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AGRITOURISM AS A CATALYST FOR BUILDING CROSS-BORDER CIRCULAR INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS AND DIASPORA CAPITAL IN THE MOLDOVAN–UKRAINIAN CORRIDOR

The inherent fragility of Moldova and Ukraine within the global economic landscape is fundamentally conditioned by their peripheral structural positioning. This vulnerability stems not merely from their stage of economic development, but from their marginal integration into global value chains, caught between the gravity of EU accession and the systemic impact of Russia's war of aggression, while remaining reliant on low-value commodity exports. This article reconceptualizes agritourism, moving beyond traditional paradigms of supplemental farm income. Instead, it situates agritourism within the mainstream of functional and intersectoral upgrading across EU agri-food value chains, operationalized through the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) and the Hexa-Helix Circularity Framework (HCF). By repositioning diaspora and transnational networks as a foundational bridging helix, this model serves as the primary conduit through which tacit market knowledge, global value chain relationships, and EU regulatory familiarity are transferred to domestic agri-food clusters.

Synthesizing Sustainable Smart Specialisation (S4), Doughnut Economics, and Barbieri's typologies of agritourism across the 9R circularity tiers, this paper proposes an Adaptive Action Research framework to assess trans-boundary macroeconomic resilience across the Ștefan Vodă (Moldova) and Odesa (Ukraine) pilot regions. The research tests three hypotheses: (1) that functional upgrading, propelled by diaspora-facilitated linkages, occurs more rapidly than growth driven by traditional foreign direct investment; (2) that creative agritourism rooted in DCFTA Geographical Indications (GI) achieves export competitiveness through higher unit values; and (3) that a distributed diaspora network model offers superior resilience against geopolitical disruptions compared to centralized national industrial policy.

Keywords: Agritourism, Global Value Chains, Geopolitical Economy, Quintuple Innovation Helix, Smart Specialisation, Diaspora, GVC Upgrading, Hybrid Warfare Resilience.