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SEEKING WELLNESS IN RURAL TOURISM VALUE CHAIN: EVIDENCE FROM SLOVENIAN FARM STAY

Abstract: Exploring the connection between agrotourism, rural tourism value chain, and wellness tourism is essential, as the term agrowellness has not yet been well-established in professional and scientific literature. This study aimed to assess the current state of agrowellness offers in farm stays in Slovenia's Eastern Cohesion Region, a less developed tourist area compared to other leading destinations in the country. The study focused on determining if there is a connection between the development of agrowellness offers and the specialized label of a tourist farm that provides a healthy living experience. Additionally, the survey aimed to identify any statistically significant differences in the development of agrowellness offers based on selected general characteristics of the farmland, such as the location of the tourist accommodation farm, farm size, farm self-sufficiency, and the age of the operator of complementary activities. A quantitative structured observation method was used to assess the state of development of agrowellness offers on farm stay in Slovenia, specifically in the Eastern Cohesion Region. Five main themes emerged from the study, along with some fundamental characteristics of the tourist accommodation farm. These themes include sports and recreational activities, healthy diet, mental wellness, healthy lifestyle activities, and wellness services, as well as other rural tourism offerings. The overall assessment of the wellness offer showed that the sampled farm stay underperformed compared to the average, but still had potential for further development. The healthy diet and sports and recreational activities segments received the highest ratings. Statistically significant differences were observed in the mental wellness segment, where farm stays with more than 34 hectares of land had more advanced mental wellness offers. Additionally, farm stays with operators of the complementary activity aged 50 or older had a more developed wellness offer in the sports and recreational activities segment.

Key words: agrowellness, farm stay, wellness tourism, agrotourism, rural tourism value chain

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Introduction

Agrotourism

Agrotourism is a branch of tourism that is rapidly developing as people want to escape the hectic pace of everyday life and relax in nature. The countryside offers genuine contact with nature and the local population. Since agrotourism is conducted exclusively on farms whose primary activity is agriculture, an important asset is their active involvement in agrarian activities.

Prevolšek (2020) noted that there is no single definition of rural tourism. Other terms for rural tourism include agrotourism, rural tourism, farm tourism, soft tourism, alternative tourism, and ecotourism. A common view is that the concepts of agrotourism and rural tourism differ, with agriculture being a subsample of rural tourism. Agrotourism is perceived as a rural activity aimed at providing recreational services, thus enhancing agricultural and local resources (Prevolšek, 2020). Agrotourism allows those who do not live in rural areas and do not have access to agriculture to learn about daily life on farms and gain first-hand experience of farming methods and goods. In addition, farmers can increase their income by directly selling the resources and features of the farm (Streifeneder et al., 2022). Agrotourism diversifies farmers' business models and increases their incomes. It is a specialised form within rural tourism value chain and is usually based on experiences specific to the countryside and often involves physical activities linked to nature. Agrotourism is usually small-scale and involves a large number of small private enterprises, bringing several benefits to local communities, particularly farm income diversification, job creation, and the maintenance of rural services, thus preventing depopulation (Finer & Šajn, 2023).

Farm tourism is one of the most important complementary activities and generates significant secondary income (Pažek & Rozman, 2010). Farm tourism is the style of spending holidays on a farm and focuses on two tourism services: staying overnight on the farm and/or eating a meal. Farm tourism in Slovenia is regulated as a complementary activity on farms and is divided into catering and non-catering activities (PISRS, 2015). Farms have the opportunity to diversify and generate additional income through tourism activities. The characteristic features of a farm stay are categorisation and specialisation (ZTKS, 2023).

Experts in each field have drawn up compulsory and optional conditions that farms must meet to be awarded a specialised offer label. Since 2007, this label has been awarded by the Slovenian Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry (KGZS, 2020). A tourist farm with a specialised offer label offers holidays to those who enjoy a healthy lifestyle. It provides active leisure activities in an unspoiled manner, combined with a healthy diet (KGZS, 2020).

The increasing quantitative and qualitative development of high-quality agrotourism establishments in South Italy as an interesting and exemplary case of the commercialisation of rural tourism value chain (Streifeneder et al., 2022). Streifeneder et al. (2016) define authentic agrotourism as taking place on a fully functioning farm, where agricultural activities predominate over tourist activities and where there is domestic and direct contact with the host household and its members in an unchanged agricultural environment. Therefore, an authentic farming lifestyle is essential. This means that the authentic-

ity and originality of agrotourism are determined by the way and intensity of experiencing the core activities of a working farm, which are closely linked to agriculture and local rural culture (Streifeneder, 2016).

Protected areas are a critical resource for tourism, especially agrotourism, and they play a vital role in preserving preserved nature through sustainable planning and development of all tourism activities. Grgić et al.'s (2021) study aimed at identifying the opinions and views of respondents on the development of rural tourism value chain and its impact on biodiversity conservation in the Lonjsko polje Landscape Park found that tourists agree with the statement that rural tourism is 'environmentally friendly' and that a sustainable form of tourism contributes to nature conservation (Grgić et al., 2021).

Wellness tourism

The rural environment in which Slovenia's tourist farms are located is inextricably linked to well-being. A thriving ecosystem allows one to breathe fresh air, walk in the woods, and enjoy healthy food. Biodiversity improves moods and provides food and livelihoods; therefore, the health of our surroundings is essential. Taking concrete steps to preserve nature, limiting its impact, supporting a healthy environment, and valuing and protecting nature creates a calm and peaceful state of mind. Wellness and agrotourism can help maintain an active reduction in food waste and thus contribute to reducing global warming. Agri-providers have always reduced food waste, prepared and preserved food for composting and recycling, and exchanged food locally. Linking the two branches of tourism involves ideas and concepts on how to connect well-being and provide it to all. They also linked great guest experiences at the destination to a commitment to sustainability.

Wellness tourism represents a vital crossroads between two major industries: tourism and wellness. Wellness tourists expect to continue their healthy lifestyles and well-being while travelling because holistic health and prevention are always at the forefront of their minds.

The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) defines wellness as the active pursuit of activities, choices, and lifestyles leading to holistic health. This definition has two important implications. First, wellness is not a passive or static state but an 'active pursuit' that is linked to intentions, choices and actions as we strive towards an optimal state of health and well-being. Second, wellness is linked to holistic health; it goes beyond physical health and includes many different dimensions that should work in harmony (Institute, 2022). According to the GWI Institute (2022), wellness is divided into two major branches: wellness activities and lifestyle and a wellness-supportive environment, which is further divided into seven domains: physical activity, healthy eating, mental wellness, traditional and complementary medicine, wellness in the residential environment, wellness at work, and wellness in tourism.

Smith and Puczkó (2016) relate wellness tourism to specific contexts and compare it to a journey that includes one of the following lifestyle dimensions: health of body, mind and spirit; mind and spirit; self-care; physical strength; aesthetics; healthy eating; relaxation; meditation; mental activity; education; environmental awareness; and sensitivity to social relations (Smith & Puczkó, 2016). Dini and Pencarelli (2022) analysed the literature to reveal how wellness tourism, taken as a conceptual whole, is made up of ten different components within a supply system: Thermal Springs (thermal springs and wellness services), Spas (different typologies of spa centres with corresponding services), Medical

Tourism (medical, surgical, therapeutic wellness), Body and Mind Care (services, specialising in aesthetic treatments and massages or physical activity and/or therapies not available in thermal spas and health resorts), enogastronomy (enogastronomic experiences with a particular focus on typical local food and drink and healthy food), sport (indoor and outdoor sport activities designed for active participation of tourists), nature and environment (natural resources that can be enjoyed for personal well-being), culture (the fruit of cultural and artistic heritage in tangible and intangible forms), spirituality (spiritual activities involving mystical and religious experiences) and events (special events or entertainment activities for tourists) (Dini & Pencarelli, 2022). Combining organic rural and agroecological tourism value chain experiences, organic farming, and a nontoxic and healthy environment will help tourists disconnect from the hustle and bustle of the city, enjoy a leisurely and idyllic rural life, and satisfy their need for a healthy and slow pace of life. This is a new type of wellness tourism (Xue & Shen, 2022).

Agrowellness

Perhaps the most common motives for choosing farm tourism remain spending time in nature and enjoying a variety of sports and other activities. Still, it is a fact that this form of tourism has started to change, develop and include some other tourism services and offers that would not have been considered agrotourism before. For example, specific branches of farm tourism have begun to develop: farm wellness tourism, agri-wellness, agri-wellness, and rural wellness tourism (Pesonen & Komppula, 2010). This includes or combines agrotourism and wellness tourism. It is an idyllic holiday in nature, offering tourists relaxation while simultaneously choosing a healthy lifestyle and taking care of their well-being. (Greif et al., 2011). Consequently, we are increasingly looking for new ways to improve well-being, health, and appearance. The most common responses to this demand are large luxury and high-quality spas and wellness centres, thermal spas, and health resorts, which offer services such as swimming pools and related activities, saunas, massages, relaxation treatments, beauty therapies, and music therapies. However, Pesonen and Komppula (2010) pointed out that luxury and high-quality services can also be experienced elsewhere, including in rural areas and farms value chains.

The concept of agrowellness does not appear as a term in the scientific research literature; rather, the concepts of agrotourism and wellness, as described above, appear in conjunction. The emergence of the health and wellness industry has provided people with new ways of understanding rural areas value chains. People are no longer using the perspective of industrial civilisation and the standards of urbanisation to measure the value of rural areas and their production and consumption but are re-examining rural value chain experiences from the perspective of ecological civilisation and will thus discover the unique role of the countryside in modern society. In addition, the unique natural resources of the countryside, such as healthy food, healthy air, green farms, and forest vegetation, provide basic natural conditions for the development of the health and well-being industry (Wang, 2021). As a result, the 'agriculture + health and well-being' model enters people's eyes. Industry professionals have started to bring health and well-being to rural areas, thus giving a new function to agricultural recreation and expanding the development pathways and channels of agricultural recreation (Xue & Shen, 2022).

Values among consumers are being transformed in favour of healthier lifestyles, fundamentally changing consumer behaviour, and purchasing patterns. The expansion of the middle class, the availability of new options, and growing concerns about the effects of

pervasive technology are contributing to this transition (Institute, 2022). Wellness drives economic growth. It creates jobs and enables small business development, promotes locally sourced goods, products and product brands, helps empower women and benefit families, wellness supports the protection of natural and cultural heritage, engages in environmental protection and helps reduce tourism-related challenges (GWS, 2023). Economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection are essential elements of individual and societal well-being, as outlined by the United Nations in its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2023). (Ana, 2017) sees agribusiness as having a positive economic impact on the local community, creating many employment opportunities for local people.

For the expansion of rural recreation in China and the transformation and upgradation of agribusiness, deep integration of the health and wellness industries is inevitable. The four elements of production, livelihood, ecology, and life are inextricably linked to the growth of the agricultural recreation, health, and wellness industries (Wang, 2021).

Meanwhile, Greif, Rauscher, and Söntgerath (2011) see the advantages of agribusiness as preventing rural-urban migration, creating a safe environment for holidays with children, preserving nature reserves while allowing tourists to interact with unspoiled nature and animals, promoting healthy lifestyles, and offering a family-friendly environment and peace and tranquillity. Large-scale centres are not able to offer tourists due to the high number of guests.

Research question

This study aimed to assess the current situation regarding the development of agrowellness offers in farm stays in Slovenia, more specifically in the Eastern Cohesion Region, which is a less developed tourist region in relation to the number of leading tourist destinations in Slovenia (SiStat, 2021). The assessment is based on the question of whether there is a link between the development of the agrowellness offer and the recorded label of the specialised offer: a tourist farm with a healthy living offer held by farm stay in Slovenia. The survey also aimed to answer the question of whether there were statistically significant differences in the development of agrowellness offers according to the following selected general characteristics of farmland: the statistical region in which the tourist accommodation farm was located, the size of the farm, the degree of self-sufficiency of the tourist accommodation farm, and the age of the operator of the complementary activities of the tourist accommodation farm.

Material and methods

Data were collected using a quantitative structured observation method from a sample of 36 farms between March and May 2023. An online observation form was created using Office 365 Forms. The data were collected in the framework of the project »Model of distribution of sustainable agrowellness goods of Slovenian countryside for increased well-being of local communities #AGROVEL« on 36 selected farm stay, primarily in the Eastern Cohesion Region. The Eastern Cohesion Region was selected because it is less developed in terms of tourism (KRVS, 2019) in terms of the number of leading destinations and more agriculturally developed than the Western Cohesion Region of Slovenia (GOV.SI, 2023).

We also included two tourist farms from the Western Cohesion Region in the observations because they contained a specialised offer for healthy living, thus providing a more comprehensive answer to the primary research question. Initially, the operators of complementary activities on the farm were informed of the content and duration of the observation form. Participation in the survey was voluntary via telephone after a transitional arrangement was made. We wanted to include an equal number of farm stays from all regions in the sample; however, the response rate of owners participating in the survey was not uniform between the regions. Despite the convenience of the sample of farm stays in the survey, the results presented below provide answers to the questions asked with a sufficient degree of relevance.

Structured observation method

Observational data collection adds value to the research data (Saunders et al., 2007). In our case, according to the objectives of the research, we focused on observing the agrowellness offered to farm stays in Slovenia, where we investigated the frequency of specific tasks through qualitative observations. In terms of the role of the researcher, structured observation is unobtrusive because it reveals the role and purpose of the observer, who focuses on the research, takes notes, and talks to the participants (Saunders et al., 2007). Data were collected directly on-site, allowing the collection of information that participants would have missed if they had chosen the indirect method of structured online observation.

Collecting data by observation has advantages in terms of explaining what is going on, the researcher is aware of the process, and it is useful for researchers who are already working within the observed process (Saunders et al., 2007). The disadvantages of this method are that it is time-consuming, there may be ethical dilemmas, observer bias, and the potential for conflict during observation; it is challenging to record data, and it is not very easy to access permission to observe (Saunders et al., 2007), which was not detected in our case. This research was conducted using quantitative structured observation, which is a high-level predefined structure that is systematically constructed. The data collected indicate the frequency of each observation but do not explain why it occurred (Saunders et al., 2007).

Description of the observation form

When creating the observation form, we considered the need to develop an evaluation form that was focused, unambiguous, context-independent, well-defined, comprehensive, mutually exclusive, and easy to write down (Saunders et al., 2007). The observation form included both closed (38 questions) and open questions (18 questions). The questions covered six thematic areas: basic information about farm stays, sports and recreational activities, healthy eating, mental wellness, healthy lifestyle activities/wellness services, and other rural tourism offer.

The observation form was set out for the hybrid (Kuhmonen, 2020) because we used a combination of both a tried and tested form and the form we designed ourselves. We used variables relating to the socio-demographic profile of the complementary activity holder and the characteristics of the farm itself. Kuhmonen (2020) notes the importance of these variables for maintaining the resilience of farms in Finland considering their economic viability and coping with environmental sustainability.

To achieve the objectives of our research, we have added sectors, which are divided into wellness pillars (Gojčič, 2015). We added questions on other tourist offerings to examine the extent to which the farm stay offer was integrated and coordinated with local tourist offerings in the immediate surroundings.

Results and discussion

Description of the sample

We surveyed 36 farm stays, 1/3 of which were in the Savinja region (Table 1).

Tab. 1. The statistical region in which the farm stays are located, the registered specialised offer and the number of different specialised offer designations

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent	
	Statistical region in which the farm stay is located				
Valid	Gorenjska region	2	5.6	5.6	5.6
	South-Eastern Slovenia	4	11.1	11.1	16.7
	Carinthia region	4	11.1	11.1	27.8
	Podravska region	6	16.7	16.7	44.4
	Pomurska region	6	16.7	16.7	61.1
	Savinjska region	12	33.3	33.3	94.4
	Lower Posavska region	2	5.6	5.6	100.0
	Registered specialised offer for healthy living				
	Not labelled as a specialised offer for healthy living	31	86.1	86.1	86.1
	They have a specialised Healthy Living offer label	5	13.9	13.9	100.0
	Number of different labels of specialised offers				
	One label of specialised offer	11	30.6	30.6	30.6
	Two labels of specialised offers	9	25.0	25.0	55.6
	Three labels of specialised offers	2	5.6	5.6	61.1
	Four labels of specialised offer	3	8.3	8.3	69.4
	Five labels of specialised offer	5	13.9	13.9	83.3
	Six labels of specialised offer	2	5.6	5.6	88.9
	Eight labels of specialised offer	2	5.6	5.6	94.4
	Nine labels of specialised offer	1	2.8	2.8	97.2
	Ten labels specialised offer	1	2.8	2.8	100.0
	Total	36	100.0	100.0	

From (Table 1) it shows that five of the observed farms registered a specialised offer for healthy living. Farm stays may have ten different registered specialised offers, and 11 farm stays out of the 36 observed have only one registered specialised offer (Table 1).

Tab. 2. Land size in hectares, percentage of self-sufficiency and age of the holder of the complementary activity

		Land size in ha	Percentage of self-sufficiency	Age of the holder of the complementary activity
N	Valid	36	36	36
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		34.06	68.47	50.39
Median		25.00	70.00	52.50
Mode		14 ^a	60 ^a	55
Minimum		3	0	0
Maximum		175	100	77

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

The observed farm stays had an average of 34.06 ha of land (Table 2); the smallest tourist accommodation farm had 3 ha of land, and the largest 175 ha (Table 2). Half of the farms had land covering up to 25 ha (Table 2). The observed farms had, on average, 68.47% subsistence (Table 2); only one farm was not subsistence, two farms were entirely subsistence, and half of the observed farms had 70% subsistence. Half of the observed farms had a percentage of self-sufficiency between 60% and 80%.

The youngest holder of a complementary activity on a farm stay is 35 years old, and the oldest is 77 years old; on average, the holders are around 50 years old, and half of the observed holders are over 52 years old (Table 2).

89% of the observed farms had a positive opinion about the integration of the cultural and natural heritage of the local environment, and the majority of the open-ended answers referred to historical and cultural heritage (Figure 1). 11% of the annual fairs are organised within 2 km, and in 40% of the fairs, it is also possible to visit the local market. As can be seen from (Figure 1) 43% of farm stays have shops with local products and souvenirs, and 89% are linked to the main tourist destinations in the statistical region; however, among the open answers, it is possible to detect negative opinions about mutual cooperation, because there is no response from the opposite side.

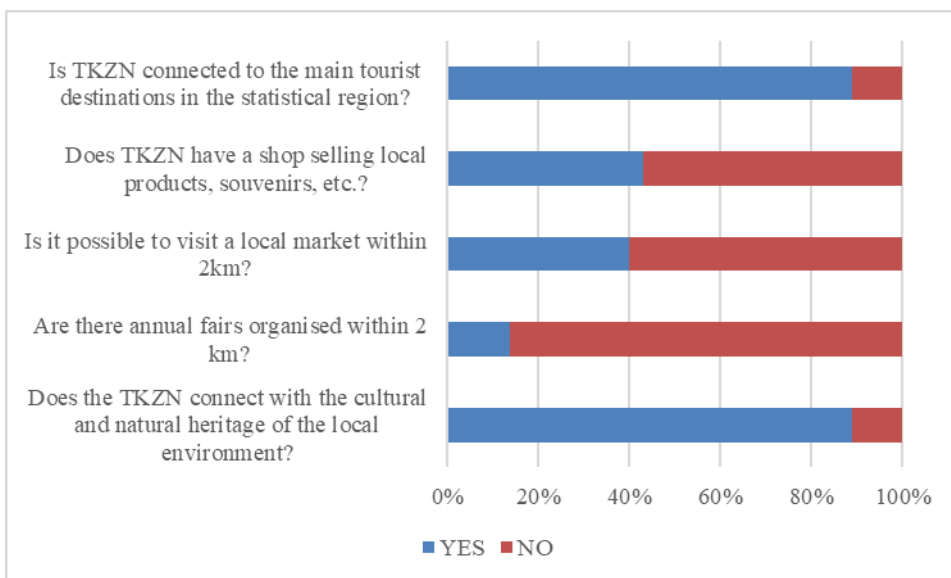


Fig.1. Other rural tourist offers

Results of descriptive statistical analysis

Sports recreation is widespread in Slovenia (Berčič, 2023). People are particularly accustomed to the outdoors, especially biking, mountaineering, and cycling (Poteko, 2022). The results of sports and recreational activities during the observed farm stays are presented in the graph (Figure 2). Only three of the 36 farms did not rent sports equipment or props. 92% of the observed farms rented volleyballs, footballs, or basketballs in 60% of the observed farm stays, 57% had badminton or table tennis equipment, and 51% rented bicycles, as shown in the graph (Figure 2). 92% of the observed farm stay rent volleyballs, footballs or basketballs, 60%, 57% have badminton or table tennis equipment, 57% have badminton or ping-pong equipment, and 51% have bicycles. The farms had at least two or six different types of sports equipment. Bike (100%) and cycling (91%) trials were conducted around the farms. Cycle paths more than 2 km away were marked at only three locations. A radius of up to 2 km means that this distance can be walked by any healthy individual, which can be tested using a 2 km walk test (Vrbovšek, 2015), thus contributing to sustainable nature conservation. 62% of farms have various sports and recreational areas within a radius of 2 km, while the rest indicate that these areas are between 4 and 15 km away. In 12 cases, there were ski slopes; in seven cases, there was a sports park close to the farms, and 31% of the farms had a swimming pool. The majority (69 %) did not have guides or instructors; however, on the remaining farms, they ran a wide variety of recreational activities, from the most varied bikes, cycling, and climbing to horse riding, swimming, and guided tours of the countryside. The farms observed indicate that 51% of people are interested in farm work as a form of recreation, allowing them to help with everyday farm tasks, from harvesting crops to hay harvesting, seasonal work on arable land, feeding animals, and tending the garden. Tourists who spend their leisure time on farm stays are actively involved in the life and work of their hosts (Torres & Momsen, 2011).

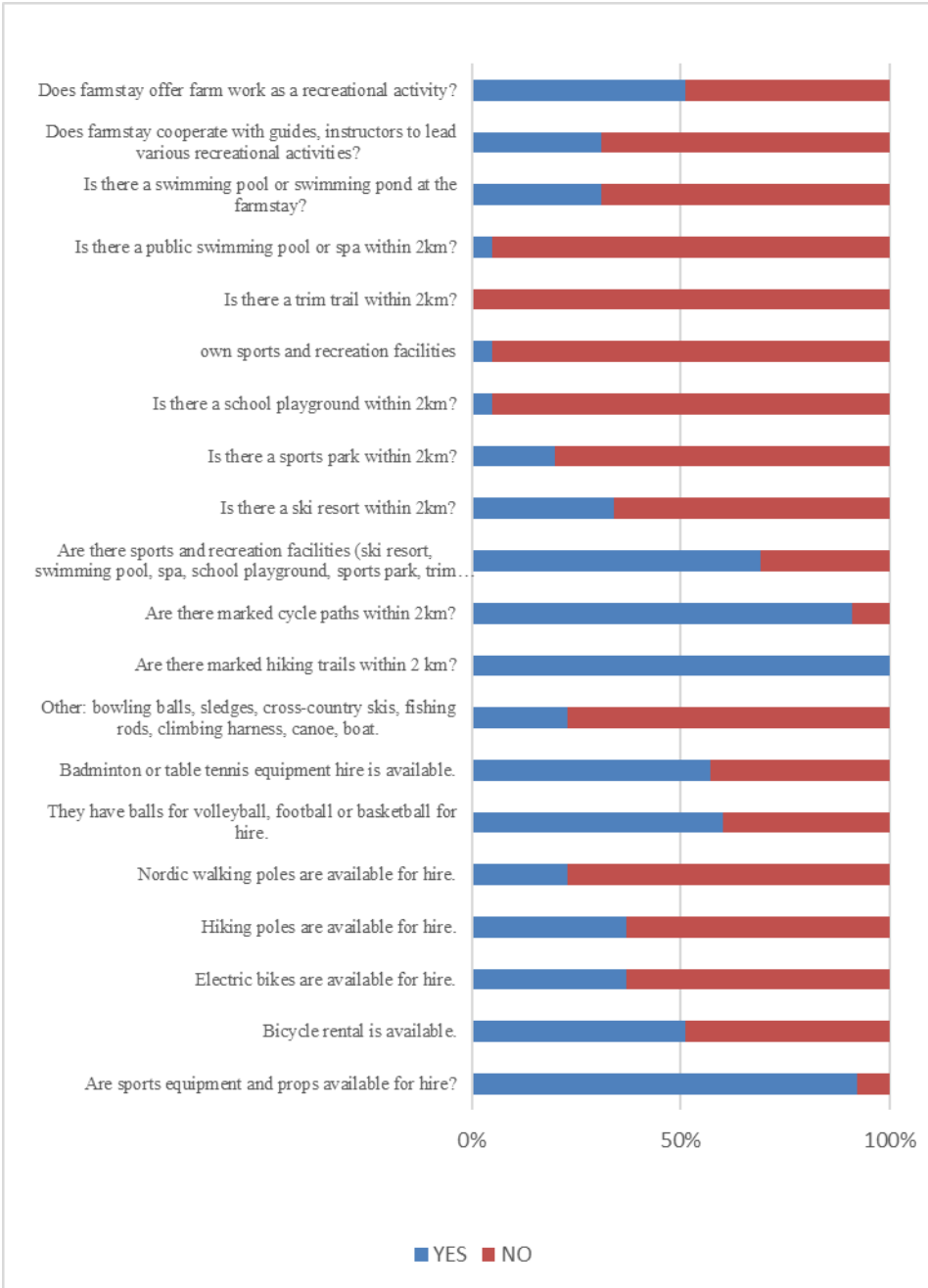


Fig.2. Sports and recreational activities in monitored farm stay

The results of the observation of the food offered in the context of a healthy diet (Figure 3) showed that 94% of the farms offered a variety of locally produced vegetables and fruits, 83% offered locally produced milk and dairy products, 74% offered animal food, and 37% offered home-grown wholegrain cereals and cereal products. Healthy diet guide-

lines, according to the National Nutrition Portal for Healthy Adults, recommend less use of salt (NIJZ, 2021) and the farms surveyed are trying to reduce salt intake in meal preparation by 60% but still add sugar as a preservative in 94% of homemade products. Menus are not repeated in 43% of cases, and even in 37%, fatty meats and fatty products are replaced by legumes, fish, poultry, or lean meat from local home rearing.

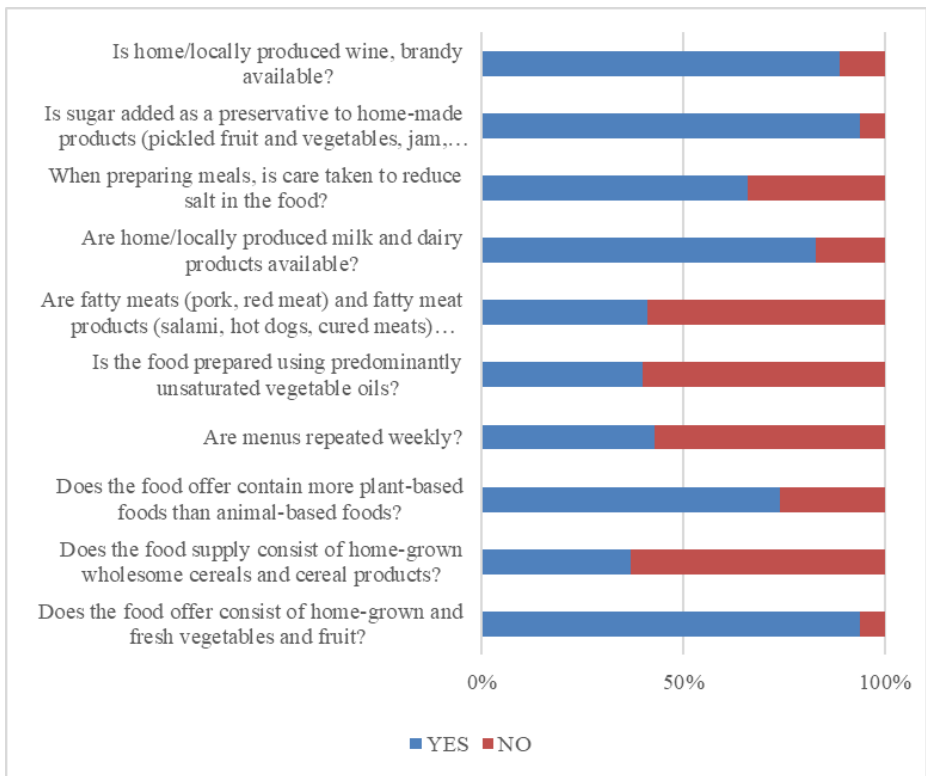


Fig. 3. Healthy diet in the observed farm stay

The mental wellness results are shown in the graph (Figure 4). Breathing exercises, gradual muscle relaxation, and visualisation of a calming place are offered by 37% of the observed farm stays but can be made available in 57% of client requests. Similarly, a small proportion (23 %) offered forest wellness or forest baths, but for 34%, this was made available upon request. Only one of the 13 open-ended responses stated that a therapist performed this type of activity. Activities such as forest bathing have a substantial impact on a person's physical and mental health (Wen et al., 2019) but require a guide in nature (CPI, 2023). Conversely, farm stays have excellent conditions for offering this type of activity because they are located close to forests.

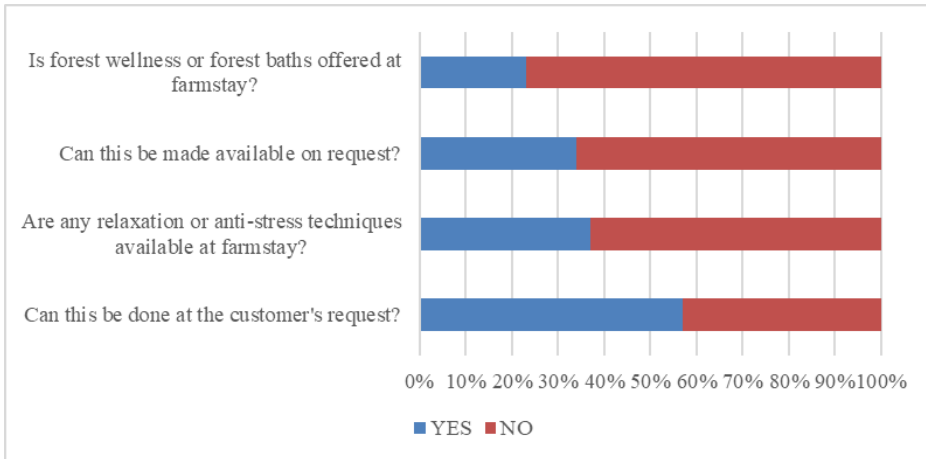


Fig.4. Mental wellness at the observed farm stay

The results graph (Figure 5) shows the results. Wellness services, such as saunas and massages, are offered on 43% and 34% of farms, respectively. The sauna infrastructure varied greatly, with Finnish saunas offered in 14 cases: infrared saunas in 10 cases, 5x Turkish, bio, salt, herbal saunas in 10 cases, and 5x Turkish, bio, salt, and herbal saunas in 10 cases. The types of massages offered were relaxing, horsebud oil, sports, and therapeutic on request. In ten cases, baths and a 1x hot tub were offered to guests, whereas no one was observed offering an ice bath. 31% of the observed farm stays offered locally produced body-care products, mainly bee products, preparations, ointments, soaps, creams, and massage oils. In 17% of farmhouses in proximity to spas or health resorts, traditional and complementary medicines are offered to guests.

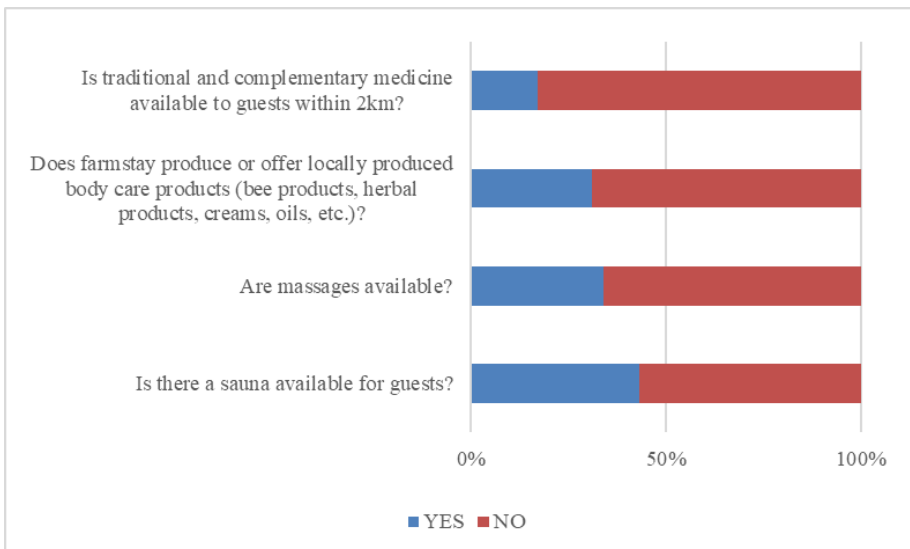


Fig.5. Wellness services in the observed farm stay

We prepared an overall quantitative assessment of the wellness offered by the tourist farm for each segment. In assessing the offer, we considered only the dichotomous variables that comprised each segment, where the score of each segment was the sum of the values of all the dichotomous variables that comprised each segment. The maximum values that could be achieved by the tourist farms under each pillar are sport - 21, nutrition - 10, mental wellness - 4; and wellness services - 13, which adds up to a total of 48.

The average score of the overall wellness offer in the observed farm stay (Table 3) is 20.08, out of a maximum of 48, which means that the tourist farms in the sample have a well-developed wellness offer that is below average, as they achieve less than 50% of the criteria of the wellness offer; however, according to the observed situation, they have the potential to improve. Half of the tourist farms scored 19, whereas most scored 15. The lowest-scoring tourist farm had a wellness offer score of 13. In contrast, the highest-scoring tourist farm had a wellness offer score of 38, which is still approximately 20% below the possible maximum (48).

In terms of the individual elements of the offer, the best-rated segments are nutrition (average score 6.61 out of 10) and sports (average score 9.53 out of 21), followed by mental wellness (average score 1.5 out of 4) and, in last place, wellness services (2.44 out of 9). This result is expected, as farm stays are primarily farms with a high percentage of self-sufficiency in food production and are in rural areas in nature, which provides plenty of opportunities for outdoor exercise. The lowest score in the wellness services criterion is probably due to the fact that these services require the most significant investment, and it is expected that this type of infrastructure is most represented in hotels and spas offering wellness services (Rančić et al., 2013).

Tab.3. Wellness score of the offer of a farm stay for each segment

		Sport and recreation activities score	Healthy diet score	Mental wellness score	wellness services score	Score of the wellness offer
N	Valid	36	36	36	36	36
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		9.53	6.61	1.5	2.44	20.08
Median		9.5	7	1.5	1	19
Mode		6	7	0	1	15
Minimum		6	1	0	0	13
Maximum		17	10	4	9	38

Mann-Whitney U test results

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the ratings of the different segments of the wellness offer in the observed farm stay in relation to the possession of a specialised offer for healthy living. Based on the results presented in (Table 4), we find that there are differences between the two groups of farms: tourist farms that have a specialised offer

with the Healthy Living Tourist Farm label have a more developed wellness offer (Mean Rank=23.1) than tourist farms that do not have a specialised offer (Mean Rank=17.76). The differences in favour of tourist farms with specialised offers are mainly in the segments of wellness services, sports, and recreational activities. In contrast, the differences are smaller for healthy diet and mental wellness. Nevertheless, we conclude that the differences between the groups are not statistically significant ($p>0.05$), which means that the specialised offer for healthy living of farm stay is not the reason for the better development of the wellness offer. This finding is encouraging because it indicates that a wellness offer is present in the observed farm stays. This is evident even though the sign of a specialised offer does not confirm it. It was observed that the holders of the complementary activities on the observed farms do not recognise the term wellness in relation to the term specialised offer for healthy living, which is probably why the label does not represent an added value or guarantee that they are a wellness tourist farm.

The Specialised label offers Healthy Living Tourist Farm holidays to those who enjoy a healthy lifestyle. It offers active leisure activities in an unspoiled manner, combined with healthy eating. The label was awarded to Slovenia in 2007 by the Slovenian Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry (KGZS, 2020). Wellness is also defined as a holistic approach to healthy lifestyles involving a wide range of wellness activities. The term wellness, in its definition, describes spending time actively in nature, relaxing and eating healthily (Dillette et al., 2021). As early as 1956, Dr Halbert Dunn introduced the concept of 'holistic wellness', where different types of wellness, physical, intellectual, spiritual, and environmental, can contribute to well-being. We hypothesised that if providers have a better understanding of these mechanisms, they would be better able to plan and implement programs that aim to have a more significant impact on the holistic health of tourists during and after a visit to a farm. Therefore, there is a need for broader awareness of the concept of agrowellness among providers.

Tab.4. Mann-Whitney U test results for the specialised offer of a farm stay for healthy living

	Offer for a healthy life.	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Sport and recreation activities score	0	31	17.61	546.00	50	0.204
	1	5	24.00	120.00		
	Total	36				
Healthy diet score	0	31	18.40	570.50	74.50	0.889
	1	5	19.10	95.50		
	Total	36				
Mental wellness score	0	31	18.26	566.00	70	0.723
	1	5	20.00	100.00		
	Total	36				
Wellness service score	0	31	17.90	555.00	59	0.386
	1	5	22.20	111.00		
	Total	36				
SCORE WELLNESS OFFER	0	31	17.76	550.50	54.50	0.290
	1	5	23.10	115.50		
	Total	36				

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the ratings of different segments according to the land size of the observed farm stays. Based on the results presented in (Table 5), we conclude that there is a statistically significant difference ($p < 0,05$) between the size of the land and the mental wellness segment; that is, farm stays with more than 34 ha of land have more developed mental wellness segment (Mean Rank=24.04) than those with less land (Mean Rank=15.37). Differences in favour of larger farms, which are not statistically significant, are also found in the other three segments of the offer of food, sporting and recreational activities, and wellness services in favour of farm stays with more than 34 ha of land.

We assume that larger farms have more land for forest wellness, sports, and recreational activities and thus probably have more material possibilities to develop additional offers such as mental wellness. Traditionally, each Slovenian farm has, on average, more forestland than arable land. The Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management for Forest Owners discusses the value of forests for Slovenian farmers, and we assume that the owners of complementary activities also pass this on to tourists who visit them.

Tab. 5. Mann-Whitney U test results by land size of the farm stay

Ranks						
	Land size	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Sport and recreation activities score	Up to 34 ha	23	17.59	404.50	128.50	0.485
	Over 34 ha	13	20.12	261.50		
	Total	36				
Healthy diet score	Up to 34 ha	23	17.20	395.50	119.50	0.314
	Over 34 ha	13	20.81	270.50		
	Total	36				
Mental wellness score	Up to 34ha	23	15.37	353.50	77.50*	0.014
	Over 34 ha	13	24.04	312.50		
	Total	36				
Wellness services score	Up to 34 ha	23	17.07	392.50	116.50	0.266
	Over 34 ha	13	21.04	273.50		
	Total	36				
WELLNESS OFFER SCORE	Up to 34 ha	23	15.98	367.50	91.50	0.055
	Over 34 ha	13	22.96	298.50		
	Total	36				

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the ratings of the different segments on the percentage of self-sufficiency in the observed farm stays. Based on the results presented in (Table 6), we find that there are differences between self-sufficiency and the rating of the individual segments of the wellness offer of the farm stay: tourist farms with lower self-sufficiency have an overall better sports and recreation offer (Mean Rank=20.50) than tourist farms with higher self-sufficiency (Mean Rank=17.23). Tourist farms with more self-sustainable accommodations have more developed wellness services (Mean Rank=19.36) than those with less self-sustainability (Mean Rank=17.14). Nevertheless, we note that the differences between the groups are not statistically significant ($P>0,05$), which means that the percentage of self-sufficiency of farm stay is not a reason for better development of the wellness offer.

Table 6. Mann-Whitney U test results for self-sufficiency of a farm stay

Ranks						
	Self-sufficiency	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Sport and recreation activities score	Up to 68%	14	20.50	287.00	126.00	0.359
	Above 68%	22	17.23	379.00		
	Total	36				
Healthy diet score	Up to 68%	14	18.82	263.50	149.50	0.882
	Above 68%	22	18.30	402.50		
	Total	36				
Mental wellness score	Up to 68%	14	18.39	257.50	152.50	0.960
	Above 68%	22	18.57	408.50		
	Total	36				
Wellness services score	Up to 68%	14	17.14	240.00	135.00	0.528
	Above 68%	22	19.36	426.00		
	Total	36				
WELLNESS OFFER score	Up to 68%	14	18.82	263.50	149.50	0.883
	Above 68%	22	18.30	402.50		
	Total	36				

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the ratings of different segments according to the age of the owner of the observed farm stay. Based on the results presented in (Table 7), we conclude that there are statistically significant differences ($P < 0,05$) between the age of the owner and the segments of sports and recreational activities and mental wellness, namely, farm stay owners over 50 years of age have a more developed segment of sports and recreational activities (Mean Rank=20.43) and mental wellness (Mean Rank=20.52) than farm stay owners under 50 years of age (Mean Rank=13.33) and (Mean Rank=13.17). Differences in favour of older owners were also found in wellness services, whereas differences in favour of younger owners were found in the food segment. Although all differences between groups are not statistically significant ($p > 0,05$), overall, farms with older owners - farm stay- have a better agrowellness offer. Health, self-care, and home environment are values that give older people life satisfaction (Zapata-Lamana et al., 2022). They are, therefore, likely to tailor the offer of their tourist farms to their interests and incorporate a personal approach in the design of the offer, thus maximising the potential for sports, recreational activities, and mental wellness.

Table 7. Mann-Whitney U test results by age of the holder of the complementary activity in a farm stay

Ranks						
	Age	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Sport and recreation activities score	up to 50 years	12	13.33	160.00	82.00*	0.049
	over 50 years	23	20.43	470.00		
	Total	35				
Healthy diet score	up to 50 years	12	22.29	267.50	86.50	0.068
	over 50 years	23	15.76	362.50		
	Total	35				
Mental wellness score	up to 50 years	12	13.17	158.00	80.00*	0.037
	over 50 years	23	20.52	472.00		
	Total	35				
Wellness services score	up to 50 years	12	15.79	189.50	111.50	0.344
	over 50 years	23	19.15	440.50		
	Total	35				
WELLNESS OFFER SCORE	up to 50 years	12	15.42	185.00	107.00	0.278
	over 50 years	23	19.35	445.00		
	Total	35				

Kruskal Wallis H test results

The Kruskal–Wallis test was used to compare the scores of the individual segments according to the statistical region in which the farm stay was located. Based on the results presented in (Table 8), we concluded that there were differences between the groups of farms located in different statistical regions. The highest Mean Rank values were found in tourist farms in the Lower Posavje (Mean Rank=29.75) and Gorenjska regions (25.50), whereas the lowest values were found in tourist farms in Pomurska (Mean Rank=10.58) and southeastern Slovenia (Mean rank=15.50). Looking at the different segments of the offer, there are no statistically significant differences in ($p < 0,05$) were found only in the Mental Wellness segment, with the highest values in the Gorenjska and Posavska regions and the lowest values in the Pomurska and Podravska regions. We assume that the reasons for such differences are not only due to the natural characteristics of the location of the statistical region or the development of the profession offering such mental wellness services but also a combination of both.

The infrastructure for studying nature in Slovenia is still in its infancy (Baldauf et al., 2011). For example, the forest, as a natural feature, is material for the interpretation of nature, which, in addition to its productive and environmental functions, also provides a social function. In the spirit of green tourism, this is undoubtedly an advantage and marketing opportunity for mental wellness. Nature interpretation is a discipline that stimulates people's attention and enthusiasm for nature and is thus a tool that brings natural heritage closer to visitors. Therefore, we assume that the observed farms in the Gorenjska and Lower Posavje regions have a greater affinity for relaxation activities in the sense of mental wellness and recognise nature as a given that should be exploited in this direction. The better development of wellness offers in relation to the statistical regions and the further development of agrowellness can be linked to geographical location.

In a study of the district of Kleve (Lower Rhine, Germany) as a model region for a rural area unknown to tourism, interviews were conducted with regional opinion leaders, farmers, and industry experts to share their experiences with the factors that could foster and contribute to the successful development of agrotourism. The results of their case study and additional market interviews show that its success in lesser-known rural regions depends on the geographical location, collective efforts of local visionary entrepreneurs, regional utility networks, and committed political stakeholders in developing a sustainable business model. These results can also be useful for other comparable rural European regions to diversify their farming and develop their own business models (Zapata-Lamana et al., 2022).

According to the Statistical Office of Slovenia, the economic development of the statistical regions in Slovenia confirms that Gorenjska and Posavska are among the most economically developed regions in Slovenia, while Pomurska and Podravska are among the least economically developed regions in Slovenia (SiStat, 2021). It is assumed that owing to their better ecological status, farmers have better opportunities for the development of wellness infrastructure.

Tab. 8. Kruskal Wallis H test results by statistical region in which the farm stay is located

	Statistical region where farm stays are located	N	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	Asymp. Sig.
Sport and recreation activities score	Gorenjska region	2	20.25	3.835	0.649
	South-Eastern region	4	17.38		
	Carinthia region	4	13.88		
	Podravska region	6	18.50		
	Pomurje region	6	13.25		
	Savinjska region	12	21.79		
	Posavska region	2	24.25		
	Total	36			
Healthy diet score	Gorenjska region	2	23.50	3.835	0.699
	South-Eastern region	4	15.13		
	Carinthia region	4	12.38		
	Podravska region	6	23.42		
	Pomurje region	6	17.83		
	Savinjska region	12	18.25		
	Posavska region	2	21.25		
	Total	36			
Mental wellness score	Gorenjska region	2	32.75	12.698*	0.048
	South-Eastern region	4	17.25		
	Carinthia region	4	23.50		
	Podravska region	6	13.17		
	Pomurje region	6	10.50		
	Savinjska region	12	19.75		
	Posavska region	2	29.25		
	Total	36			
Wellness services score	Gorenjska region	2	20.75	4.983	0.546
	South-Eastern region	4	19.75		
	Carinthia region	4	20.63		
	Podravska region	6	14.58		
	Pomurje region	6	12.42		
	Savinjska region	12	20.71		
	Posavska region	2	26.25		
	Total	36			
WELLNESS OFFER SCORE	Gorenjska region	2	25.50	7.819	0.252
	South-Eastern region	4	15.50		
	Carinthia region	4	17.38		
	Podravska region	6	17.75		
	Pomurje region	6	10.58		
	Savinjska region	12	21.17		
	Posavska region	2	29.75		
	Total	36			

Conclusions and recommendations

Agrotourism is growing in popularity as an increasing number of city residents appreciate the slow pace of the countryside and its authenticity (Hasanzadeh, 2023). External influences (political crises and pandemics) have reduced mobility, making it an attractive alternative to remote holiday destinations. Agrotourists are interested in working farms, local production, and livestock farming. Some European regions (e.g. Bavaria and South

Tyrol) have successfully developed agrotourism, whereas most rural regions are lagging (Streifeneder et al., 2022). The benefits of developing agrotourism are mainly in terms of diversifying the farm business model and increasing farm incomes, with consequent long-term positive effects on the countryside, perhaps the most important of which is the creation of new jobs and reduction of depopulation in rural areas.

Thus, wellness tourism and agrotourism are combined with the offer of holidays in nature and the choice of farm stays, enabling tourists to acquire a healthy lifestyle and take care of their health and appearance. The wellness services offered during the farm stay are different from those offered in wellness centres. In this respect, the observation of the individual segments showed that most of the facilities offered are sports and recreation facilities and that tourists are interested in working on the farm as a form of recreation. A variety of locally produced food is offered, and there is also an admittedly smaller proportion of forest wellness or forest baths, as well as a proportion of wellness facilities and services such as saunas, massages, hot tubs, ice baths, homemade body care products, and traditional and complementary medicine services. The forms of wellness activities on farm stays are more basic and closer to natural and outdoor activities. Movement in fresh air and relaxation in the woods do not require the infrastructure of beauty and relaxation treatments in spa centres. From the observed results, it can be concluded that the natural resources of the countryside and farms provide basic conditions for agrowellness development within rural tourism value chains.

The main finding of the survey is that wellness offers are present in the observed farm stay, even though they are not always labelled as tourist farms with specialised offers for healthy living. The survey aimed to assess the current situation regarding the development of agrowellness offers in farm stays in Slovenia, where the average score (20.08 out of 48) showed that the farm stay in the sample has a below-average score but has the potential for agrowellness development. This was shown by the scores resulting from the question of whether there was a correlation between the assessment of the agrowellness offer and the recorded label of the specialised offer for healthy living in Slovenia. It was found that the differences between the groups were not statistically significant ($P > 0,05$), which means that the specialised offer for healthy living of farm stay is not a reason for better development of the wellness offer. In summary, both agrotourism and wellness tourism contribute to sustainable development and the well-being of individuals and communities (Zhong et al., 2021). They share synergies in promoting authentic experiences and enhancing the quality of life, although their approaches and activities differ (Nelvi & Yora, 2023).

The survey also answered the question of whether there were statistically significant differences in the development of the agrowellness offer in relation to some of the characteristics of farm stays. Looking at the different segments of the offer and the statistical region, the statistically significant differences were ($p < 0,05$) only in the Mental Wellness segment, with the highest values in Gorenjska and Spodnje Posavska regions, and the lowest values in Pomurska and Podravska regions. Statistically significant differences were found to exist ($p < 0,05$) among farm stays with different land sizes in terms of the development of the mental wellness offer; farm stays with more than 34 ha of land had a more developed mental wellness segment (than farm stays with less land). We found that there were statistically significant differences ($p < 0,05$) in the development of the offer of sports and recreational activities and mental wellness among

farm stays according to the age of the holder of the complementary activity; that is, farm stays with holders aged 50 and over have more developed segments of sport and recreational activities and mental wellness. Agrotourism's potential to complement wellness tourism could be further explored, particularly in how agricultural experiences might enhance the wellness offerings of a destination (Chen et al., 2023).

A limitation of this survey is the location of the observations, as we mainly focused on the Eastern Cohesion region of Slovenia. The number of farms covered varied by region. The sample was convenient; we selected farms that were members of the Association of Tourist Farms in Slovenia. Finances and time constraints did not allow us to use a quantitative observational approach. Future research should include quantitative approaches.

The trends in wellness tourism point towards relaxation in nature and sustainable tourism (Szabó et al., 2020), which is not about building new infrastructure but about taking advantage of the natural environment by being aware of and appreciating it. We see scope for further research in the direction of identifying attitudes towards the term agrowellness and conceptualising it in a way that could give it a place in professional and scientific literature as a new branch of tourism within rural tourism value chains. The results can be a starting point for holders of complementary activities on tourist farms in Slovenia, as well as in related areas in Europe and elsewhere in the world, to become even more aware that agrowellness is a new trend in the leisure time of tourists, especially after the stormy period of the epidemic of Covid, when people are looking for shorter holidays closer to home. This opens new avenues for further research.

Acknowledgement: The research was conducted within the framework of the project »Model of distribution of sustainable agrowellness goods of Slovenian countryside for increased well-being of local communities #AGROVEL«, financed by Development Pillar of Financing 2021-2024 (RSF 2.0) within the scheme Student Challenges of the University of Maribor.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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