

LAND OF FOOD AND SPAS

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Abstract

About 20 million t of agricultural products in the value of 5.5 billion dolar produced annually in Serbia on arable land area of 4.1 million ha. In 2010, the food was exported in the value of 2 billion dollars (which makes one fifth of total Serbian exports), while in the imports stood at 2.2 billion dollars. The surplus amounted to 1,2 million dollars.

Bigger food production and its realization with support to stronger rural tourism development could be realized with the investment of about one billion euro and the entire region be proclaimed as an area without genetically modified products. This is very important because 10% of EU inhabitants, or about 50 million people said that they want to consume such kind of food.

Serbia could attract a significant number of visitors thanks to branded food and rural tourism (about 1000 events are organized annually). Serbia has a great potentials when it comes to rural and spa tourism.

Serbia disposes of 40 spas and about 400 mineral or thermal mineral water springs. In line with this abundance in mineral waters, Serbia could be called “a land of spas”.

Key words: *agriculture, organic food, rural tourism, Serbian spas*

Introduction

The food production, its safety and the production of the raw material (for another sectors, the trade exchange with the world, social, demographic and other aspects) determine the huge importance of the agribusiness for Serbia. According to this it could be concluded that the agribusiness with all following activities (food processing and other industry) participates in the creation of the gross domestic product (GDP) of Serbia circa 42.5 percent, and in the export value with 25 percent!

For example in Serbia although the cattle breeding fund records an annual drop of 1.5

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percent, total of 470,000 t of meat has been produced. Total of 43 kilograms of meat has been consumed per capita, mostly pork meat about 289,000 t, whose consumption goes beyond 21 kilograms. To increase the exportation it is necessary to increase the production and consumption of the beef meat. It has been produced less than 100,000 t, while the consumption per capita amounts to four kilograms. In addition, 20,000 t of mutton and 75,000 t of poultry meat have been produced. However, it would be best to increase the beef breeding, because the European Union will have the lack of the beef meat by 700,000 t. Serbia has a chance to export 8,875 t to the European Union annually. In 2008 total of 1,700 t was exported, in 2009 this number was 938 t, in 2010 it was below 1,000 t. The reason for such statistics is the lack of the fattened beef. In 1990 Serbia exported 30,000 t of beef meat to the markets of 40 countries all around the world. If we would have had enough quantity of the baby beef for the exportation, Serbia would have exported to the EU market for the next three to five decades. The current decreased number of the livestock provides total of 1.5 billion liters of milk. In addition, total of 1.8 million t of wheat has been produced in Serbia annually, then near six million tons of maize and finally one million tons of potatoes. In 2010 Serbia produced 492,000 t of sugar, and thus exported 180,000 t and 220,000 t of sugar stays enough for the domestic consumption and reserves. Serbia has from its production circa 200,000 t of vegetable oil and 70,000 t could be exported, then more than 600,000 t of plum, more than 220,000 t of apple (in 2010 total of 140,000 t was exported), near 420,000 t of grape.... The goal of the new agricultural policy of Serbia is to saw the wheat on the area of 600,000 hectare, to breed 600,000 milking cows and to increase the meat production from the current 470,000 to 650,000 t.

In 2010 the exportation of the food from Serbia amounted to 2.2 billion dollars, and the import was 1.1 billion dollars. It was the only economic activity which recorded the surplus in the amount of 1.1 billion dollars. It is good. Yet the exportation of the raw materials and the importation of the final products are not good. Once Serbia used to export 1,7 million t of maize and import 4,000 t of pork meat. However, the analysis shows that even over 50 percent of that export refers to the inherited market of the former Yugoslavia. Therefore, nothing has been done when it comes to the return to the markets Serbia used to export on. The great chance for Serbia lies in the non-aligned countries. It is about 170 states with 1.7 billion inhabitants, where the annual turnover of the halal food amounts to 650 billion dollars. There are a great number of politicians and businessmen, who received their education in the ex-Yugoslavia. They are willing to cooperate with Serbia and at the same time this is a chance for the food to be launched in these countries. In these countries the products from Serbia could be competitive. The food production is the first prerequisite of the tourism development in Serbia.

Government's action

If the Serbian Government would announce the agribusiness for Serbia's strategic activity and Serbia for the GMO region, the food production would be increased and better. However, it requires the investment of at least one billion dollars into the strengthening and modernization of the agribusiness, which would double the value of its production (in 2010 it amounted to 5,5 billion dollars). There would be enough food for the domestic consumption, the reserves, and the exportation would reach more than four billion dollars. By 2020 the growth rate would amount to 10 percent. This would satisfied the domestic demand at higher levels and provide the foreign currency inflow of six billion dollars. Such developing pace by 2030 the export value would amount to 10 billion dollars and all domestic needs would be met. By 2020 in Serbia would be near 350,000 commercial households with an average property of 15 hectare, instead of the current 778,000. All other small households would also have their own production and consumption for the necessity of the development of tourism. There would be the special-purpose food production (domestic and foreign). If it is widely known that the EU has 500 million inhabitants (10 percent of them or 50 million are for the GMO food), then it is a great opportunity for Serbia to produce and launch such food on the EU market. The fact that the GMO food is by 30-50 percent more expensive in the world has to be took into consideration. The GMO food could be exported from Serbia, but the tourism could also consume it in Serbia, too. In this case, it would be the inflow of the foreign currency on the domestic market. **Serbia and such food would become a well-known brand worldwide.** And the agricultural would be an important business.

Geographic protection

The traditional Serbian products should be geographically protected, too. We should offer our best products to the tourists in the world and those visiting Serbia, they are water, raspberry, plum, plum brandy, wine, ham, cheese, whipped cream, tobacco-cracklings, mushroom, smoked-ham from Zlatibor, burek, sour milk, mutton,Few producers enjoy the popularity in Serbia and the world, such are 'Žuta osa', 'Sokolova rakija', 'šumadiski čaj', soybean products, sunflower oil, beverages made of herbals. There are also varied kinds of cheese. The healthy food is our chance to get on the global markets. There are some twenty products in Vojvodina bearing „Best from Vojvodina“ trademark. Tourists are interested in waters and in Serbia there are near 400 mineral springs since this production is in connection with certain regions.

Serbia could have its competitive brand on the global market via the agribusiness sector. It is necessary to act urgently with the agricultural products from the advanced processing phases. The domestic brand must be protected in accordance with the global quality standards. The Serbian Diaspora could help the promotion of the products from Serbia on the global markets. It could be the bridge with another countries and 'transfer'

of new technologies, business experiences, and the guarantee for the foreign investors and international buyers. The capital of the Serbian Diaspora has been estimated from 50 to 60 billion dollar, and if only 10 percent of that money would be invested in Serbia, its economy would be recovered completely. Creating the name and brands Serbia needs the powerful name. The name depicts something good, popular on the market and expensive. The brand has to be unique, immortal, persuasive and of good quality. Our brand has to be marked with '**Made in Serbia**' sign.

It has been estimated that the food products from Serbia could be exported to the Western market in the value of 500 million dollars. In this part of the world there are more than four million people. If two million of them would spend 200 dollars buying our products, the economy of Serbia could be recovered. The products from Serbia could be sold at the so-called 'Serbian houses' all around the world and in this way they would be protected and returned on the global markets.

Global references

The Republic of Serbia is dominantly rural country. Near three fourth of the territory are the regions on which near half of the inhabitants live (it has circa 7.5 million of inhabitants). The Global Tourist Organization suggested that Serbia should develop the rural and spa tourism. It is not without reason. Serbia has very favourable geographic position, good climate, rich fauna and flora, wealthy culture and tradition...Annually some 1.500 different tourist manifestations are organized in Serbia. Among the most popular and world widely known are: the trumpet festival Guča, the rock music festival Exit in Novi Sad, Wine Bal in Vlasotince, the Global Food Day in Velika Plana, breaking egg competition in Mokrin...

The development of tourism and visits of tourists from all around the world would create the real picture of Serbia. Therefore, the data showing that more than 70 percent of people starving from hungry are living in the rural areas does not refer to Serbian villages since the most visited and popular manifestations are those celebrated in the name of: bacon, sausage, bean, barbeque, cheese, cabbage and etc. All these products require new marketing approach. It is important to highlight that they are coming from Serbia where there does not exist the GMOs, that they are prepared according to the traditional recipes.

If one rural household in Serbia would have two double rooms and would be rented to foreign visitors 200 days annually for 20 euro for one full board, the income would be 16 000 euro. We have to take into consideration that a major part of expenses goes for food and beverage which our farmer makes by himself. If only 10 percent of households would deal with tourism it would be additional income for Serbia in the amount of 1.6 billion euro annually! A great number of villages in Serbia possess spas too. In this

sense, Slovenia which has been working on the promotion and popularization of the rural tourism for 15 years may serve as the best example. A number of households is getting bigger and bigger year in, year out and there are 1 000 of them dealing with this kind of tourism.

A country of spas

On the territory of Serbia there are near 40 spa and climate sites and near 400 hundreds of mineral or thermal springs. Thanks to this wealth Serbia could be given the name – country of spas. If Serbia would have used this wealth in tourism it would consume the food in its best way. It would be of great advantage because the food would not be exported as raw material but as the product from the advanced processing phase. The tourism in Serbia would be developed in this way. All advantages and benefits which offer those spas and Serbian villages (near 4 800) have not been exploited at its maximum extent.

In 2008 total of 2,2 million guests visited Serbia and spent 944,2 million dollars, and in 2009 and 2010 a number of guests was lower and spent one billion dollars annually.

The historical data and archaeological researches indicate that the Roman people were the first who started visiting spas on the territory of Serbia. Upon the wars in Dacia, Roman legionaries and veterans had come to spas “to be cured, and to get rest”. Archaeological relics proved that the Romans visited spas. For example, in the middle of the bed of Crni Timok river running down Gamzigrad Spa there are baths where the Romans had bathed. It happened that even the Roman Czar Gallery who erected beautiful building Felix Romuliana had come to have a bath here. During the authority of the Nemanjić dynasty, people visited spas. The Nemanjićs, who were wise people, had taken their wives to the spas in order to show to the princesses from Byzantine, Hungary and France what Serbia has. After the reign of the Nemanjićs, Serbia was under the Ottomans. Nevertheless, despite of not being free the Serbian people had remembered the locations of thermal springs.

They had furtively bathed and drunk mineral remedial water there. At the beginning of the 19th century Serbian people had raised the mutiny against the Turks and in the second half of the same century Serbia was released and started to recover. The spas were recovered and reconstructed in accordance to those from Europe. Some Serbian spas were of high rank because the eminent gentlemen bathed in them. At that time such were spas and their guests.

Guests and overnights

In 2008 the spas in Serbia were visited by 366.098 guests and thus were realised 2.36 million of overnights. In January in 2009 total of 15,659 guests spent time in spas and were realised 10,652 overnights. The greatest number of visits was recorded in the „queen of spas“ Vrnjačka Spa, then in Sokospa, Niška Spa, Arandjelovac, Mataruška Spa, Spa Koviljača, Prolom Spa, Gornja Trepča Spa, Vranjska Spa... The international guests mostly visited Vrnjačka Spa and in the previous year 122.289 international guests visited this spa. The development of tourism requires the strategy and long-term plan. It requires knowledge, wealth, culture and willingness for better job. It means that the sole beauty of the landscape is not enough for the successful development of tourism. One man and one house do not make an tourist offer.

When it comes to the privatization in tourism in Serbia, all hotel-tourist enterprises have been sold via auction in the following spas: Mataruška, Bogutovačka, Soko, Koviljača, Bukovička. The privatization of the Fontana hotel in Vrnjačka Spa has been annulled and new privatization process is expected to be carried out again. Gornja Trepča near Čačak is an example of good privatization. It is reconstructed and five times more money invested in. In 2009 total of 3.2 billion RSD was allocated from the budget to tourism sector.

During the authority of Tito the politicians spent their holidays on the Adriatic Sea. The spas were neglected and left to deteriorate. Upon the latest wars conducted on the territory of Serbia the spas went through transition. From 2000 and onwards the spas started recovering and the opinion on them changed. They were not any more just the health resorts, sanatoriums, but people started visiting them to refresh their body and soul. As the best example may serve the data that in 2008 the number of overnights increased by 11 percent and in some places more than by one hundred percent!

There is still a lot to be done. As soon as the Law on tourism was adopted which is harmonized with the Global Tourist Organization, new Law on spas should be adopted as well. Serbia is for the European standards in spas, but everything is realised slowly. Yet, it is being realised! One example of it is an offer of the spa from Kanjiza, which goes like this: „a room with a view on Europe“! Apart from spa and rural tourism Serbia has the food on the offer for tourists. Everything the nature offered to a man would be used up in a proper way and it would increase the food production. The food will be sold to the international and domestic tourists and thus the economic cycle of agriculture, good food – brands and tourism would be closed.

Conclusion

The Global Tourist Organization suggested that Serbia should develop its rural and spa tourism, emphasizing that these are ideal conditions for its development. Now Serbia could offer eco-tourism and spas, which is a substantial resource of the inflow of foreign exchange currency. In the end of the working week a tired man needs to spend time in the green environment, to listen to gurgle of a clear stream and to breathe in fresh mountain air. All this could be found in a village or spa. It is necessary that the agrarian policy – makers realise that the agriculture and tourism are developing chances of Serbia. **The agriculture produces food and through its sale in tourism you could turnover money and make a profit. Therefore, it means that these two branches have to become the strategic branches, which will give full contribution to the development of the country.** They do depend on each other and could not exist without each other. The production of healthy food and the development of spa and rural tourism is the long-term opportunity for Serbia on the global market. At the same time, the development of agriculture and tourism might stop leaving of the young from villages and could enable the return of those who are left without a job during the transition process.

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Резиме

У Србији се годишње на 4,1 милиона хектара обрадивих пољопривредних површина произведе око 20 милиона тона аграрних производа у вредности од око 5,5 милијарди долара. Од извоза хране у 2010. години, у Србију је стигло 2,2 (што је петина њеног укупног извоза), и остварен је суфицит од 1,1 милијарду долара.

Већа производња хране и њена реализација уз подстицај снажнијег развоја сеоског туризма може се остварити уколико би се у рурални развој Србије уложило око милијарда долара, а цео регион прогласио за подручје без генетски модификованих производа. То је значајно јер се 10 одсто становништва Европске уније или близу 50 милиона њих изјаснило да хоће да троши такву храну. Туризам у Србији, као ни аграр, и поред обиља могућности није стратешка привредна грана. Када би се створили исти услови живота на селу као и у граду, млади би остајали у њему да живе и раде, не само у пољопривреди, већ и у туризму. Уз велики број брендова у храни, Србија кроз развој туризма (годишње се одржи око 1.500 манифестација) могла би да привуче значајан број гостију.

Србија у области сеоског и бањског туризма има шта да понуди. На њеним просторима постоји 40 бања и око 400 извора минералне или термоминералне воде. Србија се по том богатству, може с правом назвати - земља бања.

Кључне речи: пољопривреда, здрава храна, сеоски туризам, бање Србије