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ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCE OF SUCCESSFUL AGROTOURISM DESTINATIONS IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. This article examines the development trajectories of successful agrotourism destinations across six distinct national contexts: Italy, Germany, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and Australia. The main purpose of the study is to identify transferable lessons for Uzbekistan. Drawing on peer-reviewed sources indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, reports issued by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism/UNWTO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), as well as recent market intelligence data, the study applies a mixed methodological framework comprising comparative institutional analysis and a multi-criteria success factor scoring model. The article identifies infrastructure deficits, the absence of dedicated legislation, and weak human capital as the primary barriers, and proposes a concrete eight-pillar policy roadmap adapted to the institutional context of Uzbekistan.

Keywords: agrotourism, rural tourism, comparative analysis, Uzbekistan, Italy, Japan, sustainable development, UNWTO, Silk Road tourism, destination management.

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматриваются траектории развития успешных агротуристических направлений в шести странах: Италии, Германии, Японии, Республике Корея, Новой Зеландии и Австралии. Основной целью исследования является выявление опыта и практических подходов, которые могут быть адаптированы для развития агротуризма в Узбекистане. Исследование основано на анализе научных публикаций, индексируемых в базах данных Scopus и Web of Science, отчётов Всемирной туристской организации ООН (UN Tourism/UNWTO), Организации экономического сотрудничества и развития (OECD), Продовольственной и сельскохозяйственной организации ООН (FAO), а также актуальных аналитических материалов туристического рынка. В работе применяется комплексный методологический подход, включающий сравнительный институциональный анализ и многофакторную модель оценки факторов успеха. В результате исследования выявлены основные барьеры развития агротуризма в Узбекистане, включая недостаточный уровень инфраструктуры, отсутствие специализированной нормативно-правовой базы и ограниченность человеческого капитала. На этой основе предложена восьмикомпонентная дорожная карта развития агротуризма, адаптированная к институциональным условиям Узбекистана.

Ключевые слова: агротуризм, сельский туризм, сравнительный анализ, Узбекистан, Италия, Япония, устойчивое развитие, UNWTO, туризм Великого шёлкового пути, управление туристическими направлениями.

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматриваются траектории развития успешных агротуристических направлений в шести странах: Италии, Германии, Японии, Республике Корея, Новой Зеландии и Австралии. Основной целью исследования является выявление опыта и практических подходов, которые могут быть адаптированы для развития агротуризма в Узбекистане. Исследование основано на анализе научных публикаций, индексируемых в базах данных Scopus и Web of Science, отчётов Всемирной туристской организации ООН (UN Tourism/UNWTO), Организации экономического сотрудничества и развития (OECD), Продовольственной и сельскохозяйственной организации ООН (FAO), а также актуальных аналитических материалов туристического рынка. В работе применяется комплексный методологический подход, включающий сравнительный институциональный анализ и многофакторную модель оценки факторов успеха. В результате исследования выявлены основные барьеры развития агротуризма в Узбекистане, включая недостаточный уровень инфраструктуры, отсутствие специализированной нормативно-правовой базы и ограниченность человеческого капитала. На этой основе предложена восьмикомпонентная дорожная карта развития агротуризма, адаптированная к институциональным условиям Узбекистана.

Ключевые слова: агротуризм, сельский туризм, сравнительный анализ, Узбекистан, Италия, Япония, устойчивое развитие, UNWTO, туризм Великого шёлкового пути, управление туристическими направлениями.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary tourism scholarship has witnessed a marked reorientation toward forms of travel that restore the experiential connection between visitors and productive landscapes. Agrotourism—broadly understood as tourism conducted in agricultural settings, where farming activities themselves constitute a central attraction—has evolved from a peripheral niche into a mainstream segment of the global tourism industry. The global agrotourism market was valued at USD 89.8 billion in 2022 and was estimated at USD 91.6 billion in 2023, with Allied Market Research projecting it to reach USD 111.1 billion by 2032 at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12.5%¹. Grand View Research, employing a narrower product-category definition, estimated the market at USD 8.1 billion in 2024 and projects it to reach USD 15.78 billion by 2030 at a CAGR of 11.9%². According to broader estimates, the global agrotourism market reached approximately USD 91.6 billion in 2023 and is forecast to grow to USD 160.9 billion by 2033. More than 59% of UNWTO Member States have identified rural tourism as a national priority³. Uzbekistan—endowed with UNESCO-listed Silk Road heritage, exceptional agricultural biodiversity, and a rapidly expanding international tourism sector that welcomed 7.96 million visitors in 2024—stands at a pivotal moment where these global trends can be effectively leveraged⁴.

These figures, while not entirely comparable—a reminder that definitional inconsistencies across national statistical frameworks remain an unresolved methodological challenge—point unanimously in the same direction: agrotourism is among the fastest-growing segments within the broader rural and sustainable tourism sector. The structural drivers of this growth are well documented in the academic literature. Tew and Barbieri (2012)⁵ demonstrated that farm-based diversification into tourism provides income resilience, strengthens community connections, and offers a viable long-term entrepreneurial model. Barbieri (2020)⁶ further developed this framework in the post-pandemic context, emphasizing the role of authenticity, storytelling, and landscape immersion as unique experiential assets that urban hospitality facilities cannot easily replicate.

The UNWTO's 2023 report, *Tourism and Rural Development: A Policy Perspective*, which represents the organization's first globally representative survey of Member States on this issue, found that 96% of respondents expected rural tourism to improve in the coming years, while 59% identified it as a current policy priority⁷. The report also highlighted three recurring structural constraints: inadequate rural infrastructure, shortages in human capital, and challenges related to destination governance. As this article demonstrates, these issues are also highly relevant to the Uzbek context.

Uzbekistan's tourism sector has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years. International arrivals increased from 1.50 million in 2020 to 7.96 million in 2024, generating USD 3.52 billion in tourism export revenues. The national development strategy "Uzbekistan–2030" aims to attract 15 million foreign visitors and increase tourism export revenues to USD 5 billion. Visa liberalization measures, including visa-free and e-visa arrangements covering 90 countries by August 2025, have contributed significantly to this growth. Nevertheless, tourist expenditures remain heavily concentrated in the country's major heritage destinations—Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva—while rural and agricultural areas continue to capture only a limited share of tourism spending.

Aslam (2024), in a systematic review published in *Sustainability*, concluded that "agritourism in Uzbekistan is still in its initial stages of development and provides mainly economic benefits," attributing this situation to limited scientific research, underdeveloped institutional frameworks, and knowledge gaps at the farm level⁸. Ibadullaev et al. (2025) reported complementary findings from the Khorezm region, confirming strong farmer interest in agrotourism while noting that institutional constraints often limit broader participation⁹.

This article proceeds from the premise that systematically analyzing successful international models, rather than developing approaches from the ground up, can significantly shorten Uzbekistan's learning curve. Accordingly, the central research question guiding this study is: What contextually transferable lessons can Uzbekistan draw from the agrotourism experiences of Italy, Germany, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and Australia?

1 Allied Market Research. (2024). Global Agritourism Market Size, Share & Growth. Market estimated USD 33.8 billion in 2022, projected USD 111.1 billion by 2032, CAGR 12.5%. [alliedmarketresearch.com/agritourism-market-A09097](https://www.alliedmarketresearch.com/agritourism-market-A09097)

2 Grand View Research. (2024). Agritourism Market Size, Share and Growth Report, 2030.

3 World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). (2023). *Tourism and Rural Development*

4 U.S. Department of Commerce — Trade.gov. (2025). Uzbekistan – Travel and Tourism.

5 Tew, C., & Barbieri, C. (2012). The perceived benefits of agritourism: The provider's perspective.

6 Barbieri, C. (2020). Agritourism Research: A Perspective Article. *Tourism Review*

7 UNWTO. (2023). *Ibid.* Three structural bottlenecks identified

8 Aslam, M.U. (2024). Agritourism as an Emerging Sustainable Tourism Industry in Uzbekistan.

9 Ibadullaev, E., Rajabov, A., Kuziboev, B., et al. (2025).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lane's (1994) seminal contribution to the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* established four criteria distinguishing rural tourism from urban mass tourism: location in rural areas, functional rurality characterized by small-scale and traditional features, integration with the rural world, and predominantly traditional social organization¹⁰. Although this taxonomy was originally developed for the European context, it remains foundational in contemporary scholarship. Sznajder, Przeborska, and Scrimgeour (2009) subsequently proposed a clearer distinction between "agritourism," defined as activities carried out on working agricultural holdings, and the broader category of "rural tourism," which includes any tourism activity in a non-urban environment. This distinction has significant regulatory implications.

German scholarship developed a parallel tradition around *Urlaub auf dem Bauernhof* ("farm holidays")¹¹, which Sidali, Schulze, and Spiller (2011) analyzed comparatively with the Italian *agriturismo* model. Their research revealed important differences: Italian *agriturismo* tends to focus on gastronomy- and wine-based luxury experiences targeting middle- and upper-income segments, while German *Bauernhofurlaub* originated from a working-class family holiday tradition and developed a quality-certification system that prioritizes transparency over exclusivity. These contrasts are instructive for Uzbekistan, which possesses elements analogous to both traditions.

The economic rationale for agrotourism development has been rigorously explored in the literature. Mastronardi et al. (2015), using the Italian Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN) dataset, demonstrated that *agriturismo* farms generate significantly higher net working income per labor unit than comparable non-*agriturismo* holdings¹². Importantly, they reported that *agriturismo* adoption correlates with greater environmental sustainability, including organic farming, biodiversity conservation, and reduced chemical inputs, indicating a synergy between economic incentives and ecological outcomes.

Hwang and Lee (2015), examining South Korea's rural tourism policy in *Tourism Management*, found statistically significant positive effects of the government-supported "Green Tour Villages" initiative on non-farm household income. Their panel data analysis across Korean rural municipalities provides one of the clearest causal estimates of how well-designed agrotourism policy can translate into household welfare gains¹³.

Jin, Takao, and Yabuta (2022), in a study of Japan's green tourism published in the *Asia-Pacific Journal of Regional Science*, established that local community "power"—the density of social networks and collective decision-making capacity—is the strongest predictor of green tourism success at the village level¹⁴. This finding foregrounds community engagement not merely as a desirable feature but as an essential precondition, a point to which the present paper returns in Section 5.

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have provided a normative framework within which the multiple contributions of agrotourism can be systematically categorized. Purvis, Mao, and Robinson (2019), revisiting the conceptual foundations of the "three pillars" of sustainability in *Sustainability Science*, note that economic, environmental, and socio-cultural dimensions must be treated as genuinely interdependent rather than addressed sequentially¹⁵.

UNWTO's survey found that Member States ranked SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 1 (No Poverty), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) as the most important contributions of agrotourism to the global sustainability agenda¹⁶. The gender dimension of agrotourism entrepreneurship is particularly relevant: McGehee, Kim, and Jennings (2007) documented that women play a disproportionate role in driving agritourism enterprise creation in both the United States and South Korea, finding that motivations for farm-based tourism are strongly gendered in ways often overlooked by conventional rural economic analyses.

The European Parliament's 2023 briefing on rural tourism cited Booking.com's 2023 Sustainable Travel Report, in which 76% of surveyed travelers across 35 countries expressed a desire to travel more sustainably, as evidence that demand-side shifts are now structural rather than cyclical¹⁷. This convergence of supply-side agricultural needs and demand-side sustainability preferences creates what UNWTO describes as a structural "window of opportunity" for agrotourism investment in emerging markets.

Gomez-Carrasco et al. (2021), in a global bibliometric analysis of 252 Scopus-indexed articles on agrotourism and sustainability, identified a pronounced geographic concentration of scholarship in Italy, Spain,

10 Lane, B. (1994). What is Rural Tourism? *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*

11 Italian Republic. (2006). Legge 20 febbraio 2006, n. 96 — Disciplina dell'agriturismo.

12 Mastronardi, L., Giaccio, V., Giannelli, A., & Scardera, A. (2015).

13 Hwang, J., & Lee, S. (2015). The effect of the rural tourism policy on non-farm income in South Korea. *Tourism Management*

14 Jin, C., Takao, M., & Yabuta, M. (2022). Impact of Japan's local community power on green tourism

15 Purvis, B., Mao, Y., & Robinson, D. (2019). Three pillars of sustainability: In search of conceptual origins. *Sustainability Science*, 14, 681–695. DOI: 10.1007/s11625-018-0627-5

16 UNWTO. (2023). Ibid. SDG alignment: SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 1

17 European Parliament. (2023). Rural Tourism. Briefing PE 751464, EPRS, Brussels. europarl.europa.eu.

the United States, and China, as well as a significant research gap concerning Central Asian and post-Soviet transition economies. By synthesizing established international scholarship with emerging Uzbekistan-specific studies, including Aslam (2024), Ibadullaev et al. (2025), and Aktamov (2025)¹⁸, the present article aims to contribute to addressing this gap¹⁹.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employs an explanatory comparative design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), integrating quantitative secondary data analysis with qualitative comparative institutional analysis. The selection of six destination countries follows a hybrid most-similar and most-different case-selection logic. Italy, Germany, and Japan represent mature and institutionally sophisticated agrotourism economies in different global regions; South Korea represents a successful state-led emerging-economy model; New Zealand and Australia represent industry-driven Anglophone cases; and Uzbekistan serves as the focal analytical case for which recommendations are developed.

Italy's *agriturismo* system is widely acknowledged as one of the most institutionally mature agrotourism models in the world. Law No. 96/2006, *Disciplina dell'agriturismo*, defines agritourism as a hospitality activity conducted exclusively by agricultural entrepreneurs and requires that the farming function remain predominant in terms of working hours. This legal constraint, although counterintuitive at first glance, performs a critical function: it prevents the transformation of agritourism into mere countryside hospitality detached from productive agricultural activity, thereby ensuring that authenticity remains structural rather than decorative.

The sector has grown from approximately 14,940 registered farms in 2005 to 24,891 in 2023. The introduction of the *Agriturismo Italia* national trademark in 2013, a quality classification system awarding one to five sunflower marks according to comfort, service variety, and environmental quality, provided consumers with a credible signaling mechanism and farms with a reputational incentive structure. Grand View Research estimates Italian agritourism revenue at USD 259.9 million in 2024, with a projected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10.4% through 2030.

Figure 1 below illustrates the long-term trajectory of registered *agriturismo* farms and tourist overnight stays, capturing both the structural growth trend and the COVID-19-related disruption followed by rapid recovery (Figure 1).

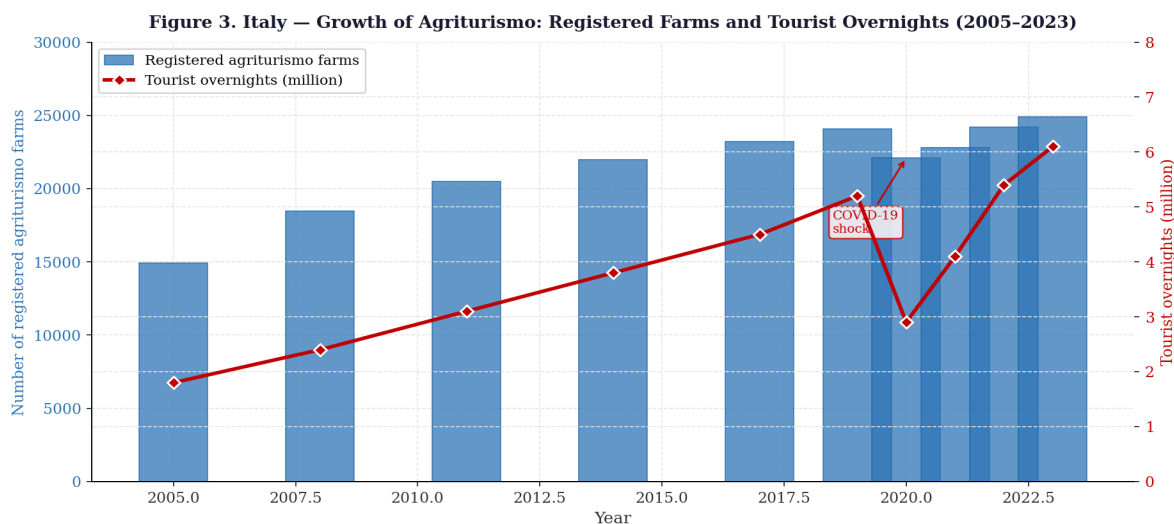


Figure 1. Italy — Growth of Agriturismo: Registered Farms and Tourist Overnights (2005–2023)²⁰

Germany's *Urlaub auf dem Bauernhof* ("farm holiday") tradition is rooted in a post-war social policy orientation that sought to provide affordable rural recreation for urban working families²¹. Unlike Italy's gastronomy-centered

18 Aktamov, O. (2025). Assessment of the Development Processes and Indicators of Agrotourism in Samarkand. *Central Asian Journal of Innovations on Tourism Management and Finance*

19 McGehee, N.G., Kim, K., & Jennings, G.R. (2007). Gender and motivation for agri-tourism entrepreneurship.

20 Source: ISTAT (2023); Mastronardi et al. (2015); Grand View Research Italy (2024).

21 Deutscher Bauernverband e.V. (2023). *Landtourismus wieder im Aufwärtstrend*.

luxury positioning, the German model has historically targeted middle-income families with children. According to the Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft für Urlaub auf dem Bauernhof (BAG), approximately 10.25 million people expressed a preference for farm holidays in 2022, while more than 4,500 registered operators collectively generated approximately 16 million overnight stays per year.

The sector's most instructive contribution to international practice is its quality certification architecture. BAG's multi-criteria classification system, which covers accommodation standards, farm authenticity, available activities, environmental management, and visitor information, provides a transparent and independently audited signal that supports both consumer confidence and operator improvement incentives. Sidali, Schulze, and Spiller (2011) noted that, unlike in Italy, where strategic marketing planning entered the sector relatively late, German operators have been more systematic in branding and differentiation, although the sector remains constrained by a more conservative image than its Italian counterpart.

Japan's Green Tourism programme, officially promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) since the late 1990s, addresses a structural demographic challenge that Uzbekistan may face in the coming decades: the depopulation and ageing of rural communities. The *satoyama* concept, a traditional Japanese land-use philosophy emphasizing the co-evolution of human communities and their agricultural-forested landscapes, has been operationalized as a tourism product that offers urban visitors an immersive encounter with a disappearing rural way of life.

Jin, Takao, and Yabuta (2022), through an econometric analysis of panel data from Japanese municipalities, demonstrated that local community social capital is the dominant predictor of green tourism success, outweighing natural resource endowment and infrastructure quality. This finding has important implications: it suggests that community mobilization and governance capacity building should precede, rather than follow, infrastructure investment.

South Korea's approach to agrotourism is distinguished by its explicit use of government-directed cluster creation as the primary instrument. The Green Tour Villages programme, launched in 2002 with the objective of increasing farmers' income and providing urban residents with agricultural experiences, had created 190 certified villages receiving 1.3 million visitors annually by 2006. Choo and Jamal (2009), examining organic farm tourism in South Korea through the lens of ecotourism theory, found that farm-based tourism experiences on organic holdings generate a distinctive form of environmental consciousness among visitors—a "pedagogy of place" that extends beyond the visit itself into behavioral changes in food consumption and environmental attitudes.

New Zealand's agrotourism sector is notable for developing largely without a dedicated national legislative framework. Instead, it has been driven by industry associations, primarily Agritourism NZ, and integrated into the country's broader positioning of agriculture and tourism as its two largest export industries. Agritourism NZ describes the sector as a combination of agriculture and tourism aimed at promoting sustainable tourism, supporting local agriculture, and providing economic benefits to primary producers and rural communities. The organization provides training programmes, advocacy, and marketing support.

Australia's Tourism Research Australia (TRA) published detailed agritourism data in its 2024 *Fact Sheet: Farm Visit*. Approximately 3.3 million trips in 2024 included a farm visit, generating total visitor expenditure of AUD 4.2 billion, equivalent to approximately USD 2.8 billion²². The demographic profile of farm visitors is notably broad: 57% of visiting parties were aged 44 and under, challenging the stereotype that agrotourism appeals only to older nostalgic travelers.

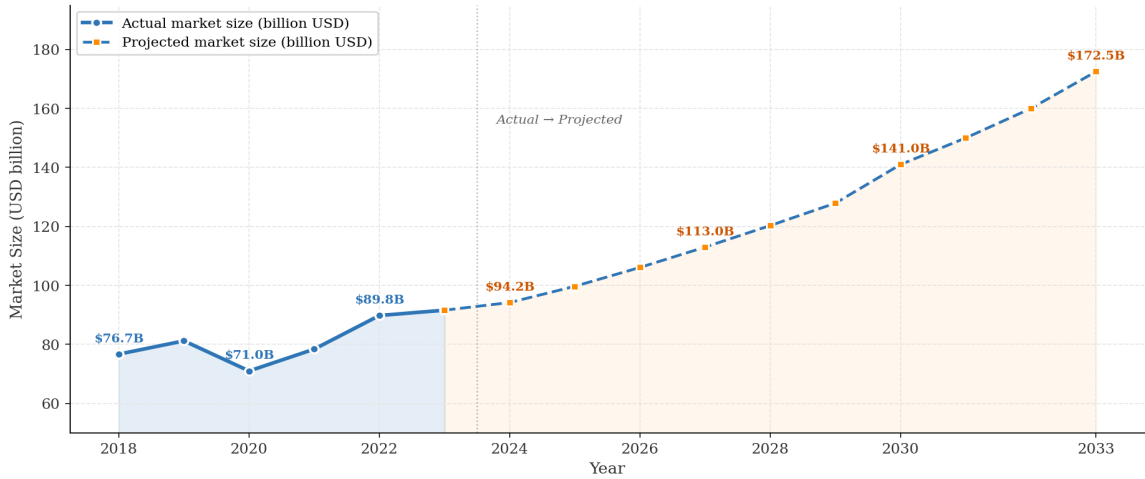
A further notable feature of the Australian data is the high activity co-participation rate: 40% of farm visitors engaged in general sightseeing, 26% visited national parks, 24% undertook bushwalking, and 17% visited heritage sites. This activity bundling, in which agrotourism serves as an anchor and cultural-natural attractions function as satellites, closely mirrors Uzbekistan's potential offering, where farm visits near Samarkand's UNESCO heritage sites could operate in a similar bundled format.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Figure 1 presents the historical trajectory and projected growth of the global agrotourism market, synthesizing data from Future Market Insights, Allied Market Research, and Grand View Research. The chart highlights the temporary contraction associated with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the strong V-shaped recovery that followed. Projections through 2033 indicate a structural rather than cyclical growth trend, driven by urbanization, increasing demand for authentic travel experiences, and the sustainability preferences of younger traveler cohorts (Figure 2).

22 Tourism Research Australia (TRA). (2024). Agritourism Fact Sheet: Farm Visit. Austrade, Canberra.

Figure 1. Global Agrotourism Market Size Dynamics and Projections (2018-2033, USD billion)



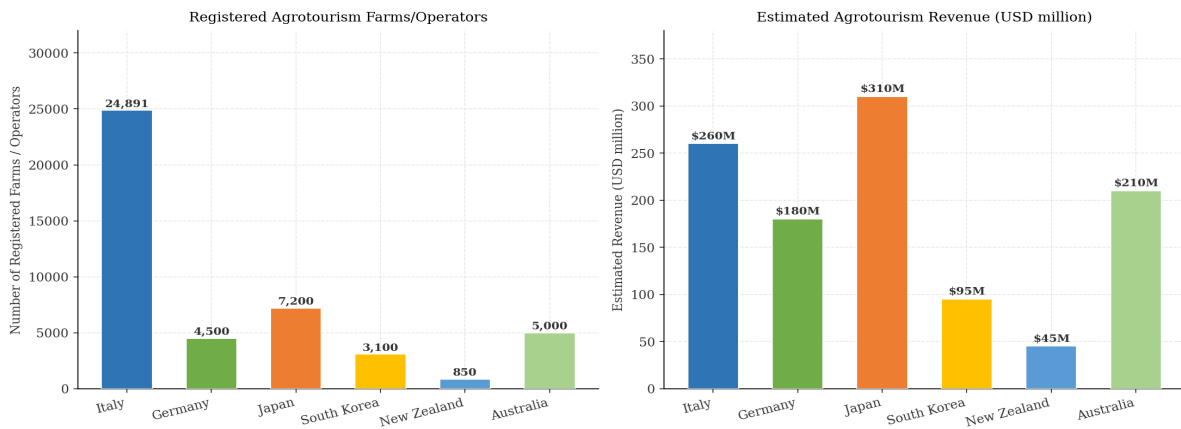
Sources: Future Market Insights (2023); Grand View Research (2024); Allied Market Research (2024); Business Research Company (2024)

Figure 2. Global Agro tourism Market Size Dynamics and Projections (2018–2033, USD billion).

The European Parliament’s 2023 rural tourism briefing emphasized that, despite the overall growth trend, affordability constraints and the cost-of-living crisis have introduced near-term demand uncertainty: 49% of surveyed travelers stated that more sustainable options were “too expensive,” an increase of 11 percentage points compared with 2022. This tension between sustainability aspirations and price sensitivity suggests that Uzbekistan’s competitive advantage may partly lie in its cost competitiveness as a destination, where authentic agrotourism experiences can be offered at price points less accessible to European peers.

Figure 3 presents the comparative data visually across two dimensions: the absolute number of registered agrotourism operators and estimated sector revenue. This comparison reveals both the scale difference between Uzbekistan and mature markets and the fact that several countries, such as Germany and New Zealand, have achieved strong performance with a relatively modest number of operators. This indicates that quality and yield per visitor are as important as visitor volume (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Comparative Analysis of Key Agrotourism Destinations (2023-2024 Data)



Sources: Grand View Research (2024); Deutscher Bauernverband (2023); OECD Japan (2023); GFRAS South Korea (2023); Agritourism NZ (2024); Tourism Research Australia (2024).

Figure 3. Comparative Analysis of Key Agrotourism Destinations

Figure 4 presents a radar chart comparing the six study countries against Uzbekistan across six operationalised success factor dimensions. The chart makes visually explicit both the multi-dimensional character of agrotourism competitive advantage and the specific configuration of Uzbekistan’s strengths and gaps (Figure 4).

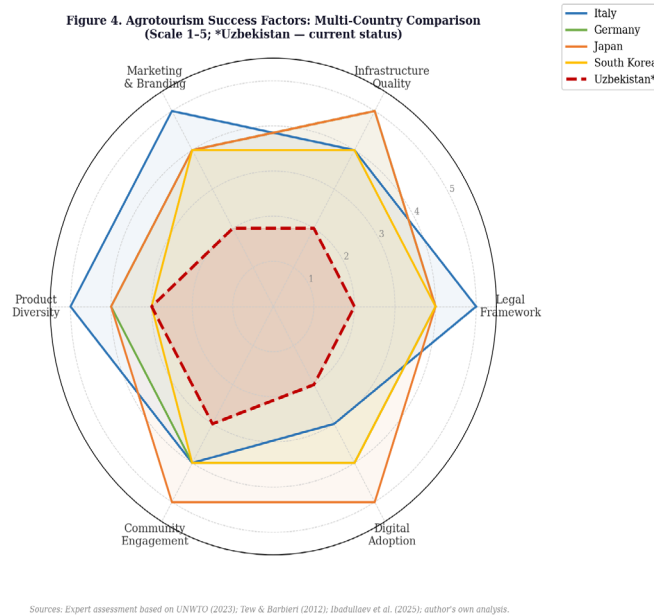


Figure 4. Agro tourism Success Factors: Multi-Country Comparison

Uzbekistan currently scores highest on product diversity potential (3/5) and community engagement (3/5), reflecting the richness of its agricultural and cultural heritage, and the genuine hospitality orientation of its rural population. It scores lowest on legal framework (1.5/5), digital adoption (2/5), and infrastructure quality (2/5). The pattern differs structurally from the European cases: Italy and Germany's weakest historical dimension was digital adoption (now improving); Japan and South Korea's challenges were more in physical infrastructure; Uzbekistan faces compound deficits across institutional, physical, and digital dimensions simultaneously. This simultaneity means that a sequenced, prioritized reform program is essential — trying to address everything at once risks spreading limited administrative capacity too thin (Figure 5).

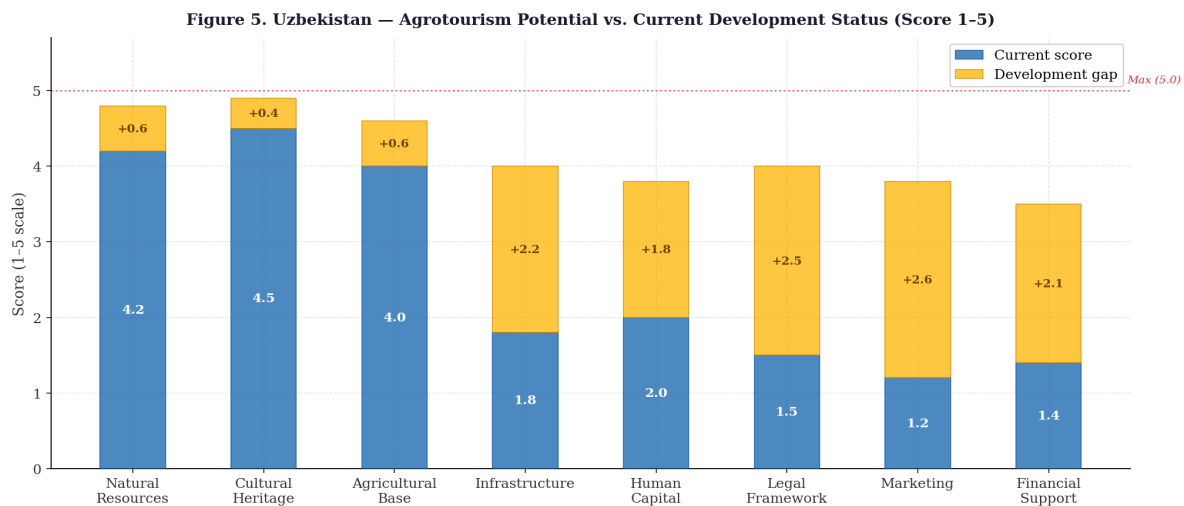


Figure 5. Uzbekistan — Agrotourism Development: Current Scores vs. Potential (Scale 1–5).

Figure 5 visualizes the gap analysis across eight dimensions of agrotourism development capacity. The contrast is clear: Uzbekistan's natural resources, cultural heritage, and agricultural base are close to their potential ceilings, with scores of 4.2/5, 4.5/5, and 4.0/5, respectively. This suggests that the country's asset endowment is not the main constraint. The key constraints are concentrated in the enabling environment: infrastructure, with a current score of 1.8 and a potential score of 4.0; human capital, with a current score of 2.0 and a potential score of 3.8; legal framework, with a current score of 1.5 and a potential score of 4.0; marketing,

with a current score of 1.2 and a potential score of 3.8; and financial support mechanisms, with a current score of 1.4 and a potential score of 3.5.

This configuration is, in a certain sense, more manageable than a situation in which the natural resource base is the limiting factor. Gaps in the enabling environment can be addressed through targeted policy and investment decisions within a defined time horizon, whereas fundamental natural endowments cannot be artificially created.

The preceding analysis of international success factors, Uzbekistan's current position, and the structure of its key constraints supports the development of an eight-pillar policy framework for the 2025–2030 period.

UNWTO's survey identified the infrastructure gap in rural areas as the leading constraint on rural tourism development globally. For Uzbekistan, this issue is most evident in three areas: poorly maintained or unpaved roads to farm destinations, unreliable electricity supply that makes it difficult to maintain hospitality standards, and insufficient broadband connectivity, which limits digital booking, social media promotion, and smart agriculture integration.

Germany's Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft quality system and Italy's sunflower trademark demonstrate that quality certification is among the most cost-effective policy instruments available to agrotourism regulators. The costs of establishing such a system are borne by the government, while the ongoing costs of compliance are distributed among operators, who are simultaneously incentivized to invest in improvements. The consumer benefit, expressed through credible quality signals in an otherwise opaque market, generates substantial welfare gains for visitors and reputational gains for the sector as a whole.

Uzbekistan's Tourism Committee should develop, in consultation with the private sector and academic researchers, a three-tier classification system for agrotourism operators: "Agrotourism UZ Bronze," "Agrotourism UZ Silver," and "Agrotourism UZ Gold." This system should cover accommodation quality, food safety, authenticity of farm activities, environmental management, and guest language services.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The comparative analysis presented in this article reveals a consistent cross-national pattern: the economic, environmental, and socio-cultural benefits of agrotourism are not automatic. Rather, they are the result of deliberate institutional design, sustained public investment, and community engagement over time horizons measured in decades rather than years. Italy's sector took nearly thirty years to mature from its 1985 legislative foundation to its current scale. Japan's green tourism programme has been developing for approximately twenty-five years. South Korea's village programme began in 2002 and generated substantial income effects only after a decade of sustained government commitment.

This temporal dimension has important implications for Uzbekistan. The formulation of a strategy with a 2030 horizon is appropriate; however, stakeholders should recognize that the major commercial returns from agrotourism investment, although some immediate benefits are possible, are likely to materialize more fully during the 2030–2040 period. Premature assessment or policy abandonment after only two or three years, before enabling conditions have accumulated, would be a costly mistake.

The study also confirms the findings of Nematpour and Khodadadi (2021) that, in developing economies, agrotourism development cannot be left to market forces alone. The relevant market failures are well documented: coordination problems among smallholders, information asymmetries between rural producers and international visitors, and the public-good nature of destination reputation and shared infrastructure all require government coordination and co-investment. Therefore, the key question is not whether the state should play a role, but how that role should be designed to be catalytic rather than crowding out private initiative.

A limitation of the present study is its reliance on secondary data for the Uzbekistan-specific analysis. The comparative scoring matrix and potential gap assessment are based on expert estimates rather than primary-data-derived metrics. Future research should prioritize panel data studies of Uzbek agrotourism farms, following the approaches of Mastronardi et al. (2015) for Italy and Hwang and Lee (2015) for South Korea. Such studies would help generate the causal evidence base necessary for evidence-based policy refinement.

Digital transformation is increasingly moving from an optional advantage to a mandatory condition. Countries that fail to integrate their agrotourism offerings into global digital booking ecosystems will face structural disadvantages in competing for international visitors. In addition, clustering and network formation—the aggregation of individual farms and experiences into coherent destination propositions with shared marketing—are necessary to achieve the scale required for international market visibility.

Uzbekistan's endowment profile, including its UNESCO heritage sites, exceptional agricultural biodiversity, living Silk Road cultural traditions, genuine rural hospitality, and rapidly improving international connectivity, constitutes a strong competitive foundation. The binding constraints lie in the enabling environment: legislation,

infrastructure, human capital, quality systems, and finance. These are solvable challenges. With the eight-pillar policy framework proposed in this article, anchored in international best practice and adapted to Uzbekistan's institutional context, the country has the opportunity to develop agrotourism into a genuinely transformative force for rural economic welfare by 2030.

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