

AGRI@TOUR 2010
Arezzo, 12 Novembre 2010

European meeting on Agritourism

<http://euroagritourism.wordpress.com>



European meeting on Agritourism - Introduction

Agri e Tour (ninth Edition) is the opportunity of a comparison between the European Countries on the hot topics with regards the agritouristic sector, in order to consider possible synergies, integrations, strategies and policies.

We have provided three possible ways of comparison: an opinion survey among the participants; a debate during the meeting; possibility to add opinions and comments on the meeting blog.

Therefore, participants have expressed in advance their point of view concerning the development of the sector. They share a point: thinking that Agritourism can represent a development model in the light of the Common agricultural policy (CAP) and in the perspective of its next reform.

Here there are the main questions to the attention of participants, businesses, associations, technicians and administrators. These queries involve the entire sector of agricultural multifunctionality:

- ✓ does the agritourism represent a widespread and effective solution to the income creation or it can be applied only to an élite of companies?
- ✓ what is the agritourism impact on the local areas? Does this transformation involves the enterprise in its individuality only or it can be referred to other local operators as well?
- ✓ what are the organizational, financial, logistical and managing necessary conditions of the local system, in order to ensure an optimal development?
- ✓ what are the rules which ensure a correct competition and an harmonic sector planning?
- ✓ How is it possible to judge the Italian experience up to now, in the future perspective of the Common agricultural policy (CAP)?
- ✓ Is the Italian experience similar to other Countries?

The nine great subjects of the article 1 of the law are introduced by the sector protagonists and presented by the practical experience of “witness-businesses” chosen between the rich view of the Italian agritouristic enterprises. Each of them has in fact developed an original solution.

Here is a short summary of the main subjects of the meeting:

1. Tourism strictly linked to the region
2. Resources preservation
3. Human activities preservation
4. Multifunctionality and income diversification
5. To defend the ground, the region and the environment
6. Use of the rural building and landscape safeguard
7. Support to the typical productions and to wine and food
8. Rural culture and food education
9. Agricultural system and forest development

Analysis of the issues

Agritourism and rural development

Agritourism is nowadays the ideal melting pot between the **farmer**, whose will is keeping his origins and getting his subsistence thanks to agricultural activities, and the **consumer**, who wants to rediscover himself, his origins and the goodness of the past. He is also searching food products quality and authenticity at a fair price.

The Italian outline law on Agritourism - dated 1996 - regulates, at a national level, the rural tourism development towards farming businesses and more than 3 millions tourists interested in a Farm Holiday.

The article 1 of this law fixes nine great targets, valid for every kind of international rural tourism, since each of them contributes to the agriculture's support, through the promotion of appropriate sort of tourism.

1. A tourism strictly linked to the region

Tourism is certainly one of the main factors of economic development for the most part of the rural area. In fact it can combine preservation and improvement of physical and cultural resources. Tourism can also open new market spaces to agricultural productions linked to typical and niche products, to different kind of local craft as well, promoting the maintenance and sometimes the use of traditions connected to happenings and events typical of the local culture. Finally tourism is a remarkable instrument to promote, through the visitors experience, the region and its products.

2. Resources preservation

Resources protection with regards the environment and the historical and cultural heritage can be defined as *diversity* safeguard, a wider concept than biodiversity, since it involves aspects related to culture, art and professions of a place.

In many European regions, some cultures have a central role (for example grapevine and wine, olive tree and oil) and an eventual neglect would have dreadful consequences on folklore, mentality, culture and touristic attraction of a place.

The agritouristic activity allows, in the majority of these cases, to defend all the region's resources, landscape, agriculture and culture.

Rightly we can say that landscape, a typical touristic resource, is always natural and cultural at the same time.

3. Human activities keeping

Agriculture, meant as multifunctional activity, realizes job opportunities. This way, local people can still live in those areas and there is no depopulation.

Agritourism, in particular, lets farmers to stay in their region and avoids young people exodus because they get new job possibilities in the agricultural areas.

Moreover, the increase of young people occupation can produce positive effects on farming businesses as well, by updating competences and technical knowledge and also creating new professional profiles, advanced and specialized (such as touristic - scientific guides, sport trainers, innovative figures linked to the new telematic instruments).

4. Multifunctionality and income diversification

In order to be successful and to survive, businesses do concentrate their efforts on the ability to attract consumers with very diversified activities.

Multifunctionality is the capacity to encourage the development of smaller activities, as craft, touristic and food and wine itineraries, teaching farms.

Multifunctionality is also the ability to diversify itself with activities linked to agriculture, i.e. restaurants, taste of typical products coming from the farm, hospitality, cultural, educational and entertaining events organization. Finally, through multifunctionality it is possible to interact with other productive sectors and services (craft, touristic itineraries, schools), representing the engine to improve these activities in the light of the development of a local policy, no longer sectorial.

Agritourism, in particular, is today a clear and winning example of the transformation of the farming enterprise into a multifunctional business.

This changing phenomenon, often based just on will, strengths and individual resources of single businessmen, makes of the rural tourism a potential big laboratory where it is possible to test ideas, solutions and innovation procedures.

5. Soil, region and environment protection

Environmental resources, if conveniently combined with a good hospitality culture and with a widespread local business activity, become a strong engine increase, since they represent resources which are not transferable or clonable.

The strict relationship of cooperation between region, agriculture and environment makes the Farm Holiday always more active in order to protect rural areas, natural habitat and regions revitalization. A virtuous model of agritouristic business knows how to give importance to agricultural soils and the related productive sector. It also confirms the irreplaceable role of agriculture to safeguard landscape and environmental values.

6. Use of rural building and landscape protection

The rural architecture is simple but functional, born to perform agricultural functions of users (farm workers, land agents, landowners and so on).

These manufactured products are often abandoned and are deteriorated, covered by vegetation which got the upper hand on them.

Just to give an example, on the Roman communal area we can count at least 10.000 manufactured buildings, spread on 52 hectares countryside.

Agritouristic activity lets renovating many of these rural structures, developing the typical building estate and preserving the rural landscape which surround them. This would be possible by expanding the productive potentialities of agricultural sector and receptivity.

7. Typical productions and wine and food support

Giving value to typical productions and wine and food means saving the cultural identity of a region and its people, preserving biodiversity as a social and environmental instrument, despite of the spreading taste homologation.

Food has always been a strong component in many Countries, with regards tourism; in recent years it has definitively become a typical touristic proposal.

Typical dishes have - as a target - to promote genuine products and to preserve the true value of cultural identity.

8. Rural culture and food education

One of the main reasons for a Farm holiday is certainly the satisfaction of a wine and food pleasure. Agritourism, through restaurants, direct sales or teaching farm, is -especially for children - a real occasion of "food education" to typical and quality products.

As well as nutritional and healthy aspects, food education means knowledge of historical food products and wine and food tradition. These elements can effectively be passed on to people through farming businesses, where food is simple and close to its origins.

9. Forest and agricultural development

Agricultural and mountain areas are suitable for a cultural tourism, thanks to their conformation. Of course, this kind of activity is on a quality level and quantitatively different from the "traditional" mass tourism.

We are talking about a tourism related to the region's cultural values, without causing great environmental impacts on it.

Agritourism, meant as productive activity linked to the country, lets rural people living in these areas and ensures the protection of the region and the agricultural and forest safeguard. This last aspect has got a specific role with regards areas subjected to depopulation, i.e. high hills and mountains.

Participants point of view

In order to prepare a direct comparison, in the last few days we started from a synthesis of these themes, creating a questionnaire given to participants. This way we have got a “picture” which we think it represents a growing reality.

Nowadays agritouristic structures registered in Italy are almost 20.000. The annual total turnover is estimated over a thousand million euro. In the last ten years, Farm Holidays have increased about 100%, to witness the strong incentive to enterprises transformation. Tuscany is at the first place, with over 4.000 structures, followed by Trentino Alto Adige, with more than 3.000 Agritourism. Follow Veneto, Lombardia, Umbria and the South.

According to the meeting participants, Agritourism and Region are the two key words able to define and understand the phenomenon. Other elements are: seasonality; rhythms of nature; health (meant both as outdoor activities and related to nutritional aspects); environment safeguard.

We asked what factors are significant to ensure the development of forms of agritourism in Europe. Participants have answered thinking about the importance of taking part in the normal Farm Holiday running.

Then they have considered the use of local products (preserving biodiversity) and the professionalism of the owners.

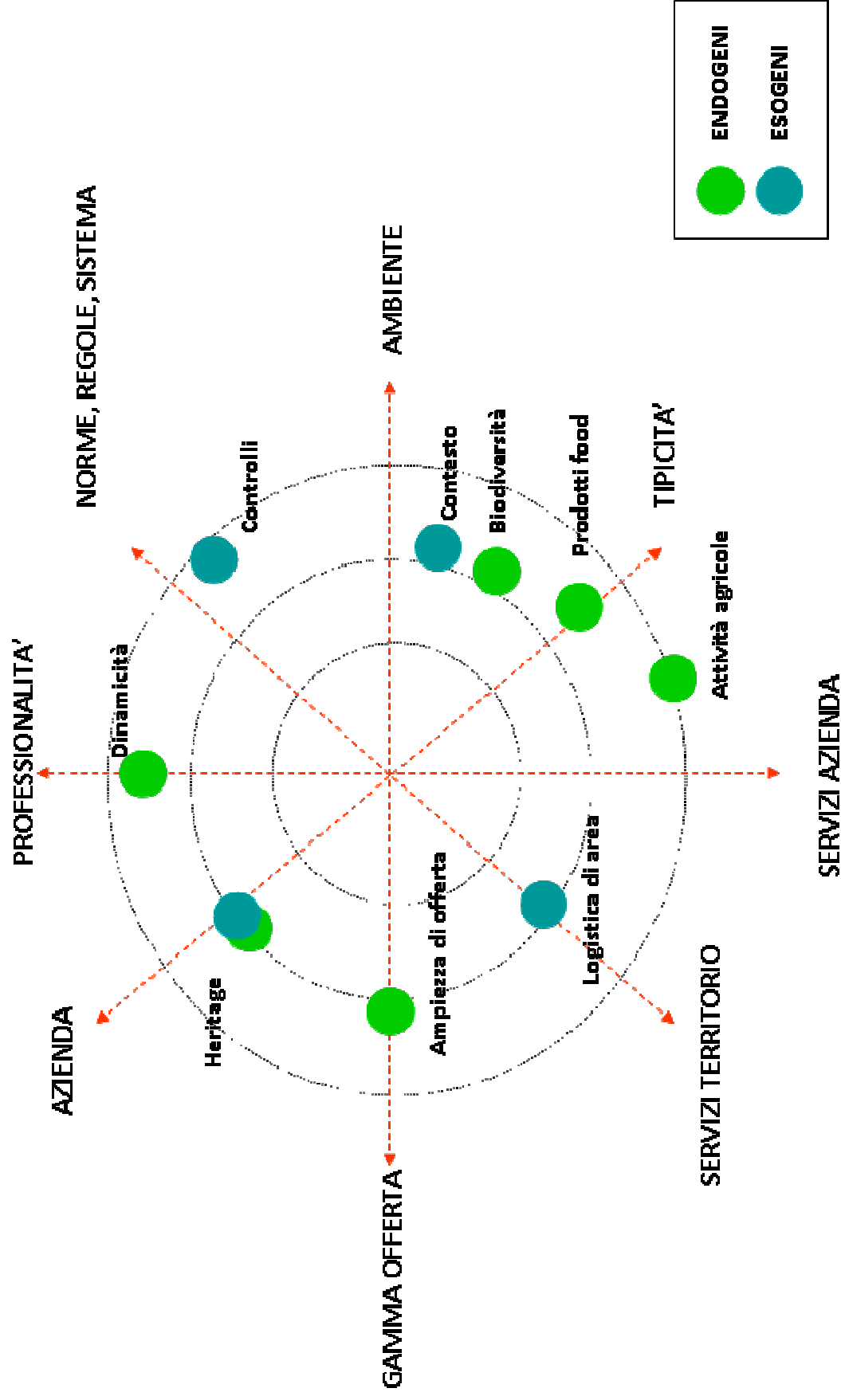
Therefore we are talking about an Agritourism meant as direct and deep contact with its Region, by sharing rhythms of life and work with the host family, committed to ensure high quality standards (thanks to regular checks).

Of course, landscape and traditional buildings (where guests are staying), are relevant too.

Tradition is certainly a value and it is considered as culture and respectful preservation of the knowledge of our fathers.

We can summarize, as follow, a preliminary view by the participants.

I fattori di successo secondo l'opinione dei partecipanti



Questions submitted to participants

The reflection is open to everybody. See: <http://euroagritourism.wordpress.com/>

AGRI and TOUR 2010 EUROPEAN MEETING A GUIDE TO A CONSIDERATION ON THE AGRITOURISM IN EUROPE

1. What is, in your opinion, the best definition of “agritourism”?

2. Could you please sum it up in three key words?

- a.
- b.
- c.

3. Which of the following factors are important in order to ensure the development of forms of agritourism in Europe:

- welcoming and comfortable facilities 5 _ 4 _ 3 _ 2 _ 1 _ 0
- agricultural activities which are visible and available for the guests participation 5 _ 4 _ 3 _ 2 _ 1 _ 0
- Great choice of activities and things to do into the farm and nearby 5 _ 4 _ 3 _ 2 _ 1 _ 0
- natural environment and landscape 5 _ 4 _ 3 _ 2 _ 1 _ 0
- historical and traditional building 5 _ 4 _ 3 _ 2 _ 1 _ 0
- professionalism of the operators and their relatives 5 _ 4 _ 3 _ 2 _ 1 _ 0
- a touristic offer based on the region’s values 5 _ 4 _ 3 _ 2 _ 1 _ 0
- an high level offer concerning food and wine 5 _ 4 _ 3 _ 2 _ 1 _ 0
- transport, guide and accompanying services 5 _ 4 _ 3 _ 2 _ 1 _ 0
- use of local products and preservation of biodiversity 5 _ 4 _ 3 _ 2 _ 1 _ 0
- rules and severe checks 5 _ 4 _ 3 _ 2 _ 1 _ 0
- other factors 5 _ 4 _ 3 _ 2 _ 1 _ 0

4. What is your evaluation with regards:

4.1 Agritourism and environment

4.2 Agritourism and the traditional building heritage

4.3 Agritourism and the preservation of traditional activities

4.4 Agritourism and the region's preservation

4.5 Agritourism and improvement of local resources

4.6 Agritourism as the creation of job opportunities

4.7 Agritourism as a type of multipurpose enterprise

4.8 Agritourism and local food farming products

4.9 Agritourism and teaching activities

4.10 Agritourism and social forms of agriculture

4.11 Agritourism in comparison with the other types of country tourism (not strictly linked to agriculture)

5. According to you agritourism can represent a development model in the light of the Common agricultural policy (CAP) and in the perspective of its next reform?

Yes

No

6. Which evaluation can you give on the possible rules applicable to the sector:

A= I completely agree

P= I partially agree

N= I do not agree

- The farm's dimension should be proportional to the agricultural activities. A P N
- It would be useful to decide absolute dimensions of the touristic activities A P N
- The agritourism should be carried out only by farmers or their relatives. A P N
- Agritourism should offer only local products. A P N
- They should be allowed only activities which are compatible with the vocation of each region. A P N
- Other considerations..... A P N

7. Which opinion do you give to the possible politics applicable to the sector?

A= I completely agree

P= I partially agree

N= I do not agree

- The agritouristic sector should have tax reliefs and/or administrative facilitations. A P N
- Agritourism should be supported by a policy which rewards its authentic characteristics. A P N
- It is important to ease the synergy between businesses, both locally and nationally. A P N
- It is necessary to concentrate the promotion of the sector in the ideal areas. A P N
- It is necessary to help young people to settle and take over elders' responsibilities. A P N
- It is necessary to strongly advantage the organic farming companies and the ones which adopt environmental friendly practices. A P N
- Only guide lines and no rules have to exist. A P N
- Due to the considerable investments that an operator has to handle, it is essential to get over the "de minimis" system with more effective helps. A P N

- Other.....

8. What is your evaluation on the importance of the services to the agro-industries in the agritouristic sector?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| • Technical assistance | 5__4__3__2__1__0 |
| • Training | 5__4__3__2__1__0 |
| • Communication and promotion | 5__4__3__2__1__0 |
| • Quality systems and guarantee | 5__4__3__2__1__0 |
| • Web | 5__4__3__2__1__0 |
| • Other..... | 5__4__3__2__1__0 |

Abstract

Meeting participants:

Moderator:

Alessandro MASTRANTONIO – Journalist

Come in:

- **Vittoria BRANCACCIO**

AGRITURIST National President

- **Tulio MARCELLI**

TERRANOSTRA National President

- **Walter TRIVELLIZZI**

TURISMO VERDE National President

- **Luis CORTES**

Director NAVARTUR - Spain

- **Klaus EHRLICH**

Eurogites – UE General Secretary

- **Daniele FANTECHI**

BEurope Director - MALTA

- **Bruno CHARLES**

Rete Gites Panda - FRANCIA

- **Marios SKLIVANIOTIS**

Greek Tourism National Authority - Director- Rome Office – Greece

- **Andy WOODWARD**

Farm Stay UK Director - United Kingdom

Guests:

- **Shai DOTAN**

Director Agritourism sector - Ministry of Agriculture - ISRAEL

- **Alberto LIM**

Minister of Tourism - Republic of the Philippines

Conclusions by:

Giuseppe BLASI

Rural Development - General Director MIPAAF (Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Rome)