

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **An application of a women-oriented agro-tourism rural development model in improving local economy**

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The people who reside in rural areas and live on agriculture make up the majority of the poor, and poverty is a phenomenon mainly experienced by women. In this context, tourism and agriculture are sectors that best complement each other, and the interaction between them has pushed agro-tourism to the forefront. The primary locomotives of this type of tourism are women. In this study, the importance of agro-tourism as a rural development model and, especially, its role in alleviating the poverty of women are considered. The material for this study consists of the data that were gathered through questionnaires during the exploration and application stages of a project initiated in Kosbucagi Village in Erdemli Borough of Mersin Province with the support of Cukurova Development Agency. The data have been analyzed using SPSS statistical package software. In this study, it has been found that women household standings are determined by their spouses' educational levels and their household income. It has also been determined that, women are willing to participate in activities that would bring income, and in that sense, they would want their villages be opened to tourism. It has been found that Kosbucagi Village carries a great potential in applicability of agro-tourism.

**Key words:** Rural development, agro-tourism, poverty, rural women.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Is agro-tourism, which is among the rural development strategies, integrated with sustainable environment, a solution in alleviating the poverty in rural areas? The contribution of agro-tourism to development, one of the current issues of recent years, has been studied in the framework of a project and the results are discussed further. However, the developments in the subject of agro-tourism will be summarized first, in the following paragraphs.

### **Poverty and the feminization of poverty**

The efforts to find solutions at the national and international levels to problems of poverty and sustainable development was initiated in United Nations Human Environment Conference of Stockholm, in 1972; these efforts had gained momentum with the establishment of the World Commission on Environment and Development by United Nations in 1983, and came to an important milestone with the adoption of Agenda 21 in the Rio

Summit of 1992. The concept of poverty has been discussed on international platforms, especially since 1990s, and the efforts to come up with solutions to alleviate poverty have been stepped up (Öztürk, 2008). The decision to eliminate poverty was considered in World Summit for Social Development that convened in 1995, in Denmark. In the summit of June 2000, this decision was transformed into a goal to reduce the ratio of the people living in poverty by half until 2005. The declarations of that summit were later restated in the Millennium Declaration of September 2000 by United Nations General Assembly. Many other developmental agencies have taken similar decisions to reduce hunger and poverty. World Bank has developed new strategies for rural development. International Fund for Agricultural Development has published a report on rural poverty. A majority of charity organizations have focused on alleviating poverty through developmental and co-operative programs and many governments have emphasized food and income securities in their plans and policies (Dixon et al., 2001).

**Table 1.** Poverty ratios in Turkey across types of economic activities (TÜİK, 2009).

Economic activity	Poverty ratio (%)					
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Total	25.60	20.50	17.81	18.56	17.11	18.08
Agriculture	40.88	37.24	33.86	30.22	37.97	33.01
Industry	15.64	9.85	10.12	10.13	9.71	9.63
Service	12.36	8.68	7.23	7.83	6.82	7.16

Most of the world's poor live in rural areas. IFAD estimated in 2001 that among the poorest, 1.2 billion people in the world survive on less than a dollar per day (Ariquez and Stamoulis, 2007). In struggling with poverty, an important issue is where poverty concentrates, as well as how serious it is. In a recent World Bank study, Ravallion et al. (2007) estimate that in 2002, 75% of the developing world poor still live in rural areas. Part of this correlation between rurality and poverty is given by the fact that some countries, as we have seen, indirectly define the poor as rural. In Turkey, 18.1% of individuals live below the poverty line that includes food-related or non-food related expenses. While the ratio of the poor is 38.7% in rural settlements, that ratio is 8.9% in urban areas (TÜİK, 2009).

In his definition of poverty based on rurality, Kazgan (1984) stated that industry sector is dynamic, whereas, agriculture sector is static, and while industry incomes are always on the rise, incomes derived from agriculture sector are not reliable, because they are not continuous. He also noted that, poverty is unavoidable in countries whose economies depend on agriculture, if agricultural efficiency cannot be increased. When poverty ratios are evaluated according to the types of economic activities (Table 1), service sector's share is 7.16%, industry's share is 9.63%, and agriculture's share is 33.01%. Generally, in the world, in many underdeveloped countries, poverty prevails along with under-employment among the villagers without land, agricultural workers, and small land owners (Öztürk, 2008). However, since a great portion of food production is carried out by small farmers in developing countries, solving the problems faced by that part of the population will ensure the continuity of the food production in those countries. In this context, according to Dixon et al. (2001), the strategies to be followed by under-developed and developing countries for avoiding poverty and hunger are; i) increasing agricultural production, ii) diversifying agricultural activities, and iii) enlarging the agricultural establishments and providing for means of income outside agriculture.

However, econometric estimates show that expanding employment outside agriculture has direct influence over decreasing poverty (Lanjouw and Murgai, 2009). In Korea for example, 37% of farmers and 67% of seasonal

workers have second jobs outside agriculture, and they spend more time on non-agricultural activities (Jang and Yongl-youl, 2008).

Although poverty is a fundamental problem for the whole mankind, recently, there have been discussions on how poverty is felt more heavily by women. It was in 1995, in the Action Program of the Fourth World Conference on Women, that the expression "The Feminization of Poverty" was first used. Feminization of poverty means that women are burdened with a greater share of the world's poverty. Because women take secondary places in income, means, opportunities, and possessions behind men, they face a greater risk of impoverishment. Consequently, the poverty ratio among women is expected to be higher than among men (Heintz, 2006). A woman's place in employment market is a determining factor for the degree of her poverty. Reduced participation in the employment market, employment with lower wages when the participation is provided, employment outside the regulated sectors, employment as unpaid family workers, having no say over the income –especially in rural areas, are all determining criteria of the woman's poverty. According to a study by International Labor Organization (ILO), there are 550 million working poor in the world, of which 330 million are women (Şener, 2009). In Turkey, of the female population over the age of 15 (26,067,000 individuals), 24.9% are in the employment market (6,480,000) and 22.3% (5,810,000) are being employed. Furthermore, of the working women, 48.5% is being employed in the agricultural sector, and among those, the ratio of the unpaid family worker is 74.4%. In rural areas, with respect to their work positions, the greatest fraction of the poor are wage workers (40.0%) and unpaid family workers (37.6%). When one recalls that unpaid family workers are mostly women, the need for emphasizing the impoverishment of rural women becomes clear (TÜİK, 2009).

In International Conference on Population and Development of 1994, it was stated that women are generally the poorest of the poor, and gender equality must be ensured for sustainable development and reduced poverty. Eliminating the social, cultural, political and economic discrimination against women is a prerequisite of sustainable development and the

elimination of poverty. However, many studies have shown that the gender dimension is not well understood in strategies and policies designed to alleviate poverty. Although it is accepted that men and women equally benefit from development, many policies and programs focus on men's roles and thus fail to meet the special needs of women living in poverty. As a result, these policies and programs further strengthen the secondary positions of women in households and the society, in general. (Khidir Osman, 2002).

Combating poverty will not be possible without the support and participation of women who play important roles in the economies of rural communities (URL-1). Women, who not only carry out their responsibilities in households, but also serve as resources of manpower for agricultural activities—especially in developing countries, provide the 50% of the food production over the whole world, and 60 to 80% of the food production in developing countries (URL-2). In this context, women's participation in decisions taken about education, health, nutrition and transportation and the employment of women in jobs created outside agriculture have been emphasized in Agenda 21, as well as in the projects developed by FAO and UNDP at international level (Akpınar et al., 2004). In Turkey, as well as in the world, a considerable number of studies have been done to evaluate the rural women's status and socio-economic standings and to emphasize the need for the betterment of their living conditions (Akpınar et al., 2004; Amin, 1997; Cahn and Liu, 2008; Corral, 2002; Kantar and Budak, 2001; Li, 2005; Rad et al., 2010; Rahman and Ibrahim, 2007; Yildirak et al., 2003).

### **Agro-tourism as a rural development strategy**

Rural development is a political option for reducing the socio-cultural and economical differences between rural and urban areas, and for improving the livelihoods of rural communities, in other words, for solving their immigration and employment problems in place (Buğra et al., 2003). Rural development can also be defined as the type of development that benefits rural population by raising their living standards and improving their prosperity in a sustainable way. Rural development does not only contribute to decreasing rural poverty by indirectly influencing employment and demand outside the agriculture, but also helps close the regional income gaps, stops the immigration from rural to urban areas and reduces poverty (Anriquez and Stamoulis, 2007). In Turkey, approximately 35% of the population currently lives in rural areas. The income per capita in these areas is only 40% of that in urban areas. Furthermore, because of the problems waiting for solutions in rural areas, such as insufficiency of infrastructure and health or educational services, the smallness and scattered positions of agricultural establishment, the lack of employment for

younger generations and women, the development of these areas is more important (Buğra et al., 2003).

By analyzing data derived from tourism and pointing out the importance given to tourism in countries with high levels of poverty, Dilys and Urguhart (2001) emphasized that tourism, as a burgeoning sector, can be transformed into a means of living for many of the world's poor. The reason is the substantial potential of tourism in creating jobs and added income. Tourism also has a great affinity with agriculture; the two sectors complement each other very well. This interaction between tourism and agriculture has pushed agrotourism to the forefront as an innovative agricultural activity. In Europe, rural tourism plays an important role in rural tourism. For example, in some rural areas in East Germany (an example being Wittow on the island of Rügen), 80% of accommodation is provided by working farms or farms that have been converted to accommodation facilities. Poland's experience since the early 1990s provides a case in point: rural farm-based tourism was seen as a cheap form of tourism that would utilize existing spare capacities in farm houses and small, unsophisticated catering facilities (Holland et al., 2003). Rural tourism is a popular topic in tourism research both in China and internationally. Rural tourism, as a concept, is a form of tourism that is located in rural areas, is rural in scale, character and function, reflecting the differing and complex pattern of rural environment, economy, history and location (Gao et al., 2009). Sharpley and Roberts (2004) also concluded that two other themes could be identified for rural tourism research. They are rural tourism as a "sustainable" activity and rural tourism as an agent of rural development. Agrotourism plays an important role in preserving the rural environment and local cultures, preventing immigration, increasing income and reassigning of economic roles in households (Hall, 2004). Studies carried out in Sweden (Gössling and Mattsson, 2002; Woo and Yeon, 2006) have shown that agrotourism also plays a role in invigorating local economies.

Despite a short development history, rural tourism has also made a series of achievements in China. First, farmers have significantly increased their income levels by developing rural tourism. Some mountainous areas, which used to struggle with poverty, have greatly improved their social and economic conditions since the adoption of the strategy of developing rural tourism. Second, rural tourism has created large quantities of re-employment for oversupplied rural labour without geographic labour relocation. Rural tourism has been proved to be an effective means to absorb surplus rural labour and redirect rural employment to non-agricultural sectors. Third, rural tourism has promoted the restructuring of the rural industries. Rural tourism has transformed farmers into tourism service providers. Agricultural products such as grains, vegetables, fruits and poultry are consumed locally by tourists and thus have increased their added values. Propelled by the

development of rural tourism, ecological agriculture, sightseeing agriculture and high-tech agriculture have also experienced rapid development. Fourth, rural tourism has heightened the awareness of ethnic culture and environment protection. The development of rural tourism has brought to farmers not only economic benefits but also new ideas, thoughts and philosophies (Gao et al., 2009). In another study by Woo and Yeon (2006), it has been noted that agrotourism, as a sub-activity of rural tourism, is applied as the most promising strategy for overcoming lower incomes in agriculture, and agrotourism's importance in rebuilding of rural Korea has been emphasized. The authors have also mentioned that agrotourism help rediscover the rural resources, which were neglected during the growing process of the national economy. Besculides et al. (2002) have noted the positive effects of agriculture on the local economies. The rapid development of agrotourism has also been noted by many researchers. A comparison of the contents and outcomes of different countries' agrotourism development models has been presented by a number of the scholars from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, and Norway, (URL-3).

Tourism based on agriculture present various opportunities for the exchange of culture, information, products and services between residents of rural and urban areas (Jang and Yongl-youl, 2008). Being an activity for the tourists who are eager to get away for rural life on unspoiled fields, the primary objective of agrotourism is to satisfy the yearning for authentic culture and rural geographies (Çikin et al., 2009). Agrotourism presents the rural world to tourists with all its cross sections. Tourists are able to observe and participate in various rural activities and sports while resting. The availability of tourism based on agriculture in all seasons increases the diversity of these activities. In addition, a multitude of recreational open-air activities can be enjoyed in rural geographies. Rural cultures also involve authentic activities, such as folklore and cuisine, which are exclusive to specific locations (Soykan, 2003). Urban population is increasing day by day in Turkey, today, the urban people's world is restricted in the closed door flats, offices, clubs, television, video games, spicy fast food, computer, internet, and so on. They can see nature only on television or screen of the computers. More over, some people living in the cities do not have relatives in villages and they never visited or stayed in the village. These people would also want to enjoy rural life. Consequently, the demand is on the rise for tourism based on agriculture, which presents alternatives to the traditional tourism approach (sun, sand, and the sea). Indeed, the understandings and the expectations of tourists are also changing in the international tourism markets. In France, the ratio of those who spent their vacations in rural areas was 17% in 1965. Recently, as much as 53% of the vacationing French preferred rural areas (Soykan, 2003). On the other hand, agrotourism

also faces hindrances, such as the lack of information and communication, the insufficiency of venture capital and commercial understanding needed for basic infrastructure, and the absence of organizations like co-operatives (Maruti, 2009).

In the agricultural sector of Turkey, the costs are on the rise, while the prices of outputs are driven down and the support is decreasing. Under these circumstances, the growers are being distanced from the production and rural communities are being impoverished, while resources are being misused or used inefficiently, lands are lost to erosion and forests are disappearing. Therefore, it is stated that "while the strategy of ensuring rural development is being adopted" (DPT 9. BYKP, s. 4) in agricultural strategy (2006 to 2010), "in the projects and activities of the rural development program, the main principle will be full participation, a bottom-up approach, the improving the education and entrepreneurial levels of the young generations and women through the strengthening and organizing the local capacity, extending employment outside agriculture, improving and diversifying the income-producing activities" (The YPK decision of 30 November, 2004, number 2004/92). Also, in the Agriculture Bill, the development of rural areas in socio-economic respects is targeted as one of the priorities of agriculture policies. The strategic goals of a document prepared by KSGM (2008) as part of the 2008 to 2013 National Action Plan for Social Gender Equality, included encouraging women's entrepreneurship in agricultural enterprises, supporting of women who are starting up co-operatives, increasing women's membership and participation in existing co-operatives, initiating projects for diversifying activities for producing income and improving the working conditions of rural women. Similarly, the RIS-Mersin Project, the key sectors for Mersin's Innovation Strategy, are named as agriculture, food production, logistic and tourism. In this context, one of the nest means for rural development appears to be agrotourism, for it provides support for small-scale enterprises and possesses potential to create employment and income in both agriculture and tourism. Although Turkey is known to have great potential in this respect; very few villages are actually opened up for tourism based on agriculture.

Tourism is the world's largest industry and women make up more than half the world's population. Based on these facts alone, the study of women's roles in tourism within developing regions is an important endeavor. This volume extends the limited amount of research devoted to women's roles in tourism by examining their roles as initiators of tourism (Hammond, 2003). Since a majority of the activities and services that make up agrotourism, such as baking, handcrafting, weaving, gathering and cooking fruits and vegetables, gardening, etc., are parts of women's daily lives, the primary locomotives of this type of tourism are women.

Rural tourism has become an important part of many

rural development strategies in the last decade. However, it has largely been ignored by rural economists (Slee et al., 1997). In Turkey, few studies have addressed agrotourism or rural tourism (Çikın et al., 2009; Akpınar et al., 2004; Soykan, 2003).

In this study, the goals are to establish the importance of agrotourism in alleviating the poverty in rural areas and determine the position of rural women in agrotourism. With these goals in mind, the fore listed are evaluated, and suggestions are made to ensure the applicability and maintainability of agrotourism:

- i. The potential of agrotourism for reducing the poverty and creating employment,
- ii. Rural women's social, economic and demographic characteristics,
- iii. Possible contributions of agrotourism activities towards women's status

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In Turkey currently, very few villages are actually opened up to rural tourism (Soykan, 2003). For that reason, Kosbucagi Village has been selected as the pilot region. The date for this study has been derived from a project named "Development of Agrotourism as a Development Strategy of Kosbucagi Village of Erdemli District" supported within the 2008 Rural Development Projects Program of Cukurova Development Agency (CDA).

### The interviews with local authorities and the village selection

Interviews were done with authorities from Erdemli District Governorship, Erdemli District Agriculture Management, and Erdemli Chamber of Agriculture. Villages with potential for agricultural tourism were identified and visits were made to those villages. The proximity of Kosbucagi Village to District center and historical ruins, its clean air and water, the variety of its agricultural products, the presence of a health-care cabin, and most importantly, the eager attitudes of its headman, the council of elders and its residents were the determining factors in the final selection of this village as the pilot region of this study.

### The composition of the sample volume

The materials for this study consist of the data obtained through questionnaires. Due to similarities in socio-economic and cultural characteristics, questionnaires were administered to women over the age of twenty, through face-to-face interviews. The following formula was used in calculating the sample volume (Arıkan, 2005):

$$N = \frac{0.25 N z^2_{1-(\alpha/2)}}{d^2 (N-1) + 0.25 z^2_{1-(\alpha/2)}}$$

Main sample size being 727, the sample volume was calculated as 85, assuming a 10% uncertainty within a 95% confidence interval.

## Forming of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was composed of four main parts. The purpose of the questions was to:

- i. Determining the women's identifying characteristics,
- ii. Determining the woman's role in agricultural and household activities,
- iii. Establishing the women's level of participation in decisions,
- iv. Determining the women's approach to agricultural tourism.

## Data analysis

The data was analyzed by using SPSS software package after it was coded. In evaluating the data, descriptive statistics and chi-square analyzes were performed. The data derived from questionnaires were also confirmed by observations during face-to-face interviews.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The agroculture tourism potential of the region and the village

Situated to the immediate east of the provincial center of Mersin, Erdemli district is 40 km away from the city of Mersin. With its historical, geographical and cultural resources and a long shoreline, the district has a great potential for tourism. Its population is 125,391. Of this population, 21.9% live in villages. The rate of literacy over the whole district is 97.0% (URL-4). Dominated by the typical Mediterranean climate, the main economic activity in Erdemli District is agriculture, especially fruits of citrus family and greenhouse produces. Twenty-one percent of the 2,078 km<sup>2</sup> of the district area consists of fields of agriculture. Being the center of citrus fruit production, Erdemli is one of the most important districts of the province of Mersin. In this district where growing fruits (peaches, apples, plums, apricots, quinces, etc.) is well developed, animal husbandry, which is growing cattles, sheep and goats for milk and meat, is also common. The ruins date back to Byzantium and Roman periods. At a distance of 20 to 25 km from the town of Erdemli, tourism locations of Asthma Cave, Ayas, Heaven and Hell Chasms, Kanlidivane, Kayaci Valley, Korykos, and Pasha Tomb are located (URL-5).

Surrounded by forests, Kosbucagi Village is a settlement that is 12 km away from the twon of Erdemli, at an altitude of 575 m. The main source of income for the village is agriculture; fruit and vegetable production is especially common. However, there are important problems facing the village: the employment and sources of income in the village are mainly based on agricultural activities. Hidden unemployment is widespread. Agricultural establishments are small sized. Organization, co-operation, marketing, education and distribution in agricultural activities are inefficient. The monthly income is below 400 Turkish Liras for 67% of households, and

**Table 2.** Demographic characteristics of the women in the area of study.

Characteristic	Percentage	
Age (Age intervals)	21-35	34.1
	36-45	18.8
	46-55	28.2
	55+	18.8
Marital status	Married	92.9
	Single	2.4
	Widow	4.7
Number of children	1-2	54.2
	3-4	26.5
	5-6	14.5
	7-8	1.2
	None	3.6
Education level:		
Women	Illiterate	7.1
	Primary school	85.8
	Secondary school	1.2
	Highschool	5.9
Men	Illiterate	2.5
	Primary Sch.	67.9
	Secondary Sch.	7.4
	Highschool	18.5
	University	3.7

about 75% of women make up the unpaid family workforce.

These problems hinder the household incomes and living standards from reaching satisfactory levels and stabilizing there. On the other hand, the wide diversity of the agricultural products, the strong work-force potential, the absence of environmental pollution and the multitude of cultural and historical locations make up a promising infrastructure for agrotourism, because agrotourism thrives in naturally attractive areas where agricultural activities are performed (Nilson, 2002).

### Women's characteristics in the area of study

In the area of study, it was determined that 52.9% of women was under the age of 45, 92.9% of them were married, 54.2% of them had 1 or 2 children, 26.5% had 3 or 4 children, and the average number of children was 2.7 (Table 2). For comparison, the average number of children per woman is 2.53 in the whole of Turkey (Kaya, 2005). While 7.1% of the women are illiterate, that ratio is 2.5% for the men (Table 2). Again, for comparison, 27%

of women older than 15 year old in rural areas of Turkey were reported to be illiterate (TUIK, 2004). At higher levels of schooling the gender difference is more apparent, favoring men. The relationship between education level of women and that of their husbands was found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). It was revealed that the education level of women is generally the same as that of their husband's or higher.

In the area of study, it was found that 84.5% of women had access to social security through their spouses. 26.6% of women with social security had green cards, which provide people certified as poor with medical benefits. Even though no legislative restriction is the case, rural women generally are not able to direct coverage by social security systems due to the fact that in agriculture sector rural women work as non-paid family workers or do not earn sufficient income (URL-6). 56.7% of the households in the area of study had a monthly income below 600 TL. In contrast with that, the monthly expenses of 78.5% of the households were below 600 TL (Table 3).

The common reply for the "What is your profession?" question was "Housewife" for all the women. The women

**Table 3.** Monthly incomes and expenses of the households.

Interval (TL/household)	Income (%)	Expense (%)
≤200	11.1	32.9
201-400	29.6	26.6
401-600	16.0	19.0
601-800	23.5	8.9
801-1000	4.9	10.1
1001-1200	3.7	-
≥1201	11.1	2.5

identified child care and housework as their primary duties; 86.5% of them also added agricultural activities to their primary responsibilities. This situation can be viewed as an evidence for the women's internalization of gender-based division of labor. In addition, it was found that 25.9% of the women who identified themselves as housewives also worked as paid day-laborers at busy times when orchards are being pruned or olive or vegetable gardens are being picked. On the other hand, it was determined that 45.9% of the women's spouses were farmers, 20.0% were workers, 14.1% were retired, 11.8% were shop-keepers, and 4.8% were paid day-laborers.

Of the women who earned income as paid day-laborers, 66.7% stated that they transferred their earnings to their spouses, while 33.3% stated that they spent it on food and groceries. It is interesting to note that, 35% of women usually gave these earnings to their husbands or fathers to be spent on food, 25% spend it for household food expenditure, 15% use the earning for self expenditure, 15% spend it for household food and children expenditure while 10% use it for household food and their own spending (Rad et al., 2010). When it comes to transferring of women's incomes to men, Maletta (2008) noted that the women who worked for pay in rural regions of Afganistan had virtually no control over their incomes. In traditional cultures, everything that belongs to a married woman actually belongs to her husband, and everything that belongs to an unmarried woman actually belongs to her father or a male relative. Women benefit from economic privileges as far as their husbands or male relatives permit (Chitsike, 2000). In the area considered in this study, the fact that women were able to earn income meant that they would have better access to healthcare and the children would get better education, regardless of the fact that they might not have control over their incomes.

The women specified that they reserved, on the average, 9.02 h on their daily chores (household or agricultural). 53.1% of the women worked 9 to 14 h per day, 33.3% worked 6 to 8 h per day, 4.9% worked 3 to 5 h per day and 8.6% worked 3 h or less per day. The women performed 77.7% of the chores related to animal husbandry, 45.2% of the reaping work, 38.7% of the pesticide application, 36.0% of pruning, 36.5% of planting, 34.0% of tilling and 31.3% of watering. Overall,

the women spent 5.97 h per day on agricultural work and 3.05 h per day on house chores. It was found that household income had a significant effect on women's daily work hours ( $p < 0.05$ ). As the household income increased, the women's work hours decreased. Akpinar et al. (2005) stated that women in rural areas divided their times between housework and agricultural work, and worked about 16 h per day, while the daily work rate was 13.2 in India and 11.1 in Bangladesh. From the viewpoint of the social values in which they grew up, it is accepted as natural that women spend a majority of their time at work. Thus, any additional activity that may bring income will only increase the workload of the women. However, remembering that women will still be doing their normal daily work in agrotourism, this time for pay, their economic standings in their families will be affected in a positive manner.

83.1% of women stated that their spouses took their opinions in deciding on matters. Of these women who gave their opinions, 34.7% gave opinions on household spending, 9.3% on children's matters, 5.3% on travel, 50.7% of the women stated that their spouses asked their opinions on all matters. The relationship between household income and the women's participation in decisions was found to be significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Household income affected the women's participation positively, meaning that, as the household income increased, the women's participation was more likely. Rahman and Ibrahim (2007) have documented that decisions on selecting enterprises, procuring and allocating inputs, and selling of products are made by men. In decisions relating to processing, storing and consuming of products, women had equal weight with men.

93.4% of the women stated that they occasionally visited the town (the district center), but 47.3% of them had emphasized that they had never been outside the district. For the 52.7% who did make visits outside the district, 34.3% had made hospital visits or had run errands, and 65.7% had visited friends or relatives. The household income had also a significant effect on the women's trips to the district center ( $p < 0.05$ ). As the household income increased, the women's frequency of visits to town also increased. However, a statistically significant relationship was not found between the household income and the visits outside the district. In

other words, the household income did not affect the frequency of outside visits. It can be said that the trips outside the district were necessitated by outside requirements, such as health problems, hospital visitations, weddings and festivals, etc. Under these circumstances, it can be claimed that, the women's socio-economic contacts outside the village will increase with agrotourism, and that increased interaction will bring an improvement to their status.

It was found that 91.4% of the women had never participated in a training or education program. The reason is that, they did not believe that participating in an educational activity would make a change in their lives, such as earning an income. The subjects they would want to be educated about were, in the order of desirability, health (50.0%), childcare (33.3%), and acquiring professional skills (16.7%). In a study by Rad et al. (2010), it was noted that there was a statistically significant relationship between the women's having income earning skills and the usefulness of education. In this respect, if participating in training programs would not help them acquire income earning skills, the women would not want to participate; thinking that those programs would not be useful. Abay et al. (1999) had also noted that training programs could not change the women's status in households, because the programs helped very few of the women to earn income. On the other hand, 65.0% of the women who did not participate in training programs stated that they did not or could not participate because their spouses or mother-in-laws had not given permission. Indeed, in a study by Abay et al. (1999), it was stated that, in villages, where the men's domination over women were strongly felt, it was important to convince men, as well as women, in order to promote a program aimed at women. There was a statistically significant relationship between educational level of men and their desire/support for their wives to participate in training programs ( $p < 0.05$ ). Husbands with higher educational levels desired/supported their wives' participation in training programs.

### **Women's approach to agroculture in the area of study**

It was determined that the concept of "tourism" was known by all the women, but they conceived only foreign visitors as tourists. Again, all the women specified that they had never heard the terms "agrotourism", "agriculture-based tourism" and "ecotourism". 88.2% of the women emphasized that they wanted their villages to be opened to tourism and visited by tourists. A statistically significant relationship was found between the women's education levels and their desire for opening to tourism ( $p < 0.05$ ). The women who did not want the village be opened to tourism were illiterate or educated at primary-school level. Furthermore, the spouses' professions also had an effect on the women's views on this issue. The

women whose spouses are officials or shopkeepers did want the village to be opened to tourism. Of these women, 70.6% thought that the village would develop further by opening to tourism, 17.6% thought that they would meet new people, and 11.8% thought that their crafts would find buyers.

However, all the women had negative opinions on boarding visitors in their homes. It was understood that, in their current situations, the women could not act as boarders because they would not open their homes to strangers. Consequently, in agrotourism applications, independent boarding homes will initially be more appropriate.

### **Conclusions**

The co-operative spirit of the village residents, their willingness to promote their cultural heritage, the availability of boarding in a rural environment, the possibility of tours to agricultural fields and production establishments, the activities involving carpet weaving, handcrafting and authentic cooking of local delicacies, combined with the richness of the touristic and cultural resources of Kosbucagi Village, are evidences that necessary conditions are present for initiating agrotourism. However, the generally low levels of education and income of the residents, their ignorance of agrotourism, the lack of organization, the absence of venture capital and commercial networking are all factors that make it impossible for the village people to initiate agrotourism enterprises on their own. In this context, the local authorities will be playing the important role in the success and the maintenance of agrotourism enterprises. The foremost item on the agenda is the support to be given to agrotourism by the authorities for reducing rural poverty and promoting social development. The authorities' responsibilities are the following:

- i. The local authorities should make their presence felt by providing the district residents with material and social support and observing their progress, because knowing that the authorities partake in their activities will give the residents confidence.
- ii. The authorities should provide financial support in establishing the infrastructure needed for maintaining the agrotourism enterprises.
- iii. Since the maintenance of agrotourism depends on promoting it, the local authorities should help promoting the agrotourism enterprises by providing access to media and communication outlets.
- iv. In parallel with the development of agrotourism in the village, the women will be contributing to their household incomes by selling their handcrafts and homw-produced delicacies to tourists, in addition to opening their homes for boarding. However, in order to ensure the continuance of these efforts, not only should their products and services be promoted, but also sales outlets should

be established near agrotourism centers. Unorganized small farmers will need the local authorities' support for that.

The markets are saturated with common-place tourism models. On the other hand, the awareness of and the longing for rural nature and natural products have risen, along with the environmental problems. These changes have raised the expectations from agrotourism. However, in forming agrotourism enterprises, the local residents must be informed and their participation must be ensured. This approach will accelerate the process of adoption of agrotourism by the locals. On the other hand, foreseeing and preventing social corruption and potential conflicts between stakeholders will guarantee the success and sustainability of agrotourism.

A great majority of rural women work as unpaid family workers; that creates a situation where women are dependent on their husbands and their living conditions are determined by the men's incomes. The women who are aware of that will be willing to partake in activities that will bring income and thus raise their living standards. These women will act as the locomotives of agrotourism, because agrotourism can help women earn income by providing outlets for their local products, and enable women to interact with tourists from outside, though women would normally have little chance of leaving their environment. As a result, agrotourism will not only raise rural women's status by rearranging household dynamics, but also raise the living standards of the families.

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