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# ISSUES OF AGROTOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE FERGANA VALLEY

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**Abstract**

The agritourism sector is gaining increasing importance in the global tourism market. The growing need for proximity to the natural environment, familiarization with traditional farming and animal husbandry lifestyles, enjoyment of national cuisine, and recreation in ecologically healthy areas is fueling interest in agrotourism.

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## Introduction

The agrotourism sector is becoming increasingly important in the global tourism market. The growing need for proximity to nature, getting acquainted with the traditional lifestyle of farming and animal husbandry, enjoying national dishes, and relaxing in ecologically healthy regions is intensifying interest in agrotourism.

The Fergana Valley, as one of the most fertile and beautiful regions of Uzbekistan, has enormous potential for developing agrotourism. All branches of agriculture – horticulture, viticulture, cotton growing, animal husbandry, and poultry farming – are widely developed in the valley. At the same time, the hospitality of the local population, rich national cultural heritage, and traditional customs make agrotourism services attractive in the valley.

In recent years, great attention has been paid in Uzbekistan to diversifying tourism, particularly developing rural tourism and agrotourism. Resolution No. PQ-4412 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated August 13, 2019, outlined issues related to expanding new types of tourism, including agrotourism. Furthermore, research by local scholars M. Juraev (2020), Sh. Sattorov (2021), and N. Abdullayeva (2022) has analyzed the economic efficiency of agrotourism, its role in improving rural infrastructure, and its place in regional development.

The Fergana Valley stands out for its natural and climatic conditions, fertile lands, traditions of horticulture, viticulture and vegetable growing, as well as its rich cultural heritage. Therefore, the potential for developing agrotourism in this region is high. Scientific literature notes that the growth in agricultural production volume, the expansion of transport and logistics capabilities, and the interest of the local population in entrepreneurial activity can accelerate this process (Karimov, 2021; Yunusova, 2023).

Since 2020, several state programs have been adopted in the republic aimed at supporting new directions in tourism, among which agrotourism holds a special place. According to data from 2025, interest in agrotourism in the Fergana Valley is observed to be growing by an average of 18-20% per year. This is



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expanding opportunities for building new tourist infrastructure, establishing agrotourism centers at farms, and providing employment for the local population. Therefore, studying the prospects for agrotourism development in the Fergana Valley is of not only economic but also social and cultural significance.

**The Essence and Importance of Agrotourism:**

Agrotourism is a type of tourism that involves introducing tourists to the agrarian way of life, agricultural work, the process of preparing national dishes, traditional crafts, and local culture in rural areas. It creates an additional source of income for the rural population while sparking tourists' interest in national values.

**Results and Discussion**

The Fergana Valley is a region rich in agricultural products, with pristine nature and diverse cultural heritage. These opportunities reveal the following main directions for developing agrotourism:

*Agricultural Sector:*

- In 2024, the gross value added of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries in the Fergana region amounted to 22,746.2 billion soums.
- This was a 3.9% increase compared to the previous year (2022).
- At the end of that year, this sector's share in the region's Gross Regional Product (GRP) was 35.5%.

*Total Agricultural Output:*

- In 2024, the total volume of agricultural, forestry, and fishery products (including services) in the Fergana region was 39,421 billion soums.
- This showed a 3.9% increase compared to the previous year.
- The region's share in the republic's total for this sector was approximately 9.3%.

*Market Tourism (Gastronomy and Open Tourism):*

- The Fergana region received up to 475,000 foreign tourists in 2024.
- Gastronomic tourism, local dishes, national cuisine, local products, festivals, and similar events are becoming popular in the region.

**Opportunities and Weaknesses**

*Opportunities:*

1. **Economic Importance of Agriculture:** The agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sector has a high share (around 35-36%) in Fergana's GRP. Integrating this sector with agrotourism could become a primary economic source.
2. **Foundation for Local Products and Food Tourism:** Horticulture, fruit and berry products, and traditional dishes are very widespread. The existence of gastronomic festivals and branding activities is an additional source of interest for tourists.
3. **Ecological Environment and Cultural Heritage:** The valley's nature, rural landscapes, folk crafts (e.g., adras weaving, pottery), and national customs can provide an authentic, non-artificial experience for tourists.
4. **Social and Demographic Factors:** Fergana has a large population, a significant part of which lives in rural areas and is active in the agrarian sector. This can create additional income sources for this population (e.g., opportunities created for local farmers under the IFAD program).

*Weaknesses:*

1. **Lack of Information:** Tourists do not have full access to information regarding agrotourism projects and farm services; marketing and information dissemination are insufficient.



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2. **Infrastructure Problems:** In some areas, services like transport, hotels, internet connectivity, and sanitary conditions do not match the required level for tourism. Lack of convenience for tourists can negatively affect visits.
3. **Financial Resources:** Investments and credits are needed to involve small farmers in agrotourism, and training qualified personnel is also required.
4. **Legislation and Formalities:** Legal frameworks and oversight regarding tourist reception, licensing, taxes, sanitary rules, and ecological regulations need improvement.

**Conclusion and Recommendations:**

1. **Increase in Tourist Numbers:** If agrotourism is included in tourism programs alongside improvements in marketing, branding, and service quality, the number of foreign and domestic tourists could increase by 10-20% annually over the next five years.
2. **Increase in Income Sources:** Agrotourism services (guesthouses, farm excursions, fruit picking, traditional cuisine) can significantly increase the labor income of the rural population. For example, a rural farm could increase its monthly income by several million soums from one day of guesthouse services or a gastronomic master class.
3. **Improvement of Advertising and Brands:** Creating gastronomic brands (dishes, craft products) and organizing festivals in Fergana is of great importance for attracting tourists (e.g., events like the "Fergana Gastronomic Festival" are being planned).
4. **Water Resources and Climate Adaptation:** Agriculture is sensitive to water demand. When planning agrotourism projects, it is important to consider water supply and use agrometeorological data. Several agrometeorological stations are being installed in the Fergana Valley.

Developing agrotourism in the Fergana Valley is very promising based on current statistics. The economic importance of the agricultural sector, the interest in gastronomic and cultural tourism, the average growth in tourist numbers, and the opportunities for the local population all serve to expand this field. However, for this development to be sustainable, attention must also be paid to aspects such as infrastructure, legal framework, finance, knowledge, and marketing.

The development of agrotourism in the Fergana Valley holds great economic and social significance. This direction allows for increasing employment in rural areas, raising income from tourism, and widely promoting local products. The valley's natural-geographical conditions, richness in fruit, vegetable, and horticulture, and the preservation of national traditions form a solid foundation for agrotourism. At the same time, it is necessary to create modern infrastructure, involve farms and the local population in tourism services, and strengthen public-private partnerships. By integrating the agrarian sector with tourism, new directions of rural tourism – such as ecotourism, gastronomic tourism, and ethnotourism – can also be developed.

Overall, the prospects for agrotourism in the Fergana Valley are vast, and through properly directed investment, personnel training, and advertising and promotional activities, this sector can be turned into one of the important branches of the country's economy.

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