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TOURISM STRATEGIES AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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## INTRODUCTION

Since its creation in 1961, the OECD Tourism Committee has endeavoured to grasp the overriding trends, including structural change, in the tourism, travel and recreation industry, to give governments a clearer understanding of their role and of how they must tailor their action.

Accordingly, in 1987 the Committee began to probe how tourism strategies could contribute to rural development. Since 1990, this examination has been carried out within the broader context of the OECD Group of the Council on Rural Development, following the wish of the Council at its 1990 meeting at Ministerial level.

For many years a number of rural areas have been beset by population loss and declining services. These problems are now exacerbated by changes that have brought job losses and falling income to the farm sector.

In contrast to this downturn, tourism has blossomed into a prosperous, fast-growing activity, and has indeed turned out to be a significant factor for economic growth in the countries in which it has developed.

It was therefore important to determine whether tourism's growth potential could be harnessed as a strategy for rural development, in particular by drawing upon resurgent interest in the countryside, its traditional way of life, and landscapes and the architectural heritage, referred to as amenities.

The Tourism Committee devoted several of its sessions to these issues, undertaking in particular to ascertain, in the light of national experience, whether rural tourism had any distinguishing characteristics, whether it could develop in all rural areas, whether it was truly capable of generating employment and attracting capital to such areas, whether it presented drawbacks for the countryside and whether it required action on the part of national or local governments.

With the help of Mr. Bernard Lane (Director of the Rural Tourism Unit at the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom), and in co-operation with the Secretariat of the Group of the Council on Rural Development, the Secretariat of the Tourism Committee summarised this examination. The results were analysed in a chapter of the 1993 annual report on Tourism Policy and International Tourism, which the OECD Council made publicly available on 28 February 1994.

That chapter has been taken from the report and supplemented by a bibliography, and is now reproduced in this general distribution document.

## I. RURAL TOURISM DEFINED -- THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOURISM AND AGRICULTURE

Across the rural regions of the developed world the issues of population decline, economic change and community regeneration are universal. For over a century, the powerful trends of industrialisation and urbanisation have steadily altered the economic and political position of rural society. In the last 40 years those trends have intensified. Farm incomes have fallen in real terms. Technological changes have joined with falling incomes to reduce agricultural employment. In response, rural service provision has diminished: shops, schools, churches, professional services and transport facilities have all declined in numbers and in underlying vitality. Typically, rural populations have aged and become fewer in total. Many small towns and villages now struggle to retain their viability. Throughout the world, local, regional and central government agencies have intervened to address these issues, with various degrees of success.

In recent years, the rural world has seen new challenges. Nature and landscape conservation is increasingly regarded as important. Historic buildings and "traditional" rural societies are receiving more attention. In some more accessible rural regions, there has been an influx of population, of people unhappy about big city living conditions -- a trend known as counter-urbanisation. But for most parts of the countryside, rural decline issues remain important.

Tourism on the contrary, presents a picture of thriving growth. From humble origins in the nineteenth century, tourism has expanded rapidly since the early 1950's. International tourist arrivals have increased from 25 millions in 1950 to an estimated 476 millions in 1992. About 60 per cent of this travel is for leisure purposes. Domestic (non-international) tourism, however, dwarfs even these massive figures. The World Tourism Organization estimates domestic travel numbers to be ten times the international total. Domestic tourism is also growing rapidly. The WTO estimates that, by 2000, tourism could be the world's largest single industry.

There are many factors behind the growth statistics. In the developed world, there has been a rapid growth in disposable income. In Britain whose economic growth in recent years has not been very strong disposable income rose by 63 per cent in real terms between 1968 and 1988. Shorter working hours and increasing numbers of paid holidays have helped. Higher levels of education have prompted a greater desire to travel, and explore. Transport networks -- rail, road, air and sea -- have been greatly improved. Rarely, however, have government agencies directly influenced the pace of tourism development, which has largely been driven by market forces and private enterprise. In this way, tourism differs markedly from agriculture and other rural activities.

Tourism has, until recently, been concentrated into specialist beach, lake and mountain resort areas, and into major cultural centres. It has proved to be a powerful engine for economic growth -- transferring capital, income and employment from industrial, urban and developed areas to non-industrial regions. Intra OECD tourism flows dominate the world pattern. The top five tourist generating countries -- Germany, United States, United Kingdom, Japan and France -- account for over 51 per cent of world travel expenditure. Income flows are remarkably similar: the top five destination countries, accounting for 41 per cent of receipts, are the United States, Spain, Italy, France and the United Kingdom (1987 figures). Within that picture there have been real changes in the post war period. Foremost amongst the new destinations is Spain. Foreign visitors to Spain increased from 6 millions in 1960 to 47 millions in 1986. Foreign earnings more than doubled -- (to 15 billion US dollars) -- between 1983 and 1987 alone. Tourism now employs over 1.5 million Spanish people directly. Yet the vast majority of Spain's visitors are concentrated into the five coastal regions of Spain, out of the total of 16 Spanish regions.

While the Spanish example illustrates how tourism can assist national economic growth, the experience of many other countries, including Britain, Ireland, France and the United States illustrates how regional economic growth can also be linked to tourism development.

Can the power of tourism's growth potential be harnessed to pull rural regions out of decline? Already tourism to rural regions is increasing. Can -- and will -- that increase continue? Will rural tourism provide sufficient employment, income and capital flows to materially assist rural development? Can all rural areas be helped? Could there be drawbacks to tourism development in the countryside? Should governments and communities intervene to assist or guide tourism development? Is there evidence that this can be done successfully? What further research is needed into issues in rural tourism to help understand and foster its growth and potential? And what marks out rural tourism from other forms of tourism activity?

## **1. The Case for Rural Tourism**

Rural tourism is not totally new. Interest in countryside recreation grew in the nineteenth century as a reaction to the stress and squalor of the expanding industrial cities. Writers such as Wordsworth and Schiller captured the romanticism of the rural scene. The new railway companies capitalised on this emergent interest by transporting tourists to the countryside. The Alps and the American and Canadian Rockies were early rural tourism venues assisted by rail-led marketing and capital investment.

The new rural tourism of the 1970's, 80's and 90's is, however, different in several ways. Far larger numbers of visitors are involved. Over 70 per cent of all Americans now participate in rural recreation: figures for many other OECD countries reveal similar, if slightly lower, levels of participation. The penetration of those visitors is far greater. The spread of car ownership and internationally available car hire allows visitors to reach regions far beyond rail-nets and rail-heads. Most important of all, tourism has developed away from spectacularly scenic areas into countryside of

all types. It has also broken free of large and specialised resorts into small towns and villages to become truly rural.

Growth in rural tourism is difficult to quantify, because few countries collect statistics in a way which separates purely rural from other forms of tourism. Most national tourism administrations agree, however, that it is a growth sector. Experience in individual rural regions provides further testimony. In the American states of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho ranch and farm hospitality enterprises have increased from five in 1985 to 90 in 1992. Australia's "Outback Queensland" area reports steady annual increases in visitor flows of up to 20 per cent p.a. Many new tourism projects in rural Austria have achieved a steady development in patronage throughout the 1980's.

## **2. But What is Rural Tourism?**

At first glance, this is a simple question. Rural tourism is tourism which takes place in the countryside. But, on deeper consideration, a simple definition of rural tourism is inadequate for many purposes. Equally, it is difficult to produce a more complex definition which applies to all rural areas in all countries. Problems include:

- Urban -- or -- resort-based tourism is not confined to urban areas, but spills out into rural areas;
- Rural areas themselves are difficult to define, and the criteria used by different nations vary enormously;
- Not all tourism which takes place in rural areas is strictly "rural"  
-- it can be "urban" in form, and merely be located in a rural area;
- Tourism has historically been an urban concept; the great majority of tourists live in urban areas. Tourism can be an urbanising influence on rural areas, encouraging cultural and economic change, and new construction;
- Different forms of rural tourism have developed in different regions. Farm-based holidays are important in many parts of rural Germany and Austria. Farm-based holidays are much rarer in the rural United States and Canada;
- Rural areas themselves are in a complex process of change. The impact of global markets, communications and telecommunication have changed market conditions and orientations for traditional products. The rise of environmentalism has led to increasing control by "outsiders" over land use and resource development. Although some rural areas still experience depopulation, others are experiencing an inflow of people to retire or to develop new "non-traditional" businesses. The once clear distinction between urban and rural is now blurred by suburbanisation, long distance commuting and second home development;

-- Rural tourism is a complex multi-faceted activity: it is not just farm-based tourism. It includes farm-based holidays but also comprises special interest nature holidays and ecotourism, walking, climbing and riding holidays, adventure, sport and health tourism, hunting and angling, educational travel, arts and heritage tourism, and, in some areas, ethnic tourism. There is also a large general interest market for less specialised forms of rural tourism. This area is highlighted by studies of the important German tourism market, where a major requirement of the main holiday is the ability to provide peace, quiet and relaxation in rural surroundings;

Because rural tourism is multi-faceted, because rural areas themselves are multi-faceted and rarely either static entities or self-contained, and free from urban influence, a working and reasonably universal definition of the subject is difficult to find. However, in almost every case rurality is the central and unique selling point in the rural tourism package. The search for a definition must, therefore, begin with an understanding of the concept of rurality itself.

### **3. What is Rurality?**

The need for a definition of rural tourism is relatively new. The need for a definition for rurality in general is an old issue faced by geographers, sociologists, economists and planners for many years. In this wider debate on rurality three major discussion points dominate: (1) population density and size of settlements, (2) land use, and its dominance by agriculture and forestry, (3) "traditional" social structures and issues of community identity and heritage. It is worth briefly discussing each of these in turn.

### **4. Rural Population Densities and Settlement Size**

Typically rural areas have low population densities: this is a result of small settlements, widely spaced apart. The natural and/or the farmed/forested environment dominates the built environment. Average rural population densities vary enormously between and within the OECD countries: an exact analysis would be valueless because of the varying sizes of the administrative units used for statistical purposes. This point is also illustrated when examining the size of settlements classified as rural by a selection of member states, given below:

### **5. Selected National Criteria for "Rural" Settlements**

**Australia** population clusters of fewer than 1 000 people, excluding certain areas, e.g. holiday resorts.

**Austria** Towns of fewer than 5 000 people.

<b>Canada</b>	Places of fewer than 1 000 people, with a population density of fewer than 400 per square kilometre.
<b>Denmark (and Norway)</b>	Agglomerations of fewer than 200 inhabitants.
<b>England and Wales</b>	No definition -- but the Rural Development Commission excludes towns with more than 10 000 inhabitants.
<b>France</b>	Towns containing an agglomeration of fewer than 2 000 people living in contiguous houses, or with not more than 200 metres between the houses.
<b>Portugal (and Switzerland)</b>	Towns of fewer than 10 000 people.

*Source: UN Demographic Year-books and Robinson (1991).*

The OECD Rural Development Programme uses a pragmatically based series of indicators: while at local level a population density of 150 persons per square kilometre is the preferred criterion, "at the regional level geographic units are grouped by the share of their population which is rural, into the following three types: predominantly rural (> 50 per cent), significantly rural (15-50 per cent) and predominantly urbanized regions (< 15 per cent)".

From this array of varying definitions, two clear points stand out. Rural settlements may vary in size, but they are small, and always with a population of fewer than 10 000 inhabitants. They are almost always in areas of relatively low population density.

## **6. Land Use**

Many commentators define rural areas as those with less than 10-20 per cent of their land areas covered by the built environment. There are three important implications here. These areas will be dominated by agrarian and forest-based economic activities. They will be, to a large extent, repositories of the natural world and wild-life. For the visitor, they will give an impression of space, and a traditional non-urban, non-industrial economy. Their economies will be strongly influenced by the market for farm and forest products. Although the labour force required for farming and forestry has declined rapidly in recent years, rural areas still show a strong bias towards jobs in the farm/forest sector. Additionally, they usually exhibit low female activity rates outside the home because of the shortage of job opportunities for women in many rural areas.

## 7. "Traditional" social structures

The rapid urbanisation of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries produced new social structures different from the "traditional" societies of the countryside. The retention of older ways of life and thinking is important in retaining rural "character". It is this residual character which, combined with the scenic values and recreational opportunities of the countryside, attracts tourists from urban areas.

It is difficult to define the exact characteristics of rural society. There are great variations between countries and continents, and even within countries. In his article, "Communities and their Relationships to Agrarian Values" (in Rural Policy Problems, Brown, W.P. and Hadwinger, P.F. eds., pp. 19-32, Lexington, 1982), Flinn noted three very different types of traditional life styles within the rural United States:

- Small town society, closely knit, strongly believing in democracy, but often not in close contact with nature;
- Agrarian society, based on family farming, farm life and the calendar of the seasons;
- Ruralists, living outside towns, but not farming: independents who value open space, nature, and "a natural order".

The rural sociologists have struggled hard to identify the varying characteristics of rural societies. Frankenberg's urban/rural contrasts, dating from 1966, remains a valuable check list.

## 8. The Characteristics of "Rural" and "Urban" Societies

<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban</i>
Community	Association
Social fields involving few but multiple role relationships	Social fields involving many overlapping role relationships
Different social roles played by same person	Different social roles played by different people
Simple economies	Diverse economies
Little division of labour	Great specialisation in labour force
Ascribed status	Achieved status
Education according to status	Status derived from education

<i>Rural</i> (continued)	<i>Urban</i> (continued)
Role embracement	Role commitment
Close-knit networks	Loose-knit networks
Locals	Cosmopolitans
Economic class is one of several divisions	Economic class is the major division
Conjunction	Segregation
Integration with work environment	Separation of work environment

Source: Frankenberg, 1966.

## 9. The Continuum Concept

Faced with the complexities of the rural world discussed above, and with an array of other indices deliberately not discussed here, commentators on the rural scene have evolved the concept of the rural-urban continuum as a way of coping with the complexity of the situation, and the problem of comparing areas which are perceived to be rural, but possess many different characteristics. Rural communities can be assessed on a sliding scale with sparsely populated remote wilderness as one end of a polar typology. The other end of the scale can be represented by the so-called "world city", the ultimate expression of urbanisation. Between these extremes lie a variety of situations, largely rural or largely urban, with a mid-point represented by the outermost edge of suburbia, a cross-over point between poles, exhibiting characteristics of both rural and urban typology (see Robinson 1990).

An additional part of the "rurality" equation can be introduced here. The OECD's Rural Development Programme has developed a useful typology for assessing the economic geography of rural areas. This divides the rural world into peripheral or remote regions, "intermediate" regions, which make up the majority of the rural land mass, and economically integrated rural regions, often close to large urban complexes. The peripheral regions are characterised by sparse populations, small scale often traditional enterprises, high servicing costs and economic poverty. The economically integrated regions tend to have large farm units, a diversified economy, good services and relative affluence. The intermediate areas lie midway between these extremes. This typology can also fit the continuum concept: the three types of region are not sharply defined but blend into each other. The typology has important implications for both rural development and rural tourism which will be explained later.

The continuum concept copes not only with a variety of landscapes, life styles and demographic inheritance -- but also with change. Settlements can move along the continuum, exhibiting change through time. Typically -- but not always -- the change tends to move districts and settlements towards the urban pole. In the OECD's economic typology, change is also common -- and can also occur in either direction.

A further valuable point to note is that the continuum concept allows observers to realise that indices of rurality may change at different rates relative to each other. Thus, rural settlements may remain locationally rural while becoming functionally urban. Settlement size and population density may remain "rural", but economies may become non-agricultural, and society may display increasing numbers of urban characteristics. Different parts of rural society may display more or less urban characteristics. The American geographer Brian Berry notes the increasing development in the USA of "urban civilisation without cities" as educated, independently employed or retired urbanites seek "rustic backgrounds for sophisticated lives lived in a country setting". Commentators have, however, also noted that these newcomers to the countryside are amongst the most vocal in seeking to preserve certain rural characteristics, notably, landscapes dominated by farming, forestry or parkland, and small-scale settlements.

Throughout the debate on definitions of rurality amongst academics, planners and politicians, rurality is almost always seen as an important condition, possessing very valuable characteristics worthy of preservation. Thus, while the global condition has become steadily more urban, most commentators have stressed the importance of retaining key differences between urbanisation and the rural realm. Forty years ago, in 1951, the British government set up a special commission to review the future of that most remote and most rural part of Britain, the crofting communities of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (Crofting is a subsistence farming/fishing economy carried out on small holdings, usually of less than 5 hectares, far away from urban settlements). After noting that crofting flew in the face of all modern agrarian practices, and required, even in 1951, massive levels of state subsidy, the Commission concluded that, "in the national interest, the maintenance of these communities is desirable, because they embody a free and independent way of life which, in a civilisation predominantly urban and industrial in character, is worth preserving for its own intrinsic value" (Taylor Commission, 1951). In 1990, Peter Keller, in a report for the Tourism Committee of the OECD, on "Tourism Policy and Rural Development", wrote "The countryside as a creative counterbalance to the hypercivilised urban centre is no illusion... hill farmers must be kept on the land... highly developed economies should be able to afford the luxury of safeguarding typically rural areas". In this, Peter Keller, as an expert on the tourism industry, recognises the special value of the countryside.

The practical expression of the pro-rural sentiments quoted above has been two-fold. Government policies financially support both primary rural products and rural service provision in every OECD Member country. These financial policies are frequently backed by strong conservation policies, aimed at the retention of existing landscape areas, whole settlements, buildings and the natural world. Urban conservation policies also exist, but usually cover only fragments of cities and isolated special situations.

**10. Rural Tourism: a Concept for Development and Conservation**

It has been argued above that rurality as a concept is connected with low population densities and open space, and with small scale settlements, generally of fewer than 10 000 inhabitants. Land use is dominated by farming, forestry and natural areas. Societies tend towards traditionalism: the influence of the past is often strong. Government policies lean towards conservation rather than radical or rapid change.

It follows, therefore, that rural tourism should be:

- Located in rural areas;
- Functionally rural, built upon the rural world's special features: small scale enterprise, open space, contact with nature and the natural world, heritage, "traditional" societies and "traditional" practices;
- Rural in scale -- both in terms of buildings and settlements -- and, therefore, usually small scale;
- Traditional in character, growing slowly and organically, and connected with local families. It will often be very largely controlled locally and developed for the long term good of the area;
- Sustainable -- in the sense that its development should help sustain the special rural character of an area, and in the sense that its development should be sustainable in its use of resources. Rural tourism should be seen as a potential tool for conservation and sustainability, rather than as an urbanizing and development tool;
- Of many different kinds, representing the complex pattern of rural environment, economy, and history.

A list of contrasting features between urban/resort tourism and rural tourism could include the following:

<i>Urban/Resort Tourism</i>	<i>Rural Tourism</i>
Little open space	Much open space
Settlements over 10 000	Settlements under 10 000
Densely populated	Sparsely populated
Built environment	Natural environment
Many indoor activities	Many outdoor activities
Infrastructure - intensive	Infrastructure - weak

<i>Urban/Resort Tourism (continued)</i>	<i>Rural Tourism (continued)</i>
Strong entertainment/retail base	Strong individual activity base
Large establishments	Small establishments
Nationally/Internationally owned firms	Locally owned businesses
Much full time involvement in tourism	Much part-time involvement in tourism
No farm/forestry involvement	Some farm/forestry involvement
Tourism interests self supporting	Tourism supports other interests
Workers may live far from workplace	Workers often live close to workplace
Rarely influenced by seasonal factors	Often influenced by seasonal factors
Many guests	Few guests
Guest relationships anonymous	Guest relationships personal
Professional management	Amateur management
Cosmopolitan in atmosphere	Local in atmosphere
Many modern buildings	Many older buildings
Development/growth ethic	Conservation/limits to growth ethic
General in appeal	Specialist appeal
Broad marketing operation	Niche marketing

#### **11. The Importance of the Continuum -- Concept for Rural Tourism**

Commentators seeking to define rurality have made extensive use of the concept of the rural/urban continuum to deal with many different types of area, exhibiting different characteristics, and areas undergoing active change. A similar continuum concept can be useful for those seeking to define rural tourism. Few areas will display all of the characteristics of rural tourism listed previously. Many will display some "urban" characteristics. Some will be in the process of change and development towards becoming large, urban resorts. The use of the continuum concept allows planners to recognise this

trend, and to take steps either to regulate it, or to make infrastructural provision for it. It can be strongly argued that management strategies in rural tourism should aim to conserve rurality as an important resource. But, in some cases it may be valuable to allow or even encourage some change to take place.

## 12. What Types of Holidays are Rural?

This is a frequently asked and extremely difficult question. Rural tourism cannot be defined solely by holiday type: intensity of use, location, style of management, integration with the community and other factors play an important part in the definition. But a broad-brush approach can be useful. Again, the continuum concept is a useful one. Many types of holiday can be developed in both urban and rural locations. Holiday-makers may be involved in both urban and rural activities on the same day. A tentative classification of holiday types is given below: it should be used with care. The listing follows the continuum concept, moving from specifically rural to specifically urban with a broad intermediate category.

<i>Holidays which are usually specifically rural</i>	<i>Holidays which may be rural or urban/resort based</i>	<i>Holidays which are usually specifically urban/resort based</i>
Walking	Swimming	City sightseeing
Climbing	Low/medium intensity beach holidays	Shopping
"Adventure" holidays/wilderness holidays	Medium intensity downhill skiing	High intensity beach holidays
Canoeing	Sports requiring man-made infrastructure of a semi-natural type, e.g. golf	High intensity downhill skiing
Rafting		Urban heritage/culture holidays
Cross-country skiing	Cuisine-based holidays	Zoological gardens
Snow-shoe tours	General heritage holidays	Health resorts
Low intensity downhill skiing	Conservation holidays	Industrial tourism
Nature study in outdoor settings, including bird-watching, photography etc.	Educational holidays	Major conferences/conventions
Hunting	Cultural festivals	Entertainment holidays/gambling
	Craft holidays	

<i>Holidays which are usually specifically rural (continued)</i>	<i>Holidays which may be rural or urban/resort based (continued)</i>	<i>Holidays which are usually specifically urban/resort based (continued)</i>
Cycling/Cycle touring	Camping	Resort holidays
Horse riding	Sightseeing/Touring	Sports requiring man-made infrastructure, e.g. international arena based events
Landscape appreciation	Small/medium sized conferences/conventions	
Rural heritage Studies	Sailing/cruising	
Small town/village touring	Sea angling	
Relaxation holidays requiring a rural milieu		
Small scale conventions/conferences		
Rural festivals		
River and canal angling		
Sports requiring natural settings, e.g. orienteering		

### **13. The Relationship Between Tourism and Agriculture**

Traditionally agriculture and forestry were central to rural life. They were the major employers of labour, the main sources of income within the rural economy, and indirectly had a powerful influence on traditions, power structures and life styles. Together, the decisions of farmers and foresters determined rural land use and landscapes.

In the late twentieth century, the central role of farming and forestry has been diminished. Both activities have shed much of their labour force. Only five OECD countries now employ more than 15 per cent of their labour force in farming, forestry and fishing: in eight OECD countries, that figure is less than 5 per cent. The economic power of farming and forestry has declined, not least because those activities are extremely dependent on state subsidies for their profitability. Traditions are waning before the combined attack of television, power farming techniques and tree processors. Even the role of agri -- and arboriculturalists as "landscape gardeners" has diminished: power has begun to move to planners and conservationists.

In this evolving situation, two myths have grown up about the role of rural tourism. One is that rural tourism is farm-based tourism. The second is

that diversification into tourism will universally "save" the farming community. These statements are untrue because the relationships between agriculture, forestry and tourism are extremely complex ones.

Farm-based rural tourism has been successful through many (but not all) parts of German-speaking Europe because of a powerful combination of small farm size, interesting scenery, closeness to markets, traditional town/country links caused by late migration from the countryside to city regions, the owner-occupation of farmsteads and the tradition of effective and interventionary local government and co-operative movements. Furthermore, the role of farm-based tourism has been exaggerated because it has received great attention from both agriculture ministries and academics. The Bibliography of Rural Tourism for the OECD reveals that farm tourism is the largest single special category of rural tourism in terms of published works (see Appendix B). In areas where some or all of the factors mentioned above are lacking, farm-based tourism has been slow to develop. Reasons include:

- Long distances to the urban holiday market;
- Medium and large sized farms which did not need to diversify, or were amalgamated to create larger units;
- Rented farms which either failed to receive the owner's permission to diversify, or were amalgamated to create larger units;
- Very poor and very small farms which had no surplus accommodation;
- Coops and local councils and tourist boards which did not help with marketing and infrastructure provision;
- Scenery/heritage/activity attractions which were poor;
- A short, single season.

Thus, for example, over large parts of Eastern England, Sweden, Canada and the United States, farm tourism is poorly developed. But that does not mean that rural tourism is poorly developed. Many of the kinds of rural holidays discussed earlier are not dependent on farm situations. Accommodation can be provided by hotels and motels, small town and village bed and breakfasts, purpose built lodges, camping and caravan sites.

Diversification into rural tourism is frequently held up as a potential panacea for agriculture's ills. There is no doubt that in some areas, and for some businesses, tourism can be valuable. But there are serious problems in its universal application:

- Over 75 per cent of the land of the OECD countries is rural: there are insufficient visitors to maintain all farmers in all areas;

- Farm-based tourism does not reduce productivity on many farms. In some cases, additional tourism earnings are invested to increase agricultural productivity. Therefore, farm surpluses in OECD countries could continue to grow, leading to falling prices and quota restrictions, and a further round of farm problems;
- Some areas are unsuitable for intensive tourism development because of remoteness, lack of scenic or heritage attractions, and other factors;
- Successful farm tourism development seems to require effective co-operative marketing and development efforts. Many areas have no tradition of co-operation between farmers, or between farmers and governmental agencies.

The key relationship in rural tourism is between tourism development and comprehensive rural development, embracing rural services, new enterprise attraction, conservation, a wider role for women and inward investment. Agriculture has an important role to play in rural tourism, but it is but one facet amongst many: it may be of greater or lesser importance depending on local, regional and national circumstances.

## II. RURAL TOURISM: ITS GROWTH, ITS MARKET -- PROMISES AND PROBLEMS

### 1. Why has Rural Tourism Grown?

Rural tourism is not an accidental or temporary growth phenomenon. Although the travel trade is in some senses a "fashion" industry, subject to short term trends, the forces behind the growth of rural tourism are more long term in nature. These forces are partly connected to long term changes in the travel market, partly to improvements in transport and communications and partly to the efforts of public agencies charged with assisting rural change. In total, 14 key factors can be isolated which have been responsible for rural tourism growth in the past and which will continue that growth into the future.

- **Increasing levels of education.** The post-war period has seen universal increase in free or assisted education available to the populations of the developed world. This has included longer periods of school-based education, more higher education, the spread of adult and continuing education and the growth of non-formalised education, via radio, television and other media. Research shows that increasing levels of education correlate with increased interest in outdoor recreation, eco-tourism, and special interest holidays.
- **A growing interest in heritage.** Over the last 20 years there has been a boom in the level of interest in heritage both man-made and natural. This reflects many factors: a fear of the future, a fear of rootlessness, better education, time to explore, and, not least, better heritage presentation. Freeman Tilden's pioneering book "Interpreting Our Heritage", first published in 1957 in the United States helped revolutionise and inspire the heritage industry. Rural areas are especially well suited to heritage interpretation, possessing many historic landscapes, artefacts, and linkages, and fine settings for heritage sites. With the exception of the urban zoo (an institution now in decline), rural areas have a monopoly of the natural heritage market.
- **Increases in leisure time,** coupled with higher levels of disposable income, are important factors in developing tourism generally. One specific aspect of this equation is important for rural tourism. This is the growth of the short break, and the second or third holiday market. The European Community's 1985 Survey of Europeans on Holiday indicated that, of those taking holidays, over one-third now take two or more holiday trips involving overnight stays away from home each year. This is important because while a "traditional" resort-based holiday may still account for main holidays, rural special interest holidays can be tried for the second, often shorter, holiday without too much risk.

- **Transport and communications** have improved so rapidly and universally in the post-war period that remoteness -- in time and cost -- is now no longer a major problem for rural areas. As a result, rural tourism development projects can now be carried out in places as remote as Canada's Labrador Straits (accessible only from the offshore island of Newfoundland), or the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic. This ease of movement owes itself in part to technological changes -- jet aircraft, high speed trains, motorways, and roll-on roll-off ferries, automatic telephone systems and fax machines. It has been influenced by better and more widespread money handling facilities, chief of which has been the internationally acceptable credit card. There have also been key attitudinal changes on behalf of both the travel trade and their clients. Distance and remoteness have become selling points, rather than barriers.
  
- **Health consciousness** has grown and is growing steadily and in the concept of healthy living, active recreation plays an important part. Exercise and sport play central roles in healthy living strategies. Rural areas are well placed to provide outdoor recreation of all kinds from walking to cycling, orienteering, skiing and climbing. The countryside is assumed to be healthy, with overtones of fresh air and bucolic well-being. In contrast, resort holidays based on the sun/sea/sand formula have been found to offer serious health risks. Medical researchers in Australasia, America and Scandinavia have pinpointed sunbathing as being responsible for higher levels of skin disease, ranging from premature wrinkling to deadly skin cancers. While this problem is still only fully appreciated in the southern hemisphere, it seems very likely that knowledge of the risks posed by sun-belt holidays will grow.
  
- **Better outdoor clothing** has helped rural holidays in both a practical and a fashion sense. High performance fabrics enable wearers to stay warm and dry in adverse weather, allowing tourists to enjoy wet weather and out-of-season conditions. Contemporary outdoor clothing is now extremely fashionable, and available in a wide range of colours and styles. Outdoor recreation equipment has also been much improved and many items, such as the mountain bike, the wind surfer and the 4-wheel drive utility vehicle, have achieved cult fashion status.
  
- **A growing interest in speciality food** is widely evident, be it wild rice from North America, non-pasturized cheeses from France, cholesterol-free, non-farmed salmon and deer from Scandinavia, or organic produce from the Alps. Considerable space in the press is devoted to speciality foods and food preparation. Rural holidays have been able to capitalise on this trend because the countryside is the source of quality non-processed foods.
  
- **Green issues** have risen high on most political agendas over the last ten years. This interest has been seized upon by the marketers of many consumer products, including holiday tour operators. Rural holidays, although not necessarily environmentally friendly, can capitalise on the wholesomeness which the countryside is felt to exude.
  
- **Authenticity** is a quality which is increasingly prized. In a world of video and television entertainment, factory produced goods, and suburban anonymity, the authenticity of the countryside, and the personal touch

provided by small scale communities and accommodation units is extremely valuable. An English Tourist Board survey of motives for taking rural holidays, conducted in 1987, placed this point second only to scenery as a reason for staying in the countryside.

- **Peace and tranquility** rank high amongst the requirements of many tourists. This is hardly surprising given the high levels of mental stress experienced by many workers. A 1986 survey of the German holiday market found that "to switch off, relax" was the number one aim of those taking holidays: this aim was given by 66 per cent of respondents. 47 per cent wished to experience nature, and 32 per cent sought cleaner air and an unpolluted environment.
- **Ageing but active populations** are becoming the norm across the OECD countries. Early retirement is now commonplace, as are active 70-year-olds. In 1971 83 per cent of British males aged 60-64 were still working in full time jobs. By 1995 it is expected that only 55 per cent of men in that age group will remain in full time work. Effective occupational pensions allow this active but ageing population to travel widely: many choose rural holidays for health reasons and to discover new non-urban experiences.
- **REAL travel (rewarding, enriching, adventuresome and a learning experience)** has been noted by many commentators as being a growth area. The many facets of rural tourism are specially placed to fulfil the needs of this growth market.
- **Individualism** is also a growth market, rejecting the mass activities of the past. The growth of individualism has been noted and acted upon by the car manufacturers, by clothing manufacturers, and by many other purveyors of consumer goods. Rural tourism, because of the fragmented and small scale nature of the enterprises involved, is especially capable of exploiting this market trend, although high quality selling and hospitality skills are needed.
- **The rural agencies**, numerous in most countries, have been quick to express an interest in rural tourism and to offer aid and advice. These agencies include those connected with agriculture, with nature conservation, with community welfare, with the arts and crafts, with National Parks, with economic development, transport -- the list is almost endless. Although the agencies rarely co-ordinate their activities, and are rarely organisations with any experience of tourism, they have assisted many collective projects and individual enterprises.

## 2. The Size of the Market

Given the many factors above, it is interesting to note that there is very little quantitative knowledge of the precise size of the rural tourism market. Estimates have been made of the size of the "Special Interest" tourism market, which is a closely related area. The World Tourism Organization estimated the special interest market to be about 3 per cent of the total domestic and international market in 1985. In 1989, a survey of U.S. travel

agents revealed that special interest holidays comprised 15 per cent of all bookings. Other U.S. surveys show that eco-tourists (a related niche rural tourism market) are relatively wealthy, and spend more per holiday than conventional visitors. Repeat bookings accounted for one-third of the clients surveyed. German statistics claim that 20 per cent of main holidays are now in the special interest category.

What is clear from market surveys is that the rural holiday market is very much an affluent and well educated one, requiring quality and tending to spend above average amounts. British and American surveys confirm these points, but perhaps the most comprehensive and telling evidence comes from France. "Le Marché du Tourisme Vert", published by the French Ministry of Tourism in 1991, takes an in-depth look at the market for rural holidays in France, including both domestic and foreign markets. British visitors were noted to be largely from the leading social groups. German tourists to rural France represent "un certain snobisme". The Italian market is described as from the upper social strata, couples aged 35-40 with children aged 5-12, usually from a large city and environmentally very aware.

Therefore, if levels of income and educational attainment continue to rise across the OECD countries, the market for rural tourism should also grow. At the time of writing, recessionary trends may limit short term growth; in the long term, most authorities predict a return to slowly rising standards.

Aside from the bird-watching and hunting/fishing markets, which have a wider appeal across the whole socio-economic spectrum in many countries, rural tourism is generally supported by an up-market clientele.

### **3. What Can Rural Tourism Contribute to Rural Development**

The American state of Wyoming (with a population of 512 000) estimates that wildlife tourism is worth over \$ 1 billion annually within its borders. Britain's Countryside Commission estimated that visitors to the countryside spent £ 3 000 million in 1986: of this figure £ 1 100 million came from those spending at least one night in the countryside, and the remainder came from day trips. These are gross figures; the net figures after deduction of goods bought in to service tourism, when tax has been paid, etc., would be much lower, but, equally, they make no allowance for the multiplier effect of tourism spending.

Clearly, rural tourism, while still only a minority tourism market, is already making a valuable contribution to rural economies. Its contribution can be expressed not only in financial terms, but also in terms of jobs, contributions towards funding conservation, encouragement to the adoption of new working practices, and the injection of a new vitality into sometimes weakened economies. In total, tourism promises 17 potential benefits to rural development. These are covered in detail below.

-- **Job retention** is extremely important in rural areas where employment decline is often endemic. Tourism cash flows can assist job retention in services such as retailing, transport, hospitality and medical care. It can also provide additional income for farmers, and, in some cases, for

foresters and fisherman. Job retention is not as politically glamorous as job creation, but, by helping the viability of small communities, it is critical to the survival of marginal areas. Studies of rural Austria, Sweden and Ireland have documented the role of tourism in job retention.

- **Job creation** is a further possibility if rural tourism is successful. Job creation typically occurs in the hotel and catering trades, but can also take place in transport, retailing, and in information/heritage interpretation. Studies in Britain suggest that job creation varies by enterprise type. Farmhouse accommodation and bed-and-breakfast can create up to 23 jobs per £ 100 000 of tourism revenue. Job creation effects are less marked in hotels and caravan/campsites, yielding approximately six jobs per £ 100 000 of revenue. Similar figures of between five and six jobs per £ 100 000 revenue have been estimated for rural attractions of all types (see Hart, Hardy and Shaw, 1990, and others).
- **Job diversity** is encouraged by rural tourism development. Most rural areas have little job variety outside farming and basic services. Better job diversity enriches rural society, and helps retain population levels.
- **Pluriactivity** can be a further useful by-product of tourism in the countryside. Pluriactivity is the term used when an individual or family carries out more than one type of job to maintain their income. A part-time farmer could also offer accommodation, assist the local administration in service tasks and act as a ski-instructor. Sea fishermen may take tourist parties on angling trips, on whale watching expeditions off the coast of Canada and the United States, or on bird-watching excursions off the coast of Ireland or Scotland. Pluriactivity guards against recession in any one sector. It is especially important in the rural context because of the cultural importance of the family as a unit in many traditional societies.
- **Service retention** is vital in rural areas: rural tourism can assist in three ways. Visitor information services can be provided by existing outlets, such as shops, thus increasing income flows if payment is made for acting as information outlets. Services can also benefit by the additional customers which visitors provide. The high levels of public transport in rural Austria and Switzerland are in part due to the support they receive from holiday-makers. This additional custom is not, however, automatic: to make the most of the potential, services often need to offer new products, to be available at different times and to understand the new markets. Finally, tourism's importance to national economies can strengthen the political case for subsidies to help retain services.
- **Farm support** is a major issue on all political agendas. Many studies have shown that farm incomes can be bolstered by rural tourism, through accommodation enterprises of all kinds, by developing open farms and other attractions, by increased sales of farm produce, and by increasing female activity rates through additional off-farm employment. There are widespread variations in the levels of farmer participation in rural tourism throughout the OECD countries, varying by region, farm size, age of farmer and other factors. While surveys show that economic benefits are of first importance in prompting farmers to enter tourism enterprises, the

surveys also stress that many farmers achieve a social bonus. Visitors bring variety and company to what can be a lonely and limited life style.

- **Forestry** is an important activity in many upland and climatically marginal regions. Forest regions have suffered serious socio-economic problems in recent years, partly because of the mechanisation of tree felling and processing, and partly because of falling prices following reduced timber demand. Rural tourism can assist forestry by diversifying income sources for forest communities if the special qualities of the forest environment for recreational use are realised and developed.
- **Landscape conservation** has become an increasingly important form of heritage protection. Although this dates back to the designation of America's Yellowstone National Park in 1872, the national park movement is still progressing and most countries now have a wide range of lesser designations covering many types of landscape. Landscape is of crucial importance to rural tourism but, equally, visitor use is vital to the landscape conservation industry. Visitor use brings political benefits, can bring economic gains, and can provide jobs in maintaining and repairing traditional landscapes worn by recreational activities.
- **Smaller settlements** in the countryside have always been at greater risk of losing viability because they are unable to support the many services which now require larger threshold populations to support them. Rural tourism can assist these smaller settlements to survive, because smaller places have a special attraction for visitors. Careful management of this process is, however, required.
- **Rural arts and crafts** have a special place in the cultural heritage of regions and nations. Many commentators have noted that tourism can assist arts and crafts, both by recognising their importance, and by purchasing craft products. Income flows from these activities are well documented. Support between the arts and tourism can be a two-way process. Many communities now use arts and crafts festivals as a marketing mechanism to encourage visitors to come to their areas.
- **Cultural provision** has always been restricted in rural areas. The lack of major facilities such as theatre, opera, music and galleries has been one of the many factors encouraging rural depopulation. The festivals and other events described in the previous paragraph have enabled rural areas to broaden their cultural provision, buying in artists and ensembles and supporting those purchases by ticket sales to visitors. The English Lake District's "Theatre in the Forest" project at Grizedale is a classic example which can be repeated in most countries.
- **Nature conservation**, like landscape conservation, is a stated goal of most modern governments. It is, however, an expensive process. Rural tourism can valorise nature conservation in a monetary sense. Many estimates have been made of the value of nature to tourism. On the grand scale, it is estimated that each elephant is worth \$ 14 375 to the Kenyan economy. On a lesser scale, the British Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has demonstrated that even small bird reserves can help sustain village shops by visitor purchases and by the expenditure of reserve management and

maintenance staff. Visitors are prepared to pay to see nature: most reserves and many national parks successfully charge for entrance. How far charging can be extended is a much discussed point in conservation circles.

- **The historic built environment** can benefit from rural tourism in two ways. Many historic properties now charge for admission in order to maintain their fabrics and surrounding gardens and parklands. Secondly, there are important buildings from the past which have become redundant. Churches have lost their congregations, castles have lost their wars, farm buildings have become too small for modern equipment, railway stations have lost their trains, and canal warehouses no longer have barge traffic. The tourist industry can usually use these redundant buildings profitably and imaginatively: they can become attractions in their own right. The small town of St. Jacobs in Ontario, Canada, has converted grain stores into a craft centre; in Lanarkshire, Scotland, a folly constructed in the shape of a pineapple has become sought after as a cottage for holiday lets; in the Swiss valley of Safiental, a timber farm-house is maintained in its original pre-twentieth century condition by using it as a Youth Hotel.
- **Environmental improvements** such as village paving and traffic regulation schemes, sewage and litter disposal can be assisted by tourism revenues and political pressures from tourism authorities. These help develop pride of place, important in retaining existing population and businesses, and in attracting new enterprises and families.
- **Small fishing communities** are suffering badly from dwindling fish stocks, quota restrictions and international bans on some activities. A number of these communities can successfully diversify into sports fishing, bird and seal watching, and coastal sightseeing. Some environmental groups claim that potential revenue from whale and dolphin watching could exceed revenue from catching whales for meat.
- **The role of women** within the rural community was, in the past, a restricted one. Farming, forestry and mining were very much male occupations. Alternative jobs for women were few. Women were rarely involved in local politics. The widespread emancipation of women, coupled with the possibilities which rural tourism offers, have together done much in many areas to release the under-utilised talents and energies of the female half of the population. Studies show that tourism enterprises have increased the power of women within both the family and the community. Experience in Spain, Greece, France, Britain and Ireland has demonstrated how the flexible and open-minded approach of women towards new ideas and co-operative working has helped develop and lead successful rural tourism projects. The development of the role of women could do much for the economic and social well-being of many rural areas.
- **New ideas and initiatives** will be essential if rural communities are to prosper into the twenty-first century. Efforts to support agriculture, forestry and service provision by state subsidies have done much to develop a culture of dependency within the countryside. The new challenges and the fiercely competitive nature of the tourism market could do much to encourage enterprise and new methods. There is also evidence that rural tourism can act as a catalyst to bring new businesses of many kinds into

rural communities. Research in the English county of Cornwall shows that good holiday experiences by business people were instrumental in encouraging them to re-locate their businesses to the county. Since 1971, the area has been able to reverse a century of depopulation, and it is now experiencing a population renewal.

#### 4. Rural Tourism: The Problems

While many benefits can flow from rural tourism development, there can be problems. All economic structural re-alignments can disrupt sensitive environments. And, as the records of numerous rural aid agencies will testify, rural communities can be extremely resistant to new ideas. The problems in developing and managing rural tourism are listed below: they lead on to Section IV which asks: can rural tourism pay? Will it make a sufficiently large contribution to alleviate rural problems? And can it be managed?

- **The environmental threat.** Rural tourism operates within sensitive natural environments. Some of the most attractive tourism destinations have the most sensitive environments. These include sea and lake shorelines, wetlands, high mountain areas, and polar areas. Many studies have highlighted the threats which tourism has already brought to the environment. Intensive skiing has destroyed vegetation and encouraged land-slips; climbing erodes rock faces, and, with modern equipment, destroys their natural condition; walking and riding wears out paths in heavily used areas; noise and litter drive out and injure wild creatures; existing farming practices are upset by fire, dogs and competition for labour. The peace, quiet and authentic nature of the countryside can be seriously compromised. All these issues can be tackled to some extent by the skilled management of the countryside; management of the order required is as yet rarely available (see later in this review).
- **The socio-cultural threat.** Just as the influx of large numbers of visitors can disrupt the natural world, so also can visitors impinge upon the small scale, static, and well ordered socio-cultural world of the rural community. Earnings patterns change, success/failure relationships are altered, power structures are challenged. More fundamentally, sociologists have long recognised that the impact of "advanced" cultures on "traditional" cultures almost always brings change to the traditional culture and not in the other direction. This process has been examined in detail in the Mediterranean and in the Alpine lands. But the process is most marked where special ethnic or linguistic groups are involved. The Irish-speaking Gaeltacht areas of Ireland have long experience of the problem: a recent positive step towards an answer has been the appointment of a project officer to try to develop tourism which is friendly towards the Irish language. In North America, the relationship of the Indian tribes and Inuit peoples to tourism development is a difficult issue still in the process of re-assessment.
- **The housing question.** Some successful rural tourism areas -- in the Canadian Rockies, in South-West England, in parts of the Alps -- have found that success in the visitor market has brought accommodation problems for local people. Small communities rarely have very much surplus housing.

If they are to retain their character they must not expand too much or too rapidly. Visitor demand has three types of effect. Housing can be taken over for visitor accommodation, usually in the self-catering sector. Housing purchased as second-homes by city people is often rarely used, and brings little economic benefit to the local community. Housing can be purchased as retirement homes by holidaymakers who fall in love with their holiday areas. On retirement, the one-time holidaymakers gradually create a tendency towards a gerontocracy. All these impacts raise prices and create tension within rural societies.

- ***The incoming entrepreneur.*** For reasons which will be discussed later, many local farmers and businesses do not decide to enter the tourism market when opportunities present themselves. Surveys show that, in extreme cases, up to 80 per cent of tourism-related businesses in small towns and villages are owned, managed or controlled by incoming or non-local entrepreneurs. In some respects incomers can provide a valuable transfusion of contacts, capital and skill. But they can also present problems. They may be insensitive to local tradition, cultures, working practices and architectural styles. They may use non-local suppliers for goods and services. They may repatriate their profits and capital gains out of the area. They have little loyalty to their new base of operations and often leave when trading conditions deteriorate. Less tangibly, but equally important, they set up tensions between locals and incomers, and do little to change the dependency culture common to many rural places.
  
- ***Traffic congestion*** -- usually road traffic, but in some cases sea and air traffic -- can be a major problem if an area is successful in attracting tourists. Narrow roads can easily be choked by traffic both inside and outside settlements, parking becomes an issue, non-tourism business can suffer and, in extreme cases, emergency services cannot make urgent calls. The attractiveness of the area as a destination can decline, taking it down-market. There can be side effects on landscape and nature conservation. Traffic management techniques and better use of public transport can help, but the funds and skills necessary are not usually available.
  
- ***The issues of planning, local control, public participation and partnership*** bring together many of the points covered so far in this section. In an ideal world, local people and businesses would control tourism development in such a way that the problems discussed earlier would be minimised and benefits maximised. Planning controls would ensure a carefully worked out balance of development between tourism-related and other land uses. Different types of tourism activity would be zoned into the regions best suited for those types of development. Employers and employees would undertake regular training courses to learn the skills of marketing, hospitality, interpretation and tourism planning. The community would feel that it had "ownership" of its industry in a broad sense. As a result the visitor would feel a genuine sense of welcome from the host population. But real world is rarely ideal.

The financial power of the incoming entrepreneur, and the power of skilled outsiders including tour operators and tourist board officials, means that

local control is seldom achieved. When locals do have power, they often do not have the foresight, experience or skills necessary. In some areas local politicians resent and resist development. In others, the promise of new jobs and income can be too great a temptation, leading to the acceptance of damaging schemes. In most cases tourism management is not practised because of cost and political implications.

There have, however, been many experiments in introducing local participation into rural tourism development projects. Most are so recent that evaluation is not yet complete. Canada has pioneered the most widespread attempts at community participation in rural tourism planning. Alberta has been especially active in this field, initiating its Community Tourism Action Plan, involving 426 out of 429 eligible communities, in 1987. Local committees have been encouraged and assisted to draw up tourism development plans through extensive consultation. Similar actions have been carried out in British Columbia and Saskatchewan. Heritage Canada has been involved in exemplary local participation work in Labrador. While it is difficult to assess the results of this work at this stage, it is already becoming clear that there are widespread variations in the quality of the plans produced. Regional co-ordination has been found to be necessary and is now being developed. Much has been learned about how to assist the work of local committees as a result of these experiences.

Other important efforts at establishing local control have taken place in Britain, Ireland and Switzerland. In Switzerland, the community of Waltensburg successfully built and operates a 70-bed hotel, to high environmental standards, with profits flowing to assist other local development schemes. This project is a model of good practice, even though it is unlikely that the concept could be transplanted fully to other rural communities. In Britain and Ireland, project leaders have assisted communities and districts to grapple with control and planning issues. Sometimes these project leaders have been educationalists; in other cases they have been rural development agency workers. Areas covered include the Ballyhoura Mountains in Ireland, the Berwick, Shropshire, West Dorset and West Somerset regions of England, and the Taff and Cleddau Rural Initiative in Wales. Further valuable experience as well as commercial success has come from these projects.

In some areas comprehensive community businesses have been formed to ensure local control and profit retention. The Connemara West Company, based in Letterfrack, Galway, Ireland is an oft quoted example. Community business, however, seems to be successful only in special circumstances.

- **Can all rural areas successfully develop rural tourism?** Over 75 per cent of the land area of the OECD is rural. It seems unlikely that all of this vast area can participate in tourism development. Some types of area have important natural advantages for rural tourism. Experience suggests that six factors are involved in determining the suitability of areas for investment purposes. But experience also suggests that these factors are not exclusive, and that because the tourist industry is highly dynamic, and subject to changes in fashion, the factors may not remain constant in the

future. Furthermore, an area's possession of any one -- or even all -- of these factors does not guarantee success. The factors are:

- . Scenic value -- including mountains, seashores, lakes, islands, rivers and special interest scenery such as wetlands or mixed deciduous forest.
- . Special wildlife assets.
- . Cultural assets including historic buildings/towns/villages/sites and/or ethnic heritage of all types.
- . Special facilities for sports including hunting, fishing, skiing, hiking etc.
- . Ease of access by large populations.
- . Effective promotional, commercial and management skills.

The OECD Rural Development Programme's typology for rural areas differentiates between remote areas, intermediate areas and economically integrated areas. The typology forms a useful additional set of criteria to consider when assessing conditions for the growth of tourism activities. The economically integrated areas are usually close to large cities, offering considerable leisure market potential. Closeness to cities may, however, result in a higher level of day-visit recreational use, which is less valuable in financial terms than overnight stays. Remote areas are, by definition, more likely to attract guests who stay overnight, leading to greater net revenue potential per visitor. If teamed with mountain or lake scenery, remoteness -- if not too daunting -- can be a considerable attraction. But remoteness without fine scenery generally means that there will be little likelihood of rural tourism development.

The OECD Rural Development Programme typology can also be a valuable indicator when considering the likelihood of local people taking up new initiatives such as tourism. Peripheral areas may try new enterprises because of a high "desperation factor", brought about by poverty and decline. Economically integrated areas may, paradoxically, also be keen to try new enterprises -- not because of desperation, but because of spare capital and the large potential markets nearby. It is in the intermediate areas that it can be most difficult to change attitudes and develop new tourism businesses.

- **Farmers** are critical in maintaining both the basic rural economy and the scenery on which rural tourism depends. Yet farmers have responded unevenly and often only slowly to the opportunities available through tourism. Some farmers are strongly anti-tourist, resenting visitors on their territory, especially where footpaths or riding trails cross their land. Many would prefer better prices for farm produce rather than incentives to move into the visitor industry. When farmers do diversify into tourism, they often do so together with other farmers, rather than with local communities, and thus potential co-operative benefits are lost.

At the root of many of the problems encountered in involving farmers in tourism is a basic question of knowledge and training. A hotelier would be incapable of working in the farming industry without a lengthy period of training, yet farmers (or their wives) are expected to diversify into providing visitor services of all kinds with little or no training.

- **Training deficiencies** are not confined to agriculturalists. Many business people and employees working in rural tourism have little or no training in the many skills required for this complex and competitive industry. Lack of training is one of the reasons why some studies have noted a high incidence of business failures in the rural tourism field. Training needs are covered in Appendix A.
- **Failure to group and to set up co-operative ventures** is a common but not universal problem. Because rural tourism enterprises are small, co-operation with other businesses can bring major savings in marketing and training and in the purchase of supplies. Co-operative groupings can also negotiate with government bodies to fund infrastructural improvements, and can work with the major players in the international tourism market, the tour operators. Interest and success in co-operative ventures owes much to the history and experience of the regions concerned. Where there is a tradition of co-operation, usually in farming, tourism co-operatives seem to work.

### III. MANAGING RURAL TOURISM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

#### 1. Can Tourism Strategies Solve the Rural Regeneration Question?

Given the long list of problems outlined above, can tourism strategies make an effective contribution to rural development? The answer according to most authorities, is a carefully qualified yes. It will be shown below that in order to minimise the problems and maximise the benefits, sustainable tourism management strategies should be employed. It will be further argued that more research and development is necessary to help ensure the success of the strategy approach. However, even given a successful management strategy, tourism alone would not be able to solve all rural regeneration issues. It would be disastrous if it could. Tourism can contribute to regeneration, but an area would suffer in the long term if tourism came to be a dominant activity. The aim of any tourism strategy should be to assist the balanced development of an area, not to convert it into a resort complex dependent solely on the travel trade.

#### 2. But Can -- and Should -- Rural Tourism be Managed?

Many texts have been written on tourism management: one of the latest, by Edward Inskip, promises "an integrated and sustainable development approach". Little, however, has been written specifically on effective rural tourism management -- although there have been books on recreation management, and on countryside management.

The case against the managed approach is three-fold. The expansion of modern tourism has not been the product of planning but of a largely free market. Tourism is a consumer industry: central planning in this area has had an uneven record. Third, there is the claim that the tourism industry is different -- it is unmanageable. In the words of Professor Butler of the University of Western Ontario, Canada -- "tourism development is like pregnancy -- one cannot become just a little bit pregnant".

The case for managing rural tourism rests on four points.

First, the tourist industry is now well established and mature. Clients are more discerning and many seek a carefully managed, quality environment on holiday, rather than just a holiday. The industry is beginning to realise that it has long term environmental responsibilities, and management techniques can help it to meet those responsibilities.

Second, rural tourism is different from resort tourism because it operates in a very sensitive human and fragile physical environment. Management is, therefore, essential if the very qualities on which the rural holiday relies are not to be lost through inappropriate or over-development.

Third, because of the many new and inexperienced small enterprises involved in the rural tourism sector, some unifying strategy is essential for business planning purposes. The initial development of this new sector frequently requires public sector finance; some form of strategic plan is normally necessary to gain access to that finance.

Finally, tourism management is beginning to evolve into something more flexible and enterprise-orientated than simple land use and infrastructure planning. This process may still have a long way to go, but most commentators and many experienced members of the industry see management as a necessary future tool. On balance, therefore, it seems that there is a powerful case for the creation of rural tourism management strategies.

### 3. The Evolution of Rural Tourism Management

Current thinking in rural tourism development and management has three distinct sources.

- **Recreation management** ideas have evolved in North America over the last 50 years, largely through national park administrations. Key areas of discussion centre around visitor and vehicle control, zoning policies, wildlife and vegetation management, trail design and maintenance, carrying capacity assessment and interpretation policies. Most of these ideas are useful to rural tourism management but the recreational management approach is essentially non-commercial and does not, therefore, answer many of the question which rural tourism management poses. Recreational management techniques were usually evolved in non-farmed areas, free of settlements of any size, and in areas where land ownership was in the hands of the managing authorities. The authorities usually had considerable powers of planning control, and long term funding to carry out their ideas.
- **The concept of sustainable tourism** was developed in the alpine regions of Europe by German, Swiss, Austrian, French and Italian academics, conservationists and tourism professionals. It is known by a number of other names green tourism, responsible tourism, post-industrial tourism, meta-tourism and alternative tourism are but a few. It was developed as an answer to the pressing problems of mass tourism in the Alps and the Mediterranean. It can best be described as a system of long term tourism planning which is friendly towards the long term well-being of communities and habitats, the visitor, and the tourist industry. It envisages these three players in the tourism equation being in a triangular relationship. In unplanned mass tourism, the industry dominates decision making, to the detriment of all parties because of the operation of the "resort cycle" theory, which envisages that a resort will have a finite life because of eventual overcrowding and deterioration. The Sustainability Concept gives power and knowledge in equal amounts to each party, resulting in careful, slow optimisation of each other's aims. (see Krippendorf, Zimmer and Glauber 1988, and Bramwell and Lane 1993).

Sustainable tourism is a powerfully attractive concept to the rural tourism manager. It provides a useful philosophy and check-list for proposed actions. Because of its all-embracing scope, because of its utopian aims,

and because it is still new, it remains largely untested over time. A number of British, Austrian and other areas are now implementing sustainable rural tourism strategies.

-- **Rural tourism project management** is also in its infancy, but over the last ten years there have been many rural tourism development projects throughout the world. These have been variable in aims and quality. They have been handled by a variety of professionals including community social workers, economic development officers, marketeers, educationalists, historians and interpretation experts, land use planners, and farm advisors. Most projects have been of short duration -- up to three years -- and many have been unable to develop tangible long lasting benefits in that time.

Rural tourism management in the future should try to combine the experience and knowledge of all the sources discussed above. But much more work is required before long term effectiveness and success can be achieved. The issues to be addressed, and the type of research and development work necessary are described below.

#### **4. Issues to be Addressed if Sustainable Rural Tourism is to be Promoted Successfully**

Over the last 20 years, many businesses and communities have participated in the growth of tourism in rural areas. As the bibliography on rural tourism in Appendix B shows, there has been great interest in this trend from many parts of the world. But several important problems remain to be addressed before the development of rural tourism is fully understood and before the benefits of that development are available to all regions in all countries. Perhaps the most important issue is how a sustainable form of rural tourism can be developed -- a form of tourism which would retain the intrinsic values of the countryside, while sustaining its economic life, and helping ensure the long-term profitability of the travel industry interests involved in the transfer of visitors both inter-regionally and internationally.

#### **5. Pre-requisites Before Discussion can Begin**

##### ***To agree a definition of the term "rural tourism"***

This may seem a somewhat arid way to begin the discussion: it is, however, vital. It sets the content and the boundaries of the discussion. Section I covers this question in detail. It defines rural tourism as being located in rural areas, and as being functionally rural -- that is, firmly based on the rural world's special features of open space, contact with nature, rural heritage and society. Its scale should be in keeping with the landscape and settlements in which it operates: those settlements are normally of fewer than 10 000 people. While including farm tourism within its remit, its overall focus should also encompass the whole range of suitable businesses and settlement types in the countryside. Its aim should be to help ensure the long-term sustainability of the life of the region: it should be a force for the conservation of rurality rather than a force for urbanisation.

The definition above is given in terms of rural tourism's location and impact. A recent Australian Department of Tourism discussion paper (Tourism discussion paper No. 1 -- Rural Tourism, Canberra 1993) further defines rural tourism in terms of product:

- the natural environment, the landscape and wildlife;
- the farming process;
- the country towns, the rural people, their cultures, communities and activities;
- the indigenous communities, their way of life, their identity and relationship with the land and nature.

Finally, it should be noted that because of the rich variety of physical backgrounds in the rural world and the complex palimpsest of history which overlays its physical frame, there will always be a need to adjust any definition to accommodate local, regional and national variations.

***To agree the need for special care in the development and management of tourism in rural areas***

While there is clearly a need for care in all forms of tourism development, there is an especially pressing case to be made for care in the countryside. Because of the fragile nature of the industry's raw material -- rurality itself -- all activities should be subject to special scrutiny to ensure that they pass the test of sustainability. In practice this will mean the recognition that:

- not all areas are suitable for development;
- not all communities wish to be developed or are suitable for development;
- not all forms of tourism activity are acceptable in every location;
- there may have to be limits to growth in any one area;
- special visitor management techniques may have to be employed to prevent and/or repair environmental damage caused by visitor pressure.

***To agree the aims of rural tourism development***

Aims may include a wide range:

- job retention, creation and diversification;
- the conservation of traditional buildings and habitats;

- community support;
- transport system support;
- agriculture / forestry support;
- the development of a better quality of life for rural peoples;
- the development of new roles for disadvantaged/under-employed groups;
- quality-of-life enhancement for visitors from urban areas, last in this list but a crucial aim in many respects.

Rural tourism strategists need to determine their aims before commencing development; those aims should be reviewed periodically.

***To recognise that there will be a need for special partnership arrangements to help rural areas develop tourism***

These partnerships may be between businesses, between businesses and the community, and between businesses, communities and public sector institutions. They will be necessary because of the fragility of the rural world itself, and the fragility of many of its small enterprises. They will be necessary because of the need to restructure the rural economy. And the partnership concept will also be necessary because of the peculiar nature of tourism itself in a rural area. Tourism is a special form of economic activity in any area because of its powerful impact on the public domain. While car manufacturing or office work can be hidden away in industrial estates or science parks, tourism's basic acts of sightseeing, shopping and touring are totally public. In rural areas there is an additional intrusion: tourism frequently intrudes onto the private domain, as visitors seek access to private land, to private lakesides and sea shore. Partnerships between interests are, therefore, vital to deal with the conflicts of interest which can easily arise.

**6. Key Issues to be Solved in Practice**

Successful development and management will require both public and private sector participation. Traditionally, public sector involvement in rural areas has been very considerable, both because of the need to conserve and control national food supplies and because of the long term structural weaknesses within the rural economy. Because of this inherited position, and because there seems little likelihood of most rural economies strengthening in the near future, the public sector's role will continue to be a powerful one. But tourism in non-rural areas is essentially a private sector initiative, and experience shows that it functions best in private hands. Therefore, while there will always be a strong regulatory and co-ordinating role for the public sector within rural tourism, steps should be taken wherever possible to stimulate private sector involvement. Public sector involvement is likely to be greatest in the early stages of an area's development, with private sector responsibilities then gradually taking on a more important role.

### ***The need to understand and relate to the market***

Without markets, any discussion on rural tourism must remain academic. The size, type, elasticity and demands of the market influence all the issues listed later. Lack of market knowledge, and lack of knowledge about how to relate to markets, are common problems for many rural tourism initiatives. The two parts to this issue are:

- The need to understand the size, location, characteristics, perception and requirements of markets;
- The need to understand how to relate to, influence and win markets via marketing campaigns, liaison with travel agents, travel companies and tour operators.

It is most likely that basic market research is best initiated and funded by the public sector in order to ensure that this fundamental information is available to all businesses. Marketing campaigns and promotions may be begun by the public sector, but the role of that sector should gradually change to one of co-ordinator rather than funder as development proceeds.

### ***The development of an environmentally sustainable enterprise milieu***

This complex phrase embraces a number of issues:

- The provision of effective planning and conservation legislation, and bodies to implement that legislation -- a public sector responsibility;
- The development of regional and local sustainable rural tourism strategy plans to assess an area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, to guide both public and private sector investment, and to assess environmental and community requirements. This is usually a public sector responsibility, but requires close consultation with the private sector and with environmental and community interests;
- The provision of business advice and training -- typically a public sector responsibility, but not necessarily delivered directly by the public sector. The importance of training in the development of rural tourism should not be underestimated: a separate Appendix covers this issue;
- The development of an ongoing monitoring and evaluation process to review the success of tourism as an industry, and to provide a response mechanism for environmental and community interests. This is usually a private/public sector partnership, with a secretariat provided by the public sector. This secretariat may also be responsible for initiating research and development programmes;

### ***The development, improvement and monitoring of accommodation***

Lack of accommodation or of suitable accommodation is one of the key development problems in many rural tourism areas. Accommodation is essentially a private sector responsibility, but it may require advice / grant aid in the early stages. Quality control may be a public sector responsibility, but some of the quality control systems can be devolved to industry associations as development proceeds.

### ***The development and improvement of visitor attractions***

Although the rural world is itself the key attraction, there are many cases where special emphasis can be given to aspects of rurality by the careful development of visitor attractions. These developments are normally private sector responsibilities. The role of the public sector is that of guidance, encouragement/discouragement, regulation and, in special cases, grant aid may be necessary: in peripheral areas community-based developments may be both necessary and useful.

### ***The need to provide and manage infrastructure***

Infrastructure includes:

- Transportation facilities and services -- either a public or private sector responsibility, although rural public transport is often assisted by public subsidy even if provided by private operators;
- Information facilities -- usually, but not always or necessarily, a public sector provision. In some rural areas the private sector can be very effective at providing information on a franchised basis from a public authority;
- Interpretation of landscape, heritage, nature. These facilities are typically a public sector responsibility, especially if carried out for a wider region. Private provision is also possible, either as a form of private visitor attraction, or as part of the work of special interest groups (such as the National Trust in the United Kingdom, or the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States);
- Access for walkers / riders / cyclists. Access issues (to paths, to mountains, lake or sea shores) are usually regulated by the public sector although access often occurs across private land. Rural tourism development thrives on a good partnership here: Austria, Switzerland and Germany are classic models of good practice. In contrast, the situations in Ireland and Scotland are classic examples of unresolved access issues slowing the development of tourism because of weaknesses in the regulatory system;

- Environmental protection and repair is normally a public sector responsibility. Payment for protection, and especially for repair, is however, a difficult issue: the principle of "the polluter pays" is increasingly threatened or invoked by the public sector in an effort to reduce the charge on the public purse. These problems, if unresolved, can produce serious disagreements between the community, the tourist trade and visitors.

### ***Research into the development and management of rural tourism***

Research and development is important in all industries: it is particularly important in a new field like rural tourism. Research can find ways of lessening the impact of tourism on the environment and new ways of attracting and retaining visitors, and can help keep areas in the front rank of the internationally competitive business of tourism. Normally, research will be led by the public sector, but private sector participation is extremely important if the work is to be relevant and acted upon. A fuller explanation of the areas into which research is required can be found in the next section.

### ***The requirement for leadership***

Many small businesses and numerous public sector organisations are involved in rural tourism. The successful promotion of development and management planning requires more than usually informed, skilled and dedicated leadership. This is an intangible factor, but one of great importance. It can help persuade business interests to be kinder to the environment; it can steer difficult government institutions to more pragmatic interpretations of their roles; it can influence the doubting farmer; it can bring new ideas to communities of no hope.

Leadership can be provided by enlightened individuals from the private sector, by politicians, by public sector agencies, by local/regional administrations and administrators, by tourist boards, and by powerful land owners; what is important is that there be leadership, that it be carefully fostered not feared, and that it be fostered in depth, so that when one individual or agency fails, the whole momentum of development is not lost. A number of North American educational institutions provide short courses in leadership for rural politicians and administrators.

#### **IV. FUTURE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

All successful industries devote resources to research and development. Rural tourism is still a relatively new area of business, and, therefore, much basic research is needed. That basic research is especially critical because of the highly competitive nature of the free enterprise tourism market. The countryside may have intrinsic advantages because of the growth of special interest, independent holiday-making, but existing resorts and mass tourism enterprises are already researching how best to improve their marketing and their products to regain market share.

In almost all business sectors research and development involves a partnership between the public and private sectors. The need for partnership is very important if rural tourism and its development are to succeed. Rural areas and enterprises have a history of public sector intervention. Rural tourism is growing in a fragmented and ad hoc way: public sector partnerships can co-ordinate activities. Since many of rural tourism's activities take place in the public domain, careful research into environmental and visitor management is necessary to maintain established community goals such as landscape, nature and heritage protection during the re-structuring of the rural economy away from primary production towards a greater reliance on the service sector.

This section outlines ten areas where future research and development should be concentrated.

##### **1. Market Information**

Market information studies for rural tourism are few, and this is a major problem in determining the size, characteristics and requirements of the market. Without this information, it is difficult to plan infrastructure investment, to provide effective business training, to encourage suitable numbers and types of new entrants into rural tourism provision and, of course, to develop marketing campaigns.

Market information studies need to cover market groups already taking rural holidays, and those who do not. For both groups, basic positioning information should include age/family size/occupational characteristics/area of origin/holiday patterns during current year and previous years/ perceived requirements of holidays/likely accommodation type/likely method of travel/method of choosing holidays/knowledge and perception of specified "control" areas.

For those not taking rural holidays, additional questions should cover reasons why alternatives were taken, perception of specific types of rural

holiday, perception of specific rural areas, and likely future trends in holiday choice.

For those taking rural holidays, additional questions should review propensity to take holidays in various types of rural area, repeat visit likelihood, major strengths and weaknesses of previous rural holidays, the importance of various types of infrastructure, and likely future trends in holiday choice.

The development of a standard way of obtaining and analysing this market information would assist rural groups with limited skills and resources, and also enable inter-regional and international comparisons to be made.

A particularly valuable part of this programme would be the production of information on price sensitivity (do people look for rural holidays as economical holidays?); on the importance of scenery (are specific types of landscape more or less worthwhile in investment terms?); on the importance of infrastructural such as heritage and interpretative centres (are they valuable, or simply wet weather facilities?), and on desired accommodation requirements (are private facilities vital, is personal contact really important, can historic buildings command a premium, do visitors care about the style of new buildings?)

## **2. How Best to Relate to Markets**

Directly linked with the market information question comes the issue of how best to relate to markets. Major resorts and tour operators use sophisticated, expensive and sometimes wasteful methods to reach their customers. Rural tourism areas often -- but not always -- have weak and amateur links to their markets. There would be value in the publication of an evaluated good-practice guide looking at a range of successful areas and the techniques they have employed to relate to their markets. Special emphasis should be given to evaluating:

- Brochure/leaflet design and distribution;
- co-operative marketing ventures;
- product versus area promotion;
- repeat visit potential;
- direct mail;
- mailing list swaps/purchases;
- niche marketing;
- tour operator relationships;
- the use of telecommunications;
- evaluation techniques.

## **3. Benefit Assessment and Enhancement**

Rural tourism investment is undertaken largely to improve the economic, environmental and social well being of rural areas. Relatively little is known about the levels of return on different types of investment: almost nothing is known about the long term impact of less tangible forms of investment such as

training, strategy planning etc. Typical problems faced by investment planners in rural areas are gaps in knowledge on returns from:

- Display boards;
- tourism information centres;
- visitor and heritage centres;
- craft workshops and galleries;
- on-road cycle route provision;
- off-road cycle route provision;
- public transport enhancement;
- scenic road construction;
- training in business skills;
- training in hospitality skills;
- strategy planning exercises.

Closely allied to the above enquiry is another. How could rural areas retain more revenue from their existing tourist industry. Can farmers be trained and organised to make more of the visitor market through sales to local hotels and restaurants, and direct sales to visitors? Can marketing retain visitors in an area for longer periods? Can co-operative purchasing groups re-invest money locally? There are close linkages between this field and Point 4 below.

The OECD's Rural Development Programme has an ongoing project to devise internationally acceptable indicators to measure the work of rural development programmes. Any research on the benefits flowing from rural tourism development should, where possible, be linked with the project on rural indicators to ensure international compatibility and comparability.

#### **4. Management, Control and Operational Issues**

Section III of this report discussed the need for skilled management if rural tourism was to flourish in an environmentally and community friendly way. Research is necessary to evaluate the management, control and operational questions involved in creating sustainable rural tourism. Evaluation should be made in terms of job retention, creation and diversification, visitor satisfaction, capital and manpower requirements, environmental protection and community participation and partnership.

Special consideration should be given to two fields:

- i. For long term strategic planning, an increasing number of rural regions and localities are developing tourism strategy plans. These plans assess tourism assets, weaknesses and environmental carrying capacities. After a review of market opportunities, the long term plan looks at how best to develop and manage specific areas, communities and ecosystems. The plans discuss infrastructure requirements, traffic management schemes, new enterprise development, training for tourism businesses and marketing techniques. Five-to ten-year time scales are usually adopted.

There are many different ways of drawing up and implementing long term strategy plans. Some, for example are based on intensive community consultation techniques; others adopt a much more "top-down" approach. Research and evaluation is needed to assess the effectiveness of strategy planning in general, and of specific types of planning in detail. Effectiveness should be measured in terms of the cost of strategy development and administration, commercial success, effectiveness in environmental and community conservation, and in terms of job retention, creation and diversification.

- ii. At the tactical level, the implementation of strategy plans requires detailed knowledge of issues such as visitor management schemes, heritage interpretation, ways of encouraging new entrants to tourism, the validity of co-operative marketing schemes, rural public transport schemes, historic building conservation and ways of successfully integrating nature conservation and tourism. These are just a selection of issues which face tourism administrations and businesses on a regular basis.

Work on the bibliography of rural tourism (Appendix B) revealed a remarkable lack of easily available material on the "mechanics" of rural tourism development. Visitor management information is especially rare. What written work is available is scattered in many books, from numerous countries and in several languages. There is a case, therefore, for the publication of a "reader" on this subject, bringing scattered sources together, with research being commissioned to fill gaps in existing knowledge and published material.

## **5. Sustainability Indicators**

The quality of the natural and human environment is an important asset for tourism to the countryside. Much is written about the need to sustain the qualities involved: most of that writing is in generalised terms.

In 1992 the World Tourism Organization (WTO) set up an International Working Group on Indicators of Sustainable Tourism. The working group reported to the WTO's Environment Committee in early 1993. It recommended the development of a series of measures and indicators of sustainability, including warning indicators, pressure/stress indicators, measures of management impact, and destination attractivity indices. Indicators were felt to be necessary at national level, and also for critical areas/"hot spots". It also recommended pilot testing of these indicators at a number of sites during 1993/4.

Collaborative research with the WTO on sustainability indicators for rural tourism would be extremely valuable. It would help back up the economic assessments already mentioned as research areas. It would give firm guidelines for decisions on management and control policies. It would help provide protection against over-development and loss of a unique selling point: rurality.

## 6. Training

Training is accepted as important in all spheres of economic activity. Training in rural tourism is generally poorly developed: this is a major stumbling block to development. Rural tourism requires relatively little new capital: the physical landscape, natural and built heritage, farming pattern, and, in many cases, redundant buildings, are all there. But, successful rural tourism requires totally new skills: in marketing, in hospitality, in catering, in heritage interpretation and guidance, in visitor management, in festival and event promotion, in building conversion, and in rural tourism strategy planning itself.

A number of organisations have begun to develop training programmes. These include:

- The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation through its Rome Office;
- COFRAT (Comité de formation des ruraux aux activités du tourisme) in France's Loire-Atlantique Region;
- In Austria, the OEAR, the Österreichische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Eigenständige Regionalentwicklung (the Austrian Association for Regional Development through Self-Help);
- The University of Bristol's Rural Tourism Unit in the United Kingdom;
- The University of Minnesota's Tourism Center in the United States: this organisation has developed manuals and videos, and hosted a national interactive tele-conference. It was the base for America's National Rural Tourism Development Project from 1988 to 1991;
- The University of Calgary in Canada, in its Management Faculty, through Continuing Education, and through the specialist Center for Livable Communities.

Training has tended to concentrate on small businesses and employees. It has usually been short term, with little linkage between courses, and no long term training plan. Existing business courses have usually been adapted: little specifically tailor-made material has been produced on rural tourism.

Training for rural tourism professionals, planners and administrators is less well developed. The market is smaller, but paradoxically, the need is probably greater. Planners and professionals are the industry's leaders, acting as brokers between businesses, between businesses and politicians, and frequently, between businesses and markets. Once again, training materials are usually adapted from other subject materials, and short courses with little linkage are the norm. Formal qualifications in Rural Tourism Development/Management are unknown. Closely allied to this area of training is the concept of training trainers for the farm/small businesses/employee sector.

A more detailed discussion of training and education possibilities is given in Appendix A, Education and Training for Rural Tourism. This suggests

possible curriculum frameworks, and the idea of international compatibility and comparability between programmes. One of the keys to this development would be the setting up of an international Rural Tourism Training Network, bringing institutions and agencies together to learn of each others' skills, successes and failures, and common problems. The network would avoid duplication of research effort, and bring the hybrid vigour which can often stem from such collaborative ventures. The network need not be fully global, but could also function concurrently on a continental scale with groups in Europe, North America, Australasia and Asia.

## **7. Community Involvement and Community/Industry Co-operation**

Community involvement and community/industry co-operation are special features of rural tourism in some places. They can bring local capital investment into play, can lessen conflicts between visitor interests and local interests, and can contribute towards the authenticity of rural holidays which many visitors seek. Yet community involvement is unsuccessful in some places, while very valuable in others. Research is needed to ascertain whether there are any basic ground rules for this type of work, whether involvement is only successful in the short term, and what exactly can and cannot be delivered in co-operation with rural communities. This area of research should also consider the role of local tourism associations, and the requirements of leadership touched upon in Section III. Its findings should be disseminated via the various publications and training materials envisaged elsewhere in this Section.

## **8. Agency Intervention in Rural Tourism Development**

Many public sector agencies are involved in rural tourism development, management and marketing. Few of the agencies involved were designed specifically to work on rural tourism, or, in many cases, on tourism of any kind. Examples of their diverse origins include agricultural advisory services, national park authorities, regional and local planning agencies, state forestry authorities, rural development agencies, local government planning services, leisure services and general administrative services, and, of course, all embracing tourist boards ranging from national through regional to local level. Some public sector involvement in tourism and development in rural areas will probably always be needed. Whether, however, public sector agencies should carry out the full range of roles, or should be limited to a regulatory function, is not clear. Certainly, in some areas, co-operatives, semi-state agencies and private consultancies carry out roles reserved elsewhere for the state sector. This area of research would, therefore, examine, compare and evaluate the ways in which rural tourism is being developed and arranged by different forms of agency. The recently formed (1993) Rural Tourism Development Foundation in the United States should be included in this work.

## **9. International Co-operation**

International co-operation can yield valuable insights into problems and act as a powerful educational device. Many international agencies are already involved in rural tourism, including OECD, FAO, the Council of Europe, ECOVAST, EUROTER, the European Community, some travel trade groups and informal organisations such as the Anglo-American Countryside Stewardship consortium.

This area of research would look at what international links already exist and how they operate. It would examine the success (or otherwise) of different types of co-operation and exchange, and consider ways of co-ordinating schemes, and expanding (or contracting) them where advantageous. The investigation would not be limited to "executive" or "public agency" schemes, but would also bring together operators and small businesses of all kinds. Much could probably be learned from the extensive programme of exchanges between farmers common in most OECD countries

## **10. Best or Bad Practice Assessment**

There are many examples of rural tourism initiatives across the OECD countries. Few are known about beyond their national or even regional boundaries. Written evaluations of the initiatives are usually published in obscure places. Comparisons of one initiative with another are rarely possible because different criteria are used in each case. Perhaps most important of all, only successful schemes are normally covered. Yet, much can be learnt from failures and, in an experimental field, failures are a necessary risk if new ideas are to be tested.

There are grounds, therefore, for the publication on a standardized basis of project assessments to help inspire, educate and assist practitioners within this field. This work could be used to form a companion volume to that discussed under Heading 4 which put the case for a "reader" on the mechanics of rural tourism management. The volume under discussion here would cover the broader field of regional development, integrated project management and area based schemes. Both volumes would provide excellent material to assist the development of the training programmes covered under Heading 6.

## APPENDIX A

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR RURAL TOURISM

One of the major issues in the development of rural tourism is the need for education and training. It is frequently overlooked because many people, having experienced holidays as consumers, and having been involved in other types of business, assume that little further knowledge or skill is required to enter the tourism industry. But tourism is a complex and highly professional enterprise: success rarely comes without considerable expertise. Rural tourism requires additional and specialised skills.

It is readily admitted that the restructuring of the rural economy will entail new capital inputs. To use that new capital effectively, trained administrators, managers, operators and employees are necessary. The need for agricultural education has been recognised for over a century. An hotelier would be unlikely to survive as a farmer without several years of training. But farmers and other rural people are commonly expected to enter the world of tourism with either no training, or training which lasts only a few days. In-service training or continuing professional development is also poorly developed.

Training and education programmes in rural tourism should bring a number of benefits. They should help develop more care and commitment amongst all those involved. They should help businesses become more effective and profitable, by encouraging better marketing, organisation and co-operative working and helping gain repeat visits from guests. They should help professional planners and administrators understand the need to plan rural tourism in a sustainable and profitable way. Finally, there is the critical but hard-to-define point that well-thought-out training programmes help widen horizons, raise standards and create professional and positive attitudes.

This paper sets out the client groups who need training in rural tourism, evaluates their requirements and suggests possible outline curricula, discusses the constraints on the development of rural tourism education programmes and puts forward a framework for research and development.

#### Client Groups

- i. Individual entrepreneurs in accommodation, attractions or other tourism related businesses;
- ii. Employees in the rural tourism field;

- iii. Professionals including planners, tourism administrators, land agents and estate managers;
- iv. Community and co-operative groups;
- v. Trainers in all the above fields.

Clearly the requirements of the five groups noted above will be very different in some respects. There are likely to be considerable differences amongst clients in the standards of previous educational attainment. A common core curriculum for all groups is unlikely to be feasible. But there will be many areas where similar forms of education and teaching materials can be employed.

### **Needs, and Outline Curricula**

#### ***i. Individual Entrepreneurs***

Basic knowledge of the tourism industry's structure, facts and trends -- basic knowledge of the trends in rural economy and society -- principles of sustainable tourism and the operation of the planning system -- skills in lodging and attraction management -- basic business skills -- marketing skills -- assertiveness training, negotiating and hospitality skills -- linguistic skills as required -- a knowledge of the history, traditions and geography of the local area.

#### ***ii. Employees***

Requirements here will vary considerably according to the type and grade of job under discussion. The aim should be to help people to perform their jobs more effectively, to gain greater job satisfaction, and to progress towards promotion or self employment.

Curricula suggestions would include: basic knowledge of the tourism industry's workings -- assertiveness training, negotiating and hospitality skills -- linguistic skills as required -- knowledge of the history, traditions and geography of the local area -- plus other items according to job specification.

#### ***iii. Professionals***

In-depth knowledge of the tourism industry's structure, facts and trends -- in-depth knowledge of trends in the rural economy and in society -- adequate grounding in ecology -- detailed knowledge of the implementation of the concept of sustainable tourism and the operation of the planning system -- knowledge of funding systems in both the private and public sectors -- skills in drawing up tourism strategy plans -- marketing and management skills for areas, accommodation units, and attractions -- assertiveness training and negotiating skills -- visitor management techniques -- community group creation and mechanics -- legal and operational requirements of co-operative and partnership schemes -- linguistic skills as required.

**iv. Community Groups**

Skills similar to those required by the curriculum for entrepreneurs outlined above, but with the addition of group working skills, survey techniques and knowledge of the history and legal requirements of co-operative ventures.

**v. Trainers**

All the requirements of the fields to be taught plus teaching and testing skills.

**Constraints on the Implementation of a Rural Tourism Training Programme**

- i. Funding problems for long term investments such as training are always a constraint;
- ii. The need for training is not recognised by the industry itself or by governments;
- iii. There are few incentives for individuals to undertake education or training;
- iv. There is a lack of easily available teaching materials and nationally, (or internationally) recognised curricula;
- v. Some rural areas require distance learning or residential provision because of their isolation and sparse population densities;
- vi. There is a lack of co-operation between institutions which could help provide training. Sometimes this occurs at national level because of jealousy, competition between agencies, or the fact that rural tourism training is cross-sectoral. It occurs at the international level because of ignorance, disinterest, language barriers and the perceived cost of travel.

**Ways Forward to Overcome the Constraints**

There are several institutions in various countries which have begun to develop training programmes in rural tourism. These include the University of Minnesota (United States), the University of Calgary (Canada), in France, University College, Dublin (Ireland), CERT (the state tourism training agency) in Ireland, COFRAT (a development of the state agricultural training agency) in France, the University of Bristol (England), and a number of British agricultural colleges. There are probably many others within and without the countries mentioned. Several tourist boards are examining ways of incentivising training programmes, either by offering benefits in kind for

businesses undertaking training, or by subsidising training costs. It should be possible to further encourage these moves by:

- Drawing up an inventory of training programmes offered within the OECD countries;
- Encouraging all interested parties to discuss, on a national basis, the need for training, how that training should be structured, what curricula should be developed, and what qualifications could be offered. The results of those national discussions should be reported back to OECD;
- Setting up an international rural tourism training network, to encourage cross-border collaboration, pooling of material and the harmonization of programmes. This network could be developed at both continental and global levels. Early work on an Anglo-North American network, and on a European network has already begun;
- Holding a workshop amongst practitioners from the OECD countries to act, in the first instance, as a "think-tank" on all the proposals listed above and, secondly, as a "ginger-group" to encourage and lead towards progress in the field;
- Creating distance learning materials, and programmes, for the client groups already noted.

## APPENDIX B

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