

“Agro-JRP” Innovative farming

Title: “AGRITOURISM”

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Introduction

Although any kind of tourism taking place in the rural space may be considered “rural tourism”, a consensual definition of the term has not yet been found. In his seminal article *What is rural tourism?*, Lane (1994) advocates that rural tourism should ideally be, apart from located in rural areas; functionally rural (based on the rural world’s special features, such as open space, natural resources and traditional practices); rural (small) in scale; traditional in character; and finally organically and slowly growing and controlled by local people. We define Agritourism, as a quite specific tourism product or format, closely linked to the agricultural sector. It is an innovative tourism product, whose evolution is still in progress, although deeply rooted in the tradition of several countries.

This document aims to be a guide tool for farmers, who see in agritourism and related activities a method to diversify the income of their firm, and to integrate through tourism the income of agricultural activities..

Agritourism can be seen as a meeting point, between the desire of a farmer, to open the doors of his farm, and the tourists’ request to experience countryside life, being more and more aware of the surrounding environment and contact with nature. Although agritourism cannot be seen as the panacea for the economic problems of rural areas, yet the increasing demand of services and facilities, identified as agritourism, has fostered a quick growth of this sector in Europe and an increased interest about it in non European countries.

Since the mid- 1900s, in Europe, the introduction of new technologies and the opening of international trade have led to a general decline in farmers’ incomes, counteracted by EU policies to support the agricultural sector and its need for diversification.

Agriculture accounts for only a small part of gross domestic production (GDP) in Europe and the possibility to diversify the offer has provided a valuable support to agricultural incomes, to the preservation of the landscape (through the recovery of abandoned farm buildings), to the consolidation of agricultural employment and exploitation of local products.

Agritourism could help to exploit the peculiarities and specific resources of each territory, limit depopulation through the creation of new positions, bring urban population and young population to the agricultural world, preserve traditions and local identity.

This work is divided into several sections, in which we will try to outline the different opportunities offered by tourism to the agricultural sector.

The first section of the document outlines the existing situation of agritourism in Europe. In the following sections accommodation, food, sport facilities and cultural and recreational activities will be analysed. They represent a key element to extend the range and increase the appeal of agritourism.

1. Agritourism in Europe

There is not an univocal definition of agritourism, in Europe or in the World. There are many definitions in literature, including: “Agritourism is the merging of all tourism and recreational activities with any farm activity” (Busby & Rendle, 2000) or “Agritourism consists of many activities such as accommodation at the farmhouse, participating in agricultural festivals, hunting, picking selfgrown products, bird-watching, horse riding, walking” (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008).

Each country has adopted its own legislation to regulate agritourism activity. The Framework Law 96/2006 in Italy, establishes that it is agritourism if the operator is a farmer, who carries out cultivation, or forestry, or keeps farm animals. Agritourism activities are generally related to an agricultural activity, to a better exploitation of local resources (existing buildings no longer useful to the management of the farm, business products, natural environment, cultural resources of the place). In agritourism it is necessary to provide one or more hospitality services, such as:

- accommodation;
- provision of meals and drinks using the farms own products;
- setting up of equipped areas for camping;
- organisation of recreational, sporting, cultural and educational activities.

The diffusion of rural tourism and the consequent growth of agritourism can be traced back in Northern Europe. The first regulations about agritourism at European level date back in the mid-80s. Previous years were marked by a structural European policy for the coordination of national policies and the financing of individual projects aimed to increase productivity. The directives adopted in the 70ies were based upon the idea that farming is an important instrument for the conservation of the natural environment.

The aim was to preserve agricultural activities, improving living conditions and income levels of farmers operating in these areas, so as to protect the countryside from the degradation of cultural and environmental resources.

In the 80s the EEC approved the Regulation 797/85 and 2088 of 1985, in which support was given for farm investment in disadvantaged areas, to provide incentives to adapt existing farm buildings to be made suitable for tourists and help promote tourism in rural areas.

In recent years more emphasis has been put on the role of multi-functionality, by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)¹. There are many differences in the definition of agritourism among different European countries, because of lack of uniformity and the fact that each country has its own cultural point of view. Even the name itself changes, as what in Mediterranean countries is called Agritourism or agrotourism, in UK is defined as "Farm Tourism".

Here we try to list several common characteristics of agritourism in various countries:

- The modest contribution in terms both of income and tourist numbers;
- The aim to provide a tool to complement agricultural income;
- The purpose to avoid the depletion of existing resources;
- The difficulties in balancing the main activity (agriculture) with the needs arising from the changing tourism sector demands;
- The needs and opportunities to increase visibility and access to the market through new technologies;
- The need to bring out distinctive features of rural tourism compared to traditional tourism, such as authenticity and uniqueness;
- The location in connection with nature being the main development factor for the farm.
- Intimate links with nature were also pointed out as a major trump card for the development of farm tourism².

France stands out as the country most committed to the enhancement of the rural areas, founding the first organization providing rural hospitality with the introduction of the "Fédération Nationale des Gîtes Ruraux", in 1955. The aim of this association was to provide organizational support for the phenomenon of rural tourism.

The countries with a stronger tradition of rural hospitality are probably Germany and Austria. In these countries a rigid classification divides the structures according to the level of comfort and services. An interesting case is the protected area of Bliesgau in Germany, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where agritourism plays a key role for the preservation of the biosphere, offering visitors direct experiences with rural activities. Agritourism providers

¹The second pillar of the CAP: the rural development policy. The reform wants to improve the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector, strengthen the links between primary activity and the environment, improve the quality of life in rural areas, to stimulate cooperation and innovation and encourage diversification of the economy in rural communities

²Potocnick, Irma, Serge Schmitz. "Farm tourism across Europe", European Countryside (2013), p. 4.

offer individual advice regarding structural requirements for rooms and holiday flats, sustainable development on farms, and targeting of customers.

Agritourism in Ireland has been developing since the 60s, as a response to the lack of traditional accommodation to host US and British tourists. The attractiveness of the Irish countryside gave a further impetus for tourists to develop this type of accommodation, in recent years³.

The interest to agritourism in Italy can be traced back to the origin of Agriturismo, the National Association for the Agritourism, the Environment and Territory, formed by Confagricoltura in 1965, to promote tourism in the agricultural sector and to enhance its resources.

The first national regulation dates back to 1985, when law 730 "Discipline of the Agritourism" was introduced, with the aim to promote the development and the rebalancing of agricultural land, to facilitate the survival of productive activities in rural areas, to foster a better use of rural heritage and buildings, to promote conservation and environmental protection, to promote typical products, to preserve the traditions and cultural initiatives in rural areas, to develop social and youth tourism, to facilitate relationships between the city and the countryside⁴. Agritourism is classified according to the services it offers and its characteristics, as the 'traditional accommodation'. The current classification system changes depending on the region. We can find different symbols are used, for example sheaves of corn are used in Tuscany, daisies in Trentino or four-leaved clovers in Lombardy. The current classification system is not homogeneous and it has generated lots of public confusion, even in the foreign markets. 30 years since the first law that regulated agritourism, was introduced, a process of unification is now developing.

In Slovenia the development of agritourism is part of a more general support to the agricultural sector and to the integration of farmers' income. A particular case of interest is the development of rural tourism in areas of wine production, where food and wine play an important role in attracting tourists, in the perspective to promote local products. In this context, the Association of Farms in Slovenia, as well as providing useful information through its own Internet site, works closely with the national network of specialized consultants who offer assistance to operators in the agricultural sector.

³Ivi, p.6

⁴L. 730/1985 "Disciplina dell'agriturismo", Italia, 5 December 1985.Art. 1

Since the mid '80s agritourism in Greece has developed following the examples of other European countries. In the first phase the spread of rural and traditional accommodation prevailed mainly on coastal areas, offering services that didn't fit in with the environmental conservation. In the second phase more awareness began to spread about the farming standards thanks to the intervention of the European Program. An important initiative was the birth of the Agroxenia association⁵ .

In the 90s in Croatia the first law was introduced to regulate agritourism activities. Yet, as most tourism is centered on coastal areas⁶, the promotion of internal rural areas is still inadequate.

In Turkey the "Bugday Association for Supporting Ecological Living" was introduced in 2004 with the support of the United Nations Development Program. The aim is to disseminate and promote agritourism development, through the production and sale of local products.⁷ .

⁵Hellenic Agritourism Federation

⁶Potocnick, Irma, Serge Schmitz. "Farm tourism across Europe", European Countryside (2013), p. 6

⁷Artuger, Savas, and Hakan Kendir. "Agritourist motivations: the case of Turkey." International Journal of Business and Management 8.21 (2013), p63.

1.1 Agricultural income

Agriculture nowadays carries out multiple functions related to its interaction with land and natural resources, from its ability to protect and preserve landscape, to its importance in providing services for the community. The development of agritourism activities is part of a broader strategy with the aim to support and increase the small and medium agricultural producers' income. Agricultural income comprises the income generated by agricultural activities (as well as non agricultural secondary activities) over a given accounting period, the solar year. In some cases, the corresponding revenues will not be received until a later date. It must not be confused with the total income of agricultural households, as it does not include income from other sources, or from non agricultural activities, salaries, social benefits, etc⁸.

Compared with 2013, EU28 real agricultural income per worker has decreased by 1.7% in 2014 according to first estimates issued by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union.

The results highlight that in 2014 there has been a sharp reduction of the agricultural income, in most European countries. 20 Member States on 28 ended the year in negative sign. The following graph (Fig. 1) shows the countries with the largest decreases: Finland (-22.8%), Lithuania (-19.4%), Belgium (-15.2%), Italy (-11.0%), Estonia (-10.9%) and Denmark (-10.1%). Unlike in Slovenia (+ 13.3%), Hungary (+ 9.1%), Czech Republic (+ 7.2%), the UK (+ 6.9%), Greece (+ 4.4%) and Cyprus (+ 1.8%) with the highest increases. Among the causes that led to the drop in income, Eurostat underline the decline in the value of crop production (-6%) and a smaller reduction in that of livestock (-0.9%)⁹.

⁸ The real income of factors in agriculture, per annual work unit, is equal to the real value added net of the cost factors, the total number of work units in the year. Net value added at factor cost is calculated by subtracting from the value of agricultural output at basic prices the value of intermediate consumption, the consumption of fixed capital and production taxes, and adding the value of production subsidies.

⁹Report 194/2014 First estimates for 2014 EU28 real agricultural income per worker down by 1.7%, Eurostat, 15 December 2014.

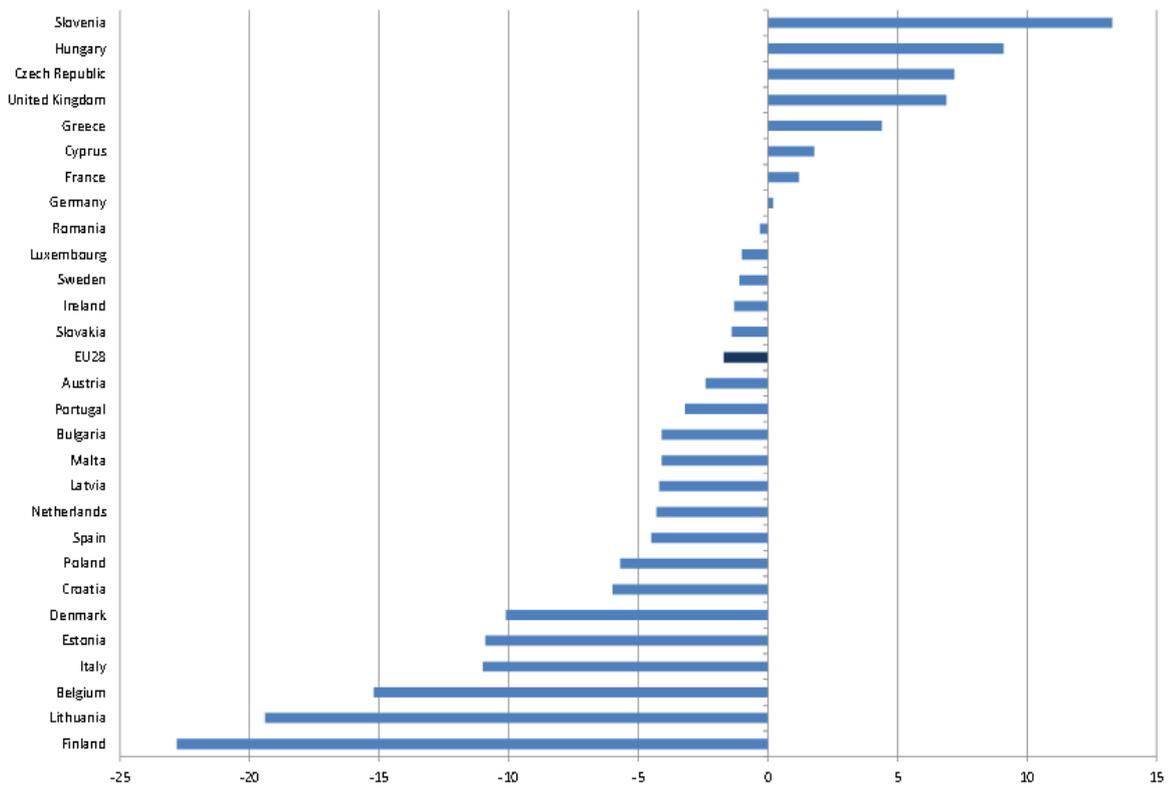


Fig. 1. Change in real agricultural income per worker, 2014 compared with 2013 (in %)

Farm incomes are characterized by a high - degree of instability and are generally lower than those of non-agricultural sectors.

Since the mid- 1900s, in Europe, the introduction of new technologies and the opening of international trade have led to a general decline in farm incomes. For this reason, the E.U. introduced policies to support the agricultural sector and provide support to diversification: among these are the policies to support agritourism activities as an important source of diversification.

2. Ecotourism

Agritourism, as proposing an ecological holiday able to convey the necessary sensitivity to all aspects of environmental protection, can contribute to the development of ecotourism.

An official international definition of ecotourism was adopted during the UN International Year of ecotourism in 2002 (UNEP and WTO, 2002), defining it as a form of sustainable tourism that:

- contributes actively to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage,
- includes local and indigenous communities in its planning, development and operation, and contributing to their wellbeing,
- interprets the natural and cultural heritage of the destination to visitors,
- lends itself better to independent travellers, as well as to organized tours for small size groups.

All tourism, in fact, should be ecologically, socially, culturally and economically sustainable.

Ecotourism differs from other forms of tourism through its dependence on the protection of natural ecosystems so that they, and their associated cultural values, can be visited and interpreted. The challenge for the tourism industry is to develop ecotourism skills and the quality of its product without adversely affecting the environment on which it depends. This involves ensuring that the type, location and level of ecotourism use does not harm natural areas and that management is adequate to sustain appropriate levels of ecotourism. Revenue raised from ecotourism should be used to maintain ecological sustainability by providing supporting infrastructures, which will avoid damage to the natural environment for example boardwalks, toilets, and camping grounds. Infrastructures can also educate visitors about minimising impacts on the natural environment (e.g. interpreted walks and interpretation centres). Managers of natural areas need to consider the requirements of ecosystems, allowable activities under the designated form of tenure management regime, appropriate locations for various ecotourism styles as well as the social needs of visitors (e.g. crowding, presentation of the area). Different management techniques such as permit conditions, infrastructure provision and styles of presentation can help to maintain or increase the use of an area by visitors. However, limiting access to and use of sensitive environmental areas for ecotourism ventures will be required at times to avoid overuse, preserve biosystems and ensure the existence of opportunities for all styles of ecotourism.

Some of the main components and principles of sound ecotourism are listed below:

- The natural environment
- Ecological and cultural sustainability
- Contribution to conservation
- Education and interpretation
- Provision of local benefits and participation
- Visitor satisfaction
- Responsible marketing

In Europe, there are various experiences of public and private protected areas that proved to be able to enhance their tourism potential, in terms of natural resources. These include *Fattorie del Panda*.

Examples

- **Cottage Lodge, UK, Ecotourism accommodation**

The company gives information about the area regarding roads, cycling paths, walking tracks and horse riding. They divide activities into three categories: physical activities, days out, leisure and pleasure. "Physical activities" category offers solutions for cycling, walking and horse riding. "Days out" gives information surrounding areas visitors can reach by train or by car to have a brief trip. "Leisure and pleasure" gives some hints on simple and relaxing activities ("The European Ecotourism Labelling Standard, EETLS").

- **Lapland Safari Sweden, Traditional Sami cultural camp**

There is a strong interpretation element in all the activities of the camp. There are interpretative walks and storytelling night, visits to museum with local guides and guests are encouraged to meet with locals and discuss about the area's history. The culture of the Sami people is dominant, as the camp has been developed in the traditional way using traditional techniques that are explained to visitor ("The European Ecotourism Labelling Standard, EETLS").

- **Distant adoption of animals, plants, trees, etc.**

In recent years, in Europe, farmers have introduced new activities.

The aim is to increase the agricultural income and to enhance and preserve the environmental heritage.

These activities include, upon moderate payment, the distance adoption of animals, plants, trees, etc.

Farmer purpose is to offer the possibility to discover and know the area, the farmer's work and the excellence products of the destination. The farmer annually sends to customers, some products and offers the opportunity to visit and live directly experience on the farm, such as harvesting, milking, product processing, etc.

In Ireland and the United Kingdom the distance adoption of sheep is highly developed.

This allows customers to receive the sheep photos, the information about pastures and an official certificate of adoption, in addition of some products.

In Spain, in particular in Almeria, is possible to adopt an orange plant and the company every year provides to send a part of the harvest products and processed products, such as jam, juice, etc

In Italy, in particular in Tuscany, in Garfagnana (mountain area in the province of Lucca), people can adopt a chestnut tree. At the early XX century, in Garfagnana, there were about 18,000 hectares of chestnut fruit, but today only 3,000 hectares are still in production. The Associazione Castanicoltori of Garfagnana is an important association to enhance and promote the chestnut cultivation.

It represents the most of the producers participating in the production of Neccio flour that is a DOP product.

The farmer sends fruits product from the tree (eg: chestnuts, Neccio flour, etc.) and offers the opportunity to participate directly in the harvest, drying and milling of the chestnut.

- **Eumelia Organic Agrotourism Farm & Guesthouse, Laconia, Greece**

Eumelia, which means harmony, is a sustainable development and agritourism accommodation that also runs workshops and events for wellbeing, agricultural activities, creative projects and gastronomy.

The organic farm is designed along the principles of Homeodynamic/Biodynamic agriculture, and the accommodation facilities are created using entirely eco-friendly materials and technology, such as recycling, compost, geothermal heating/cooling and water recycling. The farm is a place where tourists can practice many interesting activities. There are many great walks around the farm area in the middle of a vibrant nature, and different trails for mountain bikes. Tourists can participate in the farm activities with farmer, picking olives, grapes, herbs, fruits and vegetables.

3. Agritourism experience

Tourism is nowadays going through a new phase. Consumers and industry need a reassessment of the relationship with nature and the enhancement of interpersonal relationships.

Tourism industry offers a more active form of tourism, such as stays in rural farms and wine tasting tours.

In this context the search for authenticity, identity of places, and knowledge of the historical roots of destination become predominant.

Authenticity gets the role of instrument to affirm the identity of a territory and its integrity.

Agritourism offers a learning experience to visitors, providing education through recreation in addition to increasing income¹⁰.

Agritourism experience differs from the traditional mass tourism. It offers high added value services and activities that farmer can run in his own firm.

In agritourism, in addition to the comfort of each property, you can live experiences that allow tourists to sink into rural world.

In order to meet the demand, operators need to identify the main motivations that guide the tourist to travel. Among them:

- Building and strengthening relationships: this is the main reason that drives families to go on vacation. During the year, other activities employ the majority of the time.
- Research of physical and mental wellbeing: considered as an important moment of vacation, to be able to carry out recreational activities and sports.
- Break and relax
- Living experiences outside everyday life
- Looking for best weather and environmental conditions
- Discovering and learning about new cultures, traditions, identities, etc.
- Celebrating special occasions
- Remembering experiences of the past
- Discovering different lifestyles¹¹.

¹⁰ Poore, Jessica Jarrell. "Knowledge and Perceptions of Agriculture in Tennessee through Fall Agritourism Experiences." (2011).

¹¹ Barrera, Ernesto, and Roberto Muñoz. *Manual de turismo rural para micro pequeños y medianos empresarios rurales*. No. E20 26. FIDA, Washington, DC (EUA) PROMER, Buenos Aires (Argentina), 2003.

3.1 Farming and ranching

For centuries, farming and ranching have been the main source of livelihood and have changed the landscape of rural regions.

As mentioned previously, since the early 50s of '900, the introduction of new technologies and the liberalization of international trade have led to a reduction of small and medium agricultural producers' income.

The agritourism activities represents an important source of farm income diversification, also thanks the support of European policies for agriculture,

In addition to providing the main source of income to the farmer, in agritourism farming and ranching have multiple functions, providing services to tourists:

- Observation of the process of agricultural production: the service consists in making it possible to observe the whole or the most interesting parts of the production process.

In different seasons, tourists can observe sowing, harvesting and pruning phases and learn about the techniques used by the farmer.

Tourists can observe traditional methods of ranching, that it is different from industrial production.

They can understand production cycles related to the production of cheese, wine or oil, that farmer can make more understandable setting up guided tours.

- Participation in the process of agricultural production: agri-tourists can take part both in plant and animal production, cooperating in creameries, dairies, wineries and breweries
- Direct contact with farm animal and rural nature: the service is based on unlimited direct contact between tourists, mainly children and alive animals. The most favourable for this purpose are the farms with diversified areas, where visitors can walk along educational paths, admire various animals and plants.
- Direct sale: farmers can sell home made products, to enhance the freshness and quality resulting from traditional methods.

Tourists watching or participating in the production process are more willing to buy products that they observed while being made, or produced themselves.

Sometimes farmers offer stays in their farms connected with picking up of various products, e.g. fruits or vegetables.

A “pick your own” is a farm where customers may go to pick, cut or choose their own product out of the field. This type of activity is also called u-pick, cut-your-own or choose-your-own and it is a direct marketing channel choice for farms growing berries shrubs, fruit trees, pumpkins and in some cases Christmas trees.

Pick your own (PYO) was born in the United States, when prices for some fruit and vegetable crops hit low levels in the 1930s and 1940s. Prices for some crops failed to cover the cost of harvest labor and containers, prompting some producers to allow customers to come to the fields to pick their own product for purchase. An increase in “rural recreation,” as people drove to the countryside from the cities for leisure, also influenced the popularity of PYO marketing.

There are some advantages and disadvantages of the pick your own activity. Advantages of PYO operations for farmers include the reduced need for product harvest and handling labor, lower equipment costs, the opportunity for larger transactions per customer and the potential to sell lower-quality products. Disadvantages may include the need for an excellent location or superior advertising, liability and other risks of having customers on the farm, the need for customer supervision and the potential for crop damage from improper harvesting¹². The most often they can pick up strawberries, raspberries, currants, gooseberries, apples, pears, etc. This kind of agritourism products is very popular in the UK¹³.

Example: Strawberries Farm, Hampshire (UK)

Over the years the farm expanded their fruit and vegetable range. You can chose among eight different types of strawberries and also raspberries, cherries and blueberries.

You can chose the new potatoes (charlotte) and spring and winter broad beans. The season to pick your own, starts on 1st May to the end of August. During this period you can find also other different products, like local asparagus, new forest Ice cream, fresh double cream, home made strawberry jam, home made scones, elderflower cordial, seasonal vegetables and fresh eggs.

¹² University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment, “Pick-Your-Own (U-Pick) Marketing Cooperative Extension Service”, June 2014.

¹³ Sznajder, Michal, and Lucyna Przeborska. “Identification of rural and agri-tourism products and services”, Roczn. AR Pozn. CCCLIX, Ekon 3 (2004): 165-177.

CConservation of natural resources and landscapes.

The activities of farming and ranching has a leading role in the conservation of environments and rural landscapes, which have a powerful attraction for tourists

- Food and wine tourism.

A large number of agricultural operators offers the opportunity to taste their products directly in farm. Many tourists when choosing the destination, take into account the possibility to taste typical food and wine products, directly from the farmer.

In recent years, food and wine have contributed to the development of rural tourism. In some countries of Europe food and wine routes were created, to discover the peculiarities of local products¹⁴.

Example

- **Wine Roads of Northern Greece**

The Wine Producers Association of the Northern Greece Vineyard was set up in 1993 as a not-for-profit non-stock corporation. The Association's aim was to support the vine-growing and wine-making tradition and give the opportunity to Greek and foreign visitors to discover the hospitality of the vineyards of Northern Greece.

It is an innovative way for any visitor to discover wineries open to visitors and explore the lush vine-growing areas of this part of Greece, in conjunction with a host of local cultural activities.

The Wine Roads of Northern Greece continue to play a leading role in support of wine, a key element in the Greek cultural identity and offer a total of 8 different routes that cross the whole of Northern Greece, with suggested stops at 41 notable wineries of Thessaly (Rapsani and Krania), Epirus, Macedonia and Thrace. Signage along the roads directs travelers to vineyards, wineries and other points of interest.

¹⁴ Barrera, Ernesto, and Roberto Muñoz. *Manual de turismo rural para micro pequeños y medianos empresarios rurales*. No. E20 26. FIDA, Washington, DC (EUA) PROMER, Buenos Aires (Argentina), 2003.

4. Agritourism activities

The recreational and cultural activities in agritourism are an important element that characterises the hospitality and integrates agricultural income.

Agritourism values the peculiarities and specific resources of each territory and brings population and young people to the agricultural world, to preserve traditions, know the territory and its identity.

The farmer promotes and organises recreational, cultural, educational, sport, hiking and fishing activities, closely linked to the rural sector. The proposed activities make the appeal of agritourism more inviting.

Some examples of activities, which will be analysed in this chapter, are carried out with riding locally bred horses, fishing as sport related to fish farms, food and wine courses, etc. All activities must be primarily aimed at the development of the area, activities and rural heritage as well as the activity and agricultural production.

In Italy, in 2013, there were 12,096 companies (+ 1% compared to 2012) authorized to the exercise of other agritourism activities (including horseback riding, hiking, nature observation, trekking, biking, educational farms, courses, sports, etc).

These companies represented 57.9% of agritourism in Italy.

In Italy there are more than 900 parks and protected areas: in fact, 10% of the national territory is protected

Every year, the number of tourists in these areas increases; they are driven by the desire to practice hiking, mountain biking, bird watching, skiing, horse riding, climbing (47% of the total), by the desire to relax (20%), but also to discover food and wine peculiarities (15%) and the traditions (10%)¹⁵.

¹⁵ Istat, "Le aziende agrituristiche in Italia anno 2013", Statistiche Report Istat, 10 Ottobre 2014.

4.1 Hiking

The farmer, to increase the attractiveness of its agritourism, can offer different and various products.

The concept of well-being is usually integrated with physical activities and mind relax to improve body, mind and spirit balance.

Hiking is a very practiced and appreciated activity by customers of agritourism and is performed on walking paths.

Usually these activities are practiced in areas, considered as attractive from the environmental and landscape point of view.

Agritourisms in mountain locations, or surrounded by green areas, offer guided walking tours of different length, from a few hours walk to longer tours, which may take several days.

This type of activity is requested by the tourists who are looking for tranquility and contact with nature. These are the two main reasons that drive people who live in city towards a green holiday.

In Europe a type of activity, called Nordic Walking, is rapidly developing; it is practiced with the aid of sticks, similar to those used for cross-country skiing.

The Nordic Walking was born in Finland, since the 30s, and it originated from the cross-country skiing. The differences between nordic and traditional walking, is in fact the presence of sticks that allow to reduce the weight on joints, knees, ankles, etc.

This activity has developed differently in Europe. It is more widespread in Scandinavia and Central Europe, where since 2003 the first Nordic Walking Parks were born.

German, Swedish and Finnish, are currently the largest number of practitioners of Nordic walkig in Europe.

Agritourism can offers other types of activities carried out with different 'means of transport', for example horse riding, mountain biking, canoeing, cross-country skiing, climbing, etc.

Climbing is rapidly developing in Europe¹⁶. This activity can be carried out on natural or artificial walls. In the case of agritourism it is carried out in mountain areas and requires

¹⁶ F.A.S.I. Italian Sport Climbing Federation

the presence of specialised guides.

Climbing can combine the growing needs of seasonal tourism flows, with the environment protection and preservation.

Some operators organise themed tours, such as bird watching, observation of flora and fauna, etc. Usually, the tour guide is the farm operator or a member of his family, but more demanding itineraries require a specialised operator.

Examples

- **Region Villach, Austria**

The region around the city of Villach is a hiking paradise for all the family. Beautiful, crystal-clear lakes and a natural landscape provide everything from quiet walks to adventurous climbing tours. There are five trails for Nordic Walking around Lake Faak, between 4,5 and 10km in length.

- **Dadia Forest Reserve Visitors' Centre, Greece**

In Dadia, Greece, the creation of a feeding place for the rare vulture species and the creation of basic tourism infrastructures was an incentive that had a multiplier effect, attracting public investment and generating rural development with ecotourism as a centerpiece. WWF organizes the annual Bird's Day where locals and tourists celebrate the unique range of birds present in the area as a common heritage ("The European Ecotourism Labelling Standard, EETLS").

4.2 Horse Riding

The role of the horse in agritourism is much appreciated by tourists and it has changed very much over the years.

In the past it was used as a means of transport or as a driving force in field works.

Technological progress has replaced the horse as a field working animal with more efficient mechanical means.

However, its figure has remained central to the development of recreational activities aimed at the rural tourism sector.

Many agritourisms offer the possibility to explore the territory, through equestrian activities, able to live an authentic experience and at the same time being in contact with nature.

The riding holiday is an opportunity to enhance the knowledge of this animal, allowing

people to discover unexpected perspectives with a totally sustainable means of transport. Agritourism proposes various activities, from the classic riding stables and horse walk in the surrounding countryside, to trekking horse or pony, which may last a few days.

The offering of equestrian activities requires significant investment, both economically and organisationally, because there is the need for an adequate infrastructure for the animal shelter, as well as qualified personnel. A lot of agritourism that offer riding stables experiences are properly equipped with guides and instructors to meet the different needs of the guests.

In Europe the horse is an important economic resource. In 2009, in Europe, there was an equine population of about 5 million horses¹⁷.

In the past, horses were important to carry out agricultural and industrial activities, while today they are kept essentially for recreational and sporting activities.

In Great Britain and Ireland excellent traits and suitable infrastructures for equestrian activities can be found; in Ireland, about 250 specialised structures for equestrian activities blossomed in a very short period of time, attracting over 100.000 people annually.

Portugal and Spain take joint pole position in this sector thanks to a well established tradition in the use of horses, attracting mainly tourists from central Europe¹⁸.

In Italy, almost 20% of agritourisms offer riding holidays.

Examples:

- **Agritourism in Cilento, Italy**

The agritourism is the ideal place for those who love open air sports.

The farmer offers different types of horse riding excursions. For examples the "Campania Ride", "Cilento Ride" or "Horseback rider for beginners". The "Campania Ride" is a relaxed riding programme perfect for visit the surrounding area of Cilento. It includes 12 hours riding and half-board accommodation at the agritourism. The "Cilento Ride" is a package that includes 5 days trail riding with organized picnic and half-board accommodation at the agritourism.

4.3 Mountain Bike

¹⁷ Liljenstolpe, Carolina. "Horses in Europe." *EU Equus* (2009): 32.

¹⁸ Béki, Piroska, Tímea Vágó, and Dóra Lasztovicza. "The Present of Equine Tourism in Hungary in Reflection to an Empirical Research." *APSTRACT: Applied Studies in Agribusiness and Commerce* 7.1 (2013).

Apart from equestrian activities, agritourism offers the possibility to discover the area and natural resources of the destination using mountain bikes.

Cycling tourism is a form of sustainable tourism, a way to understand an area in a different way from traditional mass tourism, being especially close to local environment and traditions¹⁹.

Today many agritourisms offer the opportunity to enjoy the surrounding territory by mountain bike; some farms have made it their strong point, combining the immersion in a rural area with a recreational activity suitable for every type of visitor.

Cycling tourism has become increasingly popular. In Europe about ten million people choose this kind of holidays activity²⁰.

In choosing cycling routes tourists on the whole prefer to select rural destinations where nature is abundant and traffic is almost unheard. Itineraries last from a few hours to longer tours, which may take several days.

Some tourists may prefer to use their own bikes while, for others, the agritourism must provide all the needed equipment, including, sometimes, the presence of one or more bike guides (experienced cyclists who have a good knowledge of the surrounding areas, traditions, food, wine, etc.)

Studies conducted with the support of the European Parliament on cycling in Europe (Lumsdon et al. (2009), Weston et al. (2012) have estimated the overall demand for cycle tourism and its economic impact.

In particular, linking the growth of bicycle use in each European country, an estimated percentage demand for the total cycle tourism can be assessed (Tab. 2).

¹⁹ Lumsdon, Les. "Transport and Tourism: cycle tourism—a model for sustainable development?" *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 8.5 (2000): 361-377.

²⁰ Agritourist

Demand band	Low	Low-Medium	Medium	Medium-High	High	Very high
Share of population using cycling as main mode of transport (The Gallup Organisation, 2011)	≤2%	>2-5%	>5 -<8%	8-12%	12-20%	>20%
Expert estimate share of cycle holidays as % of all holidays	0.5%	1%	1.5%	2%	3%	3.7%
Countries attributed to demand band	Turkey**/** Bulgaria Luxembourg Portugal Malta** Cyprus Spain	Romania Lithuania Serbia**/** Norway** Croatia**/** Macedonia**/** Italy Estonia Ireland Greece UK	Latvia Czech R. Slovenia France*	Slovakia Poland	Hungary Denmark Sweden Belgium Germany Finland Austria* Switzerland**/**	Netherlands

Table 1. Cycle tourism demand bands²¹. *Austria, Switzerland and France have been moved up one demand band in order to compensate for a lower daily usage share of cycling with demonstrated high shares of incoming cycle tourists. **These countries could not be included in the estimate for Europe due to missing background data. ***These countries do not feature in the modal split data of The Gallup Organisation (2011). They have been attributed a 'cycling as main transport mode' share based on other, similar data on bicycle usage and the shares of neighbouring countries.

It is estimated that each year in Europe (EU27 + Norway and Switzerland) there are about 2.000 billion cycle tourism trips, of which about 20 million are overnight trips. Multiplying this number for the average estimated cost of each trip, an impact on the tourism sector of about 44 billion can be assessed²².

Example:

- **Alpine Pearls Initiative, Network of tour operators**

The Alpine Pearls network has created a soft mobility concept that contributes to reduce tourism impact on the environment. The SAMO project or Sustainable Mobility-Car-Free Tourism provides an eco-friendly holiday. For the duration of the holiday, tourists leave their car keys to the tourism association and become one of the SAMO visitors, receiving a personal SAMO pass for free, and then travel by rail, coach, bikes or other lines ("The European Ecotourism Labelling Standard, EETLS").

²¹ Piket, Pieter, Eke Eijelaar, and Paul Peeters. "European cycle tourism: a tool for sustainable regional rural development." APSTRACT: Applied Studies in Agribusiness and Commerce 7.2-3 (2013).

²² Ibidem

4.4 Fishing

Another interesting activity proposed by agrotourism firms is fishing.

This activity takes place in the open air and in contact with nature.

The presence of a river or a small lake in or near the farm attracts not only tourists, but also fans who regard fishing as a sport. A large or small lake may also be open to people living in the surrounding area, that may also be able to use the facilities available.

The accessibility to the structure is the first important requisite to attract people at the agritourism.

As in the case of swimming pools, an artificial lake requires large economic investments.

4.5 Courses

Farmers have discovered how the organization of courses, related to various agricultural activities represents a key factor for the integration of income, responding to the new sensitivity of tourists searching authenticity. Different courses may be related to agriculture, environment, food and wine, apiculture etc.

Horse riding courses, in which tourists can improve their techniques or learn to ride a horse with qualified personnel, are much appreciated.

Cooking classes in agritourism are an opportunity for tourists to know and discover flavours and culinary secrets of the destination.

Courses are usually customised in accordance with the number of people and specific requests; they represent an important tool to enhance the products on agritourism and typical products of the area.

Cooking courses can be more or less complex: from the preparation of the simplest dishes, such as pasta or fettuccine, up to special and particular dishes.

Usually at the end of the course the farmer organises a dinner where participants can taste what they have prepared. This type of activity does not require any special investment and normally the farmer or family members are the teachers.

Cooking classes can represent a key factor for deseasonalizing agritourism, because they often are required also during the low season.

In some cases, many cooking classes are included in the holiday package, especially for

foreign tourists.

Other types of courses that farms can offer are courses of painting (especially landscape painting), photography (in particular landscapes, birds, flowers), herbal medicine, mountain bike, etc. Agritourism, as immersed in nature, can expand the range of courses and organise for example musical experiences, business internships, etc²³.

Examples:

- **Accommodation in Pelion, Greece**

Tour the soap making workshop at the Pelion des Roses Hotel. Learn how ancient Mediterranean communities made soaps for cleaning and bathing. Watch how organic soaps are made using cold process soap making with pure local olive oil and aromatic herbs.

- **Agritourism in Sicily, Italy**

The cooking course in the agritourism represents the opportunity to live a fascinating journey through first and second dishes, side dishes and desserts of Sicilian tradition. Tourists use only zero kilometre products, always the seasonal and fresh ones, in order to let you discover fragrances and tastes of Mediterranean diet. Every tourists will be allowed to directly pick vegetables and fruits which will be used as ingredients for the food preparation, and will receive, free of charge, the apron with the farm logo, together with the booklet of the course of cuisine. The standard courses last 3 hours plus the duration of the meal with the dishes prepared during the course.

²³ Agritourist

4.6 Swimming pool

The presence of a swimming pool in agritourism allows the holidaymaker to spend part of the day in total relax. Although there is a lack of connection between swimming pool and the rural sector, its presence is usually a very strong asset.

When planning an agritourism the owner must weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of a swimming pool: in fact, a swimming pool is costly, not only its construction, but the maintenance afterwards.

The commitment of the farmer will change according to the swimming pool type: in fact, the cost will vary in accordance with depth and dimensions, while a lifeguard will be needed, according to law, for larger and deep swimming pools.

The presence of a swimming pool will attract in particular families who are willing to give up crowded beaches to relax in areas surrounded by nature, without renouncing to swimming and sunbathing.

The location of the agritourism farm and its microclimate must also be taken into account: for instance, in central Italy, in particular Tuscany, Marche, Umbria, Lazio and Abruzzo the majority of agritourism farms are equipped with a swimming pool (55% of the total), while the percentage decreases to 25% in the South of Italy and surrounding Islands. The situation is different in Northern Italy where only 15% has a pool because the farms are located at higher altitudes and temperatures are lower²⁴.

4.7 Sport facilities

The presence of sport facilities in agritourism is highly appreciated by customers, as complementary activities carried out in the open and in close contact with nature, although not related to the agricultural sector and to the knowledge of the territory.

Some agritourism farms are specialized in organising sports and entertainment activities to be done alone or along with other people staying at the agritourism.

In recent years multipurpose fields have been developed to accommodate various sports such as tennis, football and volleyball.

²⁴ Ibidem

Building sports facilities requires an initial investment however routine maintenance is inexpensive due to the use of the synthetic material.

5. Panda Farms

In Europe, the first network of private accommodation was developed in France, with Gîtes de France. In 1951 the first gîte rural in the Basses-Alpes, Provence-Alpes Haute was established..

In 1955, the National Federation of Gîtes de France was founded. By that year, there were 46 *gîtes*. The rural *gîte* is an apartment or a house, including one or more bedrooms, a living room / dining room and a kitchenette. It can be rented for a few days, a weekend or for a week or more, especially during the school holiday period.

Today, in France, we can find different types of Gîtes de France, as the *Gîtes and Horse*²⁵, *Gîtes of fishing*²⁶ and *Gîtes Panda*.

Gîtes Panda are located in Regional or National Natural Parks, and are approved by WWF.

Panda Farms were born in Europe to support the conservation of of high environmental value and natural reserves. Tourism is an important tool for the increase of agricultural income as well as for education and preservation. The main goal is to make the agritourism located in a natural reserve or in the immediate vicinity, a place for the diffusion of environmental, historical and cultural knowledge. The diffusion of *Panda Farms* is uneven, at European level.

Gîtes Panda should respect a number of requirements. Among these:

- being located in a natural environment;
- providing equipment and documentation for the observation of flora and fauna.

Another common feature, is to be located near a natural accessible foot path.

Today there are 43,800 *gîtes* rural, of which 64 are bed and breakfasts and 201 are holiday rentals, located in regional or national parks, bearing the Panda logo of WWF²⁷.

²⁵ The denomination of *Gîte* and Horse qualifies an accommodation with the label (*Gîte Rural*, *Chambre d'Hôtes*, *Gît* for Children, etc), declared as an equestrian structure (equestrian farms, pony-club, equestrian centres, etc).

²⁶ The denomination of *Gîte* of fishing qualifies an accommodation with the label *Gîtes de France*. It includes three conditions:

- Offer the opportunity to fish in vicinity territory;
- Have the necessary equipment;
- Presence of an helpfull owner

²⁷ www.gites-de-france.com

In Italy, the network was established in 2003 through an agreement between WWF Italy, the National Parks Federation (Federparchi), and ANAGRITUR (composed of the three main organisations for agritourism promotion- Agritourist, Terra Nostra, Turismo Verde).

The aim of this project was to differentiate the farms, which were located within or close to protected areas and that adopted measures to conserve and monitor the environmental sustainability.

Agritourisms that have decided to join the programme, have submitted a specific set of management rules, with the aim of saving energy and water, rational use of resources and improving activities on offer²⁸.

The WWF manages more than 100 reserves in Italy, with a total surface of about 30,000 ha, including both private and public lands. The majority of them were established to contribute to the conservation of rare or endangered plants and animal species. Some of the better-known species include goshawks and golden eagles, rare frogs and newts, woodpeckers and wanderer butterflies, orchids and heather, and less conspicuous but equally important species such as rare beetles and lichens²⁹.

²⁸ www.fattoriedelpanda.com

²⁹ www.wwf.it

6. Educational Farm

Educational Farms were born as an effective educational and promotional tool, aimed primarily at children.

There is no univocal definition of Education Farm in Europe: each country has followed its own path, which has led to the creation of different experiences; the unifying goal is to create a connection between rural world and children with their families, and to strengthen the link between the city and the countryside.

In Italy educational farms are called *Fattorie Didattiche* whilst in the UK and Sweden they are called City Farms and Community Gardens.

Pioneers of educational farms in Europe, were the Scandinavian countries, which as early as the twentieth century promoted experiences of life in the countryside for those who lived in the city.

The first farms were created in Norway, Sweden and Denmark, inspired by a youth movement, the *4 H Club*, born in the United States in 1902. The 4H stands for head, health, heart and hands. The aim of the 4H Club is to "engage youth to reach their fullest potential while advancing the field of youth development".

Today in Sweden, there are about 200 4H Club³⁰ which offer a variety of activities, such as camps with the possibility of sleeping on farms or in tents.

In Germany, after World War II, the government supported the creation of "Aktivspielplätze" to give young urban people the chance to learn about farming and live close to nature.

Other types of activities for children and young people related to agricultural environment, such as Adventure Park and Farm Youth were established in Berlin and Stuttgart.

In 1972, there was a further evolution in Germany, with the foundation of the "League of Youth Farms and BdJA Playgrounds". The BdJA³¹ aim is to ensure the responsible development of children and youth, through activities that involve the natural world.

Today, in Germany there are more than 150 farm members.

In the Netherlands the "City Farms" project was started to support the link between the city and the countryside.

³⁰www.4h.se

³¹www.bdja.org

Since 1970 the City Farm was born in Britain and has become a tool for the recovery of abandoned sites, in addition to being an educational and training tool.

In the following years there were initiatives also in Belgium.

In the 90s we could find the first example of Educational Farms in Italy, consisting of a permanent group of educational farms. The project was born with Alimos³², a nonprofit organisation whose mission is to improve innovation processes in fruit and vegetables production, to support environmental protection and to spread a new food culture.

The farmer interest in the creation of a relationship between agriculture and school was the main factor behind the development of European Federation of City Farms (EFCF)³³.

Educational Farms are growing rapidly in Europe, as they represent an opportunity to strengthen the link between farmers and children.

Farmers hosting schools or families at their own agritourism promotes the tradition of farming and can improve their income. The experience in an educational farm can represent an opportunity to discover nature and create a bond with the land around us.

The goal of educational farms is to bring young people and adults to nature.

The Educational Farms involve children, through workshops, games and practical experiences, such as walking among the green crops, attending the harvest of fruits and other products or learning how to make cheese. Visits throughout the year are planned to learn about farming and natural cycles in different seasons.

³²www.alimos.it

³³ www.fattoriedidattiche.biz

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