that context, the concept of a green economy is perceived as a development model aimed at reconciling prosperity growth, social inclusion, and environmental security. UNEP characterizes a green economy as an economic system that enhances human well-being while reducing environmental risks and resource scarcity (United Nations Environment Programme, 2011).

The role of agriculture and tourism stands out when it comes to the sectoral application areas of the green economy. Agrotourism has become a real instrument of sustainable development in rural areas, as seen from numerous scientific works and publications of international organizations. According to FAO, agritourism is an opportunity to build sustainable and flexible agri-food systems (Partalidou & De Matteis, 2024). At the intersection of the economic, environmental, and social roles of agrotourism, this theme acquires its relevance in the context of a green transition. Agrotourism is a multi-functional model that combines agricultural production, cultural traditions, rural way of life, and services. Under this model, the farm functions not only as a commodity production enterprise; it is also an entrepreneurial entity that provides opportunities for accommodation, tasting, participatory experiences, the sale of locally produced goods, and the promotion of cultural heritage. The bibliometric analysis has shown that the core themes of scientific literature about agritourism include economic sustainability, environmental management, cultural heritage, and social welfare (Ndhlovu & Dube, 2024).

The purpose of this paper is to provide a systematic study on the conceptual framework of agritourism in relation to the green future, its mechanisms for income generation and employment creation, ecological preservation, and social outcomes. The central research questions include: What are the impacts of agritourism in income generation and employment creation; through what ways can it help in conserving nature and biodiversity; and what outcomes would arise through this approach in relation to the green future?

2. Theoretical and Methodological Framework for Green Economy and Agritourism

The green economy is a development model that combines economic efficiency with environmental responsibility and social justice. The main content of the concept is related to resource efficiency, low-carbon growth, protection of natural capital, and enhancement of social well-being. A green economy can be considered an approach that ensures the implementation of the idea of sustainable development through economic mechanisms (United Nations Environment Programme, 2011).

To define the theoretical boundaries of agrotourism, it is important to distinguish it from rural tourism and ecotourism. Rural tourism encompasses a wider range of recreational and hospitality activities carried out in rural areas. Ecotourism is primarily concerned with the natural environment, environmental education, and conservation. The central element in agritourism is the direct connection with agricultural activities. Farming, production processes, seasonal labor, local food culture, and agrarian lifestyle become key components of the tourism product (Yasin & Bacsi, 2025).

In the modern literature, three main methodological approaches are distinguished in relation to agritourism. The first approach explains agritourism as a tool for the diversification of the rural economy. In that approach, agritourism is associated with an additional source of income, the expansion of local entrepreneurship, and the extension of the value chain. The second approach considers agritourism as a mechanism for transforming socio-cultural capital into economic value. National cuisine, craftsmanship, family labor traditions, and rural identity become resources that shape the authenticity of the tourism product. The third approach values agritourism as a mechanism for environmental sustainability. In this approach, the protection of the landscape, water, and soil resources, and biodiversity is considered as the basis for ensuring the competitiveness of rural areas (Ndhlovu & Dube, 2024).

The concept of “multifunctional rural development” is of particular importance in the scientific explanation of agrotourism. In accordance with this perspective, the rural area is not only the location for agriculture but also a much more complex entity, including social, environmental, cultural, and recreational values. Agritourism can be regarded as a manifestation of the multifunctional value of the rural area expressed in economic terms. The main topics related to agritourism-rural development research are discussed by Yasin and Bacsi, including the economic impact, policies, motivations, ecology, and landscape preservation (Yasin & Bacsi, 2025).

The relationship of agritourism with the green economy is structural. The green economy requires the optimization of resource use within environmental constraints. Agrotourism allows natural and cultural capital to be transformed into an income-generating form without degradation. The FAO technical document notes that agritourism stimulates local development, creates employment opportunities for women and youth, and shifts agrifood systems in a more inclusive and sustainable direction (Partalidou & De Matteis, 2024). Therefore, agritourism should not be considered a separate tourism service but rather as a territory-based green development mechanism.

3. Economic, Ecological, and Social Impact Mechanisms of Agritourism

3.1. Economic Impact Mechanisms

Agritourism primarily plays a role in diversifying income. In traditional farming, income depends mainly on crop production and market sales. In agrotourism, activities such as accommodation, food service, tastings, excursions, master classes, direct sales of local products, and event tourism create additional revenue channels. This model partially reduces the dependence of agriculture on seasonal and price risks.

The second economic mechanism is related to keeping added value at the local level. The “farm to fork” approach, short sales channels, and family-based forms of service increase the circulation of money in rural areas. Thanks to agritourism, local processing, local presentation, and local consumption are taking shape, rather than a model based on the export of raw materials from the countryside. Studies analyzing research directions for the pandemic and post-pandemic period show that agritourism is an important tool for revitalizing local economies and community-based development (Turtureanu et al., 2025).

The third economic impact is related to employment and entrepreneurship. Agrotourism leads to the expansion of activities in rural areas such as hospitality, culinary, digital marketing, guiding, handicraft sales, and small-scale processing. This increases the productivity of family labor and may weaken the economic incentives for rural-urban migration. Bibliometric studies confirm the close connection between agritourism and sustainable rural development, and its contribution to the regional economic structure (Yasin & Bacsi, 2025).

3.2. Ecological Impact Mechanisms

The ecological essence of agrotourism is that the protection of natural capital becomes a necessary condition for the sustainability of economic activity. Rural landscape, soil fertility, water quality, biodiversity, clean air, and traditional rural scenery are key elements of tourist attractions. Therefore, ecological degradation not only harms nature but also the market value of the agritourism product. In line with the basic logic of the green economy, welfare growth here is based on the conservation of resources (United Nations Environment Programme, 2011).

The impact of integrating agriculture and tourism on agricultural eco-efficiency is also empirically confirmed. Wang and co-authors show that integrating agriculture and tourism improves environmental efficiency, and the positive impact increases as the level of integration increases (Wang et al., 2024). This finding indicates that agritourism is not merely a marketing instrument but also a variable that influences the resource-use logic.

The second important ecological dimension involves behavioral transformations. Given that the farm tourism environment involves direct interactions between tourists and the production process, ecological cycles, and space, ecological responsibility is created not only based on information but also experientially. Hassan et al. found a positive correlation between ecological behavior, personal values, and tourist well-being in the context of farm tourism (Hassan et al., 2024). Therefore, agritourism also plays an essential role in ecological education and behavioral transformation.

It should be noted that the environmental advantages of agritourism are not achieved by default. Commercial overexploitation in combination with ineffective management may lead to an increased likelihood of environmental deterioration, construction pressure, and resource depletion. Iannucci et al. focus on the dynamic interplay between tourism development and landscape degradation, noting that it is critical to maintain a balance between income generation and ecological sustainability (Iannucci et al., 2022).

3.3. Social Influence Mechanisms

The social impact of agrotourism is related to the transformation of the internal potential of the rural community into an economically visible form. Rural life, local cuisine, crafts, seasonal labor habits, and hospitality practices gain market value through agritourism. In such circumstances, cultural heritage becomes not only a protected object but also a form of social capital that generates sustainable income (Turtureanu et al., 2025).

Research on the pandemic and post-pandemic period shows that agritourism plays an important role in strengthening cultural heritage and community-based development. In agrotourism, food preparation, hospitality, presentation of local knowledge, sale of handicrafts, and small service activities often enable women's labor to enter market relations. Akpinar and co-authors show that agritourism is a direction that can strengthen the socio-economic position of rural women (Akpinar et al., 2005).

Agrotourism also serves to reduce the socio-cultural distance between cities and villages. For city dwellers, direct familiarity with the origin of food, the production process, and the rhythm of rural life leads to the formation of more conscious consumption behavior. This leads to a strengthening of trust between producers and consumers,

interest in rural areas, and a sense of closeness to nature. Thus, agritourism is not only a service sector but also a plane of social learning and mutual understanding.

3.4. Overall Assessment

The economic, ecological, and social impact mechanisms of agrotourism operate as an interconnected system. Income diversification stimulates the protection of ecological quality; ecological quality increases tourist attractiveness; social and cultural capital increases the authenticity and market value of the service. That is why agritourism should be considered a multifunctional mechanism for sustainable rural development. Modern scientific literature consistently confirms that conclusion (Ndhlovu & Dube, 2024; Yasin & Bacsi, 2025).

4. Conclusion

The theoretical and analytical analysis conducted shows that agritourism is one of the flexible and multifunctional forms of green economy that can be applied in rural areas. The green economy model, which reconciles increased economic prosperity with reduced environmental risks and enhanced social inclusion, finds practical expression at the local level through agritourism (United Nations Environment Programme, 2011).

The research results confirm that agritourism has significant potential in terms of income diversification, activation of local entrepreneurship, expansion of short value chains, and increased employment in rural areas. At the same time, it stimulates the protection of biodiversity, landscape, water, and soil resources and creates environmental responsibility and behavioral change. From a social perspective, it creates a favorable environment for the preservation of cultural heritage, the strengthening of women's and family entrepreneurship, and the deepening of urban-rural relations (Partalidou & De Matteis, 2024; Akpinar et al., 2005).

For the realization of the potential of agrotourism, the institutional framework, infrastructure provision, service standards, digital visibility, training, and financial support are of particular importance. In this regard, agritourism should not be considered a separate tourism activity but as an integral part of green transition, regional development, and sustainable rural policy.

The development of agrotourism in Azerbaijan opens up important prospects for the socio-economic revitalization of regions, the expansion of the non-oil sector, and the efficient use of local resources. The application of a cluster approach, especially in regions and liberated areas, can more clearly reveal the strategic role of agritourism in relation to the green economy.

Author Contributions

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Funding

The authors received no funding.

Acknowledgment

The authors have no acknowledgments to declare.

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