

**TREASURE**

**HUNT**

**IN YOUR**

**NEIGHBOUR'S**

**BACKYARD**

finding new ways for  
European agritourism

# AN AGRITOURISM TRAINING FRAMEWORK FOR YOUNG EUROPEANS

Treasure Hunt in your Neighbour's Backyard  
2021-1-SE01-KA220-VET-000024850



## FINAL REPORT OF PROJECT RESULT 1

This final report is divided into two distinct parts that are closely linked:

1. Contributions from all partners on case studies in agritourism and other things based on literature and theoretical background
2. Findings from focus groups/interviews with agritourism experts.



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## INTRODUCTION

Agritourism is not a new phenomenon, and its potential benefits extend beyond the boundaries of the farm. It can create positive interactions between non-farmers and farmers and raise awareness of agriculture. It also contributes to the quality of life in communities by expanding recreational opportunities, diversifying the economic base and promoting the conservation of farmland. Agritourism offers school children and adults the opportunity to learn about the state's agricultural heritage, food production and resource management.

### OBJECTIVES

**The TREASUREHUNT project aims to:**

- train agricultural entrepreneurs to develop skills and competencies to innovate their business by linking agriculture and tourism
- increase opportunities for young immigrants and women entrepreneurs to engage in agritourism
- promote the innovation capacity of the whole agricultural sector thanks to the link with tourism, another sector important for the EU economy
- make agritourism, in combination with other land-based businesses, an attractive business field for young entrepreneurs
- stimulate the interest of potential rural entrepreneurs in learning foreign languages by using interdisciplinary teaching methods to learn English and professional skills at the same time
- build a strong network for the exchange of best practises in agritourism

More specifically, the main objective of Result 1 is to list and prioritise the key competences that agricultural entrepreneurs should have in order to develop new tourism offers based on agriculture and experiences gained from agriculture.

This report has been prepared on the basis of information gathered through the partnership:

- previous European experiences/best practises/case studies on agritourism in formal and non-formal learning settings.



- collection of direct inputs from tourism and agriculture experts and cross-fertilisation between the two sectors on perceived needs in terms of competences and skills in the specific area of tourism development in agriculture.
- training needs perceived by the project target group (agricultural entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial, tourism skills and competences).

In particular, Result 1 is a collection of topics linked on the one hand to specific skills and on the other hand to learning and training methods that will be developed in the following phases of the project.

The activities carried out under Result 1 aimed to identify the following:

- Competences required to become an agritourism expert
- Specific needs perceived by agricultural entrepreneurs to stimulate the creation of a new tourist offer based on the elements of rural life.



## TASK 1A PREVIOUS EUROPEAN EXPERIENCES/BEST PRACTICES/CASE STUDIES OF AGRITOURISM IN FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In PR1, 1a we collected consistent and coherent contributions from all partners based on case studies of agritourism in each country based on European projects, on different definitions of agritourism in each country (Sweden, Greece, Spain, Italy, Bulgaria), on a presentation of the existing agritourism offer at the national level (agritourism facilities, enterprises offering agritourism activities and any kind of enterprise related to agritourism) and on the identification of training needs and skills of young (or aspiring) agritourism entrepreneurs.

Before we start with the different countries, we give two short definitions of agritourism.

“*agritourism is a specific type of rural tourism in which the hosting house must be integrated into an agricultural estate, inhabited by the proprietor, allowing visitors to take part in agricultural or complementary activities on the property*”

Marques, 2006

“*agritourism is any practice developed on a working farm with the purpose of attracting visitors*”

Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008

Also, the first world congress on agritourism that took place in Bolzano, 2018, mentioned that agritourism is a sustainable form of tourism that provides an authentic farm holiday experience and “may create numerous multifunctional benefits for sustainable local development and represents an effective instrument to strengthen the viability of rural areas”.



# SWEDEN



## What is agritourism?

Agritourism, or agriturism as it is written in Swedish, is a term that is not used very often in Swedish literature, and even less so in spoken language, probably because the prefix agri- or agro- is associated with the academic world. The word agritourism is a combination of agri, the Latin word for field, and tourism, which means rest in a foreign land. The combination of the two words means that agritourism is a type of tourist activity that involves learning about agricultural activities and relaxing in an agricultural environment. Sweden is a forest-rich country and a typical farm also has forests. Forests play an important role in agritourism, as many activities on farms take place in the forest. The Public Access Act gives everyone the right to be there without the owner's permission. You can camp, pick mushrooms and berries. This may be the reason why the word agritourism is not used so often, as it does not cover activities in the forest.



A term that is often used is naturturistic (nature-based tourism). Naturturistic is relocated (from the city to the countryside) consumption in the form of entertainment, activities and meals that focus on experiencing nature, according to the National Strategy for Nature Tourism 2018.

SUPPORTERS IN ORGANISATIONS  
WORKING WITH MIGRANTS

### **Are there any differences or particular aspects to address about the general concept of Agritourism?**

Interest in general education in agritourism is low among teenagers in Sweden. Teenagers seem to be more interested in activities related to agritourism, e.g. sport fishing, hunting, mountain biking, winter sports. This can of course be a part of agritourism, but it cannot be the main part of education. However, it seems that younger adults in their 20s and above are more likely to accept general topics such as communication, leadership and small business management.

"Agritourism is any practice developed on a working farm with the purpose of attracting visitors" (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008), is a very general but concise and useful definition of agritourism.



**Research related to agritourism case studies by each country based on European projects with particular emphasis on the different learning/training methods applied both at formal and non-formal level.**

#### SUPPORTERS IN ORGANISATIONS

Nature is one of the main reasons for visiting Sweden, not least among international visitors. Nature tourism consists of almost 3000 activity and guide companies, which together with room rentals, restaurants and equipment rentals comprise almost 10,000 companies. Although nature tourism is dominated by single or family businesses, it is one of the most important sources of new jobs in the countryside. Since 2000, the turnover of the hospitality industry has doubled, which means strong growth also outside Sweden's cities and large towns. This is a reason for the government, authorities and industry experts to call nature tourism one of the leading future businesses for rural development.

## Case 1 Tiraholm Fish farm

The Tiraholm estate is a farm with an old lineage and exciting history, and is located on a peninsula stretching out into Lake Bolmen. Today the Ekwall family runs fishing in the lake. The fish is caught, processed, sold and served here at Tiraholm.

The oldest current reference to Tiraholm is the name Tidhra, which dates back to 1414, when the laird Peter Gudmundsson was in charge of the farm. Eneroth, Porat and Löfgren are other family names of those who owned the estate before it was sold to a German sawmill in 1896. In 1907, Tiraholm was bought by Stroemsnaes Bruks AB.



The story of Ebbe Skammelson tells of the mysticism that surrounds Tirahol, dating back to the 11th century. In the early 1920s, Maja, a woman from Stockholm, fell ill with tuberculosis and needed fresh air to improve her health. Doctors were consulted and advised her to stay at Lake Bolmen, where the air was clean and healthy. So her husband Per Ekwall bought the Tiraholm farm in 1928.

The couple had four children and twenty years later their son Gustaf became the owner of the farm together with his wife Theresia.

## The fishing

Gustaf and Theresia had a conventional farm at Tiraholm, mainly involved in milk production; they also did a little fishing. In the late 1950s Gustaf started taking freshly caught fish to the market in Ljungby to sell, mainly the famous Bolmen whitefish, but also pike, eel and perch.

This extra income was a blessing for him and his wife, for in the meantime their family had grown and they were the parents of six children.

The youngest child was Nisse. Together with his wife Vicky, he took over the farm in 1981 and mainly did fishing. His cousin Hugo, who is a fisherman in Lake Mälaren, helped Nisse and Vicky to start fishing with cage nets. Trap nets are a sustainable fishing method where the trap can be left in the water all season long. The nets are emptied regularly and protected species or undersized fish are released back into the waters unharmed.



When Nisse and Vicky took over the farm, they also started breeding rainbow trout in the lake. Over the years, the farm was expanded with a processing plant, smoking machines and newer boats.

### **Farm shop and restaurant**

As Vicky and Nisse settled into their busy roles as fish farmers, they added three children to their family, Jens, Malin and Jonas. In the midst of all this hard work and the pressures of a new family, they were able to open one of Sweden's first farm shops in 1988.

The shop specialised in smoked, pickled, filleted and fresh fish from Bolmen, long before the term "locally produced food" became popular. The shop developed a good reputation and to expand the range, the couple began experimenting with pies and burgers. The next step, opening a small restaurant, was already on the horizon, but there was still a long way to go. In 1998, the fish restaurant Tiraholm's ed opened and became probably the only purely inland fish restaurant in Sweden, and with a very local touch. Pike, pike, eel and rainbow are prepared to order.

In 2006, the need arose for a small function room at Bolmen. After storm Gudrun devastated large parts of the forest on the farm, the wood felled by the storm was cleared and milled. That winter, the wood was used to build a pub and ice cream parlour, as an extension of the existing restaurant.

As the restaurant's popularity grew, so did the number of visitors to Tiraholm. In 2010, the restaurant space was expanded after the children Jens, Malin and Jonas decided to become more involved in their parents' business, which made this further expansion possible.



The restaurant's capacity was increased from 40 indoor seats before to just over 100 today. In 2012, the first "Christmas table" was served to Tiraholm's guests. The event was much appreciated and enjoyed by all - with the skill of the chefs and a lot of creative ingenuity, they now offer around 40 dishes consisting of freshwater fish and a tasty selection of game meat from the forests in the immediate vicinity.

### **Hotel, conference centre and research station**

In early summer 2018, the hotel at Tiraholm was ready for occupancy. Thanks to the careful and delicate work of local craftsmen, our red hotel building with its water-inspired rooms and conference suite came into being. Having a place to stay in our backyard naturally means a more complete experience here on the shores of Bolmen. Tiraholm is also very proud of the fact that the region's companies and organisations hold their important meetings and receive their customers and partners in the "Småland backdrop".

The facility also forms the basis for the educational project "Think H2O", which the research institute Sydvatten has been running for some time in Bolmen for high school students. The young people from Skåne county come to Bolmen to learn about the multidisciplinary aspects of our most important resource, water.

The close cooperation with the research station, which has been on the farm for some time and is run by Sweden Water Research, makes Tiraholm and Bolmen a hub for issues related to water and sea fish in southern Sweden.



Over the years, Tiraholm has thankfully received and been nominated for various awards for its business, ecological thinking and commitment to nature. Tiraholms Fisk is owned and operated by the Ekwall family. They are supported by a few year-round employees and a wonderful crowd of more than 35 seasonal workers from the region.

## Case 2 Skullaryd Moose Park

The moose park is run by Erik Oester.

Erik is 24 years old and has been very attached to nature and animals since he was a child. Attending agricultural school (Stora Segerstad) was the logical choice for him. During his studies, the idea was born to add elk to the existing deer farm that his grandfather started in 1970. Work began in 2012 and the park was finally opened to the public in the summer of 2014.

The family farm dates back to the Viking era and there are cairns and a rune stone near the park. Most of the buildings on the farm date from the mid-1800s, but the oldest buildings date from the early 1700s. The moose park is surrounded by beautiful Swedish nature.

### The vision

One of the goals of the Moose Park is to give people the opportunity to visit the countryside and experience wild native animals.

Another goal is to use the area to study the ecology and relationships between Swedish cloven-hoofed game in cooperation with schools. It is important to remember and respect that these are wild animals.



Therefore, the animals are kept in large enclosures that are as natural to them as possible. All animals are bred in captivity, but they are still wild species.

The moose is the king of the forest and we strongly believe that it is only natural that it has access to forest areas, just as our red deer has access to swamp areas.

This means that your experience at Skullaryd Elk Park will be special. Here you can observe the animals in their natural environment.

### **Mapping and categorisation of the existing agritourism offer at national level (agritourism facilities, enterprises offering agritourism activities and any type of enterprise related to agritourism).**

This section is dedicated to the research to identify and present the number of existing agritourism businesses (supply) in each country (at national level).

#### **Bo på lantgård (Farmstay Sweden)**

Farmstay Sweden (Bo På Lantgård) was founded in 1989. It is an association of more than 100 member farms that offer accommodation for your holiday throughout the country. The member farms offer unique and exciting experiences to guests from all over the world. Guests can personally interact with the farm hosts and learn about farm life, activities and daily routines.

There is a farm for every taste and preference. Try staying on a working farm and help the hosts with the daily chores, or go on exciting excursions into nature.



Many of the farms are open all year round and welcome both private and corporate guests for meetings and celebrations.

Accommodation standards, the "wheat ear" rating is a rating standard used for farm stays in Sweden.

Each farm is rated in several areas and marked with 1 to 5 wheat ears depending on the quality. This is to help guests when booking. A single wheat ear means that the farm has met all the requirements to become a member of Farmstay Sweden. Five wheat ears mean that the farm is of high quality and high standard. Such farms have a Farmstay Sweden logo visible on their farm and website

### **Identifying the training needs and skills of young (or aspiring) agritourism entrepreneurs.**

The organisation, now called Naturturismföretagen "Companies for Nature Tourism", is the only voice and sector organisation working for better conditions for running nature-based businesses and for sustainable business development. They were an important counterpart to the Swedish National Board of Education when the 3-year upper secondary programme in nature tourism was developed. This ensures that the programme reflects the educational needs of the students.

In 2021, the first students will be able to apply for the 3-year upper secondary programme in nature tourism.

The programme, like all Swedish upper secondary programmes, includes Swedish language, English, mathematics, physical education, history, social sciences and religion and entitles students to university studies. The general subjects for all education in land-based industries are biology, entrepreneurship and land-based industries.



Sweden is a forest-rich country and the forest is an important element for all activities related to rural tourism: multiple use of forests, chainsaw usage and off-road vehicles, and plant and soil science. There are two compulsory courses in rural tourism. The first deals with the use, maintenance, and application of safety measures when using basic equipment. After this course, the student is also able to make an open fire and cook.

After the second course, the student will be able to plan and lead group activities. The student should be able to adapt to and meet the individual needs of tourists.

There are also a number of elective courses. For example, small business management, animal husbandry, nature and landscape management, hunting, and wildlife management. There is a third course in rural tourism, which includes specialisation in a particular area or activity of your choice, storytelling, and small business management. The course also covers equipment and safety in the chosen area or activity. At the end, the student can earn a certificate in Nature Leadership.

The three-year programme will not start in autumn 2022 at Stora Segerstad due to the low number of applicants. However, it is possible to start adult education in late autumn. It is likely that such a course would attract a number of students.

In addition to the upper school programme, there are a number of opportunities for adults (> 19 years).



Folkhögskola "folk high school" = liberal adult education; non-formal and voluntary. The philosophy of folkbildning practised in the folk high schools is that all citizens are free and independent individuals who have the right to participate in all aspects of a democratic society. The activities are intended to provide a comprehensive approach, to stimulate curiosity and critical thinking, and to be part of the crucial process of lifelong learning. Folkbildning creates the conditions for people to freely pursue knowledge and contributes to giving them the opportunity to change their lives. Folkbildning is organised in Sweden by study associations (studieförbund) and folk high schools (folkhögskolor). More than ten different training courses in nature tourism are offered, varying in content and duration.

There are some training courses in the yrkeshögskola (vocational school) system that offer up to two years of training, for example, to become a fisheries and game warden.

There are also a number of university-level tourism courses to apply for.

Agritourism is a term that is not very common in Sweden, but it is clear that it is a special case of rural tourism, ecotourism and nature-based tourism. Considering that green sustainability is one of the top priorities of the Erasmus+ programme, we are left with these "commandments" for the treasure hunter looking for new directions for European agritourism.



Some of them are, for example, the following:

1. **Travel less - experience more.** The distance of the journey does not necessarily increase the experience. A shorter distance gives more time for the experience.
2. **Visit neighbours - find the treasures.** A neighbour can be the farmer next to you or even in the countryside next to you.
3. **Drive slowly - skip the highways (and the airways).** If you choose slow modes of transport such as trains and ferries, the environment is known to benefit from lower carbon emissions.
4. **Enjoy the journey - make it your destination.** If you travel slowly, you have the opportunity to make several stops and meet new people before you reach your destination.
5. **Fight placelessness - make sure your destination is a "place".** Make sure your destination is unique. An airport looks the same everywhere in the world, while a small goat farm in the Pyrenees cannot be copied.
6. **Go beyond the big sights - find your own diamonds.** It's not the sunset on Santorini that's so special. It is the sight of all the people who will experience it that is unforgettable.
7. **Produce locally - cook globally.** Use local produce, but there is nothing wrong with following or mixing recipes from around the world.
8. **Show your own disadvantages - they could be gold for others.** If your place is cold and dark - build an ice hotel.
9. **Find the history - increase the value of your finds (provenance).** Learn the history of your place and learn to tell about it.
10. **Find a place to rest - listen to the silence.** Stay overnight and enjoy the silence of the landscape.



# GREECE



## What is agritourism?

Agritourism is a form of tourism that has developed mainly in the United States (1960s), Canada, Austria and France.

In Mediterranean countries, this type of tourism is a more recent phenomenon than in Central and Northern Europe. In countries with an industrial past (the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries, etc.), agritourism has a longer history, as they used agritourism like the way to return to nature for holidays, relaxation and recreation. In contrast, in the European Mediterranean countries, this type of tourism was much more closely linked to the mass tourism model than to rural tourism. Moreover, in these countries, the link between the countryside and the city has dissolved in recent years.

To start with the definition of agritourism in Greece, it is important to define what it means when talking about "rural areas".



In Greece, the delimitation of rural areas is very difficult due to the particular geographical structure of the country, where mountains and the sea lie side by side, while the coasts are only a few kilometres away from inaccessible and remote parts of the country.

For example, there are areas in Greece where the mountains merge directly into the sea, such as Mount Pelion or Mount Olympus. When the term "rural area" is used in Greece, it usually means a place, even if it is in the mountains or by the sea, where agriculture is practised.

The roots of agritourism in Greece lie in various forms of rural tourism that take place on religious holidays such as Easter or on local holidays when city dwellers visit the countryside to meet relatives and friends or to pursue various activities in nature, as well as on weekends.

There are different names for farmers' tourism activities, such as "agrotourism", "farm tourism", "green tourism", "farmers' tourism offer", etc., the variety of which shows the diversity of tourism services offered. The term "agrotourism" (which is more accurate than agritourism in Greece) was first used in Greece in the 1980s and coincides with two developments.

The first was Greece's accession to the European Economic Community in 1981 and the inclusion of agritourism in local and rural development programmes. The second was the issue of gender equality and the standard of living of the rural population.

It is worth mentioning that in Greece there are "agrotourism cooperatives" in rural areas. These cooperatives produce local products such as sweets, spoon sweets, jams, pies, traditional Greek pasta, etc. and/or offer accommodation.



According to the Greek data on agritourism, the interest in the development of agritourism has manifested itself in the last 20 years and is characterised by the absence of national or regional planning. This is due to the lack of clarity on the concept and content of agritourism and even more on the definition of the product by the relevant bodies.

In Greece there is no official planning and programming body, while many different bodies are involved in agritourism activities, such as:

- National Tourism Organisation (NTO)
- Ministry of Development
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Local government organisations (cities and municipalities)
- Rural and urban agritourism cooperatives
- General Secretariat for Demography and Family Policy and Gender Equality

### **Are there any differences or particular aspects to address about the general concept of Agritourism?**

There are different tourism products that can be divided into groups according to their main motive. Agritourism belongs to the category whose main motive is the encounter with nature and rural life (travelling, observing, exercising), together with ecotourism, ski tourism, mountain tourism and sports and rural tourism.

According to the Greek Ministry of Tourism, agritourism is a special form of tourism that belongs to the general form of rural tourism.



More specifically, the Greek Ministry of Tourism's definition of rural tourism is: "Rural tourism is any particular form of sustainable tourism development that aims to bring the visitor - the tourist - closer with nature and the activities that can be developed to strengthen the rural area economically and socially, without altering the environment and the particular cultural elements of the place concerned."

The Greek Ministry of Tourism has also defined ecotourism/green tourism, agritourism or agrotourism, and wine tourism.

Agritourism is a specific form of rural tourism that involves the provision of reception and accommodation services and/or catering in functionally integrated areas with farms, offered in conjunction with activities related to agricultural production and the protection and enhancement of the natural and man-made rural landscape. The agritourism activity must be linked to the production of agricultural products.

Farm-based agritourism concerns the provision of reception and hospitality services or catering. In cases where these enterprises provide catering services, they must use and offer for consumption products from the basket of agricultural and/or handicraft products, without prejudice to the provisions applicable to multifunctional farms.



The agritourism farm may offer its customers purely agricultural activities, such as demonstration, information, monitoring, or participation services in actions and activities that promote the visitor-tourist's contact with rural life, sustainable agricultural production, gastronomy, food and wine tasting, oenology and biodiversity protection, as these individual activities are governed by more specific provisions. If the accommodation is not located on the same site as the farm, the above activities are offered on the farm.

Greece also meets the criteria and conditions for the development of agritourism in many forms of this type of tourism, especially local development. These criteria include the numerous and varied natural and anthropogenic comparative advantages.

Thus, there is agritourism in:

- mountain villages
- traditional settlements
- settlements in areas of special natural beauty
- fishing villages
- villages and farms



**Research related to agritourism case studies by each country based on European projects with particular emphasis on the different learning/training methods applied both at formal and non-formal level.**

#### SUPPORTERS IN ORGANISATIONS

It is well known that EU programmes are the main initiatives for sustainable rural-local development and rural tourism in the EU. These programmes (such as the EU Rural Development Programmes) act like entrepreneurial ideas and efforts in rural tourism are non-recourse and the financial support can help to promote entrepreneurial activities in rural tourism. In this sense, EU development programmes provided the opportunity to expand rural tourism and increase the income of rural people while agricultural production declined.

## **Case 1 Agritourism Cooperative Entrepreneurship**

The aim of this Erasmus+ programme was to develop and promote entrepreneurship among young people, especially in the form of establishing a rural business cooperative. The main action was learning mobility of individuals and the action type was youth mobility. The project was implemented in the period from 1-03-2021 to 31-10-2021 and involved 5 partners from Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania and Moldova.

The purpose of the programme was to involve European citizens in a business initiative related to actions of successful cooperative and agritourism enterprises.



These actions were successful through the exchange of knowledge and experience and the development of new ideas and partnerships. This project can play the role of a forum for the exchange of best practises and forms of innovation, with the aim of highlighting the importance of rural areas, boosting local economies and keeping people in the countryside.

The objectives of the programme were in particular:

- Getting to know the agri-food business model as an alternative form of entrepreneurial activity.
- Raising awareness of active entrepreneurs in order to inform and advise young people who want to become active in entrepreneurship and the social economy
- Exchange of know-how in the fields of cultivation, processing and high-tech farming,
- Training entrepreneurs with modern, targeted training programmes to develop specialised and high value-added human resources
- Transfer best practises from Europe and cultivate a cooperative attitude, both in the short and long term. This action underlines the fact that well-designed and managed agritourism can contribute to its three main dimensions: sustainable development, job creation and trade.



The mobility included 50 male and female agritourism entrepreneurs from the partners' countries who participated for 7 days in Ano Vrontou in Serres, Greece, and had the opportunity to learn about each other's business policies and traditional practises and to learn about the cooperative agricultural business model as an alternative form of business through educational seminars, visits and presentations. Participants also shared their knowledge and practises with young entrepreneurs in the region and sensitised them for their professional integration into cooperative entrepreneurship in agritourism.

## **Case 2 Students' training on new methods of tourism promotion and management of clientele of Agritourism Lodgings**

The aim of this Erasmus+ project was to provide knowledge and technical skills to 14 students of 1st EPAL Glyfadas attending 2nd and 3rd grade in the field of "Finance and Business Administration" to help them orientate themselves in career choices that are promising either in the tourism industry or in the industry of advertising and promoting products and services using modern social media tools. The main action was the mobility of individuals for learning purposes and the action type was VET Mobility of learners and staff. The project was carried out in the period from 20-07-2018 to 19-07-2019 and involved 2 participating countries: Greece and Italy.



The purpose of the programme was to teach students new methods for the management and organisation of small agritourism hospitality businesses so that they could gain a competitive advantage through internet access and customer management. Tuscany is undeniably the pan-European model in the field of agritourism, as it has managed to link accommodation services with other productive sectors, especially primary production, which has brought the local economy to a very high level.

The objectives of the programme focused on:

- students' knowledge of current trends in social media and how best to use them to effectively promote agritourism businesses
- knowledge of specific tactics as well as significant results achieved in terms of developing an interactive relationship with potential visitors and customer management
- tools for advertising through social media
- better knowledge of the factors that influence and attract the target groups that choose to spend their holidays in agritourism accommodation

The total duration of the project was 16 days including travel, from 27/3/2019 to 11/4/2019. It took place in the Tuscany region of Italy, starting in Rome for 2 days.



To achieve the above objectives, this programme focused on the following activities:

- Educational visits to agritourism installations:

1. "Guardastelle" in San Gimignano
2. "Villa Mosconi Bertani" in Verona
3. "Il Ciocco Ciocco" in Castelveccchio Pascoli, Lucca
4. "Il Cerreto" in Pomarance, Pisa
5. "Agriturismo Alberese" in Alberese.

- Educational visit to the "Coldiretti" agriturismo in Pistoia

- Educational visit to the Department of Tourism of the University Campus in Lucca

- Seminars entitled: "Agritourism in the European framework - presentation on EU funding for the tourism sector" & "The ability to develop a social network strategy" by Mrs. Cristina Zygomalas

- Meeting with the advertising and communication agency Media Firenze and presentation of local start-ups by Mr. Gregorio Salimbeni

The efforts of the accompanying teachers focused on imparting knowledge that can be absorbed by the underage secondary students. A key component to the success of the activities was the interaction between the students and the representatives of the companies where the study visits took place.



## Case 3 Next Destination Balkans: Agritourism Landscapes Development (LANDS)

SUPPORTERS IN ORGANISATIONS  
WORKING WITH MIGRANTS

This Erasmus+ project aimed to understand the opportunities that agritourism offers to the tourism sector in the Western Balkans region and to contribute to strengthening the capacity of HEIs to play an active role in the development of society by improving the quality of life in rural areas through the diversification of the rural economy. The main action was cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practises and the action type was capacity building in higher education. The project was implemented in the period from 15-10-2017 to 14-02-2021 and involved 6 partners from Serbia, Greece, Slovenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Romania and Slovakia.

The approach to developing and promoting agritourism is supported by:

- Increased cooperation of multi-sectoral actors at local level led by higher education institutions in tourism, agriculture and management, 2 regional development agencies in Serbia and 2 regional development agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina and regional NGOs
- Increased provision of training courses for professionals/adults in the field of agri-tourism (with a focus on ICT-based courses)
- Expanded training offer for teachers and other stakeholders on EU CAP and IPARD in BiH, as well as on cross-cutting competences in the agritourism sector in both Serbia and B&H



With the support of well-known EU partners - Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Greece - the following key outputs were prepared:

- Situation analysis: understanding of the agritourism sector and agritourists, review of local initiatives, courses, results of stakeholder consultation, identification of product development and land potential
- Toolkits for agritourism: in order to provide farmers and other stakeholders interested in agritourism with the necessary information, the project team developed a website and launched a Moodle platform where relevant information, a professional course catalogue on agritourism topics and cross-cutting competences can be found
- Boosting agritourism throughout the Western Balkans and bringing its landscapes closer to the EU in the medium term



Specific objectives of the LANDS project were:

- To develop and accredit a set of professional courses in agritourism that will enable new entrants to develop professionally.
- Strengthening the didactic and pedagogical skills of academic staff to train agritourism and rural economy educators through the use of ICT leading to improved skills required for EU pre-accession funding for rural development (IPARD) and other funds of the various agritourism stakeholders. Professional development of the teaching staff in the colleges is one of the key areas for the successful implementation of the project outcomes as well as for the adult education of professionals and new entrants in the field of agritourism.
- In order to strengthen the capacities and competences of agritourism trainers as a continuation of the previous Tempus project AGRIVOC Training Centre Development and to successfully deliver modern training courses in agri-tourism for sector professionals and newcomers, as well as to improve access to non-formal education in this field, Serbian higher education institutions benefitted from the introduction of e-learning educational opportunities.

**Mapping and categorisation of the existing agritourism offer at national level (agritourism facilities, enterprises offering agritourism activities and any type of enterprise related to agritourism).**

### **Number of existing agritourism businesses**

In 2018, Nikos Frantzeskakis, President of the Hellenic Agritourism Association, prepared a dossier with application materials by 40 businesses seeking licensing as Multifunctional Farms.



The Network of Cooperating Multifunctional Farms (ΔΙΣΠΑ) is group of 40 agritourism businesses, that in 2017 had developed the following map of cooperating multifunctional farms. To compile this list, Frantzeskakis sent out a self-evaluation questionnaire to interested businesses, and asking them to provide the relevant application material.



Network of cooperating multifunctional farms applying for the official agritourism licence from 2018. The network is the result of a self-assessment questionnaire sent by the Greek Agritourism Association to its members.



The Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), in its 2016 survey of farms reporting some kind of agritourism activity, gave the very different figure of 581 farms with agritourism activities and thus multifunctional farms. The corresponding figures for the 2021 survey are currently being prepared by ELSTAT, but there are indications that the number of multifunctional farms will be reduced by 50%.

It is possible that farmers were never really interested in agritourism, although agritourism was created mainly as a means to generate additional income for farmers. This view was also supported by the deputy head of one of the regional tourism administrations, who stated that "it is not farmers who are interested in agritourism, but investors who have nothing to do with agriculture". The same source explained that the ROI from agritourism does not come close to the ROI from a pure agricultural or hotel business or a restaurant, which is due to the inefficient use of resources.

A farm can gradually develop into a hotel unit through an intermediate stage of agritourism. Assuming that the farm has all the other necessary assets required by law and starts with a very limited number of rooms, the farm will gradually build more rooms as income from visitors increases (see Blue Bay Resort Hotel case study).

The difference between farmers and investors is that a farmer earns his income by cultivating a vacant piece of land, while investors would earn their income by building a few more rooms on a vacant piece of land.



Keeping a piece of land for agritourism may just be a pretext; the real plan of the investors is to wait for the opportunity and/or additional resources to convert the land into rooms and make a profit when other circumstances allow (see case study, Hotel Margi). The land is held until financing is approved and development can begin.

On closer inspection, ELSTAT's estimate of 581 farms with agritourism activities is perhaps not so unreasonably high. In a recent interview, the President of the Hellenic Agritourism Association, Nikos Frantzeskakis, spoke of more than 1000 registered agritourism farms in Greece.

In the first assessment, our team investigated this number and found that it is likely to be at least partially true. The website tripadvisor.com lists about 1000 Greek establishments in the field "accommodation" when searching with the keyword "farm". These are self-proclaimed "agritourism" farms, similar to the farms reporting "agritourism" activities in the 2016 ELSTAT survey. However, it is not known how many of these 1000 farms are registered and where, and whether they meet the specifications for certification as a multifunctional farm set out in Greek Ministerial Decree No. 543/34450/2017 (Government Gazette B1145/2017).

We asked all 14 regional tourism agencies by phone how many agritourism licences they have issued so far. Some of the agencies stated that they cannot disclose such information due to GDPR restrictions; however, most of them responded that they have not issued that many agritourism licences, and they acknowledged that they have issued 1-2 licences, so the total number of licenced agritourism businesses does not exceed 30 or 40. Our team has only seen the agritourism licence of Nikos Frantzeskakis displayed on his website [Fabrica Houses & Farm](#).



## **Identifying the training needs and skills of young (or aspiring) agritourism entrepreneurs.**

Very broad guidelines of how to start an agritourism business are provided in the 2012 National Greek Tourism Organization publication “How to establish a rural tourism business”, assuming that rural tourism and agritourism are not very different from each other.

To identify the training needs and skills required for young agritourism entrepreneurs, it is necessary to obtain first a picture of what training resources are currently available and what they offer, what the hotels/agritourism businesses want and what they offer in terms of employment, how demand can be successfully bridged with supply and what gaps and opportunities are generated in the process.

### **Educational Institutions**

There is a large number of educational institutions directly or indirectly involved in (agri)tourism teaching and training. They range from private and public vocational training schools, all the way up to higher education institutions (Universities and upper technical training schools).

### **Courses and Degrees**

Subjects and specializations range from “agritourism technician” with detailed syllabus and program of studies published by the General Secretariat of Continued Education and Lifelong Learning, all the way up to Doctorate Degrees in the field of agritourism by institutions such as the University of the Aegean, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and others, whereas a number of other Universities have announced openings for Doctorate Candidates.



There is a lot of student interest in agritourism, as can be seen from the large number of graduation studies prepared on the subject.

## Employment Survey

The 2021 Employment survey in Greek Hotels found that:

- 85% of the hotels employ up to 25 people.
- The educational/training level of hotel employees is fairly low. About 24% of the total hotel employees have graduated from tourism schools.
- The highest percentage (32%) of tourism school graduates are employed by 5\* hotels and the lowest (15.5%) by 1\* hotels.
- Greek hotels are understaffed. Only 16,000 positions of the approximately 22,000 job vacancies (about 73%) are actually covered. Most available positions (5,254 and 4,628) are for housekeeping and director/managers and only 76% and 73% are covered, respectively. This has important impact on the quality of services offered. The lowest coverage with only 57% of the 227 available positions regards IT.
- Of the approximately 6,000 and 4,000 vacancies in South Aegean Islands and Crete, only 75% and 73% were covered, respectively.

The above are true for conventional hotels, and Agritourism installations are simply nowhere in the picture.



### Action required:

1. Hotel industry image upgrade as a fair employer, offering job security and opportunities for professional development, not an opportunist slave employer.
2. Educational institutions must restructure their program of studies to evolve in response to fast-changing market demands, and prepare students realistically, with the appropriate balance between theoretical knowledge and practical experience.
3. Establish a well-planned and flexible lifelong learning program with enhanced access to it and certification system.
4. Tighter integration between educational institutions and the industry.

### **New Technologies in the Hospitality Industry**

The Penetration and Use of New Technologies in the Hotel Industry study found that 92% of hotels have an internet presence (website) and 81% of the remaining 8% would create a website if they had the means. Hotels' websites are translated into 1.3 languages on average, with 1 in 3 hotels' website only in Greek and 36% in two languages (English is usually the second language). In addition, more than 3/4 of hotels are present on social networks, with most hotels updating their profile weekly by qualified full time employees, while 50% of hotels hire professionals to take photos, translate and develop digital content such as banners, commercials, menus and video posts for the hotel website. Hoteliers are keen to learn and train themselves and their staff in e-marketing and new technologies.

Again, the above applies to conventional hotels. There is scepticism about the necessity or applicability of the above findings to agritourism businesses.



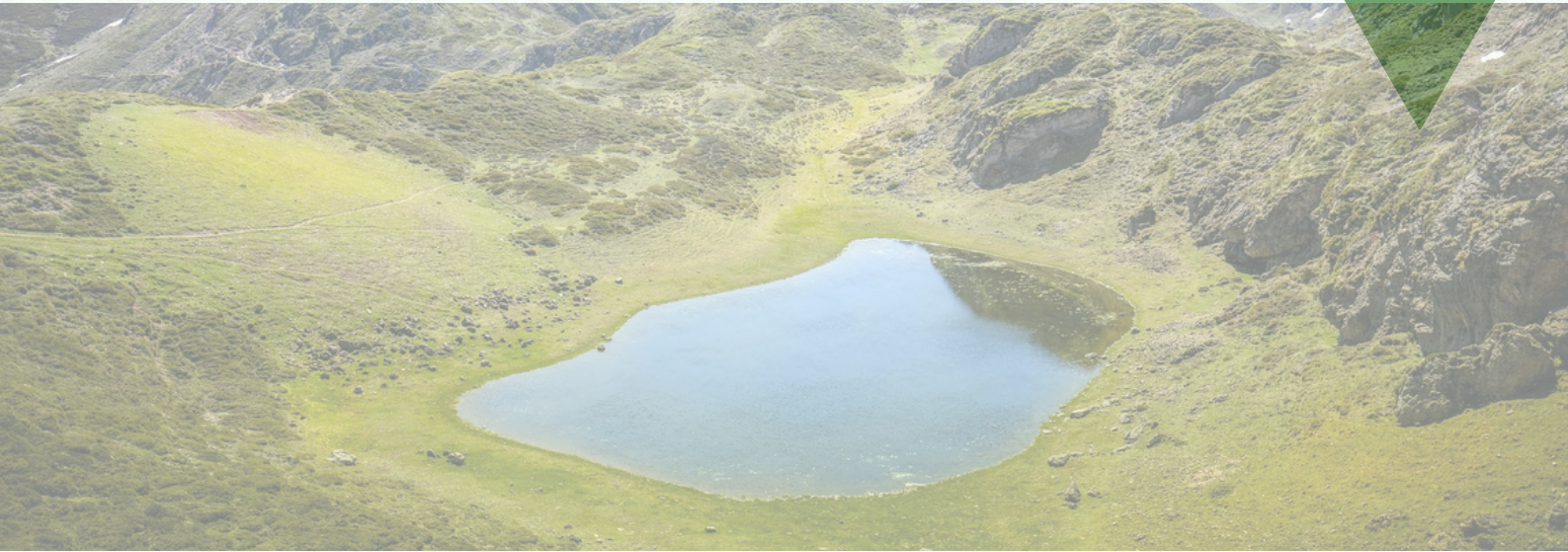
However, many small hotels of the size required by agritourism have recognised the benefits of new technologies and have already installed some of these new technologies. Moreover, the cost (£40 - €60 per month) for a full suite of Property Manager, Website Manager, Channel Manager, Payment Manager, Guest Manager, Performance Manager, Promo Manager and Owner Manager applications is not prohibitively high.

### **Educational Needs (Courses to be developed)**

1. Most importantly, agritourism in Greece must formulate a vision
2. Crisis Management
3. Short courses/soft skills on PMS, Channel Manager, Booking Engine, Reputation Manager, Revenue Management, Business Intelligence, ERP software
4. Provide lists of alternative and free & open-source software for various tasks
5. Data Analytics



# SPAIN



## What is agritourism?

Rural tourism in Spain appeared in the 1980s, with the emergence of new rural tourism initiatives in autonomous communities such as Andalusia, the Rural Houses of Navarra, the Basque Agrotourism or rural tourism in Asturias. It is in this autonomous community in which in 1985 DITASA (Desarrollo Integral de Taramundi SA) was constituted, this was one of the first advances related to agrotourism in Spain. After the success of Taramundi's performance, in the 90s more rural houses began to open, as well as more trails and even ethnographic museums where the traditional local culture was shown. It was in the 1990s when the PRODER program was developed in Spain (1996), and there was a strong growth in rural tourism.



## **Are there any differences or particular aspects to address about the general concept of Agritourism?**

At present there are different initiatives aimed at improving the conditions of competitiveness and quality of Rural Tourism in Spain. We have the Law for the Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment (Law 45/2007) which includes the promotion of Rural Tourism through the Sustainable Rural Development Programs.

Agritourism is an economic activity with a great projection in Spain and is presented as an alternative to sun and beach tourism. It can contribute greatly to the economic development of rural areas, local development, and the conservation of the historical, cultural, and environmental heritage of the rural areas of our country.

It is worth mentioning that, in Spain, there is no national standard referring to agritourism, so each autonomous community will refer to the term with different nuances, which is a problem referred to by the different Spanish agritourism associations, since harmonization and consistency of the term at the national level is necessary to develop this type of tourism.

From the different definitions made by the autonomous communities we can extract some common characteristics:

- Tourist services and the possibility of participation in the exploitation by the owner.
- The exploitation must be active and located in the rural environment.
- To offer the possibility of lodging.
- Sale of the farm's own products or products from the surrounding area.



**TURESPAÑA**, is the public organism assigned to the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism, through the Secretary of State for Tourism. It is mainly in charge of the marketing of Spain as a tourist destination in the world.

Some of the main characteristics and data of interest about rural tourism in Spain are:

- Summer as the season with the highest occupancy, more frequent and stable.
- The general valuation of the travelers on rural tourism is very positive, 4,3 points on 5.
- The main weakness of this type of tourism is its seasonal nature, with very irregular occupancy throughout the year.
- Lack of segmentation, 75% of rural lodgings do not have any type of specialization.
- The rural lodging sector is not very well organised in trade unions; only one-third of the rural lodging sector is a member of a rural tourism association.
- National tourism accounts for 75% of clients on average. But it varies a lot depending on the community.
- Average visitor age between 35-64 years old.
- Average stay of more than 5 days.

We can mention certain programmes or projects that have taken part in the rural environment of our country. The European Commission is proposing a Rural Pact and a Rural Action Pact to strengthen and make rural areas sustainable.



## **Research related to agritourism case studies by each country based on European projects with particular emphasis on the different learning/training methods applied both at formal and non-formal level.**

### **SUPPORTERS IN ORGANISATIONS**

It is not easy to find cases in which the agritourism model has been implemented or developed through a European project. However, we can mention certain programmes or projects that have taken part in the rural environment of our country. The European Commission is proposing a Rural Pact and a Rural Action Pact to strengthen and make rural areas sustainable.

In recent years, the rural tourism sector in Spain has developed exponentially. The interest of people from cities or semi-urban localities to learn more about life in the countryside is increasing every year. In 2018, while the rest of the tourist offers stagnated or even went down, the rural offer went up by 2.3% compared to the previous year. The expansion of rural tourism is also related, to the boom of products made on farms, it is increasingly noticeable as the consumption of organic products is increasing, and it is because of this, so they have an increasing presence in supermarkets across the country. The zero-kilometer product is increasingly valued, as well as restaurants that base their cuisine on these products of proximity and organic. It is due to this rural boom that more and more agricultural entrepreneurs are opting to incorporate agritourism as an economic activity in rural areas.



We will now comment on some cases of agritourism in Spain.

## Case 1 Village Life

Xosé Ramón Rodríguez Iglesias, a dairy farmer dedicated to intensive milk production, with the hardening of the economic conditions of the industry because of the economic crisis of 2007 and seeing how profit margins were increasingly reduced, decided to incorporate a series of changes in his workspace to enjoy what the rural environment has to offer while carrying out his daily work. The owner states that he did not decide to undertake a tourism project, but that it was something that came about by itself. Xosé does not carry out promotional actions in conventional media or social networks but rather takes advantage of the power of word of mouth of those who have already visited his facilities. It should be added that despite the success of his Vida de Aldea project, he did not follow the steps recommended by specialists: he did not receive training, nor did he seek advice or draw up a strategic plan.

The owner affirms that he began by conditioning and rehabilitating all the spaces of the farm, to live in a habitat as attractive and comfortable as possible, he did this to live and work in a space where he felt at ease. His next step was to diversify the activity, renting unused orchard land; this meant that more people approached the space he had conditioned and were interested in renting some buildings for parties, birthdays, and even weddings. His business was growing, because of these emerging ideas that users could enjoy, from animal husbandry and leisure in recreational and informative areas throughout the farm to specific activities for school visits.



The owner says that one of the keys was to implement this model without loans or major works, but rather by having imagination and giving new uses to what he already had.

To be consistent with the way of life shown to visitors, the people in charge of Vida de Aldea changed the farm from conventional intensive to grazing with organic milk production. Among the options for tourism, the Vida de Aldea project uses the formula of visit + activities, they continue with the leasing of the orchard areas, they carry out tree planting activities for the visitors, and the didactic factor acquires a special importance, the children are shown photographs of how the farm was in the past and it is compared with its current state, so that they can appreciate that in the rural world you can live in different ways and it is a sector that also advances and evolves. In addition to their tourist offer, they collaborate with social entities such as the “Coordinadora Galega de Persoas con Discapacidade” or the association “Dignidade”, which works with minors, in both cases the facilities are put at their disposal to carry out activities.

It is worth mentioning that Vida de Aldea offers neither lodging nor food service, so it limits its activity to visits and activities. In relation to this, those responsible for the project consider that it would be positive for other farms to offer these lodging and food services with traditional and local products, to create a network that would promote the development of these agrotourism companies, as well as the local development of the area.



## Case 2 Can Gel

In this case it is a family business with a centenary trajectory in the production of milk. They have recently decided to turn this farm into a quality tourist resource. The idea arose from people's curiosity about the animals and the business, so they thought of taking advantage of that curiosity as a market opportunity. In this case, the owners did take advice before making the decision, they carried out a market study that concluded that the influx was guaranteed by the flow that could come from Barcelona (40 kms away) as well as by the one thousand seven hundred educational centers that are in 60 kms around. Therefore, their strategy is based on adapting their activities to children with the didactic units of the Catalan Department of Education, so that children go to Can Gel to have fun, but above all to learn.

Once the decision was made to transform the business and open the doors to agritourism, the farm was refurbished to ensure the provision of the highest quality service. A room was created to receive and attend to visitors, information panels were placed, and viewpoints were built from which to contemplate the work carried out with the cows and the milk.

It is remarkable the influence that this tourism has on the production and the business, the people in charge of Can Gel affirm that the tourism wants the cows to go out to graze, this makes that the milk is revalued so that the buyers pay more for it. This is one of the indirect positive effects that the transformation of an agricultural or livestock farm into an agritourism model can have.



Visits are made in small groups and without haste so that the visitor can take advantage of the day and perceive that it is something exclusive and personalized, it is very important to spend time with the visitor, explain as much as possible, and listen to their doubts and impressions. One of the keys Can Gel, according to its owners, is the familiarity of the project, as well as the close relationship it has with visitors.

In this case, they do not prepare meals for visitors, although there is the possibility of hiring an external catering service, nor do they produce their own products, but they do sell by-products manufactured by the brand that buys their milk. They also have merchandising products with Can Gel branding. The owners also highlight the importance of promotion on social networks for Can Gel, they work with Facebook, Instagram, or Google Business, as well as with specific portals for recreational and educational activities. However, they assure that the best method of promotion is word of mouth. They estimate that 60% of the people who visit their farm do so recommend by a previous visitor. Finally, Can Gel also believes that it is positive to create a social fabric around their farm, this means that visitors stay and consume in places close to the area, so that in this way there is a benefit for the local community.



## Case 3 Cudaña Farm "Only love beats Cudaña's milk"

Cudaña Farm is a family business located in the north of Spain dedicated for several generations to the agricultural and livestock sector. They establish work, commitment, honesty, loyalty, gratitude, friendship and family as family values and lines of conduct, reflecting it in their agricultural and livestock exploitation.

They base their philosophy on the term Cow Comfort, an expression that literally refers to the cow's comfort, applied essentially to the dairy cow. This comfort implies taking care of all the circumstances surrounding the animal's life, considering the cow's comfort and comfort in the resting area and time. Guaranteeing this degree of animal welfare is very important to ensure a high and efficient production level, to reduce the incidence of pathologies and injuries, to satisfy the growing demand for products obtained in a way that respects the animal, as well as to maintain local production in the face of imports from countries with lower levels of animal welfare in their production processes.

Among the productive activities they develop are the sale of pasteurized milk, the sale of embryos and heifers of genetic quality, the manufacture and sale of their milk vending machine, the distribution and sale of the LELY milking robot, animal nutrition services, as well as advice on the Cow Comfort technique.



In addition to this, they offer activities such as a guided tour in which visitors are shown the production process, as well as the facilities, they are educated about animal welfare on farms and the children can enjoy bottle-feeding newborn calves, the visit includes a tasting of products made with Cudaña Milk. A cheese workshop is also offered as a complement to the guided tour, in which you can learn how to make your own cheese in the workshops of Granja Cudaña, and you can also take your own fresh cheese home. As an activity in development, "escape from the labyrinth" is presented, this will be a new attraction to enjoy with the family, a labyrinth built with corn.

As for social networks, they play an important role in terms of promoting Granja Cudaña and have both their own website and their own Facebook and Instagram. On their website there is an online store section where you can purchase the products, they make at Granja Cudaña, these can be purchased both online and physically in the guided tours and different activities they perform.

### **Mapping and categorisation of the existing agritourism offer at national level (agritourism facilities, enterprises offering agritourism activities and any type of enterprise related to agritourism).**

The diversity and richness of the landscape and nature is one of the most important characteristics of nature in Spain. We can find from alpine meadows, lagoons, Mediterranean and oceanic coasts, alkaline forests, volcanic landscape, even desert. This great environmental variety is determined by two fundamental factors, the soil, and the climate of our country.



Around this landscape and natural diversity, we can structure a model of rural tourism, understanding this as a modality of nature or alternative tourism, in which the pleasure of traveling is combined with methods and formulas that mitigate the negative impact on nature. We can say that rural tourism consists of those trips in which people coexist and interact with rural communities, with the actors of the rural environment and under the principles of sustainable development. We can identify different types of rural tourism in Spain, and we can establish up to five different ones:

## **Green Tourism**

This is an option focused on the environment and the integration of the traveler with the surrounding landscapes. This is a style in which people explore the landscape, the terrain, learn to relate to the environment and connect with the essence of each destination. Within this green tourism we find different possibilities in terms of the activities that tourists can enjoy, from hiking, horseback riding or cycling routes, to camping in natural landscapes.

In any case, there is an alternative for those who are not seduced by the previous ideas since they do not contemplate sacrificing comfort during their stay. This alternative are the Glampings, these are conditioned spaces in the middle of nature, which offer totally comfortable living conditions.



## **Agritourism**

This is one of the best-known versions of rural tourism, as well as one of the most practiced and demanded by tourists. It consists of a type of tourism in which services are offered in the own rural exploitations, like farms or agricultural exploitations. These farms normally offer both accommodation and activities or experiences related to the daily production process of the farm. The essence of this tourism proposal focuses on the traveler being able to stay in a place where rural activities such as agriculture or livestock farming are actively carried out, in which the tourist can be integrated as an observer and participant or apprentice.

It is a perfect form of tourism for tourists to immerse themselves in the rural lifestyle, as well as to integrate, get to know and learn about the way of life of people in rural areas.

## **Adventure Tourism**

This type of tourism is aimed at adventurous people who are seduced by excitement and adrenaline. This format consists of the development of activities of adventure and discovery in the natural environment, by means of which the tourist connects with the environment and the landscape and environment that surrounds him.

This modality is usually the most demanded among younger segments of the population, since it offers them the possibility of carrying out activities in which adrenaline acquires an important weight such as climbing, canyoning, rafting, diving, survival games or paragliding jumps.



This is a good way to bring the natural environment closer to this segment of the younger population to raise awareness about the importance of caring for the natural environment and the development of activities under the principles of environmental sustainability

### **Event Tourism**

In this typology, the cultural element acquires special importance. These experiences can take place in both rural and urban environments, and are always associated with specific events or activities, generally historical or cultural events, as well as commemorations. This can be the case of religious tourism such as Easter or festive tourism at times like carnival.

As for the rural environment, we see how certain activities or specific events are also located in rural areas, there are towns with traditions or important festivities whose enjoyment comes hand in hand with immersion in the natural environment. We see as examples the magical autumn in the Ambroz Valley (Cáceres). The night of the Candles in Pedraza, the medieval village of the legend of Sant Jordi, Montblanc, whose festivity is on April 23rd. Therefore, the preponderance of the cultural element is of vital importance for event tourism, and the location in the natural environment of towns with significant traditions or festivities, as well as natural events of scenic interest, attract tourists directly to nature.



## Ecotourism

This is another of the most popular and demanded rural tourism categories. It focuses on the possibility of traveling through rural zones and areas without degrading or disturbing them, enjoying their landscapes, wild flora, and fauna, but without generating any damage to the ecosystem and natural environment. In this type of tourism practices, priority is given to the interaction of the tourist with the environment, from a formative and educational point of view. It is sought that the traveler appreciates nature, rural societies and the means and ways of life of the regions visited from a perspective of integration, conservation, and respect for the environment, in addition, it is pursued the education that the visitor will acquire about the natural environment.

On the other hand, attending to the criteria of landscape or climate depending on the rural zone that the tourist wishes to visit, we can find a wide variety in the offer of rural tourism in Spain. We can establish some examples of some regions in which, for its landscape, productive and natural peculiarities, different activities are offered independently of the type of rural tourism that takes place in the zone. Some examples of this are:

- **Euskadi**, with its wide plains, mountain massifs, green forests, spectacular cliffs, rich marshes, and relaxing beaches. It is famous for its gastronomic tradition. Farmhouses, cider production, Idiazabal Denomination of Origin cheese.



- **Navarra** is especially rich in biodiversity and landscapes due to the biogeographical convergence of Atlantic, Alpine and Mediterranean regions. The "Agorutas Navarra", ideal scenery and tourist attractions combined with leisure activities related to agrotourism, stand out.
- **Asturias** and the Region of the Cider, stands out for its infinite landscapes, both mountainous, as valleys, valleys, sheepfolds, cliffs, lush forests, fairytale villages. Here we find the "Route of the apple and cider", it is also famous for dairy production, we will also find craft workshops, jewelry, wood.
- **Galicia** with its seafaring tourism, offers the possibility to embark as a sailor and live the fishing trade. Its landscape stands out for the majestic Galician estuaries, spectacular cliffs, beaches, and islands. We can find picturesque fishing villages and some of the best seafood in the world.

### Identifying the training needs and skills of young (or aspiring) agritourism entrepreneurs.

There are different studies that have been carried out in Spain on rural tourism, some of which provide interesting data to establish the strategic direction to be followed by the agritourism businessman when developing his business. Below, we will name the studies and their main conclusions that establish training needs and guidelines to follow in the development of agritourism businesses. As a result of these ideas that we will identify in the studies we will talk about the training needs and skills required by young agritourism entrepreneurs.



The studies consulted are:

- o **International Study on Rural Tourism in Spain** (Carried out by Toprural in collaboration with the European University of the Canary Islands and Sondeo.com, Published in Andalucía Lab).
- o **Analysis of the situation of rural tourism in Spain 2020** (Raúl García López, digital portal formacionenturismo.com).
- o **Rural Tourism in Spain, Strategic Orientations for a typology still in development** (Pulido, J & Cárdenas, P. Bulletin of the Association of Spanish Geographers, University of Jaén).
- o **Situation and perspectives of rural tourism in Spain, strategies for action.** (Valdés, L & Del Vale, E. Papeles de Economía Española N° 128).

One of the main ideas is the identification of a cycle of 5 phases through which the consumer or tourist passes before, during and after the use and enjoyment of the rural activity.

The first of these is the "dream", this phase is the appearance of a need to cover on the part of the consumer.

The second phase is where the entrepreneur appears, it is the "planning" phase, when the tourist, having identified the dream or need to satisfy, uses information about the destination as the most valuable tool. The tourist will gather this information through different channels, photographs of the destination, opinions and recommendations, websites, social networks, videos of the place and the experiences or activities that take place there.



The third phase is the "booking" phase, in which, once the offer of tourist activities has been analyzed, the individual will choose one based on his preferences and make his reservation, with special relevance being given to the effectiveness and efficiency of the way in which this reservation is made. Therefore, the visitor-destination interaction through "Social Media" is a key element for the strategic marketing of the service.

The fourth phase is the "experience", this will be conditioned by the level of suggestion or expectations that the tourist will have by the way in which the service was sold and offered through the offer showcase. The fulfillment of the tourist's expectations and a higher-than-expected satisfaction becomes an element of user loyalty.

The last of the phases is the "sharing" phase. The completion of the tourist activity is reflected in the verification of the visitor's satisfaction and loyalty; the recommendation of a satisfied tourist will be of special interest, since this is the best marketing campaign in the rural tourism sector.

On the other hand, some interesting data from these studies will be useful when it comes to establishing objectives in terms of the training required by entrepreneurs:

- Summer stands out as the stage with the highest occupancy, to a greater extent frequent and stable.
- Tourists look for rural trips mainly through their mobiles (70%), while 24% do it with a computer.
- The main weakness of this type of tourism is centered on seasonality, with very irregular occupancy throughout the year.



- Lack of segmentation, 75% of rural lodgings do not have any type of specialization.
- Scarce internet connectivity in rural lodgings, rural houses should be encouraged to offer a fast and secure internet connection service.
- It is surprising that 70% of travelers wish to make their reservation online but only 15% manage to do so. It is also surprising that 24% of reservations are made by phone call, and 60% of these by e-mail, provided by a rural tourism web portal.
- The rural lodging sector is not very associated, only one third of the rural lodging sector is a member of a rural tourism association.
- The average expenditure in Spain for rural accommodation is 33 euros per tourist per day and 31 euros for other concepts. The German tourist is the one that spends more in rural tourism in Spain, with an average of 47 euros the lodging per day and 33 euros in other concepts.

In addition to this we also have to take into account the evidence of deficiencies at the business level, due to the low training of businessmen and workers in the rural tourism sector, the atomization and fragmentation of the rural tourism business, the deficiencies in the promotion of the destination, a consequence of other deficiencies (lack of training, lack of knowledge and insufficient resources), as well as the insufficient sales, at least the failure to meet expectations, to which should be added the low productivity of the tourism companies, the limited offer of services that generate a certain added value, and still weak business and public networks.



Therefore, the great challenge for rural tourism is promotion and marketing to increase the market share on an international scale, since in many Spanish regions it is almost non-existent. To achieve this, it is necessary the creation of a differential offer, sustained in the personality and identity of each territory, and that responds to segments of demand to a greater extent concrete and specialized. At the same time, it is necessary to bet on technology to bring the rural tourism offer closer to the potential client and to improve the client's experience from the moment he/she receives information about the service and makes the reservation.

## Training Needs

It is essential to train and inform local entrepreneurs about the knowledge about rural tourism development that favors competitiveness, as well as quality in the offer, to try to guarantee greater sustainability and long-term progress in the agrotourism sector. As we have seen, the development of social networks and company web portals for promotion is very important. In addition, the ease of booking from the web portal is of added importance, since it is often not possible to make a reservation in a comfortable and autonomous way without contacting by phone or email. This is highly valued by tourists and improves their experience from the third "booking" phase. In addition, we must consider the particularities of the Spanish model, we see how 70% of users search for their rural trips through cell phones, it is therefore important to design social networks and web portals to be compatible with cell phone interfaces.



The rural businessman must know techniques that make it possible to be attractive in less crowded times of the year, to try to give some stability and regularity to the agritourism business during the year, regardless of the season. In this sense, information should be offered on activities to be carried out depending on the time of year, creating differentiation between them, and making them attractive to tourists.

Another characteristic highlighted by the studies is the lack of technology in agritourism accommodations or services. This is an important point, since tourists value aspects such as Internet connectivity in the lodging. Therefore, the installation of technological improvements in agritourism spaces should be promoted. Training must also be provided on economic criteria of effectiveness and efficiency, quality of service, information, and digital marketing, to improve the competitiveness and knowledge of these new rural entrepreneurs and lay a good foundation for the agrotourism sector. Many of the rural lodgings do not have any type of specialization, so by offering information about agrotourism or the rural tourism offer, it is possible to develop a tourism offer beyond lodging, with collaboration between local companies or nearby rural tourism associations. It is also important to encourage associations within the rural tourism sector, since it is a sector with few associations, and this has a direct influence on its state of mind. With an associated and related rural sector, the long-term sustainability of the model will be promoted. Finally, we can establish certain preferences in agritourism studies in each country and based on these preferences and demands of the different types of tourists in each country, orient the supply and marketing strategies of agritourism entrepreneurs to these specific demands.



In conclusion, the strategies on which rural tourism should focus are new technologies, associations and networking, product quality and training of entrepreneurs. The new technologies applied to the company allow to improve the management and to position itself better before the tourist, it favors an immediate promotion and commercialization. Working in a network through associations allows to reduce the competitive limitation derived from their small size and favors a stronger interlocution with the administrations. Quality is the key to the competitiveness and sustainability of the rural tourism sector. Training is the fundamental element for the correct knowledge of management techniques, quality, new technologies that allow the entrepreneur to innovate to maintain the competitiveness and quality offered by his company.



# ITALY



## What is agritourism?

Definition of agritourism in Italy: "Agritourism is an activity related to agriculture, but not agricultural in itself, therefore the aid scheme for this activity is regulated under European legislation by the 'de minimis' rule, which sets a ceiling of EUR 200,000 that each individual enterprise may receive over a three-year period from a Member State. The rates (decided by the regions) of the contribution can vary and can reach up to 70-80% of eligible expenditure depending on the type of intervention and beneficiary (always within the maximum ceiling)."

Agritourism is generally considered to be part of rural tourism.

As stated in the definition of agritourism in Italian legislation, farmers' income from agritourism cannot be higher than the income from agriculture.

Italian agritourism is an original form of rural tourism that can only be carried out on farms and by farmers.



Agritourism is regulated by National Law No. 96 of 20 February 2006, which defines its aspects, types and purposes for the enhancement of the rural heritage and the national territory and entrusts the Regions and Autonomous Provinces with the task of defining and characterising local agritourism activities through the adoption of appropriate legislative measures.

In 2013, in implementation of the national law, Italy created the sectoral brand "agriturismo italia" (Ministerial Decree of 13 February 2013) for businesses that regularly operate according to the regulations in force. In cooperation with the regional administrations and the national agritourism associations, a classification system for agritourism businesses was also introduced, comprising five categories to give the public an approximate idea of the comfort, the variety of services and the quality of the ecological environment of each business.

The National brand "agriturismo Italia" can have from 1 to 5 yellow symbols at the bottom.





## Criteria for classification of agritourism activities

The classification of agritourism establishments, as with the classification of other tourism sectors, refers to cases where overnight stays (accommodation and camping) are offered. Overnight stays, in fact, presuppose a minimum length of stay on the site and a continuous use of the services in order to give meaning to the guiding and selection function of the classification.

The classification is divided into five categories and is made recognisable to the public by the same number of symbols (to be defined later) as is already the case for the classification of hotels, campsites and other tourist accommodation (1 to 5 stars).

The requirements are arranged in 7 thematic sections:

1. Business and Landscape Context,
2. General and management requirements,
3. Accommodation services and facilities,
4. Campsite services and facilities,
5. Restaurant and catering services,
6. Services and recreational activities,
7. Agricultural activities and typical production.



**Research related to agritourism case studies by each country based on European projects with particular emphasis on the different learning/training methods applied both at formal and non-formal level.**

**Masserie Didattiche di Puglia** is a regional network in Puglia for experiential tours and stays at farms offering agritourism activities.

A number of associations and consortiums of consumers such as the Association and Agricultural Cooperative "Casa delle AgriCulture - Tullia and Gino" are striving to keep the social relationships, intergenerational contact and food sovereignty.

**Mapping and categorisation of the existing agritourism offer at national level (agritourism facilities, enterprises offering agritourism activities and any type of enterprise related to agritourism).**

According to the latest ISTAT report:

- In 2020, there are 25,060 active agritourism farms (+2% compared to 2019); the greatest growth is in the Northeast (+3.5%) and in the South (+3.4%).
- 63% of Italian municipalities host at least one agritourism, but this reaches 97% in Tuscany and Umbria.
- Compared to the previous year, the number of Italian agritourists fell by 21.8% and foreigners by 62%.
- 21.8% and foreigners by 62.7%.
- More than two-thirds of the multifunctional agritourisms (with at least three types of activities) offer accommodation and/or catering.



Different measures encouraging agritourism were issued in Italy throughout the years.

Two of the most recent ones are:

- The Cura Italia Decree
- The Relaunch Decree

SUPPORTERS IN ORGANISATIONS  
WORKING WITH MIGRANTS

### **Identifying the training needs and skills of young (or aspiring) agritourism entrepreneurs.**

In Italy, despite concentrated production, small-scale agriculture seems to be able to provide the social basis for rural renewal, with successful start-ups on successful organic farms, active participants in multifunctional agriculture, agritourism, younger generations of farmers with good educational capital. There is also need for networking, entrepreneurial skills, recognition of the value and potential



# BULGARIA



## What is agritourism?

Agricultural tourism (agritourism) in Bulgaria is a subset of the rural tourism. It is known by various names, depending on the region and type of farming, such as agricultural tourism, agrotourism, farm tourism, farm vacation tourism, wine tourism, agritourism, as well as some related terms that are used interchangeably with agritourism or that are complementary to agritourism include nature tourism, rural tourism, alternative farming, wildlife enterprises, ecotourism, agritainment, heritage tourism, agri-education, and value-added agriculture. Agritourism is a form of tourism which represents an alternative to the conventional mass tourism. Its forms are usually small-scale, low-density, divided into forms usually practiced in rural areas of the country.

Agritourism is generally defined as visiting a working agricultural setting for leisure, recreation or educational purposes. These usually include farm-based recreational activities.



Another definition of the term is “any income-generating activity conducted on a working farm for the recreation and education of visitors”. It includes the interpretation of the natural, cultural, historic, and environmental assets of the land and the people working on it. Agritourism is emerging concept of tourism industry, which has been gaining opportunistic ground in terms of traveler awareness, media exposure, and adoption by agriculturalist looking for diversified income streams. Stress, frustration, and mental disorders such as depression are some of the problems faced by urban people. In addition, the global COVID-19 outbreak has also changed the attitude of tourists towards visiting rather small, usually rural area-based and remote places for their vacation, looking for more social isolation. Agritourism is a viable option where people can find peace and calmness, furthermore, they can involve in farm activates, which can reduce the stress and frustration. There are various activities involved in agritourism such as bed and breakfast accommodations, cabin living, camping, farm cooking contests, heritage trails, etc. These kinds of innovative activities are increasingly attracting tourists, especially family and student groups, which is expected to boost the growth of the agritourism sector in the country.

In addition, agritourism offers farmers the possibility of diversifying and generating additional income through farm-based touristic activities in order to help supplementing their agricultural revenues. This helps to maintain the viability of active farms and rural communities.



The more general understanding of agritourism states that agritourism activities support and promote agricultural resources, local traditions and culture. Agritourism represents a successful example of sustainable tourism that has gained significant importance over the years.

### **Are there any differences or particular aspects to address about the general concept of Agritourism?**

Agritourism in Bulgaria, being a subtype of rural tourism, is considered an important economic sector for sustainable development of the rural areas in the country. Rural Development in Bulgaria is managed nationally through the Bulgarian Rural Development Programme (RDP)<sup>7</sup>, funded under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and national contributions, and formally adopted on May 26, 2015. In line with the EU policy for rural development, RDP has the following three main objectives: Improving the competitiveness and balanced development of agriculture, forestry and manufacturing; preservation of ecosystems and sustainable management, use of natural resources in agriculture, forestry and food industry, climate change prevention and adaptation; Socio-economic development of rural areas, providing new jobs, poverty reduction, social inclusion and better quality of life. Rural development funding through the EAFRD is part of a broader framework of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds), including also Regional Development, Social, Cohesion, and Fisheries Funds. These are managed nationally, by each EU Member State, on the basis of Partnership Agreements, strategic plans outlining the country's goals and investment priorities.



The National Rural Network (NRN) of Bulgaria is part of the European Network for Rural Development, the objective of which is to Support EU member states in the implementation of the rural development policy<sup>10</sup>. NRN supports the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry in the identification and fulfilment of rural development priorities and the changes that need to be made in the existing policy in order to improve the effect of its implementation, to improve the dialogue with stakeholders, to expand their participation in the decision-making process and the process of planning, programming, monitoring and implementation of this policy, to raise awareness among the wide public and potential beneficiaries; to promote innovations in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas.

Sustainable development and increased share of alternative tourism types, including agritourism in Bulgaria, is also a key priority of the National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in Bulgaria for the period 2014-2031, and aimed at stimulating integrated regional and rural development of tourism through the formation of appropriate organizational structures, coordination of supply and implementation of regionally differentiated tourism policy.



Research related to agritourism case studies by each country based on European projects with particular emphasis on the different learning/training methods applied both at formal and non-formal level.

## **Case 1 European project “Back to Nature” – Training of Trainers in Rural Tourism, Leonardo da Vinci Programme, Transfer of Innovations, 2012-2014**

The project “Back to Nature” was aimed to develop new curricular, training modules and case studies, as to create a complete vocational training package in rural tourism that will be delivered on-line to VET teachers, tutors, tourism entrepreneurs and managers<sup>12</sup>. The project was implemented during the period 2012 – 2014 under the Leonardo da Vinci Programme, action “Transfer of Innovations”, and included 9 partners from Turkey, Austria, Bulgaria and Latvia.

The objectives of the project were targeted at promoting the growth of rural tourism by:

- Awareness raising focused at the rural areas with potential for tourism;
- Training of VET teachers/tutors in rural tourism to achieve better dissemination and valorisation of project's outputs;
- Training of entrepreneurs and managers involved in tourism;
- Launching a dialogue among the trainers from the partner countries;
- Transferring best practice between the project partners.



Additionally, Back to Nature project was aimed at expanding the innovative results by developing the training programme in the form of an e-learning tool. The training materials included in the e-learning tool were developed in Turkish, German, Bulgarian, Latvian and English.

## **Case 2 A young farmer diversifies into rural tourism activities in Bulgaria**

The project was co-funded by the European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD) and national contributions, and implemented in the period 2010-2012/13.

After two years being a farmer, the young entrepreneur Tzanko Stoytchev decided to diversify into non-agricultural activities. His farm, located in the village of Ostritza, Rouse region, produced apples and vegetables. The region is characterised by an attractive landscape and several sites of natural and cultural interest. In spite of this, tourist facilities are not developed in the area. Having an old house on his farmland, Tzanko decided to apply for Rural Development Fund to reconvert the house into a guest house and start a tourism business. The project's overall goal was to support long-term cost-effective entrepreneurship by diversifying agricultural activities with nonagricultural activities. The main activities implemented were related to the renovation of the old house, which included six rooms with bathrooms, two suites, a kitchen at guests' disposal, a restaurant with a connected kitchen, a living room and a swimming pool. The guest house 'Cherni Lom' was completed in 2012 and it has been since then with very good economic results.



The beneficiary's decision of applying for RDP funds was driven on the one hand by the intention to diversify the business and on the other hand by the desire to restore the old house where he spent his childhood.

### **Lessons learnt:**

- The beneficiary's strong motivation and vision to develop his own business were important elements to the success of the project. His background in economics and finance represented also an important advantage for him;
- Availability of family financial resources can reduce the need to apply for a bank loan and consequently facilitate the implementation of the activities. Securing co-financing is important to deal with possible delays in payments from public administration;
- Knowledge of the market targeted combined with a good feasibility study is an important basis to plan and implement a project. The region is attractive in terms of cultural and natural heritage and it was lacking tourist facilities. The beneficiary identified a possible niche market to be developed, namely rural tourism facilities for a certain type of clients, and based his project on this analysis;
- The availability of financial support from the RDP and the possibility to include the costs of a professional consultant were also important factors of success. The assistance received by the consultant was important to overcome the numerous difficulties encountered during the implementation phase. Advisory services may be of great help particularly to deal with administrative procedures;



- In small and local projects, beneficiaries need to have a thorough knowledge of their area and the type of services/facilities needed together with good motivation and genuine interest to develop something useful and successful;
- Planning as precisely as possible the budget of a project is essential to avoid changes during the implementation phase and the need to find additional funding to cover the project costs;
- High level of engagement to face unexpected problems and the capacity to find solutions are important.



## **Mapping and categorisation of the existing agritourism offer at national level (agritourism facilities, enterprises offering agritourism activities and any type of enterprise related to agritourism).**

Agritourism, as an inherent part of the rural tourism, is the best way to get to know the traditions of Bulgaria. Through their stay in a village house, tourists can come to appreciate traditional Bulgarian lifestyle and culture<sup>14</sup>. The hospitality of Bulgarians, the unique local cuisine, the well-preserved folkways, customs and crafts, the architectural reserve settlements and the beautiful surroundings all contribute to make agritourism in Bulgaria memorable.

Usually guests are accommodated in a farmhouse built in the 19th or early 20th century, and a part of the rich experience is the delicious home-made food that hosts prepare with vegetables picked fresh from the garden and seasoned with herbs gathered in nearby forests and fields. There are many interesting things to do in the villages – visitors can help the hosts prepare some special dish according to a traditional recipe, take part in farm work, rent a horse to visit nearby landmarks, pick aromatic herbs and a basket of forest berries or mushrooms, or ride a mountain bike along the country roads and trail<sup>15</sup>s. Tourists may want to milk a cow, cut hay, prepare yoghurt, help make white and yellow cheese, or put up jam. Almost every family in the villages is engaged in distilling rakia (local spirit) and making wine. The Bulgarian countryside abounds with wineries that have earned worldwide recognition.



In the evening, tourists are often invited to have a meal with their hosts. Traditional dishes are served, folksongs are performed, and local legends are shared. In most cases, guests can help prepare the food. Some villages offer lessons in pottery making, icon painting or folksongs and dances, and there are demonstrations of sewing and embroidering. Visitors can find agritourism farms/guesthouses all over the country. In the region of the Balkan Mountains there are many such opportunities, e.g. in villages such as Apriltsi, Shipkovo, Ribaritsa, Medven, Zheravna, Ichera, Gradets, the villages in the Elena Balkan Mountain, and elsewhere in the region. Near Veliko Tarnovo lies the architectural reserve Arbanasi, which offers its own unique atmosphere. A few kilometers from Gabrovo, there is another architectural reserve that is also a very popular destination for overnight visitors – the village of Bozhentsi. In the Rila Mountains the villages of Govedartsi, Dobarsko, Mala Tsarkva, Beli Iskar, and Dolna Banya, are particularly popular. In the Rhodope Mountains almost every village offers accommodations for guests. Some of the most popular places include Momchilovtsi, Gela, Shiroka Laka, Smilyan, Arda, Zabardo, Leshten, Kovachevitsa, Dolen, Trigrad, and Yagodina. There tourists can taste unique dishes specific to the region, such as cheverme and patatnik, and enjoy a gaida (Bulgarian bagpipe) performance or competition. Besides being a world-renowned ski resort, Bansko, the pearl of the Pirin Mountains, provides tourists with the opportunity to take part in traditional farming activities of the region, and sample local dishes. Exceptionally attractive are also the villages in the Strandzha Mountains – Balgari, Gramatikovo, Kosti, Brashlyan, and others. Visitors may walk to ancient wind mills, ride a donkey, or enjoy an excursion in a donkey cart.



Strandzha is also where tourists can observe the traditional dance on live coals. Guests at the large Black Sea resorts have the opportunity to visit nearby villages and enjoy the residents' hospitality. In Dobrudzha (Bulgaria's breadbasket) tourists can observe the livelihood of the villages, sample the local folklore and cuisine, and visit the unique Dobrudzha farms.

Throughout the country, guests can experience a wide range of local customs and rituals, such as the dancing on live coals, traditional masked ritual kukeri, a Bulgarian wedding, singing and dancing on St. Lazar's day, singing and dancing on Christmas, the holiday of Trifon Zarezan, among others. The country is also famous with its different folklore festivals. Some of the best known are the Plovdiv International Folklore Festival in the city of Plovdiv; the Burgas International Folklore Festival; the National Folklore Gatherings at Rozhen and Koprivshtitsa; the International Festival of Masquerade and Carnival Games and Rituals "Surva" in the town of Pernik; and the National Gathering "Beautiful Thrace Sings and Dances."



## Identifying the training needs and skills of young (or aspiring) agritourism entrepreneurs.

Although the entrepreneurship education is part of different curricular and extracurricular educational activities in all levels of formal and non-formal education in the country, at present there is no specific training methodology and materials, tailored at providing the necessary entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and competences to people working and/or living in rural areas of the country in the field of agritourism.

The training needs in terms of theoretical knowledge, practical skills and competences needed by the young entrepreneurs in the country in the field of agritourism have been defined based on a desk research on the existing formal and informal educational practices in the Bulgarian VET education, as well as on interviews with colleagues from the Faculty of Business Management at the University of Forestry, teaching in the specialty of Alternative Tourism.

The following main skills and competences, needed by agritourism entrepreneurs have been identified:

- General knowledge on starting and running an agritourism business in rural areas: business planning, risk management, time management, etc.
- Management of micro or SMEs: planning, coordinating and organizing effectively, specific Information regarding the agritourism business environment, customer service;
- Legal aspects of entrepreneurial activities;
- Financial skills: book-keeping (accounting), tax calculating, financial analysis, etc.
- Digital skills and competences, including social media skills, social media marketing, etc.



In addition to the 'hard' skills listed above, which are essential skill sets for hospitality and agritourism managers, soft skills are of paramount importance for succeeding in what is first and foremost a 'people business'. The most important soft skills, considered as most important for successful career in agritourism, are as follows:

- **Customer service skills** - It should never be forgotten that it's the customer who provides the funds to pay salaries and other expenses which allow a hotel or restaurant to remain profitable and reinvest in its infrastructure. Thus, it is essential that employees and managers succeed in satisfying and even delighting customers. Excellent customer service skills is about understanding the customer's needs and being able to deliver a positive customer service experience.
- **Networking skills** - one of the key skills needed in the hospitality industry is to be able to network effectively. Unlike many other sectors of business, networking in tourism is not about job-hopping, but is rather a way to stimulate repeat business from customers. Building a loyal clientele who are interested in returning to the hotel/restaurant/tour will, in the long run, also enhance one's career.
- **Teamwork** - people who have excellent communication and interpersonal skills are more approachable and therefore easier to work with, adding great value to a team and its performance. After all, it is the collective work of a company and its workforce that needs to be applied in order to stay ahead in the ever-changing industry of tourism.
- **Communication skills** - exceptional communication skills are highly valued in most industries and the higher up one gets in the hierarchy, the more important they become. In the tourism business, each day can involve contacts with people of a variety of backgrounds, ages, nationalities and temperaments.



- **Flexibility skills** - compared to other professions, tourism jobs often demand that employees work odd hours like nights and weekends. It is also necessary to be able to switch rapidly from one task to another as the situation may arise. Thus, flexibility is an essential attribute to succeed in the agritourism sector.

- **Organisational skills** - organisational skills are at a premium in the agritourism sector. Given the need to multi-task and respond to various customers' requests, it is necessary to maintain an organizational structure so as to be able to accomplish daily tasks in an efficient manner.

- **Language skills** - are a particular plus in the agritourism field as they increase one's value as an employee. Speaking clients' language enables one to establish a more intimate relationship with them which promotes customer satisfaction and loyalty.

- **Commitment** - it should be noted that many young people start out in the rural tourism with an enthusiastic outlook, but don't realize how demanding the work is and consequently lose motivation quickly. If they fail to understand that their job is to keep clients happy no matter the cost, such individuals will never progress beyond entry-level jobs.

- **"Can-do" attitude** - it is essential that agritourism entrepreneurs be prepared to accept challenges in the workplace no matter how difficult the task may appear.

- **Multitasking skills** - being able to fulfill multiple roles, especially in an agritourism site is a way for employees to render themselves indispensable to their employers. It's important to be able to juggle different tasks simultaneously, while completing each task assigned. Thus the ability to multitask may be one of the most important skills in this industry.



One way for students to get a head start in developing their ability to multitask is to work on the side while continuing their studies.

- **Cultural awareness** - agritourism entrepreneurs are more likely than most to deal with customers of a wide variety of nationalities and cultural backgrounds. The ability to be culturally aware and get past one's own cultural norms is crucial to building a successful career in this sector. Cultural awareness is an essential social skill that will help customers feel comfortable and at home with their surroundings.

The innovative, tailor-made, ICT-based set of training methodology and materials, planned by the TreasureHunt project partnership, will provide the project target groups with powerful training tools, aimed at developing entrepreneurial skills, competences and mind-set to turn creative ideas into entrepreneurial action in the field of agritourism. This represents a key competence for all learners, supporting continuing personal and professional development, active citizenship, social inclusion and increased employability in the rural areas of the country.



## TASK 1B INTERVIEWS WITH AGRITOURISM EXPERTS

As part of PR1 1b, all partners conducted interviews with agritourism experts from each country (Sweden, Greece, Spain, Italy, Bulgaria).

The overall contribution of the experts and their engagement during the interviews are summarised in this final report of PR1.

In general, the experts described the necessary tourism challenges that would facilitate the development of the new tourism offers based on their previous experiences, talked about the specific competences and skills needed for the sector, talked about the techniques or tools that would-be entrepreneurs use to promote agritourism businesses and activities, and mentioned possible obstacles they might face.

### **Some more general information about the interviews:**

In order to achieve the objectives of PR1, experts with more experience in agritourism were selected to give their answers to questions related to entrepreneurial and tourism skills/competences. The reason for this is that their input would provide an important foundation not only for existing tourism entrepreneurs but also for aspiring agri entrepreneurs.

The interviews were conducted from mid-April to the end of May and the main conclusions were presented during our transnational project meeting in Volos on the last day of June.

On the following pages you will find a short report on the interviews in each country as well as the most important and interesting parts of the interviews.



# SWEDEN

## Interviews

**Stora Segerstad naturbrukscentrum**, the coordinator of this project, interviewed three agritourism experts with many years of experience in the field and different background.

## Interviewees

Two of the interviewees have special training and studies in tourism, while the third has no special training in tourism, but has a lot of experience in this field.

The interviewees were:

- Juha Rankinen from Ethnosphere Outdoors
- Erik Öster from Skullaryd Moosepark
- Malin Ekwall from Tiraholm Fishfarm

### Juha Rankinen (Ethnosphere Outdoors)

Juha Rankinen is the founder and director of Ethnosphere Outdoors and has more than 28 years of experience in consulting, training and courses in outdoor education, wilderness skills & bushcraft, survival, Canadian paddling, hunting, fishing, green woodworking, primitive technology, ethnobiology and natural resource management and conservation.

According to the interview, aspiring agripreneurs should have the following qualities:

- Genuine passion and commitment to nature and rural life
- Encouragement to care
- Sharing of knowledge and growth of guests
- Genuine and sincere concern for the local environment and its sustainable management.



He went on to mention that interpersonal skills are super important for an agricultural entrepreneur, but also intimate knowledge of the local ecosystem and its sustainable use, and experience in working with groups of people.

When asked about the techniques or tools that would-be entrepreneurs use to promote agritourism businesses and activities, he replied: "Taster courses. Website, face-to-face meetings with corporate clients, social media, Youtube."

Juha answered the question about the specific needs that agritourism entrepreneurs should have in order to promote the creation of a new tourism offer linked to the elements of rural life, that they need to see and learn from other functioning agritourism businesses and develop their own business ideas.

As for the possible obstacles, these could be:

- Natural disasters
- Depletion of natural resources
- Resistance from the local community due to misunderstandings
- Mistrust of the activities

### **Erik Öster (Skullaryd Moosepark)**

Erik Öster has no special training in tourism, but has more than 12 years of experience in nature activities and tours (moose safari) and specialises in deer species.

According to the interview, the qualities that wannabe agripreneurs should have are the following:

- Interest in people and animals
- Perseverance
- "Do not count every hour"



As for skills in tourism that are necessary for being an agricultural agripreneur, Erik replied that these are the ability to make the customer satisfied and the knowlegde to deal with authorities and paperwork.

He thinks that satisfied customers are the best promotion for the business, so the techniques or tools that would-be entrepreneurs use to promote agritourism businesses and activities should be website, Facebook, Instagram and also good contact with local media, daily papers, radio channels, etc.

When asked about the specific needs that agritourism entrepreneurs should have in order to promote the creation of a new tourism offer linked to the elements of rural life, Erik replied that "they need to know how to use the internet and social media and have a supportive family.

### **Malin Ekwall (Tiraholm Fishfarm)**

Malin Ekwall started secondary courses in tourism 25 years ago and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in tourism. She travelled to more than 70 countries and eventually took over the business at Tiraholm. Tiraholm estate is a farm with an ancient lineage located on a peninsula that stretches into Lake Bolmen. Today the Ekwall family runs the fishery in the lake. The fish is caught, processed, sold and served at Tiraholm.

According to the interview, wannabe agripreneurs should have the following qualities:

- A business idea of their own
- Time to develop this idea
- Access to the land on which they work



She also mentioned that the skills of an agripreneur depend very much on what activity they want to do. If they want to sell meals, they need cooking skills. It is important to invest time and money in knowledge to become an expert in their field.

When asked about the techniques or tools that would-be entrepreneurs use to promote their business and agritourism activities, she replied, "Instagram and Facebook are very important tools for marketing. They need to be active on their website and maintain good communication with local media and make sure they are informed when something happens on their farm. They also need to be active in networks and not compete with their neighbours, but cooperate. If they can get tourists to stay an extra night in the area, everyone wins."

Malin responded to the question about the specific needs that agritourism entrepreneurs should have in order to promote the creation of a new tourism offer linked to the elements of rural life, that they need to travel around and benefit from the experiences and mistakes of others.

As for the possible obstacles, these could be:

- Difficulty in finding competent staff
- Cash flow is (sometimes) a challenge

It is very important for them to have a flexible organisation that can easily adapt to new threats such as pandemics and pollution.



## Key Outcomes Summary

All interviewees spoke of the main characteristics that wannabe agritourism entrepreneurs should have.

These are the following:

1. Love for nature and rural life
2. Genuine passion
3. Promotion of care
4. Sincere concern for the local environment and its sustainable management
5. Intimate knowledge of the local ecosystem and its sustainable use

Also, basic education in agriculture and some general knowledge in tourism are important competencies for argipreneurs.

They also emphasised the importance of the Internet, digital techniques, websites and social media as promotional media for agritourism businesses.

As for specific skills in tourism, these depend on what they want to do in tourism and whether they have the appropriate skills.

Interpersonal skills and organisational skills, language skills, the ability to satisfy customers and deal with authorities and paperwork were also mentioned as important by the interviewees.

As for the possible obstacles, these are:

- Difficulty in finding competent staff
- Cash flow is (sometimes) a challenge
- Natural disasters
- Depletion of natural resources
- Resistance from the local community due to misunderstandings
- Mistrust of the activities



# GREECE

## Interviews

The **Center for Education and Innovation (InnovED)**, the Greek partner in this project, interviewed three entrepreneurs who have a lot of experience in agritourism as they are active in this sector.

## Interviewees

The interviewees are specialised in the hospitality industry in Greek mountain regions and in agritourism, e.g. with a small cheese dairy and a grocery shop.

The interviewees were:

- Serafeim Felekis: former president of Tzoumerka, Acheloos Valley, Agrafa and Meteora National Park.
- Alexis Boytzas: family restaurant and small cheese factory
- Dimitris Chandras: owner of a hotel in a mountainous region

### **Serafeim Felekis (Tzoumerka, Acheloos Valley, Agrafa and Meteora National Park)**

Serafeim Felekis is the former president of the Tzoumerka, Acheloos Valley, Agrafa and Meteora National Park. This national park was the first in Greece and one of 260 national parks in Europe to be certified by EUROPARC as a sustainable tourism destination.

According to the interview, wannabe agripreneurs should have the following qualities:

- An opinion about the whole area in which they want to operate
- A vision for their development
- Everything should have to do with the place



When asked about the techniques or tools that would be entrepreneurs use to promote agritourism, he replied, "There are many tourism exhibitions, but not all tourism exhibitions can help in developing and promoting agritourism. Most of them should find their own ways and channels to promote their business."

For Serafeim, who comes from a mountainous area, the most important need of agritourism, which is linked to the elements of rural life, is accessibility. According to him, it is difficult to promote the natural beauty of a place if you do not have access to it. In this context, the second need is the help of the national park, the municipality or the forestry office to open a rural or natural trail, etc.

He mentioned programmes and funding as possible obstacles and the lack of programmes targeting the agritourism sector and aimed at agripreneurs. Moreover, there are no specific funding programmes aimed at developing accommodation and activities in these disadvantaged mountain areas.

### **Alexis Boytzas (family restaurant and small cheese factory)**

Alexis Boutzas is 32 years old and runs a traditional Greek taverna and livestock business with his family. They are also cheese makers.

He helped his father and uncle in their own small business since he was 15, and at 18 he started to be more actively involved in the business.

According to the interview, wannabe agricultural entrepreneurs should have the following qualities:

- Desire and passion for their work
- Theoretical, business and practical knowledge
- Skills related to the sector
- Promotion and continuous development



Among the techniques or tools that budding entrepreneurs use to promote agritourism, he mentioned digital tools, social media and the Internet in general. He mainly uses Google and Instagram.

The possible obstacles could be:

- Little or no funding and programmes with more theoretical than practical knowledge.
- In rural and remote areas such as Epirus, subordinate structures (roads, etc.)

An additional question was also asked about experience tourism and whether he has noticed this trend. He answered that visitors to his region are interested in experiences, they want to try activities and something different from mass tourism. In the last five years we have had a lot of visitors from Israel and the municipality and the national park have created or opened a lot of trails so they can go hiking, mountain biking, rafting and so on. People are more interested in agritourism every year.

### **Dimitris Chandras (owner of a hotel in a mountainous region)**

Dimitris Chandras is 40 years old and has been running an agritourism hotel in a mountainous region with his family for 6 years.

He has more than 15 years of experience in the tourism industry, which started during his studies when he worked in different positions as an employee (hotels, travel agencies, catering, etc.).

In these 6 years, the hotel has not only limited itself to providing accommodation, but has also offered outdoor activities such as hiking, rafting, mountain biking, etc., but also experiences in nature to combine modern comfort with the beauties of nature and the landscape, a plethora of such events that seem to be in great demand.



According to the interview, aspiring agricultural entrepreneurs should have the following qualities:

- Love for what they do
- Adoption of the host philosophy and genuine hospitality

He went on to say that love of nature and the ability to take on the role of host rather than "entrepreneur" are super important for an agripreneur. Also, an agripreneur should be communicative as it is about welcoming and serving visitors.

When asked about the techniques or tools that budding entrepreneurs use to promote agritourism businesses and activities, he replied, "Nowadays, we are in the fortunate position that advertising and promotion is not limited to travel agencies and tour operators. Social media is an important promotional tool where we all want to be informed about developments."

He also mentioned that the removal of man from his natural environment is now a fact and therefore the tourism model is bound to change soon and more and more people will turn to agritourism.

On the possible obstacles, he only said that "obstacles have to be overcome".



# GREECE

## Interviews

**Athanasios Santas (AS)**, the Greek partner No. 2 in this project, interviewed more than three entrepreneurs, but they were selected on the basis of their formal experience in the tourism industry in general and not exclusively in the field of agritourism.

We have chosen to mention three of the interviews here.

## Interviewees

Some of the interviewees are hotel owners and some others have a lot of experience in the tourism sector through their work/profession.

In these interviews we do not know the full names of the interviewees due to GDPR:

- George H.: owner of a family-run hotel on an island near Athens.
- P.D.: Vocational school teacher, experienced in teaching tourism courses.
- P.S.: 45 years of experience in the tourism industry in general.

### **George H. (family-operated hotel on an island near Athens)**

George H. has over 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry and owns a family-run hotel on an island near Athens. The facility currently has 17 rooms and is not technically considered a farm. Moreover, many of the current activities fall under the current definition of agritourism, which makes them even more relevant and interesting.

According to the interview, agritourism entrepreneurs need to be:

- Resourceful
- Curious and accommodating
- Understanding and patient
- Sensitive to cultural differences
- Willing to adapt



According to George, prospective agripreneurs must have the necessary skills for both farming and hospitality, because agritourism is a combination of these two activities. They also need to have tourism skills, which mainly include communication, language skills, and interpersonal skills, as well as the willingness to solve problems immediately and meet guests' needs.

When asked about the techniques or tools that budding entrepreneurs use to promote agritourism businesses and activities, he mentioned an updated website with SEO features, presence in the main booking engines, listings on travel planning websites and apps, and online travel agencies. He also spoke about how they can foster loyalty among their guests to keep them coming back. This includes organised welcome and orientation meetings, farewell events, small gifts and souvenirs for departing guests.

As for the possible obstacles, these could be:

- Competition

### **P.D. (experienced in teaching tourism courses)**

P.D. has more than 25 years of experience as a secondary and vocational school teacher specialising in tourism. She specialises mainly in the theoretical and practical teaching of tourism sociology.

According to the interview, prospective agripreneurs should have the following qualities:

- Love for the natural environment

Among the tourism skills necessary for an Agripreneur, she emphasised a good command of at least one foreign language, but also the spirit of hospitality, making contacts, the ability to start and maintain a friendly conversation with visitors, compassion, empathy, respect and openness towards visitors.



When asked about the techniques or tools that budding entrepreneurs use to promote agritourism businesses and activities, she replied, "Promotion of these activities is usually done online, through digital marketing tools and techniques, social media, link farms, etc."

P.D.: "Creative entrepreneurs could organise prizes for the best picture or cross-cultural exchanges, such as international cooking evenings with local products where guests showcase their country's delicacies, or folklore music in the moonlight with local instruments and dance events etc. All this in an effort to create unforgettable experiences that make visitors happy and make them want to come back or recommend the company to their friends."

As for the possible obstacles, these could be:

- Branding and differentiation from the competitors
- Lack of information and/or a centrally organised promotional campaign to attract prospects and guests
- Bureaucratic difficulties
- Outdated and corrupt administrative system of the country

### **P.S. (45 years of experience in the tourism industry)**

P.S. has more than 45 years of experience in the tourism industry as a waiter, bartender, front desk/bookings officer, public relations manager, restaurant supervisor, accountant and event organiser in major hotels in Greece.

In the field of rural/educational tourism, he has organised field trips to assess the state of the local environment and explore opportunities for tourism development, taught ecology and environmental science courses to raise environmental awareness among local and international students, and done many things related to the environment in general.



According to the interview, prospective agripreneurs should have the following qualities:

- Perseverance
- Objectivity
- Follow their heart and instinct
- Know when to abandon a product or not to start at all
- Willingness to give up their personal attachment to a product and discard it

P.S. has a different opinion on the tourist skills that aspiring agripreneurs must have. He believes that "the activity of an agripreneur does not depend on or require tourist skills". The only skill he considers necessary is that of a good salesperson.

When asked about the techniques or tools that aspiring entrepreneurs use to promote agritourism businesses and activities, he mentioned SEO and data mining algorithms, as well as Big Data methods, such as internet scraping analysed with powerful open source software, and listing orders on online travel agency websites to assess the general mood and satisfaction of guests and/or to determine competitive prices.

The need today requires a person with appropriate data skills to be fully employed throughout the year, or the entire advertising campaign must be outsourced to a team for optimal results.

As for the possible obstacles, they are many and varied, so it is important to be prepared for all adversities and obstacles that are unrealistic and extremely expensive. Creativity in solving the problem may also not bring the best results, but it is free and offers solutions.



## Key Outcomes Summary

All interviewees spoke of the most important qualities that aspiring agritourism entrepreneurs should have. These are mainly love and passion for what they do or want to do and for the natural environment, theoretical and practical knowledge, perseverance, objectivity, following their heart and instinct, understanding and patience, sensitivity to cultural differences, willingness to adapt, a vision and a desire for continuous development.

Some of them mentioned that they should have knowledge of hospitality and customer service, a good knowledge of at least one foreign language, but also the ability to start and maintain a friendly conversation with visitors. They should also have the necessary skills for both farming and hospitality.

One respondent made the distinction and mentioned that the only skill he considers necessary is that of a good salesperson.

They also emphasised the importance of the internet, digital techniques, websites, social media and online travel agency websites as promotional tools for agritourism businesses. In addition, exhibitions are also important if you can find a suitable one.

According to two of them, access and subordinate structures are the main problem in some disadvantaged mountain areas, but the lack of funding or educational programmes specifically for agritourism is also a major issue.

Competition, differentiation of competitors, bureaucracy and administrative problems of the country are also mentioned as obstacles.



# SPAIN

## Interviews

**Instalofi Levante SL (Fyg Consulatores)**, the Spanish partner of this project, interviewed more than three agritourism experts who run thriving agritourism businesses in different locations in Spain. The aim was to identify the most important skills and competences they believe both existing and aspiring agritourism entrepreneurs should have in order to ensure the success of their businesses.

We have chosen to mention three of the interviews here.

## Interviewees

The interviewees are founders and owners of agritourism/livestock farms in Spain and of a project that offers guided walks and bike tours through the agricultural outskirts of Valencia, as well as educational workshops, training, conferences, etc., bringing young people closer to agriculture and healthy agricultural products.

In these interviews we do not know the full names of the interviewers due to GDPR:

- Teresa from Huerto Ribera
- Dorita from Lluçmançes Gran
- Marketing officer of Horta Viva

### Teresa (Huerto Ribera)

Teresa is the owner of this establishment, which has been in her family for centuries. Oranges are grown there in the same way as their ancestors did. There you can taste natural oranges freshly picked from the tree with all their juice and flavour and visit the Ribera orange grove and orchard, stroll through the gardens, taste citrus fruits and wrap yourself in the scent of orange blossom.



According to the interview, aspiring agripreneurs should have the following qualities:

- Patience
- Motivation
- Perseverance
- Thinking about the focus they want to give to their line of business

She went on to say that knowledge of languages and different social networks is very important for an agricultural entrepreneur, but so is a thorough knowledge of the local ecosystem and its sustainable use, as well as experience in working with groups of people.

Teresa, when asked about the specific needs that agritourism entrepreneurs should have in order to promote the creation of a new tourism offer linked to the elements of rural life, replied: "In our case, the need was the low price of fruit and the desire to generate more income. This reason is probably true for most farmers/agriculturalists."

As for the possible obstacles, these could be:

- Difficulty in reaching people
- Adaptation to new activities

### **Dorita (Llucmançes Gran)**

Dorita is the owner of Llucmançes Gran in Menorca with her husband and has more than 22 years of experience in the field of agritourism. Initially, Llucmançes Gran was an abandoned house and they started to remodel and restore it with the vision of combining agriculture and livestock with tourism.



According to the interview, aspiring agripreneurs should have the following qualities:

- Passion for their work, the land and the animals
- Patience
- Excitement

Dorita mentioned that there is no need for concrete skills to be successful in agritourism. She said that the good thing about being a farmer and entering the world of agritourism is that you do not need to be highly educated. However, she mentioned that she thinks it is important to treat customers in a friendly way, to get close to them and to be as warm as possible in order to create a family environment that leaves a good impression on those who visit her place.

Dorita believes that the Internet is a very good source of advertising. A well-maintained and appealing website and social media are essential to build trust with potential customers. She added that they have an expert who takes care of all social media, which is a great option.

When asked about the specific requirements that agritourism entrepreneurs should have, she replied that they need to make the most of the knowledge they already have from owning a rural business and that they want to diversify and expand their business.

As for the possible obstacles, these could be:

- Bureaucracy

### **Marketing officer (Horta Viva)**

Horta Viva is a different case, as it is an ongoing project that focuses on guided walks and bike rides through the agricultural outskirts of Valencia, as well as educational workshops, training sessions, conferences, etc. to teach young people about agriculture and healthy agricultural products.



The idea came about when a farming family from la Huerta de Valencia thought it would be a good idea to diversify their farming activities to generate more income.

According to the interview, prospective agripreneurs should have the following qualities:

- Passion for their work and the land
- Willingness to pass on this passion to tourists and future generations
- Understanding of the importance of farmers' contribution to society, because without them

The marketing officer mentioned that good English language skills and interpersonal and communication skills are essential.

When asked about the techniques or tools that budding entrepreneurs use to promote agritourism, he replied, "New agritourism entrepreneurs could work hard on marketing their products through various social networks. Apart from the usual social media (FB or Twitter), I would recommend Tripadvisor. "

As for the possible obstacles, the main one could be to find the activities that can be different from those already offered. In other words, you need to find or create your competitive advantage.



## Key Outcomes Summary

All interviewees spoke of the most important qualities that aspiring agritourism entrepreneurs should have. Passion for what they do or want to do, for their land, animals, natural environment, etc., enthusiasm and motivation, patience and creativity are the most important qualities of prospective agritourism entrepreneurs.

In terms of skills in tourism, one of the respondents said that there are no essential specific skills to start an agritourism business. However, all respondents said that some skills such as languages, social media, empathy and patience can be considered important.

The necessary skills that an agritourist should possess are as follows:

- Implementation skills
- Organisational skills
- Planning and commitment

They also emphasised the importance of digital tools and techniques such as a well-organised website, digital marketing, social media and TripAdvisor and booking platforms for promoting businesses.

Bureaucracy, difficulty in reaching people and finding competitive advantages are the main obstacles mentioned by respondents.



# ITALY

## Interviews

**Consorzio MateraHub Industrie Culturali e Creative (Matera Hub)**, the Italian partner in this project, has interviewed more than three entrepreneurs who have experience mainly in the field of agrotourism. We have selected three of the interviews to mention here.

## Interviewees

The interviewees are managers of farms, owners of agritourism B&Bs, helpers in the family wine industry and in organic farms.

The interviewees we selected here were:

- Gianpio Arcomano: owner of a family farm.
- Maria Laura Castoro: manager of a family organic farm
- Domenico Cardinale: manager of a farm in Matera

### **Gianpio Arcomano (owner of a family-run farm)**

Gianpio has been working in the sector for five years and runs the family farm "Arcomano" in Chiaromonte, Basilicata. Its location offers an impressive view of Senise and the Montecotugno reservoir, the largest earth reservoir in Europe.

Originally the farmhouse of the Arcomano family, it was then renovated in the 2000s and still retains its rural features. It is surrounded by olive trees, fruit trees and cultivated land. The agritourism is certified as an organic farm and is also dedicated to the sale of homemade meat and cold cuts.

According to the interview, agritourism entrepreneurs need to have:

- Determination
- Passion



According to him, a professional agricultural entrepreneur must know analytically in advance the potential of the territory, i.e. the geographical area where the structure is located. A coherent agritourism can then be built from the essential elements (in other words, it is not enough to have a house in the countryside).

When asked about the techniques or tools that emerging entrepreneurs use to promote agritourism businesses and activities, he mentioned that the professional agripreneurs must be able to reach and enter new markets that are more "protected" than the large communication groups.

The skills, manpower and knowledge of the tools needed to run a farm are essential (regardless of the accommodation structure).

In terms of potential barriers, these could be:

- Difficulty in finding economic resources
- Excessive bureaucracy
- Difficulty in finding qualified and hard-working labour

### **Maria Laura Castoro (manager of a family organic farm)**

Maria Laura has 10 years of experience in the sector and is the manager of an organic family farm, the Masseria "La fiorita" in Matera, Basilicata.

The masseria was founded in 1975 by 'Nonno Vito' (grandfather) to start a new family business. In 1988, father Giuseppe opted for closed-loop and strictly seasonal production using low impact farming, i.e. minimum soil disturbance and use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. In fact, the masseria is one of the first in Basilicata to have adhered to these principles. In 2015, the young Maria Laura decided to take over the baton from her father and run the family business with a combination of tradition and innovation, taking on the challenges of the future.



The masseria offers a wide range of activities such as tastings, workshops, excursions, adventure tourism, evenings, events and scout camps. It also sells its own certified organic food: each product is grown and processed taking into account its natural and nutritional characteristics and respecting seasonality.

According to the interview, agritourism entrepreneurs need to have:

- Determination
- Patience
- Perseverance

As for the tourism skills necessary for an agripreneur, she mentioned, "Knowing and being able to use the main intermediary platforms such as Booking, Airbnb and so on. Knowing how to reach and enter foreign markets: For example, we also work with travel agencies, including American ones."

When asked about the techniques or tools that emerging entrepreneurs use to promote their agritourism businesses and activities, she replied that social media, the official website, articles in the local, national and/or international press are the first steps for a good promotional strategy.

When asked about the specific needs that agritourism entrepreneurs should have in order to promote the creation of a new tourism offer linked to the elements of rural life, Maria Paula answered that they must be able to tell stories, but not in an artificial way, but also to show the less idyllic sides of rural life.

As for the possible obstacles, the biggest obstacle for them is managing several activities at the same time: production, reception, etc.



## **Domenico Cardinale (manager of a farm in Matera)**

Domenico has more than 21 years of professional experience in the sector and is the manager of the farm "Le Matinelle" in Matera, Basilicata.

The farm is an environmentally friendly and multifunctional farm surrounded by lots of greenery. It was founded in 1945 with a cereal-olive-growing zootechnical address and over the years it has pursued the goal of reducing pesticides in accordance with EEC Regulation No. 2078/92. The restoration of the structure has been done by combining comfort with the restoration techniques of the typical country house of Matera. The farm produces the necessary plants to enhance the local products. Products not available at the farmhouse are sourced from local producers with quality and typical characteristics. The composition of the menus is based on traditional local recipes and customs.

According to the interview, agripreneurs must have the following qualities:

- Entrepreneurial skills
- Foresight in the industry

On the tourism skills an agritourist needs, Domenico said that the mentality of hospitality and the mastery of foreign languages are essential.

When asked about the techniques or tools entrepreneurs should use to promote their agritourism businesses and activities, he replied that the official website and dedicated portals are important.

He also stated that: "Every entrepreneur should be creative when it comes to food, wine tourism and rural culture.

As for the possible obstacles, the biggest one Domenico mentioned is bureaucracy.



## Key Outcomes Summary

All interviewees spoke of the most important qualities that prospective agritourism entrepreneurs should have. These are the following:

- Passion
- Determination
- Patience
- Perseverance
- Foresight in the industry

In terms of tourism skills, the mentality of hospitality, mastery of foreign languages, knowledge of how to intercept foreign markets and knowledge of how to use the main intermediation platforms are essential.

The respondents also stressed the importance of digital tools and techniques such as social media, the official websites, articles in the local, national and/or international press and dedicated portals

Excessive bureaucracy, the difficulty of finding economic resources and skilled and hardworking labour, and managing several activities at the same time are the main obstacles mentioned by the interviewees.



# BULGARIA

## Interviews

**University of Forestry**, the Bulgarian partner of this project, has interviewed three agritourism experts with an academic background and presence in the sector.

## Interviewees

All respondents are professors or associated professors in the Department of Management and Alternative Tourism, Faculty of Business Management and they have a long-lasting experience in training students, PhD students, and postgraduates in the respective field.

The interviewees were:

- Dr. Radostina Popova-Terziyska: Associated Professor
- Dr. Vladimir Piralkov: Professor
- Dr. Nikolay Neykov: Associated Professor

### **Dr. Radostina Popova-Terziyska (Associated Professor)**

Dr. Popova-Terziyska has been involved in teaching and training in agritourism for more than 10 years. She is a lecturer in the Department of Management and Alternative Tourism at the Faculty of Management. She has been actively involved in teaching, training and research activities in the field of alternative tourism, including agritourism, and has prepared several curricula on these topics.



According to the interview, aspiring agripreneurs should have the following qualities:

- Perseverance and ability to stay focused and consistent
- High determination and willpower
- Self-confidence and self-esteem
- Willingness to engage in lifelong learning
- Continuous personal and professional development
- Unconventional thinking

On the tourism skills an agripreneur needs, Dr Popova-Terziyska said they should have a general knowledge of how to start and run an agritourism/agriculture business in the rural areas of the country in terms of business planning, time management, risk management, time management, etc. In addition, the future entrepreneurs should have at least a brief knowledge of the specifics of micro or SME management in terms of planning, coordination and effective organisation of activities, specific information about the business environment of agritourism, etc. Also some digital skills, especially related to social media and marketing, are very important to promote and advertise their business, because we all know that the customer is everything.

For her, the most important promotional tools and techniques include putting up signs on adjacent roads, distributing information leaflets in visitor/tourist centres, running stalls at relevant events, fairs, conferences, publishing short articles in local media, creating and maintaining a blog promoting your agritourism business, using the features of modern social media, including paid advertising/boosted posts.



When asked about the specific needs that agritourism entrepreneurs should have in order to promote the creation of a new tourism offer that is connected to the elements of rural life, Dr Popova-Terziyska replied: "It would really be beneficial for agritourism entrepreneurs to know more about local history, religion, legends, landmarks, culture and cuisine in order to present them to their customers in an attractive and memorable way. This is something that could really make a difference to the traditional, 'mass tourism' places."

As for the possible obstacles, the biggest one is the fear of failure.

### **Dr Vladimir Piralkov (Professor)**

Dr Piralkov has been a lecturer at the Faculty of Business Administration for more than 40 years and has been teaching Bachelor students of Alternative Tourism in the subjects Business Planning in Tourism and Business Planning and Control since 2009.

According to the interview, aspiring agripreneurs should have the following qualities:

- Stay focused
- Be disciplined
- Understand that "it takes time, effort, hard work and discipline to experience entrepreneurial success."

On the tourism skills an agripreneur needs, Dr Piralkov said there are some general skills that young people who want to start their own agritourism businesses should possess and/or develop: Self-discipline, creativity, natural curiosity, willingness to try new things, ability to plan and manage human and other resources, risk-taking, communication skills, flexibility, persuasion, negotiation and problem-solving skills, etc.



One of the most important promotional tools and techniques he mentioned is building marketing collaborations with other local or regional businesses in their area that target the same consumer segments. Other beneficial promotional techniques include organising group events, creating lists of complementary businesses to pass on to customers/guests, working with local community groups, working with local, regional and national chambers of commerce, etc.

When asked about the specific needs that agritourism entrepreneurs should have in order to promote the creation of a new tourism offer that is connected to the elements of rural life, Dr Piralkov replied: "If young entrepreneurs want their agritourism business to thrive in the digital age, they need to master some essential digital skills, such as social media branding, digital marketing and content creation, online banking, online communication, and last but not least, the basics of cybersecurity to protect the data of the business and key customers."

In terms of potential barriers, these are:

- increasing competition from urban markets
- lack of family support
- difficulties in accessing national/European grants
- marketing problems
- lack of resources
- lack of transport
- lack of labour (low-skilled, low-educated)
- lack of essential entrepreneurial skills and competences
- lack of appropriate training



## Dr. Nikolay Neykov (Associated Professor)

Dr. Neykov has been working in the Faculty of Business Management at the University of Forestry since 2008, first in the Department of Economics and Management of Natural Resources, and since 2019 in the Department of Management and Alternative Tourism.

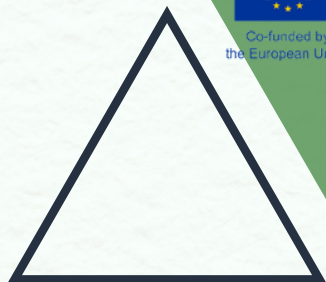
According to the interview, aspiring agripreneurs should have the following qualities:

- Creativity
- Dedication to hard work
- Ability to network with peers and clients
- Motivation and a clear vision
- Self-confidence
- Willingness to take risks
- Persuasiveness and adaptability

It is not easy to answer the question of what tourism skills an agripreneur needs, but there are certain skills/qualities that all successful agritourism entrepreneurs have in common, such as motivation and enthusiasm, creativity and entrepreneurship, clearly defined goals, good leadership skills as well as problem solving skills, persuasiveness, business management skills, risk tolerance, networking skills (both with colleagues and clients), open-mindedness and flexibility, good planning skills, time management skills, team spirit, resourcefulness, communication skills, etc.

On promotional tools and techniques, he said, "The perception of a particular business should be the same whether the consumer interacts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or any other popular social medium. Traditional advertising channels, such as email campaigns, newsletters, publications in local or national media, should also be considered."





When asked about the specific needs that agritourism entrepreneurs should have in order to promote the creation of a new tourism offer linked to the elements of rural life, Dr Neykov replied, "In my opinion, European rural tourists want to experience natural, unspoilt rural areas and landscapes and stay in authentic accommodation such as farmhouses, reconstructed old barns, rural bed & breakfasts or similar, reflecting the authentic rural heritage of the region. Flexibility and freedom are also very important, especially for young families with children. Health and safety issues have also become more important, especially now after the global pandemic. Local tour guides/farm owners should regularly carry out disinfection and hygiene measures to ensure the health and well-being of their clients. In addition, rural travellers are interested in authentic experiences that are typical for the respective region and that are entertaining but also educational. Therefore, young agritourism entrepreneurs should pay attention to a comprehensive knowledge of the local culture and customs. Very often rural tourists belong to higher social classes and are willing to pay more if they get better service. Therefore, it is important to focus on providing quality services by investing time and resources in training appropriate staff."

Some of the possible barriers include:

- Limited access to capital/financing
- Limited access to suitable labour, especially in finding skilled workers with relevant educational backgrounds
- Poor infrastructure
- Difficulties in adapting to situations such as Covid-19



## Key Outcomes Summary

All interviewees spoke of the most important qualities that prospective agritourism entrepreneurs should have. These are the following:

- Creativity
- Dedication to hard work
- Ability to network with peers and clients
- Motivation and a clear vision
- Self-confidence and self-esteem
- Willingness to take risks and engage in lifelong learning
- Persuasiveness and adaptability
- Understand that "it takes time, effort, hard work and discipline to experience entrepreneurial success."
- Perseverance and the ability to stay focused and consistent
- High determination and willpower
- Continuous personal and professional development
- Unconventional thinking

Regarding tourism skills, these relate to general knowledge of setting up and running an agricultural business in rural areas of the country in terms of business planning, time management, risk management, etc. The experts also pointed out the specifics of managing a micro-enterprise or an SME, such as effective planning, coordination and organisation of activities, specific information about the business environment in agritourism and customer service.

The respondents also stressed the importance of combining digital tools such as social media with traditional promotional channels, but also of putting up signs on adjacent roads, distributing information brochures in visitor/tourist centres, running stands at relevant events, fairs and conferences, and establishing marketing cooperation with other local or regional businesses in their area.



Some of the major obstacles/barriers and challenges faced by agritourism entrepreneurs in the country according to the respondents are:

- Fear of failure
- Increasing competition from traditional tourism
- Lack of family support
- Limited access to national, European or international grants;
- Lack of suitable workers with appropriate educational backgrounds
- Scarcity of resources
- Lack of essential entrepreneurial skills and competencies
- Lack of appropriate training in agritourism
- Poor infrastructure
- Difficulty in adapting to situations such as Covid-19



## Conclusion

As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the purpose of these interviews is to find out the competences needed to become an expert in agritourism and also the specific needs felt by the agricultural entrepreneurs in order to be able to stimulate the creation of a new tourist offer based on the elements of rural life, etc.

The consortium conducted a total of 24 interviews (3 from Sweden, 9 from two Greek partners, 4 from Spain, 5 from Italy and 3 from Bulgaria) and we had a plethora of different agritourism experts, which adds variety to this report and to PR1 in general.

The interviewed agritourism entrepreneurs, managers, owners, trainers and owners of non-agritourism hotels were perfectly combined with the strong academic background and experience of the Bulgarian lecturers, who in most cases confirmed and complemented the answers of the other interviewees.

Even though we have five different countries and more than 20 different experts, the perspective is almost the same with small differences. Now it is time to gather the most important things that were mentioned in the interviews.

It seems that the **love** and **passion** for agritourism, animals, the natural environment or for what they do in general is the key to everything. Also important for most of the interviewees are **perseverance**, patience, self-confidence, enthusiasm and **motivation**, creativity, willingness to adapt, take risks and engage in lifelong learning, persuasiveness and adaptability, **vision**, the desire for continuous development, but also knowledge about nature, the ecosystem and its sustainable development.



According to many respondents, the most important tourism skills are knowledge of hospitality and customer service, a good knowledge of at least one **foreign language**, but also the ability to start and maintain a friendly conversation with visitors, and a general knowledge of how to start and run an agritourism/agriculture business in rural areas. They should also have the necessary skills for both farming and hospitality, as well as interpersonal, organisational, implementation, planning, engagement and communication skills. Do not forget the skills to run a micro-enterprise or an SME, such as effective planning, coordination, etc.

Two respondents from two different countries distinguished and mentioned that there are no specific skills in tourism that an agripreneur (or aspiring agripreneur) should have. For one of them, the only necessary skill is that of a good salesperson.

Regarding the techniques and tools that aspiring entrepreneurs should use to successfully market their agritourism business, it is worth mentioning that digital tools, **digital marketing**, SEO and SEM strategies, **social media** and booking platforms, especially a well-organised and updated website, social media pages, TripAdvisor, etc. were mentioned by almost all respondents.

In addition, some of them mentioned the combination of digital advertising tools and traditional advertising tools such as articles in local, national and international media. Other ways of advertising, according to some respondents, are putting up signs on adjacent streets, distributing information brochures in visitor/tourist centres, running stands at relevant events, fairs, conferences and exhibitions, and establishing marketing cooperation with other local or regional businesses in their area.



As for the specific needs that agripreneurs should have in order to promote the creation of a new tourism offer linked to the elements of rural life, many respondents gave the same answers as in the previous questions.

Two of them mentioned the need for a person with appropriate data skills and digital marketing skills to be fully engaged throughout the year.

Others spoke of the need to be able to handle digital booking platforms, tell stories, master digital skills, know local history, religion, culture, cuisine, etc.

One of them stated that "local guides/farm owners should regularly carry out disinfection and hygiene measures to ensure the health and well-being of their clients. In addition, young agritourism entrepreneurs should make sure they have a comprehensive knowledge of local culture and customs, and it is important to focus on providing quality services by investing time and resources in training appropriate staff."

For almost all respondents, **bureaucracy** is the biggest obstacle for agricultural (or would-be) agripreneurs, because it is usually overwhelming and discouraging.

Some others obstacles/barriers/challenges are:

- Fear of failure
- Increasing competition, differentiating competitors and finding competitive advantages
- Lack of family support
- Limited access to national, European or international grants
- Difficulty in finding competent staff with appropriate educational backgrounds
- Scarcity of economic resources
- Lack of educational programmes specifically for agritourism



- Poor infrastructure and lack of accessibility in some disadvantaged mountain areas
- Difficulty in adapting to situations such as Covid-19
- Administrative problems of the country
- Natural disasters
- Difficulty in managing several activities at the same time
- Depletion of natural resources
- Resistance from the local community due to misunderstandings
- Mistrust of the activities

In the future work in the project (PR2) we want to produce a handbook/manual on agritourism, which will be addressed to the agricultural entrepreneurs who will participate in the training, but will also be useful for those who did not participate in the training but would be interested in it.

# CONCLUSION



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