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opportunity
for small farmers**

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Tourism in the rural area as a new opportunity for small farmers¹

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Abstract

The Brazilian rural areas have undergone substantial transformations in the last two decades. In essence, they are receiving influences of urban activities which have transformed them in spaces that are not restricted to agricultural production. The Brazilian National Domicile Survey (PNAD) of 1997 show that the population with 10 or more years of age in economic activity in the Brazilian rural area was close to 14 million people. Of this total, about 4 million people were involved with non-agricultural activities. The most important sectors of non-agricultural activities are: consumer services, transformation industry, commerce of goods, social services, and building industry. Tourism in the rural area can be considered a promising alternative for increasing employment and income levels for rural residents, provided not only by the sector itself, but by the other closely-related activities such as commerce and other services. As a matter of fact, the whole rural community ends up beneficiary of the improvements brought with by tourism implementation, which can be expressed as a better provision of infra-structure and public services. In this paper we cover the different categories of rural tourism and their characteristics; present some successful Brazilian experiences on rural tourism; discuss prospects and tendencies for small growers to run this sort of business; and present some proposals for action to foster the participation of small growers as the main managers of tourism in rural milieu. We also discuss the pros and cons of a strict public policy on rural tourism aiming at small growers. Finally, we argue that agro-tourism is one of the possible alternatives for improving the income of small growers, but not the single one, that is, others can be more promising if local constraints and advantages are taken into account.

Key words: Rural tourism; Agro-tourism; Small growers; Employment – Brazil.

Resumo

O meio rural brasileiro tem passado por grandes transformações nas duas últimas décadas. Em sua essência, ele não pode mais ser considerado como exclusivamente agrícola, pois passou a incorporar atividades tipicamente urbanas. Os dados da PNAD (Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios) de 1997 mostram que a população economicamente ativa no meio rural era de aproximadamente 14 milhões de pessoas. Deste montante, cerca de 4 milhões estavam envolvidas em atividades não-agrícolas. Os setores de atividades não-agrícolas mais importantes são: prestação de serviços, indústria de transformação, comércio de mercadorias, serviços sociais, e indústria da construção civil. O turismo no meio rural pode ser considerado como uma alternativa promissora para o aumento dos níveis de emprego e renda da população rural, devido não somente ao próprio setor, mas também às

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atividades relacionadas ao turismo, como é o caso do comércio e de outros serviços. Na realidade, toda a comunidade rural acaba se beneficiando das melhorias na infra-estrutura e nos serviços públicos que são trazidas pela implementação das atividades turísticas. Neste trabalho nós apresentamos as diferentes categorias de turismo no meio rural e suas características; mostramos algumas experiências de sucesso do turismo no meio rural no Brasil; discutimos as perspectivas e tendências para o aproveitamento desse empreendimento por pequenos produtores; e apresentamos algumas propostas de ação para encorajar a participação de pequenos produtores como os próprios administradores do turismo no meio rural. Discutimos também os pontos positivos e negativos de uma política pública específica para o turismo no meio rural voltada aos pequenos agricultores. Por fim, defendemos que o agroturismo constitui-se em uma das alternativas para o aumento da renda dos pequenos produtores, mas não deve ser a única, pois dependendo das limitações e oportunidades da localidade, outras podem ser mais promissoras.

Palavras-chave: Turismo rural; Agroturismo; Pequenos produtores; Emprego – Brasil.

Introduction

The identification of the rural as the agricultural has lost its meaning as many typically urban activities have been developed in the rural milieu. Data from the PNADs⁴ show that the non-agricultural EAP⁵ in the Brazilian rural area was 4 million people in 1997, with an annual rate of increase of 2.5% in the period of 1992/97. Nonetheless, the agricultural EAP considered of 10 million people, experienced an annual rate of decrease of 2.2 % a year in the same period.⁶ The most important activities within the non-agricultural sector, in decreasing order by number of people involved are consumer services, manufacturing, commerce of goods, social services and the civil construction industry. The main non-agricultural occupations, in decreasing order by number of people involved are: domestic services, construction work, personal services, school teachers and shop clerks. It is therefore evident the non-agricultural activities are increasingly becoming alternative or complementary forms of income generation in the rural milieu. Within these activities, those related to leisure and tourism in rural areas are also outstanding. Although it is not possible to quantify the economic importance of rural tourism activities in the Brazil, the PNAD of 1997 indicates that almost 250 thousand people that are living in rural areas are working in commerce and service activities, such as lodging, restaurants, entertainment and leisure, arts and

(4) PNAD (*Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios*) – Brazilian national population survey done annually.

(5) EAP: Economically Active Population.

(6) Special tabulations done by the Projeto Rurbano, NEA-IE/ UNICAMP (January, 1999).

decoration, cultural and sports organizations, and commerce of natural and artisan products.

Tourism in the rural area may be one of the vectors of the local development⁷ as long as it is controlled by the social actors that consider local communities appropriating the benefits generated. Because of that, tourism in the rural milieu must be locally based and self-managed by the residents. One may say that it should be local in five different aspects: local initiative, local management, local impact, marked by local landscape and placing value on the local culture (Groulleau, 1994 cited in Almeida & Blos, 1997). From this new perspective, traditional tourism in the rural milieu based on the importation of programs and resources is not an appropriate strategy to promote local development. Tourism in the rural zone has begun to consider the potential of the local community, as well as the geographical, cultural and environmental diversity of rural areas, thus basing itself on the interaction and integration of its different actors – the State, private institutions and local community.

In this paper we present different forms of tourism in the rural milieu, emphasizing some of its key features; show some examples of Brazilian experiences in tourism in the rural milieu; debate perspectives and tendencies for involving small-scale agricultural producers in this endeavor; and present some proposals to encourage and facilitate small farmers' participation in the management of tourism in the rural area.

1 Forms of tourism in the rural area

The literature in the area presents a wide range of concepts on tourism in the rural milieu that to some extent brings out its varying possibilities. For example, there is some confusion regarding the term “green tourism”, which has been used interchangeably with the terms “rural tourism” or “eco-tourism” (Tulik, 1997). Others do not differentiate between “rural tourism” and “tourism in the rural area”. Generally speaking, tourism in the rural milieu has been erroneously

(7) Local development is development from grass roots up; it is self-based insofar as it gives priority to community decisions over general plans of development; it is endogenous since it mobilizes community resources for development purposes. (Pérez & Gimenez, 1994 cited by Almeida & Blós, 1998).

considered synonymous with “agro-tourism”⁸, which refers to non-agricultural services practiced within agricultural properties.

In the interest of conceptual clarity we have chosen to use the term “tourism in the rural area”, which we feel better reflects the breadth of opportunities present in the rural milieu.

The “tourism in the rural milieu” consists of leisure activities carried out in the rural zone and includes varying forms defined on the supply side: rural tourism, ecological tourism or eco-tourism, adventure tourism, cultural tourism, business tourism, youth tourism, social tourism, health tourism, and sports tourism (Verbole, 1997; Graziano da Silva et al., 1998). The following activities are included in this concept: rural spas; rural convention centers; places for executive training; natural sports resorts; trekking; visits to relatives and friends; visits to museums, churches, landmarks and historical buildings; festivals, rodeos and regional shows; visits to scenic landscapes and the natural environment; regional gourmet; camping sites, vacation camps; country hotels,⁹ ranch resorts,¹⁰ nature sports, such as canoeing, mountain climbing, fishing, hunting; country homes and town houses as second residences, among others. Therefore, tourism in the rural milieu involves leisure activities and forms of tourism practiced in rural areas, including, besides agro-tourism, activities that are not close related to the productive agricultural properties of a region.

Presently, the urban population has been going for eco-tourism¹¹ as a way of relief from the daily routine of big cities. For this reason, it is one of the most dynamic emerging markets in our country.

(8) “Agro-tourism” can be defined as: “*activities that go on within the property, generating occupations that complement the agricultural activities that continue to make up a part of daily life on the property with greater or lesser intensity. These activities should be understood as part of a process of adding services to the agricultural products and non-material values existing on rural properties (landscape, fresh air, etc.) using the free time of farm families and sometimes involving hired labor. Some examples of activities associated with agro-tourism are: ranch resorts, leisure fishing, hunting grounds, country lodging, country restaurants, farmers’ markets, local handicrafts, home industries, and other leisure activities devoted to the revival of the local residents life-style.*” (Graziano da Silva et al., 1998).

(9) Conventional hotels located in the rural environment with leisure activities on the premises.

(10) Hotels located on productive agricultural properties that can be considered as agro-tourism.

(11) As in the case of other forms of tourism, there are various concepts of eco-tourism; however, the one that in our opinion best summarizes its particularities is Ceballos-Lascurain’s, 1987 (cited by Pires, 1998): “*eco-tourism is the act of taking a journey to natural areas that are relatively undisturbed or contaminated. The specific objective of the journey is studying, admiring or enjoying landscape and its wild fauna and flora, as well as any cultural manifestations (present or past) that take place in these areas.*”

In most cases, eco-tourism tends to generate little income for the local rural population. Visits are generally planned by travel agencies of large urban centers that barely employ local staff. Moreover, visits frequently last no longer than a few hours and meals and overnight stays take place in the cities next to the visited areas. Therefore, eco-tourism practiced this way only uses rural physical environment and its surrounding infra-structure, but income returns to the city employees and companies from where visitors originated.

The tourism in the rural milieu should be embedded in a pattern that reconcile two potentially conflictive objectives: rural economical development and the preservation of natural resources locally. In this sense, agro-tourism is more advantageous. It supplies a relatively small quantity of tourism products that are genuine and territorially dispersed, avoiding the destructive effects of the massive tourism. Furthermore, due to its great identity with the area, agro-tourism becomes an authentic possibility for consolidation of the local economy given its recognized positive effects on employment and income generation, as well as for its capability of creating dynamism in sectors and activities with which there is upstream and downstream interfaces.

2 Some Brazilian experiences in the rural area

One of the forms of tourism in the rural area that have taken off with a great impulse is eco-tourism. It is worthwhile to note here that, given the way we have defined agro-tourism, eco-tourism may or may not be considered a part of the latter, depending on whether or not it takes place within or outside of productive agricultural property. Even in the cases in which eco-tourism is an independent activity, we should take into consideration that it generates employment for the members of small farm families, especially in the service sector.

With the objective of evaluating both the positive aspects and the limitations of eco-tourism in the southern and western central regions of our country, the Brazilian Institute of Eco-tourism (IEB), in partnership with *Embratur*,¹² concluded the first stage of a study carried out in places where this type of tourism is in practice.¹³ The study concluded that the primary obstacle to the greater development of eco-tourism in Brazil is the lack of lodging infra-

(12) Brazilian Institute of Tourism.

(13) Cf. *Gazeta Mercantil* (May 5 1998, *Viagens & Negócios*, p. 7).

structure, in general, and in some cases, the poor quality of the hotels available. A further problem is the lack of road signs and of information on the different attractions that are provided. The requirement of an initially high level of investment places serious limitations on small farmers' ability to participate in eco-tourism as entrepreneurs.

Eco-tourism is a business opportunity for small farmers, but, as it has been observed, due to a series of difficulties regarding planning and management, and even the lack of a tradition in this area, small farmers have been reluctant to take up endeavors of this sort. They prefer to sell properties that have potential for eco-tourism to entrepreneurs or urban business groups, while they themselves move to more remote areas or migrate to the city.

There is a particularly interesting example of agro-tourism that has been carried out in the municipality of *Venda Nova do Imigrante*, in the State of Espírito Santo. At the end of the eighties, there were already some hotels and inns in the region's rural areas. Some farmers began to receive spontaneous visits from tourists, who were anxious to see their properties, most of which devoted to coffee growing. They gradually began to realize that these were good business opportunities, and started to organize themselves to take advantage of them. This was done as a community-based action since the farmers had understood that individually they would not have the strength and power needed to demand that the public sector improved local infra-structure, such as the quality and maintenance of the roads in the area. Once these organizing efforts took off, there was more interaction between the farmers and the local hotel business, which began to plan trips to local farms for their guests. Today, there are 51 farms on the local tourist route, as well as 12 regional restaurants. Farm visits are offered all year long, linked to the production of a variety of crops, such as tomato, guava, cabbage, cauliflower, carrots, tangerines, coffee, strawberry, avocado and rum. Tourists are able to participate in the daily activities of farm life, from planting to harvesting, depending on the time of year. Furthermore, tourists have the chance to try and to purchase local produce right off the farms, such as different kinds of cheeses, yogurt, rum, coffee, stone-ground corn flour, home-made candies, cookies, cakes, breads, etc. As an additional attraction, some popular celebrations, such as the Tomato Festival, an agricultural fair, a rodeo, a dairy product exhibition, and other such events have been made available for visitors to the region. The tourist route also includes some picturesque spots, such as waterfalls, watchtowers, hang gliding take-off ramps, mountain views and other interesting local landscapes.

As a result of these dynamics, there has been not only a diversification within the realm of agricultural production but also the implementation of a series of other activities linked to the supply of food products that have also generated income for farmers and created jobs for local laborers. The farmers' organization has made it possible to advertise the local agro-tourist business through printed materials and has also made it possible to make some changes that favor the farmers' needs, such as the approval of a municipal law that transfers responsibility for sanitary animal inspection from the federal to the municipal government, thus making it possible to commercialize products of animal origin right on the farms or within the municipality.

Another example is located in Lages, in the State of Santa Catarina, where the tourism in the rural area took off due to the efforts of *Serratur S/A*, official tourist organ of the municipality. Several types of action were taken, such as the hiring of professionals from the tourist industry to put together integrated development projects; the promotion and participation in events; elaboration of publicity materials that were distributed within the country and abroad; participation in the National Program for the Municipalization of Tourism, and the hiring and training of personnel. As a result, there was a 450% increase in tourism during the 1992-96 period; jobs offered rose 420% and the number of overnight visits to the area increased by 430%, the latter generating a revenue of close to two million *reais* in 1996.¹⁴ Furthermore, the number of farms in the region grew by 70% and the guest capacity in hotels and lodgings by 120%.¹⁵

Another example is the mountainous region of the State of Rio de Janeiro. In the municipality of Nova Friburgo, districts of Lumiar and São Pedro da Serra, Teixeira's (1998) study showed that there are two kinds of tourism in the region, the "stable" and the "variable"; the first type refers to urban residents who have property in the region or rent homes for long periods of time; the second refers to people who come just to visit the region for a weekend or over a holiday. Up until 1983, the region had only 2 inns. Within a 14-year period, the number of inns rose to approximately 35; of these, 8 are owned by local farm families and 2 by rural non-farming people. The majority of these inns – 27 – are owned by people from urban areas. The number of restaurants and bars has also grown considerably, as well as grocery stores and clothing stores, besides the construction of a small

(14) Abratur. *Congresso de Turismo Rural do Mercosul* (Lages, SC, Special ed., 1996: 7).

(15) Presented at Workshops (I *Seminário de Turismo Rural da Bahia*, Goethe Institut, Salvador, BA, 1998: 43).

“shopping center”. According to the author cited above, tourism in the area developed very rapidly, changing the socio-economic conditions of the region without any type of planning. This has caused damage to the environment, as is the case with regard to establishments and homes that dump sewage directly into the rivers, which in turn leads to a decrease in the influx of tourists. In order to deal with this problem, local merchants organized a commercial association (*Sociedade Comercial de Lumiar e São Pedro da Serra*) with the goal of organizing and increasing tourism through publicizing the region and raising the consciousness of the local population regarding the importance of preserving the environment, acting in cooperation with municipal institutions – the Secretariats of Tourism and the Environment (*Secretarias de Turismo e de Meio Ambiente*).

As mentioned by Teixeira, many farmers, with the great expansion of tourism in the region during the decade of the 80s, sold their lands – which had gone up in value considerably – and moved to the neighboring city of Nova Friburgo, to work in industry or in the service sector. Their properties were subdivided for the building of homes, inns and country resorts. Some of them ended up returning to their old properties, but this time as employees or caretakers.

There were, however, some positive results. The expansion of tourism brought with it new jobs for different family members, especially in the civil construction industry and commerce. Thus, occupations such as construction worker, caretaker, gardener, housekeeper, maid, washerwoman and cook have become important sources of complementary income for the family budget of the region’s small farmers. At the same time, for those who have some income to invest, rental homes, inns and restaurants have come to represent an important part of their reproduction strategies.

The same author above observed that the majority of region’s farmers have, as a result of the intensification of the tourist industry, become “pluriactive”.¹⁶ Data regarding income indicate that in pluriactive households, family income is around 5.5 times the minimum wage, whereas in families engaged in only one type of activity, average income is approximately 3.2 times the minimum wage. Non-agricultural activities account for more than half (56%) of the average monthly income of “pluriactive” families (Teixeira, 1998). It is important to note that extra-agricultural activities associated with tourism were originally ancillary, though

(16) “Monoactive” families are those in which all family labor power is engaged only in agricultural activities, although such families may receive pension and retirement benefits. In “pluriactive” families one or more members of the household carries out some activity outside of agriculture or has some outside source of income (Teixeira, 1998).

representing more stable and lucrative work than agriculture, while becoming at a later moment, in many cases, the main source of family income.

3 Prospects for small farmers from tourism in the rural area

In this section we emphasize agro-tourism, since this is the form that can most directly contribute with complementary income for family farmers. There are, however, some evident obstacles to the full-fledged development of agro-tourism. The first – and one of the most critical – is the lack of or precarious nature of all types of infra-structure, such as: lodging/inns; roads; water and plumbing; communication infra-structure; electricity (under current legislation, non-agricultural property cannot be supplied with electricity), garbage pick-up, fire and police departments, hospitals and emergency care facilities, and businesses such as drugstores, restaurants, supermarkets and convenience stores. Easing these difficulties would require investments coming primarily from the public sector. A second obstacle is the lack of trained personnel at all levels of activity. Tourists of different backgrounds have differing demands and expectations with regard to the kinds of activities being practiced and the services that are offered in the rural area; personnel employed in the reception, hosting and guidance of tourists should be trained to understand the behavioral and cultural differences of tourists from different regions of Brazil. The third problem is the lack of institutional support and staff for the development and promotion of tourism – policies, planning, regulation and organizational structure. Lastly, there is a lack of preparation for, and sometimes of interest in promoting and selling products related to tourism in the rural milieu, on the part of tourist agencies and operators, given the generally small-scale nature of such enterprises.

It should be emphasized that, due to matters of scale, most often one farmer alone is not equipped to offer agro-tourism products that meet all the demand that has been generated. A viable alternative is farmer's organization through associations or cooperatives that broaden their supply capacity and enable them to diversify the products that are offered to tourists. Furthermore, the organization of farmers makes negotiation between public and private institutions more efficient giving greater force and legitimacy to farmers' demands.

Productive farms can add one or more of the following agro-tourism activities: *home processing of foods; typical restaurants; diners; inns; direct sales*

to consumers; fruit picking in orchards; visits to the sites of agricultural production – milking, planting, harvesting and cropping practices, plant nurseries, gardening, organic farming, foresting, raising of “exotic” animals –, visits to food-processing units – where juices, conserves, cheeses, coldcuts, etc. are processed –; visits to crafts people, workshops and cooperatives; cooking courses and classes – breads, cakes, etc. –; leisure activities – canoeing, boat rides, aquatic sports, fluvial beach going, horseback riding, tractor, cart, carriage and train rides, playgrounds, hunting, fishing, and fishing trips –; hiking trails; mountain climbing; nature appreciation – waterfalls, forests, mountains, caves and canyons, valleys, natural areas that have been damaged and are being recuperated, etc. –; observation of flora and fauna; bathing in natural pools and streams; rural campouts; pedagogical activities; handicrafts; farm-schools; bee-raising; water-wheels; distilleries; zoos; typical architecture; chapels and museums; and the collective promotion of popular and religious holidays, rodeos and agricultural fairs.

One of the greatest limitations of tourism in the rural milieu has been the lack of marketing strategies and actions aimed at promoting and commercializing the products of this type of tourism and placing significance on the rural populations, their living ways and their activities. In order for an endeavor in tourism in the rural milieu to be successful, the installation of local tourist agencies and operations is desirable. These in turn should bring more attention to all the available products, establish closer relationships with farmers, be more sensitive to the local potential and problems, and exploit different market niches adequately.

As with any type of economic activity, problems can arise from agro-tourism, such as: a) environmental destruction derived from garbage and litter, noise, depredation of natural patrimony, its fauna and flora; b) degeneration of the local culture through the interaction of the local community with tourists of different origins (Valcárcel Riveiro & Santos Solla, 1997); c) increased transit of people and population mobility; d) increased demand for public services competing with the local community services; e) “inclusion” and “exclusion” of areas and regions, leading to rural exodus in the excluded areas; f) increase of criminality and the use of drugs influenced by influx of the urban population in the rural milieu (Teixeira, 1998); g) abandonment of agricultural activities and adoption of agro-tourism as the only source of family income; and; h) increased cost of living for resident communities due to the increased cost of goods and services and rising land value resulting from real estate speculation (Verbole, 1997; Teixeira, 1998).

Despite these problems, tourism in the rural area tends to alter the whole local dynamics allowing the local community to usufruct the benefits generated, such as public sanitation, electrical and telephone wiring, public and commerce services, among others. This should be the role of the State, prioritizing the local community participation in the process, protecting its citizenship, and promoting the preservation of natural resources.

In the particular case of small agricultural farmers, there seems to be even greater difficulties toward involvement in the tourism business. The following obstacles can be mentioned: a) lack of training to carry out other activities; b) agricultural traditions which discourage a willingness to engage in new forms of business; c) low affordability to take risks; d) difficult access to governmental programs – credit guarantees are insufficient; e) little tradition of organizing themselves by means of associations and cooperatives – for producers this becomes almost a pre-condition for success in agro-tourism, especially with regard to marketing and trading strategies –; f) difficult access to information and market; g) little interchange with travel agencies and tourism operators.

In short, tourism in the rural area, and particularly agro-tourism, should not be taken as a solution, a panacea, for rural development. Given its complexity and diversity, actions aimed at promoting agro-tourism very seldom respond efficiently to one-sector intervention and management. It demands a multi-centered approach that contemplates integration, articulation, and coordination of actions in various and complementary domains in order to intensify, promote and valorize every region's own resources (Ribeiro, 1998).

4 Proposals for rural tourism in the rural areas oriented toward small farmers

Embratur carried out a study to evaluate the status and prospects for tourism in Brazil. The total of 2,062 questionnaires were posted to municipalities located in all the country's regions that either already have tourism activities or have potential for them; of this total, 1,692 municipalities returned the questionnaire. It can be observed that both rural tourism and eco-tourism were the most important turistical types as compared to the others (Table 1). Rural tourism is more frequently cited in the Southeast and Western Central regions, being

present in 34% and 31% of the municipalities, respectively.¹⁷ Eco-tourism shows importance similar to that of rural tourism in the Western Central and Southeast regions, but it is most important in the North region.

Table 1
Frequency of municipalities with different tourism categories, as percentages of the total number of municipalities that responded the questionnaire, per region and for the country^(a)
Brazil – 1997

Tourism categories	Geographical region					Brazil
	S	SE	N	NE	WC	
Business Tourism	17	24	11	17	22	19
Sports Tourism	24	30	22	27	29	27
Religious Tourism	21	38	33	45	34	35
Gastronomical Tourism	23	15	9	15	7	16
Event Tourism	14	25	11	4	11	14
Cultural Tourism	30	44	34	49	24	39
Adventure Tourism	12	19	15	18	25	17
Soil and Beach Tourism	17	25	44	33	19	27
Scientific Tourism	4	8	7	5	5	6
Fishing Tourism	13	17	35	19	16	18
Rural Tourism	22	34	15	19	31	25
Ecotourism	20	32	32	29	40	29
Nautical Tourism	16	21	10	17	19	17
Health Tourism	6	8	3	4	5	6
Esoteric Tourism	4	6	3	3	8	5

^(a) Data refer to 1,692 Municipalities that responded the questionnaire of the 2,062 questionnaires delivered.
Source: RINTUR-EMBRATUR. Brazil.

In addition to eco-tourism, other tourism categories that strictly occur in the rural areas – adventure and fishing tourism – were registered in many municipalities. Others forms, such as sports, gastronomical, cultural and health tourism can be developed in rural areas as well. If we take all these categories as one set, the magnitude of tourism offer in Brazil’s rural area becomes even more relevant.

Table 2 also shows that there were important initiatives in the municipalities aimed at fostering the development of tourism: more than a half of the municipalities in all of the Brazilian geographical regions had a Tourism Development Plan, although is lower the rate of those that had created either a fund

(17) This percentages may be underestimated because to each municipality was asked to mark the maximum of three tourism activities

for tourism fostering or other types of tourism incentives. It is evident that many municipalities have put efforts to stimulate tourism activities, but yet there are many obstacles to overcome for a more complete realization of tourism in rural areas.

Table 2
Frequency of municipalities with initiatives to foster rural tourism, as percentage of the total number of municipalities that responded the questionnaire, per region and for the country^(a)
Brazil – 1997

Rural tourism initiatives	Geographical region					Brazil
	S	SE	N	NE	WC	
Municipal Tourism Council	48	55	42	39	58	48
Municipal Tourism Plan	60	58	57	60	55	59
Municipal Fund for Tourism Development	33	40	39	31	36	36
Municipal Incentives for Tourism	52	45	42	47	51	47

^(a) Data refer to 1,692 Municipalities that responded the questionnaire of the 2,062 questionnaires delivered.

Source: RINTUR-EMBRATUR. Brazil.

An analysis to evaluate the tourism potential has to take into consideration the natural as well as the cultural attractives. Within natural attractives, the ones related to water resources are most promising (Table 3). For instance, the river possibilities were mentioned in 75% to 95% of the municipalities that responded the questionnaire in each geographical region. The presence of waterfalls were registered in about two-thirds of the municipalities in the Western Central, South and Southeast regions, whereas lakes and lagoons are favorable for 41% to 69% of the municipalities in all regions. The fact that those activities are directly dependent on water resources demands the design of public policies for preserving the water quality, which should involve not only environmental control of production activities, but also sewage treatment, environmental education, and conservation and recuperation of ciliar forests.

Other tourism possibilities are also expressive, especially those related with the availability of hunting/fishing areas, grottos and caverns, and swamplands and mangroves. Areas for hunting and fishing are present in 47 to 69% of the municipalities per region, specially in the North region; the grottos and caverns, in 30 to 57% of the municipalities, with emphasis on Southeast, South, and Western Central regions; and swamplands and mangroves, in 21 to 45% of the

municipalities, with the South, North, Northeast, and Western Central regions being the most encouraging.

Table 3
Frequency of municipalities with natural touristical attractions, as percentage of the total number of municipalities that responded the questionnaire, per region and for the country ^(a)
Brazil – 1997

Natural touristical attractions	Geographical region					Brazil
	S	SE	N	NE	WC	
Peaks and hilltops	25	32	30	14	11	24
Mountains	18	25	22	13	8	18
Tablelands	12	15	5	15	13	13
Coastal beaches	12	15	25	35	2	20
Fluvial and lacustrine beaches	25	35	70	29	15	33
Rivers	79	80	95	75	90	81
Lakes and Lagoons	44	63	43	41	69	51
Swamplands and Mangroves	45	21	40	38	30	34
Islands and archipelagos	17	12	7	28	19	17
Bays and inlets	38	18	34	28	15	27
Grottos and caverns	44	57	30	32	43	43
Dunes	12	9	12	36	11	17
Waterfalls	65	64	42	40	69	56
Fountains/hot springs/mineral springs	12	19	6	14	21	15
National Parks	18	15	10	12	19	15
State Parks	12	17	8	11	17	13
Municipal Parks	10	12	6	13	17	12
Fishing and Hunting Areas	55	58	69	47	52	55

^(a) Data refer to 1,692 Municipalities that responded the questionnaire of the 2,062 questionnaires delivered.
Source: RINTUR-EMBRATUR. Brazil.

The prominent cultural traditions amenable to tourism are the religious celebrations, occurring in 81 to 95% of the total municipalities per region; the folkloric feasts, present in 66 to 84% of the municipalities based on the region; and the popular events and plastic arts which exist in 59 to 90% of the municipalities (Table 4).

All the above attractions represent better perspectives in income improvement for the Brazilian rural populations, because most activities are either

located in rural areas or somehow have relations with this zone. However, very little has been done in Brazil as to outline a specific policy for tourism in rural areas.

Table 4
Frequency of municipalities with cultural traditions, as percentage of the total number of municipalities that responded the questionnaire, per region and for the country ^(a)
Brazil – 1997

Types of Festivals and Feasts	Geographical Region					Brazil
	S	SE	N	NE	WC	
Religious	85	92	87	95	81	90
Handcraft	51	60	50	62	44	56
Popular	70	82	60	90	59	77
Typical gastronomy	44	32	21	41	18	35
Folkloric	81	77	68	84	66	78
Popular trade and commerce	28	45	33	51	39	41
Civic	38	41	27	22	19	32
Plastic arts	77	68	61	69	60	69

^(a) Data refer to 1,692 Municipalities that responded the questionnaire of the 2,062 questionnaires delivered.
Source: RINTUR-EMBRATUR. Brazil.

Public municipal powers need to play an important role in promoting and mediating the entire process. As a principal, these powers should place importance not only on the participation of agricultural producers including small farmers, but also on all other sectors that participate in tourism. Municipalities should also assume the responsibility for raising the conscience of the local community with regard to the potentials and limitations of tourism in the rural area.

Other actions would be: encouraging the opening of tourist agencies and operations in the municipality; readapting state technical assistance to small farmers, so as to eliminate the bias toward agricultural production; and consideration for environmental issues.

With regard to public policies of support for small farmers' involvement in agro-tourism, flexibility at the local level should be sought. National policies should provide only general directives leaving to the local and regional agendas issues of operational nature. Although some specific policies for agro-tourism may

be developed, these should be part of wider policies of support to non-agricultural activities identified as promising for rural development, taking into account the characteristics of each locale.

In dealing specifically with agro-tourism oriented toward small farmers, five basic actions should be implemented:

(1) adopt agro-ecological municipal zoning as an instrument of planing and of territorial organization of economical activities, while also identifying the potential for tourism in the rural area;

(2) support the creation of new vocational training programs in the area of agro-tourism services – tourist agents, tour guides, and providers of other tourist services – promoting professional training of youth, especially the children of family farmers. Initiatives of this type can be done in conjunction with municipal governments and private organisms such as SENAR, SENAC, and SEBRAE.¹⁸;

(3) PRONAF (*Programa de Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar*)¹⁹ support for the following actions: financing the improvement of infra-structure on agricultural properties and within their communities (such as electrical energy, health, education, communication, transportation, security, and sanitation services), and encourage the building or adapting of installations on agricultural property in order to increase the supply of lodging for tourists in the rural area;

(4) elaboration or modification of legislation and regulation on agro-tourism in order to stimulate the development of this activity on agricultural properties. These actions should include: a) regulation of a policy of trade marks for agro-tourism products and services, taking into consideration the property, the association or cooperative, the product, the municipality, or the region, individually or collectively, depending on the sales strategy to be adopted; b) revise rural labor legislation in order to include a wide spectrum of services, incorporating agro-tourism and other activities directly and indirectly linked to it; c) establish norms that regulate the concession of licenses for the exercise of agro-tourism activities; d) develop and establish municipal or regional inspection systems in order to guarantee that legislation and norms are complied with; e) establish regulations permitting the legal forest reserve of rural properties can be used for tourism

(18) Non-profit, private organizations devoted to assisting the private sector (SENAR – National Rural Training Service, SENAC – National Commerce Training Service, SEBRAE – Brazilian Service for micro and small enterprises).

(19) Official Program of Support for Family Farming.

purposes; f) revise the legislation that regulates activities inside rural settlements in order to allow for non-agricultural activities; and g) regulate the constitution of associations and cooperatives devoted to tourism in the rural zone;

(5) municipalities seeking official support have to create a minimum administrative infra-structure which should include a reserve bureau to organize demand, identify preferences, and above all provide assistance to small farmers.

The great challenge to any measures that are proposed to foment agro-tourism is to find ways to turn small or family farmers into small entrepreneurs, while at the same time incorporating these measures into a larger plan of integrated rural development for each locale.

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