

Article

# Agritourism in the Era of the Coronavirus (COVID-19): A Rapid Assessment from Poland

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**Abstract:** The COVID-19 pandemic has had strong impact on the tourism market. As a result of the lockdown and the closing of borders, tourist traffic came to an abrupt halt. Agritourism is an important way of diversifying agriculture and rural areas. In addition, it is a part of the idea of sustainable and multifunctional agriculture. It makes it possible to use production resources in the countryside and constitutes an additional source of income for both farmers and the local community. The aim of the paper was to present the results of survey research concerning the tourist plans of the Polish people in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular plans to spend holidays on agritourism farms. The study confirmed that according to Polish respondents, holidays in the country, spent on agritourism farms, were a good choice in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The respondents expect agritourism providers to take specific actions, i.e., disinfect communal rooms, make hand sanitizers available, as well as limit the maximum number of people allowed on the farm and in open-access rooms, in order to ensure safety during their stay. The article constitutes a contribution to the evolving literature on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the development of the tourism sector.

**Keywords:** agritourism; COVID-19; leisure time; holiday; agritourism farm; Poland

## 1. Introduction

Due to the fact that the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes the COVID-19 disease, is highly infectious and contagious [1], the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on public health and global economies. As a result of the lockdown, many countries are experiencing economic slowdown stemming from the slump in economic activity, an increase in the unemployment rate, and high uncertainty in the financial markets [2]. Although the spread of the epidemic has undoubtedly had an impact on many sectors of the economy [3–5], the tourism sector has been particularly affected.

The global crash of demand from hotels and restaurants caused the prices of agricultural goods to drop by 20% [6]. The introduced blockade due to the pandemic also influenced the demand for food, and thus food security by limiting mobility, reduced purchasing power of the most vulnerable population groups [7]. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), COVID-19 has affected agriculture not only in terms of demand, but also in terms of food supply [8]. To limit the

spread of COVID-19, national authorities in many countries have introduced social distress measures and stay-at-home orders, including a ban on free movement except for urgent needs, such as for food supplies [9]. The introduction of the blockade due to the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that there is a shortage of manpower to perform agricultural work in agriculture, as there are difficulties with the availability of workers during harvesting crops as well as sowing and replanting [10]. The closure of borders meant that seasonal workers from other countries could not get to their jobs on farms [11,12]. Lockdowns and restrictions on human mobility also affect the provision of key food safety, quality and certification controls, including goods controls to certify compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements [12]. On the other hand, due to the unavailability of imported products, people are more interested in consuming local products. As indicated by Cattivelli and Rusciano [9] in the province of Naples (Italy) several self-organizing food supply initiatives have been launched to support disadvantaged residents. These initiatives include food banks, canteens and other food support projects. Community gardens may be another source of access to fresh produce and inexpensive, especially for city dwellers with limited access to supermarkets. They can also guarantee the protection of biodiversity and promote the model of sustainable agriculture [13]. Moreover, interest in local products also applies to growing plants, as farmers started to prefer local seeds available in their area [10]. These initiatives and activities are, without a doubt, part of the sustainable way of production and consumption, and also contribute to the well-being of the local community [14,15].

As emphasised by Gössling et al. [16], tourism is an industry in which revenue is permanently lost because the unsold products and services, e.g., accommodation, cannot be sold in the following years, which has a knock-on effect on employment in the industry.

In tourism, events such as cyclones, fires, earthquakes or terrorist attacks happen on a regular basis, and over the years affect many regions of the world. Unexpected critical events may include such events as natural disasters, epidemic outbreaks, terrorist attacks, and financial crises [17].

Hall [18] stated that crisis management in tourism focuses on economic and financial crises and events such as 11 September 2001 or unexpected oil crises. However, the shock caused by COVID-19 has led to the following situation:

- global economic shock and a decline in the number of travels related thereto; in the first quarter of 2020, the number of foreign tourist arrivals dropped by 20–30%, and it could drop by 60–80% over the course of the entire year [19];
- the economic shock is more dramatic and the decline in the economic growth is twice as large as it is in the case of regular upheavals (e.g., cyclones, bush fires, earthquakes, terrorist attacks);
- the economic shock might lead to structural changes in some industrial sectors [20].

Undoubtedly, any internal and external events, natural or man-made, may challenge the existing structures of tourist areas.

When unexpected events happen, tourist demand may drastically decrease [21]. Country-specific perception of risk has a considerable impact on the decisions concerning travels; it is particularly evident in the times of crises [22]. The perception of the market by tourists may be significantly influenced by media reports [23]. When choices are associated with a risk [24], consumers often delay or give up on making decisions [25]. Although the classification of the types of risk changes over time [26], it can be subsumed under four main risk type categories related to tourism: financial, psychological, satisfaction-related and temporal. Recent studies show that the major concerns of tourists pertain to safety and protection, emphasising the main risk factors: war and political instability, health, crime, terrorism [27].

Prospective tourists tend to delay or cancel their plans to travel to the destinations affected by pandemic, especially if there are no anti-viral medications and vaccines, and the virus spreads rapidly and may affect their health [28]. In the case of a pandemic, tourists cancel their plans and avoid people and places [29]. Research shows that the perception of risk during tourist trips may vary depending on country of origin, destination, age, gender and travel typology [30]. Therefore, Chang et al. (2020)

proposed that a charter for a sustainable travel, tourism, and hospitality industry for the period after COVID-19 be introduced [31].

The coronavirus has affected virtually the entire tourism sector as well as tourism-related industries in many countries. International, regional and local restrictions on travel immediately impacted national economies, including tourism systems, i.e., international travels, domestic tourism, one-day visits and sectors as diverse as air transport, cruises, public transport, accommodation, cafes and restaurants, conventions and other business tourism events, festivals or sporting events [16].

The purpose of the research was to identify the tourist plans of the Polish people in the era of COVID-19 pandemic in the context of holidays spent on agritourism farms. Studies sought to answer such questions as: (i) what is the current attitude of the respondents towards holidays on agritourism farms, and what is the level of popularity of such facilities in terms of tourist trips? (ii) what are the determinants inducing tourists to choose agritourism farms as their holiday destination, (iii) how is the safety of such facilities assessed? In addition, researchers learned about the actions which the respondents believed should be taken by the owners of agritourism farms in order to increase safety during the stay of tourists.

### *1.1. Agritourism—Theoretical Background*

Agritourism began to develop in the 1990s due to an increased demand for soft tourism, in the case of which tourists preferred inexpensive holidays close to nature [32]. Busby and Rendle [33] believe that since the beginning of the 20th century, farmers have expanded the recreation opportunities offered by them to include accommodation services. In the beginning, agritourism was viewed as an additional, peripheral activity conducted on agricultural farms [34]; however, it quickly gained popularity and became one of the forms of rural tourism [35]. At present, agritourism plays many important roles in the agricultural industry, benefiting local tourism organisers and entire local communities [36,37]. Thus, the development of agriculture contributes to the multifunctional development of rural areas and fits into the concept of sustainable development of agriculture and tourism [38–40].

The development of agritourism depends on innovative solutions introduced in this area. Innovation in agritourism is both creating a tourist product from scratch and a professional marketing environment for the natural and cultural values existing in a given area. These activities are part of the concept of sustainable innovation [41,42]. A special type of innovative solution is that created on the initiative and with the involvement of entire local communities and many local and non-local level entities [43,44], whose task is to cooperate and create agritourism products, create a network of specialist farms providing tourist services (e.g., care farms), creating tourist clusters or theme villages. Women are of particular importance in rural areas [45], as they are often the creators of innovative solutions. The role and importance of women in running agritourism services is significant. They are mainly responsible for servicing tourists and devote the most time to them, e.g., are responsible for the preparation of meals. It is rural women who use their talents and skills to build and create an agritourism product. They are often the initiators of introducing innovative ideas and solutions to an agritourism farm [46].

A number of definitions of this form of tourism, emphasising different characteristics thereof, can be found in the literature on the subject. Peebles [47] suggests that agritourism simply means tourism on agricultural farms. In turn, Tew and Barbieri [48] define the activity as visiting of an operating agricultural farm or other form of agricultural or horticultural activity or agrobusiness for the purpose of recognition, pleasure, education or recreational involvement in the agricultural and natural resources or heritage.

In principle, agritourism is a form of tourism closely associated with agriculture and working agricultural farms, where plant production and livestock farming constitute some of the attractions [49]. However, the most important distinctive features of agritourism, making it different to mass tourism, are its uniqueness and competitiveness. These features are associated with:

- The agricultural farm: the rhythm of farm life, farm chores, the presence of farm animals, fresh food, scents, sounds etc.;
- People (the family): direct contact with the family of the host, the opportunity to learn about their habits, hospitality, the opportunity to meet new people and make new friends, everyday activities of village inhabitants;
- Country life: the culture, customs, folklore, tradition and history of the village and the region;
- The space: contact with nature, freedom of movement, low traffic, peace and quiet, the opportunity to engage in recreational activities and sports [50].

A basic agritourism offer took two main forms: activities unrelated and related to accommodation; some farms offer both [51]. However, the range of the offer is currently much broader.

The current concept of agritourism comprises vacation at a farmer's home, on a working agricultural farm, where it is not only possible to sleep, eat meals made of produce from the farm or the area surrounding it, participate in field works and household chores or watch plant production and animal husbandry, but also engage in recreational activities on the farm and outside of it [52].

Nowadays, agritourism consists of the following elements forming the basis of the agritourism product [53]:

- Accommodation: the farmer has the possibility to obtain additional income through the rental of extra rooms in their household.
- Food: the farmer has an opportunity to directly capitalise their agricultural production, constituting a direct link between the person offering services (the farmer and their family) and the person requesting them (the tourist). Another feature of the food offered in agritourism is the fact that it is based on the traditional cuisine of the region, and is prepared from the produce from the owner's own farm or from the local area, thus supporting both the farm itself and the local area—of which the farm is a part.
- Tourist entertainment: in the case of agritourism, tourist entertainment is based on the activities traditionally performed on agricultural farms or in the household, in which the tourist can actively or passively participate.

While staying on agritourism farms, tourists can engage in a wide range of activities which can be divided into five groups:

- Observation of the agricultural production process including crop and animal production and certain processing as well as guided tours or an individual farm (ranch), which are widely offered in different countries;
- Actual participation in the crop production process, animal production and processing (e.g., assistance in milking cows, hay production, etc.);
- Animal shows or shows presenting farm chores, including milking cows, shearing sheep, rabbits, or cowboy rodeos;
- Marked tourist trails in the neighbourhood of the farm;
- Direct contact with domestic animals or the nature of different types of farms, e.g., a small zoo or a safari [54].

Much like the entire tourism sector, agritourism has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Tourists fear the prevailing pandemic; they are reacting and changing their tourist travel plans in the current holiday period. However, it can be observed that the tourists in Poland are currently increasingly often choosing the offer of agritourism farms as short trips are enjoying considerable interest [55,56]. Therefore, it can be concluded that agri-breaks—i.e., short getaways to the country to relax in the nature, for example weekends on agritourism farms—will be a new travelling trend this year.

### 1.2. Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Tourism

Many academic centres, institutions and tourist organisations in the world are currently conducting research concerning tourist activity during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Poland, the Polish Tourist Organisation indicates that more than half of Poles plan to set off on a tourist trip during this year's holidays. As many as 82% of people planning to set off on tourist trips want to spend their holidays in the country [57]. Other studies show that despite the awareness of the COVID-19 pandemic, as many as 79.8% of the respondents were planning to set off on tourist trips. However, over 92.2% of the respondents declared that they were planning to spend their 2020 holidays in Poland, and the months that were most frequently chosen were July and August—67.8%—as well as September, October and November—38.8% [58].

Studies commissioned by the Polish Tourist Organisation show that safety was an important aspect of the trips and that most tourists expect that accommodation facilities would implement additional actions increasing sanitary safety in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, e.g., obtain the "Hygienically Safe Facility. We adhere to the recommendations" certificate [53]. The matter of safety confirmation by a relevant certificate is also indicated by research conducted among the hoteliers of the Blue Marine Mielno initiative [59].

Research conducted among consumers in the USA and Great Britain (collected between 13 and 16 March) showed that approximately 50% of American consumers and 38% of British consumers voluntarily cancelled, delayed or were forced to cancel their holiday plans due to the coronavirus and the crisis stemming from it. In both markets, 35% of consumers reported that they were not planning any trips at the time, and only 15% of the respondents in the United States and 27% in Great Britain claimed that their holiday plans remained uninterrupted. However, 70% of the respondents whose trip was interrupted plan another holiday in the next year. Although the global crisis made trips in the near future unlikely, people remain hopeful. More than 40% of consumers in both markets wants to try and will book holidays within the next six months [60].

On the other hand, in April 2020, a half of the citizens of Finland stated that they had no plans to travel in the summer period due to the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). Moreover, one-third of the respondents estimated that they would limit their trips in the summer of 2020. Domestic travel became more popular among 17% of the respondents, who planned to travel within the borders Finland instead of setting off on international journeys [61].

According to the research conducted by Destination Analysts between 12 and 14 June 2020 among American consumers, almost 70% of them were planning to take at least one tourist trip this year. Most Americans who will travel in 2020 claim that they will be avoiding crowded destinations and visit familiar places (37.7%). Nonetheless, approximately 4 out of 10 American travellers were still uncertain whether they could travel safely in the current circumstances [62]. On the other hand, research conducted by Longwoods International on 23 June, concerning the attitude of American travellers towards the coronavirus, shows that 69% of American travellers claim that they had changed their travel plans due to the pandemic (on 8 April it was 85%). Travellers most often support travel agencies with a clear, precise plan of cleaning and hygiene (43%), who test their staff and enforce the application of personal protection measures by their employees (34%) as well as those who supervise social distancing at the agency (34%) [63].

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) on the arrival of tourist to selected Italian cities in 2020 was analysed in a study conducted in June 2020. According to the estimates, Venice might record the biggest decrease. In reality, it is expected that the number of tourist arrivals in Venice will drop by 57% in 2020 compared to the previous year. The ranking also includes Florence as it is estimated that the number of tourist arrivals in the city will decrease by 55%. In general, it is estimated that tourist arrivals may decrease by 44% in 2020, compared to 2019 [64].

Research conducted among American consumers by Trips to Discover showed that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 29% of the respondents abandoned their plans to travel entirely, 20% are still undecided about their plans, 20% are still travelling as planned, 18% are still travelling, but changed

their destinations or plans, and 11% had not planned their trips yet. The persons who cancelled their trips did so due to the limitations concerning travelling and shutdowns of destinations (51%), 47% of the respondents stated that they were concerned for their health, and decreasing the expenses constituted the reason for only 1% of the respondents [65].

Most specialists from the hotel industry believe that the nature of travelling may change this summer. It may mean that tourists will only travel distances that can be covered by cars [66]. There are signs that initially the journeys will be closer to people's homes and that people will practice car tourism more often. However, a part of the population will more eagerly travel by planes and journey abroad. It is worth emphasising that the youth market is more prone to accept the risk, and young people are more active as travellers and adventurers. They also participate in more risky activities, not only in terms of travel, but also in their lives in general. All in all, even though the risk is increasing in the eyes of all people, young people perceive it as lower compared to other age groups [67]. Surely, younger people are more tolerant to risk [68], moreover, risk tolerance increases with education [69].

Establishment of better relations with local communities is another thing that can prove beneficial also for local tourist brands after the period of the pandemic. Members of local communities can, after all, more quickly reach destinations in their own backyard than foreign travellers, which makes it easier for them to re-visit these places in the years to come [70]. As the development of the COVID-19 vaccine may take a long time, travellers will have to learn how to live with the virus, as it is in the case of other viral diseases [71].

## 2. Materials and Methods

The developed survey questionnaires constituted the source material. The data were collected by using the questionnaire technique. Due to the fact that the target group reached were the people who are active in terms of tourism, non-probability sampling was applied. The study covered individuals aged 15 and above. The study used Facebook groups, in which tourism was the main subject of interest. The link to the survey questionnaire was posted in the groups in question. The respondents acquired via Facebook were moreover asked to pass the link to the survey questionnaire through the social media to other people who are active in terms of tourism. The snowball sampling method was used to recruit survey participants [72–76], which considerably extended the scope of our research. The study, in which the *webankieta.pl* service was used, was conducted in the period from 28 May to 22 June 2020. In scientific research, it is important to specify the size of the studied group. According to J.T. Roscoe after: [77], in the majority of studies the appropriate size of the sample population should range from 30 to less than 500. Therefore, it was assumed that 500 completed surveys would constitute the minimum size of the study sample. The obtained results were subjected to statistical analysis in the STATISTICA 13.3. program (TIBCO Software Inc., Palo Alto, USA). The chi-square independence test, U Mann–Whitney test and Wald–Wolfowitz series test as well as logistic regression analysis were applied for that purpose.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Respondents Profile

Survey questionnaires completed by 576 respondents constituted the source material used to prepare the article. The majority of the respondents were women (67.4%), and almost 33% were men. The age of the respondents varied—the youngest respondent was 16 and the oldest 82. The average age was 40.9, and the median was 41 years. Aggregating the age groups, the most numerous one was the group comprising people aged 40 to 49 (37.0%).

The respondents were well educated. Over 83.7% held a university degree and 14.6% had graduated from a secondary school. A high level of education translated into a positive assessment of the financial situation by the respondents: 15.3% assessed their financial situation as very good, and 58.7% as good. Almost a quarter (24.0%) assessed their financial situation as bearable. It is worth

emphasising that individuals assessed their financial situation as bad or very bad. The observation is confirmed by the value of the Spearman's coefficient of rank correlation ( $r_s = 0.122$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ), which indicates a statistically significant positive correlation.

The vast majority of the subjects were city dwellers. More than a half of them (50.3%) lived in cities with a population of more than 200,000, 18.9% lived in towns with a population of 50,000–200,000, the remaining respondents lived in smaller towns. Inhabitants of rural areas constituted 30.2% of the studied group.

The presence of children in the household undoubtedly constitutes a factor determining tourism-related activity. In the study group, 53.5% of the respondents had children under 18. It is worth emphasising that in 43.6% of the households' children were aged 6 and below.

The subject matter of the study were the tourist plans of the Polish people for the period between June and December 2020, in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the study, the respondents were asked whether they were planning at least one tourist trip. The results of the study show that the vast majority of the respondents (75.5%) had such plans. Table 1 presents the characteristics of the respondents broken down into two groups—the first comprises persons who are planning tourist trips and the second persons who are not planning tourist trips.

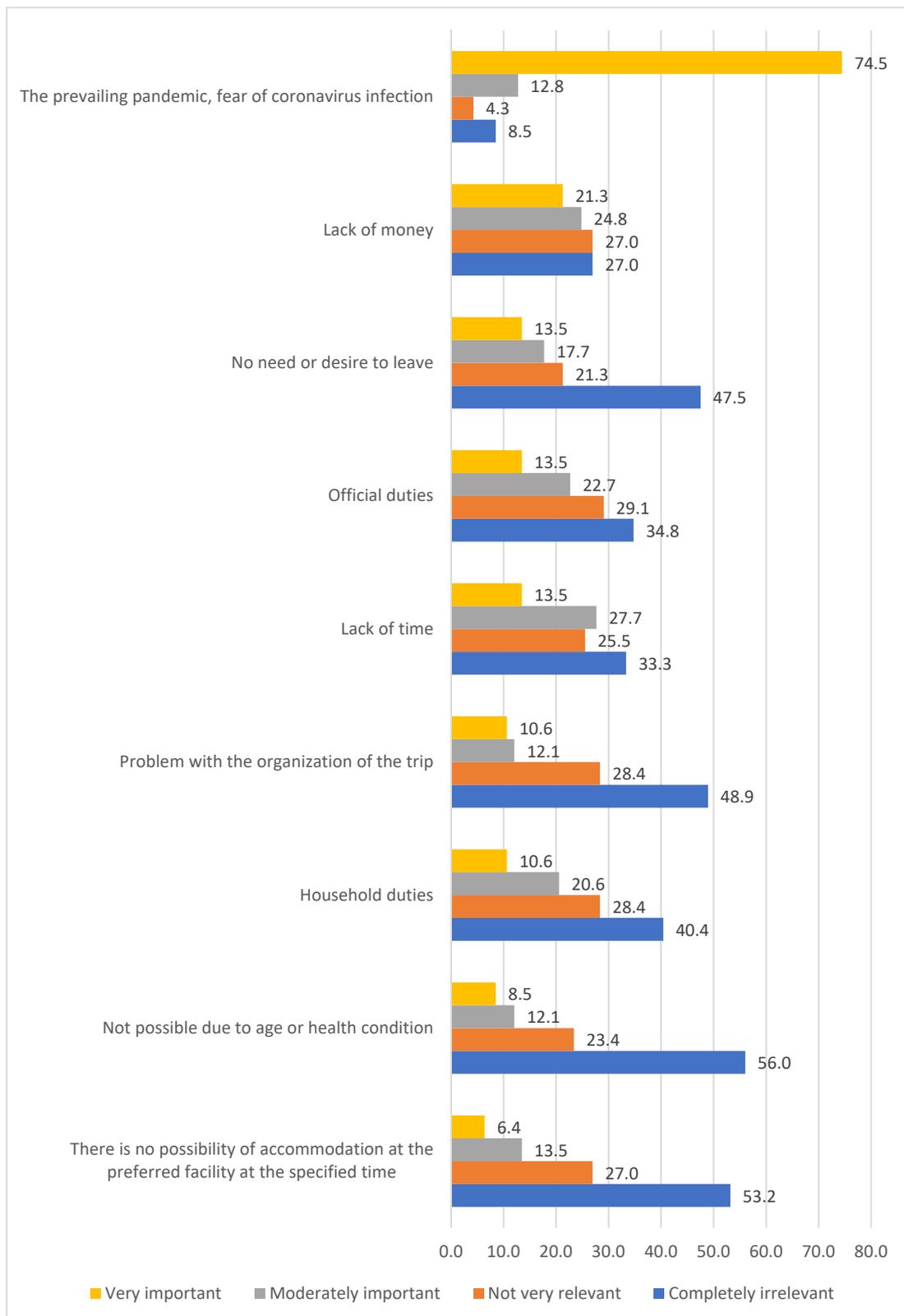
**Table 1.** Characteristics of the respondents.

Features	Persons Declaring Willingness to Travel for Tourist Purposes in 2020. (n = 435)	Persons Declaring Lack of Willingness to Travel for Tourist Purposes in 2020. (n = 141)
Gender (%)		
Female	66.0	71.6
Male	34.0	28.4
Education level (%)		
Vocational or lower	1.8	1.4
Secondary	12.9	19.9
Higher	85.3	78.7
Assessment of own financial situation (%)		
very good	17.5	8.5
good	58.4	59.6
bearable	22.5	28.4
bad and very bad	1.6	3.5
Place of residence (%)		
Village	29.0	34.0
Town with a population of up to 50,000 residents	20.6	24.2
Town with a population of 50,000–200,000 residents	12.0	17.0
City with a population of over 200,000 residents	38.4	24.8
Presence of children (under 18 years of age) in the household (%)		
Household without children	46.0	43.3
Household with children	56.0	56.7
Age (%)		
29 and under	17.0	15.6
30–39	29.9	22.7
40–49	36.8	37.6
50 and more	16.3	24.1
Mean (in years)	40.3	42.7
Median (in years)	40	42

Source: own survey.

Statistical analyses were conducted in order to determine the differences between the study group composed of people planning tourist trips and the group involving people with no such plans. The analysis began with the Wald–Wolfowitz runs test, followed by the U-Mann–Whitney test. The results of the Wald–Wolfowitz runs test showed that there was a statistically significant ( $p > 0.001$ ) difference in terms of age, level of education and assessment of own financial situation. The U-Mann–Whitney test, on the other hand, showed that the median was statistically significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the case of the age of the studied individuals and the assessment of own financial situation. Overall, the respondents who were not planning tourist trips this year were people aged 40–49, 43 on average (median 42). Every fifth person in the group has secondary education. As statistical tests showed, the assessment of the respondents' financial situation was slightly worse in the study group in question.

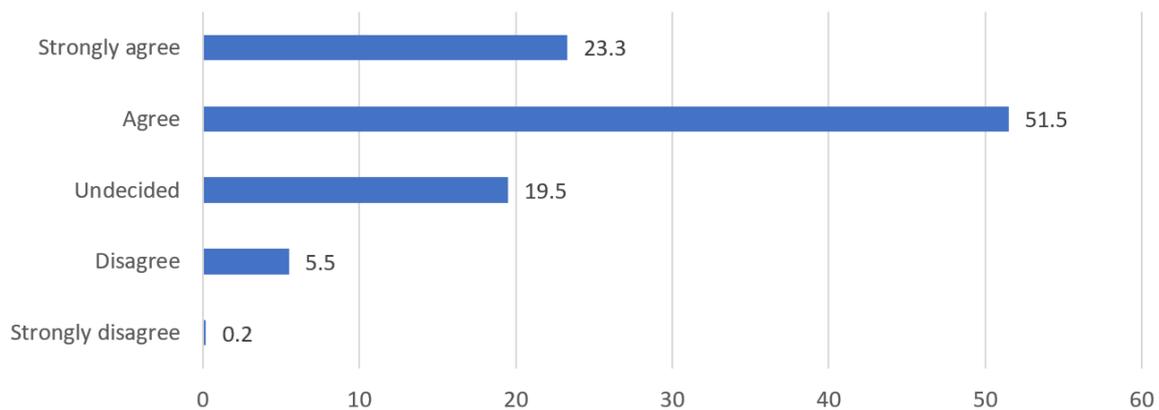
As shown previously, almost a quarter (24.5%) of the respondents stated that they were not willing to set off on a tourist trip in 2020. During the study, these individuals were asked to indicate the cause for their lack of interest in tourist trips. The most frequently indicated reason for the above was the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the fear of contracting the coronavirus during the trip (see Figure 1). A frequently indicated reason was, moreover, lack of sufficient financial means to carry out a tourist trip. In many cases, this fact may stem from the presence of the pandemic and its impact on the slump occurring in many fields of economics, which translates into concerns regarding further employment. The respondents indicated lack of time as well as professional duties as an important factor contributing to the lack of tourist plans.



**Figure 1.** Reasons for the lack of willingness to set off on a tourist trip in 2020 [in %, n = 141]. Source: own survey.

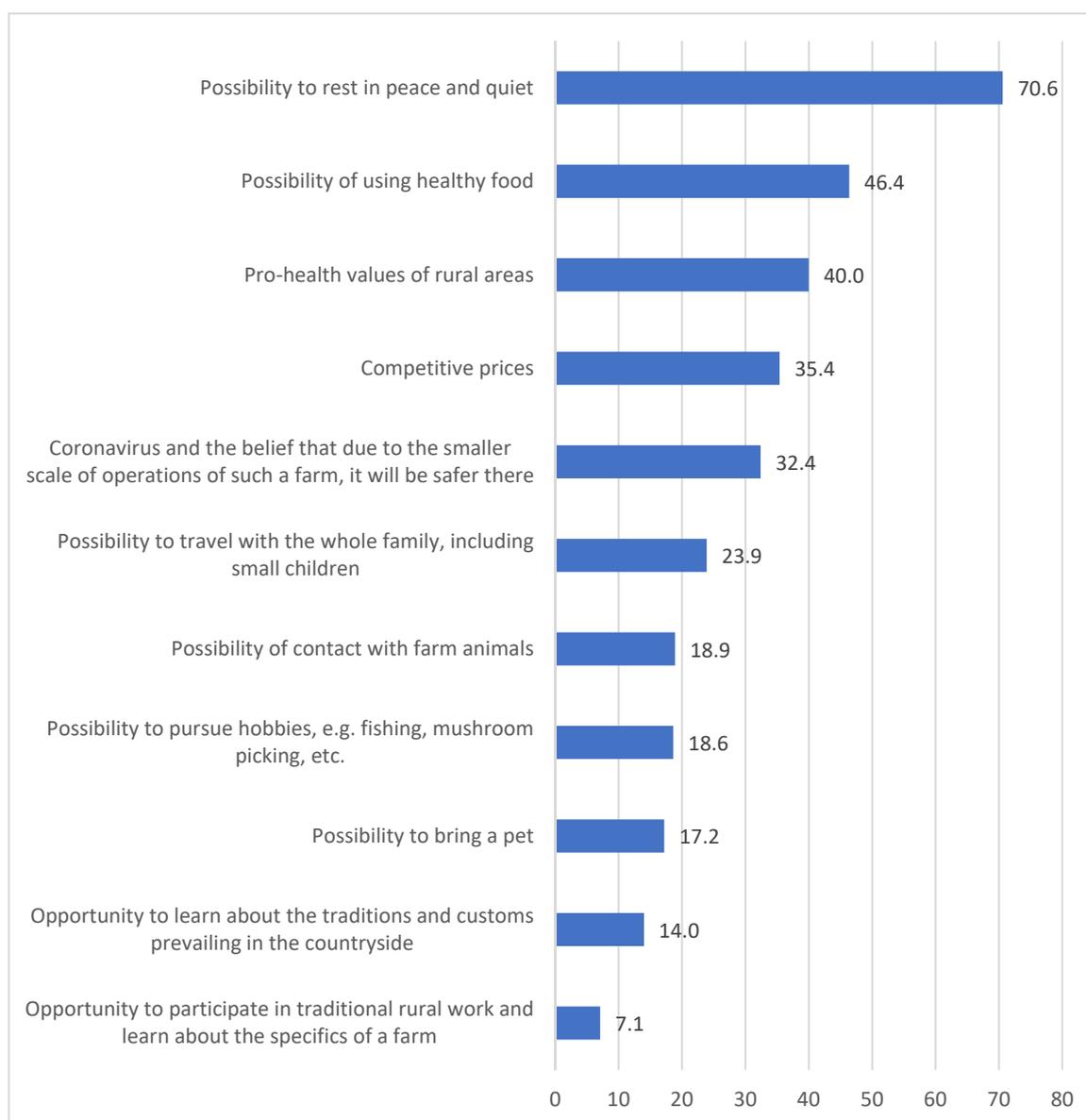
### 3.2. Expectations Concerning Holidays on Agritourism Farms

In the further part of the survey, the respondents who were planning at least one tourist trip (it is worth emphasising that the vast majority (75.5%) of all respondents declared that they wanted to go on a tourist trip in 2020) were asked whether it was a good idea to spend vacation on an agritourism farm during the COVID-19 pandemic. Results of our study indicate that the vast majority of the respondents were of the opinion that the idea was good (Figure 2). However, only 19.9% of the respondents had no opinion regarding the matter, and few of them decided that the idea was rather bad (5.7%).



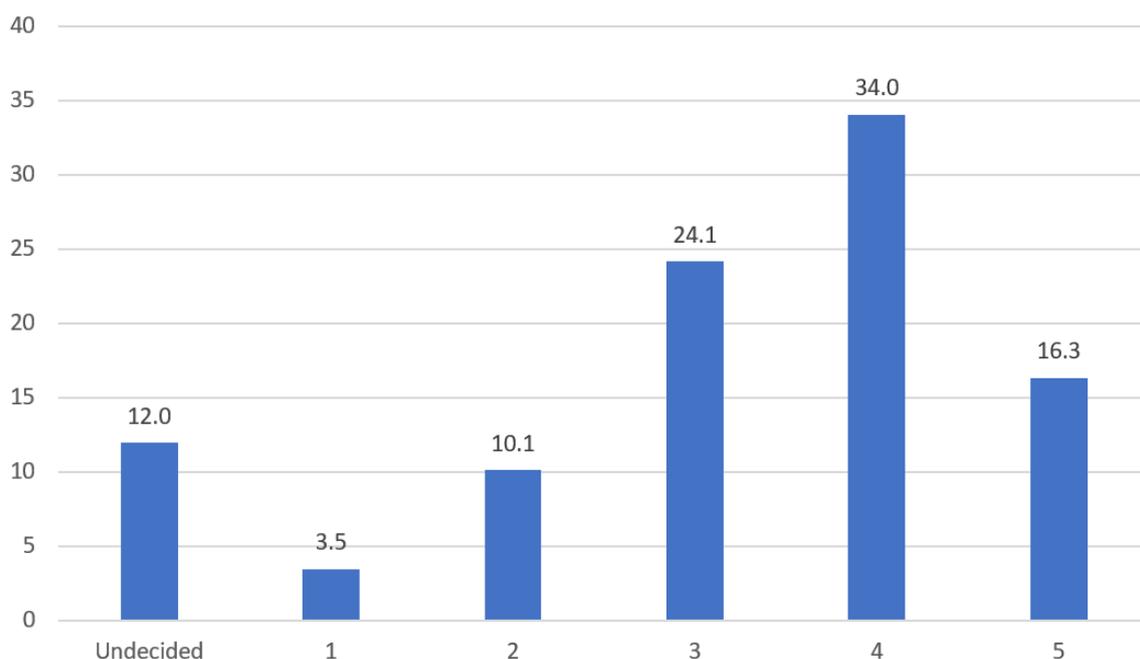
**Figure 2.** The opinion of the respondents regarding the legitimacy of planning a vacation at an agritourism farm during the COVID-19 pandemic [in %, n = 435]. Source: own survey.

The aim of a significant part of the study was to identify the determinants inducing the respondents to choose agritourism farms as their holiday destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 3). The common belief that the main reasons for selecting these facilities were the need to spend holidays in peace and quiet (70.6%), the quality of food served by the owners of agritourism farms (46.4%), or the price competitiveness of their offer (35.4%) was thus confirmed. Another matter which was important to the respondents was the possibility of going on the trip with little children, for whom holidays on an agritourism farm were an opportunity to encounter farm animals and learn about the traditions and customs of people living in the country.



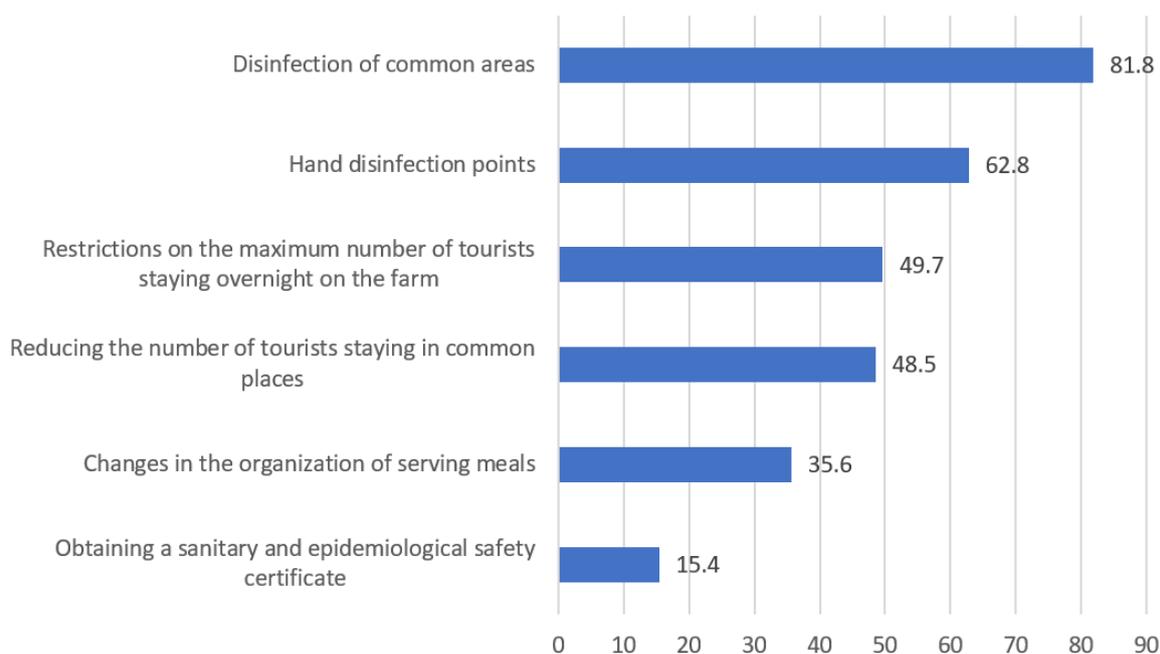
**Figure 3.** Determinants inducing the respondents to choose agritourism farms as holiday destinations in 2020 [in %, n = 435]. Source: own survey.

It is worth emphasising that almost 1/3 of respondents indicated that the reason for choosing an agritourism farm as a holiday destination was the fact that due to the minor scale of the operation of the entities offering agritourism, the risk of contracting the coronavirus was relatively low. This is also confirmed by the opinions of the respondents presented in Figure 4. Almost 3/4 of the respondents felt that holidays on an agritourism farm were relatively safe. A dozen or so percent of the respondents were of a different opinion and a similar percentage had no opinion regarding the matter. It should be mentioned here that the Polish Federation of Rural Tourism “Hospitable Farms” supports the “safe accommodation” campaign, the aim of which to ensure that holidays in the country are safe and sanitary [56,78]. In turn, the Polish Tourist Organisation encourages auto-certification within the framework of the “Hygienically Safe Object. We follow the recommendations” programme, dedicated to all facilities providing accommodation services, including agritourism farms.



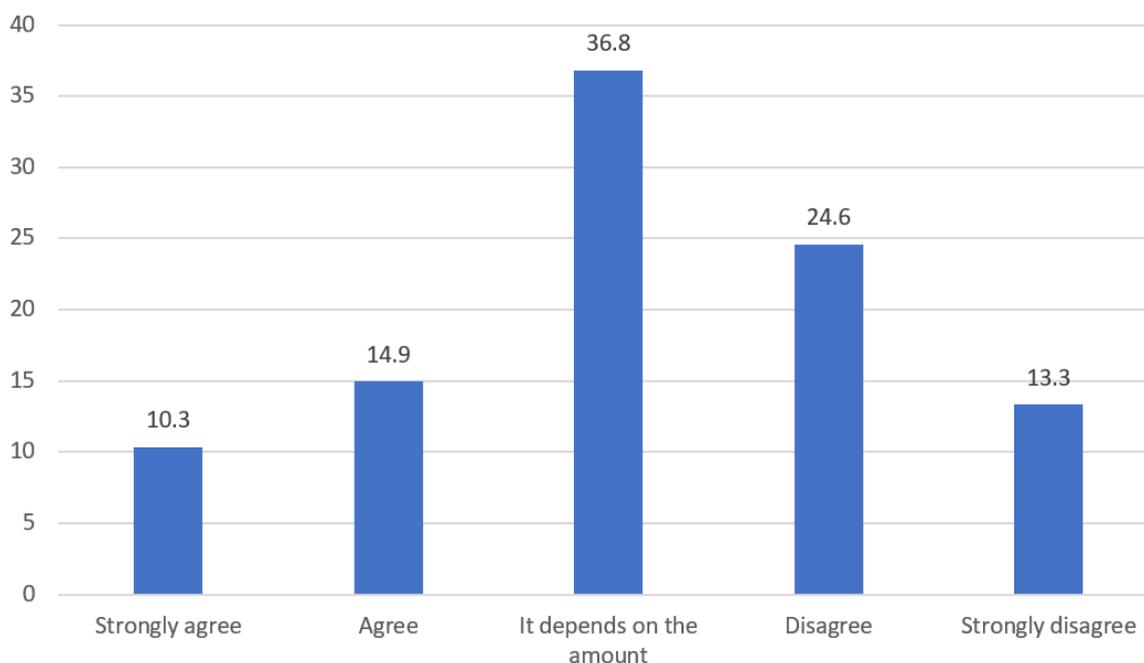
**Figure 4.** The level of safety of holidays spent on agritourism farms on the scale from 1 (least safe) to 5 (safest) in the opinion of the respondents [in%, n = 435]. Source: own survey.

The respondents were, moreover, asked what actions with regard to increasing the safety of their stay they expected the owners of agritourism farms to take. The results of the study show that disinfection of common rooms and wide availability of hand disinfectant were the most important aspects according to the respondents. This expectation is in line with the current recommendations of the World Health Organisation (WHO). In addition, many respondents stated that it was necessary to limit both the maximum number of tourists simultaneously staying at a farm and the number of people present in common rooms (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** The actions expected by the respondents to be taken by the owners' agritourism farms in order to increase the safety of their stay [in %, n = 435]. Source: own survey.

The results of the study show that according to some respondents (15.4%) it was desirable that the visited agritourism farm held a certificate of sanitary and epidemiological safety. Such a certificate would certainly contribute to increasing tourists' sense of safety. Interestingly, more than 60% of the respondents were willing to incur additional costs in exchange for the confirmation that a given facility held such certificate (Figure 6). In most cases, however, this inclination would depend on the amount of the additional cost.



**Figure 6.** Respondents' willingness to incur additional costs for the confirmation of sanitary and epidemiological safety on an agritourism farm in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic [in %, n = 435]. Source: own survey.

Fewer than 40% of the respondents were not willing to incur additional costs for the presence of such a certificate. To a large extent, the standpoint stemmed from the opinion that the owners of agritourism farms should do their best to ensure maximum safety of guests spending holidays at the facilities owned by them, regardless of the certificates held.

The final stage of the study consisted in the determination of the percentage of the respondents who were planning to spend their holidays on agritourism farms and the basic characteristics of these respondents. It was observed that as many as 17.9% of the respondents were planning to spend they holidays on agritourism farms.

Considering the fact that according to the GUS (Central Statistical Office) only 0.6% of Polish tourists chose this type of accommodation in 2019 [79], it can be concluded that the coronavirus pandemic will significantly contribute to tourists' selection of the countryside and agritourism farms as their holiday destinations.

It is worth emphasising that many tourist organisations as well as the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development became involved in the promotion of spending holidays in the country, also on agritourism farms.

The analysis conducted showed that the respondents planning to spend their holidays on agritourism farms were mostly women (67.9%) of average age of 42.4 (median 43), the vast majority of whom had higher education (85.9%). The respondents who chose agritourism farms as their holiday destination are also people with children (64.1%), in most cases residing in urban areas. Undoubtedly, agritourism farms constitute an interesting leisure option.

The chi square test was conducted in order to determine whether the respondents planning holidays on agritourism farms differed from other respondents in terms of demographics. The analysis conducted showed no statistically significant differences in terms of sex, education level and place of residence. The only statistically significant difference ( $p = 0.049$ ) was observed in the case of the presence of children in the household. On the other hand, the Wald–Wolfowitz runs test and the U Mann–Whitney test showed statistically significant differentiation ( $p < 0.05$ ) in respondents' age, both in terms of the average and their median.

A model of logistic regression, used to describe the impact of variables  $X_1, X_2 \dots, X_k$  on dichotomous variable  $Y$ , was subsequently created [80]. Logistic regression is frequently used in medical studies and epidemiology, but it can also be applied in studies on consumer behaviours in the tourist market [81,82].

In our study, the following were adopted as variable  $Y$ :

$Y = 1$  plans to spend holidays on an agritourism farm

$Y = 0$  plans to spend holidays at a different accommodation facility.

The results of the U Mann–Whitney test showed that the impact of such variables as the age of children below 18 as well as their presence in the household on the choice of an agritourism farm as the holiday destination was significant. These variables have been chosen to build the logistic regression model. Thus, the initial variables ( $X_i$ ) were:

- Age—age of the respondent, quantitative variable
- Children—dependent dichotomous variable (1—children under 18, 0—no children under 18)

The result of the analysis, in particular the value of goodness-of-fitting of chi square and its level ( $p = 0.028$ ) indicated that the model proposed by us contributes something new as it significantly differs from the model with the absolute term. The calculated values made it possible to put down the logistic model in the following way:

$$P(X) = \frac{e^{-2.751+0.023AGE+0.521CHILDREN}}{1 + e^{-2.751+0.023AGE+0.521CHILDREN}} \quad (1)$$

After the transformation the model takes the logit form:

$$\text{logit } P = -2.751 + 0.023 \text{ AGE} + 0.521 \text{ CHILDREN}$$

Positive values of the parameters of the *AGE* and *CHILDREN* variables indicate that the increase in these values has a significant impact on the choice of agritourism farms as a holiday destination.

### 3.3. Limitations

The use of the questionnaire technique made it possible to obtain data in a relatively short time. Posting a link to the survey questionnaire on the website and promoting it, among other ways, through social media, could have had an impact on the results. The choice of the snowball method for the selection of study participants had an impact on the shape of the research sample. The aim of the study was to identify tourist plans during the COVID-19 pandemic that may have changed due to the change in the epidemiological situation. By extension, interpretation of the results requires caution when generalizing them and comparing them with other studies.

## 4. Conclusions

The global economy has never faced a problem comparable to that brought on by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and tourism is the sector that has been most affected by the situation. Even though various crises afflict the sector every year, it has never been so that basically all destinations in the world are inaccessible.

The authors of the paper attempted to learn about the tourist plans of Poles in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of the holiday opportunities at agritourism farms. Agritourism is a form of non-mass tourism, the guests spend their time close to the nature and at facilities which are small

in size, frequently located far away from large clusters of people, which is in line with the current recommendations of health services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on the decisions regarding tourist trips. The respondents who were not willing to take tourist trips in 2020, indicated the pandemic and the fear of contracting the coronavirus during the trip as the reason for their decision. However, the vast majority of the respondents who declared that they were willing to take a tourist trip believed that agritourism farms were a good place to spend this year's holidays. Apart from indicating the basic factors (peace, quiet and good price) that encourage people to spend holidays at these facilities, the respondents stated that due to the small scale of their operation, the risk of contracting the coronavirus at these facilities was low. Such an opinion can indicate that this type of holiday feels safe to the respondents in the current situation. In order to ensure safety, the respondents expect owners to take specific actions, i.e., disinfect the common rooms, make hand disinfectant available, and limit the maximum number of guests at the farm and in common rooms. According to the respondents, holding of a safety certificate by agritourism farms would increase the sense of safety. As the results of the study show, the respondents would even be willing to pay extra if such a certificate were to be offered.

It could be assumed that the COVID-19 pandemic will significantly contribute to the choice of the countryside and agritourism farms for this year's holidays as these facilities are safer from the perspective of the respondents. Such opinion was in particular expressed by people spending their holidays with children.

In conclusion, we believe that holidays in the country on agritourism farms, both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, will be enjoying growing interest among tourists wishing to safely relax in nature. Agri-breaks—short getaways to the country to relax in the nature, far away from crowds, for example weekends on agritourism farms—will certainly be very popular. Similar studies with the hypothesis that staying on farms will increase should be tested in other countries are necessary to confirm these encouraging results obtained from Polish residents.

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